

(From the Dust Jacket Flaps):

Portrait of Saint Gemma

A STIGMATIC

Sister Saint Michael

Saint Gemma Galgani is a modern Saint who is too little known. Perhaps the reason for this lies in the fact that, while her interior life was most dramatic, her exterior life was almost without incident.

Born in Comigliano, Italy, in 1878, she grew up among her brothers and sisters. At the age of twenty she was stricken with a grave illness, and was miraculously cured. Four years later, however, she became ill again and, after suffering excruciatingly for several months, she died.

But the real story is that of her supernatural life; of the repeated demands of obedience and submission made on her by Our Lord, of the visitations by the Savior, His Blessed Mother, the angels and saints and even Satan to whom she gave the name of Chiappino. This aspect of her life is best told in her own words, in her letters to her Spiritual Director, her autobiography which he directed her to write, and in the words which she spoke in her frequent ecstasies, which were witnessed by her friend, Cecilia Giannini.

Sister Saint Michael, long a student of the Saint's life, realizes that these writings speak for themselves. Consequently she has arranged them with a view to tracing the course of Gemma's spiritual growth. Interspersed with Sister's judicious commentary, the whole makes for an intimate study of a stigmatic and her progress to complete union with God.

Portrait of Saint Gemma



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PRESERVING CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS, INC.

P.O. Box 221

BOONVILLE, NEW YORK 13309

Tel: 315-942-6617

Portrait of
SAINT GEMMA

A Stigmatic

BY

Sister Saint Michael, S.S.J.

FOREWORD BY

Rt. Rev. J. F. Minihan, D.D., L.L.D.



PRESERVING CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS, INC.
A Traditional Catholic Book Publisher
BOONVILLE, NEW YORK
2012

Nihil Obstat

RT. REV. E. G. MURRAY, D.D.

Censor Librarium

Imprimatur

MOST REV. RICHARD J. CUSHING, D.D.

Archbishop of Boston.

Boston, MAY 23, 1949

Originally Published by:

P.J. Kenedy & Sons New York 1950

Reprinted by:

PRESERVING CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS, INC.

P.O. Box 221

BOONVILLE, NEW YORK 13309

Tel: 315-942-6617

www.pcpbooks.net

First Printing: February, 2012

DEDICATED
TO
THE MOST HOLY TRINITY



“Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost”

Love's Surrender

“O Jesus, why am I not burned up with love for You? Why is it that my heart is not consumed with Love's flame? Why is it that my love does not correspond to Yours? Oh Jesus, how much time I have lost! How many years I could have loved You and I did not do so. But Your bounty makes me hope to be able to make up for lost time.”

“Why did You suffer for me, dear Jesus? For love! The nails . . . the crown . . . the cross . . . all for love of me. For You I sacrifice willingly everything. I offer You my body with all its weakness and my soul with all its love. My God, dear Jesus, remove whatever of malice may be at the bottom of my offering, and then accept it. Do not abandon me, Jesus, I am Yours. Take care of my soul. Think of what You have borne to save it. Surely they are right who say, ‘To suffer is to love.’ ”

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Foreword

I AM GLAD to have the opportunity to write the foreword for this little book, a mystical and ascetical treatise, on the spiritual life of Saint Gemma.

More than thirty years ago I first heard of Gemma Galgani from the author of this book. Then my English teacher in high school, she thrilled her classes with stories of the devout little Italian girl whose deep love for her Crucified Savior was visibly impressed on her frail body through the bearing of the Stigmata. In 1929, while a Seminarian at the North American College in Rome, I visited Lucca and enjoyed a very pleasant visit with Signora Cecelia Gianinni, foster mother of Gemma, with whom Gemma lived for a time and in whose home the saintly girl experienced some of the ecstasies and sufferings which are the subject of this book.

Sister Saint Michael, after painstaking work and long hours of intimate study of the letters of Gemma to her Spiritual Directors, has given us a new insight into the spiritual life of this beloved Servant of God. Saint Gemma is not too well known generally, perhaps because her life and her sufferings were by their nature and purpose hidden from the peering eyes of a callous world; perhaps because her Divine Spouse called her to Him at such an early age; perhaps because Saint Gemma demands of her followers that their way be the Way of the Cross, which was her way, with its attendant hardships and sufferings and sacrifices. Whatever the reason, this little book will be, I am sure, a most effective instrument in making Gemma better known, and I pray, better loved in a world that badly needs her saintly example and her devotion and love for Christ Crucified.

The spirit of deep love and sincere affection for Saint Gemma which moved the author to give us this spiritual treatise is evident in every chapter of this book. What is not evident is the fact that her penetrating view into Gemma's deep spirituality is the clearer and brighter precisely because five years ago, and on Saint Gemma's Feast day, her eternal outlook was illuminated by the loss of physical sight.

RT. REV. J. F. MINIHAN, D.D., L.L.D.
St. Catherine's Rectory
Norwood, Mass.

July 21, 1949

Preface

ASTOUNDING—nay, beyond full comprehension, is the thirst of the Creator for the love of His creatures! Through the ages, mystics, saints and scholars have sung of it. Francis Thompson tells of the pursuit of the Divine Lover to the point of surrender in “The Hound of Heaven.” Saint Gemma, in her letters tells more. She shows, in addition, what happens when the surrender is complete and joyous. This joyousness, as an undercurrent, runs throughout her correspondence.

The average man can grasp to some extent the heroism of great pain endured with resignation. The acceptance of pain with joy of heart is not so easily understood; while to desire pain is for the most part incomprehensible. The victim soul, athirst for the love of God, alone can plumb such depths. Yet what love story is replete without a mutual sweet sharing of pain? But the sweetness of the pain must not be lost sight of. It transcends all the torture. St. Gemma’s message is not of pain however, but of surrender and the joys of surrender, as Solomon tells in his *Canticle of Canticles*.

Gemma Galgani died at Lucca in 1903 at the age of twenty-five. In 1940 she was canonized by Pope Pius XII. This girl, on graduation day at the age of seventeen, faced her future in wonderment. Her father was asking her to take up a college career. He was able to make this a possibility and he greatly desired it. Gemma, consulting Jesus in the depths of her soul, was made aware of something quite different. Sainthood as a career was Jesus’ suggestion. She accepted the challenge and asked to be shown the way. The means God used during the next seven years for her sanctification were the same as He employs for that of all of us. Strippings, frustrations, sufferings and humiliations, He administered unsparingly.

To the deprivation of creatures and creature comforts she readily gave consent. Possessed of her heart, He sought to purify it completely of all self-love. Every desire that impeded His love had to go. In this He seemed relentless. A striking instance will come to the notice of the reader in the frustration of a desire that dominated her life at this period. It was a laudable one—that of devoting herself to Him in the cloister. Gemma complained to Jesus saying, “You have put this desire in my heart. You have told me it is your wish. Are you going to do nothing about it?”

Jesus replied, “If others will not attend to this wish of yours, hide it in My heart and I shall attend to it Myself.” And He did so, but in His way, not hers. He promised her, moreover, that she would be a Passionist and He kept His word. In the family of her foster-mother He cloistered her more securely than in any convent. There He fashioned her into a Passionist so perfectly that she became a living image of Himself. The frustration after all was but an apparent one, as are many of God’s plans. It served His purpose, however. Gemma’s constant and reiterated surrender gave more glory to God than the consecration of herself in any monastery.

Gemma’s heroic endurance of the afflictions common to us all prepared her for the apostolate Jesus had in mind for her. He put it in her heart to offer herself to Him as a victim soul. To be a victim, as she meant, was to be a sacrificial offering to God for His designs. She made the offering; He prepared her as a sacrifice.

To be nothing, absolutely nothing; to do nothing absolutely nothing, except under His direction—this was what He required of her. Nothing is so effective to bring about this disesteem of self as humiliations. The devil was the agent chosen by God to shape Gemma for the victim’s role.

This high-spirited, self-reliant girl, with the temperament of an artist, was made subject to the loathsome, atrocious and even brutal assaults of the demon. Moreover, by his hellish trickery, this evil one so confused the mind of Monsignor Volpi, her ordinary confessor since her youth, that this beloved friend came to look upon her as a fraud and an hysteric. This attitude of the confessor influenced the whole family and even her beloved foster-mother. Their confidence in Gemma was undermined. She came to feel herself a burden, an outcast.

His diabolical attempts to dupe the Provincial of the Passionists and to snare her Spiritual Director, Father Stanislas Germano, C.P., were not successful.

He did, however, by his interference, force Father Germano to be restrained in his relations with Gemma. This proved a greater trial than the estrangement of Monsignor Volpi.

The differences that arose between Monsignor and Father Germano because of the machinations of the evil one can be readily understood. The viewpoint of the Monsignor, who was the Archbishop of Lucca, was that of a conservative churchman. That of Father Germano was that of an astute Spiritual Director well versed in the teachings of Mystical Theology.

The result of this combination of circumstances was not surprising. Gemma's health became alarmingly worse. Monsignor had the doctor sent to examine her, who on diagnosing the case as consumption ordered her to be isolated from the family. Gemma was removed to a destitute apartment of her aunt's. Here she spent her last days alone, a perfect victim after the image of Jesus abandoned by His heavenly Father on the Cross.

The picture is not a somber one. Indeed the seeming uninterrupted communication with the spirit world might prove a delightful experience. God seems, however, to be pleased to lift the veil that separates the visible from the invisible only in the case of His saints. Rather is it the picture of the soldier on the battlefield who goes forth of his own freewill to an onslaught in which he knows he shall meet his death. In the spiritual combat the warrior is spurred on as in earthly warfare, by an inner joy that reaches at times to exaltation. In moments of ecstatic bliss Gemma was so overwhelmed that she was heard to call out to God to cease His transports unless He wished that she should die.

St. Teresa of Avila asked Our Lord to show her a soul growing in grace. In the *Interior Castle*, she tells of a vision granted her. She saw a mighty castle composed of seven mansions. The seventh occupied the center of the castle and there the Lord Himself dwelt. From this, His private domain, He went forth to each of the other six Mansions to be entertained by the soul seeking to know Him.

He received in the first Mansion those who were but feebly interested in Him. Those who were willing to avoid mortal sin rather than offend Him were his guests here. In the second Mansion, His visitors were always gracious and attentive. They might forget Him at times and prefer their own convenience and pleasure. This showed, to be sure, that He did not hold first place in their hearts. But, should they sin through frailty, they were deeply repentant and sought His pardon.

Souls who added penance, prayer, and good works to their daily labor, entertained the Lord in the third Mansion. These souls were well-ordered in their conversation, dress, and employment.

Visitants in the fourth Mansion had a greater liberty of spirit. They had no servile fear, for their souls possessed the Lord in the intimacy of their growing love. They regarded not the loss of health, and practised austerities generously, and even longed for trials. Creatures and creature comforts no longer attracted them, for they were now greatly enamored of the Lord of the Castle.

God arranges circumstances that will give opportunity to such souls for detachment. He permits physical sufferings that incapacitate for labor, loss of reputation through no fault of their own, estrangement from friends through misunderstanding, even misjudgment of directors, and finally, powerlessness to pray at all. But one desire remains to them at this point—an unconquerable longing for Jesus. This ceaseless cry of the heart for His love agonizes them, yet to it He gives no response. Such souls Jesus invites into the fifth Mansion to strengthen them in the virtues that come from these trials well borne.

These virtues are jewels to adorn them upon whom He deigns to bestow the gift of betrothal.

In the sixth Mansion betrothal is bestowed and the soul is initiated into a new experience in preparation for the Nuptials that are consummated in the seventh Mansion.

I have grouped the letters with the view of showing a parallel between Gemma's spiritual experience and St. Teresa's exposition given in the Castle. And I have made the divisions in the book according to the growth of her soul in love.

The volume includes an abundance of letters of Gemma, a few of Monsignor Volpi, Archbishop of Lucca; several of Father Germano and of Signora

Cecelia Gianinni. In addition, there are excerpts from the ecstatic utterances of Gemma, as recorded by Cecelia Gianinni, her foster-mother, in the last three years of Gemma's life, when she was in a state of exalted rapture.

Where clarity or brevity called for it, I have in a few instances edited Gemma's letters slightly. These changes for the most part have to do with sentence structure and the substitution of the English for the Italian idiom. Gemma's style of punctuation and capitalization I have not altered nor her naive turns of expression.

I wish to extend grateful acknowledgment to my Reverend Superiors, who have given me the permission and the opportunity to do this work; also to the Most Reverend Titus Cerroni, C.P., Superior General in Rome, of the Congregation of the Passionists; and to the Very Reverend Carol Ring, C.P., Provincial of the Eastern Province in the United States, for the two excellent volumes containing all of Saint Gemma's writings together with several important letters of Reverend Stanislas Germano, C.P., Saint Gemma's Spiritual Director, and Signora Cecelia Gianinni; to the Right Reverend Jeremiah F. Minihan, D.D., L.L.D., who has kindly written the foreword and carefully criticized the translation of the letters; to the Reverend John B. Connolly for invaluable service in producing the manuscript; to Miss Lucille Harrington for her translation of the greater number of the letters; and to all who have generously helped me in the critical reading of the manuscript and in the preparation of the printer's copy. May God bless our efforts to advance His honor and glory.

Part I



*Friendship and Intimacy with
Jesus*

Chapter I • Yearnings

THE PURGATIVE PERIOD

*"Though I knew His love Who followed,
Yet was I sore adread
Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside" ¹*

GEMMA GALGANI, as recorded in St. Michael's Church Registry, Comigliano, was born in that city on March 12, 1878. Her father, Enrico Galgani, a well-to-do chemist, owned two houses, one in the city and a villa in the country. Her mother, Aurelia Landi, was possessed of what no wealth can buy, the heritage of exceptional holiness. She was a descendant of Blessed Giovanni Landi.

Aurelia Landi, deeply affectionate, lavished her tender love on a devoted husband and her six children. At the same time she directed it into channels where the natural was transmuted into the supernatural. Gemma, of all her children, was the most loving and the most beloved by her.

Then one day, God thought to take this mother from her child. Before doing so, however, amazing as it seems, He asked the child's permission. He, God, stoops to His own creature to ask a boon:

On the 26th of May, 1885, I received Confirmation, but weeping, for I feared that Mamma would die without taking me with her. I listened to the Mass praying for her; all at once a voice spoke in my heart: "Do you wish to give Me your Mamma?" "Yes," I replied, "if You take me also." "No," said the voice, "give your mother to Me willingly. You should stay with your father. I will take her to Heaven. But do you give her to Me willingly?" I was obliged to answer, "Yes." The Mass finished, I ran home. My God! I looked at my Mamma and wept; I could not help myself.

Her father was deeply pained at her reserve that refused his caresses after her mother died. Companions at school looked upon her at times as arrogant. This was because of a reticence that clothed her as a mantle even in her gayest hours.

It would seem that early she became aware of the strength of her emotions. She feared the disastrous consequences of giving them free rein. Following her mother's death, she became violently ill. Ten years later, at the death of her brother, Gino, she had a similar experience:

I almost died myself when he died. For a month after his death I became very seriously ill.

On another occasion we find acknowledgment of a tender devotion to a beloved teacher:

At times I had such need of a word or a caress of my dear teacher that I ran to look for her. When she was serious, I wept; then she took me in her arms, although I was eleven years old, and caressed me, which made me love her so much that I called her my mother.

What lay at the base of her emotional life was her desire to give herself to others. Always, however, she felt the need for restraint. Yet in one quarter, she had no reserves. Devotion to the poor and to the afflicted was her pastime. Her father gave his permission to indulge it until conditions later necessitated a

change on his part. She writes:

The only thing that remained to me was charity to the poor. Every time that I went out of the house, I always wanted money from my father, and if he denied it to me, I took from the house, bread, flour, and other things, and God wanted me to see the poor often since I met three or four every time I went out. To those who came to the door I gave linen and all that I had. When my confessor forbade my doing this, I did not do it anymore. There came a time when my father could not give me any more money and I could not take anything from the house. Then after that when on going out I met the poor, because I had nothing to give them, they all ran from me. This was a grief that made me weep continually, and afterwards I ceased going out at all.

Another abiding source of Gemma's strength, solace, and peace was her compassion for Jesus Crucified. A crucifix lay in her mother's lap during the years of her last illness. This was Gemma's first meditation book. Later at school in her tenth year, when preparing for First Holy Communion, she heard more concerning the Passion.

My mother when I was little had me look at the Crucifix and told me that He had died on the Cross for men; later I heard it repeated by the teachers, but I did not understand it at all; and I had the desire to know the whole life of Jesus and His Passion. I revealed this desire to my teacher and she began day by day to explain to me about it, and for this she chose an hour when the other children were in bed.

One evening when she told about the crucifixion, the crowning with thorns, and the sufferings of Jesus, she explained them so well, so vividly, that I felt such intense sorrow and compassion as to cause all at once a violent fever and for all the day after I had to stay in bed. The teacher from that day abandoned her explanation.

A highly emotional, keenly sympathetic nature might account for such reaction. But in time grace would make supernatural what was now merely natural. The result would be a victim-soul.

During these years what the onlooker saw was a normal child. We might be led to think quite differently by the denunciations in her autobiography. We might well think there was a very naughty girl in Lucca, not a budding saint. Referring to the early days of her childhood before the death of her mother, she says:

One evening, to the regular prayers, my mother made me add a De Profundis for the souls in Purgatory, and five Glorias for the wounds of Jesus. I said them, it is true, but as was my custom to say them, distractedly and without attention, and I capriciously complained to my mother that there were too many to say. Mother, being indulgent, was briefer from then on.

Speaking of her behavior in early girlhood, she says:

During the time that I was with my aunt I was always bad. One day her son was on his horse (he was then fifteen years old); my aunt commanded me to take him something, I don't recall what. When I took it to him, he pinched me, and I gave him so strong a push that he fell down and hurt his head. My aunt tied my hands behind my back for a whole day. I was very angry and told him that I would avenge myself but I did not do so.

Later in telling of her preparation for First Holy Communion she writes:

All the children gave themselves eagerly to the task of preparing themselves well to receive Jesus. I alone was most negligent and most distracted; but I gave no thought to altering my life. I listened to the sermons, but I forgot them very soon . . . ,

and:

Two or three times a week I went to Communion, at which time Jesus made Himself felt. Many times He permitted me to enjoy the greatest consolations; but as soon as I left Him, I began to be naughty, more disobedient than before, a bad example to my companions, and a scandal to all

Again:

At school not a day passed that I was not punished. I did not know the lessons, and I was nearly expelled. In the house I gave no one any peace. Every day I wanted to go for a walk, and I wanted new clothes always, which my poor father gave me. I neglected every morning and evening to say my usual prayers . . .

One is amused to find her occasionally making a point unconsciously in her own favor, as for instance:

Among all these sins I never forgot to recite every day three Ave Marias with my hands under my knees, (a practice that my mother had taught me, so that Jesus would keep me every day from sins against Holy Purity)

Or:

Every day in the midst of my many sins of every kind, I asked of Jesus to suffer and to suffer much.

What Jesus saw above and beyond Gemma's self-appraisal is of moment. What did He find in this child that made Him yearn to have her all for Himself? What could He count on from her that others would refuse Him? What had she, over and above others, wherein the glory of His father would be enhanced?

In all this one sees the stirrings of grace. Gemma came to feel that God was yearning to have more place in her heart. She wished to give it to Him but felt her weakness. She sorrowed over the sufferings of Jesus in childlike sympathy. Realizing the enormity of the price of her eternal salvation, she felt overwhelming sorrow for her own sins, and the sins of others. From then on Gemma began to offer herself as a victim of atonement.

Jesus, seeing the generous desire of her heart, wished to help her realize it. One day she heard an interior voice that was distinct and convincing. It uttered strange and appalling things—things she did not understand. Her report to her director reads as follows:

Jesus made me know all that I ought to suffer in the course of my life; He told me that soon He would put my virtue to the proof, whether I really loved Him and whether the offering of my heart which I had made to Him was true. He told me that He would understand when my heart became hard; when I would find myself arid, afflicted, tempted; when all the senses would rebel and become like hungry beasts. "You will be," He added, "inclined at times to rebel; the pleasures of the world will revolve in your mind; your memory will recall all that you do not wish; you will have before you that which is contrary to God; all that is of God you will no longer feel; I will not permit that your heart have any comfort at such times. The demons, with My permission, will make continual attacks upon your soul; they will place in your mind evil thoughts, a great hatred of prayer; you will always have so much terror of the devil and the terror will never leave you. Outrages and injuries you will never lack; no one will believe you. From no one will you have any comfort, not even from your superiors. Then all will mortify you, and you will be greatly confused; what will give you greatest suffering will be that heaven will be closed to you. Jesus will appear to your eyes extremely severe; you will go to pray, and it will seem to you that you cannot do it; when you look for Jesus you will not be able to find Him; rather it will seem to you that He withdraws from you; you will wish to be recollected and you will be distracted; you will call to the most holy Mary, the Saints; but they will not have pity on you. It will seem that you are abandoned by everyone. When you go to receive Jesus or confess, you will feel nothing and everything will become wearisome; you will practise all the exercises of devotion, but all through necessity, almost outside of yourself, and it will appear to you to be wasted time; nevertheless you will believe, but as if you did not believe; you will always hope, but as if you did not hope; you will love Jesus, but as if you did not love Him, because in this time you will not be able to feel anything; you will be weary of life and be afraid of death, and you will not even have the relief of being able to weep."

Jesus told me that He wished to treat me in the same manner that His Heavenly Father had treated Him.

I began to weep in thinking of all these things of which I understood nothing; then my Guardian Angel told me to have courage, because after the tempest comes the calm; that the terrible suffering is necessary for my soul; that now I do not realize it, but one day I would discover the great secret. "For now," He added, "you know that the time of your visitation is at hand, and you know how to profit by it. If the chalice is bitter, remember that Jesus has drunk it to the last drop; resign yourself meanwhile to suffering, and rejoice and thank Jesus who through love alone gives you His cross."

The passages in this chapter are taken from St. Gemma's autobiography. The purpose of this narrative was to give Father Germano, her director, knowledge of the twenty-one years of her life before they met. It is an avowal of what Gemma thought necessary to tell. It leaves untold, however, some things one would like to know. It is written in the form of a letter and is prefaced by an apology for writing it.

My Father,

I had really the idea of making a general confession of sins without adding anything else, but my Angel has reproved me, telling me that I am to obey and make a compendium of all that has happened to me in life, good and bad.

What difficulty, Father, in obeying this. Therefore, note well: my Angel has promised to help me, and bring everything to my mind; because I tell you frankly, I have wept, because I did not wish to do this thing; I was terrified at the thought of recalling everything to mind, but my Angel has assured me of help.

And then I also think, Father, when you have read these pages and have heard my sins, you may be angry and will not wish to be my father anymore. But you will, I hope. Be prepared then to hear of every kind of sin.

And you, Father, do you approve of what my Angel has told me, to write of my whole life? It is his command, and also it seems to me that what my Angel tells me are things that you, Father, have already in your mind. If I write of both the good and the bad, it will make it easy for you to understand me as I am. Here is what you ask for.

Father! *Viva Gesu!*
Gemma

Nature and grace contend for the mastery. She lays bare her soul uncompromisingly. One traces her progress in perfection as she entertains her Lord in the first two "Mansions" mentioned by St. Teresa in *The Castle of the Interior Soul*.

Chapter II • Charring

THE ILLUMINATIVE PERIOD

*"Ah! must –
Designer infinite! –
Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it?"*

P L E A S E D with Gemma's desire to fulfill His purposes, God furnished a way to strengthen her will and purify her intention. The record of the next three years of Gemma's life gives evidence of her treading this Illuminative Way with Jesus.

Even in the first stages of her experience, she does not seem to be unduly startled at the strange phenomena. She admits at times that her new experiences are beyond her understanding, and asks her Director, Father Germano, not to put any stock in what she says. Yet withal she speaks convincingly of the matter in hand and furnishes details of happenings and conversations with heavenly visitants. The following is the first mention of this kind made by her. It has reference to her wearing the watch she had received from her aunt.

One time I well remember, I was given a gold watch and, being vain, I could not wait to put it on going out.

(Perhaps, Father, right here my imagination may be at fault.) When I returned and began to take it off, I saw an angel (which I know now was my Guardian Angel,) who said most seriously: "Remember that the precious adornments of a bride of Christ can be no other than the thorns and the cross."

I did not speak of this to the Confessor; I have told you now for the first time these words of my Angel. But soon, after reflecting, without really understanding what it all meant, I made this proposal; for love of Jesus and to please Him, I will not wear it any more, nor speak of things that lead to vanity.

I still had a ring on my finger: I took even that off, and from that day I have worn nothing of that sort any more.

Because Jesus then gave me clear illumination that I ought to become a religious, I planned to change my life. And a good occasion offered itself because it was then near the beginning of the year 1896. I wrote in a little book:

"In this new year I propose to begin a new life. What will happen to me in the coming year I do not know. I abandon myself to You, My God. All my aspirations, all my affections will be for You. I feel weak, O Jesus, but with Your aid I hope and resolve to live differently, that is, closer to You. I wish to accept whatever sorrow comes and to accept it fervently. Jesus, I do not wish to offend You any longer by my tepidity as I have up to now. . . . Therefore I propose: more devout prayer, more frequent Communion. Jesus, I wish also to suffer and to suffer very much for You, and to have prayer always upon my lips."

Now at the beginning of the year 1896, the die is cast! She sees the path that is hers to tread. A cross-laden Figure leads the way and beckons her on. At first a strange fear took possession of her. This brought yearnings for that far away land where her beloved mother and Gino had gone. Poignantly she speaks of this and tells of Jesus' response to her prayer:

From the moment, therefore, that Mamma inspired me with the longing for Paradise, I have always (even in the midst of so many sins) desired it ardently, and if God had left to me the choice, I would have preferred to leave the body and fly to heaven. Every time that I had a fever and felt ill, it was for me a consolation, but it was a grief when after such an illness I felt my strength returning. I even asked Jesus, one day after Communion why He did not take me to Paradise. He replied: "Daughter, because during your life I will give you so many occasions of greatest merit, redoubling in you the desire of Heaven and at the same time having you endure life with patience."

The annihilation of self would now be her chief concern. God would help her and He would send His ministers to assist in the work. But Gemma's reaction to each suggestion of Jesus is of the highest interest.

Now that she has found out that heaven is not yet for her, that God has something for her to do, she seeks Him for strength and guidance. Mass and Communion she knew to be the prime source of strength, and planned accordingly. The family did not readily acquiesce, however. Even her father objected. She tells us so:

In this same year, 1896, there began in me also a different longing; I felt increasing within me a desire of loving intensely Jesus Crucified and together with this a desire of suffering and aiding Jesus in His sorrows.

One day I was so moved with grief in looking upon the Crucified that I fell fainting to the earth; my father was in the house just then, and began to reprove me, saying that this was the result of going out so early in the morning to Mass. I replied crossly, "It makes me ill to be away from Jesus in the Sacrament."

He was so vexed with me then that I cried. I hid myself in my room, and it was the first time that I fled with my sorrows to Jesus alone.

A loving earthly father wishes to safeguard his frail child, and acts according to his human love; but a Heavenly Father also loves tenderly this little one and, knowing her heart's need, cannot refuse it. He comes to her to assure her of His care and love, and fires her with zeal to empty her life more and more that He may come into it for His own purposes. Beginning to sense this fullness of grace overflowing in her being, she longs to make return. This gradual growth of the soul in spiritual perception is all so simple and human that it fascinates while it astounds. God and His creature work out a divine plan while man looks on and wonders but does not understand. An excruciating malady is the means by which God prepares Gemma for the realization of His desires and hers. Of this she speaks thus:

Jesus sent me a disease of the foot which I kept a secret for some time until the pain became so great that the doctor was sent for. He said that an operation would be necessary. All the family was very much upset; I alone remained indifferent. I remember that while he was operating I wept and moaned until, looking at Jesus, I begged Him to pardon my lack of fortitude.

The test was a severe one but the frail girl stood it well. The year, 1896, closed with new resolves for further renunciation. What the new year had in store for her she little dreamed. God, seeing the determination that would not be balked, took her at her word and helped her in her self-annihilation.

Before acceding to the desires of this ardent soul, however, Jesus would give her an opportunity to reconsider the matter. After all, had she really a full knowledge of what was entailed in the choice she was making to be a victim soul for Christ? Great and undivided love alone could carry one through such an ordeal. Her reaction to the new test God sent showed the sincerity of her purpose.

In November of 1897, her father died after a lingering illness. Business reverses had already reduced the family to extreme poverty. Not only was the property lost but debts consumed what little money was left for their subsistence. The family was broken up and Gemma was received into the home of a wealthy aunt. Here she became the close companion of another niece living in the house. A new round of social activities began for her. As always happened, she became the center of attraction in the circles in which she moved. Her sense of justice made her realize her obligations to the aunt who so generously shared the happiness of her home with her. To please her aunt Caroline, therefore, she dressed as befitted their circumstances; lived the social life of the girls of her age. According to her own statement she forgot or dismissed thoughts of what had consumed her but a brief time before. Her story is as follows:

After the death of my father we were destitute; we had no means of existence. An aunt, knowing this, helped us in every way, and did not wish me to remain with the family. The day after the death of my father she sent for me and kept me with her for several months.

Every morning she took me to Mass; I went to Communion, however, only a few times, because it was difficult to find means of confessing to Monsignor Volpi, and I did not wish to confess to anyone else. At this time I began to forget Jesus. I began to neglect my prayers, and I commenced once more to love amusements.

Another niece who lived with my aunt became my companion and in many things we were in accord. My aunt often sent us out alone. I would have fallen into grave sin if Jesus had not had pity on my weakness. Love of the world began to dominate my heart. But Jesus came back to me in a strange way through suffering. All at once I began to have a curvature of the spine which brought violent pain in the lower part of my back. I stood it for some time but seeing I was becoming worse, I asked my aunt to take me back to Lucca. She did not lose time in doing so.

But, Father, the thought of those months spent in sin made me tremble. I had committed every sort of sin, even impure thoughts lashed through my mind. I had listened to evil conversations instead of being deaf to them. I told lies to my aunt to protect my companion; in short, I saw Hell gaping before me.

The testimony of those who knew her during this period presents Gemma in quite another light. The cousin, Luigi, in the deposition at the Canonization of Saint Gemma, states that she appeared as a most religious girl.

“I do not believe that Gemma ever fell into mortal sin, or even into deliberate venial sin . . . Gemma was always united to God . . . all the discourses of Gemma were turned to God. She spoke of nothing but God and sacred things.”

And a servant in the aunt's household said:

“I never perceived that Gemma fell into mortal sin or into deliberate venial sin; she loved God in an extraordinary manner as the angels love Him. Gemma concerned herself only with being united with the Divine Will.”

The illness furnished her with a good pretext for asking her relatives to let her return to Lucca, but the true motive that induced her to this may be sought in another circumstance. Two young men of Camaiore were rivals for her hand; they were Romeo Dalle Lucche, the pharmacist's son, and Girolamo Bertozzi, the son of the doctor. Bertozzi came with his father to the Lencioni uncle to ask her hand in marriage, and Gemma, who did not wish any other spouse than Jesus, to bring things to a conclusion, preferred to return to her poor home. The aunt Eliza tells this clearly:

“Gemma had scarcely heard when she fled from Camaiore and came to us at Lucca. I, surprised, wondering, and displeased, asked her: ‘Oh, why, Gemma, have you returned? Is it, perhaps, that they do not care for you?’ To the first question Gemma did not reply: to the second, she said: ‘Yes, they love me and I love them, but there was someone who wishes to marry me; but I do not want him for a husband. I wish to be all for Jesus.’”

The more one measures up to grace the more abundantly grace flows afresh into the soul to vivify the spirit. In view of this severe trial just endured, one might well ask with Francis Thompson: “The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind?” So well did Gemma correspond in these trials that God knew that He could challenge her to taste the bitter rind. He knew He could ask her to pay even her last farthing for the gift of Himself which she so ardently desired.

What happened on her return home is significant. Intimacy between Gemma and Jesus grows and Gemma makes avowal of it with candor. Considering the return from the viewpoint of the family, of relatives and friends, the judgment might not be altogether in her favor. The family was so destitute that they were dependent on the charity of others. The relatives whom she had left, having lavished every attention and care on her, considered appreciation and gratitude due them, and her departure was taken as an offense. To interested friends her action was incredible. Gemma followed the conviction of her heart, however,

not knowing how to justify herself but hoping she was doing that which would keep her soul safe for Jesus.

During the illness which immediately followed she received assurance from Jesus of His approval. During this sickness Gemma began that emptying of self which was to continue till her death. She would not die this time, however. Five years would be given her to complete her self-surrender, her self-immolation. Jesus would stay with her through it all. Even in her darkest moments she would find Him ever there; and in her brightest—ah! who can tell of them but her! Her story reads:

After I had returned to Lucca, I was ill for some time; I did not wish to allow a doctor to visit me because I did not wish anyone to touch me or see me. One evening unexpectedly the doctor came into the house, examined me in spite of myself, and found an abscess, which he feared was very serious because he believed that it touched a vital part.

Already for some time I had felt pain there; but I did not want to be touched because when I was a little girl, I heard in a sermon these words: “Our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost,” and they impressed me.

After the doctor visited me, he held a consultation with other doctors. What embarrassment was mine, to submit to this humiliation. Every time that I heard of the doctor, I wept. After the consultation I became steadily worse and I was forced to stay in bed, without being able to move. Though every remedy was tried, I became worse.

The second day that I was in bed, being restless, I wrote to Monsignor Volpi asking that I might see him. He came at once, and I made a general confession; not because I felt my illness dangerous, but to find peace of conscience which I had lost. After confessing I returned to peace with Jesus; and for a sign the same evening Jesus gave me a renewed sorrow for my sins.

Then the illness becoming steadily more serious, the doctors decided to operate. The pain of body was nothing compared with the pain of having to undergo another examination. I thought how much better it would be to die.

One evening, more disturbed than usual I complained to Jesus saying that I would not pray anymore if He would not cure me, and I asked Him why He made me so ill. My Angel replied to me: “If Jesus afflicts you in the body, He does it to purify your spirit. Be good.” Oh how many times in my long illness He let me hear consoling words in my heart! But I never took account of them.

What afflicted me most, in staying in bed, was that I wished to go to Confession and to Mass. One morning when the priest brought Holy Communion to me, Jesus made Himself felt quite strongly, and reproved me severely, saying that I was a weak soul. “It is your self love which makes you resent not being able to do what others can do or having so much dismay on finding that you have need of the help of others; if you were dead to self, you would not be so unhappy.” Those words of Jesus did me good, and for some time I was joyful in spirit.

At this time the family made novenas and triduums for my cure; but they obtained nothing. I myself was indifferent as to the outcome for the words of Jesus had strengthened me. I was not changed nevertheless, spiritually; for instance, one day a lady, who used to come to visit me brought a book to read, *The Life of the Venerable Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother*.² Almost with contempt I took it and put it under my pillow; I begged the lady to commend me to him, but I gave him no more thought. The family, however, began to say three *Paters*, *Aves*, and *Glorias* to him.

One afternoon a terrible temptation came to me. I said to myself that I was weary and that lying in bed had become intolerable. The devil availed himself of my impatience and began to tempt me and said that if I had given him the chance he would have cured me, and he would have done all that I wished. Father, I was almost on the point of yielding; I was terrified; I gave myself up for lost. All at once a thought came to me. I ran in spirit to the Venerable Gabriel and said to him, vehemently, “Save first my soul and then my body.”

Nevertheless the demon continued with more violent assaults. A thousand evil thoughts flashed through my mind. Again I had recourse to the Venerable Gabriel; and this time I conquered. I regained control of myself; I made the sign of the cross and in a quarter of an hour, I began to unite myself to my God

whom I had treated so contumeliously. I remember now that very evening I began to read the life of Confrater Gabriel which the lady had left me. I read it many times. I could not read it often enough. I admired greatly his virtues and determined to follow his example.

From the day that my new protector, Venerable Gabriel, had saved my soul, I began to have a particular devotion to him. In the night I could not sleep. If I did not have his picture under my pillow, and I began at last to see him near me, that is, Father, I seemed to feel his presence. In every bad deed I was about to do I turned to Confrater Gabriel in spirit and he restrained me. I did not fail to pray to him every day with these words: "Save my soul, then my body."

Then came the day when the woman took back the *Life of the Venerable Gabriel*. In taking it from under my pillow and giving it to the lady, I could not refrain from crying. She, seeing how much it grieved me to give it up, promised to return it after she had obtained permission of the one from whom she had borrowed it. She returned after a few days but she did not bring the book. This made me very unhappy. But that Saint of God wanted at once to recompense me for my disappointment and at night in a dream he appeared to me clothed in the garb of the Passionist. I was not slow then in recognizing who he was. I remained in silence before him. He asked me why I had wept on being deprived of his *Life*? I did not know what to answer but he said to me, "You see how much I am pleased with your disappointment, so much pleased that I have come myself to see you. Are you glad to see me?" I did not reply. He then caressed me many times and repeated, "Be good, because I will come back to see you." He permitted me to kiss his habit and his rosary and went away.

I found myself that evening perfectly calm. When night came I slept. All at once I saw again at the foot of my bed my Protector. He said to me, "Gemma, make willingly the vow to become a religious." "Why?" I asked. And he replied, giving me a kiss upon my forehead. "My sister," he said, looking at me and smiling. I understood nothing of all this. To thank him, I kissed his habit. He took the wooden heart that every Passionist wears on his breast and let me kiss it. Then he placed it on the sheet above my breast, and repeated "My sister!" and vanished.

Upon the sheet in the morning, however, I found nothing. I received Holy Communion, and I made the promise that he asked.

Meanwhile the months passed, and I was not at all better. On the fourth of January the doctors cauterized twelve times. After this I became even worse. In addition to this illness of the spine, on the 28th of January, I began to suffer an insupportable pain in the head. The doctor diagnosed the trouble as a tumor of the brain. Because I was extremely weak there could not be an operation and I became worse every day. On the second of February I confessed and I received Viaticum and awaited the moment for going to Jesus. The doctors, in an undertone, thinking I could not hear, said among themselves that I would not live until midnight. *Viva Gesu!*

On Sunday, the 19th of February, Monsignor Volpi, the Archbishop, told me to make a Novena to the Blessed Margherita,³ telling me absolutely that when it was scarcely over I should be cured. I began it as a matter of fact the same day, and I made it Sunday and Monday; Tuesday I forgot it, and in the night (I was awakened and it was not yet past midnight) I felt a hand touch me and heard these words in my ear: "Make at once the Novena to Blessed Margherita which today you forgot." These words were said very softly. However, I saw nothing. I felt only the touch of the hand and heard the voice. I made the Novena at once, but I do not remember whether I finished it.

On the 22nd, Wednesday, I forgot it again. It was not yet past midnight when I saw all at once that the room became dark (I do not know whether to say that my sight was obscured or whether the little light that was left burning went out). Then I heard in my left ear these words: "Gemma, what are you doing? You have begun the Novena to the Blessed Margherita to obtain the favor and you have forgotten it again; does it seem to you that this is the way to ask for favors?" I was seized with a great fear; I had a crucifix at my neck; I took it at once in my right hand and was about to call my aunt to ask her to light the lamp, when I felt a hand placed upon my forehead and the same voice said: "What is the matter?" "I am afraid," I replied, and spoke the name of Aunt Eliza, but I do not know whether I was heard. "Quiet, quiet," said the voice, "be good. Of what are you afraid?"

While the voice was speaking these words, the hand which had been placed on my forehead moved to the left side, and with the other hand I felt the visitor move the badge and take my left hand but without making me move. Both hands seemed to me very warm; that which I felt upon my forehead seemed to me

warmer than the other. I felt no more fear, but I could not move anymore; however I felt well; I did not feel any more pain. When I was calm (I speak thus because I had a little fear) the voice continued: "O Gemma, the Blessed Margherita is so afflicted because of you (at this point it seemed to me that I heard a sigh); she loves you, she would like to get you so many favors, she would like to cure you, to make you all hers, but she cannot: the heart of Jesus restrains her because you pray so little, and with no devotion." Here the voice ceased. I felt happy, because I thought suddenly that Jesus is merciful, that He would have pardoned me; I wanted to say: "And if I pray with devotion from now on and if I begin the Novena again, if I become good, will Jesus cure me?" But I could not speak the words.

After I had made these reflections, about two minutes passed; the voice resumed: "You know what we ought to do? We ought to begin at once a Novena to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and we ought to say nine *Paters, Aves, and Glorias, and* so that you will not forget it, we will do it together for nine evenings at this same hour. Having finished that to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, you will make one to the Blessed Margherita, and recite nine *Glorias*. Shall we do this at once?" (I remained perfectly quiet.) As he was saying the last words, I felt him lift his hand from my forehead, the other hand remained always firm; I heard the words that one says in making the Sign of the Cross, and he replaced his hand on the left side of my forehead, just as before; after that the same voice said: "Gemma, pray with devotion," and it began to recite the *Pater*, then the *Ave*, then the *Gloria*; I replied to them, and when they were finished I do not know; I did not even feel the hand because I remained as if sleeping; scarcely had I awakened when I suddenly remembered to make the Novena to the Blessed Margherita. While I felt the hand upon me, I did not feel any pain; the hand being taken away, the pain returned as usual.

For nine evenings consecutively my visitor came to me to make the Novena with me. How impatiently I waited for the night! And when I saw that the room became dark, I took the Crucifix in my hands. Before I felt the hand placed upon me, I heard the words of the Sign of the Cross; then I felt one hand placed at once upon the left side of my forehead and with the other the badge put in my left hand. I heard the *Pater, Ave, and Gloria* recited. I replied always softly, and I did not perceive when the *Paters* were finished because I remained always sleeping, and upon awaking, I at once made the Novena to the Blessed Margherita. I never forgot it. In the nine days of the Novena there were certain times when I felt some fear, during the day, and I did not wish to be left alone; when, however, evening came, then I did wish to be alone, and to have the door closed, but it was impossible, because from the 16th of January, they never left me alone at night; I never knew whether at the moment of the visitation I would be alone. The fifth night out of curiosity I wished to notice the hour; I heard quarter past eleven strike, and when I awoke, after I had already had the visitation and made the Novena to the Blessed Margherita, I heard midnight strike; the other nights, however, I did not know what time it was.

Thursday, the 23rd of February, Sister Giulia came to see me and told me that at her convent the nuns made the Holy Hour every Thursday of Lent, between 11 and 12, the hour that Jesus assigned to Blessed Margherita; to me came at once the idea of making it and of promising to Jesus that if He would cure me, I would make the Holy Hour every Thursday of my life. I would have done it at once but I did not have a book; then Sister Giulia promised to bring me the book the next Thursday. She brought it to me on the last day of the Novena; so on that day I made the Holy Hour from 10 to 11. My visitor came, therefore, after the Hour.

The last day of the Novena, which was the end of March, after having made it as usual, and having felt the hands and the voice as on the other nights, I did not remain asleep. My visitor said to me, "Gemma, the Novena to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is finished; now finish that to Blessed Margherita." I did it at once; I do not know, however, if at the moment that I made the Novena to Blessed Margherita my visitor was there, because when I heard the words, "The Novena to the Heart of Jesus is finished," the hands were removed; however I finished the Novena to Blessed Margherita, then the hand was placed again on my forehead, and the same voice said: "Oh, how happy Jesus is about the lovely promise that you have given Him of making the Holy Hour every Thursday. Never forget it. And the Blessed Margherita is also happy; she has secured from the Heart of Jesus permission to cure you, and you ought to make to her a fair promise. Do you know what she wishes of you?" With my mouth I said nothing, but with my heart I said: "I do not know," and the voice replied: "You ought to promise her to become a Visitation nun." I replied: "Yes, yes, it is what I have so much desired." And the voice continued: "Then send for Monsignor to hear your confession, go to Communion, then arise, because you will be cured. Pray always with devotion, think often of the Blessed Margherita, because she loves you and will give you many graces." "Oh, why," I asked at once, "does the Blessed Margherita love me so much when I have never thought of her,

when I have never prayed to her?” And the voice said, “Because you are a poor little soul whom she wishes to bring to Jesus.”

In saying this he lifted his hand from my forehead, kissed me and I remained sleeping, because I did not see the light come back into the room. When I awoke I looked about; the light had increased; I touched my forehead but there was nothing there; upon my hand I saw no sign. This last time, after I had finished the Novena to the Heart of Jesus, he did not touch my hand; I seemed to feel it upon my breast; in the moment when my visitor kissed me; I seemed to feel also the breath of a person on my face (I seemed to feel these things, but I do not know whether I really did). I do not know how to explain this otherwise than to say that I was very happy! I did not know how to say any other words than “Jesus, I thank you . . . Blessed Margherita, I thank you.” Often then, from the moment that I finished the Novena until the time of Communion, I have complained to Jesus because the days of the Novena passed too quickly. I seemed to have confidence with that visitor; rather the last night of the Novena, it seemed that he inspired me with confidence.

Monsignor came, I confided everything to him, made my confession, and as God wished, the moment of Communion arrived. After a little while I called my little sister so that she should read for me some prayers for preparation for Communion; while she read to me, I remained lulled to sleep, and my visitor again came to let me hear his voice; he placed his hand on my forehead and the other I did not feel and he said to me: “Gemma, in a few moments Jesus will come to give you health of mind and body, and what will you say to Jesus?” I did not reply. I do not know when my sister stopped reading, I was startled when she said to me, “Gemma, here is Monsignor, bringing Communion.” The room was not dark and also when my sister startled me, I still felt, however, the hand. I saw the Monsignor enter the room and, behind him some persons to give me blessing; I knew when I had the Host, then I was lulled to sleep again, and I did not see when all those people went away (only the accustomed hand did not leave me at all.) Scarcely a moment after Jesus was with me, my visitor said: “Gemma, renew to Jesus all the promises and add, that in the month consecrated to Him, you also will consecrate yourself wholly to Him.”

Then I renewed the promises to Jesus. I told Him many things from my heart, though I could not utter any word. How happy I was!

Just before the cure was granted, Jesus said, embracing me, “Daughter I give Myself wholly to you; will you be all Mine?” Jesus had taken from me my parents, and at times I had despaired because I believed that I was abandoned. That morning I complained to Jesus, and Jesus so good, so tender, said to me: “I, daughter, will be always with you. I am your Father; and she will be your Mother,” pointing to Most Holy Mary, the Sorrowful Mother. “Never will one lack fatherly care who is in My hands. Never, therefore, will you lack it, however much every consolation and support upon this earth is taken from you. Come, approach, you are My daughter. Are you not happy to be the daughter of Jesus and Mary?” The great affection which Jesus had hidden in His Heart for me made me speechless.

Scarcely two hours passed when I arose. Those of the household wept for joy; I, too, was happy, not because of my restored health, but because Jesus had chosen me for His daughter. And Jesus also said before leaving me that morning: “My daughter, to the grace that I have given you this morning, will be added many even greater.”

When will that moment come when Jesus will make me so happy? Ever since then I have been content, even now, but not at all as I was at that moment. When my aunt aroused me in order to take breakfast I noticed that I had my hands joined; I do not recall having done it by myself. And immediately I perceived that all my movements were free: I could move my arms and legs without difficulty. I ate breakfast and kept it down. When I was alone in the room later I was able to raise myself to a sitting position though I could not stand up: but I felt very well, there was not any more pain in my head. Later in the day with my aunt’s assistance I got up.

The return to the family in all its destitution was a matter of choice on the part of the girl. It was a deliberate unreserved offering of herself to God with the full determination to accept every exigency entailed.

The malady just spoken of in the previous pages was very complicated, and caused the sufferer excruciating pain. During this physical torture the mental anguish was extreme. Vividly she described the devil’s attempt to make her surrender to him and her vehement appeal to Saint Gabriel to save her soul. God had permitted her to go to the brink of hell, but hell was not for such as she, and the devil was powerless to do more than frighten her. With God’s permission,

he would continue to fill her with fears all through her life, but she had learned how to meet his attacks in this first terrible experience, and never would he be able to trap her.

The mystic writers tell us that when God begins to favor souls with interior communications, He does so at first through the ministry of the Angels, the Saints, and His Blessed Mother. Saint Gabriel was the agent sent by Jesus with a message to Gemma, in direct answer to her cry for help. Later during the illness He sent the same Saint again with another message directing her to pray for her cure, which was part of God's plan but of which Gemma had little thought or care.

Part II

Spiritual Betrothal
THE UNITIVE PERIOD

Chapter III • Mists

"I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds."

THIS RECALL TO LIFE had a meaning. Gemma was ready to meet her Lord in the Fifth Mansion, where He would prepare her for Betrothal. She sensed that there was to be a definite cleavage between the life that was and the life that was to be. The reader may not find it strange that her mind is filled with puzzlements as to what course to follow.

This sickness, miraculously cured, was the crucial test given by Jesus before investing Gemma with her apostolic mission. Courageously she had drunk the bitter potion through the long months on her bed of pain, asking for only one thing—not to fail in fulfilling God's plan.

She had made no formal retreats up to this point. Three months later she would make her first. Yet the Holy Ghost had led her along paths that experienced retreatants entered only after years of study in the spiritual way.

Saint Ignatius, the Founder of the Society of Jesus, in his *Foundations* gives a view of humility that is far different from that generally accepted. He does not make it consist in postures or protestations of self-contempt. Feelings and thoughts may have something to do with it, but with him humility in its perfection is fundamentally a mode of living. He says that it consists in, "choosing poverty rather than riches; opprobrium with Christ, rather than honors; and the desire to be rated worthless and a fool for Christ."

Saint Gemma chose the poverty and destitution of her own home to the comfort and convenience of her Aunt Caroline's. She chose a way of life lacking all worldly pleasures to one which might have been rendered agreeable by legitimate joys, social amenities and family ties. She chose reproach and obscurity to the esteem and attention of the Lencione family. She preferred to bear excruciating suffering without the means of alleviation that she might have had under the care of her aunt. In a very short time she had traveled far on the road to humility and God responded quickly to her surrender of self and did the marvelous things of which she tells us. The miraculous cure of which I have spoken took place on March 3, 1899, four months after Gemma's return from Camaioire. How many new and strange experiences had been crowded into those months! Yet stranger things were to happen presently. Gemma, in accordance with Saint Teresa's words, was beginning to understand better the operations of the Divine Majesty in her, and to realize more vividly her own baseness. On the other hand, Divine Consolation had shown her how vile are earthly pleasures. By gradual withdrawal from them, she had gained greater self-mastery. From now on, her virtues increased.

For a week after the cure, she was not permitted to leave the house for any length of time because of her weakness. When Holy Week came at the end of the month and she was refused permission to make the Three Hours Agony, she was overcome with grief. What then happened shows that the old life was a thing of the past and that God had definite plans in her regard.

Of the Holy Hour which she made on Holy Thursday she says:

Thursday evening of that week I began for the first time to make the Holy Hour (When I was sick I promised that if I were cured, every Thursday I would unflinchingly make it). This was the first time I had done so out of bed. Previously the confessor would not permit me to get up because of my extreme weakness.

The Holy Hour was in accordance with that suggested by God to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque when in 1674 He commissioned her to establish devotion to His Sacred Heart. One of the stipulations made by Him was that every Thursday night Saint Margaret Mary should share the deathly sadness felt by Him in the Garden of Olives.

“You will rise” He said, “between eleven and midnight to prostrate yourself for an hour with me, lying on your face, so as to appease the divine anger by demanding mercy for sinners, and to sweeten to some extent the bitterness I felt in my abandonment by My disciples.”

Gemma continues:

When I made the Holy Hour on Holy Thursday I felt an overpowering sorrow for my sins. In the midst of this infinite pain there remained one comfort, one solace . . . tears. I spent the whole hour praying and weeping. At last, being tired I sat down and after a little time I became entirely recollected. “Where was I?” I said to myself. Father, I found myself before Jesus Crucified. Blood flowed from every limb. I closed my eyes at once but that sight still disturbed me. Then I made the Sign of the Cross. Tranquility of spirit presently followed though I continued to feel even greater sorrow for sin. I did not raise my eyes to look at Jesus, for I did not have the courage. Lying on my face, I remained thus for several hours. During this time Jesus spoke these words to my heart:

“Daughter, you see these wounds were opened by your sins; but now be consoled because you have closed them with your sorrow. Do not offend Me ever again. Love Me as I have always loved you. Love Me,” He repeated many times.

This dream vanished and I returned to consciousness. From that time I began to have an exceedingly intense horror for sin. The wounds of Jesus remained so vividly in my mind that I could never wipe out the memory.

The next morning I received Holy Communion. This was what happened. When I expressed a wish to attend the Three Hours Agony of Good Friday, my family would not consent to have me do so. I wept a little while, because I could not help myself. I made the sacrifice of this desire; and Jesus so generous, although I had done it unwillingly, rewarded me immediately. I went to my room, and my Angel Guardian came to me. We prayed together, sharing all the sufferings of Jesus with our Mother of Sorrows. During the hour, however, the Angel did not fail to give me a gentle reproof telling me that I did wrong in weeping before making this sacrifice for Jesus, and that I should be grateful to those who furnish me with such occasions.

April came, and it seemed interminably long to Gemma. All alone she had to puzzle out a way to reconcile the demands made upon her by God and still be as one of the household. She could not speak of these strange happenings to people, not even to those near and dear to her. Not even to her Confessor, Monsignor Volpi, did she commit herself, for which she received a reprimand from her Angel.

I went home after confession, and on entering my room I perceived my Angel weeping. I did not dare to ask him anything, but of himself he spoke these words: “Then you do not wish to see me anymore. You are a bad girl to hide things from your Confessor.” He then pardoned me in the name of Jesus.

What seemed real to her could not seem so to others. Even as she went over each experience in her mind it seemed to be all a dream. No, she must forget it all and be normal. She must not let her mind be confused, she said to herself. But then she must, yes, she must, do something about this ache that was in her heart. Since Good Friday when she saw Jesus bleeding on the Cross, she felt consumed with a fire she could not quench. Of this she speaks thus:

Two sentiments and two thoughts were born in my heart after the first time Jesus made Himself apparent to me and let me see His flowing blood. The first was to love Him even to the point of sacrifice. But as I did not know how truly to love, I begged my Confessor to teach me. He said: “How does one learn to read and write? We constantly practise reading and writing until we learn.” I did not understand anything from this reply. Many times after that I begged him to teach me, but always I received the same answer. . . .

One day as I was thinking of my not knowing how to love, Jesus in His infinite bounty was not ashamed to humble Himself to become my teacher. During that evening prayer I suddenly found myself quite recollected and was for the second time before Jesus Crucified, Who spoke to me these words: “Look,

daughter, and learn how one loves,” He then showed me His five open wounds. “Do you see this Cross, these thorns, these nails, these bruises, these gashes, these wounds, this blood — they are the work of love, of infinite love. Do you see at last how I have loved you? Do you wish to love me really? Learn first to suffer. Suffering teaches one to love.”

I felt in that sight a new kind of pain and thinking of His infinite love for us and of the agony He had suffered for our salvation. I fell fainting to the ground and remained in a swoon for several hours. All that happened to me during these prayers was, nevertheless, a source of the greatest consolation, so much so that even if the pain had been prolonged for several hours I would not have been exhausted.

The other thing that was born in my heart after having seen Jesus, was a great desire to suffer for Him, since He had suffered so much for me. I began to wear a heavy rope which secretly I took from the well; I made some knots in it and tied it about my waist. I had it on for scarcely a quarter of an hour when my Angel Guardian rebuked me and made me take it off because I did not have the permission of the Confessor to wear it. When, later, however, I obtained permission, my angel allowed me to wear it. But I was still troubled, because I could not love God as I wanted to.

Thus far the facts show with crystal clearness the details of the workings of the Holy Ghost in the remote and immediate preparation of Saint Gemma for the vocation and special Apostolate that was to be hers. At this point she is at a loss to know what to do next. Her new experience has put her out of touch with her surroundings. The world has become for her a place of hidden perils. She grasps at the first opportunity that comes to her in the way of solution. The Nuns of the Visitation, having heard of the part that Saint Margaret Mary played in her cure, invited her to make a retreat with them. They were probably considering her as a candidate for their Community.

I went into the convent on the first of May, 1899, at three o’clock. I thought I was entering Paradise! What consolation! I asked my family not to come to see me during this time because those days were all for Jesus. Monsignor came to see me the evening that I entered and gave me permission, as Mother Superior desired, that I should not make the exercises privately, but make them with the nuns. This was pleasing to me in a measure, but displeased me somewhat, for I could not be quite so recollected as I could if I were alone. But I was willing to obey without replying. The Superior consigned me to the Mistress of Novices who gave me a schedule for the days that I should spend there.

I arose at five, went to the choir at five-thirty, received Communion and then recited Divine Office with the nuns. After breakfast, I spent a half hour in the cell, going to choir again to hear Mass with the Community and to recite None. At nine-thirty, Monsignor Volpi, the retreat master, came to conduct the exercises. At quarter past ten I made a visit to Jesus with the nuns, and then at half past ten I went to lunch. From eleven-thirty until half past twelve, I took recreation with the nuns. At half past twelve I went into the novitiate to work until three. Then we recited Vespers, after which the Superior gave instructions until five. At five we recited Compline, followed by meditation. After supper, I spent the recreation time, with Monsignor Volpi’s permission, either with him or with Mother Superior or in the choir with Jesus. The Sisters met again at half past eight for half an hour and at nine recited Matins, and then retired.

But, Father, it seemed to me that this life was too easy and rather than being drawn to it I began to feel a repugnance for it. The Novices told me that it would please the Community if I came, and as it disturbed me to consider returning to the world again I would have preferred to remain there even though I felt no transport. I would rather do this than return to the occasion of sin. I begged Monsignor for the permission to stay, and at the suggestion of Mother Superior and the whole Community, I asked permission of the Archbishop.

The Archbishop said I was too weak still and refused me the permission. I had been wearing an iron support for my spine and someone had reported this fact to the Archbishop. Mother Superior as an act of obedience had requested me to remove the support. I wept at the command because I knew that I could not support myself without it. Running into the Novitiate, I prayed to my dear Infant Jesus, then I took it off and I never wore it again.

The Superior was most anxious to tell this to Monsignor that he might inform the Archbishop. The day before the completion of the exercises, Monsignor Volpi came to hear my confession and asked me if I would remain *in* the Convent for another twelve days as May 21st was the day of the profession and some Sisters wanted me to be present.

I was very glad to remain with them but the thought was firmly fixed in my mind that this life was too easy for me. I had sinned so, I ought to do penance. I revealed my fears to Jesus in Communion and Jesus, not regarding my wickedness, consoled me and made me feel Him more and more in my soul. He quieted me, speaking ever consoling words.

My God! This was a new sorrow; the day after I had to leave the convent to return home. That moment arrived which I hoped would never come. On the 21st day of May at five in the evening, 1899, I had to leave. Weeping, I asked the blessing of Mother Superior, said goodbye to the nuns and went. My God, what grief.

But to this sorrow succeeded another even greater. I returned to the family, but I could not adapt myself. Always my mind and heart were fixed on becoming a religious and nothing could take that desire from me. In order to depart from the world I determined to become a Visitation Nun.

My Confessor gave me no encouragement. One day I complained to Jesus. Jesus said to me: “Oh, daughter, of what are you afraid? Hide this desire in My heart and from My heart no one can take it away.”

Gemma would never realize this ardent longing. A long series of disappointments would come to her and she would go on to the end bearing one of those unfulfilled desires that are so effective for sanctification. God, however, would keep it in His Heart as He promised, and, desiring it for her, would arrange, in His own way, for the enclosure, the protection, and the privacy needed for His plan.

Chapter IV • The Sign

*“ . . . a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity . . . ”*

GEMMA HAD ARRIVED at the hid battlements of Eternity and had heard a call. Returning she was to be puzzled at its meaning for a time. Gradually the mists began to dissolve and she grasped the import of the invitation extended to her.

On June 8, 1899, a girl of twenty-one years was kneeling before Jesus, putting the same question to Him as had Saint Paul, centuries before: “What wouldst Thou have me do?” A light flooded her room and a Voice answered her cry.

On the 8th of June (1899), after Communion, Jesus told me that in the evening He would give me a very great grace. I went the same day to Confession and I told Monsignor, and he replied that I must be careful to refer everything to him.

Evening came. All at once, and sooner than usual, I felt an interior sorrow for my sins: I felt it more strongly than I had ever felt it before. This sorrow led me to feel that I would die. After this I felt myself gathering all the powers of my soul. The intellect recognized only my sins and the offense to God. The memory recalled them all to me, and made me see all the torments that Jesus had suffered to save me. The will made me detest them all and promise to suffer everything to expiate them. There was a whirl of thought in my mind: There were thoughts of sorrow, of love, of fear, of hope, and of comfort.

This interior recollection was followed rapidly by a state of ecstasy, and I found myself before my celestial Mother, who had my Guardian Angel on her right hand, who first commanded me to recite the Act of Contrition. After I had finished it, my Mother turned to me with these words: “Daughter, in the name of Jesus all your sins are forgiven.” Then she added: “Jesus, my Son, loves you so much and wishes to give you a grace. Do you know how to make yourself worthy?”

In my misery I did not know how to reply. She added then: “I will be your Mother;— will you show yourself to be my true daughter?” She opened her mantle and covered me with it.

In that instant Jesus appeared with all His Wounds open; but though no blood came from the Wounds, there issued flames of fire, which in a moment touched my hands and feet and heart. I felt myself dying; I would have fallen on the earth; but my Mother smiled and covered me with her mantle. For a few hours I remained in that position. Afterward, my Mother kissed me upon the forehead, and disappeared; and I found myself on my knees; but I felt still a violent pain in hands, feet, and heart.

I raised myself to get into bed, and I noticed that blood issued from those parts where I felt pain. I covered those parts as well as I could, and then, aided by the Angel, I got into bed. These sorrows, these pains, even as they afflicted me, brought me perfect peace. In the morning I could scarcely go to Communion. I put on a pair of gloves, the better to hide my hands. I could not stand upon my feet. Every minute I thought that I would die. These pains lasted until three on Friday, the solemn Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The clear, direct, ingenuous narration of the gift of the stigmata shows the simplicity of this child of election. Was this the sign of betrothal given by Jesus to Gemma as Saint Catherine of Siena received the impress of a ring on her finger?

Gemma pleaded with Jesus to show her a way by which she might prove her desire to love Him. The stigmata was the answer to her pleading. In the way in which He had proved His love for her He would now let her prove her love for Him. However, these wounds and other sufferings to follow would be for her, as for Him, not a cause of glory before men but a source of suffering, ignominy, and derision.

Monsignor,

Do you know what my aunt did to me yesterday evening? When I got home, I went into the room; she came to me very angry and said: “This evening you haven’t your sister Giulia here to defend you. Let me see where all that blood comes from. If not, I’ll give you a blow that will finish you.” I remained silent, and my silence made her so angry that she took me by the throat with one hand and with the other attempted unsuccessfully to undress me. Just then the bell rang and she left me, and my other aunt, the one who loves me so much, came in and prevented her—although I believe she really would not have undressed me.

But she did not stop here. When I went to bed, she returned, and I pretended that I was sleeping. She came close to me, and told me that now there would be an end to this imbroglio. “You cannot deceive me as you did the Confessor. “Look,” she said, “if you do not tell me where the blood comes from, I will not let you go out of the house alone, and I will not send you anywhere.”

You can imagine how I wept. I did not know what to do. Finally I decided to tell her, and answered thus: “The blood is caused by the blasphemies which my brother utters.” “What, the blasphemies make the blood flow?” “Yes, during the blaspheming I see Jesus who suffers so much, and I suffer with Him, and I suffer at my heart, and the blood flows.” Then she seemed to calm herself a little and said: “Do only the blasphemies of your brother do you harm or also those of others?” “All blasphemies—but there is a distinct difference—his make me suffer much more.” In saying this I wept bitterly and she left me.

Tonight, then, I have not been able to do anything because I saw that my aunt was not going to bed. This morning early she called me to accompany her to San Michele because I wished it, and on the street she said to me, “Gemma, do not tell anyone of what has happened between you and me. Do as you wish, it will satisfy me if you are at home on Sunday.” Today she was kind. I have so much to tell you, so many things, tell me when I may come to confession. I need to so much.

Bless me and pray for,
Poor Gemma

Will you put me in a convent? Won’t you believe, I can’t stand any more? Put me wherever you wish and I shall be satisfied.”

Nevertheless, while the spirit within her accepted all, the flesh often rebelled.

Monsignor:

Sometimes, when I ought to begin to pray, especially on Friday, I seem not to have the inclination, and Jesus says to me: “Embrace the cross, my daughter; be sure that, while you are satiated with suffering, you are satisfying my Heart, and remember, the more bitter the cross is to you, the more it conforms to mine. I, you see, have compassion on your weakness. I send you drop by drop the chalice of my Passion and I give you a little part of My suffering at a time.”

Do I do badly not to have the inclination when Jesus calls me? Even now, on Thursday evening, I feel that I do not wish to suffer this evening, but do you know my Angel Guardian tells me to be patient because Jesus proportions the suffering as he wishes, and so orders the circumstances and disposes my heart to receive it. And then it is not at all the suffering which ought to conform to us, but we ought to conform to the suffering.

I ask your blessing and pray so much to Jesus for poor me who has so much need.

Gemma

In July, the following month, Gemma meets the Passionist Fathers for the first time.

The month of June had already passed, and toward the end, the missions in San Martino were begun, but I did not attend these at the beginning because I was attending the sermons on the Heart of Jesus at the Visitation Church. What my impressions were on seeing these Passionists preaching, I cannot describe, because I recognized the habit in which I had seen Confrater Gabriel dressed, the first time that I saw him when I was ill. I was seized with a special affection for them, so much so that from that day I did not miss a single sermon.

During His visit at Communion Jesus asked me: “Gemma, does the habit which these priests wear please you?” (And He pointed to a Passionist who was a little distance from me . . .) I did not reply. My heart spoke by its palpitations. “Would you be pleased,” added Jesus, “to be dressed yourself in that habit?” “My God!” I then exclaimed. “Yes,” continued Jesus, “you will be a daughter of my Passion and a chosen daughter. One of these sons will be your father. Go to one of these priests now and reveal everything.” And in that one indicated by Jesus I recognized Father Ignazio.

I went to confession to Father Ignazio on the last day of the Missions, but however much I forced myself, I did not succeed in speaking of my new experiences to him. But afterwards I went to Father Gaetano, to whom I revealed all the things that had happened. He heard me with infinite patience. A week passed and I confessed to him again.

It was through this priest that I made the acquaintance of a lady, Cecelia Giannini, whom I learned to love as a mother.

One desire of my heart I gained by going to confession to Father Gaetano. Monsignor Volpi had forbidden me to take the three vows of chastity, obedience, and poverty, because he thought that while I was in the world it was impossible to observe them; I who had always had a great desire to make them, seized this occasion, and this was the first thing that I asked, and Father Gaetano allowed me to make them from the fifth of July to the solemn feast of the eighth of September, and then to renew them. I was very happy about this. It was one of the greatest of my consolations.

Though with great shame, I revealed everything to him—all the particular graces which the Lord had given me, the frequent visits of the Angel Guardian, the presence of Jesus, and some penances which, without the permission of anyone I had performed daily of my own accord. His first act was to take away all these instruments which I used and he told me decidedly that he could not adequately direct me, and that I should tell all to my Confessor, Monsignor Volpi.

I did not wish to tell Monsignor Volpi because I foresaw a struggle, and the danger of being abandoned by him for my lack of sincerity and faith in him, having spoken to another in his stead. Father Gaetano knew that Monsignor Volpi was my Confessor, but he could not speak to him if I would not give him permission. At last after causing him some perturbation, I promised him that I would do as he asked. I received permission from Monsignor to go to that priest to confess after that; then I spoke of the vows made, and Monsignor approved of them and to the three named by me he made me add another—sincerity to my Confessor. Monsignor Volpi then commanded me to keep hidden these things, and not to speak of them outside of the Confessional to anyone except him.

The happenings of Friday continued to take place and Monsignor thought it well to have me visited by a doctor unknown to me, but I had warning previously from Jesus Himself, Who said to me: “Tell the Confessor that in the presence of the doctor I will do nothing at all that he wishes.”

Frequently Gemma uses the expression “the happenings of Thursday and Friday,” when she refers to the sufferings which occur on those days, especially the wounds of the hands, feet, and side. Monsignor, in his dilemma, sought the aid of a medical doctor. He arranged, without telling Gemma, to have one come to examine her. Gemma was warned of this in a dream and told to make known to Monsignor that his plan did not please God. Despite her admonition, the doctor was brought and he pronounced her a victim of hysteria for when he applied water to the wounds they entirely disappeared.

God did not intend that science should have any hand in the experience of the girl. He could count on Gemma bearing the humiliation since it was His

will. Reading the letters bearing on this visit, one is moved to admiration of the self-abnegation of this girl and stirred at seeing the heights to which God challenges a soul that has surrendered to His keeping.

Monsignor,

If you had only been alone at the time of your last visit, Jesus would have manifested the truth to you. Today, when I began to make the Three Hours Agony, I felt something had happened to me. Yesterday evening Jesus had told me that today you ought, to come. I did not wish to begin the hour, because I was confused. At last I submitted. At first I suffered in the head and in the heart, but after a little while Jesus spoke to me thus. "Do you not remember, My daughter, that I told you that there would come a day when no one would believe in you any more? Well, this is that day. O how much more acceptable you are to me thus despised than before when all believed you to be a saint." Jesus then told me that with you there would be another person, who would be a doctor, but that He did not wish him to see anything. Jesus told me today that I should accept that humiliation, and I have done so willingly.

It may be, as the doctor has said, that it is hysteria. Even should it be so, Jesus loves me. I ask your blessing, and pray Jesus that for every kind of suffering that He sends me, He will give me the strength to endure all.

Gemma

Her narrative continues:

Father, that day began a new life for me, and here I would have so much to tell, but if Jesus wishes it I will tell you alone. This was the first and dearest humiliation that Jesus gave me, and even my great pride and my self-love resented it. Jesus in His infinite charity continued His graces and favors to me. One day He said to me lovingly: "Daughter, what should I say to you, when in your doubts, your afflictions, your adversities, you think of going to others rather than to me and seek alleviation and comfort other than mine." I knew that I deserved these reproofs, nevertheless I continued as usual, and Jesus rebuked me again saying, "Gemma, do you realize that you are offending Me when in your great need you consider Me after other creatures who cannot give you consolation? I suffer, My daughter, when I see that you forget Me." This last reproof sufficed and served to detach me from every creature in order to turn myself to the Creator.

To enable Gemma to sustain this humiliation, God condescended to tell her His reason for sending it. In a letter to Monsignor Volpi she tells of this favor:

Monsignor:

Yesterday evening Jesus told me that I ought to tell you these things: Tell your Confessor that whatever sign he wishes of Me I will give him; provided that he is alone. I will then convince him that it is not a usual illness. It is not your doing. Tell him that I will send you many crosses! And that instead of receiving love, I will receive dislike and contempt, and in addition, I will be abandoned, even by Jesus Himself. Therefore, when Jesus allows me to suffer thus, I must not dwell on the pain, but I should prepare myself for other crosses in order to sustain them bravely, for Jesus once said to me: "Do you know, daughter, for what reason I send crosses to souls dear to me? I desire to possess their souls, entirely, and for this I surround them with crosses, and I enclose them in tribulation, that they may not escape from my hands; and for this I scatter thorns, that souls may fasten their affections upon no one, but find all content in Me alone. My daughter, if you do not feel the cross it cannot be called a cross. Be sure that under the cross you will not be lost. The demon has no strength against those souls who for My love groan under the cross. O My daughter, how many would have abandoned Me if they had not been crucified. The cross is a gift too precious, and from it come many virtues."

I prayed then to Jesus that He would not concede to me any grace except that of loving Him very much, and Jesus said: "O soul dear to me, if you truly love Me, behold My chalice; you can drink it to the last drop. On this chalice I have placed My lips, and I want you to drink it." I told Jesus to do with me as He would. And then He said to me: "I have sent this cross to you, you do not appreciate it; rather it is contrary to your desire, but the more it is contrary,

the more it is like Mine. Would it not seem to you a dreadful thing to see a father in the midst of sorrow and the children enjoying themselves? When I shall be your Spouse of blood, I will come to you, but crucified; show your love to me as I have shown it toward you, and do you know how? By suffering, pains, and crosses without number. You ought, therefore, to consider yourself honored, if I lead you on paths hard “and painful; if I permit that you be tormented by the demon, that the world despise you, that persons most dear to you afflict you, and with daily martyrdom, I permit your soul to be purified and tested. And you, daughter, think only of practicing great virtue; run in the path of the Divine Will, humbled, assured, that if I hold you to the cross, I love you.”

I ask your blessing,
Gemma

Believe nothing, because perhaps this is all imagination.

The very human reaction of Gemma to this humiliation is indicated in another letter:

Monsignor,

Pardon me if again today I importune you. It seems to me that Cecelia Giannini is very much displeased with me since the visit of the doctor with Monsignor Volpi. Jesus Himself seems to have told me of her disappointment and she has felt the strange outcome of the visit very much; but He assures me that it has not been I who have given her cause for this unpleasantness. Jesus has allowed it thus. If you think it advisable, set her mind at rest. It seems that she has changed a little toward me; speak to her about it or do as you think best.

If you could only see how many other persons also have changed toward me in these days on account of what happened. I imagine I can see the thoughts that pass through the minds of others. Because of all these things there were some days when I did not pray any more for sinners. Jesus reproved me and told me that I should give thought only to poor sinners and not to these other things which He will take care of Himself. I am to think of nothing. He told me again that I am to be put into a convent at once.

These things, as I have always said, may all be in my imagination and therefore, do not believe them. Do as Jesus wishes, because I am sure that Jesus will tell you what to do.

I ask your most holy blessing and commend to Jesus the poor
Gemma

At other times she tells of transports of delight in her intercourse with Jesus.

Monsignor,

Yesterday evening in the usual hour of vigil, an accustomed curious thing happened to me: scarcely had I begun to make it than I suddenly fell asleep. I seemed to have in my arms a beautiful child of three; He kissed me and caressed me and asked me whether I knew Him and whether I loved Him. I embraced Him ardently and told Him that I loved Him very much. He told me that if I wished to be all His that He would espouse me. I was very happy. I did not know what to say, I pressed Him close and said to Him: “If you are Jesus, I will do all; if not, go away.” He replied that He was Jesus. He was indeed the little Jesus. I told Him that I wished to go into the convent; He replied to me: “When you are in the convent, then we shall espouse each other; you must tell your confessor to hasten the moment of our nuptials.

“Tell him that it is not impossible to do that as he knows, rather it is very easy; if he wishes, he can do it in a moment. Assure him that as soon as he has

done as I wish whatever he asks of me I will give him; if not I will act Myself.”

The hour was then finished and Jesus embraced me ardently; He did not wish to go away, but I left him because somebody in the house was calling me. He made me promise that I would tell you everything at once; but scarcely had he gone away when I made up my mind not to tell you these things. Then Jesus returned and said to me: “Go tell all to your confessor; tell him to concern himself about you and not to neglect you; to give him sure proof and also to punish you for your Intended disobedience, I will leave you quite alone, and I will not let you see Me or feel My presence until your confessor tells you that I may return.”

Since yesterday I have been so alone, but now I have told you everything, I have nothing more to tell you; may Jesus return?

Bless me and send Jesus back to me; without Him I am afraid.

Gemma

Again and again the reader will hear her begging her Confessor to send her to the convent, away from the eyes of men to work out God’s will in the secret of the cloister. Again and again she will also plead with Jesus either to take from her these outward manifestations of her betrothal, or to effect her removal from a world that rated her as a visionary or a victim of hysteria.

Communications such as the last letter quoted and the following, indicate God’s positive design with reference to religious enclosure.

Monsignor,

In order to obey Father Gaetano, I must tell you something which happened to me a few days ago. One evening while I was writing, I heard my name called. I turned and saw a lady with a child in her arms. She held the baby out to me and I took it. Then the lady said to me, “You, daughter, have received your health back, and therefore, I wish that you serve my son in the Passionist Order.” Having said these words, she took the child, blessed me, looked at me, and then when she had taken some steps, turned to me again and said: “You must tell your Confessor that what he has refused to you, he must not refuse to me, because I am the Queen of Heaven. I have given you the command to join the Company of Passionists, and you must do what I have commanded you.” After she had said these words the Lady went away.

After this I did nothing but weep all night, because I have no one willing to help me in this matter. I feel, however, now, that since the Madonna has commanded me, she is going to help me. I have made a resolution to go to the convent on my own responsibility. The Most Holy Virgin will sustain me. I could go away just as I am, without any preparation. I will be glad to make any sacrifice to enter the Passionists.

For this is a command from the Madonna and I ought to obey.

Bless me.

Gemma

Monsignor,

Saturday you gave me permission to arise at night to pray. But I should like to pray as the nuns do. Are you willing that I ask Father Gaetano in your name to teach me how to do so?

Yesterday Jesus made me suffer very much. I had a bloody sweat all day. I was not in my own home, however; I was with Signora Cecelia Giannini. I do not know whether she noticed anything. Jesus constantly warns me to conceal from those in my family what happens to me. He tells me always that I ought to be careful not to allow myself to be seen by anyone at such times.

Yesterday evening Jesus embraced me tenderly and told me that I am all His, that He wishes many things of me; and that He has much advice to give

me when I enter the convent which He cannot give me now. He said, “You must tell your Confessor that he grant My desire that you go into the convent.” I said to Jesus that I had already told you this, and Jesus replied, “Tell him again and say that he is to send you quickly, and if there is any difficulty about being received that I shall attend to it.” He added that He would have nothing more to say about this matter, but if there was further resistance to His Will, He Himself would act. Jesus left me, and told me that as soon as possible I was to let you know all this.

I ask your blessing, and pray to Jesus for poor

Gemma

From these letters it is evident that God acquiesced in Gemma’s desire to be a nun and chose the Passionist Order for her. This particular Order had no monastery at that time at Lucca; and subsequent events according to her revelations proved that God’s plan was to use her as His instrument for the establishment of one.

It is not strange that the busy Bishop of Lucca regarded lightly the messages of his young penitent concerning the establishment of a convent of Passionist Nuns in the diocese. Not so easily could he pass over the phenomena that weekly occurred in her life, nor the gossip ensuing which was a cause of real suffering to the sensitive girl. His consultation with men of science had failed to aid him. The doctor’s visit had indeed but made things more confusing in his mind. He turned to Gemma herself and with the humility characteristic of a truly noble soul earnestly requested her to obtain from God for him an understanding of what was God’s wish for him in her regard. Gemma did so as related in the following letter;

Dear Monsignor,

I was again commanded by my confessor, Father Gaetano, to ask God to refrain from sending me the manifestations of Thursday and Friday, and Jesus for a little while consented. Shortly thereafter, however, all happened as before on Thursday evening and Friday and even more often. I no longer had any fear of revealing everything to my Confessor and he told me decidedly that if Jesus did not make him see things clearly concerning me, he would not believe such fantasies. On the same day I said a special prayer to Jesus in the Sacrament in regard to this and, as often happened to me, I felt internally recollected and soon lost myself. I found myself before Jesus but He was not alone. He had with Him a man with white hair; by his habit I knew him to be a Passionist priest; he had his hands joined and he prayed fervently. I looked at him and Jesus spoke these words,

“Daughter, do you know him?” I said no, as was true. “See,” He added, “this priest will be your director, and he will be the one who will recognize in you the infinite works of My mercy.”

Gemma

This white-haired Passionist priest was the Reverend Stanislas Germano, C.P. We shall soon see how important a role he was to have in the drama that was unfolding.

Chapter V • A Challenge

*“ . . . Him Who summoneth . . . cypress-crowned . . .
His name I know and what His trumpet saith. ”*

“CYPRESS-CROWNED!” Her Spouse! Yes “En-wound in glooming robes, purpleal.” Recognition came upon Gemma—recognition of the Holy Spirit working within her. To be the bride of Jesus! For this she must prepare. Surely now she must needs have the shelter of a cloister. Her desire to enter the convent had a new objective. It was not merely a question of avoiding the eyes of the multitude. That desire became a resolve, a fixed determination, a sacred duty to God. Jesus Himself, and dear Mother Mary and her newly found friend, Saint Gabriel, have given her approval and direction. Her beloved director, Monsignor Volpi, was painfully wrought on her account. Would that she might share her vision with him!

Then there was that little white-haired Passionist monk that God had shown her in her dreams. Already she had come to love him in her characteristically ardent way when there was no reason for restraint. He was a gift from God. He it was who was to lead her out of this labyrinth of doubts, fears, puzzlements and sometimes terrifying experiences. God had said so, and yet so often she had sought permission of Monsignor to write to him and had not received it. Her request finally granted, she still failed to lay bare that which was of most importance. She accuses herself of unconquerable pride where the reader will see only a natural reticence or a sensitiveness to revealing one’s innermost soul. Sensitiveness—this fear of what others will think or say she would call but a subtle form of the same pride. Though her soul longed to be unburdened, her mind refused to submit to the ordeal. Her first letter to Father Germano reads:

Most Reverend Father,

For the last few days I have been uncertain whether to write or not; many times Signora Cecelia has spoken to me of you, and I have had for some time an eager desire to see you, and also to write to you; I asked permission of my Confessor, but he always refused. Last Saturday I asked again; he said yes, and I was very glad. But now when about to write, I feel almost afraid, and do you know why? I must write about very strange things, which will certainly make you marvel. I tell you frankly—my head is a little unbalanced, and believes that it sees and hears impossible things; I say impossible because Jesus has never spoken to nor made Himself seen by souls as wicked as I. Some time ago I had the thought of asking Jesus if He would let me see you; for I was disturbed in mind. Then one day Jesus said to me: “Father Germane,” I looked and saw a white-haired Passionist with hands joined in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

She then gives details of her sickness and miraculous cure, her stigmata, and her visions. She closes the long letter with an account of an apparition of Saint Gabriel.

One day when I discovered that Signora Cecelia desired to found here at Lucca a monastery of Passionists, I thought of asking Confrater Gabriel about it. One night I seemed to see him and asked: “Will the convent actually come about?” He answered: “My sister, it will come, I assure you that it will come.” “But can I be a Passionist?” He answered: “You will be, my sister.” “But where?” I asked. “O send me to Cometo.” “Why so far away?” “To forget all and that all may forget me.” He did not answer. He blessed me and went away. As he was vanishing, he said: “Do not fear; you will be a Passionist.”

Another time I was weeping because I desired a grace from Jesus and Confrater Gabriel said to me: “Why are you distressed? Have recourse to the

Sorrowful Mother. In my lifetime whatever grace I asked of her I do not remember that she ever denied me.” One day I felt unhappy because I saw that it appeared impossible that I should be a Passionist, as I have no dowry to offer because no one is giving any thought to this; not even the Confessor seems to concern himself about it.

When will that day arrive? O Jesus, let it be soon! For some days I have been seized with so strong a desire that my thought is continually there [at Corneto]. I don’t think I can wait; from time to time I repeat: My God, you have put a vocation in my heart, and you thought of it, but act soon.

On another day it seemed that the Confessor wished to put me in the convent, and that some persons wished to dissuade me from becoming a Passionist. Confrater Gabriel said to me: “Gemma, bear the cross wherever the Confessor wishes, because the time will come when you will bear it in another place. Do not give any thought to those who wish you to abandon the idea of being a Passionist. Sooner will the heavens fall than that the words I have spoken not come to pass.” These last words he said to me because at the time there had come to me the thought that none of this was true; but all imagination; then for a time I was ashamed to speak of these things to the Confessor, and Gabriel told me that I committed the sin of pride because at times I was silent, and he said to me: “If you are not sincere, I will not come to see you; however, if you are good, I promise to “come every evening from eleven to midnight.” He has come up to now every evening and repeats to me: “You will be a Passionist.” The name alone fills me with happiness. How beautiful it would be if Jesus gives me the grace indeed to become one.

Lately something very curious has happened. One day while I was praying, I found myself before Confrater Gabriel, who said to me: “Gemma, have you nothing to tell me?” “Oh, I have so much to ask you about to please the Confessor. He wishes to know of this convent, who it will be that ought to begin the work, who ought to complete it, and how much time it will take.”

When I had spoken these words, some persons appeared before me and Confrater Gabriel let me see them one by one; there were seven and I knew three of them. “O who are these others?” I asked him. And he said, “They will be Passionists. Tell Monsignor that it is he who in twenty-one months should initiate this great work; he is to be courageous, because the devil is ready to make strong assaults; but what matter? Forward!” He was silent, and later he let me see a woman and said to me: “Look—this is the one that must complete the work; do you know her?” “No,” I replied. He told me her name, the city where she was born and grew up; she left me and Confrater Gabriel also disappeared.

I was, however, very little convinced by all this, and three more times the same thing happened, and the last time he added: “It will be begun on a Friday.” And I said to him, “I will be a Passionist.”

That I am mad I do not deny, rather I am certain of it. I have written all this to you because my confessor has ordered me to; but I suffer in doing so.

One last thing,— every night Confrater Gabriel comes to me and reproves me if during the course of the day I committed any sins; at other times he says to me, “Why do you find it so distasteful to write to Father Germano; do you not know who he is? He is my brother in religion.” He said this to me because I was going to end this.

Jesus, how many times have I done so; the Confessor does not believe me because he is afraid that you are not really Jesus, but the devil.” And Jesus looked at me, smiled, and said: “Tell him that I am truly Jesus; if now you are in darkness, it is My will; then one day you will see the light. Tell your Confessor then to put you in a convent, to take you out of the world, because now would be the time. Then what will happen after, can be thought about.” And in saying this he beckoned Confrater Gabriel, for it appeared to me that he stood near Jesus.

I then told Jesus that you asked me that I should pray that everything would go well, that is, the medical certificate, the Archbishop’s approval, and other things. And Jesus said: “These are all things that I as Almighty could arrange. Tell your Confessor to go to the Superior of the Adolorata Sisters, she will listen to him, and do what he says for the present, all will be through My inspiration.” I then repeated to Him many times: “But, Jesus, shall I be in the convent for Christmas Eve? Believe me, Jesus, it is not an evil desire, it seems to me: I ask it first of all to think only of You, and then because the Madonna has promised me that I shall see the newborn Child, on Christmas Day.”

Concerning her entrance into this convent she writes:

Monsignor:

January, 1900

Today I have been with Sister Maria, Superior of the Mantellate of Adolorata Sisters. Do you know what Jesus told me when I first came into the church? “My daughter, you ought to tell your Confessor that tomorrow is My feast. I have graces to distribute to My children and I have one also for you. I have given one to Sister Nazarena. I have removed all obstacles, so tell your Confessor that he should assign tomorrow as the day for you to enter amongst them, to be one of them. Tell him that I wish it to be before Friday. You will pray tomorrow and Jesus will call you to Himself.”

Monsignor, I have suffered so much in writing this. The devil did not wish it but I have written it none the less.

Gemma

Monsignor,

January, 1900

How would it be if this evening I did not go back home but remained with the nuns? You told me you would put me in a convent; Jesus wishes it, do you not believe it? With so many things happening to me every day, I can no longer bear to remain in the world. Do not send me home this evening, leave me here in the convent. Jesus wishes it. Do it, do it. Then we will find out whether or not I shall always be ill, as they say. The Superior is willing. Ask her about it. Rescue me from these strange things.

Bless me, and if you think well of it, console me and pray for poor

Gemma

Monsignor:

Today I dined with the Mantellate nuns, but in the reception room, as usual, as a guest. Place me within, amongst them, because you can. It seems to me that it would be one anxiety the less for you, because Jesus tells me that you are very much disturbed about me, and very unhappy.

Now try me, leave me here; do not send me home again. If you only knew how unhappy I am, being first in one place, then in another. Shall I remain here?

Believe me, it is Jesus Who wishes me to escape from certain wretched conditions; many times He has told me that I should leave home because I am in danger of sin. Speak with the Superior and let me stay here. Do it because Jesus wishes it.

After the reception of the Stigmata Gemma's life became a living martyrdom. It is not difficult to sense the effect of these startling phenomena upon the members of the family. It does not seem strange to read in her biography that the younger brothers spied upon her through the keyhole, or even that when something quite extraordinary came to their notice that they made jest of it, not understanding what it was all about. Though naturally sensitive to this raillery, Gemma made no complaints but besought God and her Confessor to remove her from the situation fearing to be the occasion of scandal.

To the mockery and ill treatment of those who looked upon her as a victim of hysteria were added the assaults of the devil. Some may take her descriptions of these assaults as symbolic of temptations that assailed her. Sometimes the letters read as if she were puzzled as to the reality of what she was recounting.

Whether it be a matter of symbolism or reality one cannot take her seriously without becoming aware of the implacable hatred of the devil and his relentless warfare against the reign of Jesus Christ in the hearts of men. Powerless to do harm to the souls of the saints, the evil one attacks the body in strange ways as recorded in the martyrologies.

Tanquerey in his *Spiritual Life*, vouches that the devil can affect the senses of men externally. He gives instances as in the case of Mother Agnes of Langeac when she saw him in a repulsive form to frighten her; to Saint Alphonsus in a seductive form to entice him to sin; to Saint Margaret of Cortona, who heard the devil utter blasphemous words and obscene song; and in the cases of the Cure d'Ars, Saint Madeleine of Pazzi whom he startled repeatedly by frightful

noises, and Saint Catherine of Siena who experienced blows and wounds from his brutal attacks.

From the following letters, or excerpts from letters of this period, the reader will see her preparation for meeting the challenge that Jesus was giving her:

Monsignor:

December, 1899

I have something to tell you. I was coming to tell you but you could not confess me, then Jesus told me that I ought to let you know, and if you are willing, I shall tell you at once. Sunday evening, after I had spent one of those usual tempestuous nights I was complaining a little, thus, “O Jesus, why do You not help me?” And Jesus replied at once, “O daughter, you do not see Me; but I am helping you more now than before. O how dear you are in My eyes in these moments!” When Jesus had said this, there came to me a great desire to suffer much more; but this was only a thought. I said nothing. Then Jesus said to me: “See how everyone in the world treats Me today. I am very much displeased with those who offend Me.” I begged Jesus to have patience, and to satisfy His wrath on me; to make me suffer much more, because I seemed to have the strength. Jesus then told me that the demon henceforth would have even more power to attack me. At this point He said: “To make you understand more clearly that you will be a daughter of the Passion, I will have you submit to his attacks. Besides this, I wish from you greater penitence; tell your confessor that it is My wish that from now on you go always barefoot, wear the rope about your waist, and that from Thursday evening to Saturday morning you will not drink at all; and you will use the discipline twice a day.” Jesus wishes me to do this once for my sins and once for sinners. He told me that I should tell you everything and if you were willing that I should do all this, then He would help me.

Monsignor:

January, 1900

Now it is necessary for me to tell you something that happened to me yesterday evening I did not go to bed at all, because that devil made me so afraid of hearing him blaspheme. I believed that he came into the room and it was possible for me neither to sleep nor to pray.

I abandoned the evening meditation, and did not even pray between 11 and 12, not going to bed at all. In the morning when I started to go to church I seemed not able to go to Holy Communion; I went out of church without having done so, but when I was outside, the devil began to laugh. I understood what he meant, so I went back, into church and received Holy Communion. Jesus told me that if I had not conquered that morning, I never would again, and I would never be able to communicate again. He told me that He would give me the necessary strength. Then I asked Jesus where He was during the night and why He had left me alone. He replied that He had been near me.

Yesterday evening then the devil began again to make me lose the meditation, but I succeeded in making it. When I was in bed, a dog jumped up on the bed; I made the Sign of the Cross, and it got down, and ran around the room, then got up again. I took holy water, and made the Sign of the Cross, and it disappeared. With its mouth it had snatched at the cover on the bed but then left it. It entered and left through a door closed and locked.

I have so many things to tell you but I don't know whether you wish to hear them.

I ask your blessing and please pray for
Poor Gemma

Monsignor,

February, 1900

Saturday evening I went to make a visit to the Crucified; there came to me a great desire to suffer and with all my heart, I asked it of Jesus. And Jesus that evening made me have a very, violent pain in the head, and blood almost came; but I was almost overcome and afraid that I would not be able to endure it. Tonight I suffered all night; I asked Jesus if I might have a little peace; and He gave it to me. I do not know whether Signora Cecelia observed me at this time; since yesterday evening I have been with her at her home, you know.

If you think it wise, should I ask Jesus to alleviate a little the pain in my head?

Tonight I told Jesus that I really could not bear it anymore, and He replied to me: “My daughter, neither am I able to endure any longer the evil that is done Me; this is indeed a time of wickedness [it was carnival time] which I am no longer able to tolerate. You with your suffering bear the punishment which My Father has prepared for so many poor sinners. Will you not do it willingly?” I said yes, but I was afraid of not being able to stand it. He said: “Do not be afraid, I will make you suffer, but I will give you the strength to endure it.” Now I am satisfied and even stronger.

I ask for your blessing and pray to Jesus for poor

Gemma

Monsignor,

March, 1900

Yesterday evening when I went to confession, I felt very ill; the devil began to say such horrible things about you, blaspheming; he said that in the night he would tear me to pieces if I did not yield to his temptation. He made me so afraid that I was discouraged, and I almost submitted to him. I was disgusted, and I wished to die, because I was tired of having such dreadful nights.

When I returned home, I went at once to my room; I was badly frightened, but before going in, I called Confrater Gabriel. He came at once, but he scolded me sharply, first of all because I was unhappy after the temptation; instead of resisting the temptation strongly, I did it with an oppressed heart; then because I had said I was tired of suffering, and he said to me: “Why do you refuse suffering while Jesus has suffered so much for you; why do you complain of what he has disposed? If the suffering seems long, the recompense will be eternal. If the temptations disturb your heart, and your soul is on the point of submitting to the enemy, come to me; I am ready to help you; trust in me and you will not have to fear falling. Remember to speak as little as possible about all these things; avoid purposeless talk, because so many faults are mingled with useless words.” Then he left me.

Scarcely had he left, then that bad one came along. He wishes me to do what he told me but I would not. He struck me violently. Finally I conquered with the help of Jesus. Then I went to Holy Communion later. I felt the presence of Jesus and He told me (because I said that I had waited for Him so long) “All night I was with you. . . .”

Yesterday evening I asked Confrater Gabriel to obtain the grace to let me be free of the devil in the day time; he obtained it for me at once. The strength garnered in the day helped me through the night. Then he told me to devote myself to the Mother of Sorrows, because, he said, “she is the Mother of the most afflicted of all, and loves so much to find a soul that suffers with her. She has much grace to give, she does not find anyone who asks her for it, she finds no hearts which supplicate her.” He told me then that he would give me courage, that the moment would come soon; that I would love Jesus and become strong.

Bless me and pray for poor

Gemma

March, 1900

Yesterday I spent all day without seeing the devil, and he did not even come to tempt me. Tonight, however, he came in the form of a man quite black, and had a serpent twisted around his arm, and said to me, “You are damned for that sin you committed last year. Do you remember? There is no more hope for you; I will bear you off to hell. You are already mine; you can see for yourself that God has abandoned you forever.”

I replied that Jesus has forgiven me everything, and he said, “It is not true; for that sin you are condemned to hell; come.” He dragged me along the floor. How frightened I was! I stayed on the floor without any strength left. I called Jesus, and He came at once with Confrater Gabriel who helped me. . . . Yesterday after dinner, Jesus came to me.

Chapter VI • Divine Strategy

*"All which I took from thee I did but take
Not for thy harms
But just that thou might'st seek it in my arms."*

SHE HAD BEEN BETROTHED. She had been invited into the Sixth Mansion, and might come again and again to attest to her appreciation of the favor bestowed upon her. She would, as Saint Teresa explains, prove to the Lord of her castle that her one desire was for closer bonds of union. His interest would be hers and nothing else. Since Betrothal He had been giving her a challenge to yet more arduous self-conquest, and greater courage, and confidence in Him. While asking great things of her He would often be deaf to her pleadings and she would be puzzled.

Not only does He seemingly leave her to herself but He permits the devil to assail her continually. To give her opportunity to prove her faith and love is His purpose. The measure of her trust will be the measure of her love. He has His plans for her. Through Father Germano He will work them out and she will learn how her Divine Lover will repay her constancy.

Father Germano, an astute director of souls and a student of Mystical Theology, has heard much of what has been going on through Cecelia Giannini, and Monsignor Volpi. It was in the home of Signora Cecelia that the Passionist Fathers always found hospitality when they gave Missions in the city of Lucca. From the Information thus gathered he knew of facts withheld by Gemma through reticence in her first letter to him. He now answers her letter and speaks in no measured terms. Gemma's response to his letter gives evidence of her deep humility, her extraordinary simplicity and childlike docility. In Father Germano she recognizes the voice of God speaking. In him she is going to find that sense of security she has so needed. He will not spare her but she will not cringe nor cry at his stern admonitions. She will prove to be in no sense the "baby" he playfully calls her.

Gemma, daughter in Jesus,

I have a few words in reply to your long letter. You love Jesus, don't you? You love Him very much? And now of what are you afraid? What do you doubt? What distresses you? Do you not know that He is Father, Spouse, everything to you? What does it matter what happens in and around you, whether you rejoice or mourn, whether you see clearly or obscurely? You are of Jesus, you live by Him and with Him. Nothing can be lacking to you. Therefore, if you wish my counsel, abandon yourself soul and body into His hands, without any thought for yourself or for what concerns you, either in the present or in the future. Above all, humiliate yourself. Until we are annihilated in the abyss of our nothingness, the enemy can deceive us in every way. As little flowers of this beautiful virtue, I would like to counsel you to make a visit of humility every day before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament—a visit for the purpose of asking Jesus that He make you realize your nothingness, of weeping for your sins, of protesting that you are not worthy to be seen in the presence of His Divine Majesty; and whenever you find yourself alone in church you will make these acts abasing yourself with your forehead to the ground. Offer your poor sufferings to Jesus in atonement for your own sins. Whatever new thing you seem to see or hear, even if it be good and holy, take no account of it. If Our Lord

wishes something of you, He will let you know in such a manner as to exclude all doubts. Therefore do not be disturbed if you happen to see or hear these things; I tell you not to be preoccupied with them; act as if you neither saw them nor heard them, and thus you will prevent the enemy from leading you into temptation. With the exception of your own confessor and director, do not reveal anything to anyone, not the slightest detail. Is that clear? I will pray for you and I promise to help you if you will be faithful to my poor counsel. I bless you and commend you to God. Blessed be Jesus!

Your servant,

Germano

Gemma, writing in answer to the last letter, says:

Most Reverend Father,

25 March 1900

This time I write to you because I can't wait any longer. If you knew! Today the confessor said absolutely that he would arrange everything before Easter for putting me with the Carmelite nuns in the convent of Saint Teresa at Borgo di Lucca. He says that here they will keep me a year on trial, but should I go there, who will give it any further thought? Many times he has told me that, but he has never come to the point of deciding; today he wanted to speak with an aunt at home, asked her to write to the nuns to send the rules and other details.

In hearing these things I confess that I wept bitterly. After Holy Communion I was weeping with Jesus, I told Him about this, and at that moment I was so confused that I thought myself truly alone with Him, and exclaimed loudly, "My Jesus, what are You doing? You have put in my heart the desire of becoming a Passionist, and why do you thus desert me? Will you not give me the grace then to put it into execution?" At this point I was touched by my little sister who was near me, and she led me out of the church. Later, I spoke again to Monsignor and he gave me this answer only: "Daughter, blind obedience and profound humility." I asked his permission to write to you: he gave it to me at once, and said further: "Tell him everything and ask him in my name to answer as soon as possible."

Is it possible that Jesus does not wish to keep His word? But then does He not wish me to be a Passionist? Have I perhaps been deceived by the enemy? And if I have been? Father, I never before realized how much I needed your counsel. Father, if you knew the pleasure it would give me to receive a line from you! And do you know why? Because your words would give me courage. Just before your answer to my last letter I was on the point of feeling that I must not count on a reply.

Jesus has somewhat increased my little suffering, and for the last few days the devil has tormented me continually, night and day, even while I sleep. Jesus scarcely looks at me, and when He does, His look is very grave, so that at times I am constrained not to look at Him; it seems to me. that He repulses me. This is a real torment. If I have any comfort it is given to me by Most Holy Mary of the Sorrows. She does not fail every Saturday to come to pray with me; even yesterday she came with Confrater Gabriel, and today, her feast, she was in prayer with me.

However, Father, I am almost wholly abandoned by Jesus. What shall I do? To whom shall I have recourse? May I ask you to tell Jesus these things? Tell Him also that if He wishes even the sacrifice of my not becoming a Passionist, I will make it, provided that Jesus does not become angry with me. I will do everything. I wonder if He will let me see Him any more? But If Jesus will not look at me any more, what does It matter, I will look at Him always, and if He does not wish me to be with Him any more, I will nevertheless keep near Him.

Bless me and do me the kindness, please, to reply very soon.

Pray to Jesus for poor Gemma

Answering this letter, Father Germane writes:

Gemma of Jesus,

May, 1900

Again this time you have made me angry with your exaggerated obsession. After the sermon that I gave you I thought that you would be tranquil, but instead! . . . But tell me, daughter, do you not want only what Jesus wishes? Does He not suffice for you? Have you not faith enough in Him? Do you wish to take even one step without Him? The reply to all these questions I find beautiful and ready in your heart, in your mind, and on your lips: no, no, Jesus only! Well, if it is so, why are you so afflicted and distraught? But I wish to be a Passionist and at once! . . . but I do not want to remain in the world! . . . I can't bear any more? O beautiful little spouse of Jesus! And what do you mean by this I wish and I do not wish, this I can and this I cannot? If I find you using similar expressions any more, I shall cease to care for you. No, Gemma of Jesus, abandon yourself in Jesus and sleep tranquilly in His Divine Heart, without concerning yourself either with yourself or what goes on around you. What does it matter if things happen in one way or another? What of it if creatures think of you in this way or in that? What of it if Jesus caresses you or punishes you? if He leaves you in aridity and desolation or in consolation? if He makes you capable or incapable of prayer? if you are submerged in an ocean of sorrow, what does it matter? You live solely to please Him. It is for Him and not for you to choose in what way you should please Him. Therefore I counsel you to make yourself familiar with the beautiful prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane, wherever you may find yourself: "No, Heavenly Father, not my will, but Thine be done. Destroy my being and fulfill your desire in me." In regard to the strange things that have happened to you, you have the good fortune to have an enlightened Director, that is Monsignor. Follow his directions blindly and you will not be deceived. The enemy is astute and full of evil talent, and could draw you into deceit; but if you distrust yourself and let yourself be guided by obedience, he cannot injure you. Concerning this matter, Jesus has dictated to me the following declaration, which you will transcribe at once upon a little card and wear upon your heart and carry it always. Here is the theme: "My dear God, being aware of my profound ignorance, of my unworthiness, of my frailty, of the grievous sins I have committed through which I deserve to be abandoned by You, and of the great dangers to which all these conditions expose me, I throw myself at Your feet, and declare before heaven and earth, that I do not intend to adhere to any work whatever of the infernal enemy, and I declare myself to wish to renounce him with all the energy of my will, not wishing to have anything in common with him. May he be far distant from me, from my mind, from my heart, from my body. And if You, my God, in Your inscrutable judgment wish to allow this brutal enemy to molest me, I declare myself unwilling to consent to any of his acts and much less to his depraved ends and intentions. I place this writing upon my heart, and I intend to renew this declaration and protest at every beat of my heart, and most explicitly every time that I press this writing to my heart. I am yours, Jesus, help me. I read and sign the following page at the feet of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in the church of — in Lucca, this —day of May, 1900. The unworthy servant of Jesus, Gemma Galgani."

I leave you, daughter, in the Heart of Jesus. Pray fervently for me, and for various intentions which give me thought, especially one which concerns the direction of a soul which I have here, and about which I am quite doubtful. Tell Jesus about it. Goodbye, Gemma, I bless you.

T. S. Germano

Writing again Gemma makes known more temptations of the devil and some consolation with which Jesus had favored her:

O, how sweet it is to pass a day with Jesus! He told me He would give me any grace I wished. I asked Him that if it were pleasing to Him that He would not permit the devil to tempt me with regard to purity. He replied that the devil would never have that permission again. I asked Him for a little strength for the night, and that He be good to those who think of me since I am not good enough to thank them. . . .

April, 1900 . . . Jesus said to me, "I wish you to be a victim and that you suffer continually to placate the wrath which my Father has towards sinners, and that you offer yourself to Him as a victim for all sinners." I replied, "My Jesus, do with me what you will and I am content."

Monsignor:

June, 1900

Yesterday I went to the Forty Hours' Devotion with my aunt. Afterwards I asked her to take me to Saint Michael's as I had need of you. She said she did not wish to go that far, and let me go alone. As I went out of the church, a man accosted me. I heard him speak, but I did not know what he said. I started to go back but was afraid and ran. I went into many churches, and he was always before or behind me. I walked without knowing where I was going, and I found myself in the church of the Most Holy Trinity ...

June, 1900 . . . Jesus has told me at last that now He would give me in advance a certain sign by which I could distinguish whether it was He or the devil that I saw: "When anyone appears before you, pronounce at once in a loud voice, these words: 'Blessed be Jesus and Mary!' If he responds, it is a sign that that one comes from Me. Otherwise it will be the deceiver. . . . Live quietly and I will be always with you."

June, 1900 . . . The devil has beaten me—I say the devil though I am not certain that it is he. Yesterday my aunt told me to draw a bucket of water to fill the pitchers. I did so, took the bucket to its place and in doing so I had to pass before the image of the Heart of Jesus. In seeing that Heart, I felt my own beat very hard. I saluted Jesus with these words: "O Jesus, concede me the grace to be united always more with you. Make me yours so that I shall never be separated again." Soon after I had spoken these words I felt myself beaten violently on the left shoulder. I was puzzled about the matter. I felt very ill, and even today I am conscious of the pain and everything I do causes me suffering . . . Before, Jesus gave me little things to endure, now He has permitted a new torment. I am not able to pray at all. This is for me a real torment. Tonight, for the seven *Ave Marias* which you gave me for a penance, it took the whole night. I began perhaps a hundred times. That brute did not desire it. I suffered very much with him, but at last either Jesus or Saint Paul of the Cross vanquished him; or it might have been Confrater Gabriel. The devil manages to get away very fast when he sees them.

Answering Father Germano's letter of May, 1900, Gemma writes,

Father Germano:

June, 1900

I made the declaration on the 25th day of May in the church of the Franciscan Fathers, on Friday, after Holy Communion; until that moment I have carried it always on my heart. But if you knew! It has been very displeasing to the horrible beast and from that time he has come much more often to tempt me with strong assaults. Not a night passes that he does not make me see him and in the past days he has even made himself appear in the form of my own confessor. I believed that it was really he, but when I went to confession I discovered the deceit; but he wishes very much to convince me.

He made a new assault upon me yesterday, a little while after I had confessed. Monsignor told me that he thought it well for now to remove that little penance which for some time he had given me. To tell the truth, this displeased me very much. But as the confessor preached to me that the thing most pleasing to Jesus is obedience, and it seemed that I was beginning to understand a little, I assured him that I was willing to do what he wished.

If you knew how the confessor labors to make me become good, and in particular, obedient! But I am very stubborn; how hard it is for me to obey! In short, arriving at the house after having confessed myself, I had to remove certain things (instruments of penance) which I had that day; I took off all, however, always tranquil. But it didn't last long; scarcely had I found a moment alone, when it was time to pray, I knelt and began to recite the rosary of the Five Wounds of Jesus. I was at the fourth Wound, and I saw before me a figure like Jesus, all flagellated; I finished the Rosary, then I said in a loud voice: "Blessed be Jesus and Mary!" He did not reply; I repeated it, and he replied, "Blessed, blessed," but he did not pronounce the name of Jesus and Mary.

I knew who he was. I made the Sign of the Cross, but he stood before me with heart open, all bloody, and began to say to me: "Is it thus, my daughter, that you recompense me? See who I am! Do you see how much I suffer for you, and you, on the other hand, cannot even give me the solace of these penances. They are not such great things at all! You can very well continue them as before." "No, no," I replied, "I wish to obey; I would disobey, if I did what you wish me to." And he said, "But it was not your confessor at all who commanded you; it was that Father Germano, and you are not at all obliged to obey him; let him command his own; you be guided by me ..." and many other things. At last I was on the point of taking the discipline as I had done other times on similar occasions, but no; Jesus did indeed aid me; I got up, took holy water, and became calm, after having had some blows which he gave me from time to

time. Do you know why I said, “Blessed be Jesus and Mary?” Because one morning after Holy Communion it seemed to me that Jesus told me that when I saw something, I should at once say these words; if they responded they were of Jesus, if not, of the enemy.

From what I have said, you can very well understand the great need I have of being commended to Jesus; be good enough to pray for me and to think of these things.

But see how good Monsignor is; he sees that I willingly resign myself and tells me constantly that I may be good and try to make myself a saint, that with the aid of the Most Holy Mary we shall conquer, I am, poor

Gemma

Father Germano recognized the preciousness of his charge, despite the severity of his admonitions to her. He left for the most part unanswered the letters Gemma wrote to him, but indirectly communicated with her through his correspondence with Signora Cecelia Giannini. In a letter to Monsignor Volpi of June 3, 1900, we get an insight to Father Germano’s real esteem of this child of God.

Most Reverend Excellency: Rome, June 3, 1900

I was very sorry not to have seen you in Rome when you were here. I was displeased also with the advice given to you by Father Ignatius, to place in other hands the very difficult direction of this angel called Gemma. I think that the infernal enemy works very hard to molest the poor girl in soul and body; but I hold that her spirit is excellent and that most of the phenomena which are manifested in her come from God; and I make this judgment on the basis of her ingenuous simplicity, her calm sweetness, and the absence of self-seeking in her and the presence of a profound humility. There is also something, unless I am deceived, that is the result of fantastic impressions such as girls of her type who are supernaturally influenced have. But, I repeat, according to my way of looking at it, there is also much of the enemy in all these. For all these reasons not every director is suitable for her; and therefore, Your Excellency, you must not abandon this poor creature. I should counsel exorcism from time to time; formal prohibitions against keeping vigil in the night, of harsh modes of penance, of immersion in contemplative thought, fleeing from all extraordinary manifestations, occupying herself in work suitable to her condition and above all keeping away from doctors, however holy they may be, for here the medical art has nothing to find out. All these cautions and prohibitions will not hurt the action of the Spirit of the Lord, to Whom certainly this innocent, pure, and virtuous soul is most dear. Therefore, Your Excellency, you must treasure her as a jewel.

I do not know what induces me to write these things without being asked, to a person so illuminated and adorned with episcopal character. In your kindness, Monsignor, do not take this liberty amiss, and bless me.

Your Excellency’s most humble and devoted servant.

Germano, Passionist.

Much indeed had Jesus taken. Now Gemma understands. For her dear earthly mother Jesus had given to her His own. Each Saturday brought a visit from Blessed Mother Mary. Then the joys of heaven were Gemma’s for a spell. To replace Gino, her devoted brother and confidant, the young Saint Gabriel came into her life. For her beloved father Jesus gave her a spiritual father in the person of Saint Paul of the Cross. For the companions of which she generously deprived herself He brought to her chosen souls, members of the College of Jesus,⁴ whose spiritual affinity she cherished. For the robust health she once enjoyed He substituted a fortitude of spirit that enabled her to put no limits to her generosity in His service. In place of Monsignor Volpi, her security and source of peace since childhood, He sent Father Germano, a Passionist, when the former felt he had neither the time nor the experience to guide her in her new life. Now was Jesus really going to heed her vehement appeal to send her to the convent? Had He not made it known to her that this very thing was what

He wishes? For this very reason it had become a stronger desire of hers, and no thwarting had been able to dissuade her from her purpose.

Wisdom and love have other ways of furthering them. Gemma has told us in a previous letter that He had promised that He would act if things did not work out favorably with respect to her entering the convent. The letters following give insight into His design.

During the months of July and August of the year, 1900, Gemma was living with Cecelia Giannini as companion while the rest of the Giannini family were at their summer residence. Gemma appreciated the loving care and sweet intimacy enjoyed with her new friend, for she had now the privacy and the security she had so long desired. This companionship was God's way of achieving His plan. Through this beautiful lady His wonders would be made manifest while Gemma would henceforth achieve marvels in a secrecy that made them possible. For this temporary arrangement would prove eventually to be a permanent security. In items gleaned from the diary written by her at this time we find Gemma becomes hourly more a child of the Passion, a living victim of reparation for the glory of God outraged by sin.

It was to obtain more concrete evidence of the daily working of the soul of his penitent that Monsignor Volpi had required Gemma to keep this diary. In addition, letters written at this time by both Gemma and Cecilia Giannini to Father Germano give further evidence.

Here are some excerpts from the diary; July 19 to September 3, 1900:

JULY 19, 1900 . . . This evening at last, after six days of absence of Jesus, I began my hour of prayer, for it was Thursday, thinking of Jesus on the Cross. Then it happened—I found myself with Him suffering and I felt a great desire to suffer and asked Jesus to give me this grace. He granted it; He approached me, took from His head the crown of thorns and placed it upon mine, and then went aside. I looked at Him silently for I was thinking; Perhaps He did not love me anymore, because He had not pressed the crown down hard upon my head as He had done at other times. Jesus understood and pressed it upon my temples. They were painful but happy moments, I then spent an hour with Jesus. I should have liked to continue with Him thus all night, but Jesus loves obedience very much; He Himself always submits to obedience, so when the hour was up He left me. Generally Jesus took the crown off when He was leaving; this time, however, He left it until about four o'clock the following afternoon.

July 20 ... By four o'clock today I was tired suffering. I presently found myself with Jesus, Who came beside me and was not sad as on the previous night; He caressed me and lifted the crown from my head. I then felt less pain; but when He put it upon His own head, I felt no pain at all. My strength returned and I felt even better than before I began to suffer.

We talked of many things and during our conversation I asked Him not to make me confess to Father Vallini, because I did not like to. Jesus seemed disappointed, and told me that I should go at once. I promised I would. He showed His heart to me and said, "I love you greatly because you are like me." "In what way, Jesus?" I asked, "because I seem so unlike you." "In accepting humiliations," He replied. Then there returned to me a vision of my past life. I saw my pride. It was always one of my greatest defects. When I was little, wherever I went I always heard it said that I was very proud. But what means Jesus has used to humiliate me, especially during this past year! At last I understood what God was doing with me. May Jesus be always thanked. Then my God added that with time He would make a saint of me. Of this last I will say no more for that is impossible to happen to me. He told me of something to say to the confessor and blessed me. I knew Jesus would be away from me for some days. But how good He is! Scarcely had He gone when my Angel Guardian appeared, who with his continual charity, vigilance, and patience assists me. O Jesus, I have promised always to obey you. I affirm it anew.

July 21... My dearest Mother of Sorrows came to pay me a little visit as she is accustomed to on Saturday.

She seemed very unhappy and looked as if she had been weeping. Then she smiled, saying to me:

"Gemma, do you wish to repose on my breast?" I approached her and knelt; she raised me, kissed me on the forehead and disappeared.

This evening, after confessing to Father Vallini, I felt suddenly agitated and disturbed; it was a sign that the devil was near. Later, internally and also externally, I was all in a tempest; I should have preferred to go to bed and sleep rather than to pray, but no, I began to say three invocations, which I usually

say every evening to the Sacred Heart of Mary. The enemy, who had been hidden for some hours, appeared in the form of a very small man, but so horrible that I was almost overcome with fear.

Continuing to pray, all at once I began to feel many blows on the shoulder which continued for about half an hour. Then my Angel Guardian came and asked me what the matter was; I begged him to stay with me all night, and he said to me, "But I must sleep." "No," I replied, "Angels of Jesus do not sleep." "Nevertheless," he rejoined, smiling, "I ought to rest. Where shall you put me?" I begged him to remain near me.

I went to bed; after that he seemed to spread his wings and come over my head. In the morning he was still there.

July 23 . . . The devil, in the form of a great black dog, put his paws upon my shoulders, making every bone in my body ache. At times I believed that he would mangle me; then one time, when I was taking holy water, he twisted my arm so cruelly that I fell to the earth in great pain.

After a while I remembered that I had around my neck the relic of the Holy Cross. Making the Sign of the Cross, I became calm. Jesus let me see Himself, but only for a short time, when He strengthened me anew to suffer and struggle.

At dinner time, there had come to me an evil thought which my Angel understood and he said to me; "Daughter, do you wish me to go away?" I was ashamed. These words I heard very distinctly and I did not know whether or not others also heard him.

While in church yesterday, he reprimanded me, saying: "The glory of Jesus and the place where you are, merit another kind of conduct," because at that time I had raised my eyes to look at two children to see how they were dressed.

Last night, while in bed, He reproved me again, saying, that instead of progressing in his teachings I was good and checked myself. He blessed me with certain Latin words which I have remembered well, and then he suddenly departed. Oh, then I could not help saying: "Confrater Gabriel, ask our Mother to bring you to me Saturday." He turned to me smiling and said: "You are to be good," and saying this took from his waist his black girdle and said "Do you want it again?" I wanted it very much indeed: "That helps me so much when you let me wear it; give it to me now." He shook his head to indicate that he would give it to me Saturday and left me. He told me that the girdle was the one which had liberated me from the devil the night before.

It happened today as usual. I had gone to bed, in fact I was asleep, but the devil did not wish this. He presented himself in a disgusting manner; he tempted me but I was strong. I commended myself to Jesus asking that He take my life rather than have me offend Him. What horrible temptations those were! All displease me but those against Holy Purity make me most wretched. Afterward he left me in peace and the Angel Guardian came and assured me that I had not done anything wrong. I complained somewhat, because I wished help at such times, and he said that whether I saw him or not, he would be always above my head; even yesterday he promised that in the evening Jesus would come to see me.

Yesterday evening I waited with impatience the moment for going to my room; I took the crucifix and went to bed. My Angel was willing to have me go to bed because of the order of the Confessor. I felt myself becoming recollected. Jesus came and stood by my side. What beautiful moments those were!

I asked Him if He would love me always, and He replied with these words: "My daughter, I have enriched you with so many beautiful things without any merit on your part and you ask me if I love you? I fear so much for you." "Why?" I asked. "O daughter, on the days when you enjoy My presence you are all fervor, it costs you no fatigue to pray.

Now instead you are wearied by prayer and negligence in your duties commences to insinuate itself in your heart. O daughter why do you speak thus? Tell me, in the past, did prayer seem long as it does now? Some little penance you do, but how long you wait before resolving upon it."

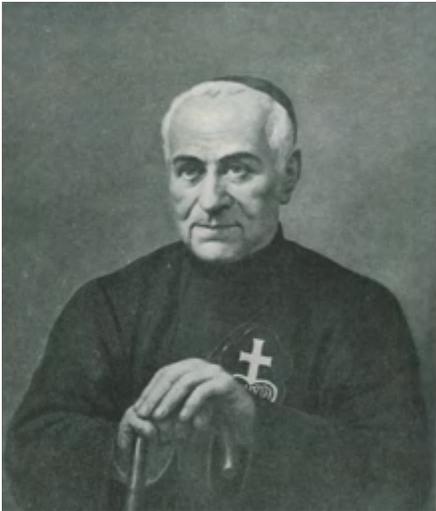
Finally I commended His poor sinner to Him. He blessed me and in going away said to me: "Remember that I have created you for Heaven; you have nothing to do with the earth."

Chapter VII • Surrender

*"All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home."*

JESUS was about to entice her to His heavenly home. Perfect trust drives out all fear. This trust He was asking of Gemma—an utter absolute surrender. This sense of insecurity that brought with it a brood of fears, must go. The assaults of the devil must cease to frighten her. Even this desire for privacy in the cloister must not destroy the peace of her soul which must be kept quiet for Him to dwell therein. Jesus presses Gemma to prepare herself rather for her heavenly home than for a convent home. Little by little the fears will leave. Little by little she will throw herself into the arms of Jesus, leaving to Him to determine whether she will remain upon this earth or go with Him above.

Through Cecelia Giannini and Father Germano, Jesus will arrange a way to meet Gemma's dilemma. Concerning many matters Father Germano has been made acquainted for some time. For example, with reference to Gemma's new mode of suffering—the crowning of thorns—Cecelia Giannini writes to him:



Father Stanislas Germano, C.P.

Father Stanislas Germano, C.P.

Today is Thursday and this evening she prepared herself for suffering as one prepares for a feast. I am alone here. If only it were possible for you to be here, there are so many things that you could understand and that you could explain to me who understand so little. . . . Jesus on Thursday evening gives her His crown of thorns and presses it a little and then there flow little fountains of blood, so that it pours over her face and pillow; and she suffers thus for an hour. Then Jesus blesses her and the members of the Sacred College and leaves her; however He does not take away the crown. He leaves it until Friday. During the day no blood is seen, except a little when He takes the crown away, which is around three or four o'clock on Friday. During all this time she suffers great pain in the head, but no one knows it but myself. Enough of this: I am afraid I have said too much, but you will form your own judgment.

At this point, correspondence between Cecelia and Father Germano will give Gemma some assistance indirectly. This does not meet her needs, however, and she writes to him, pleading for more personal advice.

Father Germano,

June 22, 1900

For how many days have I waited for you to write me a single line but nothing has come! A few moments ago I received the pictures you sent for which I thank you very much; but if it had been a letter, I should have been more satisfied. If you knew how much good your words do me! If I am disturbed by the enemy, I at once become calm; Those

words give me strength and courage, and it almost seems to me that I need have no more fear and can resist every assault. Your last letter which I received on the day of the Ascension, could not have come at a better time. How much consolation it gave me! In the second one you wrote me, I read these words: "Do not fear, because Jesus is in your heart." At times when I am tormented by the demon, the Confessor repeats them to me; but I think if you truly knew

me you would not have written them. Is it possible? Jesus in my heart!



Pages from the Saint's autobiography written in her own hand. Marks of the pre-natural scorching are plainly visible.

I want to tell you something of my heart so that you can know it. It is a heart full of sin of every kind; it is a melange of affections; there are bad thoughts constantly; it is full of anger, and this last is the predominant passion. Even at times envy enters it. Behold! There is my heart. So much of the time, you know, I desire to be good, but I am always failing. And Jesus still supports me. Just think, Father, it is more than a year since these things have been happening to me on every Thursday and Friday, and all this time I have not yet begun to learn to overcome that repugnance which I feel when I have to tell of them in confession. I thought that with time it would pass but instead it increases every day. At times it seems to me that I almost die in telling certain things, but Jesus helps me, and notwithstanding the repugnance I tell everything. And afterward I am so contented.

The brutish devil is not tired yet. At times, he beats me. For three days he has not allowed me to be recollected for a single moment. Today I hoped that he would leave me alone because sometimes Jesus on His great feast days does not allow him to torment me. And today is the feast of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus. What have I ever done for Jesus? How much I have offended Him! And yet Jesus has always such compassion for me, and the more I offend, the more compassion He has.

Every morning, the first grace I ask of Jesus is that He let me go into the convent. One morning it seemed to me that after Holy Communion He spoke these words to me: "But do you know, daughter, that there is a life more blessed than that of the convent?" And He said no more. I wonder often what this life may be, but I do not understand. However, I desire it so much that I have it always fixed in my mind. I should like to possess it soon. I ask Jesus to let me enter that more blessed life, but He tells me that I must ask permission of the Confessor. And of this the Confessor does not as yet know anything but I will tell him this evening. Every time I go to confession he asks me: "Has Father Germano written to you yet?" He wishes to read all the letters you send me and then keep them with him. Just think, he has deprived me even of these, but I have made a little sacrifice of it to Jesus; however, every time that I go to confession he reminds me of your words and says to me: "Remember that Father Germano wishes you to do thus." Even Jesus appeared to me one day with a very serious look and said: "Every desire of Father Germano should be to you a command." I didn't understand what he meant. Certain things that Jesus says I do not understand at all. How much I should like to talk with you. Can I ever hope to have that pleasure? I should like to say so many things. First, I should like you to help me become good, then teach me to pray very well, then put me in a convent.

Will you write a line to me? When I say this I do not really mean a line at all, I say that for fear of asking too much.

Commend me to Jesus and to any who might have the great charity to pray for me. I ask your benediction and ask Confrater Gabriel to think of poor,

Gemma

Signora Cecelia asks you to be kind enough to send her some of the little books about the Sacred College. She has been to Farther Moris, but as yet she has not seen him, She fears a refusal because he has lost his sight, but now the establishment of the College here in Lucca is in the hands, of Monsignor and all seems to be going well.

I do not speak of the Sacred College to her. I have concealed it because if anyone knew that I belong, it would cause scandal (I am so unworthy). I would like to talk to you about so many things concerning this college. And do you know of what I would like to speak? Of this Signora Cecelia—but how shall I do it? You are too far away; let me speak of it another time. Can we hope to have you some day in Lucca? Monsignor would be so happy. I ask your blessing in the name of all the Sisters who belong to the Sacred College (an institute established by Father Germano for the study of Christian perfection)

Most Reverend Father Germano:

July, 1900

Today Signora Cecelia asked me if I would write you a line. You can imagine with what joy I welcomed this request. I began at once because I knew that if I wrote for her, I could write for myself also. The first thing she wishes to know is whether you have received at least three or four letters of hers, one from Signora Giustina, and four of mine. We do nothing but write, but we do not get any reply. I say we, but no, they because my letters do not merit any reply. All that nonsense . . . But if I want you to reply to me, it is only that I desire to have from you some good counsel, some advice. You could have replied to the letters of Signora Cecelia. It seems to me that your silence is displeasing to her; she fears that you do not like something that they have written, and if you decided to write, how much it would please her. I know the happiness that your letters give. But what I feel is as nothing in comparison to the others who have the good fortune of knowing you.

Finally she wishes you to know that on Monday she will return to Lucca but alone, all the others are remaining at Viareggio until the end of the month. She wishes me to salute you and ask for your blessing.

Now, however, pardon me if I add something; but it is a thing that you already know, and I cannot keep silent about it. For six days I have not seen Jesus. But if you knew how bad I am! However, He has not left me entirely alone—He lets my Angel Guardian be with me always. My angel is a little severe, however, but I enjoy him. In the last days he has scolded me three or four times a day. He promises me that if I am good he will let me see Jesus, but I am always committing sins, and so it will be impossible. I try, you know, to be good, but I have such bad habits, that every moment I commit sins, and if Jesus does not really help me, My God, where shall I end?

Yesterday my Angel Guardian said to me and repeated again tonight: “If you could see how Jesus suffers. If only you could see!” I grieved then because so often Jesus at certain times, when he suffered much came to tell me. I suffered also, and it appeared to solace Him a little. But now He does not come anymore. I asked him why Jesus suffered more and he replied: “The sins are so many.” But should we who belong to the Sacred College allow Jesus to suffer so alone? No. But what shall we do? O how much I should like to do—if I could! I should give my life at once so that Jesus should not suffer; I wish to live always if it is pleasing to him to do penance for my innumerable sins, to suffer so much, to love so much.

And it has been some time since Confrater Gabriel last came. It is a grievous pain for me and yet . . . Jesus loves me and therefore lets me suffer a little.

Please commend me to Jesus, that He give me the grace of knowing my sins and of having true sorrow; every moment I discover a new defect.

I ask your benediction for myself as well as for all the members of the Sacred College, and pray every day for poor,

Gemma

P.S. In the last letter that Signora Cecelia wrote to you she spoke of Father Moris. If you have received the letter, you will certainly understand everything. I want you to know that we hope for much good, since Father Moris accepted his appointment at once. There are many who would like to enroll themselves,

and Monsignor constantly recommends prayers for this work, and because the enrolled are worthy in a particular way to be the elect of Jesus, as members of the Sacred College on the day of Corpus Christi, then many times he made me promise to pray the whole day for this holy Institution, and he promised me that in that solemn moment when he had Jesus in his hands, he would beg Him to bless this work. Of this I am already certain, because every evening when the Angel Guardian blesses me he says, “God bless you together with the members of the Sacred College.”

Once more your blessing and pray for poor,
Gemma

August, 1900 . . . Jesus consoles me saying often that there is a better life than that of the convent. Do you know what it is? My Angel Guardian has told me what Jesus means—Life in Heaven.

The Confessor does not want me to ask Jesus to take me to heaven—if he would only give permission, Jesus would take me. I think that Jesus awaits me in Paradise.

I am happy here with Signora Cecelia. After the Most Holy Mary I look upon her as a dear mother. If you would reply to Cecelia’s letters, how delighted she would be. If only you knew how much distress she has on my account. I cannot tell you all the details for it would make me unhappy. I should like to recompense her for all the things she has done for me. . . .

Father Germano answers Gemma thus:

Gemma of Jesus:

August, 1900

I have not written before this date, because Jesus did not give me permission. He wishes that you detach yourself from all creatures, even from those which are the most innocent, pure, and holy on this earth, and from even celestial consolations. With all the graces that the divine Mercy has given you, you are still a child. If your doll is taken away, you are grief-stricken at once, as children are, and you begin to shriek and cry. If Jesus caresses you, you are all excited, and you do not wish to be abandoned ever again. Baby of Jesus! But this is not fitting. Now it is necessary for you to grow up. Thus after all the explanations that I have given you, how does that continual insistence appear in every letter: Monastery, monastery! Do you want something other than what Jesus wishes and disposes for you? Why instead do you not leave it to Him, and why do you not abandon yourself in Him?

Here, yes, it is well for you to be as a child sleeping upon the loving breast of the celestial Father, as children on the breast of their mother. But is the baby then agitated when on the mother’s breast? He thinks of nothing, hopes for nothings fears nothing. That breast is sufficient for him, and on that he reposes tranquilly.

Now then do you understand? But, you will say, Jesus is angry with me, he seems to repulse me, he leaves me in the hands of the enemy! But what does it matter, when it is certain that in reality it is not so; that instead He loves you, and will never permit you to be lost; what does it matter if you suffer aridity, torments, desolations, etc?

I should like to tell you a great deal more. But how can I interfere in the meticulous direction of your spirit when you have a director so enlightened, who is at the same time your pastor, Monsignor the Bishop? And then you are so little frank with me in regard to the details of your interior life (and this reserve I approve); however, from others I have already learned of your interior life in the most minute detail, and know the horrible attacks and annoyances of a new sort with which the spirit of impurity has tempted you. Poor Gemma, blessed be Jesus!

With all this I wish to counsel you, that you submit to the wise judgment of your director. I find these sensible apparitions very dangerous, which have shown themselves to you, these discourses with Jesus, of the Madonna, of the Saints, who embrace you, etc. . . . Whatever is apparent to the senses is always full of danger and deceit; in you all the more since you have been touched with the hand of the enemy.

Therefore in my other letter I advised that declaration which I hope you have always with you upon your breast.

Be on your guard, do not have too much confidence in yourself, give yourself blindly to the judgment of your Director; ask Jesus to take away these sensible and unusual things and not to permit the evil one to deceive you in any way. As for the temptations and open violence, if you will be humble, distrust yourself and have faith in Jesus, Jesus will not permit any sin, nor allow the enemy to do you any harm even physically.

I believe that I have covered everything. If your Director wishes that I go into detail, he will require you to indicate to me in the most minute detail the particulars of your interior life, although already as I have said, they are known to me through another source. Do not speak about me to anyone, I repeat, to no one except your Director, whom you will greet for me most respectfully, and ask him not to mention me to anyone.

Farewell, Gemma of Jesus. Pray for me. I bless you.

P.G.

The following letter written to Signora Cecelia gives us Father Germane's estimate of Gemma from another point of view.

August, 1900.

In a letter of mine I asked Gemma to pray for a thing that was very close to my heart, and I have not had a reply to it. It concerns a soul directed by me in the past, and which I have now almost abandoned, it seems to me, through certain facts, that there is not in her the spirit of God, at least in that degree which I at first believed. Other souls, whom I greatly respect, are certain that she is the victim of illusions. Now this keeps me very much disturbed. On one hand I think well of her spirit, on the other hand I would say no. Since I have almost abandoned her, how many scruples should I not have, if that soul is as good as I believed in the beginning? Therefore read this part of the letter to Gemma and ask her to pray very hard to Jesus that He may make clearly known the truth of the matter, with signs that are unequivocal; thus I can be calm and decide my course.

To these doubts of Father Germano the Saint now replies in a letter, August 9, after having been illuminated by Jesus and by Saint Gabriel.

Father Germano,

August 9, 1900

I have chosen just this hour as being quiet and free. First of all, I ask your charity in regard to this letter; do not take any account of it, destroy it with all the others; in it are such insistences, such disobediences! But now I am already repentant, I shall not waste any more time excusing myself. I have received from my Confessor every permission in regard to you; I can, rather I must, manifest to you every slightest thing. Even interior things, but I don't understand what they are. Perhaps they are these: how I feel toward my dear Jesus. My spirit is willing but my flesh is weak, weak because I am so lazy. What would I not do for Jesus! For anyone who had just one of his glances, it would suffice; what force, what vigor he would feel! I feel that I would do anything for Him to see Him content; the greatest torment would seem to me easy to bear supported by Him, every drop of my blood I would give willingly, and all to satisfy Him, to prevent poor sinners from offending Him, My God, what do I say? I should wish my voice to reach to the uttermost ends of the earth, I should wish to have all sinners understand me, I should want to cry out to them: "Rather than insult Jesus, prefer to be insulted yourselves."

If you knew, Father, how Jesus is afflicted in certain moments at certain times! Oh, it is not possible to bear the sight of Him longing and, yet, how few are those who suffer with Him? Very few, and Jesus finds Himself almost alone. It is so sad to see Jesus in the midst of sorrows! But how can one see Him in that state and not aid Him?

At certain times a frenzy seizes me; a desire to suffer all the torments of the world which I can seek out for myself. About eight days ago, just after I had communicated, there came to me three resolves; I made them at once to Jesus:

1. If ever, O my God, you wish my life as a punishment for my innumerable sins, I offer it to you. I am ready to die at once if it is pleasing to you. I offer you, O my God my life, united to the life of Jesus; my sufferings, united to those of Jesus. I ask only a perfect sorrow for my sins and then to go!

2. You have shown me many times, Jesus, that it is your will that I go into the convent; whenever you wish it, I am ready, I desire it so much—yes, to suffer, to leave you, to do penance for my great sins.
3. O Jesus, but if you wish instead that I should remain; may you be blessed. Should you wish that I live here in this world, abandoned, alone, and despised, I am ready. May Your Holy Will be done in all things.

These three resolutions I renew every morning and Jesus is much pleased with them. Indeed, if I forget them he reminds me of them.

I ought to tell you something of the usual play of my fancy. Or rather the Confessor has recommended that I tell you about it. Some days ago, one morning, Jesus told me that every time any apparition comes, I was to say these words: “Blessed be Jesus and Mary!” I have used them many times and many times the demon does not reply, and then I know that it is he and he goes away. If Confrater Gabriel comes of himself he says the words before I do; and Jesus does not fail to repeat them after me.

How much time I am left without Confrater Gabriel! So many times Jesus promises him to me, but I do not do my duty well and He punishes me ... I am so weak in virtue and in vices so strong! But Jesus aids me, I wish to become a saint; the Confessor wishes it, every time he sees me he tells me so.

Last evening, with the permission of the Confessor he came. (Confrater Gabriel). You should have seen how he talked and with what force! His eyes sparkled, they seemed like two lights . . . He spoke to me of the new convent. A year has gone by and a beginning ought to be made, he said.

Now I must speak of something that is very distasteful to me. Or rather do not believe what I say at all because it is all the work of my imagination. Father, listen; that soul about whom you are worrying, if you knew that soul! Jesus does not wish you to think anymore about her. How these words displeased me when Jesus spoke them to me! But besides, I have learned from Confrater Gabriel that this soul is full of ill will. Father, I commend myself to you; do not believe anything I say about this soul for I must certainly be deceived! Abandoned by you, (for Jesus certainly wishes it) what will happen to her? Before really abandoning her, with all your skill, make another attempt. It could be possible to save her.

Be tranquil, Father Germano, everything will go well. Let us confide in God. Be of good heart, and follow this method. I should like to tell you of interior things as my Confessor has suggested but I do not know what they are. The Confessor would be pleased if you would ask me some questions, and then it would perhaps be more easy for me to understand. Do as you wish. If you wish to answer soon, the Confessor will be so pleased. And then if you came to Lucca, I should like it.

Bless me every evening, before going to bed, and bless me now, together with all the members of the Sacred College, poor Gemma.

In one of the previous letters we get clear evidence that God is starting Gemma on her apostolate for souls. She is unconscious of her power or her agency. She wonders at the words she uses to Father Germano, and even tells him not to pay any attention to them. Father Germano, however, knows well that she is the mouthpiece of God and takes her words coming directly from Him. He does not long delay in coming to see her to verify what has been told him of this extraordinary child and the following communication from him is to Cecelia telling of his coming.

Cecelia Giannini

Corneto, September 2, 1900

The Lord has heard the prayer of the innocent one. Next Tuesday evening I shall come on the nine o'clock train to Lucca. Please send your man to show me the way to your house, which at night might not be easy to find. If I should miss the connection at Livorno and Pisa, I shall come on the following train. Only Gemma is to know about it for now.

Addio. G. P.

Part III

Mystical Marriage
THE UNITIVE PERIOD

Chapter VIII • Call to Calvary

"Arise my love and come."

AT HOME! NOW Gemma herself makes frequent reference to this celestial home. It would appear by her letters that she was convinced that Jesus was enticing her thither. But it will be evident to the reader that Jesus is inviting her to a new life of activity in union with Him for the glory of His Father as a victim for souls. She feels a stirring within her and begins to offer her life for that of others. In a letter to Father Germano on the fifteenth of September she writes:

15 September 1900

My Father, beside Jesus in my poor heart,

Friday morning I sent a letter by means of your Angel Guardian. He promised me to carry it to you. I hope that you have already received it: he took it himself with his own hands. You will let me know at once, won't you? Everything goes well with me; I do not fall into that strange ecstasy anymore except at night; I have begun to make meditations with a book, if you can call it doing a thing when I am just stumbling through!

Jesus is always in my heart and you are beside Him. I think continually of Jesus and strange to say—at once you come into my mind. The seven days' prayer for Serafina is finished; I frequently forgot it, but my Angel Guardian, even if I was asleep woke me and we said it together. I wish to pray a great deal in order to obtain from my Jesus the so much desired grace for Serafina. If I could only succeed in making my mother give it to her this month!

Now I wish to speak of a thing which absorbs me very much.

Are you willing that I give my life for that of Serafina? I should do it very willingly. This morning, after having received Jesus, I felt a strong desire to offer myself to Jesus for her. I was unable to resist it. But I could not do it without your permission . . . You will write at once, won't you? And you will tell me: Do it then. I shall die happily. If I die it will be a great delight; do you believe me that everything wearies me? I should like to be near you to ask you this grace on my knees. Pray, pray very hard and do what Jesus tells you.

Here is another thing. I could ask Jesus to do this favor in part. Since to me there remain about seven years of life, three I would give to Serafina and the others keep for myself. Would this arrangement please you? In either one way or the other, you will concede my request. I will do as you tell me. I have not spoken to Monsignor of this.

Each evening when you send your Guardian Angel, he comes to bless me; and in the morning to wake me; this morning I opened my eyes, but he was not there, and I almost wept.

You will send him back to me at once, won't you? Tell him that I ask pardon and I will not be disobedient, again. I will not do it anymore. Send him back

to me. My own Angel is not so severe, rather if I am bad, so much the more he comes to bless me always.

I ask your blessing every moment, send it to me.

Pray for poor Gemma of Jesus

This is how Father Germano replied to the proposal:

. . . In regard to Serafina it seems to me a species of affront to Jesus to make a bargain with Him almost as if he could not give the grace without demanding another life. He can give the grace through His own infinite mercy. Gemma ought to live, because she ought to develop those solid virtues to expiate her sins and mine; and Serafina must live for her poor father, for her sons, who, becoming orphans, would be in the mouth of the wolf. If Jesus wishes sacrifices, let us offer Him our poor sufferings, our tears, our sighs. Ask Jesus to change His decree in regard to her. I count upon you, Gemma, for this.

The Serafina referred to in these two letters is a lady living in Rome, Signora Giusseppina Allessandrina in Imperiali, a mother of six children. Gemma mentions her in her diary,

AUGUST 2, 1900 . . . Jesus spoke of the holy soul of Giusseppina before I knew her. He said of her, “How dear she is to me. See how she suffers. She has not a moment of respite. Happy she!”

Humiliations and aridities only gave new impetus to her longing for her Spouse and she gladly accepts all.

. . . Sunday Jesus gave me a little gift. It was not a beating, it was a humiliation. I do not know whether it was Jesus who gave this gift or the Mother of Jesus. I think, however, that it was His Mother. This was it. Sunday I had need of going to confession, and I went to Saint Michael’s and while I waited for Monsignor I was speaking to one of the Fathers. Another priest passed who knew me well and knew that I wanted Monsignor and said loudly, “Monsignor at this hour! See if you can embroil other priests.” This remark was a little humiliation but I offered it to Jesus.

Father, I am of Jesus, born through Him, who else would ever have any use for this poor and ignorant girl? May His will be done and Jesus be glorified in the humiliations which He sends me.

What a desolate time! I receive Jesus every morning, but now I do not feel Him with me; all has vanished, and worse still I do not recall anything of the joys of His Presence in the past. If I were asked, “How have you lived up to now?” I would not know how to answer. Where is Jesus? What shall I offer Him for the great mercy He has shown me?

Her Spouse is demanding of her absolute and undivided absorption in His Presence. Calls made upon her, even from members of her family, she finds herself virtually unable to meet.

My Father,

This evening, to obey my aunt and my sister, it was necessary to go with them to see certain entertainments. I did not wish to go, as you understand. I wish to be always with my Jesus. I know my Angel was not satisfied because he did not come with me. Do you understand? I do not wish to go again. You must take care of it because if I say anything to Monsignor, he tells me: “Obey.” This evening I have obeyed, but I feel a great remorse in my heart. You must tell Jesus, when you say Mass, to close me in His Heart so that I shall see nothing, hear nothing, think nothing, and love nothing but Him. Rather you should tell Jesus that He Himself should command my heart to render Him love for love.

I would like to tell you of another thing. This morning my aunt told me to write a long letter to a distant relative; I sat down to write, took up the pen, but I could not write. Do you know why? It is useless. Jesus does not wish my mind to be occupied with anything but Him. What shall I do when Jesus is not

near? If I could at least please the Mother of Jesus so that she would come instead of Him. Oh if she only made me worthy to bear the name of her daughter. But how often, you know, has the heart of this good Mother seen my sins. If Jesus does not wish me any more, I must live without Him, but I cannot live without my Mother. I shall give this letter to your Angel Guardian, who will carry it to you, so do not let anyone know that I have written it. Bless me and pray for poor

Gemma

Father Germano may, in the following letter, upbraid Gemma for lamenting the loss of God's presence; but one does not see in her cries, the complaints of a querulous child, but rather the passionate longings for one she loves.

Gemma of Jesus:

October 22, 1900

After you have been so penitent and humiliated over your sins, why do you not pardon yourself? Blessed be Jesus! I pardon you with all my heart, and I return as before. However, I find that we are not there yet. You have great good will, but you are stubborn, and do not succeed. Therefore, see, we shall do this: those two long documents that I made for you in the way of a mile, read them often, indeed every day, and thus it will not be so easy to forget this advice. The principal point upon which I wished to insist is spiritual pride. You have not yet understood, that the Lord gives you such sweetness to prepare you for the great travail of the spirit; and you instead fasten upon the sweetness without thinking of anything else, as babies do upon the breast of the mother. If Jesus hides Himself for a little while and withdraws His gentleness, you weep and despair; as soon as He returns, you are feverish with joy. Prepare yourself, prepare yourself, daughter. Now is not the time to fly to heaven to enjoy Jesus in His glory; not to remain in His arms; now is not the time to die of tuberculosis or any other ailment; but to glorify God with a life of sacrifice and immolation of a heroic, not a childish nature. Do you understand?

Therefore I counsel you to make to Jesus at this moment the renunciation of all consolations, joys, visions, angelic visits, etc., protesting your willingness to remain deprived of them in order to please Him better. If He continues, though less and less, to give them to you; take them with gratitude; however, take care not to fasten your affections too much upon them. The other thing that I recommend strongly is that you pray to Jesus that He prevent the enemy from harming you in any way. To suffer indeed from this wicked enemy but not to be deceived by him. It will be well, therefore, for you to be on your guard, because the hatred this brutish Berliffò bears is great. Take heart, however; our angels will keep him far away. But put no faith in yourself. This is why from the beginning I have told you to desire Jesus to give you an ordinary and common life where the danger of deceit is less.

In regard to the meditation, make it upon the Passion; but take care not to enclose yourself in the shell of tender sensible feelings. Go to the depths, as I told you when I was speaking with you in September at Lucca. All the truths of faith, all the treasures of wisdom and the knowledge of God are found in the Passion of Jesus. Search for them and abandon the tenderness and the tears, because with these one does not penetrate the depths. In regard to the angelic apparitions, redouble your zeal to do as Monsignor told you, and as I hinted; that is, protest that you are not worthy, that you desire nothing other than God; insist against every deceit of the enemy; even add this other thing. If after these protests, the visions do not disappear, you will invite them before all else to prostrate themselves with you before the Majesty of God with acts of adoration, of faith, of praise, and of love. . . . Laudamus Te, Benedicimus Te, etc., and with the beautiful ejaculation that has always made the demon tremble; Blessed be God! . . . After having observed that reserve which is fitting, in the custody of the eyes and fleeing from occasions, do not trouble yourself any further about what you are obliged to see in the world. In this regard Jesus will not permit you to lose your soul; no, your purity is dedicated to Jesus, and He will care for it.

Goodbye, Gemma of Jesus. I bless you in every moment of the day.

P.G.

The Guardian Angels of Saint Gabriel and of Father Germano not only visit her occasionally as heretofore, but come frequently at her slightest call. For a girl of twenty-two to write that she is sending letters by her angel to her correspondent might give rise to some question. She was not indulging in mere fancy. When it is suggested to her that the delivery of the letters might be a work of the devil she simply refers the matter to her confidant.

Father Germano:

Signora Cecelia knows that I sent you a letter by means of the Angel, and says that it could have been the devil. You ought to know; tell me; and if it is he, then I will not send them anymore; now I am uncertain about it. And he is waiting here; what shall I do if I don't give it to him? With it you will find one for Serafina; do this when the Angel takes it to you. Take yours and consign the other to the Angel who will carry it to her himself. Do this and if it is the devil, I will not give him any more.

And then Signora Cecelia tells me always that you can be deceived; I pray to Jesus continually and He assures me that He will not permit any deceit.

Father Germano, answering wisely advised her:

In regard to the carrier of the letters, you might be indeed deceived. Therefore it is better to do thus: (1) protest your desire to obey; (2) declare yourself unwilling to have any share in the works of the enemy; (3) acknowledge yourself unworthy of such favors; (4) when you wish to write, content yourself with saying: "My God, I wish only You; my Angel, I trust myself to your custody, defend me against the enemy." Then put the letter under the pillow. If you do not find it there, good; if you do, so much the better.

In her next letter she concludes with the remark;

"I shall place this letter under the pillow; I shall make the protestations and add also that if it disturbs you, the Angel is not to carry it to you."

This letter tells us that she followed the directions of Father Germano in all humility and simplicity. The angel carried this letter faithfully as the following letter of Father Germano assures us.

Signora Cecelia:

October 8

I have received all the letters of Gemma punctually.

And in a letter on the 11th:

I always receive the angelic letters faithfully. The fact is unusual, and I confess I do not understand it at all. I have forbidden her to ask the angel to carry them and he brings them just the same. It might be the devil; but how explain all the rest of her extraordinary life? Let us do this to avoid the writing (which might compromise her and me with the Monsignor): when she wishes to write, let her do it on a sheet of thin paper and put it aside. When she has a sheaf of them she can send them to me all together. Certainly they are a great consolation to me. . . . In regard to the angelic letter carrier it would be possible to make this other proof. When Gemma has prepared her sheaf, as I said above, she is to place it in a sealed envelope, write the address and give it to you. You will place it somewhere apart, under a picture of Venerable Gabriel, and ask the Lord to be glorified in His servant and not permit the enemy to deceive anyone. If after three days the envelope remains in the same place, you will please post it. To Gemma say this: I am doubtful about the letter carrier, being conscious of the demerits of Gemma; all the more since God does not usually intervene supernaturally unless natural and ordinary means are lacking. Therefore, if she wishes to satisfy me, she ought to ask Jesus and the Angel to reassure me with unmistakable signs that will exclude every doubt. Otherwise, I shall be constrained to prohibit absolutely such a means of correspondence.

Gemma is not startled at this miraculous intervention of God in her behalf. Her need of secrecy demanded it and this was God's way. Just such simplicity had the Shepherds at the sight of the angels singing at the Crib of Jesus and of a God lying in a manger. Such was the simplicity of the Wise Men who did not find it too much for their great intellects to adore a God in His littleness. Of this simplicity, Father Faber speaks eloquently:

The simplicity of the shepherds at Bethlehem was that of a childlike holiness, which does not care to discriminate between the natural and the supernatural

. . . *The faith and promptitude of simplicity are not less heroic than those of wisdom . . . Simplicity comes very near to God because boldness is one of its most congenial graces. It comes near because it is not dreaming how near it comes. It does not think of itself at all, even to realize its own unworthiness; and therefore, it hastens when a more self-conscious reverence would be slow, and it is at home where another kind of sanctity would be waiting for permissions. It is startled sometimes like a timid faun, and once startled, it is not easily reassured. Such souls are not so much humble as they are simple. The same end is attained in them by a different grace, producing a kindred and almost a more beautiful holiness. In like manner, as simplicity is to them in the place of humility, joy often satisfies in them the claims of adoration. They come to God in an artless way, with a sort of unsuspecting effrontery of love, and when they have come to Him, they simply rejoice and nothing more. It is their way of adoring Him. It fits in with the rest of their graces; and their simplicity makes all harmonious. There is something almost rustic at times, in the way in which such souls take great graces and divine confidences as a matter of course, and the Holy Spirit sports with their simplicity and singleness of soul. They are forever children, and, by instinct haunt the sanctuaries of the Divine Infancy. Their perfection is in truth a mystical childhood, reflecting—almost perpetuating the Childhood of our Dearest Lord.*⁵

Just such simplicity Father Germano was made aware of on the occasion of his visit to Lucca in September. He found in this young lady of twenty-two the artlessness of a child, and so esteemed this virtue of simplicity that he deemed it a responsibility to preserve it in his penitent. To Monsignor Volpi he communicates his thoughts:

Corneto, Tarquinia

Most Reverend Excellency:

Without perceiving it I have committed a discourteous and irreverent act against Your Excellency. Spurred by the thought of hiding Gemma from the eyes of Gemma, and overlooking the fact that she is under the direction of her holy Pastor, I dissuaded her from various things; from writing of herself and of the phenomena in her diary, from submitting herself to extraordinary external things, from doing penance with a discipline, etc., and various things of a similar nature, almost as if the girl did not have near her the regular Confessor and Director, and as if I were not near enough to ask your consent before giving the precepts. I have sent her another from here, not having had time to complete it at Lucca. Pardon me, Monsignor, and remedy my errors, annulling my work, where it does not conform to your idea. Gemma has already been ordered by me to tell you all that I have said to her and done about her. I believe only that the most important thing (if I do not deceive myself) is this: Gemma must be hidden from Gemma, and the direction of her soul ought to be simple without anything oppressive in such fashion that the dear child does not realize that anyone is making any special importance of her and of her gifts . . . I say gifts, Monsignor; console yourself with this thought: Gemma is a true gem of the Heart of Jesus. There is not the slightest shadow of doubt upon this score. As to the past I do not know; today she is pure gold. Soon we shall see in this dear soul things that will astound the world. For now God keeps her hidden, and I think that every extraordinary thing will be suspended only for a short time. Therefore, Your Excellency, you will be doing something pleasing to God if you place her in a convent. However, wherever you may choose to place her, do not entrust her direction to anyone. You should be the only director of Gemma. . . .

Pardon me for taking so much liberty, Monsignor, and bless me.

Your Reverend Excellency's most humble servant,

Germano, Passionist

Chapter IX • Espousals

*"The King hath brought me into His storeroom . . .
into the cellar of wine . . . He set in order charity in me . . ."*

GOD HAD ACCEPTED Gemma's offering of self and for a year He had allowed her to ratify that offering by the shedding of her blood. He was now about to take her to His Heart.

His presence throws her into transports of love, while His withdrawal but inflames her the more to seek Him for Whom she languishes. Never is she mistaken. It is not her love for Him, but His love for her that burns within her soul. Repeatedly she acknowledges the coldness of her heart and her powerlessness to return His love. One way alone seems open to her to offer herself as an oblation, that by expiatory suffering she may make reparation for the outraged glory of His Father.

November, 1900

If I think of the past, I weep, recalling the way that Jesus sought to lead me to Himself. Oh, Jesus, when will that happy moment come when I shall go to thank You in Heaven . . . When Jesus comes within me I call Confrater Gabriel and our Mother and we pray together.

I will run to Jesus; I will love Him with all the strength of my weak heart. I will love Him with sacrifice. I will love Him even by giving to Him my blood and my life.

My Father,

No longer poor Gemma, but blessed be Gemma! That's so, isn't it, Father? . . . Thursday, when I went to Holy Communion, I felt Jesus, but His voice was so gentle that I scarcely heard Him when He spoke. I wept, but they were tears of supreme happiness. A thousand times I asked pardon for my sins, and He promised me that if I would not commit them anymore He would pardon me gladly. And then . . . how shall I recall those happy moments when I had the grace of hearing the loving invitation of Jesus when He said to me, "Gemma, do you not feel Jesus?" And another time He said (the same morning), "Who am I?" It was my same Jesus of the past; I could do nothing but repeat: "Jesus, strengthen my weakness. . . ." and then I added, "Make me conscious, Jesus, of Your love, and then everything that I suffer will be a joy through being with You. But how greatly I fear, O Jesus, that instead of giving You joy, I will cause You displeasure." I asked Him if He were satisfied with me, if I had helped Him in any way. Do you know, Father, He seemed very pleased; but He was in such haste that it seemed to me a bad sign—scarcely a quarter of an hour He was with me. He asked me if I loved Him. I wept, for you know, Father, whom I have loved more than Jesus. I have loved myself, and often times creatures and pleasures. What could I answer Jesus? I wept for a long time and that was my reply. It is Jesus alone whom I should love, and I have never loved Him as I should. Father, search for all the souls that love Jesus and tell them to love Him for me, to glorify Him for me.

My heart has become ice. It is always cold. Every morning when I go to Communion it seems as if my heart becomes harder. Do you not see, Father, that

a miracle of Jesus is necessary? Blessed be Jesus!

Today is Saturday—I am rather calm, but not completely. Thursday and Friday I had pain. I suffered in my hands, feet, head, and heart. Now I want to see whether I can explain to you why I have this pain in my heart. You know, Father, when Jesus is hidden, I search for Him every moment, for I wish Him always with me.

When He withdraws, I search for Him—at times I search so hard that I become ill. I don't know how else to explain. Do you understand?

This morning I told Monsignor these things, and he replied that he was very glad that I suffered in this way. He told me that this suffering might come at other times beside Friday; to prepare myself for greater things yet. I was almost afraid, but no, what do I say—I am happy. . . . When I shrink from suffering, Jesus reproves me and tells me that He did not refuse to suffer. Then I say: “Jesus, Your will, not mine.” At last I am convinced that only God can make me happy, and in Him I have placed all my hope. . . .

Today I did not feel Jesus present, but what does it matter? Yesterday evening I was very sad, I wept for Jesus. Signora Cecelia, who was with me, asked me about it; I replied that Jesus was no longer there. She then said: “What does it matter if He is not here; there will come a day when you will see Him.” Then my thoughts flew to Paradise. “Yes,” I said, “the time will come when I shall be full of joy with Jesus; I will go to Him, my God. All that He gives me will be for eternity, and He will give me a great reward for any little pains suffered for His love.”

You know, Father, how foolish I am; I sometimes imagine myself talking with the Angels—but what courage I have to speak thus. In heaven the Angels will be our brothers, and my Mother I shall see as great as she is. And this is how I find consolation when suffering—thinking of Paradise, and then my suffering becomes joy. My God, when my sins come to mind, I am ashamed of seeking Paradise; but if I look at the Crucifix, even with so many sins, I can do no less than desire it ardently.

I am poor Gemma of Jesus.

Father Germano answers her:

Gemma of Jesus, Daughter in Jesus,

You perhaps do not fully understand the secret of this suffering. Jesus, Spouse of blood, desires it from all Christians, and if everyone consented willingly, there would be no one who did not have an excess of it. Now Jesus has offered to you this chalice. You have accepted it, and this is why Jesus does not spare you. Not only does our poor suffering avail, but Jesus is pleased, because while on earth He loved suffering very much, therefore, He loved to have all His followers suffer much. Then this is the explanation of the mystery. Oh is it not a glory for a Christian to suffer with Jesus and as Jesus? Then instead of weeping at times, say instead: “Jesus, yes, even for this, Blessed be Jesus!” How many times have I told you: Gemma there is no more time to be a baby and act like a baby.

Farewell, daughter, I bless you.

Father Germane is coming to a vivid realization that God is about to manifest His will in a signal manner, and he makes Monsignor Volpi aware of his lights.

Corneto, Tarquinia, November 1, 1900

Most Reverend Excellency,

Knowing how busy you are in your important ministry, I have not dared to trouble you with my letters. In regard to Gemma, Your Excellency may be assured that the finger of God is here. There is in this dear girl the simple ingenuousness of a child, there is implacable hate of the enemy. God is indubitably

there in a degree quite exceptional. He will soon take such possession of her soul that there will no longer be any need to fear; as there will be no more doubt concerning her. There can be some small detail which is not divine, and that is sufficient to reassure us; and one can very well ignore the minor details. Your Excellency has known and understood better than I the present state of this child, since you have had her in your hands so long.

It seems an impertinence for me to speak. I dare only to say that as things stand at present, it seems to me that it would be better to proceed with greater ease and tranquility, avoiding, in your direction, all that could cause oppressiveness and embarrassment to the spirit of the girl.

Soon Your Excellency will see marvelous and unusual things in the creature; the root will be martyrdom of body and of spirit . . . She is a victim of sacrifice whom the Lord has chosen with infinite pleasure. However, it will be well to concentrate your direction from this point of view. Do not give attention to the details; there will soon be much more serious and important matters to consider. . . . Monsignor, pardon my temerity. Now it is for Your Excellency to correct, rectify, and plan.

But what is to be done, Your Excellency will say, to arrange for the future of the soul? I confess that I would not know how to reply to such a query. I am certain that it will not be for long. God has high purposes, and I believe He has already provided; in what manner I do not know, nor have I taken any steps in this regard; but I feel in my heart that He will soon dispose of Gemma for His own designs. To Your Excellency will remain the consolation and the merit of having brought to Jesus and for Jesus a soul in which he has placed all His pleasure.

Bless me, Monsignor.

*The least of your servants,
Germano, Passionist*

It would seem that the devil also had a premonition of Gemma's glory to come, for, of one subtle temptation that came to her in a dream, she writes:

My Father,

Why do you not come to my aid when you see that I am in danger? Saturday evening I was sleeping peacefully, and in a dream I saw a bishop with about fifty little children, all little angels, they seemed to me, with lighted candles in their hands; and all came and stood around my bed and adored me. Frightened I cried: "How many people! Send them away." Signora Cecelia suggested my making the Sign of the Cross, but nothing availed. I felt disturbed, I began to weep, then I cried out: "Father, help me!" Your Angel came, blew strongly upon the candles and everything disappeared. I do not want to offend Jesus. It was a temptation of pride, was it not?

For final purification before the celestial Nuptials, Jesus filled her understanding with such obscurity that it overwhelmed her spirit with utter desolation. Her sufferings meanwhile were so great that Cecelia became fearful lest she die under them.

My Father,

November 2, 1900

I wish to recount to you a little of the state of my soul because it is so obscure that I really see nothing more. O what are all those past things? all those things that I saw, that I felt, which I can scarcely recall, yet it appears to me that it has been a long dream of two years. My Jesus is at last tired of putting up with my great coldness. Poor Jesus, He Is right! What pain, my father! However, I am very well; I can do no less than thank and adore Jesus. But it indeed is true that Jesus withdraws Himself more always. Instead of becoming better, and not committing any more sin, thinking of the way Jesus has punished me, I become worse, improving in nothing.

I go to Holy Communion but it is as if I did not; I pray without fervor; however, I do want to love Jesus but I have so trivial a heart

Now I shall tell you a serious thing: I am no longer capable of thinking of Jesus; that is, I think of Him always, but I do not know in what way. Do you understand? I am content within my soul, but many times the tears fall without my knowing why. No one is dear to me now but Jesus. Yet if I call to Jesus,

if I search for Him, there is no response. Before He called me; now I call Him. But besides not responding, He sends me away. I begin the assault again, but He withdraws all the more; He does this continually.

How much she suffered at this time we know from what Signora Cecelia wrote to Father Germano:

Thursday she began to feel ill for a time; about nine she went to bed because she could not endure any more. The Angel Guardian came to help her because she was helpless of herself. After half an hour Annetta and I went to see her. She was rather pale. I asked her if she felt ill and she answered, "A little, but it is nothing." Meanwhile, ten o'clock approached and all at once I saw blood streaming down from her forehead and all around her head, and much from the eyes. I dried one part with a handkerchief and the other dripped on the pillow. Signor Lorenzo and Annetta likewise observed it. During the night she did nothing but call on Jesus and Mary, and said: "I feel you near; come because I love you as much as ever. Try me and you will see. Come, because I love You so much, My Jesus. O that I could see You once more and then die." ⁶

And many other things of this sort; To repeat them all would be too much, but you understand, don't you? Now we come to Friday. In the morning she received Holy Communion as usual. After dinner she asked if she might lie down. After a little while I went to see her and observed that the blood did not come from the head, but only from the eyes; they were clotted with blood. If you had only seen it; it was like Jesus upon the cross. Father, how she suffers! It is frightening. Tonight I thought that she would die; what a night she passed! One time she said, "Father will know why I suffer; I will tell only him." And then in the morning after Communion the fainting fits began and she said, "I am really good for nothing. I cannot even receive Communion properly." Poor Gemma, dear Gemma, how you love Jesus! . . .

At this time Father Germano wrote to Cecelia to assuage her anxiety concerning Gemma's mystical sufferings, but speaks of the difficulty there is in having her placed in a convent.

I told you in my other letter not to fear for the health of Gemma. The actual state of this dear child is not the result of natural illness, and therefore doctors, medicines, and other remedies are not called for, and would only serve to increase the sufferings of the unfortunate patient. Ah, please do not repeat the mistake of calling in the doctor. What would a doctor understand? He would say, "Hysteria, hysteria" and that is all, and a stupid laugh directed toward those who believe in the supernatural. And this ridicule Catholic doctors know how to make even better than the unbelievers and free masons. Therefore, absolutely no doctors! Tell Monsignor this in my name.

As for you, I repeat, have no fear. The mystical passions which come directly from God kill no one. She herself has said it many times and proved it. After atrocious sufferings Gemma returns fresh and vigorous as before. And thus it will be now. The painful effects will endure more or less, will prolong themselves for weeks or months, but they will not threaten this dear child's existence. If it were not so, she would already have died many times on the Fridays up to now. Her health might be ruined as has been the case with those badly directed, but when the action is directed by God, it injures no one. Therefore when you see Gemma gasping, do not fear. Also avoid running with restoratives, comforts, etc., which are out of place. Do not deny moral comfort to this poor child; never leave her alone when she is suffering, although she does not seek such comfort. In regard to her eating so little, do not be surprised. You will see Gemma not eating at all and living solely on Holy Communion without affecting her health. Gemma says that the Signora Giustina is very ill. . . . The presence of Gemma in the house will be the cause of saving the life of this dear mother. . . .

I understand the urgent need of cloistering this dear child, but if Jesus does not tell how and where, what am I to do? I do not clearly know what Jesus intends. The only way possible at present would be the convent directed by Mother Giuseppa; I see no alternative. With the phenomena: the ecstasies, the swooning, the convulsions, vomiting blood, falling through exhaustion, and similar things, the convent would be turned upside down, and so would the brains of the nuns; they would run for doctors to make observations, and the uproar would start a scandal; and it would end in affecting me for having shown interest in one subject to hysteria.

Ask Gemma to think well about this, and she will admit that I am right. But she may say: When I am in the convent, I will be good and have no more ecstasies, I will eat like the others, I will not swoon, I will not have any need of others to press down my heart, etc. Well, but can we be sure of it? I should like to believe it; but Jesus ought to tell me so. Therefore tell Gemma to ask Jesus to give me orders and directions, with all particulars; and I shall be ready to act. . . . It is in vain that Gemma writes and says: "Soon, it is time, Jesus wishes it, make me happy," and similar childishness. How much better it would be to pray to Jesus that He speak clearly and show the way, and say: Thus, and not otherwise; in this convent, not in that; tomorrow and not Sunday! Tell her to say this to Jesus, and I am here ready to take action. I have need of direction and I await it from Jesus alone. Meanwhile let her resign herself to waiting; and realize that Jesus is not at all pleased with these violent feelings that she manifests.

Gemma herself becomes aware of strange operations of the Holy Ghost, and at times is at a loss to know the meaning of it all. At one impulse she cries out to Jesus, "Wait! Wait!" At another she throws herself into the arms of her Beloved to do with her as He wills.

My Father,

December 1, 1900

. . . And now, Father, do what I ask. On this paper you will find a prayer written; be good enough to read it at once, and tell me if you believe that it is the will of God.

Dear Jesus,

Behold me at Your Most Sacred Feet, dear Jesus, to manifest every moment my recognition and my gratitude for the many and continued favors that You have given me, and that You still wish to give me.

However many times I have invoked You, O Jesus, You have always made me happy; I have often had recourse to You, and You have always consoled me. How can I express myself to You, dear Jesus? I thank You. But I ask still another grace, O My God, if it is pleasing to You. Wait, Jesus, wait; I am your victim, but wait, my life is in Your hands, but wait.

May Your Holy Will be done in all things.

Father, I do not know how else to say it, but you and Jesus will understand me, I hope.

I am poor
Gemma of Jesus

Father Germano answers:

Dear Gemma,

. . . Throw yourself with full abandonment into the loving arms of Jesus. You know well that the good God loves you, since He has shown it by evident and unusual signs. Why do you doubt Him now? Leave then all anxiety. Do not say: "Jesus, wait," nor, "Jesus, do" nor "Jesus, speak," nor, "Now, Jesus," nor, "Tomorrow, Jesus," nor, "Jesus, make me perceive" nor, "Jesus, Jesus, do not leave me alone," nor, "Jesus, sacrifice me" nor, "Jesus, let me die," nor, "Jesus, in the convent." No, no, no; but: "One thing only, Jesus, that You may be glorified in the humiliations of your poor servant. Not that which it appears to me You wish of me, but that which You wish in reality . . . And now, tell me, daughter, does it not appear to you that this my prayer is more beautiful than the one which you have written?"

But Jesus cannot wait. As an ardent Lover He presses her:

December 17, 1900

My Father, I received Holy Communion a little while ago. Jesus, after eighteen days, has come again at last. The first thing He asked me was this: “Gemma, shall I advance My work?” I replied, “Yes,” without knowing what He meant. “Do you know Me?” “O my Father, Jesus!” Jesus asked me if I still knew Him. He said: “What do you think is the greatest grace that I can give you upon earth?” I did not know what to say. “I will tell you—to keep you on Calvary.” Hearing Him say Calvary, I began to understand.

He would now consummate the celestial nuptials for her oblation on Calvary, and invite her into His Presence Chamber, the Seventh Mansion of the Castle, at Midnight Mass on Christmas Day, 1900.

So simply does Gemma tell of the favor that it might well go unnoticed as being of such momentous significance. This simplicity is characteristic of the saint. Only by what subsequent events reveal does one get the full import of what she relates in the following letter.

My Father,

December 26, 1900

Father, all is finished. Yesterday evening at midnight Mass, when the priest came to the Offertory, I saw Jesus, Who offered me as a victim to the Eternal Father. I was very happy. He pressed me to Himself; then He led me to our Mother and presented me to her, saying, “This dear daughter of Mine you must regard as a fruit of My passion.”

A crown of thorns—her own crown this time, not His—Jesus now gives to her as token of their marriage bonds. As a result of this mystical marriage, Gemma is inflamed with the fire of divine love in the centre of her being and senses that Presence which Saint Teresa tells us is the indwelling of the Holy Trinity.

Father, my heart still continues the violent palpitation. The blessed Angel, on Thursday evening, just before I began to suffer, came again. Together we adored the majesty of God Who gave me then so lively a sorrow for my sins that I felt ashamed at finding myself in His Presence, I tried to hide myself, to flee. I endured this torment for some time, but the Angel then gave me courage; He took from his breast a sword and let me see it, and said that Jesus soon would put it through the cross in my poor heart. He had two beautiful crowns; one of thorns and one of lilies. He asked me which I wished. I wished to obey you, Father, and did not answer at first. Then I said, “That of Jesus.” He raised the crown of thorns; I kissed it many times, smiling and weeping, and the Angel went away. . . .

Chapter X • Nuptial Banquet

*"My Beloved to me and I to Him who feedeth among the lilies . . .
I sleep and my heart watches . . .
I languish with love."*

‘As Jesus’ bride Gemma would now feast at His banquet. Henceforth, while she made denial to the senses, her spirit would be inebriated with celestial joys. At one time, the intellectual vision of the Godhead—the Holy Trinity—within the center of her being would transport her out of herself. At another, in the prayer of quiet, she would give gentle, sweet attention to Jesus, the understanding being in delightful repose. Then, again, she would find herself strangely empowered by means of an illumination emanating from a divine light in the understanding. Thereupon the gift of prophecy, of revelation, of discernment of spirits would be given to her. And ever and anon she would continue to enjoy corporeal visions, the vision of material things in heaven or on earth; and incorporeal visions, the vision of spirits as the angels, heavenly visitants, or the souls of men on earth. At the table of the Bridegroom she would drink of His wine and languish with love.

The intellectual vision, her new delight, is something quite different from the corporeal vision. The intellectual vision gets its name from the fact that it has nothing to do with forms of images but with an intuitive knowledge, first of the presence of God and His love, and second of creatures and events beyond the power of human understanding.

Saint John of the Cross, speaking of the intellectual vision, says that just as a flash of lightning, striking through a darkened room, reveals objects vividly which, after the flash is gone, still remain in the mind, so the divine light reveals the spiritual forms and images, or divine enlightenments, that God wishes to present to the soul for His own purposes.

Intellectual visions, moreover, are much clearer and more subtle than corporeal. The effects, the saint says, are quietness, enlightenment, joy, sweetness, purity, love, humility, and elevation of the mind to God. The spiritual impressions of the intellectual vision are lasting and distinct, even more so than those of the corporeal and, when God wishes, can be recalled as vividly as when first experienced. The devil can mimic the intellectual vision, as he can the corporeal, but dryness, self-esteem, the inclination to accept and make much of visions, Saint John says, result from any counterfeit of Satan.

Besides this infused knowledge of God, Saint John speaks of another inferior type of intellectual vision, but one which is still a very great favor from God. He says the purified mind may be powerfully illumined and by an infused grace may be able to prophesy future events, to know what is going on in the minds of others; may realize their motives and intentions; may see persons and things far distant; may interpret events and even participate in them without leaving one’s place of abode.

Father Germano has insisted from the beginning that Gemma neither treasure nor trust visions of any kind in accordance with the teaching of Saint John. He would have her go steadily on to God by Faith. He even goes to the length of commanding her to refrain from speaking to or even recognizing her heavenly visitants. Gemma on her part obeys him but frequently expresses the difficulty of doing so, and the dilemma into which she is often thrown. Jesus and her visitants seem to approve of Father Germano’s caution; and even the devil makes use of the director’s prohibition to serve his own ends.

The absorption of Saint Gemma's spirit into that of the Divine is revealed in letters of this period:

Father,

If you could see, taste, and realize the good gifts that Jesus gives me. I say, Father, that there is not a minute that I do not feel His dear presence; He reveals Himself ever more loving. Today in Communion He was almost playful; He said: "See, Gemma, I have in My Heart a little daughter whom I love so much. This daughter always calls me love and purity, and I Who am the True Love, the True Purity, have given as much of them to her as a human creature can receive. I treasure in her that purity as a celestial lily in My pure love."

Father, how good Jesus is! I would fail utterly, if He did not support me; I should die, if He did not vivify me. Indeed I have been able to penetrate into that depravity of those which the world holds lightly; if you could see how they appear in the eyes of God!

Help me, Father, Bless me and keep me in your prayers. I am poor
Gemma

Jesus visits her at Communion:

Father,

Today I have had Jesus, and now I possess Him entirely in my miserable soul. In such moments my heart and the Heart of Jesus are one. Oh, if I could make It remain so always! It would mean that I would not commit any more sin. Oh what precious moments are those at Holy Communion! Communion is a happiness, Father, that it seems to me cannot be equaled by the beatitude of the Saints and Angels. They admire the Face of Jesus and are sure of not sinning and of never being lost; and I envy them those two things, and I should like to be of their company, but indeed I have reason for exulting, for Jesus enters every day into my heart. Jesus gives me all Himself, though I give Him nothing of worth. I ask Him always for many things, and to tell the truth, I am afraid of wearying Him, but He says no. Blessed be Jesus! Is it not true, Father, that to be united to Jesus always is almost to taste the joys of Paradise? I know, I have been weak, ungrateful ... to Jesus; I know myself to be without merit, because I squandered the graces Jesus gave me, I see myself full of fault because of my useless thoughts and useless words; I do not know at all how to mortify the eyes. Who is worse than I? And I have the courage to say, what makes Jesus weep? I will humble myself but I will not despair. When Jesus is disturbed, I will go to His Mother and will beg her to tell Jesus that I will be good and that I will not make Him weep any more.

And again, in her time of repose:

Father,

May 10, 1901

Even though you are vexed at my extravagance, I want to tell you about a dream I had yesterday; (But I really think it was only a dream.)

I was tired, and I went to lie down and soon fell asleep. I found myself, it seemed, with Jesus, Who took me in His arms and said to me: "Come daughter, come and repose with me." And while I slept for a quarter of an hour, He embraced me ardently. Before He left me, He said to me: "You know why I have had you repose on my breast? Because I am preparing you to suffer greatly." Thus ended the sleep and the dream. Blessed be Jesus! O Father, pray for me; I feel almost not able to love thus. Bless me every moment.

Poor
Gemma

Of the growing intimacy resulting from the Mystical Marriage, Gemma speaks:

Father,

June, 1901

. . . Father, today at five o'clock I went to confession, and Monsignor Volpi again told me to withdraw from Jesus. Father, pain almost keeps me from writing, my hand trembles very much. I weep. No, Father, I am not really worthy to receive Jesus, yet into this wretched heart, worse than filth, how many times has Jesus wished to come! In this moment I realize so clearly my wretchedness, that I should like, I should like . . .

Jesus did want to come and was not pleased at the deprivation imposed on Gemma by Monsignor Volpi. Monsignor Volpi had given this command to refrain from excessive fervor at prayer either to prove her strength or to obviate the frequent ecstasies which he feared were injurious to her health. We see from the next letter that Jesus wishes the intimacy that Monsignor questioned:

Father,

June, 1901

A reproof, Father, which Jesus gave me this morning, after Communion, afflicted me greatly. "My daughter," He said to me, "I wish that from you I might have more interior recollection or more intimate union. I am happy when I press you to Myself and instead many times you withdraw, you turn your mind and heart to other things, and leave me alone; and I should almost say that you do not care to stay with me." I replied weeping, "O my God, you know well why I do so . . ." And then ... I was not able to continue; I remained silent, and Jesus went on: "If it is true, as you have so often said, that you wish to serve me I should like you to have my image engraved in your heart. Look at me: you see me transfixed, derided by all, dead on the Cross; I invite you to die on the Cross with me ..." I remained silent. I could not speak a word, Father. . . . Blessed be Jesus!

Lost in wonderment at a visit from Jesus she writes:

A few moments ago I received Jesus! What good fortune! Father! I who deserve to live with demons, find myself surrounded every morning with Angels and Saints, and united continually and intimately with Jesus! How good Jesus is to me, how merciful! I still keep Him within me; I am all in Him and He in me. But my habitation is too vile for Jesus. . . . Nevertheless He makes it noble and grand. Poor Jesus! And what shall I ever love upon this earth now that I possess Him? . . . O world, O creatures, I can no longer love you at all!

To what an eminence has Jesus raised me this morning! After Communion, thinking of the height to which He exalted me, I was overwhelmed, lost in wonderment. Father, I have a fear that is very great, do you know what it is? That by committing sin I might be deprived of His love. But I commend myself to Him, so that He may give me the grace of not meriting this punishment.

These transports were not confined, however, to moments after Communion:

Jesus continues to make me aware of Himself several times a day; in the evening, the morning, and at all times and in all places . . . And what strength it takes for me to hide this from others, especially when I am in the Church, outside, or when I even find myself alone. When at times I spend the whole day repressing this desire, because by obedience to Monsignor I am not free to let myself sink into the sea of love for Jesus, (except for a few moments after Communion, and this with haste because I am afraid) ... in the evening then I have a bit of fever; and this comes from the violence with which I restrain myself. Jesus tells me He is pleased with my obedience. But, Father, will it always be possible for me to restrain myself this way? I am afraid not, because the impulses become always stronger and more frequent; I am very much afraid of the time when I can control them no longer.

Father, how long must I remain in the world? Yesterday morning I prayed Jesus to liberate me from the body; I told Him it seemed imprisoned, and I asked Him to free me that I might go to Him. And Jesus playfully said to me: "And where would you fly?" "To You!" And then Jesus answered: "Let Me come a little while longer to you and then, when I shall free you, you will come to Me."

I have another curious thing to tell you, Father. Jesus asked me what you said in your last letter. I answered that you recommended that I be always humble and detached; but I told Him that you did not explain what you meant; and I said, "Monsignor also tells me to be humble but I do not understand about being detached because I have nothing, so I do not know from what I can be detached. I have only you, Jesus." Then Jesus said, "Tell me, daughter, are you not

really too much attached to something?” Do you know what Jesus meant? That tooth of the Venerable Gabriel. I then complained to him, saying, “But, Jesus, that is a precious relic!” and I almost wept. And then Jesus, somewhat seriously said: “Daughter, I tell you, Jesus is enough.” I know it is true, Father, Jesus is right, I am too attached to it. When Sister Maria asked me to let the nuns see it, one day, I gave it to her but I wept afterwards. I wanted to have it always with me

Father, how much I should like to tell you so that you can understand something about me. At times I am constrained to exclaim: “Where am I? Who is near me?” Without any fire at hand, I feel myself burning; without any chain, I feel myself bound to Jesus; by a hundred flames that make me live and make me die, I feel myself destroyed. I suffer, alternately, Father; I live, I die; but my life I would not exchange for that of anyone else in the world. To all I wish to cry: “Love Jesus only.”

When I find myself alone with Jesus, I feel myself in delightful company. This is a curious thing: the more I wish to be released the more I find myself bound to Jesus. More than is possible I wish to abandon everything in the world, but instead I find all; I flee from all the pleasures of life, and I enjoy instead a pleasure so much greater, that makes me so happy. I burn continually, and I should like to burn even more; I suffer and I should like to suffer more ... I should like to live, I should like to die ... I tell you plainly I do not even know myself what I desire ... I seek and I do not find, but then I do not know what I seek ... I love Jesus so very little; I should like to love Him so much more . . . I feel love, but whom I love I do not know, I do not understand . . . But in the midst of my great ignorance, I feel that there is an immense God. And Jesus. . . .

O Father, if you know of some soul wounded with love of Jesus, ask him what remedy he finds, when sick with love he feels the bitter pain of an ardor which burns, and then tell me about it.

If you could be near, how many things I should like to tell you . . . , there remains only Jesus, Father, Jesus alone! . . . How good is His mysterious love that never tires! And in me finds nothing but weakness, misery, sins, yet loves me, loves me so much! He does not cease to let me hear His voice in my heart, to let me live in His dear Presence; indeed, so great is the happiness that I experience, that at times I feel myself leaving the world; and more and more I want to leave earth and betake myself to Heaven. O Paradise! . . . Where there is only one thing to do; to love.

What beautiful moments my good Jesus lets me spend! Yesterday I sent you my Angel; did he come? Did he tell you everything?

Bless me; poor Gemma

Father Germano, in his reply on the fourth of June spoke thus to Cecelia:

The letter of Gemma entrusted to the Angel is a true bit of Paradise. This alone would be sufficient to prove the nature of the spirit of this saintly soul. In no writing of the Saints do I find accents more ardent and sublime than these. Dear Seraphim! Jesus continues to consume you with His fire, and you must pray to Him to inflame us also; but with love pure, generous, strong, and persevering. You will understand that with all this I am not surprised at whatever else you tell me or can tell me. Blessed be Jesus of Gemma.

Besides this new experience of intellectual vision, the gift of Jesus at the Mystical Marriage, Gemma still has corporeal visions which she has enjoyed all through the period of her Betrothal; Jesus in all phases of His Passion, our Blessed Lady, her Angel Guardian and that of Father Germano, are constant visitants.

These visions are accompanied more frequently, however, with locutions, that is, utterances, that bear a message to Gemma’s soul for her profit and for that of others.

Saint John discriminates among three kinds of locutions: the successive, the formal, and the substantial. Successive is the term he uses for those utterances that the soul hears itself making under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The mind is in deep recollection but actively takes part in the discourse in successive utterances—the mind, as it were, speaking to itself under divine direction. The formal locution takes place with no effort of the mind and at times without the

mind even being recollected. The soul hears distinctly the formal utterances of a third person in a word or two. Occasionally there is even a lengthy discourse for the instruction of the soul or for discussion with it. With these formal words comes the light to understand them, though they be beyond the experience of the soul at the time. Strength to fulfill the commands is also given. Often a great repugnance attends the order enjoined, especially if the operation in the soul is for its purification through humiliation.

However, Saint John says that when vile and humiliating things are required, God gives the soul greater facility and promptitude in executing the request.

The substantial locution occurs when the formal word or words uttered produce in the soul a vivid and substantial effect that a lifetime of effort could not accomplish. The soul is advised by Saint John not to make much of successive and formal locutions except to speak of them to an enlightened Confessor for guidance. Substantial locutions, however, he says, need not be feared, for the soul being passive has nothing to do with any effect produced. "Let the soul be humble and lovingly quiet under God's operations," he recommends, "allowing Him to fulfill in her His own designs."

The successive locutions Saint Gemma had from her earliest childhood. Many letters evidence also that her visions were nearly always accompanied with formal locutions. The reader of her ecstasies is led to infer that substantial locutions were bestowed upon her to sustain her in her supernatural sufferings and in her transports of divine love:

Father,

Jesus, Father, is an irresistible and delightful lover. The mercy of Jesus in these moments enchants me. How could one not love Jesus with all one's heart and soul? How could one not desire to be all consumed in Him, in the flame of His Holy Love?

These little spells of unconsciousness, which happen after Communion and when I find myself in the presence of Jesus seem to be more frequent. . . .

Today I complained to Jesus saying: "My God, if you do this to all, making them feel consumed, no one will be able to resist you and you will remain alone." At that moment I felt burned and dying before Jesus; I was in church where the Blessed Sacrament was exposed. And Jesus lovingly replied: "But I do not love all as much as I love you." Oh yes, Jesus loves; He loves this poor rubbish and is not ashamed to come every day to soil Himself.

Bless me and pray for poor

Gemma

May, 1901 . . . The month of May is for me the most beautiful month of the year, the month of grace for me.

My mind was all absorbed in the offenses committed against God when I saw an Angel near my bed. I was ashamed to find myself in his presence. The Angel, whom I recognized as mine, embraced and kissed me ardently. He said: "O daughter, what would become of the world if all were obedient?" How much better this world would be! Tell me: who was first to obey? Your Mother . . . She sent me to you and wishes you always to obey . . ."

"But I shall die, if I obey; even today I have fever," I said to him, weeping, "and I have it because Monsignor wishes this obedience."

"Obey, nevertheless, my daughter" I continued to weep and he said to me: "Jesus loves you so much. Love Him greatly." He blessed me and disappeared. Blessed be Jesus! . . .

This locution bears a message to Gemma personally to obey Monsignor Volpi, who has commanded her to restrain the ardent love of Jesus that consumes her. Another message, sent by Father Germano's angel to Gemma, reads:

Today, before I began to write this letter, I saw, it seemed to me, your Angel Guardian; did you perhaps send him? Almost weeping he said to me: "Daughter, soon you will be surrounded by roses, but do you not see that the thorns of those roses will pierce your heart? Until now you have enjoyed the sweetness that is around your life, but remember what bitterness is in the depths. Do you see," he added, "this cross? It is the cross your father presents to you; this cross is a book that you will read every day. Promise me, daughter, that you will bear this cross with love and will hold it dearer than all the joys of the world."

On another occasion this angel comes with an admonition:

After such a long time, Father, your dear Angel appeared today. How much more beautiful than before he was! The shining star that is always upon his head shone with greater radiance. Just think, he came into the kitchen while I was watching Mea (the maidservant) make the sausages! I was thinking of Jesus and saying, "O Jesus, I thank you; I suffer, but then you will soon lead me to Paradise, will you not?" Then I felt a hand on my forehead and I raised my head. Your Angel stood there and said to me: "Daughter, if you have the gentle hope of reigning one day with Jesus and Mary in Heaven, why do you not suffer, and strive with a little more strength and courage?" Having spoken these words, he kissed me, and went away, and left me very happy, I think Mea did not see him because she mentioned nothing afterward.

What delightful consolation at Mary's visit this letter tells:

How delightful is Communion received with Mother Mary! Father, I went yesterday, the eighth of May (The Feast of Our Lady of Pompeii). With my Mother I had never received it before. You know, Father, what my heart said in those moments? These words: "Mamma, how much I enjoy calling you Mamma! My heart, you see, leaps as it does when I think of Jesus." And she said: "You enjoy calling me Mother and I enjoy calling you daughter." She repeated these words to me at least three times in the course of the day

Yes, I have found so many times that the feast of my Mother is for me a day of greater peace, greater love, and of sanctification.

And what a lovely pen-picture is this:

If you could see how beautiful the crown of glory is that the Eternal Father places upon the forehead of my Mother! Flaming gold, all flames, compose the base (I speak of it as it looks to me); around this crown are many gems, which are all her virtues; there are many, many pearls. She was crowned with the crown of wisdom, she was adorned with chosen splendors, and then ... I don't know how to tell it. She had also a sign in the beautiful crown which means that she is the dispenser of the treasures of Paradise

Corporeal visions of Our Lord in the scenes of His Passion are not mentioned in detail in her letters but from her ecstasies as recorded by Cecelia Giannini, we get intimation of them:

O God, I am weak . . . give me a little strength! No matter what will happen to me, all is for you . . . O Jesus, Jesus, listen to the question which my confessor asks of me: "What do you do in the presence of Jesus?" I said, "With Jesus crucified, I suffer; before the Eucharist, I love."

How deeply I moaned yesterday, Jesus, because of the pains in my head! Yesterday, the head, today, the cross, tomorrow . . . , the wounds ... If I must suffer, let us suffer together. Which one of us will have suffered the more out of love for the other? . . . Today the cross, tomorrow, the wounds: what visions Jesus, will I see when I see you crucified? I suffer with you.

Oh! . . . but almost always when I seek you, Jesus, I find you on the cross . . . To meditate on your Passion is always a consolation for holy souls. Why then does this suffering while contemplating on your Passion frighten me so?

Today the cross, tomorrow . . . (the wounds). When will it be Jesus, when? Why should I complain? Too precious will always be what comes to me from Your divine hands.

My confessor tells me to consider who has suffered more, You for my love, or I for Yours.

This night, Jesus, I wish to endure all your pains myself. And if you wish to suffer also, we shall suffer together. Let us be the one and the same victim. Are you pleased to do this, Savior? Prepare to give me strength, Jesus, I ask for nothing more.

Poor Jesus! What a multitude of blows, poor Jesus! These wicked executioners do not weary, but your patience is unlimited

Do not torment my Savior any more; turn your blows against me . . . Not on Him! . . . No! . . . Why do you take it out on Him? Gratify yourselves on me. . . .

Still more, O Jesus, still more . . . O God! . . . give me still more, Jesus . . . Increase it, O Jesus, increase it . . . Jesus . . . O God . . . Help me now, Jesus. To

whom do you wish me to have recourse? ... In these painful moments, Jesus, no one assisted you. O Jesus, what will you say of me? . . .

Today I was to make my meditation on the scourging; I have thought of it, you know it, Jesus ... I thought of the torments of the body . . . To speak to you frankly, I am filled with this when Friday comes

The spirit is ready; the flesh only shrinks. Yes, the spirit is disposed, but the body is weak . . . Oh! I would like so much to make a prayer to you: I desire that tomorrow you increase my pains. That of the thorns is the sharpest; it is also the longest. . . . Yes, yes, Jesus, I want you to give it to me. How can I bear the sight of all your torments? As for these complaints of my flesh, I shall impose silence on it. Yes, Jesus, my spirit is ready for any suffering whatsoever. My body would like to groan at the thought of what it must endure in the head; but the spirit is ready. . . . Make me yours, Jesus, entirely yours. Crucify me once more, Savior.

Passion of Jesus! Angels of heaven, prostrate yourselves with me to honor Him. Together let us gather the blood of the Redeemer . . . Let us draw near to Jesus on the cross ... A crucified God! And still, O my Savior, I have the courage to resist you. Near You one no longer suffers. ... I pray you, come all. Let us gather up the blood which Jesus has shed in torrents. . . .

I adore, Jesus, your blood which has been shed, and I hope that its shedding will not have been in vain for me . . . O God, Jesus is dying! ... I wish to die with you. . . . O thorns, O cross, O nails, how many times must I tell you? . . . You—turn against me, no longer against Jesus. . . .

Jesus is dying but He is giving me life . . . O Passion of my Savior, I love you . . . Angels of Heaven, come all, together let us adore the Passion of Jesus.

O Jesus, who has put You in such a state? . . . O Jesus, my head! (what pains I am experiencing) . . . Today Jesus remained a long time with me . . . Answer me, Savior; if I suffer, is it for you? If I am weary, is it for you? . . . Oh, it is! . . . Then it is well, it is very well, to suffer for you, Jesus. It is good to rest there, near you . . . How happy one is very near your Heart! . . . I am not able to suffer more, my God; yet two hours only is very little, isn't it? ... I wish I could offer you every moment. . . .

O holy angels, come all, indeed all, to sympathize with Jesus . . . Passion, Passion of Jesus! Let us adore it, absolutely all . . . Oh! what a quantity of blood! . . . O Cross, why are you always afflicting my Savior? May this punishment no longer fall on Jesus, but on me O Cross, near you, I feel very strong ... I solicit continually the love of the Cross, not yours, Savior, but the one you wish me to embrace ... I love it, I love it very much ... It is on the cross, Jesus, that I have learned to love you.

My Jesus, O my Jesus, hearken to me. ... I know it, my God, I know it, I ought not to complain, but rather to rejoice . . . and nevertheless, very often I weaken and complain ... I am trying, my Savior, but I do not succeed. . . . Give it a thought, Savior; if it continues to get worse, I shall become discouraged. . . . And then?

O Jesus, I offer you a thousand thanks for making me like unto you. Remember it, my God; you have promised that if I am your companion in torments, I shall be so in glory . . . Savior Jesus, when my lips approach yours to kiss them, make me taste the gall . . . when my weak shoulders shall seek a support in you, make them feel the whips which are bruising you . . . When Your Divine flesh communicates with mine, make me share in Your sorrowful Passion . . . When my forehead is very near yours, make me endure Your thorns . . . When You press me close to Your Sacred Heart, make the lance pierce my side.

Ah! What return shall I do to express my gratitude for all Your favors, all Your loving consolations? And You, what should You not expect of me, a vile creature? . . . I offer You without reserve all that I have received from You. . . . O Jesus . . . enough for tonight . . . Near You, one does not feel any pain. ... I would like to suffer more, my God . . . but I can no longer do so; my confessor does not permit it and that is costing me much more. . . . He forbids it, my Savior, because this morning I was ill in church. Nevertheless I would like to have enough strength, Jesus, and I would like to help You, to suffer much for You. . . . Savior, to save my soul You have spared neither Your blood nor Your life; for my part I would like to die for You . . . Do You believe it? Sometimes it seems that I would have the constancy of martyrs, I would accomplish everything, absolutely all that You wish. . . . Willingly, then, for You, I would die crucified.

Chapter XI • Oblation

"A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me."

J E S U S , knowing of Gemma's longing to make return for His love, tells her of a great need that she might meet.

Dear Father,

Ten days ago I received from Jesus a command to tell you some things which I find difficult to do; but Jesus will help me.

Some while ago after Communion, Jesus appeared to me and spoke to me of some things which He wishes me to accomplish for Him. He put this question to me: "Do you tell me, daughter, that you love me very much?" O Father, what could I say? But my heart responded by its palpitations. "And if you love me," He added, "will you do all that I wish?" Then my heart answered by manifesting the desire to do so. "It is an important affair, my daughter. You have to communicate great things to your director. He can give to my Heart the satisfaction it craves." Then after a while He seemed to continue; "My daughter," He exclaimed, sighing, "how much ingratitude and malice there is in the world. Sinners continue to live in their obstinacy in sin. My Father will not tolerate them. Vile and indolent souls make no effort to conquer their flesh; afflicted souls fall into discouragement and despair; fervent souls little by little are growing tepid. The ministers of my sanctuary—" and here He stopped, and after a few minutes took up the thought again. "Ah, these upon whom I depended to continue the work of Redemption!"—Jesus again became silent. "These in very truth my Father can no longer tolerate. I continually give them light and strength; and they! They whom I have ever regarded with predilection; they whom I have treasured as the pupil of my eye!"—Jesus became silent and sighed. "Continually from creatures I receive only ingratitude, insensibility, and indifference that daily increases. No one repents, although I dispense graces and favors to all without exception.

"And from them, what do I ever gain? What correspondence do I find in them whom I so love? Seeing what I see, my heart is lacerated again, for no one cares any more for my love. I am forgotten. It is as if I had never had any love for them, as if for them I had suffered nothing, as if I were unknown to all. My heart is always sad. I remain almost always alone in church, and if many gather there it is for other motives, and I suffer seeing my house turned into a place of entertainment. Many under hypocritical guise betray me with sacrilegious communion."

Jesus would have continued but I was forced to say: "Jesus, I cannot bear any more ... if I could . . ." Jesus was very much touched; he stopped and afterward gently resumed: "Daughter, I have need of souls who will bring me as much consolation as many souls bring me sorrow. I have need of victims and strong victims. To calm the just wrath of my Heavenly Father there must be souls who with their sufferings and tribulations plead for sinners. If I could make comprehensible how angry my Father is with the world! He is preparing a great punishment for all human kind. How many times I have attempted to calm Him. He says, "No, I cannot bear any more."

Already many times, she had offered herself as a victim but now she would answer His plea by begging Him to help her to make oblation of herself to the point of immolation. How she would accomplish this she did not know. What had she which she had not already offered? She would leave it to Him to find a way. Her flesh might cry out in the words of the Spouse of the Canticle, “My Beloved is as a bundle of myrrh ...” But she would press this bundle of myrrh to her heart and learn through its bitterness the love of Jesus Crucified. This repeated conflict of the flesh and the spirit in the life story of this saint is what makes it so compellingly human—that makes one feel her struggle to be one’s own struggle—identical with that of every soul seeking God ardently.

The devil would play his part in the drama. He would find a way—to thwart her. He would scheme to undermine her courage, to break her resolve. The few friends who remained to her, those who with their affection and trust strengthened her in her moments of fear and doubt, he would try to take from her.

There was Monsignor Volpi who already was questioning the validity of her statements. He must be thoroughly shaken. There was Cecelia so indispensable to Gemma at all times; and Julia her devoted sister, who idolized her though at a distance, since she could not have Gemma with the family. There were the Passionist Fathers who directed her from time to time and, there was finally, Father Germano himself. All must be made to feel that she had duped them, that she was a fraud.

Jesus would know of the trickery of the Evil One and would let it go on. He would be near to strengthen her while she divested herself of all creature loves, all creature support. It would be her final stripping before crucifixion. The flesh would cry out in rebellion, but the spirit would triumph in the end. There would be disappointments, doubts, and fears. There would be pain. But then, could there be oblation without pain? Was it not the privilege of pain to serve as oblation from the creature to the Creator, to make satisfaction for the outrage done by sin?

The devil begins his wiles on Monsignor Volpi. He so confuses the mind of the Bishop that the latter sends his secretary to interview Gemma for the purpose of bringing back to him his impressions of the girl.

Father,

What a wicked father I have! He leaves me here alone and does not help me. You remember that Jesus has often said to me that you ought to treat me as if you were my real father, because I am your child and you ought to guide me. I will obey you always. But why did you leave me alone yesterday? In reality I was not alone because Jesus was with me. Nevertheless, I needed you too, for Monsignor had said that he would come to see Cecelia Thursday evening, but instead he sent his secretary. He did not bother to see Cecelia but came directly into my room. That secretary asked to see my arms. Then he began a conversation with me, asking if I believed that he was really a professor of Hebrew, Greek, and French. I did not reply for that was no concern of mine. I belonged to Jesus. He insisted that I reply. I answered him in words Jesus used to me: “These languages he teaches, but he is not a professor.”

He, thereupon spoke in Hebrew, and added the strange remark that he often sees me in his dreams. O Father, how confused I was then, and Jesus made me know that He was not pleased with the secretary’s actions. It was a great humiliation, Father, for I could see unchained in the heart of that secretary a tempest of doubts and thoughts concerning me which he immediately manifested to Cecelia and the family.

If you had only seen the change in Cecelia. She had been very attentive to me, especially on Friday, but today she repeated often: “I would willingly die rather than have anything to do with these strange happenings of yours.” She made me cry. I am content, however, Father, for Jesus is in my heart.

Today I was not able to go to Church, and Jesus came Himself; He asked me if He was more sweet in consolation or in humiliation. Father, how much more sweet He is in humiliation! I sent Him to you to tell you all that happened yesterday evening; has He said nothing? Father, help me! Monsignor is going to send the doctor; help me! Jesus said that I am to say this: “What I want is my Father, and then I will do all.” Bad Father, how you leave me! But I have Jesus, I have the Angel, who from time to time presents me with a cross to kiss. How much more sweet Jesus is in humiliation!

Monsignor says they cannot have hysteria in the convent, and that it is an illness from which he prays Jesus to liberate me, otherwise we shall never accomplish anything; and that I shall die because hysteria works on the brain. None of this afflicts me for I bear Jesus with me. He is very much displeased

about the secretary's visit. O Father, if you could see Cecelia! She is very severe, because she thinks I am bad. Father, keep this secret; no one in the world must know that I have written this letter to you. Come quickly to my aid; bad Father, and don't leave me all alone ...

Poor Gemma

P.S. Father, my aunt, hearing that the secretary had been sent by Monsignor, told him all about my happenings. This was wrong; Jesus was displeased. It served to increase the doubts and suspicions that he already entertained. When the secretary went away, he did so with the intention of returning. Now in the household they are most curious, no longer attentive to me. But how happy I am with Jesus alone. How He loves me thus humiliated! Even Cecelia is afflicted; yet I obey her. I bear no malice; I am always silent. I am happy with Jesus alone. You will know of all this from Cecelia. Do write to her . . . Father, write soon, do not leave me alone. If you could see the confusion of all!

Again these two eminent spiritual directors come to sword's point. The Bishop, distrusting his own discernment, submits the matter to his secretary whose wise judgment he values. Father Germano, enlightened by God, sees the Bishop to be in error and speaks his disapproval in no uncertain terms.

Corneio, Tarquinia,

Most Reverend Excellency,

April 3, 1901

Although you do not reply to my letters, yet I cannot abstain from writing, being emboldened by your kindness. This time you will pardon me if I speak with even greater liberty and frankness. You have made, Monsignor, a great mistake, because of which the Lord is very much displeased; and I, in His name, hasten to point it out to you in time to prevent a repetition. I am speaking of the new experiment which you made last week upon Gemma. Do not, Monsignor, send anyone any more, and do not speak any more about it to anyone. Examine the phenomena yourself, when and as much as you will; but do not use other intermediaries. God has entrusted this soul to you, and not to others. Do not consider doctors, not for the love of Jesus; it would be most perilous to the spirit of Gemma and our peace of mind. God has performed miracles to keep the thing hidden. In the midst of a large family the thing passes unobserved; and do we wish to publish it? The priest will talk about it, in secret, no doubt, to another priest, the doctor to his wife; and these will carry it from mouth to mouth, through the squares and cafes. Do not confide in anyone, Monsignor. And then, what need is there? The phenomena of Gemma go on so calmly; why not let them pass unobserved? Is it possible that you still doubt? Then go and see with your own eyes.

The best rule for judging Gemma's case is the interior state. The external facts count for nothing. What ought to strike all is the simplicity, the profound humility, the detachment, the union with God, the abandonment, the desire of suffering, the unconsciousness and ingenuousness of a child in the midst of such extraordinary things.

As to hysteria, Monsignor, do not consider it at all; that would be to fall into absurdity. No, there is not a trace. The modern doctors, even Catholics, are very open to suggestion pertaining to this point. If one judges the phenomena of Gemma, not taking isolated facts but all together, one finds a marvelous accord, which binds them in a perfect harmony. The hysteric, on the other hand, is voluble, inconstant, fickle, futile, restless, etc., because hysteria is a synonym for madness; and whoever has a brain malady is not at peace with himself. The other mistake of direction (pardon me, Monsignor, that I am so frank) is that continual tormenting of Gemma, throwing in her face the hysterical illusion. Why? God does so much to sustain and comfort souls; and we attempt to discomfort them! The other way is to test her, humiliate her, despise her, to make her think she is deluded, and thus harden her to desperation. The Lord will not permit this, but we do ill to go counter to His guidance. See, Monsignor, Gemma will presently find herself in such a state that the vaguest direction will suffice. A simple, calm direction is what is needed now. An oppressive direction would be a great mistake. Again, Monsignor, do not send anyone to see Gemma, not priests or seculars or extraordinary confessors or doctors. Go yourself, or let things go on as they are.

I am bold enough to remind you that the work of the monastery is not the idea of a fevered mind but what God wishes. It should be undertaken. This time I dare to ask for a line in reply, with which you will assure me that you have pardoned my excessive frankness. Bless me, Monsignor.

*Your Excellency's most devoted servant,
Germano, Passionist*

The reasons given by Father Germano did not, however, appear sound to Monsignor Volpi, who hastened to reply:

Most Reverend Father,

You complain justly that I do not answer your letters, but it is not my will which is lacking, it is the time. Your next to the last letter was among those to which I planned to reply, but it was not possible.

Meanwhile I shall reply to your last, saying frankly that the Lord cannot be displeased with the test made by the Confessor and Bishop, and if the young girl wishes that I continue as her spiritual director as I have been for many years, it is necessary that she shall submit to whatever I deem necessary or valuable to her spiritual welfare.

The Secretary whom I sent to examine what happened to the girl on certain days is a person in whom I place complete trust, and on whose discretion I can fully rely. And besides, the works of God do not fear the light, when this is not sought through vainglory.

I see that I have expressed myself very frankly, but do not be displeased. To you verbally I revealed some doubts about what happened to this girl, nor do I know how to decide to bear witness to them without a serious and accurate examination, without restrictions in regard to priests or doctors.

As to the Convent about which you have written to me so many times, do not think that it is a matter easy to bring about. Nevertheless, where the Lord shows His will clearly, very willingly I will give my poor labors.

Commend me to Our Lord, while with deep respect I confirm myself,

*Your devoted servant,
Giovanni, Auxiliary Bishop of Lucca, etc.*

These letters give two different reactions to the same supernatural phenomena. The Church is very cautious in her judgment and action in all such matters. Monsignor Volpi's attitude represents that of the conservative churchman faced with a new experience. Father Germano, having been elected by God to be Saint Gemma's director, received the light to judge her actions correctly as subsequent events showed.

Having finished a letter to Father Germano one day, Gemma gave it to Cecelia to put at the shrine where the angel was accustomed to collect her letters for delivery. This time, however, Cecelia did not place it where Gemma expected, but brought it to Monsignor Volpi, as he had requested. Gemma, not knowing of this procedure, referred to the letter in her next correspondence with Father Germano. Conferring with Gemma later, Cecelia learned that Father Germano had the letter that she believed to be in Monsignor's possession. Upon telling the Monsignor, he immediately produced the letter in question with the date which he had affixed, and which Gemma had forgotten. What was the consternation of Gemma when Cecelia made this known to her and the conclusion that the Monsignor had come to—that she was a fraud and a deceiver. But from a human standpoint, what more reasonable than the Monsignor's decision? He was certain that she had found out that the letter had not gone, and that she, to save face, had written a duplicate to Father Germano. To Gemma and to Father Germano, it was but one more trick of the devil. What it meant to Cecelia and to others was quite different. Gemma writes:

Dear Father,

. . . Do not be afraid, Father, the authentic letter is the one that you have in your hands. Do not give it to anyone; that is what Jesus wishes. But whatever happened after that letter was written, I do not know. Everybody since this affair treats me with severity. Before, they believed that there might be something

good in me and showed great regard for me; now they think differently. Now there is left to me only Jesus, and Jesus alone. Monsignor is very much disturbed about the matter, so that he will hardly hear my confession. He says I am a liar as the devil is a liar; he tries to keep me from receiving Communion, and says if I continue to sin, he will forbid me to write to you. I refrain all I can from speaking of you in confession because Monsignor tells me that it is extraordinary that a priest like you would have believed me so readily and have succumbed thus to the devil. Nevertheless, let us thank Jesus together, Father, for this trial.

Today after Communion I asked Jesus to explain the mystery to me somewhat, and he said: "O Daughter, now has come the time when your strength will be most cruelly tested, and I will give you whatever grace is necessary for you. Be calm, because I am always in your heart." Blessed be Jesus! How calm and content I should be if my flesh did not rebel, but I shall try to make it subject to the spirit. It is the devil who is at work in me. Yesterday he forbade me to give so much thought to Jesus, and in going to Holy Communion to be like everybody else and not give so much bother to Signora Cecelia; and now that poor aunt is so afraid that it is the work of the devil, that at night she does not come to see me any more; in the morning she leaves me alone and cares no more for me, saying to me at every word that I speak: "I do not wish to be deluded." O Father, this I had already foreseen; what shall I do? If it were not for Mea, [one of the servants] I should be always alone. But then have I really deceived everyone? What will become of my soul? I think of my soul, at Communion, which Monsignor thinks is continually in the state of sin; I die of grief, of grief for the great wrong that I may have done to Jesus. I do not wish to deceive anyone. Pardon me for saying it; but I don't think I deceive as Cecelia, Monsignor, and all the others believe. Help me, I want to be good, I want to obey. Don't keep me here any longer; put me in some place in Rome, near you; I die of sorrow, I don't want to sin any more; I am in peril; I am in peril in soul and in body. I am in Hell. . . . No one loves me in this house; all are very severe. No one speaks to me any more but Jesus, Jesus is always with me.

But if Signora Cecelia is afraid of the devil, what shall I say when I am all alone? Even now I feel myself destroyed, finished. Jesus, Jesus! ... I am alone writing in the study of Signor Lorenzo. O Father. . . . Jesus, make me share in your sufferings. Let me suffer lovingly, suffer for you, Jesus, and die suffering. What if I be deprived of Jesus? O Jesus, have I really lost your grace? But even in the midst of so much unworthiness I love you fervently. I shall die, Jesus, I shall die but for love of you. Father, I take courage; the smaller I feel myself to be the more I feel the love of Jesus, His love inebriates me . . . though Cecelia and the others do not love me. I remain alone; Father, do not leave me here alone.

No one knows that I have written this letter.

Father Germano, having received this letter wrote at once to Signora Cecelia to reassure her anew and commend to her with paternal affection the dear Gemma:

Be assured that the letter which I have in my hands is not trickery. And be sure that soon light will be shed upon that which is in Monsignor's hands. To Gemma, then, do not be reproachful; be with her again affectionate and loving. Believe that Jesus is in your house in her person. For now, tell her she is to refrain absolutely from writing to me (without, however, letting her know that I said it.) If she has something to say to me, let her tell me directly through her Angel or mine.

If it is Jesus who has given you, Gemma, this humiliation, who are we to say, "Why have you done this?" I should be very much disturbed therefore, if dear Gemma is distressed about it. It would be a dreadful sign of pride. Oh, do we not merit worse for our sins and ingratitude and lack of correspondence? In regard to strength, if we are humble, Jesus will give us a great deal. Therefore, Gemma of Jesus is not to vilify herself, and also is to guard against saying or thinking that the confessor is mistaken or was mistaken. This also would be pride. Instead, humble yourself and say; "Behold the poor, miserable, ignorant, foolish, unworthy servant of God; do with me what is pleasing to You." Do you understand, Gemma? Do not reflect so much; do not indulge in so much recrimination, but suffer in silence, and with humility. For now, go to Father Vallini to confess or to whomsoever you are told. If the present tribulation increases, be firm as a rock. If the Giannini's should want to drive you from the house as a malicious person, it is not my wish that you go elsewhere. Your adopted mother, Cecelia, and I, your father, will stand by you. Oh, I will not abandon you, dear child; in all your travail you can count upon me. And then there is Jesus, the dear Spouse of our souls. Our dear Jesus of Gemma! And then there are the Angels. Our dear Angels! What could you do more than you are doing?

And he concludes with these words to Cecelia:

My blessing at all times to you and to this dear girl.

Again Gemma writes:

June 29, 1901

If I had well reflected that humiliations are for Jesus the necessary path to glory, I would not have been so cast down by these happenings. Who will give me holy humility? And to think that every day I go to Holy Communion and unite myself to Jesus, fount of humility. I am full of the wretchedness of pride. Jesus, Jesus will give it to me, and also He will add to this all other virtues. Blessed be Jesus!

Having played his tricks with success on Monsignor Volpi, Cecelia, and the Giannini family, the devil turns his attention to Julia, Gemma's devoted sister whom she had left at home. Julia, annoyed by unkind rumors concerning Gemma, pleads with her to return home. The devil confuses the child and seems veritably to take possession of her, driving her to strange conduct.

July 8, 1901

Father, I received your letter about an hour ago; how many things happened Sunday! About half-past one Julia began weeping wishing at all costs for me to go home. She kept it up until evening, so that it was arranged by Cecelia for her to come to sleep here. Whenever anyone asked her why she wanted me to leave here, she replied that the Passionists had counseled her to do this. At other times she replied with strange words that only the devil could have suggested to her. I, at last, to frighten her, took the pen to write to you to tell you about these matters, and she took the pen from me and would not give it back. When I insisted that I was going to write to you, she screamed and seemed to be out of her head. Father, it was not my gentle Julia at all who was acting that way, so do not think ill of her. She is a good girl, and she did not act of her own free will. And strange to say, this happened just after your letter came yesterday. Immediately before she was calm and happy with me. Afterwards I recall her laughing at me in church in the morning. It was a very strange day. The devil is using Julia for his own purposes. How many times, Father, during the day, I heard these words in my ears: "War, war to your father, and to your souls!" And this is a cry that I have heard many times in the past day, many times . . . Ought I to go home?' If I should at the very first sign of illness they would run for the doctor. Father, Father! Signora Cecelia has almost yielded about sending me home. Monsignor says to wait to see what ought to be done. O Father if you do not have a remedy at once, what will happen to me? Poor Jesus!

The loss of my senses after Communion and when I am with Jesus becomes constantly more frequent. Father, what will become of me? Do something, soon before Monsignor returns Friday; because he will at once make me out of obedience go home to satisfy Julia. What shall I do? The devil wishes to conquer. Today I heard him laughing, and I heard it so clearly that it still rings in my ears. If I were in my own home Father, with the doctor, with a sister who has already told so much about my affair to people around, what would I do?

Send for me to go away from here now; there is no longer any time. If it were not for this illness sent by Jesus I would make the sacrifice of leaving my dear Cecelia for the sake of obedience. . . .

Bless me, Gemma

Gemma did not return home and the devil having failed in this attempt, planned anew. Gemma tells us the devil is unchained and thinks to work havoc in the mind of the provincial concerning Father Germano.

. . . And the devil, Father? How I fear him! For fifteen days I have not been to confession. Monsignor is away and returns the ninth of September, and I am in darkness. I sin constantly and yet Jesus does not weary and still supports me. Father, the devil is unchained. Woe, to you, and to Father Provincial. The Monsignor said he will act soon. If Jesus is satisfied, it matters little. About Monsignor you will learn from Father Provincial . . . but I tell you again the devil is unchained. Would it not be better, Father, if you sent for me to be at home near you; here what will happen to me? Everybody, together with the devil is

against you and me. But Jesus, Jesus is with us. Bless me always. The poor Gemma.

Cecelia gives intimation of the turn of events in a letter to Father Germano:

4th of August

As you already know from the provincial, how well the devil is served these days! Gemma is continually advised by Jesus to be on her guard. One day a letter came to Father Provincial wherein he was urged not to bother with Gemma any more, because he, the anonymous writer of the letter, had had enough light from Jesus to guide Gemma; that he abandon her and advise Father Germano also not to bother with her any more.

Father Provincial did not pay any attention to this anonymous letter; he told Gemma to continue writing the autobiography. This anonymous card Father Provincial put in an envelope to send to Father Germano, and he told Gemma to have it taken by the angel. Jesus said that from this card Gemma would have a thousand humiliations. Since the enemy obtained nothing with this card, he tried something different. He put a letter in the room of Father Provincial, written apparently by Father Germano, which said that he was going to abandon Gemma at once; that he had had sufficient illumination from Venerable Gabriel to know that she was a hypocrite; and that he would tell Monsignor to keep her from going to Holy Communion; that he would tell Monsignor to send her away from the house if Cecelia did not want to ruin twelve innocent souls. Signora Cecelia tells of the efforts of the demon to discredit Gemma with everyone, even with her, but she assures Father Germano that she resists the temptation by running to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. She also says that she knows that she is unworthy to be the guardian of Gemma, that she loves her constantly more and more.

Father Germano replied to this letter of Signora Cecelia from Rome the 14th of August:

Yesterday evening I received two letters, one from you, the other from Gemma, both posted the 4th and carried first to Corneto and then to Isola, then again to Corneto and finally they came here. I have had no letter as yet from the Father Provincial. I have written to him once only when he was in Florence, but not of Lucca and not even mentioning you or Gemma. Thus it is proven that the evil one has written the two famous letters. I do not marvel at all at this conduct of the enemy; in fact I hold it as a good sign. God desires expiation and therefore permits the devil to scourge us. You do ill to distress yourself. Do you think God is afraid of the devil? Or does not know how to be a faithful spouse to the souls he loves? Woman of little faith! Certainly prudence is necessary, for the enemy is astute. But with faith in God, with prayers together with prudence, we shall overcome. I shall give you further counsels if I hear from Father Provincial. . . . Have no fear, Sister, God will aid you. The devil has no power over us except that given by Jesus. . . .

Chapter XII • Consummation

"I sought him and found him not; I called and he did not answer me."

THE STRIPPING had been thorough. The Evil One had been foiled; Jesus had achieved His purpose. Gemma was but stronger in her trust, certain of security with Jesus though all else should fail her. Jesus would put that trust to further test. Was she ready to lay herself upon the cross and be nailed thereto? His invitation reads:

This morning after Communion Jesus said to me: "If it is genuine, that affection that so many times you have told Me you preserve for Me in your heart, I wish that you bear engraved upon it My image. Guard it! Behold Me there, transfixed, derided by all, dead on the cross. And I invite you to die on the cross with Me."

I remained in silence; I could say not one word; yet, why have I no inclination to do this which Jesus wishes? O Father, praise be to Jesus! May He be praised Who keeps me in this state of weakness which is certainly better for me. But why do I so cringe? Why do I complain so much who am but a handful of earth?

Why did she shrink? Why did she thus fear her weakness? From the beginning she had mistrusted herself. Never was she so terribly afraid of deceiving and of being deceived as during the last year, 1901, all through her stripping. Through Father Germano Jesus reassures her, and thus strengthens still more her sense of security in Him.

Here is something that you must decide. This morning for a while, before two, I was awake; all at once a host of thoughts came into my mind to disturb me. Thoughts of this sort: "Am I, perhaps, deceived? Could all these things that happen to me lead to my ruin? And is Father Germano deceived?" In this struggle I continued—do you know, how long, Father? Until five o'clock. I do not know where Jesus had gone. He did not give me half a word. At last He was a little moved with compassion, and taking away my senses a little He let me hear, it seemed to me these words; "Daughter, do not fear. It is I that work in you. I will never leave you, be assured." . . . Finally I felt such happiness at the words that it gave me confidence. Father, tell me about this, but do not write if you are not certain.

March, 1901

My Father,

Monsignor does not wish me to write even a line unless Signora Cecelia reads it. Therefore, Father, this is the last private letter I may write to you, and I want to tell you so many things.

I have such fear for my soul, I have fear of being damned, because yesterday I heard a priest, who came to see Mamma (Cecelia) tell that there was a nun who had the signs in her hands, in her feet, in her head, and heart; she went into ecstasies, and the whole thing was a delusion. Will it be so with me, Father? Am I a deceiver, shall I go to Hell? I want you to explain to me what deceit means, because I do not want to deceive anyone. Commend me to Jesus, I want to be good and sincere and obedient . . .

Father Germano answers:

Gemma of Jesus—yes. Gemma of Jesus, and not of others, and so much the less of that rascal of a Chiappino; Gemma of Jesus, always and only of Jesus. O why do you let yourself, my daughter, get such nonsense into your head and resist him whom God gives you for guide, and master in the life of the spirit? No, no, it is not true that you are deluded. Whoever makes you believe this is an enemy of Jesus, a deceiver. It is not true that you have feigned; it is not true that you have committed the sins you speak of. Your true sins and defects are those I have so often pointed out to you. Take pains to correct these; give no thought to the others. And then, if Jesus perhaps has ceased to be that dear pitiful God, merciful, enamoured of our souls, will it always be so? O Jesus, O Jesus, Gemma is all yours. Send the Archangel Saint Michael with the sword to drive away from this dear child the brutish demon who gives her such anguish. Send the dear Angel Saint Raphael to give back to her the strength to overcome this physical and moral defeat in which she is at present. O Jesus, heal the dear Gemma, and do not permit the enemy to do her any harm. Farewell, daughter, I bless you.

Later another trial seems to be the realization of what a burden she has become to Cecelia:

Father,

Cecelia went with the children to Saint Paul of the Angels She wanted me to go too, but Jesus did not wish it. She wept so much before going and said: “What shall I do about you? I cannot always be near you; I have other things to do.” And I replied thus: “If I thought I should not be ill and was certain of not becoming unconscious, I would make, if Jesus wishes it, the sacrifice of not seeing you any more; but the thought of having to be with other people and of becoming unconscious, fills me with pain and sorrow, and has made me so attached to you. And Cecelia sighed, sighed greatly and said, weeping, “What shall I ever do?” . . .

How Cecelia felt regarding Gemma, she tells in this letter:

April 6, 1902

Father,

I have received a letter from Serafina, in which she says that she will take Gemma to Rome . . . but I speak with all sincerity; that does not seem to me to be the will of God. She is very well off here and I ask you, please, not to take her from me unless you are going to put her into a convent. Even in that case I will not be too eager but I will submit . . . To Serafina, say that she should come to see Gemma but must not take her away. The household are all against her going, particularly Matteo and Annetta, and they say, “Why is it necessary to take her away from here?” Does she lack anything? No, unless she goes into the convent she is better off with us. So tell dear sister Serafina that she must not take it amiss; it would be too great a sacrifice for us to send Gemma from our home. Those days when I was without her I was nearly mad. Then let us not think of it for now; if Jesus wishes it, He will let it be known clearly . . . To take her away now, as things are, I can’t think of. I could not deprive myself of her unless it were your absolute command, dear Father. But you won’t do that, at least for now, will you? If the affairs of Gemma should change, then I would look upon making the sacrifice as the Holy Will of God.

Still Gemma pleads with Father Germano on this point:

April, 1902

Father,

Send Serafina to take me to live with her at Rome. Do not put any more obstacles in the way; you know that she would come willingly. Send her to me! O Father, what is the will of God for me, do you know? Am I to go to Rome with you or to stay here at Lucca? Father, listen; I tell you in secret. Signora Cecelia writes to you that she does not wish to send me to Rome, yet why does she not remain with me as she used to do when I become unconscious in the

presence of Jesus?

Father Germano visits Gemma and consoles her personally in the month of June, of which visit she writes to Mother Giuseppa:

Reverend Mother,

Blessed be Jesus! May Jesus be thanked! Be content, Mother, because my soul is no longer in peril; my father has come; with his words he has illuminated me, and I live anew in the grace of God. Without realizing it, I walked so long in darkness, and I was bound by the cords of the demon; but now I walk through his aid, in the Holy Light of God.

Mother, the good Jesus has made you understand everything, hasn't he? I have told you everything; have I made things clear? How well I feel. I had indeed been tempted to lose faith in my Father. My enemy, that wretched devil, who is full of infinite deceit; tried to make me see so clearly that Father Germano wished me to lose my soul. I was so thoroughly convinced that Father Germano had a hard time to dissuade me from this thing. Jesus illuminated me, I knew myself, I knew my condition. I see that the devil is laboring and exerting himself to bring about my ruin; I beg you to ask Jesus to make him flee and to drive him away before he destroys me. Do it always and I will do for you whatever you desire. Pray that the devil may have no consolation from me, but pain always, and that Jesus be always glorified.

While bravely struggling with temptation she had been making an oblation of herself not only by detachment from creatures but by new strange sufferings.

On opening this letter, Father mine, you will say, "I wonder what new thing that madcap Gemma will have to tell me this time?" It is indeed a new thing that I have never before experienced. Get ready to listen. Well, you know it is customary that on Thursday and Friday, during the day, Jesus gives me some little present (suffering) and to the usual ones he has now added another very precious one this week. He made me experience some blows of a whip all over my body, quite painful, Father. But I know that it can't be anything compared to the terrible blows of my poor Jesus. You recollect how we prayed together that Jesus would take away every external sign and, see, He has instead added another. Praise be to Jesus. May He be infinitely thanked.

But he assured me that He would satisfy me by taking away the signs, adding: "However, I will increase your suffering and a different life will begin for you." You will be satisfied, won't you, my Father, even you, now that Jesus has made me this promise? But I need a little help from you.

Father, my heart still continues the violent palpitation.

In the letter that Cecelia sent to Father Germano together with that of Gemma, the good lady began by saying:

Father, I have no words with which to describe to you the scene of Thursday and Friday; what strange things are happening, Father, Blessed be Jesus, Who has so absorbed Gemma in Himself! You would believe that you saw Jesus Himself scourged. Gemma has written to you, but she has not told the hundredth part of what she suffered. . . . She endured those blows all night and until Friday morning at ten; because I saw that she could bear no more, I said to her: "Father Germano wants you to be well; enough now." And would you believe it, she felt better immediately, and thanked me for making her do this, because she said she really was not able to bear the scourging longer.

But after dinner, she returned to her room and suffered again until half past two when Jesus relieved her because as she herself said, Jesus had compassion on her because she was a little child.

Cecelia wrote to Father Germano on the 16th of October:

Gemma suffers terribly. It seems as if her soul would depart at any moment; from the distress that seizes her, three ribs have been dislocated. Under obedience to the confessor, she had me feel those near the heart today, and I perceived that they were much elevated; they could be felt outside. I believe that it is torture, and I suffer very much.

Now Jesus was asking her to lay herself upon the cross and be crucified. The letters of 1902 and 1903 tell of this final holocaust. Father Germano commanded her again and again to pray herself back to health, but to no avail.

. . . *With regard to your health, in the name of Jesus, I command you to return to good health, to take on flesh by the end of the year. Ask Jesus to let this come about through holy obedience on your part.*

Signora Cecelia said in a short note:

Today, June 27, 1902, in an ecstasy, Gemma said: "Jesus, we will soon be at the end of your month, June. I have to carry out the command of Father Germano, under obedience, to return to health."

Concerning this command of Father Germano for a return to health, Gemma, in the same month, writes:

In regard to your command laid upon me to be in good health, I have something to tell you. Jesus, I hope, will let me be obedient; indeed, I am certain that, by the end of next month, I will not reject food any more. But Father, it seems to me that Jesus inspires me to ask a favor of you. Do not be angry, Father, I will do as you say. It is nothing wrong that I ask of you. You may have many reasons to offer, but these reasons really don't count. Are you willing that I ask Jesus the grace of not being able as long as I live to distinguish any taste in food any more? Father, I want this favor. I hope Jesus will concede it to me; however, I shall be satisfied as He wills. Do consider it....

Jesus then makes a pact with Gemma:

July 9, 1902

Dear Father,

Today Jesus and I made a pact concerning food. Father, food shall have no taste for me anymore. Jesus will let me retain it, however, as you request, if I take only very little. If I take much I will reject it as before. After the pact I spoke with Jesus of my health and in your name, Father, I asked Him again if I could be well and gain a little flesh according to your wish. This was His reply: "Tell your father that this time I will allow it, but only for a very short time." I understood not what he meant. Will you explain it to me?

Father Germano let her ask Jesus for the extinction of taste, but only on condition that she retain the food that she ate.

The time of her crucifixion was at hand. Under what circumstances would she receive the first blow of the hammer? and who should deal it? In July, 1902, when she returned from Via Reggio, it happened:

July 27, 1902

Dear Father,

Monsignor has required a certain obedience of me. He said, "When you go to Lucca, tell Signora Cecelia that as soon as you arrive, she is to call the family doctor to make you a visit, because you are ill." I have done this and have committed myself to it willingly. We returned today from Via Reggio and found your letter. Father, though Jesus continues to increase my sorrows He also increases His gentleness towards this vile creature. Every day, though, He offers me also a chalice of consolation, of comfort, of joy, and of love. Today, as I looked at Annetta, Euphemia, and the others of the household. I began thinking: How pleasant it would be to live as they do, without any extraordinary phenomena, and a thousand strange ideas. But Jesus restored me to peace with these words, "Daughter does it not please you to do My will?" That made me calm at once, I was no longer disturbed.

In regard to my health I can retain food, that is as much as is necessary, and yet I do not get well. Father when Monsignor sees me getting so thin, he sends

for the doctor. This time the doctor will come to subject me to that terrible humiliation again, for he wishes to have me thoroughly examined. They are afraid here that I am dying.

Cecelia, though torn between her duty to Monsignor and her concern for Gemma, calls for the doctor; and Father Germano approves;

August 15, 1902

Dear Cecelia:

You have done well to have had the visit of the doctor; you will do equally well to administer the medicine prescribed though I believe it will be quite futile. Jesus will take care of this little soul; though you see her in agony, remember Jesus will take care of her.

August 17, 1902

I repeat, do not be disturbed about Gemma. Jesus will not permit anything to happen. Give her the medicine. I think the time will come when Jesus will wish to leave this poor little body without any food.

Premonitions of death which she had she now communicates to Father Germano:

October 27, 1902

Reverend Father,

It may be imagination, but I have already had two strong premonitions of approaching death; I should like to see you: I have so many things to do before I die.

Jesus, calls me to Himself, I believe, and soon. And I should like to have you, Monsignor, and my good mother, Cecelia, near me. Certainly, Father, I do not know, but I have had two strong premonitions of preparing myself to die. What a lovely grace! I attribute it to my dear sister, Julia, who went to Paradise eight days ago. At once, Father, as soon as you receive a telegram, depart. Who knows, it may not be for some months; but be tranquil; Jesus will let me know the time. I have had clear signs, I tell you frankly, of approaching death, and I thank Him from my heart, but I do not know the time or the hour. Pray and listen to the instruction of Jesus. Come supplied with the Papal Benediction.

Gemma

Dear Father:

I was lying on my bed, though not asleep, when I seemed to see a beautiful lady approaching me, and about to kiss me; I cried and called Cecelia. I do not know whether she came for I lost consciousness and was no longer in the world.

I at once made a thousand protests, and my celestial mother looked at me, smiled, and said: "Dear daughter, how much pleasing incense you give me."

Father, forgive me if I submitted to her loving embrace too soon, contrary to your commands. She took me in her arms, and I was on the point of death from so much sweetness . . . How many caresses! . . . she loves me so . . . She said some words then that I did not understand: "Daughter make yourself perfect in spirit, and soon . . ." Here I do not know what happened. That "soon" gave my heart so violent a convulsion that my mother put her beautiful hand upon it; I could not speak, but interiorly I asked her to reply; I opened my eyes, with those I spoke to her. "Tell your Father (Father Germano), that if he does not give you more thought, I will take you to Paradise." She kissed me, saying: "If not, soon, sooner than he thinks, we shall be together." She left me and my

soul swam in joy.

Father, after such experiences how the world appears! I asked her to let me have a little health, a little more of life; she promised me, repeating these words: “Tell your Father that I will give it to you but if he does not take thought of you, I will bring you with me, immediately.”

I am content; I am suffering continually, but I am in peace; I ask no more to go into the convent if a better place awaits me. I asked a sign from my Mother so that I should know that she was truly the Mother of God. And love Him so much. O Father, you may well say to this, as many others say, that I am mad. O Father! To suffer a little, to burn in sweet fire a little, to die a little, to destroy myself is little enough; Father, what then shall I give Jesus?

I do not know how to tell Him or give Him anything, but to do anything else. Every day I consecrate myself to Him, all that I am, without any reserve.

Forgive me for all the foolish words, which are in this letter, pray hard for me.

Bless me every moment,

Gemma

Dear Father:

Jesus continues with His usual sweetness. I live upon earth, but on this earth I seem like a lost soul. Is this the time of which you spoke once? May God’s will be done! I am afraid, Father, I am afraid for my soul. Help me and if you see my soul in peril, have no regard for human respect, do all that Jesus. . . .

Father:

Father, who would have expected this flight of Jesus today? Jesus, today while all in festal array in honor of the Feast of His Holy Mother, left me all alone by myself. Oh, where has my Jesus gone? Why does He leave me alone? Oh, I know Father, that Jesus has every reason to flee from me but if Life is going to leave me He must return because I feel bound in fetters. The same flames consume me still though Jesus is not here. Oh, for that time when Jesus consoled me! How quickly it passed.

Now I am alone, abandoned, Father I want to suffer; no one can console me, for Jesus is no more with me. But you tell Jesus that I am His, and forever I shall be His. If He wishes to flee from me, I shall always follow Him. I trust that He will return soon. Will He?

Utterances of Gemma given in ecstatic prayer while rapt in contemplation and recorded by Signora Cecelia during the last months of her life manifest her dereliction of soul while stretched upon the cross.

Is it true, you are leaving me, Jesus? Already I notice your withdrawal. What will become of me? But why, Jesus, do you not answer me? In what have I offended you? And what is the use of living if I lose you? How many times must I repeat that I love you more than my life, and that for you I despise it? But do you not see it? For I have renounced all others. Oh what is then, Jesus, the motive which constrains you to abandon me? Come, tell me Jesus, how have I offended you? Is it that I have not preserved my heart pure enough?

Then, Jesus, you are abandoning me? When I shall see you no more, when I shall hear your voice no longer, do not forget my poor soul . . . Think of it, Jesus, help it in its moments of trial . . . You see, my Savior, how weak is my virtue, when you shall have abandoned me entirely, when I shall feel your presence no longer, when no longer I shall feel your Divine Blood circulate in my veins . . . what shall I do . . . Oh! Before your departure, I would like to expire of love in this very place, but without anyone knowing it . . . Saints of heaven, lend me your fervor; tell it to Jesus for He listens no more to me. Teach me how to love Him.

And you are still resisting, Jesus? See my heart so overcome with such a violent desire . . . and Oh! not to be able to satisfy it! . . . I aspire only to love you, Jesus! Do not let me sigh any more; I wish to die and to go with you. I beg of you, Jesus, bring closer to your burning heart mine which is frozen . . . Oh! How cold I feel! A little fire, Jesus, a little fire!

Why, Savior, conceal anything from you? You perceive so well the inmost secrets of my heart. ... If, in order to please you, sacrifice is necessary, may it be so, the sacrifice is accomplished. . . . All my days have been with crosses. O holy cross, I have embraced you, but the devil would like to inspire me with many complaints against you. I am cast down, I tremble and moan at the thought that you will fail me, have pity on me, Savior, have pity on me! Behold me alone. I call you often during the day, I seek you at every moment . . . But you, where have you concealed yourself? And of what usefulness will be to me the life which you have given me if I lose you?

O my God, on what shall I resolve? Am I no longer for you a prey for Love? Of whom then would I be the prey? of whom? Do not permit it, O Savior, do not permit it. But rather, please deliver me.

Oh! I am waiting, Savior, I am waiting for the moment of finding myself with you, completely united to you, to place myself entirely in your hands, and then to make you a thousand protestations. You have indeed reason not to wish to return to me. Oh, if I had only preserved my heart a little purer for you.

Are you not going to say anything to me? Neither yes nor no? Neither a word of approbation nor a reprimand? What is the use, Jesus, of remaining in this world? O Savior, where are you leaving me? I am tormented from morning to night. You tell me: "You are ungrateful, and I love you just the same." And now? . . . Come back, come back as formerly; I promise you all that you wish.

You say I delay? Is it I who am delaying or is it you? And you are leaving me thus? And we are leaving each other without even a word? Are you angry? Deliver me, please deliver me, lighten my steps. Where have you gone, my love? Where have you hidden yourself? Why am I still living? Make me die, I wish it. I desire it, but only to come to you.

Where have you gone, my Jesus? Infinite Beauty, where are you hiding? Where must I seek you, O Jesus? Show yourself to me at least once. Have you told me that I would no longer see you on earth? I do not recall. I would like to contemplate you, O Jesus. But I feel you, and that ought to suffice me. . . . When I was very small, they assured me that you were always present . . . Oh! How does it happen that I cannot now see you? Destroy this body, O Jesus, break these chains. I shall be satisfied only when my delivered soul shall be alone to you. When shall I be entirely thine?

O love of infinite sweetness . . . O sweetness of infinite love!

The last letter dictated by Gemma shortly before her death is significant in the fact that it is addressed to Mary, not to Father Germano:

March 18, 1903

My Mother,

Pardon my calling you this. My weak condition continues but I am satisfied. Between fear and hope I abandon myself to God. "If I am always with you," Jesus says to me, "who can be your conquerer? . . . Why then, Daughter, does not your hope increase? Daughter, humble yourself under My powerful hand. Be certain that your prayers will always obtain some grace from Me; although your love be little, I will increase it; although at first sight, your efforts seem to you to have borne no fruit." At the last He said to me: "Gemma, do not weary through temptations but resist them always, without letting yourself to be overcome, and do not fear; if you resist temptation, and persevere in resistance, the battle will bring you victory."

O Mother, pray always to Jesus for me. . . . Dear Mother, I am not at all well, you know: my life is consumed. And as to my soul. . . . O God, I am tormented by wicked and impure thoughts, but Jesus tells me to turn to you Mother, saying, "Daughter, commend yourself daily to her; she will make you beautiful, gentle, amiable, because she can win souls and save them; she will make you tranquil and at peace." And in spite of these words, I lose spirit and weep.

I am so unworthy not only of the love of Jesus and you, most Holy Mary, but of all the kindness of others, especially of my Father Germano, my dear foster mother. I give them both so little thought, and Cecelia is deeply hurt. O my God! . . . O my Jesus, do not abandon me, because I will be good . . . Dear Mother, so many victims are needed. . . .

I have almost no fear of the devil, although many times I am alone, at night, full of fear, with convulsions and on the point of swooning, as if I had an enormous weight on me and could not move, and a thousand other things. Moaning bitterly, I turn to Jesus, promising love, the love of all. Mother, I have promised so many to remember them before Jesus, but Jesus is hidden; He shows His love to me so little now, you must not withdraw. I will say the *Nunc Dimittis* at my last moments.

I have many, many things to tell you, Mother. I will refrain, however, because Monsignor says to me, “The things you have to say, say them only to Father Germano and to me, and to no one else.” How my celestial Mother loves me! She says often to me: “Gemma, wait for me; I, too, am sighing for you. As many times have you offended me, just so many times have I blessed you! Do you think that I say this to shame you? No, I say it to excite in you love for me.”

Mamma (Forgive me for using this name which comes to my lips so often, I know why.)

O Mother! Blessed be Jesus, Blessed be Mary. Jesus will soon vindicate His love for the most ungrateful of His creatures. Pray for me, tell Jesus I will be good and obedient; but I wish to go soon to Paradise if it is pleasing to Him.

Bless me, I am poor

Gemma

I am in the house of my aunt; no longer with the Giannini's, but I am content and tranquil in spirit.

This letter indicates that Gemma had died to all creatures on earth in those moments of desolation and isolation, and while waiting for Jesus was not of this world at all.

On Holy Saturday, April 11 1903, Jesus came. Gemma had received the Viaticum, and all retired for a moment's respite when He stole upon her. Of that meeting non were witness, but of her Easter joy, who could doubt?

Conclusion • Love's Victim

*"Behold my beloved speaketh to me!
Arise, make haste, my love, my dove,
My beautiful one and come . . . I found Him Whom my
soul loveth: I hold Him: and I will not let Him go . . ."*

OVERTONES such as these ring upon the ear throughout the letters and recorded ecstasies of Saint Gemma. They are the glad refrain of all souls that have become victims of Divine Love. And who are the victim souls – where are they to be found? All around us, they are – a mother or a father, a brother or a sister, a friend or neighbor. In externals they are as the rest of folks, leading normal lives, interested in affairs about them, even though primarily concerned with the interests of God.

A few letters, still extant, show Saint Gemma in another light than that of the penitent seeking spiritual directions:

To Gemma's sister-in-law, Assuntina

Beloved Assuntina,

With great pleasure I see arrive the day of your espousals because of which I repeat a thousand times: Happy greetings! It is not a duty I am performing, it is rather a joy that delights me. I shall repeat it now and forever: May happiness attend you! This is the fervent wish that every night I shall send to heaven for you. As you see I have no intention but your felicity and this shall remain ever constantly in my thought.

I should have written you before but I am sure you will excuse me, and will pardon my negligence.

Likewise in the name of my aunts, I send good wishes for your happiness. We shall all pray to Jesus that He will deign to preserve you for many long years in the affection of my brother, Guido, and as a blessing to the whole family.

May God hear my prayers,
Gemma

A playful note to Father Germano on the occasion of a dignity conferred upon him:

To my good Father, Consultor of the Holy Indulgences and Relics!

But this is a very little honor that has been given to you; I expected you would receive much greater, for example, Cardinal; but this will come another time, won't it? No, no, Father, be satisfied, I will speak to Jesus about it. . . . Enough for now. Why is my poor Father so frightened at his new dignity? But now what shall I call you? Father, Monsignor, Excellency? I shall say Father, shall I not?

Will you go to live at Rome now or remain still at Cometo? And what about poor Gemma? Has Jesus said nothing to you today about her? But my blessed Father, do not take on any more responsibilities; it is too much trouble. You will soon know many things of importance from the Angel. Adieu Father, please

Jesus. The poor Gemma.

In the interests of family and friends, Gemma is urged to write to Father Germano for assistance:

Father,

Today, about eleven, Signor Lorenzo became ill, losing the use of his hand. The doctors declared it to be progressive paralysis. It is a very severe blow to the family and I, myself, am disturbed. But now he is in bed and comfortable, I hope, for the present. I have written because the others have begged me to let you know.

Bless us all. Poor
Gemma

For her foster mother she offers some years of her life:

If you would permit it, Jesus, I would not delay for a moment to take upon myself all the illness of my good mother. Jesus, will you hear me? If it be Thy will

The Saint was suddenly heard. Signora Cecelia wrote to Father Germano:

In my last letter I forgot to speak of my illness and the cure. Yes, it is true. I felt near to death when suddenly I was entirely well. I attribute it to dear Gemma.

She urges Father Germano to help in the conversion of a sinner:

My good Father,

Happy you, who in these days can make the holy exercises of retreat . . . rather no, happy both, because I am always united to you! I shall follow you through all and together we shall try to convert my sinner, and if at the end of the exercises, he is not converted, woe, woe to you! (You threaten me always, so I shall threaten you . . . not for revenge, you know, but so that you will pray hard.)

Father, you always recommend peace to me ... If I am severe, taciturn, it is only external; internally I enjoy peace as I almost never have before, and I shall enjoy it even more when my sinner is converted.

Another plea for a soul in danger reads:

Father, why do you not love that soul? I know all, you know, all; and why instead of being disgusted and using that wretched expression “abandoned” do you not call her to yourself, speak the truth to her, show her affection as you do to me who is a thousand times worse than she? If you can see her, all right, if not, write to her at once; then If she does not return to the path Jesus wishes, and abandon every trace of sin, let Jesus abandon her. . . .

A third such reads:

A pact, dear Father. I am thinking of N.N.—and you ought to—as a sinful soul who is in mortal sin and cannot find the way to converting himself. I am almost certain that he will become converted, but I pray that, when he is, the Madonna will take him at once; if not, he will certainly fall into the usual abyss. Am I doing right in praying thus? I should like today at once, Father, to have you offer the sacrifice of the Mass for my poor sinner. Help me to save him, and I will help you to know about N.N. if God wills. Be not hasty in adopting this word “abandoned” . . . Jesus never says it, and you use it often; wait, wait. . . .

A note of thanks reads:

Father,

I am writing, having been asked to do so in the name of the family. They all thank you sincerely for the little pictures that you have sent and, to tell the truth, not so much for the pictures as for the thought you have had of all; they wish you to continue to assist them with your prayers, as you have always done. Pray that the children grow good and virtuous, that their parents conduct them in the right way through their good example.

In short, all thank you, and I too. Signora Cecelia thanks you most of all because you have sent her most. Signor Lorenzo, instead of thanking you, since you sent him nothing, sends greetings.

Signora Cecelia has asked me to tell you that the affairs of the family continue fairly good; pray hard because there is great need. Bless us all and in particular poor

Gemma

The College of Jesus, alluded to before in a previous chapter, was a society established by Father Germano in Rome for the purpose of the study of Christian perfection. The members, stimulated by him, not only were eager to know the more perfect way of living, but had a holy rivalry among them in the practice of the spiritual life. Father Germano had enrolled Gemma in this society and through her influence had it established at Lucca. Letters to fellow members of this institute are numerous. One is here included:

Most Reverend Father,

Blessed be Jesus! Yesterday I learned from Signora Carlotta that you had been changed from the monastery; I was sorry, because I should have liked to see you before you left, but I shall content myself with writing you a line, to remind you to keep yourself in the spirit of our institute, a thing which is almost obligatory for us who are enrolled in the Sacred College of Jesus.

Father, do you not know that Jesus loves the members of the Sacred College very much? Thus He keeps us united upon earth to bind us even more closely together in Heaven. Let us trust in this ... let us trust without fear. Certainly the fear of not loving God is terrible to me; it does not leave me in peace for a single moment. But do you know what makes fear vanish? It is love. Yes, love casts out fear.

Bless me,
Gemma

In two aspects the victim-soul is distinctive, in suffering and in prayer. Suffering is not only accepted with resignation, but is desired and, when inspired by God, is sought as a privilege—to participate with Jesus in reparation for the outraged glory of His Father. With Saint Gemma's attitude toward suffering the reader has been acquainted.

With chosen souls, victims of divine love, prayer becomes but the overflow of that Love. All petitions made by them have for their primary object the glory of God. They intermingle with praise, adoration, and oblation. Gradually their prayer grows into a thing of quiet repose and childlike wonderment. Even in their more exalted moments when God ravishes them in an ecstasy of joy in the prayer of union, there is still a quiet absorption of the soul lost in adoration.

At the request of Father Germano such prayers were preserved by Signora Cecelia. As the foster mother of Gemma she was present when Gemma made her Holy Hour in honor of the Agony of Jesus every Thursday between eleven and twelve P.M. What this privilege meant to her is told in a letter written by her to Father Germano:

Now while Gemma is writing to you she goes into an ecstasy; if you could have heard the words, so ardent with love! . . . It was really a moment of Paradise, but I could not describe it to you because I am incapable; I should need the language of a seraph to repeat all that I hear. If you knew how happy

it makes me to be with this angel! . . . Now the ecstasies are continual. . . .

With selections from these recorded ecstasies, we conclude this book:

1. Praise

Jesus on earth—Jesus in Heaven. Behold all that I need! Oh Jesus, who can tell what passes in a heart all burned up with love! Oh, Jesus, with what consolation does the knowledge of possessing You inebriate me!

If I felt such consolation this morning when You made me call You, Father, Oh, what shall it be when I shall be able to tell You all my joys! Yes, Jesus, You must console this poor little daughter of Yours, Your promised Spouse.

Quick, quick, Jesus, replenish me with that spirit that is all fire, and do not leave me until You first give me Your benediction. Jesus, give me strength.

Where are You leaving me, Jesus? All alone in this world that I can find only to be a dismal wasteland!

Thank You, O, Jesus, Who have made me experience such sweetness though I am ready to be deprived of it and all the pleasures and satisfactions that I can have in this life—if you so will.

My God! my Jesus, ought I not to be content to be beaten with the scourge of Your own little Son? But at times I am not content to have it so and I thank you, Lord, now for giving me these moments of peace, I thank You

2. Compunction

Oh, Jesus, why am I not burned up with love for You? Why is it that my heart is not consumed with Love's flame? Why is it that my love does not correspond to Yours? Oh, Jesus, how much time I have lost! How many years I could have loved You and I did not do so. But Your bounty makes me hope to be able to make up for lost time.

What sins! Oh, Jesus, deliver me from their weight! . . . Their number makes me shudder.

I accept, Jesus, all the pains, all the afflictions You will send me. I really deserve so many more. You would be all merciful if You multiplied my pains, my afflictions. Indeed, Jesus, I would kiss Your hand if You would add more. You see Jesus, this pain reaches out to all the fibres of my heart, and serves as a reminder to me not to offend You any more.

My God, dear Jesus, remove whatever of malice may be at the bottom of my offering and then accept it. Do not abandon me, Jesus; take care of my soul—think what You have borne to save it.

3. Love

My Jesus! Yes, my Jesus, my loving Lord is that Jesus Who holds me bound with the force of His love. That Jesus Who loves me and feels so sympathetically for me *in* all my miseries, He is truly Jesus. You see, my God, if You give so many graces, so many gifts, so many favors, to a soul who could compensate You with a good capital of virtue, so many benefits might be repaid; but if You give them thus to me, it can only be done by a plea for mercy.

What do you think of it, Jesus? No, no, You will never do me any harm. Whatever You do is well done. But at least grant me the grace to be able to be grateful. Love is truly a recompense for Your benefits, is it not? But I love You anyway. I do not love You just for Your gifts. Not at all! I love You because You are my Jesus.

4. Temptation

Oh, Jesus, why do You leave me alone at these moments . . . You were there? It can't be true that You were there ... I looked for You so many times and I

never saw You . . .

Do you ask me if I shall be sincere? Why? ... I knew him—I knew him—right away, just who he was. Yesterday I knew it was he . . . (the devil) . . .

You wish me to be sincere and obedient? I understand you ... I shall go, yes; I did not give in to him one bit—but Jesus he resembled You so . . . Do not let him take on Your appearance—make him show himself as he is ... if not, sometime I will think he is You . . .

What else do you wish? When I have confessed all, will You return to tell me that You are pleased with me?

O my God, aid me! Do not give any more permissions to that ugly enemy of mine. Otherwise if You do wish it, You must give me more strength, if not. . . .

5. Loving Resignation

You are an abyss of Love—I am an abyss of iniquity. O God,—O God! I am overcome—My Mamma, how excited I am—Your love is so powerful, Jesus, Jesus,—my heart dilates—sustain me. . . .

And why do I contend so with Your love? It makes me suffer, oh, Jesus, but what does that matter? You are the center of my life. Now let me tell You something, Jesus. You are indeed mighty but, nevertheless, for all Your greatness, my soul can make You more exalted.—Yes, Jesus, it is true!—You see, Jesus, my soul can make You more noble because in its misery You triumph by Your mercy.

You are so kind as to remain with me, Jesus—but my mind is too insensible to give thought to You . . . What happy moments I pass with You! You are an abyss of love!

I value all Your favors, but I know my weakness. Oh, what a beautiful hour we have passed together—from the same chalice to which Your lips have approached I wish also to drink—

I thank you, Jesus, Who holds me thus upon the Cross—increase my sufferings—do you think I call You sometimes because I want You to ease my sufferings? . . . Indeed, if I must stay in this world and not suffer, I tell you, let me die, now!

6. Petition to Mother

Notice how I spend my days and nights? Be touched with compassion; tell it to Jesus, tell it to Him, my only hope. If you do not listen to me must I then despair? See: Jesus has given my soul to you; I, on the other hand, have delivered up my heart to you. Do you not see how afflicted is this heart?

I have many persons to recommend to you. I would like to have Jesus make me known to all the world for what I am. In this way, they would ask for my prayers no longer. A favor, Mother, a favor: Jesus is very irritated against sinners!

Tell Him to avenge Himself, not on them, but on me. This too: I must recommend a soul who is very dear to you ... Oh! surely it will not fear to appear before Jesus.

I am not mentioning his name to you for fear of having an argument with Jesus as it has happened so many times; One thing more: my confessor wishes you to fortify my body . . . And then . . .

Mother, you must reestablish peace between Jesus and me. Many times you have been able to restrain Jesus when He was on the point of abandoning me. Come between Jesus and me. Oh my Mother, reconcile me with Him, and assure Him that I shall be more obedient.

I have noticed all, noticed all. Mother of mercy, go seek Jesus, and bring Him back to me. My Mother, do not abandon me . . . Find Jesus, make Him return

. . . My Mother, my good Mother, make me better. My Mother, my good Mother, make me pure. This is what I desire ardently, and what I need extremely.

7. Self-Oblation

Why do You keep me here on earth? How I yearn for that moment in which I shall unite myself forever to You! Jesus, You are making me suffer: I must tell You: You place these thoughts in my mind, and then it is thus that You treat me.

But what do You want, Jesus? Do You believe that I am waiting for Your request in order to give You my life? It is Yours: I have offered it to You already. What do You desire, Jesus? That I offer it again as a victim for my faults and for those of sinners? Hurry, my life is in Your hands ... It is Yours ... It is Yours . . . If I had a hundred, I would give them all to You ... I have only one ... I am disposed to all, to all. Do You believe that You are imposing a sacrifice on me by asking for my life? It is a favor for me

8. Pleading For a Soul

Yes, Jesus, very urgently do I recommend my poor sinner to you He is mine, Jesus; imagine how I wish to save him!

I know it, Jesus, I know it, he makes you weep; but believe me, Jesus, at present you must no longer think of his sins; you must think of the blood which you have shed. How merciful have you not been in my regard! All these loving delicacies which you have had for me, I beg of you, have them also for my sinner.

Remember that I wish to save him with me. He is your child, he is my brother, save him, Jesus! Why are you no longer listening to me today?

He has offended you very much; but I have sinned still more. Save him, save him. For a single soul, mine, you have done so much, and this one, do you not wish to save it?

Be merciful, O Jesus.

You do not accept my request? To whom shall I have recourse? You have shed your blood for him as well as for me ... I shall not rise from here; save him. Tell me, tell me that you will save him. I offer myself as a victim for all but especially for him. I promise to refuse you nothing . . . Will you grant it to me? It is a question of a soul! Think of it, O Jesus; a soul which has cost you so dearly! It will amend itself, it will no longer commit any wrong, you will see . . .

Is it saved, Jesus, is it saved? I have then obtained something for that one. You have pardoned him in the most complete manner. You are just, Jesus, but you are also merciful! I do not appeal to your justice, but to your mercy. You are giving him back to me forgiven? The victory is yours, Jesus, it is yours . . . You triumph always.

For the glory of your Holy Name you have just granted me the salvation of this sinner: great, is my joy ... If you would only grant me one conversion a day! . . . O Jesus, do not abandon the sinners. The most wretched are the most welcomed by you. I pray for them and for me.

When I have satisfied you, I have satisfied everyone. If you knew how I am burdened with sins!

9. Contemplation of Our Blessed Mother

What is the matter today? Where am I? O my Mother, where am I? O my Mother . . . oh, what beauty, how beautiful you are!

But do you not see me? ... I am very wicked and I recognize myself as so unworthy that your favors afflict me rather than console me. Nevertheless, if I had deserved it, I would like to come to you. Why do you come today?

Am I still your child? May I call you my Mother with confidence? But what do you wish, sweet Mother, that today I come to you . . . that I approach you? You want it? . . . How can I resist? . . .

My happiness is too great; but does not my heart tell you enough?

Do you remember the day when on going to heaven you carried my heart away. Keep it always with you; are you leaving me, Mother? How can a little girl remain deprived of her mama?

How do I feel? Well, my Mother, I feel a little ill. I am experiencing a pain in my head, but it is not the pain of (the crown of thorns) Jesus. Do you want to give me this one? Both of them willingly

My Mother, my confessor has imposed something on me: he has told me to pray for my adopted family. I have done so already. Obtain what I could not hope to do of myself: many graces, an infinity of them, do you hear, Mother? an infinity of them. If Jesus intends to send it some trial, tell Him to show Himself merciful ... It is up to you to obtain for them what I can not

When will Jesus come? Tell Him you, too, Mother, want me. I want to go with you ... I have importuned Him for so long! And Jesus would bring me very quickly to Heaven.

My Mother, I desire to possess you always and I do not wish to be separated from you any longer. Oh! Bring me to Paradise. I can live no longer without you. Do you see the suffering that you are causing me? I need your heart. Yes, each day I seek you in order to pour into this heart the sorrowful transports of mine. Do not leave me . . . O my Mother, O my Mother! If you are truly touched with compassion, Oh! Why do you part from a child who loves you so tenderly? If you are not there, who will listen to my prayers. Who will grant my wishes? Without you I am ... as a beggar-girl stripped of all succor. Mother, why do I give up?

Lead me also to Paradise. O my Mother, my Mother, you are a very pure flower with the whiteness of a lily.

10. Thanksgiving

To give mutually one's heart: such is the expression of those who love each other in the world, but it is a cold and vain expression . . . What joy, Jesus, when I shall be able to say that I belong no longer to myself! When I am entirely yours!

Oh! Do you not see, Jesus, that the farther I go, the more I fear? For in proportion that you lavish the tokens of your benevolence, I see increase the obligation of my gratitude. How can you, Jesus, bear with a heart such as mine? I need something, Jesus: I need love, your love: grant it to me and you will see that I shall have no more to ask of you.

11. Desire

It is true that having offended so much I do not deserve this love: but you ought to give it to me because this favor is conformable to your very own desires. Also I implore it with all my heart. My Savior, open your heart to me, so that I may enter. O you who can measure with one look my entire destitution, what are you waiting for? Listen to my supplications. I desire you, Jesus . . . Will you not find, Jesus, a little place for me? Why do you not leave me a very small one in the tiny cell of your ciborium? Come, Jesus, please me. Do you not see that by the mere power of your love you can say that you are continually in my heart? O Jesus!

Yes, my God, I desire you. All my works are for You. If I keep watch, it is with You; if I eat, it is for You; if I suffer, it is united to You; You will always be, O Jesus, my sweetest consolation. When I shall feel crushed, I shall cry to you always. I wish to love by faith, hope. It matters little whether I do not see you again on earth, it is sufficient for me to contemplate You in Heaven. As long as I shall live, I shall long only for You, I shall seek only You.

Yes, my God, do not allow this body of mine to revolt against Your will . . . What is this fire, Jesus, which overwhelms me? I exult, Jesus . . . my happiness is inexpressible ... I would like to remain thus for all eternity! . . . My God, if You procure such bliss on earth, what will it be in heaven? Beloved Jesus, I am

Your victim of love.

12. Gift of Self

But Jesus, you are asking for my Love? . . . Who has made You die, my Savior? Love. These nails, this cross ... all is the work of love . . . O Jesus, what would it be like if one could say some day that I have been consumed with love for you?

Oh! What gift are you going to give me, Jesus?

Once more, here are my hands, my feet, my whole being. Operate in me whatever will please you, I am entirely yours. Willingly, I sacrifice everything for You. I offer You my heart with all its affections, my body with all its weaknesses, my soul . . . But how is it I no longer belong to myself, Jesus? I am yours. . . . Answer me, Jesus, surely they are not mistaken, those who say that to suffer is to love? It is such a great grace!

13. Invocation to Mary

Help me, Holy soul. Mother . . . come to my help. Mother, I need you. Chosen soul, who is enjoying the best part with Jesus by being the Spouse of His Heart! You place your affection in Him ... I have recourse to you . . . Pray to Jesus for me in a very particular manner. May a little of your great fervor obtain for my soul, unhappy and destitute of all, this pardon of my faults of which I have never been able to make myself worthy.

More, more ... I want more . . . Intercede for me, Mother, through your love with Jesus, Who henceforth will refuse you nothing . . . More, more . . . Improve, Mother, the merit of this charity by which you become all powerful with the Savior. Do you see, Mother, all I desire of you? If you do not wish to do it for me, do it because of this God Who is the sole object of all your solicitude . . . Mother . . . tell me, will you do it? You will, will you not? But how will you succeed if I put obstacles in the way?

14. Ardent Love

My Jesus . . . Yes, this Jesus, Who holds me so strongly captive of His love, this Jesus is mine, He is my affectionate Lord . . . This Jesus Who loves me and Who sympathizes with my miseries ... it is truly Jesus. See, my God; if you had bestowed all these graces, these gifts, these favors on a soul who in return would have offered you a treasure of virtues, so many benefits would not have remained sterile. But in granting them to a soul like mine, through sheer mercy. . . .

What does it seem like to You, Jesus? But You will not reason thus. No, no, you did not act unwisely. What you do, is well done. But at least grant me the grace to prove my gratitude.

Love, Jesus, is that not the best reward of your liberalities? And then, too, I love you. Yet it is not for your benefits alone, but because you are my Jesus. I love You because You are the sole object worthy of my love. I love You because You are Goodness itself. I love You because You have promised, You have sworn not to abandon me ... I love You, O Lord, for an infinity of reasons.

Where could I seek happiness if not with You, O Jesus, Who several times has offered it to me? Does it not seem to you that my heart is a little hard? Who could have, if not You, kindled in it a few flames of love?

O Jesus, you say that You love me; and I say that You do not, because one cannot love two contrary things. You love perfection and I am not it at all.

Do You believe, O Jesus, that my heart is a suitable place of sojourn for You? Are You comfortable there? Are You contented there? Yes, Jesus, I am happy . . . O Jesus, when my heart will no longer be on earth, but in heaven what glory for You! How the Angels will rejoice!

Do You fear, Jesus, that in Your absence I shall change my sentiments? No, never! Do You remember, Lord, that when, at times, I was on the point of falling You communicated to me an extraordinary strength? Do You remember that sometimes I came to You in tears, sometimes penetrated with repentance

. . . and that you showed Yourself always the same to me? O Jesus, why would I love You solely because of Your gifts and why would I not love You because of this cross. O cross, make a little place for me beside Jesus! But what singular love You have bestowed on me! Quick, Jesus, embrace me, but with the same fire which has consumed you!

O Love, Infinite Love! O, despoil me of this flesh. Withdraw me from this body, or leave me, because I can stand it no longer. My body, O Lord, can no longer bear this continual weakness. Take me away from this world, or leave me . . . O Love, Infinite Love! I shall never be separated from your Love, no, never! O Love! O delights of Love! O Love which delights me so much and which torments me still more! O Love, Love of Jesus, I shall never cede you to anyone! What little love I possess I shall not part with it not even in favor of the Saints of Heaven, nor for you, creatures of earth. This little love is mine. I do not want any to surpass me in the love of Jesus. O Love, Infinite Love! See your Love, O Lord, it penetrates into my very body . . . When shall I unite myself to You, Who on earth can operate such a union of Love? I can stand it no longer, I am weakening! May I die, and may I die of love. What a beautiful death, O Lord, victim of Your love, victim for You!

Moderate, O Jesus, moderate Your love. If not I shall end by being consumed . . . O Love, Infinite Love! O Love of my Jesus. Make Your love penetrate me entirely; I do not ask anything else. My God, my God, I love You. Perhaps I love You too little, O Jesus! Are You not satisfied?

But, then, grant me what can come only from You; grant that I may love You more and more. I ought to love You with an extreme love.

Oh! I have said it to You many times, Lord, if I do not expire on seeing the One Who loves me so much suffer, what other pain will be capable of causing my death?

I have declared Lord, that You have suffered for me and for sinners. Yes, it is enough. May I carry, henceforth, Your cross on my shoulders!

What do You ask of me, my God? Already I have given all to You. What do You desire, O Jesus, what do You desire so ardently? Do You desire my love? I give it entirely to You. But who can love you sufficiently? No one . . . No one . . .

O Jesus . . . O Jesus . . . What are these strong attractions which unite me so powerfully to you? Is it Your heart which beats so near mine . . . ? What power there is in Your heart! Explain it to me, Jesus. How is it that this poor soul does not escape from its prison to go to heaven and rejoice in Your Divine Presence? It can resist no longer . . . every morning I hear Your beloved accents . . . I taste such ineffable sweetness . . .

Jesus, You ask only love from me; and I, in order to love You, ask much love also, for I have not enough. See, Jesus, when, in the morning, I feel Your presence in Communion, I am conscious of myself no longer. And, Jesus, who would have thought that your heart would join its beatings to those of mine? Oh! Grant me the acme of happiness, grant me the consolation that I ask of You; repeat the sweet words which You said to me Sunday. When, Jesus, will You become my Heavenly Spouse? You wish, O Jesus, that I renounce all my human and earthly designs. Since You desire it, from this moment I make the sacrifice of all tendencies of nature. You give Me, Jesus, a complete good will; but I would quickly pervert it.

I am burning, Jesus. What happiness for me if I were entirely embraced with Your pure love! O Jesus, I implore Your mercy, but I do not ask for Your delights which I do not deserve at all. It would be sufficient, O Jesus, to be nourished with Your heavenly bread. Leave me, Jesus, I plunge myself in the abyss of Your love.

O Jesus, truly You are all mine? No, nothing can please me here on earth. Allow, allow that this morning my heart becomes separated . . . It feels itself as if crushed beneath the weight of your benefits . . . But why, Jesus, do I remain always so imperfect? Speak to me clearly, you cannot be pleased with me.

At least should not so many visits stimulate my heart? O my Angel, help me. Do not leave me idle in the midst of so many graces, you who have always borne with me with so much patience.

Yes, I am happy, O Jesus, because I feel my heart beat with Yours; I am happy because I possess You.

O dear torments of Jesus! Precious prayers . . . sweet protestations! Speak, Jesus, speak; tell me what You did during Your mortal life. And at the time of

Your Ascension, tell me what did You do? What was the occupation of Your heart? If I look at this very loving heart, O Jesus, it appears surrounded with numerous gold arrows of love. And You, Jesus, Who ask for my love, what need have You for it. You are so ardently loved by the Angels! Ah! I know, it is not necessity which urges You to solicit my love. O my Jesus and my God, how little I love You! Grant that I may love You more and more, much, as much as possible . . . Jesus, Jesus, I praise You; but supply what is lacking to my praises. I offer You to Your Divine Father ... I have nothing; offer Him, O Jesus, the love of Your heart . . .

I am Yours, yes. Do not fear, O Jesus, that I will be snatched from You . . . Grant that I may love You, that I may love you always more. Some time or other, Jesus, you will cause my death by making your heart beat within mine.

The bonds of Your love are so strong that I cannot free myself from them. Give me back my liberty once more. I shall love You everywhere and I shall seek You always. Oh! What have you done to me, my Jesus? What have You done to my heart, that it seeks You unceasingly and sighs constantly after Your presence? I cannot prevent it. It is captivated by You, by You, Father, so good . . . Here is Jesus . . . How happy I am now! I would like to remain thus always. Here is Jesus. I no longer wish to know anything . . . O Jesus, May I hope that my soul will ever be pleasing to You? Grant that it may please You. Your goodness in my regard has been exercised with such constancy that I can say you have conquered me with love. Your love, O Jesus, has conquered me . . . Where was I to acquire happiness, O Jesus, if not with You, Who are forever offering it to me?

15. Love's Surrender

You love me, Jesus, and would I not love You? What marvelous tenderness of a God toward His poor creature! Jesus, when shall I be able to unite myself to You in order to be no longer separated from You? Break without delay the chain which unites me to my body ... in order that I experience no longer the torment of Your absence . . . When will it be, Jesus? Help me, and You will see that I shall finally love You with a love that is sincere, active and very ardent.

I shall remember always all Your benefits, O Jesus. This remembrance will stimulate my love . . . this divine flame, Jesus; I shall entertain it always in my heart. O Jesus, it is You alone that I wish to love. I belong no longer to myself. I am Yours.

16. Conquest of Love

Do You agree, Jesus? Make room for me, yes, I would like to be, Jesus, the sphere of your divine flame . . .

O consolation! . . . You are burning, Savior, and I am consumed . . . grace . . . purify . . . What are You, my God? You are a flame. And would You not like my heart to become a flame also?

Oh! I have found the fire which destroys all sin; I have found the ardor which disperses all lukewarmness; I have found the flame which annihilates all my passions!

I cannot understand, Jesus, how You, Who are so glorious in Heaven, can come to conceal Yourself in my heart. Oh! ... in this heart cause a flame to come down and consume my sins. O Jesus, grant me a taste of Your paradise only for an instant. O holy angels, I can do nothing . . . You, at least, proclaim the love of Jesus! See, Jesus, I am surrendering to Your holy love . . .

This prayer life sustains virtue. The constancy and intensity of union with God through prayer is indicated in the degree to which virtue is practiced. The events of St. Gemma's life were in no way extraordinary aside from her participation in the Sacred Passion. The *Letters*, however, make it clear that the virtue practiced was extraordinary. It was, therefore because of this heroic virtue that Pope Pius XII, in 1940, raised Gemma Galgani to the Altar as a canonized Saint of the Twentieth Century.

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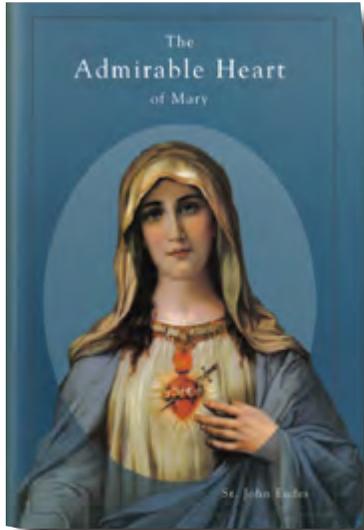
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**BIBLICAL SYMBOLISM AND THE
THIRD SECRET OF FATIMA**



John Parrot

Biblical Symbolism and the Third Secret of Fatima

When the Holy See published the Third Secret of Fatima on June 26, 2000, many became skeptical and were disappointed because it did not meet with previous expectations. The Secret was a simple vision described by Sister Lucia, analogous to the parables of the Gospel used by Our Lord to communicate the profound truths of Revelation, and yet it was thought to be ambiguous by some. But in reality the Third Secret is a profound revelation, requiring serious study and meditation.

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For the Church through her doctors and theologians of the past has already explained the significance of these various Biblical symbols. Among the lessons that the Third Secret reveals and which this booklet seeks to explain are the following:

- The Third Secret Vision does not describe a political or military assault against the Church primarily, but a spiritual one
- The “city half in ruins” is not an earthly city only, but the City of God, the Church, under attack from an internal crisis
- The “mountain” is a symbol of Our Lord, and the “rock” upon which He built the Church is Our Lord Himself primarily, and St. Peter by participation
- The prophecy of Pope Leo XIII about Satan’s assault against the Chair of Peter – its meaning as revealed in the Third Secret Vision.

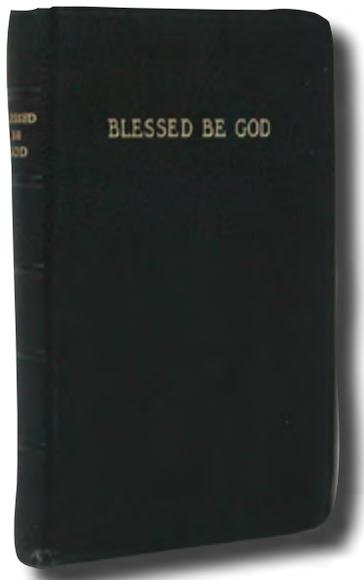
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THIRD SECRET OF FATIMA**



John Parrot

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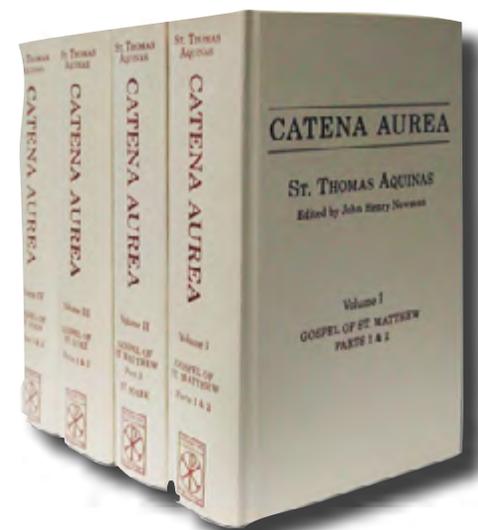
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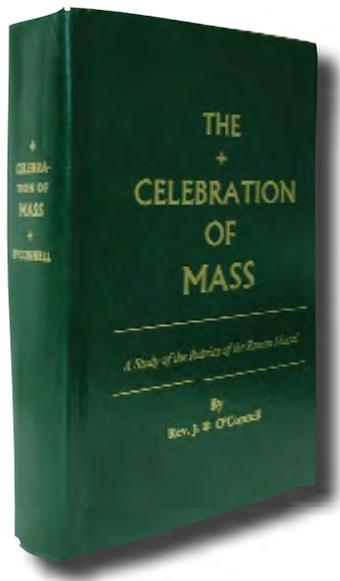
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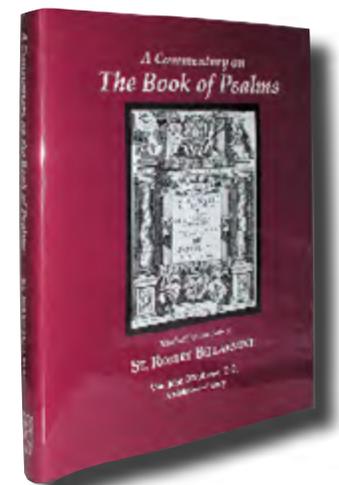
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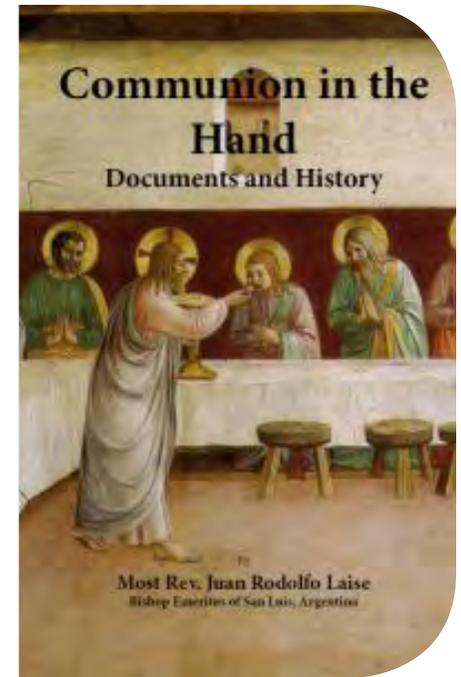


Communion in the Hand

“From the outset, priests and faithful under my pastoral care asked me not to introduce this practice in the diocese of San Luis. I called a priests’ meeting for August 8, at which I presented Rome’s decree and the instruction *Memoriale Domini*. They unanimously agreed that, for the good of the faithful, Communion on the tongue should be maintained

Nevertheless, a question remained: Since *Memoriale Domini* was the only legislation in force, how was it that everyone adopted the practice of Communion in the hand as if it were merely an option proposed, and even recommended, by the Church? Seeking an answer to this question and to defend my decision – which was very controversial with some ecclesiastical sectors that spoke out in the media – I encouraged a deeper investigation of the history of this usage. And the results of this investigation are found in this work”. (from Intro.)

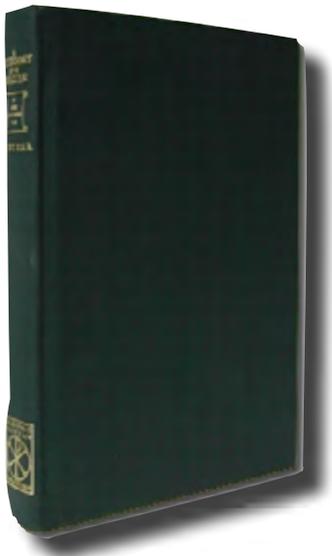
Documents and History, shows the historical mind of the Church on this subject. 2010 208 pages sewn hardback. #55735

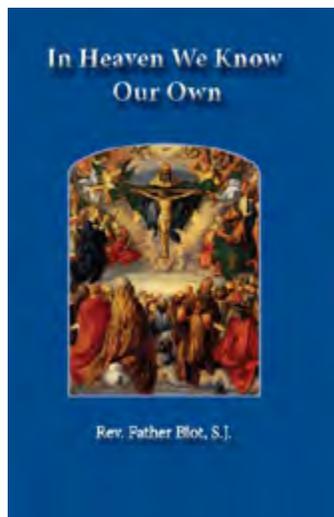


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Covering such preliminary topics as “English Catholic Version of the Psalter”, “Latin Versions of the Psalter”, “The Latinity of the Vulgate Psalter”, and “How the Psalms are Numbered”, true to form, the *Dictionary* goes on to define and decline each Latin word used in the Vulgate Psalter (as used in the traditional Roman Breviary), its English parallel, derivative, and cites where the word was used and its context.

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In Heaven We Know Our Own

or, *Solace for the Suffering*. The book is a series of letters written to a young Catholic mother whose child had just recently died. Though seriously ill himself, Fr. Blot, S.J. wrote from his sickbed to console this poor woman in her heartbroken grief. For those interested in consoling or inspiring a loved one or friend in difficult times this book is a gem. He explained to her how families are reunited, good friends see each other, and all earthly sacrifice or suffering is amply rewarded. Drawing from our rich heritage of Catholic Teaching and Tradition, Father quotes Scripture, St. Thomas, St. Robert Bellarmine, and Dante to paint a beautiful picture of what Heaven will be like.

A short treatise, in a letter format, on heaven and secondary happiness in eternity, which is based on love of those whom we have loved in this world, 2011 186 pages **reprint of 1860's Benziger English edition** hardback with dust jacket / translated by a Lady. #89030

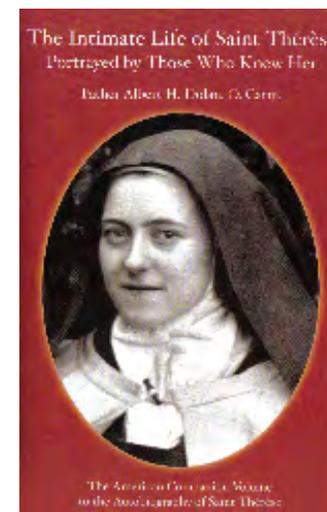
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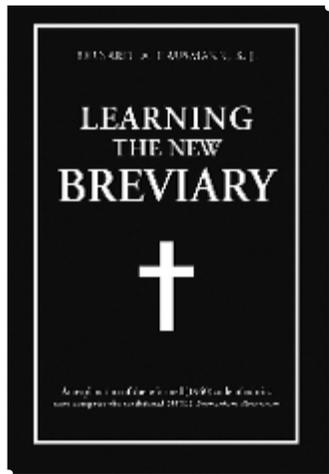
Portrayed by Those Who Knew Her

In order to compose this work, Fr. Dolan traveled in 1924 to France: to Normandy's Alencon, where St. Therese was born, to her family home in Buissonnets, to the Carmel at Lisieux, and to other French towns. Then, he went to Rome, where he and Pope Pius XI had a mutually productive discussion of his apostolate to make the "Little Way" of the Little Flower better known in homes and monasteries in America.

At the Carmelite convent he was blessed by priceless interviews with St. Therese's three sisters (who were nuns there), and one of her teachers. At Caen, he visited a fourth sister, who had joined the Visitation Order.

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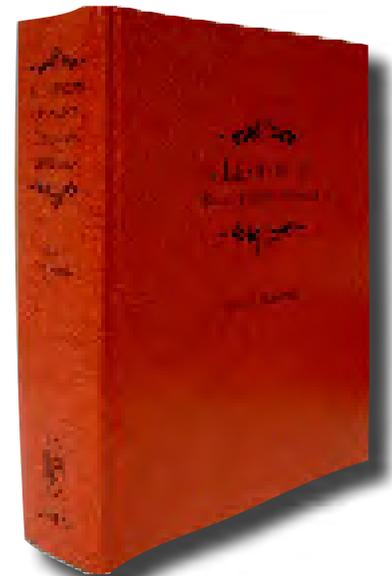
An explanation of the reformed (1960) code of rubrics that comprise the traditional (1962) *Breviarium Romanum* 2008 119 pages **reprint of 1961** edition paper back #55663

A Lexicon of Saint Thomas Aquinas

Compiled by Roy J. Deferrari, Sr. M. Inviolata Barry & Ignatius McGuiness, OP, this “big orange book” has been described by the preface’s author as “... an epoch-making work.”

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Liber Brevior

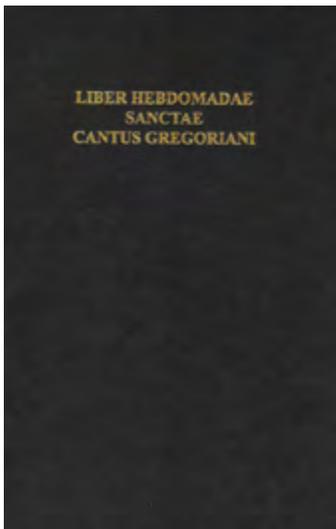
Everyone familiar with **Gregorian Chant** knows about the big book called the Liber Usualis. It has been the standard book for chant since around 1904 when it first came out. It contains almost everything one would need to sing the Divine Office as well as the daily and Sunday Masses. But it is a very large and heavy book. Moreover, the *Liber Usualis* is expensive. But what about the average traditional choirs in churches, chapels, and schools? Enter in the shorter book called the *Liber Brevior*. With Rhythmic Signs of Solesmes, propers & ordinaries for Sundays, feast days & common of the saints, 2011 766 pages N° 813 **reprint of 1954 edition** 7.5" x 4.87" x .87" Gregorian notation / English rubrics / Bible paper / with supplement / hardback with 2 ribbons / red edges. #89031



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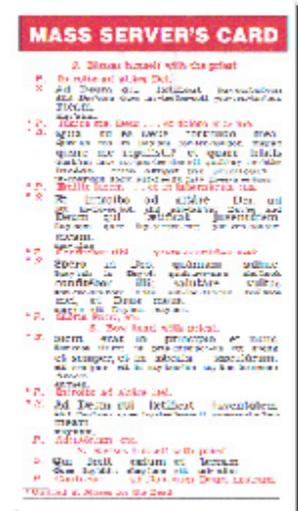
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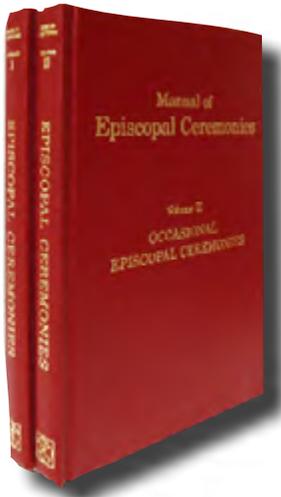


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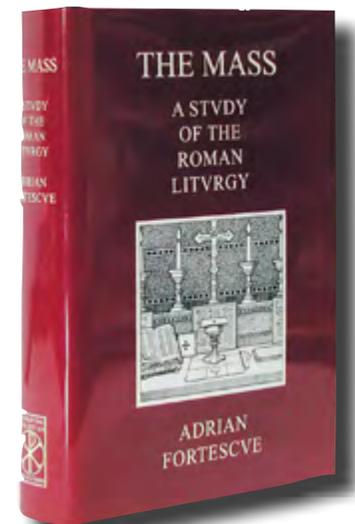


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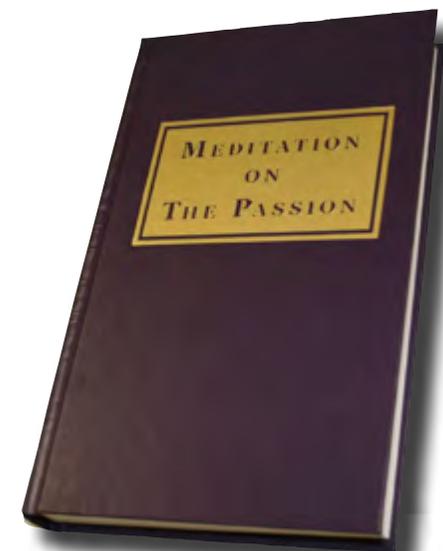
The Mass

Father Kenneth Baker, S.J., the editor of *Homiletic & Pastoral Review*, states: "Indications are that the Latin Mass will become more and more familiar to Catholics. Priests who learn how to offer this Mass may want to learn more about its history and the meaning of the various prayers. If they are willing to take the time, they will find a wealth of useful information in this classic book on the Mass by Father Adrian Fortescue." *A Study of the Roman Liturgy* 2007 429 pages (first published 1912) **reprint of 1930 edition** / hardback with dust jacket. Written by a true scholar, Fr. Adrian Fortescue. This book can provide a better understanding the Church's vast treasure of Calvary on the altar. #55662



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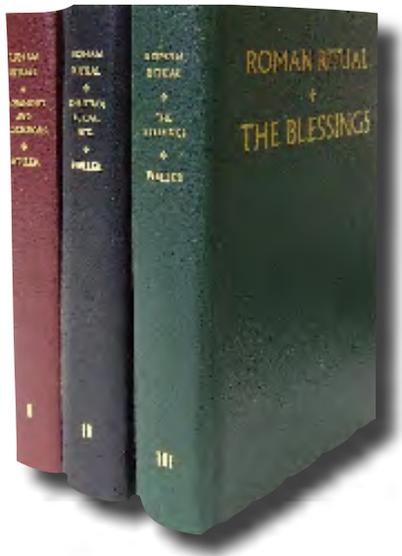
Recently we republished the book entitled Meditation on the Passion. Containing an account of the Passion by a Novice Mistress of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, it was edited by Father Reginald Walsh, OP, first published in 1922, and reprinted seven times during the 1940s and 1950s. The subject of the book is in its title. The sublime mystery of the Redemption is shrouded in the sacrifice Our Lord made with His life on Calvary 2000 years ago. And this doctrine has been proposed to us as a worthy object of reflection by countless teachers in the Church throughout her history. We republished this book in the traditional way with sewn signatures, in an attractive violet hardcover binding with gold lettering for many years of use. Compiled from Various Sources 2012 305 pages #88185



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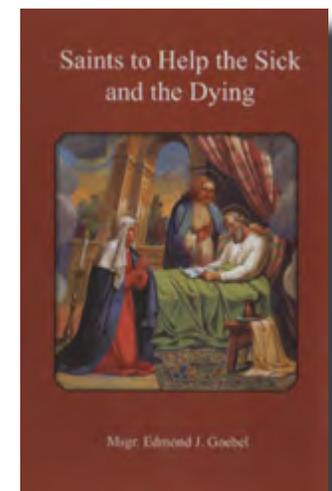
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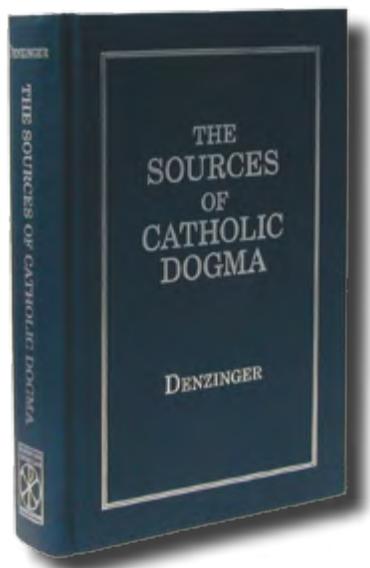
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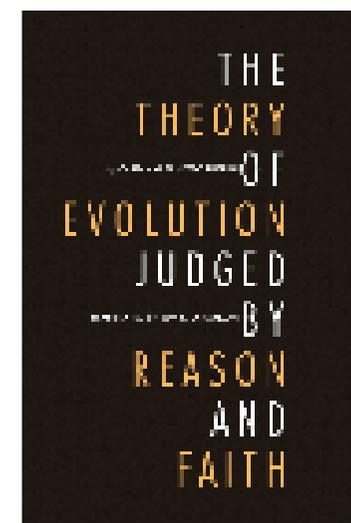
You have such a book in this English translation of Fr. Heinrich Denzinger's Enchiridion Symbolorum et Definitionum. Since it was first published a century and a half ago, this handbook or collection (enchiridion) of articles (symbols in Latin) of faith and morals has enjoyed universal appeal and approbation since the pontificate of Blessed Pope Pius IX.

From the Thirtieth Edition of Henry Denzinger's Enchiridion Symbolorum 2009 720 pages **reprint of 1957 edition** / Roy J. Deferrari, translated #55712

The Theory of Evolution Judged by Reason and Faith

Cardinal Ruffini's recognized classic, La Teoria della Evoluzione secondo la Scienza e la Fede, is famous among students of science, philosophy, history, theology and Scripture not only for the depth and breath of its wisdom and for the unusual thoroughness of its treatment, but probably more so for the unusual clarity and simplicity of its writing.

The significance and great value of the study lies in the wealth and weight of the theological and scriptural argument against the theory, although His Eminence with equal force points out the weaknesses in the scientific arguments advanced in favor of the theory of evolution of the human body. 2008 205 pages **reprint of 1959 edition** / Translator Fr. Francis O'Hanlon, foreward by Archbp Thomas Boland. #85575



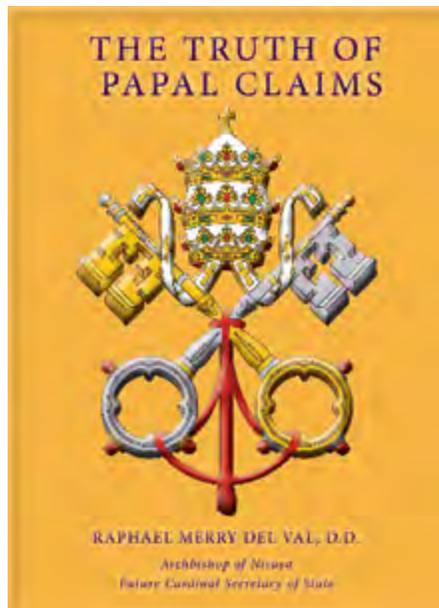
IN DARWIN'S OWN WORDS (Evolution cont.)

“To suppose that the eye with all its inimitable contrivances for adjusting the focus to different distances, for admitting different amounts of light, and for the correction of spherical and chromatic aberration, could have been formed by natural selection, **seems, I confess, absurd in the highest degree.**” *The Origin of Species* (printed by John Murray, London, 1859) (our emphasis)

From the Foreword of the *The Theory of Evolution Judged by Reason and Faith* by the Most Reverend Thomas A. Boland, Archbishop of Newark : Cardinal Ruffini passed away in 1967, just 6 years after the publication of this work. Nonetheless, this tribute from a fellow bishop is still pertinent in understanding the profound influence that His Eminence exercised upon souls during his lifetime. His Eminence, who taught Sacred Scripture for many years (1913-1930) in the Roman Seminary and the Urban College of the Propagation of the Faith, was the esteemed and beloved professor of numberless priests and prelates in many countries throughout the world. I feel confident that the present volume in its English translation will be received with grateful recognition by his thousands of former students in America who not only admired his profound scholarship and fervent eloquence as a lecturer, but have always looked upon him as a kind friend and model of priestly virtue.



Cardinal Ruffini



“The Truth of Papal Claims, by Raphael Cardinal Merry del Val, which Preserving Christian Publications has recently reprinted . . . is a worthy edition of an important Catholic work. I am most grateful to have a copy of the book.”

HIS EMINENCE RAYMOND LEO CARDINAL BURKE

The Truth of Papal Claims

There are times when it is our duty to correct our brothers in all charity. In *The Truth of Papal Claims* observe the skill and wit of turn-of-the-century Cardinal Merry Del Val in fine apologetics. It is a small book that is a quick and enjoyable read and will remind us all of the firm foundation of the Church.

Replying to an Anglican theologian living in Rome in 1902, who had challenged this future Cardinal, then Archbishop Rafael Merry del Val responded with this book, providing a profound explanation of the true nature of the Church – founded by Our Lord on the Rock of Peter and his successors, and including all the Apostles with their successors in union with the Pope. These govern the Church which is spread throughout the nations of the world, as living branches on that Vine that is the one Mystical Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Catholic and therefore universal.

Hardback with Dust Jacket, 2012 xvi 129 pages + 15 pages appendix. #55743