

DOCUMENTATION SERIES

MAGDALENE OF CANOSSA : FOUNDRRESS

1

ELDA POLLONARA F.D.C.C.

TRAINING COURSES
FOR TEACHERS
IN THE BEGINNING
OF THE INSTITUTE

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PRESENTATION

During my visits to the Sisters in the various parts of the world, in the past few years, I perceived a growing desire among them to deepen the spirit of our Foundress, Magdalene of Canossa.

Following this observation there arose the idea of presenting to the Institute a series of volumes which would reveal some essential aspects of the spirit that, in the beginning of the Institute, animated the various works of charity of our common Mother.

Her writings, edited by Sr. E. Dossi, which were recently published and put in the hands of all the Sisters of the Institute, are an indispensable source from which we can draw in order to know even more and always better this great woman. Notwithstanding the historical situation in which she lived, and in spite of her frail health, she knew how to carry out apostolic works of a pioneering nature for the integral promotion of the woman of her time and for woman's liberation from the environmental conditions which tended to oppress her. She knew how to make the woman become a promoter of culture, a formator of apostles, a good samaritan for every type of human misery.

From these writings of hers, it is possible to reconstruct the genesis of her charitable works and to penetrate her mind which is open to every form of good, to descend into the depths of the heart of the woman, of the mother, of the apostle and of the Foundress of two Institutes: the female branch, happily founded before her death, and the male counterpart which would develop later on and which was conceived as an institution capable of reaching "the same aim and through the same ways"¹ as that of the Daughters of Charity.

The method followed for this work and for the subsequent volumes is that of a direct documentation. The merit of such a thorough research belongs to Sr. M. Morazzoni, who with great patience has extracted from the numerous writings of the Foundress all the relevant passages on these specific topics.

M. Elda Pollonara has given form to the available material thus becoming a discrete guide for an exhaustive reading which is both well documented and enlightening.

The first volume, together with the second, which will follow very soon, should be, in the light of all the documents, a stimulus to re-propose to the attention of the Daughters the two "extraordinary branches" of charity, conceived and realized by Magdalene for the promotion of the laity in the spirit of the Charity of Christ Crucified, the lover of God the Father and of man of all times.

The Superior General
M. Elide Testa

Rome, 8 May 1986.

¹ M.d.C., Ep. II/2, p. 1416

PREFACE

This present work has the scope of making known one of the five *'branches of charity'* codified and handed down as a precious heritage of Magdalene of Canossa to her Daughters.

The *'Courses'* for the teachers is a work that ensued from the heart of this great woman, who was only desirous of making Jesus Christ known and loved and of spreading His Kingdom in the world.

She had already instilled in her Daughters the three specific apostolic choices, chosen by herself for the Institute *'to be perennial and to be continued'*² : pastoral activity, integral formation of the person and help to those who suffer.

But *'the Divine Love which like a fire seeks to spread itself'*³ prompted Magdalene to invent two other *'branches of Charity'* both codified as: the Spiritual Exercises for the *'Ladies'*⁴ and *'the courses for the teachers'*⁵ with the aim of always reaching out to more persons who needed to be instructed, educated and helped. These three she writes Magdalene *'seem to be able to reduce the of our neighbour, for from these needs arise all evils'*⁶

We can diversify the ways to meet the needs of the time, but all the same, the above mentioned needs remain unchanged in society at all times.

All the apostolic activities of Magdalene, precisely from her observant vigilance on the and urgent needs of her historical period and attention to serve the Church.

But in particular the work of the *'courses'* as something proposed in collaboration with the pas of the Church and as a help to meet the needs of parishes, especially those remote and neglected.

The training course for the teachers, true work of the Lord, is a workshop where one learns to give herself in total availability to serve Christ in the people and it is very similar to a novitiate. It is not just a course on culture or social assistance alone.

Magdalene intended to focus on the formation of the heart and to make those youth, contemplatives in charity and apostles for the Kingdom.

'Otherwise', writes Magdalene, *'it would be useless to accept the youth'*⁷.

The Author

² M.d.C., Regole 1828, A 3, VII, A.V.R., pg. 4, C

³ M.d.C., R.s.s., pg. 233

⁴ M.d.C., 'Sistema per assistere le Dame a fare i santi Esercizi' R .s.s., pg. 2 5 5 -2 66

⁵ M d.C., 'Sistema per le contadine' R.s.s., pg. 233-247. In this particular treatise, Magdalene uses the term 'Seminar' two times: pg. 233-234 intended as a nursery in which young seedlings are being prepared for transplanting. So too, those who attend these seminars are to prepare themselves to bring the Word of God to their own places of origin.

⁶ M.d.C. Ep. II/2, pg. 1416

⁷ cf. M.d.C., R.s.s., pg. 240

THE AIM OF THE SEMINARS

When a human heart weds the interests of God, life blossoms to give to itself, in imitation of Jesus Christ for the glory of the Father and for the salvation of all men in the world.

The contemplation of Christ Crucified, in fact, had set aflame the heart of Magdalene herself with the Charity of God and she did not desire anything other than to set aflame other hearts with the same love.

By the time of her death in 1835, with her apostolic zeal, she had already succeeded in gathering a hundred "*companions*" and she had already given her Institute, approved by the Church in 1828, a clear and precise form.

Her Daughters would have done all they could in the three specific "*branches of charity*"¹: education of the youth, by means of the school, catechesis for a solid Christian formation and assistance to those who suffer, especially to the dying as an immediate preparation for death.

These three branches constitute "*the perennial and continuous works*"² of the Daughters of Charity. Other two branches are to be carried out intermittently at periodic terms, by her same Daughters within the course of the year.

Those who read even superficially her "plans"³ compiled during a period of ten years, will note a progressive clarification of the inspiring idea and a gradual development of the work of the Institute that was always becoming more systematic.

In fact, in the last plans, the five branches of charity to which the Daughters of Charity are to dedicate themselves are clearly delineated.

The two branches, to be carried out intermittently, are the "*Spiritual Exercises*" which are to be organized twice in the year for the benefit of the Ladies and for the people of any rank to whom the Daughters of Charity extend their charitable service. The "*Courses*" were organized with the aim of preparing the previously mentioned "*rural teachers*" as the future apostles in their social milieu.

The aim for which Magdalene intended to pursue the two "*extraordinary branches*"⁴, was to procure the "*expansion of Divine Glory*".⁵

As introduction to the two apostolic activities, Magdalene writes thus:

*“. . . since holy charity is like a fire that always seeks to spread itself, we will now talk about two other works of charity connected with the branches of the Institute . . . which will help to spread and perfect our practices”*⁶

And taking into consideration the formation of the "*rural teachers*" she continues:

*“...the formation and education of the rural girls has the aim of spreading and facilitating the instruction of the youth, to make the schools of Christian doctrine flourish again and also to provide, though indirectly, the assistance to the sick in the rural areas”*⁷

¹ "branch" indicates the apostolic sector (cf. M.d.C., Regole e scritti spiritual Vol. I p. 43.)

² cf. p. 5, n. 1.

³ With the term "Plans of the Institute" the Foundress intended to show the directives which her Daughters would have to follow in carrying out the apostolate. Such plans—18 in all— have been presented in various forms to the ecclesial and civil authorities so as to make the Institute known or to obtain the proper approval. (cf. Ep. II/2, p. 1399).

⁴ M.d.C., to Don V. Gilardoni, Ep. II/1, p. 158.

⁵ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 255

⁶ Ibid. p. 233

⁷ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 233.

It is to be noted that Magdalene writes in the first ten years of the eighteen hundred when:

*"the various Italian states have not yet succeeded to organize the schools for the formation of the teachers and the Veronese Marchioness, without means and titles, but being full of the love of God and having an intuitive foresight conceives a concrete plan to prepare the teachers of the rural centres"*⁸

But more than just being concerned with the formation of teachers who will make up for the nonperformance of this duty on the part of the various Italian states at this precise historical era, Magdalene plans to form authentic apostles, capable of elevating the woman to her dignity as a person and above all as a daughter of God.

The young who were to be prepared, in fact, must have such qualities which would not confuse them with those receiving training for the general educational profession. These young girls had not only decided to *"remain in the virginal state"*⁹ and desired to involve themselves *"to spread and facilitate the education of the young"* but also they desired *"to let the Christian Doctrine blossom in the parishes"* and to dedicate themselves *"to help the sick in the rural areas"* that is, to be in their own native places, committed lay people to *"spread and carry on the work"*¹⁰ proper to the Daughters of Charity.

Today, the Church has re-discovered, by virtue of the sacrament of baptism, the privileged role of the laity. This woman (Magdalene), however, with an active faith as that of the saints, had already long before committed herself and her Institute to prepare lay apostles as a help to the local Churches.

Magdalene writes that these young people, after an adequate formation, could:

*" . . . according to the wishes of their respective parish priests offer themselves for the Divine Glory, for His service and for the good of their neighbour" .-*¹¹

The needs of the Universal Church and in particular the local churches, especially those which had been deprived of spiritual help, prompted Magdalene to prepare suitable persons

*"seeing that it is impossible to have that number of Daughters of Charity to provide according to the needs of the various places..."*¹²

The Daughters of Magdalene will live *"in the city and in the more populated places"*¹³ and the lay teachers *"selected by their Parish Priests"*¹⁴ will work instead *" in the poorer rural areas, in places where the houses are dispersed and in the small villages" .*¹⁵

⁸ M. Giacon, L'azione caritativa e formativa di Maddalena di Canossa, Pisani, Isola del Liri, 1974, p. 142

⁹ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 234.

¹⁰ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 233.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 246.

¹² Ibid., p. 233

¹³ M.d.C., Ep.II\2, p. 1424.

¹⁴ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 234

¹⁵ Ibid

And it must be this way "even if there were Daughters of Charity available to be sent to those places" ¹⁶

The reasons which the Foundress forwards for the above-mentioned arrangement are as follows: not only that the Sisters cannot satisfy the "numerous spiritual needs of the Christian people"¹⁷ but also because "*the house of the Institute cannot sustain the burden of maintaining so many sisters thus dispersed*"¹⁸

As a wise woman, she desires that the good work should be carried out, and carried out well with a deep spiritual incisiveness and continuity in time. Thus she writes to Margaret Rosmini:

" . . . on Wednesday, if God wills, I will leave for Bergamo, for the sake of my dear country girls. There are three more months to finish instructing them. You can imagine how concerned I am that they should be formed well, so that afterwards they can work in the service of God and for the good of the souls" ¹⁹

The eye of the Foundress is certainly focused on the ultimate end of life: to glorify her God and to help as many as she can to glorify Him.

The results which would ensue would be for the Daughters of Charity as well as for the teachers that they had prepared, "*the Divine Glory and the good of their neighbours*" ²⁰
To one of her daughters she writes:

*"I am consoled to hear that the teachers are doing well. May the Lord bless them so that they might profit from the training and thus be fruitful in their labours, all for His glory"*²¹

These young people, in fact, once they are duly formed will surely cooperate

"that God may be known and loved, to prevent sins and to prepare the way to Heaven for many souls" ²²

¹⁶ M.d.C. R.s.s., p. 234. In the appendix to the Rules of Milan (1820) Magdalene will allow the work of the Daughters of Charity to be extended "also to the rural areas" (cf. art. Vllil, p. 77).

¹⁷ M.d.C., Ep. II/2, p. 1422

¹⁸ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 234.

¹⁹ M.d.C., to Rosmini, Ep. III/1, p. 585.

²⁰ M.d.C.. R.s s p 246

²¹ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/4 p. 3123.

²² M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1a, pp. 246-247.

**CRITERIA
OF CHOICE
FOR
ADMISSION**

CRITERIA OF CHOICE FOR ADMISSION

The distinctive features requested by the Foundress in the work of charity are many. Above all, they should be persons who are not too young such that they have not yet made their choice regarding their state of life.

Magdalene, in fact, excluded those who would have had the intention of forming a family because she wanted them to remain in total availability to the needs of the local Church

"There is no place - she writes with reference to the work of charity - where we cannot usually find country girls who do not desire to remain in the virginal state".¹

Thus she writes to the Parish Priest who recommended to her a very young girl:

". . . those girls who enter here for the seven months teacher formation course should be of an age where they have already chosen for themselves a virginal state of life. Otherwise, should they change their mind regarding their state of life, it would be unfair to the rural places from where they come, in view of the fact that the burden of maintaining and educating them is borne by these communities".²

With such reasons, Magdalene refused to accept the girl we mentioned before:

". . . it is not suitable . . . for such a tender age, because for such girls, only seven months of formation is not enough and after that period is over. we cannot keep her any longer"³

Magdalene establishes that the person who is interested in attending the formation course should have already chosen the lay apostolate as a decisive commitment for life:

". . . don't accept anyone who could have given you reason for doubting: the uncertainty of a girl's perseverance in the state of celibacy or of marrying again in the case of widows"⁴

In the invitation sent out to the individuals, she insists:

"The young girls of the rural areas . . . must be unmarried and they should manifest the inclination to persevere in this state"⁵

¹ M.d.C. R.s.s., pp. 233-234

² M.d.C. to a Parish Priest, Ep.III/4, P. 2874.

³ M.d.C., to a Parish Priest, Ep.III/4, p. 2874.

⁴ M.d.C., R.s.s., pp. 234-235.

⁵ A printed prospectus, A 3: M C - FO, A.C.R.

A second criterion is that they should be of an exceptional behaviour:

*" . . . Let no one ever be accepted if she had not always maintained an irreproachable conduct - and does not enjoy in the country the reputation of being honest and uprightly"*⁶

To a gentleman of Bergamo, she recommends him to search for

" . . . two girls who are upright and honest, are inclined to live the celibate life and are of good upbringing".⁷

A third requirement sought for in the girls are qualities of temperament, of spiritual life and of ability to relate with others:

"It would be better, your Excellency", she writes to the Bishop of Chioggia, "if you can find some girls, even if they are not very educated, for we will educate them. However, they should have an open mind, good temperament and pleasing ways of winning the girls ' affections ".⁸

And more precisely to a gentleman of Bergamo she writes:

*"The girls must have sufficient talents and capabilities"*⁹

And again to Monsignor Savorin:

*"It is from experience we learn . . . that if they are cold and have closed mentality, our efforts are nearly useless and it is a waste of money for those people who have financially supported them and are desirous of the good they could accomplish. Even the teacher of this work of formation tells me this"*¹⁰

On the printed paper circulated for publicising this formation course, it is precisely stated:

" . . . even the widows can be accepted as long as they enjoy a good name and are receptive to instruction ".¹¹

and that

" . . . living their state of life in holiness, let them have the desire to be engaged in works of charity".¹²

For Magdalene one of the fundamental characteristics that should be discovered in the persons who are prepared for this noble apostolate, was their desire to sacrifice themselves totally for the good of others.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ M.d.C., to Mr. Sebastiano, Ep. II/2, p. 1311.

⁸ M.d.C., to Monsignor Savorin, Ep. II/2. p. 1304

⁹ M.d.C., to Mr. Sebastiano, Ep. II/2, p. 1311

¹⁰ M.d.C., to Monsignor Savorin, Ep. II/2, p. 1304

¹¹ cf. A3, MC-FO, A.C.R

¹² M d.C-, R.s.s-, p. 234

*"Let us accept - she has written in her 'Plans' - some good girls from the Rural areas, who are eager to dedicate themselves to the Christian Education and instruction of the poor children of their own native places in order to form them for this purpose. Let us help them to carry out their own work in a true Spirit of Charity for the love of the Lord. "*¹³

In another Plan, Magdalene specifies that such girls should not only be "desirous" but should have

*"... the vocation to dedicate themselves in running a School of Charity and to teach Christian doctrine when they return to their homes. "*¹⁴

Writing to Faccioli, Superior of Bergamo, Magdalene requests that she should be informed of the three young girls who had been recently admitted:

*" ... write to me in detail of their health, of their good will, capabilities and their inclinations for teaching. "*¹⁵

When she had doubts and thought that she was presented with girls who were not exactly called to an apostolic life, she would not make any exception.

Regarding the two girls who were presented to her by Don Burocco, the parish priest of Milan, Magdalene replies:

*"It seems to me that even the age of the girls who are to be instructed is to be considered. For we are not able to know if they are accepting this training because of their inclinations or if they are motivated by the speculation of financial gains. The second case could be damaging to our girls and ideas which are not suitable may be circulated to the rest of them. "*¹⁶

And to Bragato, the Superior of the Community in Verona, she writes:

*" . . . about that priest from Murano who spoke to you about his sister, whom he wanted us to educate so that she can help maintain her family, tell him dankly but graciously that we cannot take her. We take only those who will later become teachers involved in the apostolate. "*¹⁷

A good summary of all the qualities expected from the aspiring teachers is given by Monsignor Zoppi in his inaugural speech made on the occasion of the canonical erection of the Institute at Milan (14-9-1823).

Addressing himself to the Milanese who are present, he says:

"Don 't think that the good works of this Institute is focused only on the poor of this city. It is up to you, Ladies and Gentlemen, to help it spread in your rural areas and eventually to the whole world.

¹³ M.d.C., Ep. II/2, p. 1422.

¹⁴ M.d.C., Ep. II/2 p. 1424.

¹⁵ M.d.C.. to Faccioli, Ep.III/3, p. 2219.

¹⁶ M.d.C., to Don Burocco, Ep. II/1, p. 310

¹⁷ M.d.C., to Bragato, Ep.III/4, p. 2600

Do you have any rural girls who are not strong enough for hard work and inclined to works of piety and charity - who would need only to be educated and formed to make good use of their own will?

Send them to this Institute, which will accept them for the Formation Course. They will be kept here for as long as it is necessary to instruct them in Religion. They will be trained for some useful works, equipped for teaching others and will be infused with the real spirit of Charity.

Then, they will return to your rural areas nearly like other Daughters of Charity to spread the Christian Teaching, to inculcate piety and sobriety, to make your settlements faithful and religious. On so doing, they can even compensate generously in this life, the great sacrifice you have undertaken to provide for their education.

And you yourselves can be, O Lord, witnesses to all this goodness, and you can watch with your own eyes how these little plants which are destined to bear much fruit, grow until such time when they will be transplanted in society. "¹⁸

Another criterion for choice must take into account one's social status. They should not be persons bound to farm work,

"... because," writes Magdalene, "those who are accustomed to the hard toil of the farm will find it difficult to put up with a sedentary life as that of a teacher in a school. "¹⁹

but let them be chosen from *"among the daughters of artisans, millers, bakers or such occupations."*

The term *"rural girls"* for Magdalene meant the young girls of the countryside rather than literally those who worked on the land. she wished that the young girls be chosen from the

"daughters of artisans, millers, bakers or such occupations"²⁰ as she explains, "those who are accustomed to the hard toil of the farm will find it difficult to put up with a sedentary life. "²¹

Physical health is another important factor so that the young girls could bear the burden of apostolic work which in fact could be very exhausting:

" I recommend that they be persons of good health. We have seen on our part, in our experience with the girls of Bergamo that amidst the change of climate, and style of life, the change of environment from the freedom of one's own home to continued restrictions, those who were weak and frail became sick and they hampered us not only because we had to nurse them but also we could not help the others. "²²

Before admitting a girl of poor health, she desired that a doctor whom she knows be consulted *"confidentially"* on the girl's physical state:

"If we have accurate information about this illness we can take her as a teacher, but with caution, especially regarding this type of illness more than others. We will have to be more attentive about her health. Let us give her a trial without any obligation. "²³

¹⁸ Mons. F. Zoppi, Istruzione al popolo per la erezione dell'Istituto in Milano, 1823, A 3, XXIV, A.C.R.

¹⁹ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 234.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 234.

²² M.d.C., to Mons. Zoppi, Ep. II/2, p. 1081.

²³ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep.III/4, p. 2752.

In the end Magdalene wanted that all the personal documents of the candidate be in good order. To be admitted.

*"... it will be proper that they present certificates of good conduct, of baptism and a declaration of whether they have been confirmed or not".*²⁴

and she confirms: *"never receive anyone if they don't present certificates from their respective parish priests"*.²⁵

She requires some books: *".... let them bring along one or two copies of the catechism book that is used in their village."*²⁶

And this is so, in order to adapt the teaching of the doctrine to the specific texts used by the respective parish priests.

Regarding furniture and the trousseau, Magdalene specifies to Rosmini that they are in need of beds as they begin the work: *"Let them bring their beds, and the few things needed in dressing up, that is, whatever they have in the house."*²⁷

And the phrase that is rather ambiguous and written in the Rules of Verona of 1828, *"They will pay for their own crafts and text books . . ."*²⁸ the missing subject of the sentence is clarified in a letter sent to Margaret Rosmini: *"and their families will provide for the books, the papers and the laundry."*²⁹

For the monthly fee *"They will contribute what is necessary for their upkeep."* And she warns the Daughters of Charity not to receive *"any sort of gift, but they must do everything only for the love and the glory of God"*³⁰ Instead, the Community can admit into the formation course a teacher of their choice, not the benefactors' choice, if at the end of the year they have some surplus, after all the expenditures.

And of this latter specification she explains:

*"In our Institute I don 't see the least difficulty in having a fund for the maintenance of a teacher when the choice would be that of the Institute. Because, my dear daughter, if the choice would have been of some benefactors, I would not accept the fund, since they could choose any candidate that is not suitable for us and then complicate everything Keep always as a rule, my dear daughter, not to accept any gift with strings attached to it. This, to my belief, brings grave harm to the whole Congregation than we could ever foresee."*³¹

These meaningful clarifications denote the primary interests of Magdalene: the glory of God, and the good of the neighbour in a completely disinterested way.

²⁴ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 235

²⁵ Ibid.M d.C., R.s.s-, p- 235

²⁶ M d.C., R.s.s-, p- 235

²⁷ M.d.C., to Rosmini, Ep.III/4, pp. 2563-2564.

²⁸ M.d.C., Regole autentiche, 1828, ms A 3, VII, A.C.R., p. 5.

²⁹ M.d.C., to Rosmini, EP.III/4 p. 2564.

³⁰ M.d.C., Regole autentiche, 1828, ms., A 3, VII, A.C.R., p. 5.

³¹ M.d.C.. to Rosmini. Ep. III/4 r., 2s~4

**WAYS
OF CHOOSING
THE YOUNG GIRLS**

WAYS OF CHOOSING THE YOUNG GIRLS.

Months ahead of the formation course for the young girls, Magdalene began a series of correspondence with Parish Priests and Bishops whom she knew. She informed them of her initiatives, above all when they requested foundations to which she could not comply with, either due to the lack of Sisters or because she preferred to open houses on the periphery of the city where the needs of the people were greater and urgent.

Thus, as a consequence, she would write down in the Rules this experience of almost twenty years: the future teachers of the rural areas will be "chosen by the Parish Priests and by able persons."¹

When pressured by Ecclesiastics for new foundations, Magdalene offers an alternative—that has already been proven to be apostolically valid—the preparation of committed lay persons.

To Don Tavecchi, Parish Priest of Rovato, to whom she replied that the orphanage is not among the works of the Institute²; she pointed out the possibility of a "course" for the preparation of teachers: "*Next January we have here in Verona a new course of education for teachers.*"³ And she concluded giving hope of a foundation in the future: "*If we can be established there, we could help Rovato in a better way.*"⁴

To Don Michael Murara, Parish Priest of a small town in the province of Trent, she writes:

"I will not fail to keep in mind your suggestion . . . when the time for the course of teachers' education is here."⁵

She assures the Bishop of Chioggia, Monsignor Antonio Savorin, that the four young girls he has chosen for the course would have the best possible preparation for his desired end:

"The four young girls presented themselves as I expected, that is, they are very good Be assured of our total commitment in your service, so that they will succeed according to the aims which you and we ardently desire, that is, that they may return full of enthusiasm and be prepared to revive charity, which, as you say, is very much needed."⁶

To another gentleman who asked for a foundation in a town of Bergamo, she replies,

¹ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 234

² cf. M.d.C., to Don Tavecchi, Ep. II/2, p. 1038.

³ Ibid. p. 1041.

⁴ M.d.C., to Don Tavecchi, Ep. II/2, p. 1041.

⁵ M.d.C., to Don Murara, Ep. II/2, p. 1306.

⁶ M.d.C. a Mons. Savorin, Ep. II/2, p. 1306.

*"I made the most serious reflection on the foundation, but considering well all the circumstances, with regret, I find, I'm not able to comply with it now The only thing I see possible would be that you should find two young girls and I would try everything to have them instructed, and with every care, see to it that they become capable for the objective you have in mind. "*⁷

To Monsignor Francesco Zoppi, Bishop of Massa Carrara, who has asked Magdalene for years for a foundation in his diocese, Magdalene thus writes:

*"In the city of Massa or in the Diocese certainly there will be good young girls who are desirous of giving themselves to the service of God. I, therefore, think that you should send me four of them to Milan. When you believe that it is opportune to initiate them, please tell me so, and I will find a way so that they could live with us for six months or a year without burdening their families. "*⁸

Foreseeing even the good of the neighbouring towns, Magdalene thus continues:

*"and if two of them would come from the city, and two others from some other towns, we could hope for great gains even in the towns. These girls then, keeping a school where they can earn, would be a help to their poor families and you would have apostles for the Christian Doctrine, who are capable of teaching others in vocational training and in reading. "*⁹

The letter proceeds in an optimistic and good humoured tone:

*" and then with the passing of time, if the Lord deigns to bless these girls, as He has blessed those of Bergamo, though it might seem too much to say, that on their return to Massa, you will find a very notable change in the city within six months. "*¹⁰

Everything, as in every initiative of hers, Magdalene attributes to the Mother of God:

*"Out of sheer sincerity I confess that it is Mary most holy who made the girls from Bergamo reap so much fruit and I don't doubt she would do the same for these girls. Here is my project. "*¹¹

Magdalene does not only indicate the Course of Studies, but shows also the most practical way by which the young women could reach the venue:

*" it seems to me that it is more convenient, if you could have them accompanied by the father of one of the girls and your secretary who would proceed from Mantua to Milan; in this way, I believe. the way is shorter than the one from Genoa "*¹²

⁷ M.d.C. to Signor Sebastiano, Ep. II/2, p. 1311.

⁸ M.d.C., to Mons. Zoppi, Ep. II/2

⁹ Ibid. p. 1077.

¹⁰ M.d.C., to Mons. Zoppi, Ep. II/2, p. 1077

¹¹ M.d.C., to Mons. Zoppi, Ep. II/2, p. 1076

¹² Ibid. 1088

In the duration of the Formation Course, Magdalene informs about the progress reached by the young women and about their potentials:

"On my part, I assure you that I have nothing but praises for everyone. Colomba, besides behaving very well, has also learned well a bit of everything. Nonetheless, due partly to age and partly to health I cannot assure you whether she would succeed as a teacher.

Teresa is so good, prudent, but limited in her talents . . . she has learnt the crafts, but she is not one for studies . . .

*We have always found Francesca a very good student She is not only good, but also the best inclined to teaching, full of zeal, clever, active. . . how much consolation it would be for me to learn that the three of them, in their own ways, would be of help to you."*¹³

¹³ M.d.C., to Mons. Zoppi, Ep. II/2, p. 1096

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE EDUCATORS

Magdalene knows that every work of education requires human rapport between the educator and the subject to be formed. From the nature of such a rapport comes the benefit of the formation itself.

From here we see the need of the presence of one or more persons—guides, who have the capacity to enlighten, to support, to encourage, to animate.

And if such education would have as its goal the preparation of persons who in turn would become educators, the demands of such human rapport will be great and the criteria of choice would even be more selective.

In the treatise¹ that Magdalene wrote for the formation of young women destined to become teachers and apostles of charity in such a way

*“. . . as to make them capable of exercising the duty of teachers in their own native places and villages, propagating and spreading the vocational training and the education that they learned from the Institute, ”*²

she thus establishes:

*"The Superior, with the advice of her assistants, will choose from among the Sisters the one best judged to be the teacher. ”*³

It was a matter of a cautious choice, the result of a consensus and the most suitable person possible.

Taking into account the fact that the young women came from the rural areas, an assistant to the teacher, *"one sister who hails from the rural area "* will be chosen, and *"if this person is not skilled in crafts"*⁴ a third one will be chosen . *"It could also be that sometimes, the head of the doctrine is the one suited for the purpose."*⁵

The first disposition required of such sisters is that they be enthusiastic about the work and animated by the desire of:

*. dedicating themselves Wholeheartedly in this branch of work of charity which speaks for itself and which is obviously to be continued”.*⁶

Only with this interior motivation will it be possible for one to be free from the opinion

*"...that this branch is impracticable or too difficult or too much of a distraction for the community. ”*⁷

¹ Maddalena presenta il trattato con il titolo "Sistema per le contadine" R.s.s., pp. 233-247.

² M d C., Ep. II/2, p. 1438

³ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 236 n. (84)

⁴ M.d.C., R s.s., p. 236

⁵ Ibid. pp. 235-236

⁶ Ibid, p. 237

⁷ Ibid . pp . 2 3 3-2 34

These are ways of thinking that are not in harmony with hearts burning with apostolic zeal.
To do this work well,

*"...the Sisters would have to sacrifice a little bit of their quiet time and tranquility. In joining this Institute they have already sacrificed much to the Lord. In doing this work they could make God known and loved."*⁸

The community is not an end in itself but it is in a permanent state of service. The first aim of a Daughter of Charity is to make Jesus Christ known and loved.

But in this kind of apostolate, one also obtains the end of having Him served by preparing persons who are capable of working concretely for the spreading of the Kingdom of God.

And the Sisters,

*"... other than having the great joy of eliciting from others the service of the Lord, will receive in heaven, in addition to their crown, an abundant reward."*⁹

With these sentiments, the Daughters of Charity will dedicate themselves to the training of these young women and will consider this charge as a special grace from the Lord:

*".... the Sisters to whom the Lord will give the grace to be involved in this, will be most diligent, profiting from every bit of time, not losing any moment, nor occasions in order to be of help to these good girls, remembering that this is a harvest that gives much fruit within a short period of 'cultivation'."*¹⁰

The search among her daughters who had such qualifications was not always easy. Magdalene also often advised various Superiors through letters about the houses in which these courses are to be conducted.

She writes from Venice to Bragato, Superior of Verona:

*"On the one hand I have at heart the good to be done; and on the other, I would not want you to be overburdened so that you could not attend to be overburdened so that you could not attend to either one or the otherPierina should not be taken away from the School (of charity). Tell me if Beppa (Terragnoli) would be suited as head with Deodata, who if needed, could be helped by Rosa (Dabala) from Venice or by Cristina (Pilotti) for teaching sewing or it is better to place Cristina as head with Deodata."*¹¹

On another occasion she writes to the Superior of Bergamo:

*"I would like to know from you, since you would like me to allow you to admit 5 farm girls I would like you to write to me about the method you have chosen to use and which your companions judge suitable for that work. But tell me everything in detail. After seeing what you write, I will in turn, tell you what the Lord will enlighten me as to what you should do."*¹²

⁸ M.d.C. R. s.s.. p. 246-247

⁹ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 246-247

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ M.d.C., to Bragato. Ep. III/1, p. 221

¹² M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/3, p. 2187

Magdalene supports spiritually her daughters, encourages them and expresses her pleasure when she sees their happiness and their availability.

*"It is necessary that I tell you how great a consolation you have given me this time, particularly when I see you indifferent to all, not looking for anything else but the good of the Institute as a whole, and the good of the girls in particular. I assure you that you have taken from me the fatigue of travelling"*¹³

As a person in continuous search of the better thing to be done, Magdalene submits for evaluation her apostolic initiative:

*"In the same way, tell me if the method that I gave you succeeds and if all of you, as I hope in the Lord, are calm, united and full of courage to work for the Lord."*¹⁴

With real maternal satisfaction she informs some priests:

*"Cattina Carminati is well, she behaves very well and is very happy she does her duty of assistant teacher to the farm girls in the company of Cristina (Pilotti). I would say that I have seen her in this work and she seems to be always happy."*¹⁵

*"...I want to assure you of my full dedication and the concern of my dear companions so that these young women would be truly formed according to our common desires."*¹⁶

The personal commitment of Magdalene to this work was praiseworthy. Her concern was to be the guide and animating presence of the work.

"I wanted to try and find the way of establishing here a school for the formation of rural teachers,¹⁷ in which case I had to agree with you all to divide the work to help each other, but due to too many things and other difficulties, it has never been possible to discuss with the Superior¹⁸ and to sufficiently allow matters to mature."¹⁹

Unable to follow up personally the work, she gives the charges to her faithful secretary Cristina Pilotti, of whom she reveals in various letters, her deep esteem. Thus she writes to Renzi from Milan:

*"I don't send you the greetings of Cristina for I left her in Verona where she is supervising the course of education of the teachers for the rural areas"*²⁰

And to Mons. Zoppi:

¹³ M d C. to Dabala . Ep. III/2, p. 1140.

¹⁴ M.d.C., to Faccioli Ep.III/3, p. 2219.

¹⁵ M.d.C., to Don Zanetti Ep. II/1 p. 435.

¹⁶ M.d.C., to Mons. Zoppi, Ep. II/2, p. 1090

¹⁷ Allude al corso delle maestre di campagna a Verona

¹⁸ M. Angela Bragato, Superiora della Comunita' di Verona.

¹⁹ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/4, p. 2762-2763.

²⁰ M.d.C., to Renzi, Ep. II/2, p. 1154.

*"I am uncertain of stopping in Verona for some weeks; neither can that companion Christina), whom the Lord's goodness has deigned to bless abundantly in the work of forming the rural teachers here. Consequently, I desire to personally meet your young women and to see for myself that they are well guided for at least one month in the hands of this companion of mine, who among others is best trained for this work. I am then, constrained to ask for the delay of their coming"*²¹

Health is an obstacle to the zeal of her best collaborator and Magdalene in her preoccupation, writes thus to the Superior of Verona, Rosa Dabalà:

*"Tell Cristina that my advice is that she should try to spare herself as much as possible "*²²

And after a few days:

*"Regarding the teachers, my hope is that the Lord is obliged to help them. Tell dear Cristina to take every care: food and rest, as much as she can, I think, are the best for her. I will not fail to pray also for the teachers, unworthy as I am. "*²³

Another daughter on whom Magdalene could fully rely for the formation of the teachers was Francesca Luca. She thus writes to Faccioli, Superior of the house in Bergamo:

*"This year, make Checchina the head of this branch of work of the Institute, but oblige also the other two, namely, Lazzaroni and Maddalena as you can see their names written down in the timetable Leave to Checchina even the direction of the school, letting her this time do one and the other. "*²⁴

On another occasion, her esteem for the same daughter surfaces:

*"Regarding the permission you gave to Checchina to help Lazzaroni in the accounts, as long as it does not bring disturbance to the school, I am very happy about it "*²⁵

And knowing her desire to be fully consumed for the glory of God, she requests Faccioli to tell her as follows:

*"Tell Checchina that I recommend her to do well the Novena to the Holy Spirit, because it concerns me that she should burn, to put it better, burn as a blazing torch, being consumed slowly in order to serve the Lord longer. "*²⁶

With a maternal heart, she follows the formators and students thus:

"I am glad for the good news that you continually give me regarding even the rural teachers. Let us thank the Lord for them. Greet them for me and tell them that it would be a great pleasure for

²¹ M d C, a Mons. Zoppi. Ep II/2, p.1080.

²² M d C to Dabala'. Ep. III/5. p. 3723

²³ M.d.C., to Dabala, Ep. III/5, p. 3725

²⁴ M.d.C. to Faccioli, Ep. III/3, pp. 2161-2162

²⁵ Ivi, p. 2239.

²⁶ M.d.C., to Faccioli. Ep. III/4, p. 3118

*me to know them. And I hope to find you spiritually well. I wish all a very Happy New Year, full of the copious blessings. May God form each one of you according to His Heart. This is what I desire most of all".*²⁷

*"I'm glad to hear of what you tell me about the rural teachers; may the Lord bless them and make them do great things for his glory. I am very consoled to hear that you are all calm; continue to give me your news greet the teachers for me. "*²⁸

*"I am pleased to hear that the teachers are very good and that you find everyone happy. Have no doubts, God will help you to fulfill his work. Trust in Mary most holy whom I ask you to take as Mother and Teacher in all your undertakings, most especially in the works of charity."*²⁹

As a conscientious Mother she desired that the excessive zeal of her daughters for the good of the neighbours should not harm their health.

The formation course for teachers is not a work that is "perennial and continuous" like the other three apostolic activities of the Daughters of Charity.

Due to this reason, before beginning the annual course, Magdalene seeks information whether the health of the Sisters is sufficiently good to bear the burden of the Work

*"Regarding the teachers whom you want to accept, it is very good that for now you are an welt But before deciding on it, I want to see how the health of everyone would be after the Octave of Easter and remember to write to me in a fortnight how each one's health really is and I will answer you right away. "*³⁰

And with the course already begun, she reproaches them gently:

*"You are surprised by my long silence, my dear daughter, and you are right I cannot deny not being surprised and even feeling uncomfortable in hearing that you have accepted and settled the teachers before I could give my answer . . "*³¹

*"I hear, thanks be to the Lord, that all of you are in good health, and I win continue always to compliment you as long as you are all well, because should you get sick, I will not allow you to take up the formation of rural teachers next year, therefore, try to keep welt Be aware that you must stay firm like towers if you want to work for the glory of God. "*³²

Magdalene desired that her daughters as well as their students should keep in good health.

The teacher " must pay attention to preserve the strength and the health of these girls. "³³

To obtain such an end, she lays down the following rules for their physical and mental health:

*".... for recreation it is sometimes good to lead them to the garden of the house "*³⁴

²⁷ M.d.C., to Facioli, Ep.III/3, p. 2253.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 2404

²⁹ Ibid. p. 2239

³⁰ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep.III/4, p. 2750

³¹ Ibid. p. 2762

³² Ibid. p. 2824.

³³ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 239.

³⁴ Ibid.

In spring, *"an hour before evening" the teacher "must see to it that they breathe some fresh air in the orchard or in the courtyard."*³⁵

Concerning the food: *"... if possible, they should i be served with the food they are accustomed to take."*³⁶

In the way that Magdalene is a mother to her daughters, she wants that they in turn treat the young women entrusted to them with a maternal solicitude. i The motherly ways that Magdalene demonstrates to her daughters are such as to enable them to be mature and independent so that in their turn they could be true educators of other educators.

*"Regarding the teachers, I wrote to Cristina to depend on your judgment Do as you see best before the Lord."*³⁷

*"Seek as much as possible His glory by loving Him above all and then make Him loved and known also by the persons for whom you are responsible."*³⁸

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 240

³⁷ M d C to Dabala, Ep. III/5. p 3714

³⁸ M.d.C. to Faccioli. Ep. III/4. p. 3045

CONTENTS OF FORMATION

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From the writings of Magdalene it is not easy to reconstruct the contents of the various disciplines taught during the seven months of preparation of the so-called "rural teachers"

In fact, exhaustive specific programmes do not exist. These can only be reconstructed from the "Plans"¹, from the treatise on "the Method for training the Rural Teachers"² and from her "Letters"

Magdalene had no appropriate models from the government of that time to copy. In the first ten years of the eighteenth century, in fact, only a few Italian States cared for the establishment of training centres for teaching at the elementary level.

The courses were generally for men. In Venice, training centres for women would be established only in 1861³, ". . . such that the initiative of Canossa, while serving as a model and a starting point, assured a sufficient culture to the one who has to teach reading, writing and arithmetic to the people in the rural areas; the majority of them is illiterate." ⁴

The first concern of Magdalene was to prepare teachers in view of apostolic service for the benefit of the local Church.

In her "Plans" placed at the disposition of civil and religious authorities who require information on her new initiative, she thus expresses:

"To extend and to propagate this benefit among the people, the Institute is engaged in the education of the Rural Teachers whom it seeks to form not only in skills but in the Spirit of Charity, for the benefit of their rural communities and to have a means of teaching Christian Doctrine in these dioceses of ours where the Bishops are most t5.onns?rned" ⁵

Intellectual Formation

She wanted her teachers "skilled", that is, capable of a fitting education for the children of the suburbs. And to such a scope the Daughter of Charity

" must instruct them in the duties of religion, training them in reading, writing, and works adapted to women, so that they would be capable of being teachers in their farms and villages, propagating and spreading in this way the education they have had in the Institute." ⁶

¹ M.d.C., Ep. II/2, pp. 1401-1438

² M.d.C., R.s.s., pp. 233-247

³ M. Giacon, pp. 142-143

⁴ I. Giordani, o.c., p. 96

⁵ M.d.C., Ep. II/2 p. 1405

⁶ Ibid. p. 1438

From the "Method for Training Teachers" and from the "Letters" it is easier to trace out the contents of the course given during the months of formation.

The Sisters in charge must teach: "the girls how to read", so that in their own turn, "they would learn how to teach standard reading"⁷ At the same time, they will teach them twice a day how to write:

*"Regarding what you write to me, concerning the Writing class of the teachers which is scheduled twice a day, tell Checchina (Francesca Luca) to do it by all means."*⁸

To Don Castellani, whose two sisters were received as students of the course, she writes:

*" . . . we teach the young women a bit of writing, just the standard way, the four arithmetical calculations, other small little things in connection with studies and every sort of craft."*⁹

The Foundress herself gives the instruction to program the daily schedule which the Daughters would follow with scrupulous accuracy.

Writing to Faccioli she says:

*"I enclose the schedule for the Method which you must follow for the teachers Take note, my dear daughter, not to change anything without writing to me, since I want to see things in good order."*¹⁰

And it is indeed through this daily schedule, more than in the treatises, that it is possible to trace the other disciplines taught, for example, "an hour daily of writing, the study of grammar, of arithmetic, composition and drill practice in the Italian language."¹¹

And as the one responsible for the initiative, she writes to the Superior of Bergamo:

*" . . . I will come to see what they are learning . . . We can do the little we are capable of, but in the end, it is God alone who can bless our efforts."*¹²

To these hours of instruction, hours of practical training are alternately added:

"cutting and sewing, embroidery in which it is . . . very important that they should be trained as much as possible."¹³ "The young women will prepare lunch and supper taking turns weekly, and doing other duties by themselves as understood."¹⁴

And with a motherly intuition she specifies:

⁷ M.d.C. R.s.s. p. 237

⁸ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep.III/3, p. 2252

⁹ M.d.C., to Don Castellani, Ep.III/3, p. 1834

¹⁰ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep.III/3, p. 2161-2162

¹¹ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 2, p. 84

¹² M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep.III/3, p. 2207

¹³ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 236

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 240

. “concerning their health, try as much as possible to serve food which is as close to that, which they are accustomed to take.”¹⁵

Regard for the local Culture

For other practical lessons to be taught to the young women, Magdalene wanted the teacher to be informed

“ of the specific needs of their towns, of the various agricultural produce and other products, of the particular jobs common to the place or such similar things.”¹⁶

Let alone "their need of instruction" there is the aim of

"forming them according to their personal needs, their particular needs, and the aims for which they had come to the formation course.”¹⁷

She herself writes to Monsignor Zoppi:

"When it is time to send them to me, kindly write what things in particular you would wish these girls to learn pertaining to their towns because I want them to be of the greatest possible help.”¹⁸

Even learning to weave was necessary for the woman of the eighteen hundred, but this skill was given always according to the needs of the towns from which the young women originate.

"Concerning weaving, I will try my best so that Francesca (Manucci) gets some training. The girls from Massa say that cloth and other simple woven materials matter little to them since cloth is made in the mountains at a very low price. What would be needed there would be design-weaving and this requires a big and complicated machine.

Aside from this, the things to be taught to them are many and seven months transpire quickly. I repeat! I will begin to teach Francesca, who alone, to my mind, can work on the loom and the thread; then we will see later on, and if needed, I will see to it that other crafts are substituted.
"¹⁹

And if the young women is of frail constitution, this type of work is not to be taught.

"Another thing that displeases me is the doubt that no one is fit to be taught weaving this being a heavy and very tiring work and it seems to me that these girls are very frail. I repeat! The Lord will help us and we will do whatever is possible”.²⁰

The teaching of this skill must not digress from the benefit of the religious community. It seems this is the way to interpret the above absolute prohibition she gives to one of her daughters who taught someone to mend the veils:

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 243

¹⁷ M d.C.. R.s.s.. p. 236

¹⁸ Monsignor Zoppi, Ep II/2, pa 1081

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 1093

²⁰ M.d.C., to Monsignor Zoppi, Ep. II/2, p. 1990

*"P.S. I heard that Margaret Crespi (F.d.C) has taught Meneghina how to mend veils. If, however she has learnt to do it, remember that I absolutely prohibit teaching anybody this work, not even to the rural teachers; neither must you be seen doing this work in their presence..... I will tell you why later on."*²¹

And all this is done on the principle of professional integrity, always present in the exhortations of the Foundress to her Daughters.

At the end of the course Magdalene could tell the Bishop of Massa:

"Teresa (Vacca) is very good, prudent, but limited in talents. She has learnt the crafts but has not done so well in the studies, not being fit for such matters.

On the one hand, I think she is prepared enough to assist her sister in school and this will bring better results. "²²

The course for the training of teachers is about to conclude.

"I hope that Francesca will be an excellent teacher, though I cannot give you the same good news about the rest I would like to think that even for the crafts you would be satisfied; only it was not possible to make them learn weaving, having found out that it is too heavy for them, as they would tell you later on.

But they learnt some other things. "²³ "In speaking about these good girls, I don't know what else to tell you aside from what I have already said before . . . The skill is not wanting in anybody. The cleverest is Manucci. She and Teresa Vacca have a great inclination for spiritual exercises.

Colomba Vignaroli always says that she is ready for whatever you would think best. She is also very good and able but, due to her health, I cannot fully assure you.

I know that you would have been very happy about the crafts but it was not possible for them to learn weaving because it requires too much effort.

Vignaroli and Vacca are obviously not capable, but, in confidence, let me tell you that Francesca Manucci may seem healthy, but her constitution is not fit for such work and it could have been an obstacle to the greater good that I hope she would do, since she has no resistance to fatigue . . .

*Thank God that the three of them manifest a great fervour and commitment to work for the Divine Glory. I hope that they would at least correspond in some way to your great zeal and charity. Since I am sure of this, may the Lord grant you the light to assign them where God would be served most."*²⁴

Magdalene looks forward to forming apostles and as such she cares not only for intellectual aptitude but above all for spiritual maturity. And for such a purpose she wrote to Monsignor Zoppi:

*"... I believe that they don't want a lot of studies; we can use the time better in teaching them how to read well, to sew, to make stockings, in short, the household duties in a family and give them a sound foundation in religious education according to our custom, especially in Verona..."*²⁵

²¹ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep.III/3, p. 2315

²² M.d.C. to Monsignor Zoppi, Ep. II/2, p. 1095-1096

²³ M.d.C., to Monsignor Zoppi, Ep. II/2, p. 1097-1098

²⁴ Ibid., p. 1099-1100

²⁵ M.d.C., to Monsignor Zoppi, Ep. II/2, p. 1076-1077

Religious instruction must top all the other disciplines so that they could be formed as true and convinced Christians capable of

*" . . . serving at the school of Christian doctrine in their parishes."*²⁶

*"They will be well instructed and grounded in the Christian doctrine and in the manner of instructing and educating the youth."*²⁷

Magdalene is concerned above all to give the students a solid foundation of Christian life, to ensure formation of what is fundamental in their life of faith. In the first Place, she exhorts:

*" . . . the teacher should find out . . . what and how much of the essential things they have already learnt and strengthen them in these. If they do not know them, they will be prepared to receive the Sacraments and be instructed according to our way of assisting the dying."*²⁸

In the second place teach them thoroughly all the doctrines applying what you explain to them, to the questions of the Catechism text books of their places. "²⁹

"Having taught them the essentials, give them a very brief historical survey of the natural law, the written law, as well as the law of grace and teach them the doctrine well, till the end Instruct them on the most holy sacraments of Confirmation, Penance, Eucharist and Holy Oil, not omitting a general instruction on all the Sacraments".³⁰

Instruct them also on the value of

*" . . . the holy sacrifice of the Mass and the four ends for which it is offered. Do not forget to instruct them well on the indulgences."*³¹

To such an end, the teacher daily

*" . . . will make half an hour of spiritual lesson which will be explained well to them."*³²

*"Every Sunday . . . she will read to them the Gospel of the feast, in Italian of course, and then she will explain to them simply in a way suited to their understanding . . ."*³³

*"Instruct them how to meditate . . . making them know Our Lord Jesus Christ, His Spirit, His teachings, His most holy life and His most bitter death, since every Sister of this Institute must have this concern - to make known our Saviour who was sent by the Divine Father."*³⁴

²⁶ M.d.C., R.s.s. p. 245

²⁷ M.d.C., Regole 1828, A 3, VII, A.C.R., p.5

²⁸ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 242

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid .

³² M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 232

³³ Ibid. p 238

³⁴ Ibid. p. 240

The spiritual lesson will be carried out "for about an hour . . ." ³⁵ on books of solid and sure formation, ³⁶ very appropriate in order to

" . . . lead the soul in whatever situation and state of life to sound holiness. " ³⁷

"Teach them how to make the examination of conscience and keep on emphasising that the fruit of all spiritual exercises is the practice of virtues." ³⁸

To this end she writes to Renzi:

"See to it that they be well founded above all in thee practice of virtue; for the rest, they are as things of little consequence. " ³⁹

But the practice of virtue must find its deep roots in faith, without which, a true Christian formation would not last: "The teacher must seek to infuse the true spirit of faith {in the young women) ⁴⁰

Magdalene is also aware that Christian formation is not possible without prayer. With this in mind, she invites her daughters to pray:

"Meanwhile, I ask you to entrust them to the Lord so that they could be formed according to His Heart and then they would live for His greater Glory. " ⁴¹

In another letter of hers she invites the whole community to pray:

"Pray . . . implore the Most Holy Mary that she may deign to ask her Divine Son to bestow a particular blessing, even this year, on this work that will give Him great glory. " ⁴²

All that has been proposed till now, constitutes according to Magdalene,

" the way to truly form them. If this is not realized, the aim for which they were received would not be reached. " ⁴³

Education for nursing the sick

Another aspect of the education given to the young women will be some notions regarding the nursing of the sick if and when the chance for this work of charity presents itself.

"It would be useful to instruct them how to assist spiritually and physically the sick and the dying, teaching them how to do it with care and attention with modesty coupled with skill, teaching them

³⁵ Ibid. p. 239

³⁶ Kempis, Imitation of Christ—St. Francis di Sales. I'hilothea, The Spiritual Diary—St. Alphonsus de'Liguori, Modo ' conversare to familiare con Dio.

³⁷ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 241 Ibid. p. 241-242

³⁸ Ibid. p. 241-242

³⁹ M.d.C., to Renzi, Ep. II/2, p. 1192

⁴⁰ M.d.C., R.s.s. p. 241

⁴¹ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/3, p. 1831

⁴² Ibid., p. 1815

⁴³ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 240

*moreover to prepare some soup, simple remediesgiving them pointers which are very necessary for seriously sick persons. "*⁴⁴

The future apostles will above all be instructed in the way of assisting spiritually the dying persons. They must not discourage the persons by telling them that "*the sickness is incurable*" but at the same time they should take every care to prepare them" for death as if they would die"⁴⁵ And since life is in God's hands more than in those of the doctor, they must prompt them acts of resignation to God's will with regard to the manner and the "*hour of death itself*."⁴⁶ The interior disposition of these young visitors must be conformed to those of the Daughters of Charity, of the Ladies and the Tertiaries to whom Magdalene has indicated in a very detailed way the manner of assistance:

*"They must serve - and must see - with great charity and happiness, in the sick, the person of Jesus Christ Himself who said: If you have visited the sick, you have visited me. "*⁴⁷

The visitors must give their service

*"...primarily for what concerns spiritual assistance, procuring for the sick those comforts of our religion that could serve to improve their lives. "*⁴⁸

If the principal aim remains as that of spiritual comfort, it might also be necessary for some cases to extend also corporal service

*"...rendering thus the work of mercy more completely. ... often one penetrates the soul of the other through the body. "*⁴⁹

Government Examinations

At the end of the (formation) course, the young women are given government examinations which will qualify them to teach.

From the same time-table of the "rural teachers" one can deduce the subjects taken for examinations in those days:

- *Christian Doctrine*
- *Standard reading and writing*
- *Grammar*
- *Arithmetic, that is, calculation*
- *Dressmaking*⁵⁰

From the registers side by side with each subject, one can surmise that the time-table dates back to the time of the Foundress herself.

⁴⁴ M.d.C.. R.s.s., p. 245-246 45

⁴⁵ Ibid.. p. 246

⁴⁶ Ib id

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 359 cf. R.s.s., p. I Regola III, p. 223

⁴⁸ M.d.C.. R.s.s., P. 2, p. 35

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 36. Per modalità più dettagliate di assistenza alle inferme cf. p. 124-127

⁵⁰ M.d.C., R.s.s.. P. 2. p. 84

To-day one might smile at such a rudimentary program but if one considers that "the various Italian States had not yet succeeded in establishing schools for the formation of teachers",⁵¹ one is stunned at the initiative of Magdalene.

The attention of the government then was focused more on the conduct of the teacher than on the quality of education.

In order to teach, aside from the qualification required by the government, one needed "the clearance from the police regarding one's moral and political conduct."⁵²

Some letters of the Foundress bear witness to the examinations taken by the students who had completed the course.

From 1822, the year in which Magdalene started the courses, we have proofs that the examinations form part of the regular procedures.

She writes to the Superior of Bergamo:

*"Write to me whether the good Marietta di Tavernola⁵³ has sat for the examinations and whether she has been granted the license to teach."*⁵⁴

The immediate preparation of the candidates for the examinations was done by her secretary Cristina, and because of it, she justifies the delay of her correspondence to her own daughters:

*". . . since our teachers are nearing the end of their course, my secretary Cristina is always with them, so that they could be ready for the exams."*⁵⁵

*"You will find me very negligent in writing, my dear daughter. But know that, here the teachers are very close to their exams and so I have trouble in finding secretaries."*⁵⁶

She enquires of the Superior of Bergamo regarding the examinations of two students: "Tell me if you know who would examine the two teachers in training we have here from Valle Camonica."⁵⁷ And in another letter she assures her daughters with an expression of faith: "As for the examinations you win see that the Lord will make everything go well."⁵⁸

To her daughters of Verona, worried about the public examinations of the young ladies of Chioggia, she playfully writes:

*"I did not speak to the Bishop, neither of the teaching diplomas nor of the tricks, since we are dealing with a Diocese away from ours . . . well, the Bishop will be glad when we will return to him his teachers and he will certainly know what to do with them, for in Chioggia too a teaching diploma will, no doubt, turn out to be useful⁵⁹ ... for everyone."*⁶⁰

If the examination results are good Magdalene will rejoice with her daughters:

⁵¹ M. Giacon, o.c., p. 142

⁵² N. Dalle Vedove, B. Gaspare Bertoni, Vol. IV, p. 60, tip. Stimmgraf., Verona, 1981.

⁵³ Marietta Mora di Tavernola, localita bergamasca sul lago d'Iseo.

⁵⁴ M.d.C., Dabala, Ep. III/1, p. 564

⁵⁵ M.d.C., to Bragato, Ep. III/5, p. 3527

⁵⁶ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/5, p. 3532

⁵⁷ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/4 p. 3005

⁵⁸ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/3, 2394.

⁵⁹ Brancini: in gergo dialettale equivale a pesci

⁶⁰ M d C to Dabala, Ep. III/5, P- 3719

*"... let us thank the Lord who has lavishly blessed us. "*⁶¹

*"I thank the Lord for his goodness, for he has accompanied our little work so well. "*⁶²

If, however, the result is not positive for some of the students, she comforts her daughters in this way: "*... those who did not get the diploma now may get it later on...*"⁶³ For over and above the teaching profession, officially recognized, Magdalene values the formation of the heart:

*"... what matter most and in fact, the real aim of our Institute, is the formation of the heart, rooted in the spirit of Charity-two attitudes that you must have in order to carry on this work in view of a truly Christian Education. "*⁶⁴

Though not neglecting the preparation of teaching in view of the standard examinations and the official government recognition, Magdalene is concerned with forming the heart of the young women and to root them deeply in the Charity of Christ so that in the future, when they return to their homes, they can keep alive the type of education they have received from the Institute.

⁶¹ M.d.C., to Dabala, Ep. III/2, p. 965

⁶² M d C a Mons. Zoppi, Ep- II/2. p. 1103.

⁶³ M.d.C.,to Dabalà, Ep. III/5, p. 4092.

⁶⁴ M.d.C., to Don Castellani, Ep. III/3, p. 1834.

METHODOLOGY FOR AN INTEGRAL FORMATION

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Methodology is the art of transmitting to others that which one possesses, whether it be on a scientific level or on the level of life.

Such an art requires a human rapport between the Master and the disciple, between the educator and the person to be educated. From the nature of such a rapport, depends the quality of the educational work.

For this reason, Magdalene chooses the Sisters who are most gifted and trained. She also requests that the live-in course be prolonged for an efficacious rapport between the educator and the future apostles.

The Sisters, in fact, do not have to prepare persons who are only capable of self-realization, but persons who are called in their own turn to be educators.

It would then be necessary to distinguish the methodology used by the Daughters of Charity and the methodology that must be taught to the girls in formation .

Methodology of the Daughters of Charity

Magdalene starts from the principle that the methodology proper to the Daughters of Charity in the work of education can be summarised as docility to the interior movements by the Lord, though not neglecting and in fact, making the most of, the values of the prevalent pedagogy.

*"The Sisters to whom the Lord will give the grace to be employed in this work of charity must be very diligent. "*¹

It is a grace, writes the Foundress, to collaborate with God in the apostolic formation. And she specifies : the manner of this collaboration: " . . . *they must be oery diligent . . not losing time, nor chances for the profit of these good daughters.*"²

The first month will be spent "fully " in gathering the necessary data in order to plan the succeeding months of the educational program which is, as much as possible, personalized. With such an open-mind which is characteristic of a true educator, she lets the teacher choose the method "*as she would judge best.*"³

Magdalene with her sharp intuition, suggests:

¹ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 247

² Ibid ..

³ Ibid.,p.236

"...try to discover the nature, the temperament, the talent, the ability, the conditions of the family in which they live. "4

And uniting the wisdom of an educator and the exquisite charity of a mother, she continues:

*"...if there is anybody, whose simplicity merits to be respected... let her talk but away from the others".*⁵

The sisters in charge of their formation will also dedicate themselves

*". . . to discover the spiritual needs of these girls, such as their needs for instruction . . . the particular needs of their places . . . in order to form them with respect according to their respective needs, and relatively speaking, this is the aim for which they were received. "*⁶

After this phase, the girls will be invited to a personal encounter with God through " . . . five days of Spiritual Exercises"⁷ and "having been previously prepared" to purify their hearts with the Sacrament of penance.

With a spirit that is now free from every interior conflict, open to grace and to the educative work of the teacher, the girls can begin their journey which will make them collaborators for the good of the parishes from which they come.

One of the effective means for a good procedure of the course is the daily schedule with its practical and theoretical sessions that are well combined. And this is, generally speaking, a time-table that is suited for personal adaptation.

Magdalene specifies in the treatise:

*". . . if someone who is used to getting up early, would wish to do so, let her do it, but let her not come out of her own room. "*⁸

*"After lunch, it is not possible to have one system, since the customs and the situations of the different towns and villages are different and they have to be formed according to their habits. "*⁹
*"In the same way, one cannot have a fixed programme for the evening as it is prolonged and shortened according to the season. "*¹⁰

Regard for the person and her rhythm of growth is a pedagogical principle that the Foundress recommends continuously to her daughters.

In the morning, the girls are invited to make "half an hour of meditation. " Magdalene explains the method:

*"...the teacher must instruct them how to meditate . . . trying to make her fall in love with the way of life of Our Lord Jesus and imitate it . . . and make them realize how much a soul is worth so that they would be determined to sacrifice every satisfaction, even spiritual ones, for the good of the same. "*¹¹

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid .

⁶ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 236

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid, p. 238

¹⁰ Ibid. P. 239

¹¹ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 240-241

Then the day will progress in learning the various disciplines. After the lessons in the morning, the Superior of the house can allow, if she sees pedagogically fit, a gathering of the girls for an exchange of ideas on the matters they have previously studied.

*" . . . in a place apart from the school, or in a small circle, the girls of the same school will practise teaching the girls among themselves. "*¹²

From the context in which this is drawn, one can deduce a methodology which to-day in modern terms, we could call "ante litteram" or group dynamics. Magdalene proposes such a method not only for a better grasp of the contents of their learning but even for the formation of the girls in socialization and Christian fellowship.

In the afternoon, the sisters should teach the girls reading " . . . so that they could learn well how to teach standard reading"¹³ to their pupils when they would be practising their profession.

They will also make " . . . half an hour of spiritual reading which will be explained well to them. "¹⁴

During feast days, the (head) teacher or her assistant

*" . . . will read to them the Gospel . . . then she will explain it to them in a simple way that is suited to their intellectual abilities. "*¹⁵

Towards the evening, the Sister-in-charge will explain to them

*"... the Doctrine, asking them questions and keeping them in a relaxed mood for the duration of about an hour" and in the end "she will let them sing some hymns. "*¹⁶

For Magdalene, even singing forms part of a very effective teaching method, especially if the lyrics are religious.

The methodology proper to the Daughters of Charity would be applied not only to theoretical disciplines and in the Christian Spiritual formation but even in general cases of pastoral nature with the end of uprooting ignorance, the cause of a lot of moral disorders and in so doing improve the immorality in the places of work:

*" . . . it is due to ignorance that there is so much disorder and this gives rise to the many immoralities of rural areas. "*¹⁷

The Teacher therefore must

*"... keep herself informed of certain . . . some of which result due to ignorance . . . and some happen due to human disorders weakness which introduce disorder in the accomplishment of things that have to be done necessarily."*¹⁸

¹² M.d.C., Regola diffusa 1820, MI, A3, IV, A.C.R., p. 54

¹³ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 237

¹⁴ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 232

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 238

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., p 243

¹⁸ Ibid p. 242-243

Magdalene invites her daughters to study the way

*“ . . . to correct and to eliminate the discrepancies that have occurred in these works and not to do away with these necessary works. ”*¹⁹

The duty proper to the laity, that is, to sanctify every human reality is discussed as the Mother wisely comments,

*“ . . . the things are not bad in themselves but they become bad because of the disorderly way in which they are done and this must be corrected. ”*²⁰

After the teacher has been informed *“ . . . of the various agricultural and related products of their respective places, the employments specific to a place and such things... ”*²¹ she will try to free the girls from various superstitions, from *“many foolish practices”* like

“... to have one's fortune told by the gypsies and similar things... Every place has its own mal-practices and it is necessary to eliminate them by letting the girls realize the evil these produce and how- these things are all vain, superfluous and sinful”.²²

The teacher must not forget to prepare girls, who in case of need would know how to read *“ in the sheds . . . the lives of saints or to sing, to narrate beautiful anecdotes that edify. ”*²³

The future apostle must know how to lift into goodness any environment she finds herself in.

And not being satisfied with her general recommendations, Magdalene goes down to the details regarding the manner of behaviour: the teacher *“must make them notice the dangers”* inherent in the different works and environments, perceptive and attentive to avoid every form of involvement in evil.

For example: they must avoid

- in the cultivation of silkworms
 - stealing by hatching more silkworms than the one agreed with the owner,
 - allowing unknown or solitary persons to lodge in the owner's house during the season of spinning.
 - intemperance in eating and drinking
 - dances and songs of bad taste
 - bad companions
 - complaints and indecent talks
 - keeping away from the Sacraments and they must be faithful in sanctifying the feasts²⁴
- at harvest time
 - mixed lodgings (boys with girls) and immodesty in dressings.²⁵

¹⁹ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 243

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid .

²² cf. M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 244

²³ Ibid .

²⁴ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 244

²⁵ Ibid

- during the husking of grain
 - the frivolity that originate from working and teasing all evening and late into the nights among the youth of the opposite sex.²⁶
- in the woods and in the pasture lands
 - isolation and distancing from one's companions which cause hardship in helping each other.
- in the stalls
 - flirting
 - complaining and many other tricks, frauds etc.²⁷
- in the fairs and markets
 - let them go, if necessary, in the company of good women, behaving with due wisdom.²⁸
- in games and in the school
 - promiscuity²⁹

And after such a detailed analysis of all possible situations, Magdalene concludes:

*" . . . it is impossible to give a specific solution to all the different misbehaviours. The teacher must see to it that she gives the suitable guidance after getting the advice of the Superior since it is not possible to lay out here more than the general norms "*³⁰

Methodology for 'The Teachers of Rural Areas'

The methodology that the Daughters of Charity use with the teachers of Rural Areas is almost through the process of 'osmosis' One in fact could speak of a communication of life more than a theoretical education.

The transmission of an education is not limited to the enrichment of intellectual concepts but it consists essentially in the formation of the heart.

*"... what is most important, and in fact, the sole aim for which the Institute is engaged in this work, is the formation of their heart and to ground them in the spirit of charity..."*³¹

The formation to a firm will and good behaviour is based on a clarity of thinking, of deep rooted convictions such that the person is enabled to respond promptly and coherently to the multiple demands of daily life and to take the necessary initiatives in conformity with the circumstances and to respond with a behaviour that is as coherent as possible.

According to Magdalene the deep conviction that must be permanently infused in the life of the teacher in the rural area is the love of God and of souls.

*"It is good " she writes, " . . . to introduce to them a true spirit of sacrifice through which they will be disposed to deprive themselves of their freedom and their likings, even though these may be holy, in order to dedicate themselves for the Glory of God and the flood o f souls. "*³²

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ M.d.C. R.s.s., p. 244

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 245.

³¹ M.d.C., to Don Castellani, EpIII/3, p. 1834

³² M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 239

During the period of their formation, the young apostles can find sufficient and substantial stimuli in order to be inflamed evermore with this ideal in such a way that it becomes natural to them,

*"...when they are back in their homes, they will spread the knowledge of the Lord."³³
Furthermore they must "use all their time" for the works of Charity, to help and serve their own family, to persevere in the "... practices of piety which they have learnt."³⁴*

Thus sustained spiritually, they can give of themselves to every charitable work. Magdalene writes:

"...after 4 months of formation, the girls will be taken by the (head) teacher or her assistant to lead at Holy Mass, doing it sometimes in such a way that they assist at no other Mass but that, so that they can get used to taking the girls with them without scruple once they have returned to their farms. "³⁵

" In places where the houses are not far from the parish Church, it is necessary that the country teachers should get used to bringing their girls to the Vespers or to other parochial celebrations since the most dangerous moments for the youth in the rural areas is the time when they come out of the Church. "³⁶

The teacher:

"...must explain the method by which a school of Christian doctrine is to be well established and an guidelines and instructions to obtain this aim judged by the Sisters as best. Moreover, they should make the girls realize that they are not instructed in order that they can act as wise persons when they return to their homes but only because they should know what to do and how to adjust themselves, should they be employed in this work. "³⁷

Magdalene recommends that one should give herself to this service with humility and discretion:

". . . it is very essential to inculcate in them not to think highly of themselves because they have been educated in the Institute, neither should they show that they know more than the others in any other thing; they should, on the other hand, be more virtuous, just because they had a better chance of learning (about these virtues). "³⁸

The students must moreover know how to help the sick and the dying in the towns and villages even in their own homes. To such an end, they will visit the hospital "*once every fortnight*" it is understood that they should not go altogether but "*always accompanied by their teacher or by a sister appointed to be in charge of such a visit.*"³⁹

³³ Ibid, p. 240

³⁴ Ibid, p. 241

³⁵ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 238

³⁶ Ibid, 239

³⁷ Ibid. P. 245

³⁸ M.d.C., R.s.s., p 245

³⁹ Ibid., p. 240

*"It is necessary to instruct them first of all how to assist the sick spiritually and physically, teaching them how to nurse them with care, attention, modesty and skill at the same time."*⁴⁰

Concerning the way to assist the sick spiritually, Magdalene reaches the refinement proper to the saints. She writes thus: *"they must be instructed as our rules for the Sisters teach, regarding spiritual assistance..."*⁴¹ One must carefully avoid telling the sick that "the sickness is incurable" but at the same time "to suggest" in such a way as to prepare them for death

" . . . as if they must die, abandoning themselves into the hands and will of the Lord concerning the time of death itself ".⁴²

*"Being well instructed in this . . . it will also be necessary to teach them how to revive the spirit of Charity in the Christian doctrine classes of the Parish . . . that good widows could be chosen as volunteer nurses . . . but of the types St. Paul spoke about . . . should there be no suitable girls."*⁴³

The Sisters will teach these country girls all that they know so that "they can help out in that work of charity" among the sick which the *"families might ask of them"*.

*"Aside from an this, they must inform these girls of the associations of charity which have already been established by St. Vincent de Paul and the Marian associations."*⁴⁴

And with a last act of true generosity and kindness, Magdalene recommends that these new apostles be provided

*"...with those books, papers and instructions which could be necessary or useful for such an aim . . . and in the same way to provide for the schools and for the teaching of Christian doctrine."*⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Ibid, p 246

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 246

⁴⁴ Ibid .

⁴⁵ Ibid.. p. 247

DURATION OF THE COURSE

DURATION OF THE COURSE

The course must have a duration of 7 months. This time would seem too short if one considers the number of subjects to be taught and the type of formation wanted by the Foundress. But such a duration is more than justified by the reasons given by Magdalene in her treatise because of historical era in which such a course was conducted.

The Austrian government in 1818 used to prepare its teachers for the first grades of the elementary school with a course of only 3 months and the upper elementary classes with a course which lasted one semester with an attendance of only 5 hours in a week.¹

Knowing this, one can't help but admire the courage with which Canossa organises a school with a live-in nature for a duration of 7 months.

Given the amount of work required of her daughters, even Magdalene herself considers this duration so "brief" and she justifies it in this way: "*Don't be surprised to hear of the duration fixed for the course which to some could seem very short.*"² The reasons are as follows: "*above all, so that these girls would not be separated for long from their families . . . to which they have to return later on.*"³

In the second place,

*"it is not good to allow them to take in too much in a quiet withdrawn manner, otherwise, the objective for which this branch has been embraced would disappear..."*⁴

A third motive is due to the fact that such a length of time "*is of the least inconvenience and burden for the family.*"⁵ In fact it has been fixed that the girls be received from "*the first of September of each year . . . till the first of April of the next year.*"⁶ The summer months are excluded

*"...since summer is the time when the families who work in the farms would like to have them back for one reason or the other."*⁷

The last motive, but not the least in the order of spiritual importance is that Magdalene puts forward this period of 7 months " . . . *under the protection of the Most Sorrowful Mary . . . in*

¹ P. Trotto, Scuola elementare a Padova negli ultimi cento anni 1805-1905, Firenze, 1909 p. 77

² M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 235

³ Ibid.

⁴ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 235

⁵ Ibid .

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

commemoration of her seven sorrows."⁸ it is not only the Institute that is in the hands of Mary but she wants every work to be carried out under the gaze of Mary.

The brevity of this span of time⁹ is, however, compensated by the intensity of the efforts of the educators. Magdalene knows that " . . . the work in itself is heavy and requires a lot of attention."¹⁰ Magdalene recognises that this time "becomes very burdensome"¹¹ for her daughters. But she encourages them with the hope of the results that would come out of this effort:

*"Remember that this is a harvest that is destined to give much fruit in a short time of cultivation."*¹²

*"Remember that everything is as nothing compared to God who deserves every thing"*¹³

And she would want her daughters to reject " . . . the opinion that this branch is not . . . feasible or too burdensome or too distracting for the community."¹⁴

The time fixed for the formation of the teachers of the rural areas is ordinarily to be respected but if the good of the persons to be trained or the circumstances require differently, she is ready to postpone the beginning or anticipate the end of the course.

Thus Rose Dabala writes from Bergamo to Count Luca Passi:

*" I believe it will not displease you if I add what the Lady Marchioness tells me-that she thinks it is better to start the course for the country teachers soon after Pentecost, a season when we really do not normally accept them; but this time only due to some special circumstances of the Institute, she has decided to deviate from our system."*¹⁵

When the time came to begin the first course in Verona. the date would be moved by some months.

*"... Isabella (Ferrari)¹⁶ is busy today to get the number of country girls who must be trained as teachers. I will now try my best to have this training course in Education: I don't know if I will succeed in this season since winter in Verona is far too advanced; and other than the good that derives from it, I will try my best to offer such a course also because Isabella will have an idea of it."*¹⁷

Sometimes the delay in starting the course is due to the concern of the Mother to give her daughters some rest in the apostolic work.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ cf. Ibid, p. 247

¹⁰ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep.III/3, p. 2162

¹¹ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 242

¹² M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 242

¹³ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep..III/3, p. 2162

¹⁴ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 233-234

¹⁵ R. Dabala, al Conte L. Passi, Ep. III/1, p. 520.

¹⁶ She was a member of the college of Music of Coriano and aspired to become a Daughter of Charity; and Magdalene, not long before had brought her with her to Verona.

¹⁷ M d.C., to Renzi, Ep. II/2. p. 1150- 1151

*"Last year, you have received (the Young Women) on the 5th of April and this year it is going to be one month later, because I wish that the Easter season be over and that you would have had some days of rest."*¹⁸

*"Regarding the teachers, I have already written to you that I will give an answer to you only after Easter because it is my wish that you should take some rest."*¹⁹

*"Regarding the education of the teachers, at present, I don't see why you should take up new burdens in view of your weak health. All of you must try to become strong. Rest during the toaster season; after this period I hope you could have them again and then I will see what you have to do."*²⁰

"Concerning the teachers, I am sorry that you should have them so soon, for the Superior told me that you are an tired and very worn out²¹from the fatigue of Easter.

*I leave you to agree with Don Giovanni, and if he so judges that you should have them, then do it, but try to share the labour as much as possible so that you can all endure it without anyone having to suffer."*²²

Another cause that could delay the start of the course is the difficulty of communicating with the girls:

"...I have decided to begin the training course for the country girls on the 1st of this coming December but not having yet the reply from an those who wish to come, I think we cannot begin until the 7th of the next month which is the vigil of the Immaculate Conception.

*You can therefore give the notice to those of Verona who have decided to come and as soon as you can, please tell me the number and the names of those who are coming."*²³

And having to postpone again the beginning of the course in Verona, Magdalene writes in this manner to Don Giovanni Zanetti:

*"... kindly inform the aforementioned parish priest²⁴ that there is a course of education here in Verona and this will begin on the 12th of this month and will end on the 12th of July"*²⁵

Even concerning the final part of the course, Magdalene reserves some exceptions:

*"... I will try my best so that our country girls could all go home . . . after the feast of Easter. But for what I can do and for what I have already done, I find it hard to send them home because I have shortened by some weeks the normally prescribed time."*²⁶

When time and health allow it, the Foundress herself personally receives and chooses the students of the course:

¹⁸ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep.III/4, p. 3056

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 3067

²⁰ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/5, p. 3326

²¹ sickly

²² M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/5, p. 3340

²³ M.d.C., to Dabala, Ep. III/2, p. 1540

²⁴ Giacomo Meloni, parroco di Pisogne (Brescia)

²⁵ M.d.C., to Don Zanetti, Ep. II/1, p. 431

²⁶ M.d.C., to Terragnoli. Ep. III/2, p. 836

*"Now I am dealing with the reception of a number of country girls to be trained as teachers here in Verona. I foresee that it would take till mid December before they could enter and be initiated in in the course."*²⁷

She wants to know them all one by one:

*"To tell you the truth, I am tired: first due to too much writing and then for being always interrupted by persons who come to settle the new country girls. The date to receive them is fixed on . . . 10th of October."*²⁸

The Foundress intends to do good to as many girls as would be desired - to spend their lives for the spreading of the Kingdom of God, but regularly at fixed time and never at the expense of the religious life of her Daughters:

*". . . if the training doesn't have its fixed periods and if the girls don't come here seriously for this end, in a few years' time the spirit of the Institute will dissipate."*²⁹

When the course has begun, she doesn't allow late-comers to be accepted:

*"Regarding that good young woman of Parona, I am not convinced that she should be admitted this yeat Tell that noteworthy Religious that we will accept her with another group. We cannot depart from the established method by accepting girls out of time."*³⁰

*"Regarding that young woman (Maria di Telgate) about whom the good Count Don Luca Passi has spoken to you, you know very well, my dear daughter, that I cannot make exceptions to the rules. If the girl you have in school now would like to be accepted for training as teacher, and you cannot conduct a training course now, you cannot, and therefore you should not accept her. P.S. Tell the Lord Count Don Luca that there is another course planned for teacher training in Bergamo. We are still conducting one in Verona and when it is time to start one in Bergamo, I will inform him beforehand."*³¹

*"Concerning Romelli, I will leave the matter according to what Count Don Luca has told me and I win write to her to come. Regarding the one of Rovato, I don't find it feasible as two months of training are already over and this house is over-burdened with works of charity. After 7 months we do not know how we could prolong the course for those who have come late. For the other two to whom we have committed ourselves, if they are already on their way, we have to take them in, but if they are delayed, I don't find it oportune to hasten their coming."*³²

And at the end of the course Magdalene is punctual in coming to greet her "good country girls. "

²⁷ Ibid., p. 1536

²⁸ M.d.C., to Bernardi, Ep. III/1. p. 677

²⁹ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/4, p. 3074

³⁰ M.d.C., to Bragato, Ep.III/3, p. 1886

³¹ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep.III/3, p. 1977-1978

³² M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep.III/4, p. 2825

*" I will stay here in Verona till about the Holy Week, and then I will return to Bergamo where I left our good country girls who are almost at the end of their studies and whom I must send back home. "*³³

*" . . . I will go back to Bergamo since the Course for the preparation of our girls from the rural areas will be ending there this year. "*³⁴

From Bergamo, she relates to one of her daughters how emotional is the detachment of the girls from their educators:

*"The country girls are leaving, and at this moment, the third one has left, amidst so much crying and weeping that the good Count Marco Passi who was here. also cried "*³⁵

And on another occasion she writes again to Bernardi:

*"I believe that on 20th, five of the country girls. I assure you that I wish that all of them go soon because they are so inconsolable that we cannot go on this way. "*³⁶

"Yesterday three of our country-girls went home. . I assure you that their weeping was so desperate that I wished they were all gone.

Those from Rovato will leave on Thursday and Checchina sent word to me that at any time they would begin to weep because of the coming departure.

I told them to wait till tomorrow morning and I will give them the permission to cry aloud until evening but with the understanding that they go to the orchard of the Camozzi family and they can cry aloud as much as they want.

*This week, seven will leave and two others at the beginning of next month. The young Angeline will stay a bit more in school. "*³⁷

As Magdalene desires punctuality in starting the course so also she recommends utmost solicitude in letting the girls leave after the course ends:

*"You have done well to have the girls write home that they could go home, because during the short time I have to stay in Verona, I would like to stay with you with a bit of quiet since I have to plan and settle many things before I travel again. "*³⁸

The consolidation of the Institute comes in again as a prime interest of Magdalene. In 1828, the year in which she had to go to Rome for the approval of the Rules, she writes from Trent to the Superior of Verona that the trained teachers should not be kept in the house even for "*an hour more*". The reason is "*very important*" as she will tell her personally.

" I enclose the answer to Don Strabui. Know that this one asks me to keep for 20 more days Lucrezia of Desenzano. This year, I cannot keep anyone, not even for an hour more for very important reason which I will tell you personally and which I am sure you will find justified and

³³ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, Ep. III/2, p. 825

³⁴ M.d.C., al Card. Zurla, Ep. II/1, p. 585

³⁵ M.d.C., to Bernardi, Ep. III/2, p. 843

³⁶ M.d.C., to Bernardi, Ep. III/1, p. 604

³⁷ M.d.C. to Bernardi, Ep. III/1, p. 608

³⁸ M.d.C. to Bragato, Ep. III/3, p. 1990

necessary as it is. Moreover, see to it that everyone writes at once to their families and see to it that everyone is assured that someone is notified to take them home on the day their studies."³⁹

In 1830 instead, the sickness of one of the Sister teachers induces Magdalene to postpone the ending of the course. So she writes to Faccioli, the Superior of Bergamo:

*"Regarding what you have to do, if the Lord keeps Checchina sick, I would say that you should do like this if Checchina does not get well, ask Don Giovanni the permission to keep the student teachers 10 or 15 days more, since they have to pass the exams."*⁴⁰

Time is never absolute for Magdalene. The good of the souls and the Glory of her God are at the height of her thoughts and everything is ready to be subordinated to these ideals that transcend time.

³⁹ M.d.C.. to Bragato, Ep. III/3, p. 1983

⁴⁰ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/3, 2385

**NUMBER OF
PARTICIPANTS**

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

When it concerns the formation for the apostolate, Magdalene avoids big numbers. The criterion is clear to her. The slow work of education requires a followup of limited number of selected youth. Magdalene aims at a very personal rapport between the teacher and the pupil. The sound pedagogy that inspires her makes her write concerning this work

*"Receive . . . that number that you can serve in accordance with the desires of their respective parish priests "*¹

And in the treatise concerning the training course she specifies:

*" In those places, where they would like to profit from this means . . . let two young girls or as many as would be judged necessary for such a place, be chosen. "*²

Two, therefore, or a few more for every town were chosen in such a way as to form among themselves a small group destined to be "salt and leaven" for the isolated zones of villages and farms.

Altogether, the number must be in proportion to the availability of the Daughters and they can vary in number between 5—12. Not more.

The number of teachers that I allow you to accept will be five, and they are: the one sent by the holy religious of Trescore, the one from Moscona, the two from Valcamonica and the fifth one, I leave you the freedom to choose. Know that I am thinking whether it would be better if the two of Valcamonica would be received in Verona in order to leave you more places.

*This year, they are also recruiting here some teachers; five from here too. But I cannot decide for sure until I hear what the Veronese have concluded, since I have been told of many candidates. Within 8 days, I will tell you for sure. Meanwhile, write to me also how you find yourself pressured. "*³

At another time she specifies the reasons:

*"Regarding the number, my dear Daughter, certainly, more than five will ask to be received but I don't allow you more than five since this being the first time you will do it by yourselves; such a branch of work which requires not ten days like the Spiritual exercises, but seven months, it is not good that you should carry a burden that is beyond your strength for a long time. "*⁴

In her enthusiasm at the beginning of the work, the Superior of Bergamo writes to the Foundress that the young girls who want to attend the course are 60. Magdalene answers in this way:

¹ M.d.C, Ep. II/2, p 1438

² M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 234

³ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/3, p. 2162-2163

⁴ Ibid, p. 2206

*"Regarding the 60 young girls to be taught, it makes me laugh, to tell you the truth, but when I come we will do all the best we can."*⁵

The Foundress, like a mother, smiles to think of a class of 60 in the city of Bergamo alone, since certainly this will not answer the criteria she dreamed of. She writes to the Superior of Milan in a humorous tone:

*'Laugh, because it's funny. Count Don Marco Bassi and his brother came to see if we have place for 60 country girls . . . they are doing miracles in that place! besides this, the Sisters have also 150 girls for communion and confession.'*⁶

In Bergamo, the requests for admission are always beyond the limits established:

*"I have been to Bergamo where God willing, on Wednesday, 23rd of this month. Those country girls who were trained last year would be coming together with other country girls to do the Spiritual Exercises; henceforth we will accept other young women whom we must train as teachers and the application are so many that I will receive as many as could be accommodated in the place: but to receive everyone is impossible since we don't have enough place. Please recommend us to the Lord so that we could do this well."*⁷

Magdalene tells Monsignor Zoppi about the result of the enrolment in Bergamo:

*"I am presently in Bergamo with my country girls of whom I have 12 since our place cannot accommodate more than this number."*⁸

Writing to various parish priests, Magdalene specifies that the girls must be few and well chosen:

*"My dear companions there in Bergamo have also expressed their desire to accept some country girls for training . . . I also willingly gave them permission to do so, only I cannot go and stay at Bergamo except for the purpose of receiving the said girls, whom I think must not exceed 7 in number...."*⁹

*". . . here we have begun the work of training teachers for rural areas. This is the first time this work is formally done in Verona. Up to now, six have entered, three of whom were sent to me by the most zealous Bishop of Massa, Monsignor Zoppi . . . I am expecting at least four others in a few days' time. Having started this branch of work here, I think, God willing, I will go to Bergamo for the same purpose where we will receive a small number of teachers; they will be few. as the number of sisters is also small."*¹⁰

Magdalene fears that in Verona, the minimum number of students would not be reached in its first year of training. She communicates her doubt to the Superior of Bergamo:

⁵ M.d.C., to Dabala, Ep. III/1, p. 495

⁶ M.d.C., to Bernardi, Ep. III/1, p. 501

⁷ M.d.C., to Rosmini, Ep. III/1, p. 675

⁸ M.d.C., to Monsignor Zoppi, Ep. II/1, p. 579

⁹ M.d.C., to Don Zanetti, Ep. II/1, p. 430

¹⁰ M.d.C., to Don Burocco, Ep. II/1, p. 335-336

*"As soon as possible, I urge you, my dear Rosa, to inform me, first of all, among those we have spoken about how many and who would be the country girls who would be coming here (from Bergamo to Verona): those of Monsignor Tomini and of Camozzi and Ranica, so that I could count them all and then I will write to you whether I will take them here or not, because if I don't have the sufficient number, I would not start the Course of Education here. And be certain that I will write to you as soon as I have the reply so that they could come soon."*¹¹

And three days later, she thinks of being able to transfer some girls from Bergamo to Verona for the course:

"Tell me, my dear daughter, if aside from the country girls recommended by Monsignor Tomini, by Camozzi, by Don Luigi, by Ranica, about whom I am waiting for your answer . . . if there are others who are willing to come to Verona because I am certain that in any case, you won't have less than 7 in Bergamo.

*Again, if someone else (among these girls) would like to come, do write to me. "*¹²

She informs Bernardi of the day when the course was begun for the first time in Verona and the different places of origin of the young women; she entrusts to the prayer of the community the success of the work:

"... I recommend you to pray the Lord in order to obtain His blessings on this branch of work for the country girls which began here last Tuesday. I still don't know whether there will be few or many who will come for this first formal course in Verona because I had many contacts but I don't know how many would succeed to come. Two are coming on Tuesday-they are from Bergamo and they are happy to have the course here. In a few days, I am expecting one from Santa Lucia Someone has asked me for one of San Michele, two from Mozzecane and of some others and I don't know how it will end.

*The holy Bishop of Massa, who was most desirous to send me his girls, write to me that he is trying his best to send them. Trusting in the Lord's Providence, I accept them with all my heart. "*¹³

Even to the Superior of Venice, she gives an account of the number of girls received in Verona:

*"The branch of work for our teachers go on well till now and they are ten; I ask you to keep them constantly in your prayers to God and to the Most Holy Mary so that everything may be accomplished for the greater Glory of God."*¹⁴

A month later, she informs that the teachers continue their formation well and to the ten is added another young girl:

*"My eleven country teachers are progressing in their studies with abundant blessings of the Lord and Christina is quite well in spite of the great effort and burden that she carries and God as usual is the one who strengthens. But I ask you to continue praying for this branch of charity, so that it may be accomplished in every way and may be perfected with the Divine heavenly blessings. "*¹⁵

¹¹ M.d.C. to Dabala, Ep. III/2, p. 1541

¹² M.d.C. to Dabala, Ep. III/2, p. 1542-1543

¹³ M.d.C., to Bernardi, EP. III/2, p. 1560

¹⁴ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, Ep. III/3, p. 1614

¹⁵ M.d.C., to Bernardi, Ep. III/3, p. 1620-1621

For the following year also, the number is always limited but in proportion to the availability of her Daughters:

*"...we have begun anew the training of the country teachers. Presently there are 5 and the girl from Burano makes the sixth. We are waiting for two others from Hal Cavallini (Bergamo) and one from Desenzano; till now, those who are here are 6 'angels', we hope that those who will come will be, by the grace of the Lord, the same. "*¹⁶

In a succeeding letter, she specifies the place of origin of each one:

*"We have here eight girls for training as teachers; I believe we have all the valleys of Bergamo represented. Because three are from Val Camonica, one from Val Cavallina, another from Val Brembana, one from Desenzano, one from San Zeno and one from my dear Burano. "*¹⁷

The following year, she still remains uncertain whether the course for teachers would be held in Verona. She turns to Faccioli who was elected Superior of Bergamo after Dabalà:

"... if Count Marco Passi does not reach in time to stop those coming from Bergamo, instead of those from Brescia, certainly it would be indiscreet and unfair to make them come to Verona, therefore keep them there. So there will be three of them- that of the Servant of God of Prescore and one of your choice, so that they could form the number I promised you . . .

Right after (the Jubilee Year) we are also accepting here five teachers, girls to be educated. The Veronese have little inclination for such a thing and who knows how many from Bergamo would come willingly.

*In the meantime, while they are applying, don't assure them positively because some Veronese might apply any time. "*¹⁸

And being always concerned about the health of everyone, she specifies in the 'Postscript' of the same letter:

*"Upon reflecting that the season is changing, I would like to add that should there be some girls from Bergamo who would want to come to Verona to be trained as teachers, knowing that you already have five, write to me and I will see to it that they could be received before the Jubilee celebration starts so that they could come while it is not yet too cold for traveling. Write to that servant of God of Prescore when the training will begin. "*¹⁹

But to the five girls, Faccioli would add two others. And the Foundress replies:

*"Regarding the 2 young women recommended by Mosignor Benaglia and by Gorlago, if you think it is not too much of a burden, take them in honour of Our Lady of Sorrows. If they are too many, take the one of Monsignor Vicar and leave aside Gorlago's. These will be enough for this year. "*²⁰

The following month, the number of teachers in Bergamo increased again by two. They are nine in all:

¹⁶ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/3, p. 1815

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 1830

¹⁸ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/3, p. 2213

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 2213-2214

²⁰ M.d.C., M. Faccioli., Ep. III/3, p. 2228

*"I heard that you have taken in two other teachers. Courage, my dear daughters, let us try to work wholeheartedly for the good of the others and for the Glory of the Lord. Do not doubt that God will help you."*²¹

In 1831, the requests for admission to the Course in Bergamo is pressing, even after the course has begun. Faccioli promptly gives the news to the Foundress and the Mother answers thus:

"It is all right, regarding the teachers whom you wish to receive . . . but before resolving the matter I want to see how you are all faring . . . and remember to write to me frankly in a fortnight and I will answer you.

*Regarding Tonina who, according to Checchina, wants to come in order to be trained as teacher, I have no objection to her joining the seven. It is true that someone else would not be accepted, though needful, but this is one of our girls and it concerns me much that we should help her I don 't know how they could pay for her tuition but it is understood that they will try their best to do so from the moment they have asked to be received. I think Don Giovanni Zanetti has no more particular haste concerning teachers; nonetheless, when it will be the moment to begin, before committing yourselves with the seven girls, ask him f rst. Give the same, my respects."*²²

In the month of April, Magdalene herself encourages Faccioli to receive one more, given her particular situation:

*"Regarding Tessera, I am sorry to see you too much burdened for having a number of teachers more than what you had intended; but if you don't accept her for training this year now that she is willing, I am afraid that she could be left in danger. See to it yourselves whether she has means of paying the fee²³ for food and if she has, accept her because I think if this girl is trained, she win do a lot of good. If she doesn't have the money, write to me before accepting her. Meanwhile, greet her in my name and tell her that I will answer her in my next mail since I have a lot of correspondence to answer to-day."*²⁴

The zeal of Faccioli made her receive another one that same year, but the Foundress made her put a stop to it after a maternal reproof. If they should get sick due to too much work, they will see her get angry:

"Listen, my dear daughter, you ask me the permission to accept that young woman in whom Countess Camozzi is interested. Do you want us to displease a person and a family from whom we owe a lot? Since you have not asked me, I should say 'yes ' . You have accepted many without asking my permission. hence one more or one less won't make much difference. Next year we will make the accounting in another way. Meanwhile, pray hard that the Lord may keep you all healthy, because if you get sick, you will see me get angry. With such a number of young women that demands more than your strength, you can rely only on three, namely, Valsecchi, Caglioni and Teresa since they have been a long time in the house, they could also give you extra help. For this year let it go. Next year, I will also be there to count them. I am very consoled that those of Como are progressing.

²¹ Ibid. p. 2233

²² M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/4, p. 2750-2751

²³ the payment—la retta

²⁴ M d C to Faccioli, Ep. III/3, p. 2770

Thanks be to the Lord who deigns to be served by four bedraggled women²⁵ like us, . . . I hope you understood me . . . Remember that this will be the last!"²⁶

The health of the community of Bergamo has been endangered and Magdalene once more follows up closely the zealous Superior. Twelve teachers are too many:

"I hear that some of you needed blood-letting Look, my dear daughter, I told you, not in order to scold you but to make you reflect that twelve teachers to be trained are too many for your small number and it will cost you excessive efforts in every way."²⁷

In January 1835, the Foundress is in Bergamo exhausted and uncertain whether she could make it at the return trip to her dear Verona. She takes personal interest in the enrolment of young women who want to attend the course that year.

She writes to Dabalà:

"You have written to me that the teachers are ten in number. I know that there are four from Chioggia, one from Vilimpenta and one from Schio, tea me who the others are."²⁸

²⁵ Unworthy women

²⁶ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/4. p. 2772-2773

²⁷ ibid p, 3132-3133

²⁸ M.d.C.. to Dabala . Ep. III/5. p. 3800

**LOCALITY
AND ENVIRONMENT OF
THE COURSE**

LOCALITY AND ENVIRONMENT OF THE COURSE.

The live-in course must meet certain definite demands. Above all, it must be held in the city nearest to the places where the girls come from.

In the treatise related to this work, the Foundress writes that once students are found ". . . *they must be directed to the house of the Institute located in the nearest city in which the course will be held.*"¹

The first city in which the work began was in Bergamo, in 1822. She writes to Bernardi: "I am preparing to receive here the country girls . . . Next time, I will be able to tell you how many there are . . ."²

After a few years. Verona follows:

*"I inform you, my dear daughter, that . . . I have arranged to receive the country teachers, this time in Verona, because I desire that all the branches of work of the Institute be instituted in this first house of ours."*³

The desire of the Foundress to have this course even in Verona is prompted by many reasons. Above all, it is because of the non-realization of the course in Bergamo in 1827 due to lack of applicants:

*"Know then, my dear daughter, that in Bergamo I don't find it feasible to introduce the course for the country girls this year due to lack of applicants. Our good Checchina (Luca) of that place (Bergamo) is again having health problems and though this is not serious, at any rate, I am not willing to undertake the said work. I also find it an impossibility to take away companions from here, except one, and she also comes from another house. Therefore, this year we will be satisfied to train the teachers in this house (Verona)."*⁴

Even in 1828 Bergamo remained a very uncertain venue. So she expresses to Faccioli who was then Superior of that city:

¹ M.d.C., R ssp, p. 234 (cf. M.d.C., Ep. II/2, p. 1424)

² M d.C., to Bernardi, Ep. III/1, p. 526

³ M.d.C., to Bragato, Ep. III/2, p. 1359

⁴ M.d.C., to Bernardi, Ep. III/3, p. 1610

*"Regarding what you write to me concerning the acceptance in Bergamo of the daughter of Mr. Pollini, I still don't know exactly when the country teachers will be accepted for Bergamo. We will agree also on this when I come."*⁵

*"You could already see that it is impossible to undertake the teacher training in Bergamo from what you write to me, and you are in need of help for the work you have at hand. I don't think that from Verona Don Giovanni could be persuaded to send one, considering his good reasons regarding the distance. Therefore, I see it difficult or almost impossible to meet his needs unless he objects to making them do their training in Verona and wait for a definite answer. But this is also uncertain, for it is only when I reach there, that I can give an answer. If he has difficulty due to the distance . . . then he can bring them to another place (where training is available)."*⁶

Cristina Pilotti, who should have presided over the course that year writes in the name of the Foundress:

*"I received the order from the Lady Marchioness, our beloved Mother, who left yesterday for Venice, to tell you, my dear sister, that on 15th of this month we are beginning in our house (Verona) the training course for the teachers. If in Bergamo there are those who would want to come to Verona, the Marchioness has allowed me to accept them. You, therefore, my dear Sister, must find out among those who desire, the most needy among the needy places."*⁷

A month after, the Foundress confirms:

*"Cristina has already written to you as she also has written to me to send Roncoli to Verona; you can write to the one from Darfo . . . that if they wish, they could come with their daughter right away, otherwise, we cannot help them."*⁸

A second reason for the non feasibility of the course in Bergamo is the fact that the teacher who has to preside over the course, cannot tolerate the climate of that city due to her weak health. Regarding this, she writes to the Superior:

*"I assure you, my dear daughter, that it was with real pleasure that I read the beautiful disposition with which you manifested to me your inspiration . . . I praise and approve your courage and of that of your companions . . . but if you should think that we could conduct the training course for the teachers in Bergamo as we did in the past years, I am afraid this is not possible this year for the reason that I don't feel like exposing dear Cristina to the climate of Bergamo by staying there for seven months."*⁹

And she informs Don Giovanni Zanetti of her program and of the same reasons:

"I think that we win receive here in Verona the girls from rural areas to be trained. I don't remember well but it seems to me that you have spoken of someone but the distance makes you

⁵ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/3. p. 1816

⁶ M.d.C. to Faccioli, Ep. III/3, p. 2155

⁷ Cristina Pilotti, to Faccioli, Ep. III/4, p. 2780

⁸ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/4, p. 2822

⁹ M.d.C., to Dabala, Ep. III/2, p. 1 519

*think twice it has been the Lord's win to prevent me from having the training course of the country girls in Bergamo since Cristina (Pilotti) cannot withstand the climate there and I heard that even the good Checchina (Luca) continues with her discomforts. "*¹⁰

A third reason that renders it difficult to have the course in the city of Bergamo is the limited space available for the "branches of charity" that Magdalene defines as "extraordinary" ¹¹

In order to have more available space, Magdalene asks the Camozzi family, who in Bergamo have donated to them the convent, to let them have a barn and part of the attic in exchange of some rooms not included in the building that was donated. She gives the news to Monsignor Traversi in the words:

*"I think that we win receive here in Verona the girls from rural areas to be trained. I don't remember well but it seems to me that you have spoken of someone but the distance makes you think twice it has been the Lord's win to prevent me from having the training course of the country girls in Bergamo since Cristina (Pilotti) cannot withstand the climate there and I heard that even the good Checchina (Luca) continues with her discomforts. "*¹²

In that manner, one of the obstacles to the work in Bergamo will be eliminated. In fact in 1832, the training courses were taken up again regularly till 1850.

Bergamo and Verona are the two cities in which, while Magdalene was alive, the training courses were conducted alternately. Only after the death of the Foundress did Venice, Trent and much later, Milan start this work.

The treatise concerning this work gives the directive that the course should be held "inside the house,"¹³

*"In the house of the Institute, a place purposely separated from the community w^m be established as the living quarters for these girls and for whom a system must be kept, that is suitable for them in order to adapt to their needs, not to annoy them and at the same time, (in order) not to distract the community. "*¹⁴

The daily practices of piety, the different rhythm of prayer and also the places set aside for them are all respected .

The community lives in a way that is totally independent from them.

*"At the end of the daily vocal prayers, let them make half an hour of meditation and this must be done in a separate Place. If there is no chapel or a choir loft, these exercises of piety must be done in a separate place in the room where they gather for the rest of the day..."*¹⁵

Even though the community would have the Eucharistic Celebration in the house, the girls "must go to hear Mass outside the house."¹⁶ Such an arrangement must serve to increase in the young women, maturing Christians, the desire and the will to frequent the religious celebrations in their respective parishes.

¹⁰ M.d.C., to Don Zanetti, Ep. II/1, p. 428

¹¹ M.d.C., a Mons. Traversi. Ep. II/2. p. 899

¹² M.d.C., to Don Zanetti, Ep. II/1, p. 428

¹³ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 233

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 235

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 237

¹⁶ Ibid.

*"It is necessary that they should get used to take care of their girls at vespers and at other parish functions . . . and it is necessary to instruct them on the way of assisting at the parochial Mass and the explanation of the Gospel, not only with respect to themselves but even with the girls."*¹⁷

Even with regards to the preparation of meals "if it is possible" the girls themselves

"... must prepare the food for lunch and supper on a weekly rotation. In the same manner they will do all the other duties".¹⁸

The girls must not fall in love with the quiet withdrawal *"otherwise the aim for which this branch was established would vanish."*¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 239

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 240

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 235

**AFTER THE
TRAINING COURSE:
THE FOLLOW-UP**

**AFTER THE TRAINING COURSE:
THE FOLLOW-UP**

Magdalene follows up the young women not only during the course but even after the period of their formation:

*"I heard that the good girls we have trained give the best of themselves in the education of the youth. May the Lord grant that they work much as I desire "*¹

Every year, she invites them for a course of the Spiritual Exercises through which their spirit is strengthened for a new self-giving in the apostolic service. Magdalene never neglects to follow up personally her "good daughters" of Bergamo even though she is assailed by a thousand obligations, like for example, the canonical erection of a new house in Milan. She writes to the Superior of Trent:

*"I try to hurry up as much as I can because I would like to return to Bergamo, to receive for the Spiritual Exercises, the good peasants' daughters who have been trained by us last year."*²

And a few days later:

*"...I have come to Bergamo, where God willing, those girls who have been trained last year will come together with other country girls to do the Spiritual Exercises."*³

She does not always have the possibility to personally follow them up together with the new teachers in formation, due to the high season of farm work. she writes from Bergamo:

*"Here, it is impossible to arrange the Spiritual Exercises for the country girls during these days, since in these areas, other than the spinning, there is also the harvesting and the major works of the farm."*⁴

After some experiences of moving dates she decides to fix the course annually at a favorable time

*". . . for the peasants' daughters . . . for the Spiritual Exercises . . . it has been fixed for the novena of the Assumption of the Most Holy Mary into Heaven and the Lord has provided me with an excellent preacher."*⁵

¹ M.d.C., to Mons. Zoppi, Ep. II/2, p. 1105

² M.d.C., to Rosmini, Ep. III/1, p. 665

³ M.d.C., to Rosmini, Ep. III/4, p. 675

⁴ M.d.C., to Bernardi, Ep. III/2, p. 1147

⁵ M.d.C., to Don C. Burocco, Ep. II/1, p. 326

The personal contact with her daughters who return after an apostolic experience that is by now integrated and profitable, gives so much feeling of deep consolation to the Mother:

*"Tomorrow, God willing, the Spiritual Exercises will begin here. If you could see, my dear daughter, this house of ours, on certain moments it seems like the Crib with these peasant girls coming, some accompanying those who stay, some to greet me and to speak to me of God, that I assure you, I feel so small; it is, nonetheless, a special grace that should not be suffocated because some please me so much in their own clumsy way; but I tell you, it is a great consolation."*⁶

When she could not reach them on account of "many troubles" she has at hand, she writes to the Superior who then substitutes her:

*"Give my hearty greetings to the teachers, especially those whom I know . . . I recommend myself to their prayers . . . because I really need the Lord very much in order to make the least possible mistakes."*⁷

The consoling news she receives regarding the annual occurrence of these spiritual encounters between the young women and her daughters, leads Magdalene to thank the Lord and to pray that the good done could be continued with perseverance.

*"I thank the Lord when I hear that the Spiritual Exercises had been very fruitful and I ask Him to give to each one holy perseverance."*⁸

Little by little, as the years pass by, Magdalene harvests the fruits of her indefatigable apostolic work, and the gratitude to God increases with the increase of the good that is spreading everywhere:

*"I am consoled that even the last batch of teachers are already doing so much good. Let us thank the mercy of God. This is the greatest reward in the world that the Lord can give to our efforts, namely, that He may be served."*⁹

⁶ M.d.C. to Faccioli, Ep. III/2, p. 1168

⁷ M.d.C. to Faccioli, Ep. III/4, p. 2834-2835

⁸ Ibid. p. 2931

⁹ M.d. C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/4, p. 2983

**THE TEACHER TRAINING COURSE:
AN OPPORTUNE PERIOD
FOR VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT**

THE TEACHER TRAINING COURSE:
AN OPPORTUNE PERIOD FOR
VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

The great heart of Magdalene, inflamed with love for God and for men, has discovered in the teacher training course an efficacious way of spreading the knowledge of Christ, of His Gospel and of making charitable activities reach the most abandoned and the most needy.

During the seven months of preparation, she proposes to that chosen group of future apostles, a course of Spiritual Exercises lasting five days— and every year, after the course, she invites them to repeat this experience of revision of life and a most intense communion with God.

Oftentimes, she herself guides these days and she so inflames them with divine charity that everyone is full of enthusiasm on their return to their families and some desire the choice of religious life. In 1823, Magdalene writes to tell the Superior of Venice how the Spiritual Exercises for the teachers ended:

*"Yesterday, therefore, having ended the Spiritual Exercises, those girls left with almost everyone crying . . . One of those who have been trained last year wig remain as our novice and I hope she will succeed well."*¹

Magdalene, to whom the expansion of the Institute as well as the spreading of the knowledge of the Lord to the poor, matter so much, does not accept easily the requests of these teachers for admission to the religious life until a serious examination of an authentic call of the Lord is done, She is not easily carried away by enthusiasm. Her motto was: "Mentalities that are very sound and temperaments that are calm."² And to her daughters: "The Sisters must pray much and wholeheartedly to the Lord so that . . . no one who is not called may enter the Institute."³

Time is another element to whom Magdalene entrusts the firmness of a vocation.

She writes to Monsignor Zoppi regarding a young woman whom he has sent for the teacher training course:

*"Francesca Manucci is an excellent subject in terms of her qualities, her spirit and in fact in everything. As much as I know of her, I would not find any difficulty in concluding that if it were a question of being a postulant she would succeed very well in our Institute. Time, experience and perhaps a continuous guidance will make us know more of her and her suitability for the Institute."*⁴

¹ M d.C., to Terragnoli, Ep. III/1, p. 687

² M d C, to Bernardi, Ep. III/1, p. 503

³ M.d.C., R.s.s. p. 69-70

⁴ M.d.C., to Monsignor Zoppi, Ep. II/2, p. 1092-1093

Sometimes the "course" is suggested as a way to study a vocation of which Magdalene is not sure. The seven months in the Institute allow the Daughters and her to examine closely the qualities of the young woman.

To a diocesan priest who informs her of his sister's desire to join the Daughters of Charity, Magdalene answers in this way:

"The desire to be fully one with your wise and most prudent opinion regarding the decision⁵ which your excellent sister, Miss Bernardina (Castellani). must make, has made me decide to trouble you with this letter of mine.

I talked many times with this very good daughter, in whom I detect some traces of divine call to the religious life. You, however, in your position know better than I do, that it is well to ascertain the Divine will in this particular matter. I believe you will think in the same way as I do, to carry out this resolution in order to be assured that the vocation is mature . . .

With these considerations, I present for your reflection, the desire of Miss Bernardino To me it seems, this is the best thing to do since matters may turn out otherwise. Your sister, in returning home will always be prepared to follow your Most Reverend wishes for charitable works to the advantage of your people . . .

Miss Bernardina desires therefore, if you would allow her, to enter as a teacher and to stay here till Easter. Meanwhile, she would have the possibility of knowing better how things are. I would see to it that she gets an excellent spiritual director who could help her discern her vocation better. We will get to know her better and at the end of the allotted period, if the Lord really calls her, then we will conclude with you and with her the best way of executing such a desire. If the Lord shows that she is not called, after the given time, your sister will return to your home in peace and will be for the school as you wish."⁶

For some young women who are desirous of consecrating themselves to God in the religious life, the training course is like a first direct experience, a period of observation and a test of a wiser and a more mature choice. Meanwhile, the Foundress tries to know them closely and should they be far from her, she takes an interest in their conduct but always remaining cautious and leaving them full freedom in the choice of the state of life they desire.

"... I know that Canon Tommini has someone who, with the pretext of coming for teacher training, wanted to come and observe the Institute in order to enter it afterwards. Don Ghedini has another one. Count Marco Passi has still another one . . . I desire that those of Valcamonica could also come for the course in Verona so that if they would ever resolve in entering the novitiate, half of the difficulty is already overcome. In any case, whether they enter here or in Bergamo, it is necessary that there be an agreement that they should return home after seven months, so that they would feel free as well as the Institute to do what is best after they have discerned Tea dear Magdalene that yesterday, her niece Teodora came to see me. I like her very much and if I had money, I would have taken her in tomorrow."⁷

Sometimes, the revelation of a similar decision to the family unleashes a strong reaction that is difficult to placate.

⁵ the vocational choice

⁶ M.d.C., to Don Castellani, Ep. III/3, p. 1833-1834

⁷ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/3, p. 2162-2163

*"The novice about whom I told you and who has remained with us at the time of the Spiritual Exercises . . . is one of the young women who have been trained here last year. On account of this, we are now in great trouble, because her relatives also want her at home and if the Lord doesn't remedy this situation, on my part, I am constrained to send her back. Pray to the Lord for her because I tell you the truth, aside from her good qualities she has been educated with the same method and she is of a great help in the training of the country girls who win begin to enter on 10th. Till now they are six. I believe that tomorrow, other two will enter and henceforth, still others."*⁸

At other times, the training course constitutes a step to prepare the family for a definitive detachment.

The excerpt from the following letter put in evidence a premeditated agreement among three persons: the young woman, the priest who directs her and the teacher of the course:

*"The father of our good Laura Cherubini is finally disposed to let her come to this Institute for about six months, so that she could be trained {so he thinks} in order to keep a private school for her family. She hopes that once she enters, her father will be persuaded to leave her alone and to allow her to follow her first intention (to be a Daughter of Charity)."*⁹

When some one strikes her in particular as talented and with distinct characteristics of a true apostle, Magdalene confesses her intimate desire to receive her among her daughters. Of one such young woman sent by Monsignor Zoppi, she writes in this way:

*"Regarding Francesca, we find her a good student; she is not only good but of excellent disposition, full of zeal, clever and active; in other words, it seems to us that should someone with the qualities of Francesca ask to be a postulant, we will not hesitate a single moment to receive her as "companion"."*¹⁰

But soon afterwards, almost repentant, she proceeds thus:

*"When this excellent daughter will return to Massa, Cristina and I believe that if you would let her find a companion with qualities similar to her own and one in whom she has confidence, she could also be trained to do a great amount of good."*¹¹

Magdalene sees in the unique work of the Teacher Training Course, the service of the poor in the local Church and the spreading of the Institute realized.

Hardly does a course for teachers end without anyone from the group openly declaring her desire to be a religious:

*"Similarly, I am informing you that probably, I will come to Verona together with a young woman who came on condition to be trained for the rural areas but it seems lately that she would remain a Daughter of Charity."*¹²

⁸ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, Ep. 111/1, p. 690

⁹ Don C. Zambelli. to Pilotti. A 3. ms. XXXI A C R

¹⁰ M.d.C., to Mons. Zoppi, Ep. II/2, p. 1096

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² M.d.C., to Bragato, Ep. III/2, p. 1359

What constitutes as an obstacle in receiving some girls, who possess evident signs of a true calling, is the economic condition of the young woman. For at the moment Magdalene may not have the sufficient means to maintain her. she turns then to some wealthy ladies whom she knows and sometimes the difficulty is overcome. She writes to Faccioli regarding such a problem:

*"Finally, I can tell you that if the Lord provides for Serafina¹³ as I have told you before, other than half of the dowry and her furniture but also the living cost for three years of novitiate, I have great hopes as before, of receiving her."*¹⁴

And when the financial obstacle seems insurmountable, Magdalene consoles her daughters with thoughts of faith and of abandonment in the provident hands of the Lord:

*"Don't feel sorry regarding the novice who cannot come to join us on account of the dowry because the Lord will not fail to provide us with subjects by giving vocation to another one."*¹⁵

Monsignor Sardagna, the Bishop of Cremona, committed himself to pay for the maintenance of six young women, hoping to have a foundation in his diocese. Magdalene says, "... he is very much committed due to his desire to see the spreading of Divine Glory"¹⁶; but she is always extremely careful to promise what the near future does not deem possible:

*"... I know the project which you have proposed to the deceased Rosmini and that the same did not find a way of being able to accept it. Cristina and I have suggested that we accept it in the following manner . . . to receive girls who are called to the religious life and who have the necessary qualities in order to succeed as suitable subjects for the Institute, as Teachers to be trained. On our part, there is no commitment . . . If the foundation takes place, six subjects who are already formed (through the teacher training course) would already be prepared for Cremona.¹⁷ They can bring with them the little or much they possess. If the foundation does not take place. . . those who have some dowry would remain in the Institute and the others who have enjoyed the benefit of training can be placed as teachers in some boarding place or in some towns, as they are best inclined, since we receive frequent requests for subjects who have been trained in the Institute for the same objectives."*¹⁸

A month after, she states her thoughts precisely to the same Monsignor:

*"The sincere desire which I nourish in order to best serve you, has made me search through a most scrupulous reflection for those subjects who would have the necessary qualities to succeed as religious according to our common desires."*¹⁹

But the uncertainty of the foundation makes her extremely prudent. And she proceeds thus:

¹³ Angeloni Serafina di Bergamo.

¹⁴ M.d.C., to Faccioli, Ep. III/4, p. 2471

¹⁵ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, Ep. III/4, p. 2473

¹⁶ M.d.C., to Mons. Sardagna, Ep. II/2, n. 1228

¹⁷ To be Daughters of Charity

¹⁸ M.d.C., to Monsignor Sardagna, Ep 11/2, p. 1229

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 1230-1231.

*"I have actually many girls at hand and to me they all seem good. To confess the truth, I am sorry that among these good girls, some are excellent when we speak of vocation, capacity and health, and these are deprived of means except for what one can hope, their personal furniture and a bit more, on the other hand, there are girls with right mentality and true piety, their family would perhaps be able to detach from them, if their placement as Sisters is assured, but they would not be willing to allow them to be trained for something uncertain. "*²⁰

The Superior of Milan informs Magdalene of a certain young woman who has been presented as an aspirant by Monsignor Traversi. Writing to the latter, Canossa proposes that the aspirant should attend the course in order to know better the young woman:

*"Regarding that young woman of whom the Superior has written to me, I can't say anything, not knowing her. I need to be assured of her vocation and her health . . . if the girl wants to enter as a student, that is, a teacher, she would have what is necessary for that aim and we can ascertain her vocation and her health, without commitment on our part and we will be able to consider the matter more carefully later. "*²¹

Magdalene, in instituting this work and leading it according to her criteria, knows how to give glory to the Lord and to draw advantage for her Institute.

To make Christ known and to make the young hearts fall-in love with Him was her desire. Every year, she sees the increase among the Daughters of Charity and every year young Apostles return to their towns in order to be angels of assistance and comfort to many who are in need of help.

²⁰ M.d.C., to Monsignor Sardagna., Ep. II/2, p. 1230-1231

²¹ M.d.C., to Monsignor Traversi, Ep. II/2, p. 851

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

'Seminari' — in current English usage the word 'seminar' is intended as a short intensive course lasting only a few hours or few days. So the term cannot be applied to the six or seven month-long courses Magdalene of Canossa organised for girls from rural areas who wished to work as teachers.

Here in this work, the term 'course' has been used instead.

'Figlie di Campagne o Figlie di contadini - Girls from rural areas but not literally farmers' daughters. Those chosen for the training courses were preferably chosen from families of artisans, millers, bakers or such occupations in the rural areas.

'Maestre di Campagne' - Girls from rural areas who were trained for the work of teachers in rural areas.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- A.C.R. - Canossian Archives in Rome
cf - compare
Ep. - Letters of Magdalene of Canossa
M.d.C. - Magdalene of Canossa
ms. - Manuscript
mss. - Manuscripts
o .c. - cited works
P. - Part
p. - page
pp. - pages
R.s.s. - Magdalene of Canossa,
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RdV - Rule of Life, Institute of the Daughters of
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