

DOCUMENTATION SERIES

MAGDALENE OF CANOSSA : FOUNDRESS

2

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ELDA POLLONARA F.d.C.C.

**THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES
IN THE EARLY DAYS
OF THE INSTITUTE**

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PREFACE

This volume, dealing with one of the two "*extraordinary branches*"¹ proper to the Daughters of Charity, brings to light the difficult beginnings of a work so dear to the heart of Magdalene of Canossa: the Spiritual Exercises, or Retreats. According to the Foundress this is "*one of the branches of Christian piety which is most important and beneficial*". These fire the sacred moments of the year in which

"... with the greater light one receives in profound meditation...by more frequent and specific instructions and with the greater efficacy with which God deigns to speak to the heart of the one who invokes Him in solitude and silence, one understands oneself better and is able to be concerned for the supreme affair of one's salvation".²

And if these Exercises are

". . . adapted to a particular class of persons . . . besides having that milieu which is suited to them the more these persons feel themselves animated to a virtuous emulation in the reform of their lives".³

Reading through these pages one can notice with what interest and with what commitment Magdalene promotes this "*branch of Charity*", considering it as the crowning of every apostolic activity because it is intended to orientate all categories of persons with whom each daughter of Charity comes in contact, towards that true and eternal happiness to which every heart more or less knowingly tends.

Her heart, modelled after the Heart of Christ, embraced "*all sorts of persons*" from the most wretched to the very wealthy, so that all might reach the final goal for which they have been created and that they may contribute to the spreading of the Kingdom of God in this world.

"The Institute", she writes, "is directed towards the benefit of the most wretched and the poorest classes, though one branch in it can be found which sees to the spiritual needs of the higher social classes. But even this is intended towards just one thing, which is to say, to do better whatever is done for the poor".⁴

Magdalene had a strong sense of the relativity and the brevity of life, so all of what she did, and therefore what also her daughters should do, was done in view of the "*heavenly Kingdom*", to which she wished to lead all men.

"... before long", she writes, "the ashes of the ladies will remain mixed with those of our poor.

¹ cf. M.d.C., to Don Gilardoni, Ep.II/1, p. 158. The three "permanent and continuous branches" proper to the Daughters of Charity include the pastoral activity, the integral promotion of the person and assistance to those who suffer (Rdv, p. 14). The two "extraordinary" or intermittent works are the training for teachers in rural areas and Spiritual Exercises for Ladies.

² M.d.C., Regole e scritti spirituali, a cura di E. Dossi, ed. Pisani, Isola del Liri. P. 2a. P. 99.

³ M.d.C., R.s.s.P. 2a, p. 99.

⁴ M.d.C., Ep. II/2, p. 1407

And the one and only object of this branch of Charity is, as has always been repeated, to make it easy for the ladies to have the means whereby they can procure for themselves a place among the poor in the heavenly Kingdom!"⁵

Since this is the common goal of all men, Magdalene wished that "*this holy work of the Lord*" be carried out "*not only annually*" but be continued "*steadily and permanently*" with the collaboration of the laity.⁶

If this work helps to make known the spirit of Magdalene of Canossa a little more and a little better and helps us with greater fidelity to follow in her footsteps which are the same as those of Christ, it will have served the Church better and will give greater glory to the Lord.

E.P.

Rome, 10 April 1986

⁵ M.d.C., R.s.s., P.2a p.99.

⁶ M.d.C., Ep. II/2, p. 1407.

1. THE AIM OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

1.

THE AIM OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

The love of Christ and Christ Crucified inflamed the heart of Magdalene and this love oriented her entire life to the search of the Glory of God. One who loves, desires to exalt the beloved; desires not only that he should be known, but also that he should be recognised as worthy of love, of praise and of veneration. And when the beloved is God, one endeavours so that He may be glorified above all.

The glory of God is the manifestation of His greatness in man, of His power and especially of His goodness. .

Magdalene's whole life was a continuous longing to spread the glory of God. Her whole life, and in particular her apostolic activity, was the expression of this yearning.

Even the work of the Spiritual Exercises, promoted for every category of persons, serves to glorify God. In all her writings the ultimate aim of this activity is seen to be constant: "... *the Glory of God and the spiritual good of our neighbour*".¹

Taking some expression from the "*unabridged rules*"² we see clearly the goal Magdalene had set in programming this activity for her daughters.

The primary aim of the Spiritual Exercises, she writes, is that "*of spreading the Divine Glory*".³

" *The Institute has taken this branch of work*⁴ . . . for no other reason than to procure the spiritual welfare of these souls, the good of their families and above all the extension of Divine Glory".⁵

And again concluding the treatise she insists:

" . . . even in this branch of charity nothing else is sought, except the honour, the will of God and His Glory... ".⁶

The work of the Spiritual Exercises, which in the Rules of the Daughters of Charity appears codified seemingly for the Ladies alone, is in practice extended to every category of persons with

¹ M.d.C., Regola di Venezia, 1812, ms. A3, IV, A.C.R. p. 81

² Thus defined by Magdalene in a letter addressed to Rosmini (Ep.III/4, p. 3029). Here the original elaborate text in use prior to 1828 is mentioned. It was in this year that the Holy See asked her to write it briefly for ecclesiastical approval.

³ M.d.C., R.s.s., P. I, p. 255.

⁴ Magdalene considers her Institute almost as a plant from which the 'branches', that is, the five apostolic activities of the Daughters of Charity, take life.

⁵ M.d.C., Regola di Milano, 1820, ms. A3, IV, A.C.R. p. 71.

⁶ M.d.C., R.s.s., P. I, p. 266.

whom her Daughters are in contact in the various apostolic ministries. All the sisters are to be kindled by that fire of *"charity which embraces every sort of person"*.⁷

The Daughters of Charity, who propose *"to imitate Jesus Crucified in the fulfilment of the two precepts of Charity"*⁸ are, according to Magdalene, *"persons desirous of working for the Glory of God"*.⁹

To this end

"... they receive in the houses of the Institute the Ladies or women who desire to make the Spiritual Exercises... for ten consecutive days... Also at other times of the year they receive the young girls who frequent the houses of the Institute".¹⁰

For the young women who prepared themselves with a residential course of seven months to become teachers, Magdalene decides:

*"... five days of Spiritual Exercises"*¹¹ so that *"when they return to their homes they can spread the knowledge of the Lord"*¹² and *"devote themselves to working for the Divine Glory and the good of their souls"*.¹³

And not only during the training but successively every year, the teachers will receive an invitation on the part of the Institute to frequent a course of the Spiritual Exercises.

In this way *"besides contributing to the salvation of the souls who wish to profit by it"*, the work of the Spiritual Exercises *"becomes... the completion and extension of the other branches"*¹⁴ of the work of the Daughters of Charity, which in essence is: to make Jesus Christ known by means of Catechesis in the parishes, instructing and educating the youth in order to fit them into society in an appropriate way, to visit and assist those who suffer physically in hospitals or in families.

The teachers trained in the Institute and the Ladies as well, should, according to the intention of the Foundress, extend and sustain the works of the Daughters of Charity especially in places where their number is too limited or where their status as consecrated persons, does not allow them to reach.

In the silence of the cloister, by the action of the Holy Spirit, urged by the Word of God, stimulated by the joyous testimony of the poor Daughters of Charity. The Ladies will learn from Jesus Crucified, the Love that became servant, to serve Him in the most needy neighbour.

Above all the Ladies are urged, always according to Magdalene, to promote and sustain

*"... the glory of the Lord, devoting themselves to the schools of Christian doctrine, so that the girls who frequent them may be well instructed"*¹⁵;

to lend themselves for visits to hospitals *"with greater commitment in this exercise of Charity"* to support and sustain *"in the rural areas girls who have been trained as teachers"*.¹⁶

⁷ *ibid*, p. 255.

⁸ M.d.C., Ep. II/2, p. 1426..

⁹ *ibid*, p. 1415

¹⁰ M.d.C., Ep. II/2, p. 1438

¹¹ M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1a, p. 236.

¹² *Ibid*. p. 240.

¹³ *Ibid*. p. 246.

¹⁴ *Ibid*. p. 256.

¹⁵ M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1a, p. 256.

¹⁶ *Ibid*., p. 257.

And the poor, whom they will serve and to whom "*belongs the Kingdom of Heaven*",¹⁷ will secure for them entry into the House of the Common Father.

Magdalene is aware of the "*foolish*" logic of the Gospel and does not hesitate to affirm:

*"... the one and only object, as /la.S always been said, for which the branch of Charity was embraced by the Institute is to facilitate for these Ladies, the means by which they can procure for themselves a place among the poor in the heavenly Kingdom".*¹⁸

In this way, Magdalene, helping "*even the upper classes of society*", to their spiritual advantage, remained faithful to her charism and to her beneficiaries, the poor. But the extent of the action of the Ladies should reach even the other apostolic fields, in which they will always have as their ultimate aim, the spreading of the Kingdom of God and the diffusion of His Glory.

She

*". . . intended to set aflame the upper classes with the spirit C fervour, to arlimale thern not only lo helping to provide good education for their children and the necessary supervision of their servants, but also to assist in the Parish Christian Doctrine classes, to visit hospitals and to sustain in the rural areas the good, which the country girls trained in the Institute would do, dependent on their Parish Priests".*¹⁹

Magdalene who well knows the frailty and inconstancy of the young, thinks of giving them support through the Ladies who have received spiritual formation with the system of the Spiritual Exercises and so she specifies its modality:

*". . . to support the girls trained as teachers in the rural areas, the Ladies are invited to make the Spiritual Exercises, so that they are provided with assistance for their spiritual needs and it is so to the advantage of their families. Also that they may support with their works, the above mentioned branches of work".*²⁰

Even in one of the eighteen plans of the Institute²¹ Magdalene emphasizes the numerous commitments that she asks of the Ladies, after having repeatedly placed them before Christ who immolates Himself for the salvation of all men., rich and poor, without exclusion of any category.

In her many letters directed to the Superiors of the various communities , the Foundress, almost like a refrain, repeats the ultimate aim of this apostolic activity: the glory of God

*"Do not forget to pray and make others pray . . . so that the .Spiritual Exercises ttle Ladies of Venice are going to make may succeed for the glory of God".*²²

And again:

¹⁷ Mt.5,3.

¹⁸ M.d.C., R.s.s. P.1a, po. 266.

¹⁹ M.d.C., R.s.s., p 1a~ p 266.

²⁰ M.d.C., Ep. II72, p. 1410.

²¹ With the term 'Plan of the Institute' the Foundress intends to make known the line of direction her Daughters would have to pursue in carrying out their apostolate. These Plans—a total of 18—were presented with some variations to the ecclesiastical and civil authorities for making the Institute known and for establishing official approval. (cf. Preface to the Plans of the Institute. 1199)

²² M.d.C., to Bernardi, 28 October 1820, Ep. III/1, p. 387.

"Finally, on Tuesday of the coming week, God willing, the Spiritual Exercises will begin in Verona. Let this novena of the Immaculate Conception for these people be a means of their gaining profit from it. May the outcome be the greater glory of God ".²³

Magdalene is convinced that without the help of God no human initiative can produce fruit for eternal life. This *"without me you can do nothing"*²⁴ has become the bodily and spiritual fabric of her life.

For this, she invites her Daughters to pray so that all they undertake may be supported and made fruitful by the Lord. She writes to one of her daughters:

"To tell the truth, these good girls are of great edification to us. Pray, and get others to pray that the Lrd may deign to bless everything while it is in progress and when it is brought to conclusion. May everything succeed for the glory of God and the good of the souls".²⁵

At Venice Magdalene is personally directing a course of Spiritual Exercises and she recommends herself to the prayers of her Daughters so that it may result in the greater glory of God:

"For your consolation, I tell you that these Ladies make these with fervour and with edifying intensity and the number is greater than that of the previous years. I recommend them however to your prayers and to those of all the others, so that the Lord may bless them and that it may be for His Glory"²⁶

When the participants increase, Magdalene is glad because more people will be able to give glory to the Lord by a life that is more Christian and apostolically efficacious.

"... first of all I am consoled by you and by all the dear companions in hearing that the Lord has deigned to give you this year as well an abundant harvest of labourers in His vineyard in the work of the Spiritual Exercises. Courage, my dear Daughter, do not be dubious about the Lord 's assistance. Strive as much as you can for His glory, first of all, with your own love for Him and then make Him loved and known by others who are near at hand ".²⁷

As a conclusion to the Exercises, a new letter of the Mother in which she congratulates and conveys abundant wishes for persevering results:

*"From you, my dear, I hear that the Twenty first will be the last day of the Spiritual Exercises in Bergamo, and, thanks to the Lord, that everything proceeded well. May the Lord grant constant perseverance to the holy desires of those good Ladies! To tell you the truth, my dear daughter, **it** is a great consolation to me to see how much the Lord is glorified through these Spiritual Exercises".²⁸*

The thought of the glory of God is predominant in the heart of Magdalene, who is convinced that the work of the Spiritual Exercises is the crowning point and that which empowers all the other works taken on by the Institute.

²³ Ibid., p. 1405.

²⁴ Jn I 5, 5.

²⁵ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 27 September 1823, Ep. III/1, p. 683.

²⁶ Md.C., to Faccioli, 2 June 1824, Ep. III/2. p. 866.

²⁷ Md.C., to Faccioli, 17 March 1832, Ep. III/4, p. 3045.

²⁸ Md.C., to Faccioli, 28 March 1832, Ep. III/4. p. 3050.

*"If, as the Monsignor of Chioggia has told me, it is true that the diocese has four hundred thousand souls, then training of the teachers for the rural areas is an immeasurable good. You can see and I have also experienced the happy consequences to the Ladies of the Spiritual Exercises; and when they can also be acquainted with the other advantages other than to their own benefit and the benefit of their families, these Spiritual Exercises are even of greater value..."*²⁹

The positive outcome of this initiative is not due to her personal efforts but to the prayers of the good people who follow them. Thus she expressed her convictions to the Superior of Milan:

*"Having noticed from your letter that you desire to know something about the Spiritual Exercises (of Venice), here I am happy to satisfy you, my daughter. On Monday the Spiritual Exercises ended happily to the general satisfaction of everyone. I assure you that I recognise in this work a special blessing of the Lord which I would attribute to the prayers of that notable person³⁰ and the holy Vicar of St. Bartholomew³¹ who other than praying, wanted to make a triduum before the Blessed Sacrament solemnly exposed for this intention, and also to the prayers of others and those in other Houses".*³²

And she informs the Superior of Verona:

*"In these days we have had plenty to do since only two days ago the Spiritual Exercises began for the merchants and the Ladies. I hope that as an outcome of this work the Lord will be greatly served. The number of the participants is quite large, I ask you, my dear daughter, to pray intensely to the Lord these days so that He may bless them and all may reap the fruit (of the Spiritual Exercises)".*³³

"Reap the fruit" for Magdalene is to search and find the Lord, returning to Him after having taken the right road, and being conquered by Christ to become with Him His collaborators. The glory of God and the good of the souls is for Magdalene the inseparable formula cherished in her heart.

*"Yesterday, my good Ladies concluded the Spiritual Exercises in a satisfactory manner. Now we continue to pray that the Lord may deign to give them holy perseverance. I assure you that we remain edified in seeing their fervour and remarkable devotion".*³⁴

The consolation of Magdalene grew with the growth of the fruits reaped from this precious apostolic work:

*"I assure you my dear daughter, this year I am greatly consoled to see the real disposition of those who made the Spiritual Exercises and I hope a lot of good will come out of it. Continue, my dear daughter, to pray and to make others pray so that the resolutions are maintained".*³⁵

²⁹ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 12 April 1821 Ep. III/1, p. 415. 30.

³⁰ Mgr. P. Pacetti: cf. Ep. 1, p. 280

³¹ Mgr. Bartolomeo Zender: Cf. Ep. III/1, p. 398.

³² M.d.C., to Bernardi, 16 December 1820 Ep. III/1, p. 39.

³³ M.d.C., to Bragato, 5 March 1828, Ep.III/3, p. 1856

³⁴ M.d.C., to Bragato, 4 April 1829, Ep.III/3, p. 2111.

³⁵ M.d.C., to Bragato, 26 March 1828, Ep.III/3, p. 1880.

Magdalene attributed such importance to the Spiritual Exercises that more than once, she personally guided them at the cost of personal sacrifice. In a letter, she writes:

*"With the utmost consolation, I sensed the good intentions of those excellent ladies to make the Spiritual Exercises. I also see, my dear daughter, that it would be a very good thing to continue this holy work. I will show your letter to the Superior and if he gives me permission to come, I will come".*³⁶

The spiritual satisfaction of the Ladies is proportionate to Magdalene's self-forgetfulness and the gift of herself:

*"During the Spiritual Exercises, these good Ladies did not even give me time to breathe. I shall start by telling you that this year I have had the consolation of great hope. This branch of the Institute is about to be established here, for there was not only a greater consensus among the Ladies, but it also pleases the Lord to see that they are very happy to take a greater interest in this holy retreat. In all this, may the Lord be blessed and may He grant us the grace that there may be fruit according to His will".*³⁷

Even before the person of the Director, the Guide and Teacher of the Spiritual Exercises was the Holy Virgin:

*"Thanks to the Lord, the Spiritual Exercises of the Ladies proceed well and the work, through the intercession of the Most Sorrowful Virgin, seems well established".*³⁸

In Milan too, the Most Holy Mary is present and working for the successful outcome of the Spiritual Exercises:

*"... I am very busy, with large number of Ladies, for there were twenty-six for meals today . . . through the protection of the Most Holy Virgin Mary I hope there will be abundant fruit"*³⁹

Gratitude is the interior attitude of Magdalene. Everything is attributed to her two great loves: Jesus Christ and His Mother Mary:

*"Let us give lively thanks for the goodness of the Lord for His many mercies and I hope the Spiritual Exercises will conclude successfully. Continue to trust in the protection of the Most Holy Mary."*⁴⁰

³⁶ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 16 February 1829, Ep.III/3, p. 2090.

³⁷ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 11 June 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 871.

³⁸ M d C., to Faccioli. 9 April 1833, Ep. III/5, p. 3335.

³⁹ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 25 March 1828, Ep. III/3, p. 1879.

⁴⁰ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 15 April 1829, Ep.III/3, p. 2122.

2. THE BENEFICIARIES OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

THE BENEFICIARIES OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Magdalene was deeply convinced of the need for Spiritual Exercises as a means to conversion and sanctification .

She organised and offered at various times of the year this means of an encounter with God to all the categories of people to whom she directed her charitable works.

And when she listed the Spiritual Exercises which are meant for the Ladies, she named it the "*fifth branch*" of the Daughters of Charity¹ and indicated in the "*plans*" that they should be used for other categories, like the Teachers trained for Rural areas and for the Tertiaries. Thus, in practice, she threw open her initiative to a vast range of people with whom she came in contact in her numerous apostolic activities.

The Ladies

With regard to the Ladies, Magdalene writes:

*... Charity embraces every kind of person, for the benefit of the upper class of Ladies and to keep them more involved in the service of God ... in order to undertake this we could receive those Ladies who would like to make the Holy Exercises in the Houses of the Institute twice a year".*²

In the eighteen "*Plans*" that Magdalene presented to different people who wished to know more of the young Institute, she mentioned not only "*the Ladies*" but also "*the Teachers of the rural areas*".

Little by little, as her apostolic activities opened

*". . . this Congregation" has the aim "of helping at least in some way, the wealthy classes" she writes in the Plan B. 8-8,*³

and following that we read:

¹ "Sistema per assistere le Dame a fare i Sallti Esercizi", cf. M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1a, pp. 255-266.

² M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1a, p. 255.

³ M.d.C., Ep. II/2, p. 1425.

"... at different times of the year we receive ... those ladies or women who desire to make ten days of Spiritual Exercises".⁴

From Verona, the Superior of Milan is informed:

"By the end of June I must return to Venice as I have planned the Spiritual Exercises for the Ladies for July 1. I regret the season, but they want it that way".⁵

And while waiting to go to Bergamo for business concerning the foundation, she thus writes to Lawyer Gavazzeni, who was interested in her work:

"... I return to Venice, where on 12th July the Ladies will come to us to begin their Spiritual Exercises which will end on 21st of this month . . . I recommend to your prayer and that of Don Luigi the successful outcome of this retreat, as this is the first time this branch of work has been taken up by the Institute".⁶

Notwithstanding the delicate health she always had, she rarely delegated to another the duty of presiding over this spiritual ministry of Charity.

Writing from Bergamo to Don Burocco, the director and confessor of the community of Milan:

".. . if my health, which is still uncertain, allows me, I hope to leave for Venice by next Monday or Tuesday to be with those Ladies to begin the Spiritual Exercises on 28th".⁷

Teachers in Rural Areas

Even for the young girls, who for seven months prepared themselves to become teachers in rural areas, Magdalene includes the experience of the Spiritual Exercises:

"...at the end of the month let them make five days of Spiritual Exercises".⁸

Here is what she writes regarding these programmed courses for the Rural Teachers who were guided by her personally:

"I am trying to hurry as much as I can, so that I can return to Bergamo to receive first the good daughters of the rural areas who were trained by us last year to make the Spiritual Exercises and then to receive the new ones of this year".⁹

From Bergamo she informs the Superior of Venice that given the small number, she herself will dictate the themes of the meditations:

*"... we have twelve good young girls who are making the Spiritual Exercises. As they are so few I did not have the courage to inconvenience a **priest**, so I thought it better that I help them . . . I make them read the meditations through, after which I speak about them".¹⁰*

The following year the retreatants are doubled:

⁴ Ibid., p. 1427.

⁵ M.d.C., to Bernardi, 7 May 1820, Ep. III/1, p. 361.

⁶ M.d.C., to avv. Gavazzeni, 21 June 1820, Ep.II/1, p. 400.

⁷ M.d.C., to Don Burocco, IX April 1824. Ep.II/1, p. 313.

⁸ M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1a, p. 236.

⁹ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 16 August 1823, Ep. III/1, p. 665

¹⁰ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 27 September 1823, Ep. III/1, p. 683.

"... I'm in need of a little bit of rest but our retreatants are coming on Sunday and to-day, 14th, as I start on this letter ... I have eleven more and to-morrow morning I expect the 'onslaught.' The Lord will help me to do the little I can to help them . . . Our two rural teachers are doing very well and I can say sincerely that they are helping us as much as they can and are keeping well . . . I will also make these good girls of the rural areas pray; they are an indescribable confusion to me. At this moment they number 25".¹¹

In concluding her report to the Superior of Venice about the fatigue endured during these days she writes:

" Here I am at the end of the Spiritual Exercises for our girls from the rural areas, my dear daughter... I believe that it must have been the prayers that all of you have certainly said that I am feeling better than before and this small fatigue has really helped me. I will write to you again soon, as we shall have a little more to do. What now remains is to dry the tears of those who are returning home. All the companions are also keeping well in spite of having worked hard, as you can well imagine; there were 28 who slept and ate here and we had the greater task of having to guide them".¹²

From Milan, Magdalene went to Bergamo to assist in the Spiritual Exercises for the teachers of the rural areas in that part and she informs the Superior of Trent about this:

".. . next week I will go to Bergamo to assist the good young girls of the rural areas and the teachers to make the Spiritual Exercises. I recommend them to your prayers. This year, it seems to me, there will be many".¹³

And from Bergamo again to Margherita Rosmini she writes that the number of young girls is so large that she is at a loss as to how to organise them:

". . . I came to Bergamo, where God willing, on Wednesday 23rd of this month, those young girls whom we trained last year, will come together with others whom we will have to train this year as teachers. At present the number is so large that I will receive only as many as can fit in this place. it is impossible to accommodate all, as we do not have room".¹⁴

Also Cardinal Zurla, mediator in Rome to the Holy Father, Pope Leo XII, for approval of the Institute, was periodically informed of the spiritual activities of the Foundress:

"Also here in Bergamo, during the period of the Assumption of the Most Holy Virgin, we will hold the Spiritual Exercises for some of our girls from rural areas whom we have trained and for other young unmarried girls. When the Spiritual Exercises are concluded I will go to Verona . . . ".¹⁵

On her arrival in Bergamo she thus informs the Superior of Milan about her impressions of the girls who made the retreat:

¹¹ M.d.C., to Bernardi, 15 September 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 938-939.

¹² M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 26 September 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 944

¹³ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 4 September 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 932

¹⁴ M.d.C., to Rosmini, ? September 1823, Ep. III/1, p. 675.

¹⁵ M d C., to Card. Zurla, 30 July 1825, Ep. II/1, pp. 596-597.

"Tomorrow, God willing, the Spiritual Exercises will begin. If you could only see, my dear Daughter, this house of ours! At certain times, it looks like a stable. These dear country girls and those who accompany them sometimes stay behind to greet me and to speak to me about God. Sometimes, having to touch on certain topics, I can tell you, I don't know where to go for they are all over the place. It is a special grace indeed that I don't feel suffocated, for some show their affection for me like 'bears', but it is a great consolation! Six young girls have already entered and at this moment I'm expecting another and 10 others will come later. Help us with your prayers so that we may reap the fruit".¹⁶

And on the same day to the Superior of Verona:

"To-day and to-morrow I want to rest as much as I can. God willing, I will again be on the move because on 3rd of this coming month we hold the first of our Spiritual Exercises for our rural folk. I need you, once more, to get others to pray very much, for after the Spiritual Exercises I shall be staying there for other matters, all for the greater glory of the Lord".¹⁷

And when the Mother cannot be present personally, she writes to the Superior to convey her greetings to the young retreatants.

"Greet the teachers warmly for me, in particular those I know, including Tessera, 'the naughty one', who, I hope will improve for the better and do well. I ask for the prayers of the teachers and those of all of you especially on Saturday, the feast of our Most Holy Mother. I would like you to know that I am tied up in many matters and I really need the Lord's help very much so as to avoid as many blunders as possible".¹⁸

The Mother, being far away, is afraid that her daughters would weary themselves beyond their strength and so she writes:

"I hear that you are having the Spiritual Exercises for the Teachers. Write to me when you have finished with them so that I can organise myself ... If I had come with the two companions I have had with me these days, may be you would not have had either beds or rooms to give us ... Write then, I repeat, when the Spiritual Exercises are concluded . . . After having written the foregoing, this morning I received your dear letter ... From the same, I note the big number of retreatants. I would not want it to be something beyond your strength . . . From what I understand, you started the Spiritual Exercises last Thursday and will conclude them next Saturday".¹⁹

Also the following year the young girls were numerous. Magdalene encourages her daughters to work for the glory of Him, whom they love, desiring at the same time to make Him loved by those who do not know Him:

"First of all, I share with you and with all your dear companions the consolation of hearing that also this year the Lord has deigned to give you in the Spiritual Exercises an abundant harvest in His vineyard. Courage, my dear daughter, do not doubt. The Lord will help you. Seek as

¹⁶ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 3 August 1825, Ep. III/2, pp. 1168-1169.

¹⁷ M.d.C., to Bragato, 3 August 1825, Ep. III/2, p. 1170.

¹⁸ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 28 June 1831, Ep. III/4, p. 2834-2835.

¹⁹ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 17 September 1831, Ep. III/4, pp. 2914-2915.

*much as you can His Clory, first of all by loving Him yourself und then by making Him loved and known by those around you as well".*²⁰

If the Spiritual Exercises of the Teachers were consoling for the number of participants and for the successful outcome, Magdalene is not happy about the health of her zealous daughters:

*"I thank the Lord on hearing that the Spiritual Exercises have been fruitful and I pray Him to give all of you holy perseverance. I hear that you and dear Checchina have had to have blood letting (for the fatigue). I recommend you to rest for a while until both of you are better".*²¹

The Glory of God should be the constant desire which accompanies the activities of her daughters. Again she thus writes to Faccioli:

*"You can imagine how much comfort your letter brought with the news of the happy outcome of the Spiritual Exercises. My hope is that as a result there will be greater glory to God".*²²

Magdalene informed Monsignor Zoppi how much good the Lord was working among the young girls and how the work of the Spiritual Exercises was spontaneously spreading to other categories of people:

*"Immediately after we had finished the Spiritual Exercises in Milan, we moved there. We had the Spiritual Exercises in same way, not only for the Ladies, but also for the young girls, whose number exceeded 60. Even on this who deigned to bless even those with wonderful results. These Exercises were very satisfactory and attracted even the married ladies of the merchant class; too few of the Ladies of the upper social class had requested it".*²⁴

Various Categories

Reading the correspondence of Magdalene we become more aware of the vast range of people from diverse social backgrounds for whom she organised the Spiritual Exercises during the most suitable periods of the year.

The letters, more than the Rules and the Plans of the Institute, trace the steps of her apostolic activities.

The letters exchanged with Durini indicate clearly from 1809 the indefatigable zeal of Magdalene and the irrepressible dimensions of her heart, open to all spiritual needs and to all categories of people. She involves Veronese Priests in her work of Charity, to organise, also in Milan, courses of Spiritual Exercises for barbers and domestic workers.

"I have been informed that you have offered yourself to Don Pietro Leonardi to come to Milan to conduct the Spiritual Exercises for domestics. Through me, he wishes to inform you that he accepts your offer and also Monsignor Pacetti is willing to come with him. If this is alright with you, please let me know at once... because neither one will accept any new assignment of preaching from others until you have given me reply.

²⁰ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 17March 1832, Ep.III/4, p. 3045.

²¹ M d C., to Faccioli, 5 ottobre, Ep.III/4, p. 2931.

²² M.d C, to Faccioli, 28 September1831, Ep.III/4, p. 2923

²³ A Bergamo.

²⁴ M.d. C., to Monsignor Zoppi, 27 August 1825, Ep. II/2, pp.1068-1069.

P.S. If you cannot come for the domestics' retreat you could come for other Spiritual Exercises ... but a precise reply is needed".²⁵

They could be of use contemporaneously not only to the domestics but also to the barbers. Magdalene gives this information in the name of the priests who are interested:

"I have been told to inform you, my dear, that they have many other commitments. If Abbot Giglio would like, the Spiritual Exercises for the barbers could begin on 5th rather than on 6th, but whichever is more convenient. There would be no difficulty if it were possible to combine the two so as to give the Spiritual Exercises to the domestics in the morning and to the barbers in the evening".²⁶

And to Cardinal Zurla she writes of the Plans of the Tertiaries²⁷ which have to be submitted to the Holy Father:

"If the Lord does not will it otherwise, I will hold the Spiritual Exercises on 1st October, in Bergamo, for my rural folk and other good young girls of the villages".²⁸

An ingenious idea crosses the mind and the heart of Magdalene, always aflame with zeal to make the Lord known and to spread His glory: not only to offer the Spiritual Exercises to the Ladies but also contemporaneously propose them to the boatmen. She has spoken of it to the Ladies of Venice in the previous autumn as something to be accomplished in the following spring. But as she has not received confirmation she writes to the Superior of Venice:

"I should tell you that this spring, it was discussed, as far as I remember, between the most Reverend Superior, the Priuli, Don Luzzo and Don Provolo whom you know well, that the latter would give the Spiritual Exercises to the boatmen of the Ladies. The Priuli has not mentioned this to me in her letters. In any case, if we have an extra bed available, I would like you to keep it for the preacher and do not give it to any lady so that you will not find yourself in a muddle later. I pray you, please give me a quick reply to the above-mentioned letter".²⁹

And a few days later to Dama Priuli, who is responsible in Venice for organising the Spiritual Exercises, she writes:

"Write to me by the next post, if it is convenient, to confirm that Signor Antonio Provolo is coming for the Spiritual Exercises of the boatmen. Beppa³⁰ had written to me about it, but I have not heard anything more in the letter of Your Excellency. Do write to me at the earliest so that I can plan".³¹

The Exercises were held in May of that same year. Magdalene gives news of this to the Superior of Verona:

"Yesterday, they started the Spiritual Exercises of the boatmen of the Ladies; they are beginning to respond and even the ferrymen wanted to come. The preachers are doing well".³²

²⁵ M.d.C., to Durini, 9 February 1809, Ep. 1, p. 319.

²⁶ M.d.C., to Durini, 21 February 1809, Ep. 1, pp. 319-320.

²⁷ Some Rules of an institution which intends to involve lay people for a more widespread undertaking of the spiritual works of Charity such as those carried on by the Daughters of Charity

²⁸ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 20 April 1832, Ep.III/4, pp. 2768-2769

²⁹ M.d.C., to Card. Zurla, 25 August 1824, Ep. II/1, p. 587.

³⁰ Terragnoli Giuseppa: per note biografiche cf. Ep. 1, p. 649.

³¹ M.d.C., to Dama L. Priuli, 28 April 1831, Ep. 1, pp. 648-649.

³² M.d.C., to Bragato, 18 May 1831, Ep.III/4, p. 2786.

Consoled by the overwhelming and surprising response of the participants, she writes to the same person four days later:

"Know that from both groups our remarkable *preachers are getting good response; so every day the listeners are increasing and if it continues like this the small auditorium of the boatmen will not be enough to hold all of them*".³³

And about the conclusion of the same Spiritual Exercises she informs the Superior of Bergamo:

"I arrived in Venice on 11th of this month and on 13th they started the Spiritual Exercises of the Ladies. In a small oratory, very near our convent, we also had them conduct the Spiritual Exercises on 23rd and your intention of getting Antonietta⁴" and another companion from Milan to assist you ".³⁴

As there was a positive outcome of the initiative, the experience is repeated in the following year:

"On Monday, I must go to Venice where the following Friday, Abbot Venturi will begin the Spiritual Exercises for the Ladies and at the same time another Veronese priest will conduct the retreat for the boatmen but I don't know if they will permit me to go there much as I would love to ... It's enough. I desire that the Lord may grant me the grace to do even in this His Holy Will"³⁵

Another category to whom Magdalene intends to offer the Spiritual Exercises are the merchants, even if the realisation in this area is limited in comparison to the horizons she has at heart.

She writes to the Superior of Bergamo deciding on a suitable date in her busy schedule:

"... I have not a moment to spare as I am very much engaged all the time until August with one thing or another and I cannot include anything else. Therefore, if the merchants³⁶ there wish to make the Spiritual Exercises, it is better that they decide to make them in the first week of Lent, otherwise I will certainly not be able to be present".³⁷

But the Spiritual Exercises of the merchants that year did not materialise.³⁸ Not even the following year could Magdalene preside over them:

"About holding the Spiritual Exercises for the merchants, humanly speaking, I see it as impossible, because on Wednesday the Spiritual Exercises of this community will start. As soon as they end, there will be the election of the Superior".³⁹

But she rejoices on hearing the news that the same Faccioli, helped by some sisters of Milan, will be able to organise the Spiritual Exercises for the Merchants:

"I am aware of your good intention to start the Spiritual Exercises on 23rd and your intention of getting Antonietta⁴⁰ and another companion from Milan to assist you".⁴¹

³³ M.d.C., to Bragato, 18 May 1831, Ep. III/4, p. 2786

³⁴ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 25 May 1831, Ep.III/4, p. 2790.

³⁵ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 27 May 1832, Ep.III/4, pp. 31 11-12.

³⁶ Bergamo

³⁷ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 14 February 1828, Ep. III/3 p. 1843

³⁸ cf. M.d.C., to Bragato, 26 February 1826, Ep.III/3, p. 1852.

³⁹ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 19 February 1829, Ep.III/3, p. 2091.

⁴⁰ Cocchignoni Antonietta, assistant Superior and Mistress of the Novices in Milan.

⁴¹ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 5 March 1829, Ep.III/3, p. 2098.

The policy of extending this precious spiritual initiative to all the categories of people with whom the Daughters of Charity come to contact is expressed in the fifteenth Plan.

Here we read:

"So also will Spiritual Exercises be organised during other periods of the year for the poor young girls who frequent the Houses of the Institute ,, ⁴²

From Verona, Magdalene informs the Superior of Venice:

"... I will not write, because we are holding the Spiritual Exercises of the girls of the Association . . . ". ⁴³

And some days later she writes again:

"We have for the first time organised the Spiritual Exercises for the young girls of the Parish and to-day is the last day but one of these days (days of the Spiritual Exercises) ...". ⁴⁴

And again the following year from Verona:

"We are planning to hold here among us the Spiritual Exercises for the Ladies and the young girls in a more animated manner than the one held at San Zeno. Please, recommend all of us to the Lord so that we can do some real good". ⁴⁵

The news spreads quickly, even to Venice:

"... on Saturday we are going to organise the Spiritual Exercises for the ladies and the big girls who want to come here from San Zeno, to take part in the Jubilee lasting eight days. We have two preachers and they preach behind closed doors ... You can imagine how busy we will be!" ⁴⁶

At the end of the Spiritual Exercises she writes to Milan:

"I assure you that we have had and are having too much work at the moment, the Ladies of the Parish of San Zeno being here . . . and I have interesting things to tell you". ⁴⁷

Inspiration is not lacking for her daughters to make them desire the love of God:

"Courage, my dear daughters, let us labour with love for the good of souls and for the glory of the Lord . Do not doubt that the Lord will assist you". ⁴⁸

⁴² M.d.C., Ep. II/2, p. 1438.

⁴³ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 27 January 1828, Ep. III/3, p. 1824.

⁴⁴ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 31 January 1828, Ep. III/3, p. 1825.

⁴⁵ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 5 November 1829, Ep. III/3, pp. 2219-20.

⁴⁶ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 11 November 1829, Ep. III/3, pp. 2224-25.

⁴⁷ M.d.C., to Bernardi, 4 December 1829, Ep. III/3, p. 2231.

⁴⁸ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 6 December 1829, Ep. III/3, p. 2233.

3. THE DIRECTOR OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

THE DIRECTOR OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

The Spiritual Exercises are for Magdalene a privileged means offered to any person who wishes to open his heart to Divine Love in such a way as to harmonise his own life with that of the Will of God and to spend his life working for the extension of His Kingdom. The one and irreplaceable Teacher on this journey is the Holy Spirit. From this follows the need for the Director of the Spiritual Exercises to be a docile disciple of the Spirit of God, simply an assistant, attentive and alert to every retreatant, ready to help him in his uncertainties of faith and in the choice of life.

Criteria of choice

The indispensable requisites for conducting a course of Spiritual Exercises efficaciously are outlined thus: that *"the priest be learned, zealous and prudent"*; that he should have *"the spirit and the vocation for this work"*.¹

Magdalene is very prudent in the choice of Directors of the Spiritual Exercises. Her criteria are well defined and pass through three stages: preliminary finding, personal enquiry, request and ecclesiastical approval.

1. Preliminary finding

In every city where the work had been initiated, Magdalene had some ladies at her disposal who had the task of finding priests who were well-qualified and with whom they were quite satisfied. They kept the list of the names of these priests and at the opportune moment they sent the invitation, and managed the cash in hand necessary for that work.

In Verona, slowly there formed

"... an association of eighteen ladies, each of whom will take turns annually to be president. The name of the first person drawn by lot is as president She will have as her assistants, two ladies who presided the two preceding years and thus we can continue to give a chance to everyone to help in our holy week. The president with her two assistants will select the priests who are to direct the Spiritual Exercises. The choice will be submitted to the Bishop and approved by him".²

¹ M.d.C., Unabridged rules, P. 1a, p. 203.

² M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 99.

In the background Magdalene is the animator of this work but she desires that everything be organised by the same ladies with the consent of the Superior of the various Houses where the Spiritual Exercises will be conducted:

"The president with her assistants will see to the invitations that are to be sent. She will liaise with the Superior of the Daughters of Charity if the retreatants want to lodge for the night or they wish to take meals in the house. She will find out from them the cost and keep the ladies informed".³

Regarding the preliminary findings, in nominating the qualified persons for conducting the Spiritual Exercises, here are some of Magdalene's letters. She writes to the Superior of Venice:

"Regarding the preachers of the Spiritual Exercises for the Ladies . . . ask also our Father if he thinks it is all right to have Don Giovanni Palazzi di Santa Fosca⁴, who is now preaching in Bergamo in an exceptional way and who will also be preaching the Spiritual Exercises to the nobility during Holy Week. If you think it is all right, some of you could speak to Priuli and Mihlieli".⁵

Magdalene regards the above-mentioned Director as very suitable but if the Ladies have others in mind, she leaves it to them to decide:

"For the Ladies' Spiritual Exercises, I leave it to them to decide. It would not be prudent to speak about it to Don Giovanni Palazzi until they have decided. This Religious has conducted Spiritual Exercises also for the nobility but I desire only that the Ladies be satisfied".⁶

After a week, Magdalene receives the news of the selection made by the Ladies from the Superior of Venice:

"I am pleased to hear that the Ladies had already decided on the preacher for the Spiritual Exercises and on my part, I will try to do everything I can to be able to be there at the scheduled time".⁷

Her letters throw light on the mutual understanding the Foundress had with the Ladies of Venice. She writes to N.D. Loredana Priuli who is responsible for organising the Spiritual Exercises at Venice:

"I have written to Don Venturi who, as you well know, is in Salo and he gave me the same kind reply saying that he, on his part would be ready to accept the invitation if he could be released from his engagement of conducting the seven day novena to the Holy Spirit which for many years now, he has been conducting in this Parish. So I sent Carlino Canossa⁸ to that parish to replace him during that period, so as to free him. But the parish priest hesitated promising to give me a reply after the Festive Season... Regarding the selection of the person from among the

³ Ibid, p. 110.

⁴ Don Giovanni Palazzi, teacher and well known preacher of that period.

⁵ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 3 April 1824, Ep III/2, p. 837

⁶ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 21 April 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 846.

⁷ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 28 April 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 853.

⁸ Carlo Canossa. nephew of Magdalene

others proposed by his Excellency,⁹ I found it necessary to submit myself to his choice, not only because his judgment is better than mine but also at present I have no knowledge of anyone. When I met the abovementioned religious,¹⁰ it seemed he would be very pleased if we could anticipate the Spiritual Exercises a little and he said he himself would go to the Monsignor ... Yesterday he returned to tell me that he had been to the Prelate, without being able to speak to him. Having spoken about it to the Parish priest of the Novena who is not able to give a reply without the expressed consent of the Bishop... I thought of writing to His Excellency¹¹ about all this and I will write to you later about the reply of our Prelate. I need to have a reply from him as soon as possible as to whether he thinks it is possible to anticipate the Spiritual Exercises. I will be waiting for his reply ... before going to Trent to find a solution".¹²

The mutual understanding was possible with the preacher and the various interested parties. Magdalene expresses her contentment to Lady Dama

"... I am very consoled on hearing that their Excellencies are pleased with the preacher, and believe me, in spite of the fact they are biased, they will find him more than what they expected. They will be helped by our bishop ...".¹³

In 1833, the Countess Maddalena Michieli¹⁴ took over as the person responsible for the Exercises as La Priuli was sick.

The Foundress asked prayers from her daughters because Margherita Rosmini also was in danger of her life and she herself perhaps could not be present for the next Spiritual Exercises for the Ladies. In the meantime, she expected a prompt response about the nomination of a preacher:

"It is better that you help me not only with your prayers but also help me to get a prompt reply from Lady Dama Michieli for the Spiritual Exercises, if they organise them I need to know at the earliest possible date what they have concluded about Abbot Venturi and also about Don Provolo. The former is not in Verona and if you think he is free I wouldn't want him to become engaged elsewhere, as then if they did want him they would be unable to have him. If I know for certain, before coming, I will write to him and assure him. If they don't want to take him, then it will be all right".¹⁵

As it is impossible to communicate with Lady Michieli, Magdalene gets the Superior of Venice to transmit her intention and her desire:

"I would ask you to inform the good Lady Michieli about all this for it is impossible for me to write to her as I should. Tell her I would like very much for her to organise the Spiritual Exercises. Very soon I hope to be with them but in the meantime don't neglect to get on with the preparations and to encourage all of them".¹⁶

Arriving at Venice, she informs the Superior of Bergamo how she had found the work of the Spiritual Exercises there:

⁹ Refers to S.E. Mons. Grasser. Bishop of Verona: for biographical notes see cf. Ep. 1, p. 246.

¹⁰ L'Abbot Venturi, for biographical notes see cf. Ep. 1, p. 578.

¹¹ The N.D.L. Loredana Priuli.

¹² M d C., to N.D.L. Priuli, 11 April 1831, Ep. 1, pp. 646-647.

¹³ M.d.C., to N.D. Priuli, 28 April 1831, Ep. 1, p. 648.

¹⁴ M. Michieli, for biographical notes see M.d.C., Ep. III/2, p. 1023.

¹⁵ M.d. C to Terragnoli 8 April 1833. Ep III/ 5, p.333-34

¹⁶ M d C to Terragnoli 24 April 1833. Ep.III/5,/ p.3343

*"I found the work of the Spiritual Exercises for the Ladies disorganised and shaky. As you know, the leadership of the good Lady Priuli, who was president, has been missing for months".*¹⁷

There is an intense exchange of letters also with the Superior of the House of Milan and the Ladies who are responsible for the Spiritual Exercises:

*"My dear daughter, I hope on Thursday you will be in a situation to tell me something about the Spiritual Exercises of the Ladies of Milan as I'm a little curious to see the final outcome. I think Durini¹⁸ would find it difficult to go to His Eminence. However, she is very docile and ready to obey and so perhaps she will go. In short, write to me about everything you know and about every contact so that I know what measures to take".*¹⁹

As Durini was absent from Milan in those days, she asks Louisa Visconti²⁰ precise information about the date fixed for the Spiritual Exercises:

*"With the certainty of being able to enjoy the pleasure of your company during the period of the Ladies Exercises, I would ask you to let me know as agreed upon, precisely when these will start so that I shall be able to take the right measures".*²¹

The difficulty of being able to find good preachers prompted Magdalene to seek a speedy reply from the Superior of Milan:

*"Do me a favour, my dear daughter... and give me the reply at the earliest possible date. Tell dear Somaglia,²² that I embrace her warmly. Then inform her of the commitment of Don Giovanni Palazzi who is preaching at S. Fedele this year. I asked him on her behalf if he would be free ... he replied that after a few days he would be free for two months ... and at your disposition ... Up to now Somaglia has not informed me of anything. I would like you therefore, to repeat to her these things and make her understand, that in these days preachers have to be engaged years ahead of time".*²³

January 1830 was particularly cold. The icy streets and other valid reasons did not allow Magdalene to preside at the Spiritual Exercises which were to be conducted at Trent. To go there, she would have had to forego some other undertaking; but Milan quickly seeks her presence:

*"This year I cannot at all costs absent myself from the Exercises²⁴ because Lady Durini, who used to preside all these past years, has gone to Rome and will not return in time".*²⁵

¹⁷ M.d.C., to Faccioli, May 1833, Ep. III/5.

¹⁸ The Countess Durini, friend of Magdalene is responsible for finding suitable Directors for the Spiritual Exercises in Milan.

¹⁹ M.d.C., to Bernardi, 2 July 1825, Ep. III/2, pp. 1154-1155.

²⁰ Luisa Castelli Visconti: per note biografiche cf. Ep. 1, p. 59

²¹ M.d.C., to L. Visconti, ? January 1826, Ep. 1, p. 602.

²² Countess Maddalena Somaglia, responsible with Lady Durini for the Spiritual Exercises in Milan. Per note biografiche cf. Ep., 1, p. 613.

²³ M.d.C., to Bernardi. 24 May 1826, Ep. III/2

²⁴ at Milan.

²⁵ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 26 January 1830, Ep. III/3. p. 2275

The organisers of the Spiritual Exercises in Verona are the two noble ladies, Countess Giulia Buri²⁶ and Marchioness Serego.²⁷ She writes to the latter:

*"... Don Bresciani told me it has been decided, always subject to your approval, that we begin after lunch on 29th ... Tomorrow I hope to be able to send you the schedule with the names of those Ladies, whose number is very small because after I became a parishioner of S. Zeno, I have had no more occasion to see them".*²⁸

She is troubled about the choice of preacher for the Spiritual Exercises which are to be held in Verona. The choice made by Countess Buri does not meet with Magdalene's favour and she, with great preoccupation, informs the Superior of Verona about it:

*"Regarding the noble Countess Buri, I find myself in a muddle about the preachers. Speak to our Superior in my name ... and see if he is in favour of asking the Bishop".*²⁹

A month later, Lady Buri hands over to Magdalene the choice of the preachers:

*"When you see our most reverend Superior, to whom you will convey my regards, don't forget to speak to him about the preachers for the Spiritual Exercises of the Ladies of Verona. As I have already written to you, I wish Countess Buri to realise that I will keep the preachers in mind . . ."*³⁰

The following January, Magdalene is again engaged in arranging for preachers:

*"About the preachers, I have planned everything. I will speak to Father Taeri, though I fear that he may not be able to come as he is engaged here for the first week of Lent and, being in poor health, I don't think he can manage to do so much preaching. If the Ladies want Benaglia for the instructions it will be necessary for Buri to inform him not to take on any commitment . . . Tell our reverend Superior, to whom I send my respects, that I will speak to Taeri and that he should kindly try to find some Veronese preachers because I am very worried about Taeri's poor health".*³¹

In the city of Trent, the Ladies who were in charge of organising the Spiritual Exercises were Lady Taxis and Lady Turcato.³²

*"Regarding the Spiritual exercises, I never try up to the present moment the number is small. At times, in the beginning they are few and then they increase. You can see, my Daughter, as I am here it is not possible for me to give a decisive answer as to whether you should go ahead and have the Exercises or not. Listen then to the opinion of our Superior, of the Confessor, of Signor Don Antonio your brother and also to that of the good Ladies Taxis and Turcato and then do as the Superior decides".*³³

²⁶ Giulia Buri, a relative of Magdalene

²⁷ Marchioness Serego, cousin of Magdalene, married to Marquis Filippo Serego, linked to the Canossa Family by the marriage of Eleonora Canossa to Count Federico Serego. cf. M.d.C., Ep. 1, pp. 112-637.

²⁸ M.d.C., to Marchesa Serego, 25 novembre 1831, Ep. 1, pp. 638-9.

²⁹ M.d.C., to Dabala, 6 novembre 1834, Ep. III/5, p. 3735.

³⁰ M.d.C., to Dabalà, 26 December 1834, pp. 3773-3774.

³¹ M.d.C., to Dabalà, 20 January 1835, Ep. III/5, pp. 3814-15.

³² The two Baronesses responsible for the Spiritual Exercises in Trent.

³³ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 10 March 1832, Ep. III/4, p. 3040.

The following year she tells the new Superior of Trent, Angela Bragato:

"I hear that the Ladies there have started the Spiritual Exercises. I ardently desire that the Lord may shower on them copious blessings. Please give my warm regards to Taxis and to Turcato".³⁴

In the city of Bergamo the person responsible for finding suitable priests for the Spiritual Exercises was Lady Bartolomea Salvi.

From that city, Magdalene writes that it was not possible to organise the Spiritual Exercises for the merchants and she gives the reason:

"Here they were not able to organise the Spiritual Exercises for the merchants due to the serious illness of the Lady who is in charge of these".³⁵

She also gives information about this to the Superior of Trent:

"Regarding the Spiritual Exercises here, they cannot be held because of a serious illness which the Lord has found fit to befall the organiser".³⁶

In the year 1828 Magdalene is in Verona, and is prevented from going to Bergamo because of the heavy snow. She writes to the Superior:

"Regarding what you tell me about the Spiritual Exercises for the merchants let me advise you that you should inform Don Giovanni about all this; that is, all that Lady Salvi has told you about the preacher they have planned to engage. On my arrival we will decide everything".³⁷

In July of the same year Magdalene makes arrangements for the coming Lent:

"Tell Lady Salvi that I think the Spiritual Exercises should be held during the first week of Lent However, we will see later on".³⁸

The following March, the preacher was available. Magdalene would engage him as soon as she obtained the approval of the Ladies:

"Regarding the preacher, Count Marco Passi is ready to do the favour and if the ladies are satisfied, nothing could be better, for you have an angel"³⁹

A year later, after a positive evaluation of the two proposed preachers, she allows Lady Salvi to come to an agreement with Don Giovanni Zanetti:⁴⁰

³⁴ M.d.C., to Bragato, 13 novembre 1833, Ep. III/5, p. 3487.

³⁵ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 6 April 1826, Ep. III/2, p. 1351.

³⁶ M.d.C., to Bragato, 10 April 1826, Ep. III/2, p. 1356.

³⁷ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 14 February 1828, Ep. III/3

³⁸ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 1 July 1828, Ep. III/3, p. 1967.

³⁹ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 5 March 1829, Ep. III/3, p. 2099.

⁴⁰ Don G. Zanetti: per note biografiche cf. M.d.C., Ep. II/1, p. 407.

"Regarding the two preachers, I have great esteem for them as I know that both of them are holy and capable. Therefore I don't know which one to choose and so it is better we stay out of his. I suggest you do this: tell everything to Lady Bartolomea Salvi and as organiser of the Spiritual Exercises let her, together with other Ladies, select and decide which of the two they prefer. Thus, I repeat, we can say we had nothing to do with it . . . Reflecting more on what you tell me regarding the Spiritual Exercises it would be better, in order to do things properly, that you tell Lady Bartolomea to go to Don Giovanni Zanetti and that between them choose which one they think is better. Don Giovanni wanted me to make the decision, but as I see that I will not be able to go to Bergamo at that time because of inclement weather, it is better that they decide and the rest of you go ahead with your duties, trying to do what you can so that God may be served".⁴¹

Also in the year 1831 Magdalene, with full confidence, entrusts to Don Zanetti the task of selecting the Director from among those whom he knows personally:

"With regard to having Angelo Bosio as Director of the Spiritual Exercises, Don Zanetti and Don Luca are quite convinced, for they and the Ladies who have chosen him know him. I am satisfied even though I don't know him"⁴²

2. Initial findings and evaluation of Magdalene

In her correspondence with the Superiors of the various houses, Magdalene puts forward again and again the criteria for the selection of Directors for the Spiritual Exercises. She expresses her opinion on people whom she knows:

From Venice, she writes to Dabala, the Superior of Bergamo:

"I am struck by that holy old man Coletti⁴³ who is ninety-one years old and walks unsteadily. However when he opens his mouth, he seems like the angel of the Lord he is. I am sure of your prayers for me and for the Ladies".⁴⁴

And from Verona, she writes to the Superior of Venice:

"Regarding what you ask me about the Ladies' Spiritual Exercises, as these good ladies wish to know my humble opinion regarding the two proposed preachers, tell them that I think highly of both of them. I have great veneration for Don Barbarone. From what I hear, he is an excellent preacher; and Don Leonardi for his part preaches in earnestness, so that, let me tell you again, I hold them both in high esteem ".⁴⁵

Magdalene is in Milan and does not find it easy to engage a preacher, Don Giovanni Palazzi, who is very busy:

"Tell Don Francesco⁴⁶ about my attempts to engage the excellent preacher Palazzi for the Spiritual Exercises there...; I do not think it possible for as he is a very busy person and after

⁴¹ M.d.C. to Faccioli, ? January 1830, Ep. III/3, pp. 2269-2270.

⁴² M.d.C., to Faccioli, 7 November 1831, Ep. III/4, p. 2962.

⁴³ An excellent preacher from Venice.

⁴⁴ M.d.C. to Dabalà, 6 June 1823, Ep. III/1. p. 638.

⁴⁵ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 2 April 1825, Ep. III/2, pp. 1082-83.

⁴⁶ Don Francesco Bugnoli, confessor of the community of Verona.

he has finished preaching in Milan I'm sure he has other commitments in Venice ... You see, my dear daughter, I cannot, nor would it be suitable to keep a non-local person for all these days, so I think it best not to engage him. The Lord will not fail to see our needs and send us another excellent person. In the meantime, thank Don Francesco for what he has done to start the Exercises".⁴⁷

Magdalene is uncertain if she should engage a preacher from Verona. She asks the opinion of Margherita Rosmini, Superior of the community in Trent, and gives advice for the choice of a preacher suitable for that city:

"I don't think it is possible to find a person like Venturi. Don Bresciani has suggested Don Conti to me, whom you also must have known and heard about when he taught in San Zeno. I do not know if he will give me an affirmative answer but before I speak to him, let me know by return post if it is all right to engage him even if he is not really the best. I'm afraid we have to submit this to the Bishop.⁴⁸ I don't think that this city wants preachers who are too ardent in presenting some of the fearful truths about our faith. Neither should they be too rigid in discussing certain arguments. Whatever reasons may be, if we find difficulties during these first years, we will not be able to continue with these Exercises, especially since the preachers were chosen by us. Give me a reply at once as to what also Monsignor thinks I should do. In the meantime I will continue to search. But as you know, it is like searching for a gold coin,⁴⁹ whose hiding place one cannot guess. In our hometown we know whom we are dealing with".⁵⁰

When the choice of the daughters conform to her judgements, Magdalene expresses her satisfaction:

"Regarding the Exercises, I will be more than happy if the Curate Canon Tavecchi agrees".⁵¹

The Foundress is always in search of good preachers, and when she does not know them personally, she writes, seeking information:

" For these Lenten Spiritual Exercises you can ask Don Giovanni Zanetti . . . even I am at a loss as to what to suggest to you, as we are short of preacher and listeners".⁵²

Until the preachers are ascertained, Magdalene thinks it would be imprudent to send the invitations to the ladies:

"Regarding the proposal made by Monsignor Sardagna to send the invitations to the Ladies for the Spiritual Exercises, I am of the opinion that if the preachers are not first ascertained, it is better not to take any further step ".⁵³

As for the preliminary search for preachers suggested by Rosmini, Magdalene urges her to give at least a minimum of information:

⁴⁷ M d C., to Bragato, 28 March 1826, Ep. III/2, p. 1344.

⁴⁸ Msgr. Carlo Sardagna, Bishop of Trent.

⁴⁹ Gold coin in circulation in Lombardy-Veneto region during the Austrian rule.

⁵⁰ M d.C., to Rosmini, 20 March 1831, Ep. III/4, pp. 2748-49

⁵¹ M d.C. to Faccioli 19 July 1833 Ep. III/5, pp. 3413.

⁵² M d.C. to Faccioli 5 January 1834 Ep. III/5, pp. 3540.

⁵³ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 18 December 1829, Ep.III/3, p. 2244.

"Listen to Monsignor, my dear daughter. On my part I am ready to co-operate with the person who will be coming as well as with the preacher . . . But I cannot do anything because I don't know this Don Scaglia nor where he comes from. By the time you write to me ... I hope to have got the information as to his ability and about the suggestion that he would give for the Exercises. After this first step is taken, we will communicate again".⁵⁴

From Milan Magdalene hurriedly asks information from the Superior of Verona:

"Send word to call Don Leonardo from the House of Canossa... tell him that I am planning to have the Lenten Spiritual Exercises in Trent given by a certain Don Scaglia, and would like to know if he is acquainted with him and if he has the experience and ability for conducting the Spiritual Exercises and from what place he hails from. If he does not know, tell him not to write to Trent as I have already done so. Tell him also that I ask him only because he may have greater insight on this matter than what I may receive from Trent".⁵⁵

Also for the following year, the Foundress takes care to make sure in advance of obtaining a preacher, who is one of the best she knows for the city of Trent.

And she informs Rosmini about this:

"About the Spiritual Exercises for the Ladies, I want to tell you in confidence that as I was in Trent and as I came to know the Lenten preacher⁵⁶, I spoke to him and asked him if he could give the Spiritual Exercises to the Ladies of Trent, as he will already be there. Take note that he is very able and one year he conducted the Lenten Exercises in Bergamo, a place noted for the number and quality of preachers and for the well-known practice of holding Spiritual Exercises. At the end of Lent, he gave it to the Cavalieri and they were very satisfied. He told me that if they wanted, he would be able to manage everything on his own, and he would begin on the Saturday of the Passion Week ending on Easter Sunday, keeping Good Friday morning for the preaching on the Passion at a suitable time. So, with a gift to the preacher everything could be accomplished. We have time, but just let me tell him now so that we need not worry about Trent".⁵⁷

The approval of Don Giovanni Palazzi for holding the Spiritual Exercises in Trent is nearly assured:

"Let me tell you that I spoke to him... about the Spiritual Exercises, for which he had already given me an answer in Venice. In the beginning he told me that he was not prepared and that he needed to write and so on. As I know him and know about his encounter with the Knights ... in Bergamo, I did not give up on the matter. In the end, he understood that he was really wanted, and would do it wholeheartedly".⁵⁸

⁵⁴ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 12 January 1831, Ep.III/4, p. 2667.

⁵⁵ M.d.C., to Bragato, 13 January 1831, Ep.III/4, p. 2672.

⁵⁶ The person referred to is Don Giovanni Palazzi.

⁵⁷ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 5 August 1831, Ep.III/4, pp. 2861-2862

⁵⁸ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 10 March 1832, Ep.III/4, p. 3039-40.

3. Request for Ecclesiastical approval

After the first two preliminary phases, that of the findings on the part of those who are responsible, and that of getting information and advice from Magdalene regarding the choice of the preachers, the way was clear for asking for ecclesiastical approval. In the same way it was also done in other places where these periods of spiritual experiences were programmed.

Thus Magdalene informs Don Carlo Ferrari, the Parish priest of St. Eufemia in Verona:

*"Here is what those who organise Spiritual Exercises do in other places: they and the Ladies who are involved in the organisation, choose the preachers according to their wishes. Then I get them to present the matter to the local bishop".*⁵⁹

Faithful to the requests of the Church, she recommends that the two religious who conduct the Spiritual Exercises should be suitable and approved by the local Ordinary.⁶⁰

In another Plan again she establishes:

*"The Spiritual Exercises should be for ten days' and they should be conducted under the direction of priests approved by the Bishop"*⁶¹

With slight variation Magdalene specifies even more clearly her thought:

*"The Spiritual Exercises should be given to those Ladies or women who desire them ... by suitable religious with the full approval of the Ordinary".*⁶²

In these few instances, when she wrote mentioning about obtaining religious approval from the ecclesiastical authority for priests who are called to conduct the Spiritual Exercises in the Houses of the Institute, Magdalene follows up this reminder in her letters to her daughters time and again with other reminders on the need for this practice:

*"As soon as you know the decision of the Ladies regarding the choice of the preacher, speak to Signor Giuseppe Alessandri and write in my name to Monsignor Rosada so that it can be submitted to his Eminence Monsignor Patriarch as it is our duty to have his permission for the usual Spiritual Exercises. Also ... see that the necessary formalities are completed with our parish priest".*⁶³

She writes on another occasion to the same Superior:

*"You might have already done so but in case you have forgotten, remember to ask His Excellency, our Patriarch, in my name for his blessing on 5the preacher"*⁶⁴

And almost on her deathbed, Magdalene expresses her complete docility and availability to the supreme guidance of the local Church:

⁵⁹ M.d.C., to Don Ferrari, 23 October 1831, R.s.s., P. 2a, p.118.

⁶⁰ M.d.C., Ep. II/2, p. 1430.

⁶¹ M.d.C., Ep. II/2, p. 1430.

⁶² Ivi, p. 1438.

⁶³ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 27 April 1825, Ep. III/2, p. 1105.

⁶⁴ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 17 May 1829, Ep.III/3, p. 2134

"I will be waiting to hear from you about the preachers. Whoever is approved by the bishop and the Superior is acceptable to me".⁶⁵

Specific tasks of the Director

The specific tasks of the Director of the Exercises are delineated in *"The Plans of the Institute"*:

*". . . to establish the programme for the day"⁶⁶
"... to give the meditations and the conferences"⁶⁷
"... and all the other practices of the Exercises".⁶⁸*

The programme of the day is entrusted to the Director of the Spiritual Exercises. Also the spiritual lesson that is to be given to the ladies must be agreed upon with him.

Magdalene is more precise with Rosmini as the period of holding the Spiritual Exercises draws near:

*"Together with Monsignor, we have decided the time-table for the Ladies who will also lodge with us for the night. But all this, as with the books, are to be submitted to the Directors of the **Spiritual** Exercises and what they judge to be best is to be done. Moreover, the time-table for the day is adapted according to the customs of the place and the season; there are places where things are done at an early hour and in other places they are done later... I don't know the ladies of Trent and depending on the method of instruction in Catechism used in that place decide with others or consult with the Directors of the Spiritual Exercises which book is to be used, and according to their opinion...what themes should be discussed. You will find in the retreat programme that they will be confined to their rooms at various hours. At that time it was suggested by the preachers of Milan, and I too took the opportunity to suggest it in Verona, that the practice of the Examination of Conscience be introduced as norm. I had Rosa bring some books of Spiritual Exercises for the lay people, where there are the above-mentioned examinations of conscience. But even on this point, the Directors can do what they like. I would make Conzati give the conferences in Church and Lucietta and Annetta can give their conferences in the refectory".⁶⁹*

In February of the following year, Magdalene found herself in Bergamo and began to pay attention to the choice of a preacher for Trent. She wanted the Ladies to have not only the meditations but also the lectures:

"If it was our Don Bresciani, he would not have more than two meditations a day and the lectures are very necessary".⁷⁰

The time-table for the day is adapted according to the various rhythm of the life of the city but also to changing seasons. Everything is done as agreed upon with the Director for the course:

⁶⁵ M.d.C., to Dabala, 17 January 1835, Ep. III/5, p. 3811.

⁶⁶ M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 13, p. 258.

⁶⁷ *ibid*, p. 257.

⁶⁸ *ibid*, p. 255.

⁶⁹ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 9 April 1830, Ep. III/3, pp. 2348-2349.

⁷⁰ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 1831, Ep. III/4, p. 2718.

*"Consult Don Giovanni Zanetti also about the book for the evening lessons (lectures): however if the preacher thinks that we should keep to the time-table of last year, I don't know if it will be suitable for this year as we are well into the season and the evenings are much shorter".*⁷¹

Magdalene recommends that the practice of confession be encouraged faithfully according to the intentions of the Church.

The Director will confess the Ladies *"in the place where the Spiritual Exercises"*⁷² are held if the place is like a convent. Instead, if they are held in a House⁷³ *"it would seem better if the ladies moved to a nearby church "*.⁷⁴

The Lodging for the Director

Even regarding lodging for the Director of the Spiritual Exercises Magdalene gives precise norms according to the church directives, which in those days were quite strict.

During the day, the Director has at his disposal the house of the Confessor, if the sisters are living in a convent.⁷⁵

In this case

*"The Superior will get the man who helps in the convent to assist the priests. In this way the same person can see to all their needs and at lunch he will also serve them whatever is prepared for the ladies."*⁷⁶

". . . if the sisters are lodging in a hollse, it would be better for the Ladies to find themselves accommodation ".⁷⁷

It was always prohibited then for the Director to live in the same House where the Spiritual Exercises were held:

*"If however one or two ladies wanted to consult the Director or ask him about their doubts, let it be done but not in the house. They can always talk to him in the place that is allocated for hearing confessions according to apostolic directives, which will be complied with in the houses of the Institute."*⁷⁸

"If the places where the sisters live are not monasteries but houses, it is still prohibited to the Directors to meet the Ladies in the houses where they stay".⁷⁹

This last rule is however made flexible according to the *"prudence and discretion of the Superior"*.⁸⁰

⁷¹ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 11 March 1829, Ep.III/3, pp. 2102-03.

⁷² M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1a, p. 259.

⁷³ For the 'house' Magdalene intends the lodging of the Daughters of Charity, which was not monastic in style.

⁷⁴ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 259.

⁷⁵ In every monastery, the Church ruling was that there should be a separate lodging reserved for the confessor and the preacher of the Spiritual Exercises.

⁷⁶ M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1a, p. 259, n. 120.

⁷⁷ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 1a, p. 258.

⁷⁸ *ibid*, p. 259.

⁷⁹ *ibid*.

⁸⁰ *ibid*.

Any familiarity with the man of God who has to receive the most intimate confidences of the conscience, is to be avoided:

*"It is already understood that the priest must never have his lunch or coffee, chocolate or any other drink in the company of the ladies".*⁸¹

Magdalene not only upholds the Church as they were at that time but she also gives spiritual motivations.

In fact she recommends:

*"... special care and attention is to be given to these souls for they are the treasures which the Lord has entrusted to them".*⁸²

Through her letters, Magdalene recommends all her daughters to provide lodging for the Directors according to the Ecclesiastical directives in force at that time. Writing to the Superior of Bergamo, Magdalene requests that suitable accommodation be found for Don Marco".⁸³

*"You could give him lodging with Signor Bentivoglio or you could lodge him in the room of Don Giovanni Maria. Or speak to Lady Salvi for you really need to find a lodging.".*⁸⁴

With the Superior of Venice, she writes that she is happy at having found lodging for the preacher who is to arrive:

*"As for the preacher, the parish priest Biasuti,⁸⁵ I know him and the ladies of Venice could not have chosen better. I have already replied to the good Dama Priuli, who told me that you had written to ask for a room for him. I am happy that they have found it".*⁸⁶

From the Superior of Trent, she waits for more detailed news about how and where the preacher will be lodged:

*"Tell me what they think about lodging and maintenance of the preachers. Then I will reply you more precisely, but also keep me informed of all the happenings so that I know what to do".*⁸⁷

The Superior of Venice should ask Lady Priuli to give proper lodging to Abbot Venturi.⁸⁸ It is recommended above all, that he be given a good bed:

" The same Lady Priuli has written to me asking me to write to Don Venturi, for she has arranged lodging for him in the house of Don Francesco Luzzo. Try to find out in a gracious manner from the same Lady Priuli if there is a good bed in that house and everything else he may need.

*As you already well know we do not have extra beds, let alone one suitable for him".*⁸⁹

⁸¹ *ibid*, p . 265.

⁸² M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1a, p. 259.

⁸³ Count Don Marco Passi: for biographical notes see Ep. II/2, p.787

⁸⁴ M.d.C. to Faccioli, 5 March 1829, Ep. III/3, p. 2099.

⁸⁵ Sac. Giov. Battista Biasuti: cf. M.d.C., Ep.II/1, p. 651.

⁸⁶ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 11 April 1829, Ep.III/3, p. 2120.

⁸⁷ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 19 February 1831, Ep.III/4, p. 2718.

⁸⁸ Abbot Venturi, cf. p. 46.

⁸⁹ M.d.C., aila Terragnoli, 20 April 1831, Ep.III/4, p. 2768.

After some days she reminds them that everything should be made ready for the arrival of the two preachers: the food and a young male servant who can assist them in their needs:

"I believe that on Tuesday Don Venturi will leave with Don Provolo and I request you to prepare lunch for these two religious, who even if they do not arrive in Venice on Wednesday, will all the same be eating on Thursday; arrange with the Ladies to have a soup and three other dishes. It will be necessary for you to discuss with Betta to find some good man who will serve them; if you can't find anyone for this, you can ask Don Luzzo to give you some good girls from the Boarding House of Cavanis and you can pay them. Anyway, see what you can do because to send someone from here will double expenses".⁹⁰

The number of Directors

The number of preachers for the Exercises is proportionate to the number of the ladies who attend it:

"Lodging will be provided for this priest or if one is not sufficient for the two of them".⁹¹

Trent is in need of two preachers and Magdalene is in touch with many people contemporaneously From Bergamo she writes to the Superior of Verona:

"I need another favour from you and it has to be done quickly and wisely. Send word to Don Conte Luca Passi to come and see you and when he comes, on my behalf, ask him if he could and would like to come with me on Wednesday to Trent to conduct together with Abbot Venturi, the Ladies' Spiritual Exercises . . . Further, tell him, that I saw him that he was very tired on his arrival and I know he has to be in Genua on the 3rd Sunday. If it is going to be difficult for him, he should without hesitating tell me through you that he is unable to. As soon as you get a reply from him send me the news by the very next post".⁹²

At the same time, while waiting for this reply, which she fears might be negative she contacts a relative to make enquiries about finding another priest.

"In the meantime, by ordinary mail, I will send you a letter for Don Leonardo of the House of Canossa, with whom you can discuss about Fr. Conte Luca's coming and if the latter is unable to come, you can send the letter inviting Don Leonardo. Other than this, you should also contact Don Bresciani and tell him that I was not, as he had advised, able to arrange with Don Venturi. I sincerely thank him and hope to have him another time in the future".⁹³

Don Venturi accepted the responsibility for the Exercises in Trent, but as he was not able to give two meditations in the afternoon due to his frail health, Magdalene wrote again to the Superior of Verona to try to get Don Luca Passi. In the case of his non acceptance, she sent an enclosed letter to Don Leonardo:

⁹⁰ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 7 May 1831, Ep.III/4, pp. 2778-79.

⁹¹ M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1', p 258.

⁹² M.d C. to Bragato, 6March 1830 Ep.III/3 p 2304.

⁹³ M.d. C. to Bragato, 6March IX3(), Ep 111/3 p 2305.

"Another novelty. They write to me from Trent to say that it is not possible to have more than one sermon after lunch during the Spiritual Exercises which will be held there for the first time. So it is better that you again get don Count Luca Passi to come to you. On my behalf thank him sincerely for his kindness and generosity in accepting to come to Trent. Tell him that I will keep him on the list for the year when he will give Lenten Exercises there and that I accept his offer. Instead, send by post the letter I enclosed for Don Leonardo, who is able to give two sermons after lunch. However, if Fr. Count Luca on hearing this says that he is prepared to preach twice, don't send the letter to Don Leonardo ".⁹⁴

But the engagement of two preachers is fortunately not always such a difficult task. Magdalene writes to Don Burocco:⁹⁵

"It is very fortunate that the Lenten preacher of the Cathedral is an excellent Veronese preacher who is able to get permission from our Bishop for this year as well. He has been well accepted in Trent by all. He agreed to be one of the two preachers and so having also found the second preacher, the scheduled time for beginning the afore-mentioned Exercises will be during the novena of Easter".⁹⁶

As soon as she can leave Bergamo for Verona Magdalene searches for not one, but two preachers:

"I see that it is almost impossible to find one who can do everything by himself: Enough! I'll see but tell me, there are two preachers; other than giving them lodging and food, if a present should also be given. I see that it is more or less impossible for this Lent. In short, pray and then, write what you have decided and I will do the little I can, provided that I can go to Verona ".⁹⁷

When it happens that there is uncertainty over some preachers, Magdalene asks the Superior of the House to persuade the Bishop.

She writes to the Superior of Verona again from Bergamo:

"I take then the responsibility of writing to our Superior so that our Bishop will hear of it.⁹⁸ AS you can already see, we have to think of two, instead of one. I enclose a letter to the same, so that you can read it and then seal it and send it to him at once".⁹⁹

Magdalene, always busy in the city of Trent over the Spiritual Exercises, writes barely one month before her death:

"I was greatly consoled to hear that Don Benaglia had accepted to come and give the instructions and I would also like Fr. Ramboni to be approached before he takes on other commitments. Please ask our Reverend Fr. Superior to go and ask him".¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ M.d.C., to Bragato, 23March 1830, Ep.III/3, p. 2319-20.

⁹⁵ Don Bernardino Burocco is a priest from Milan. For biographical note see cf. M.d.C., Ep.II/1, p. 302.

⁹⁶ M.d.C., to Don Burocco~ July 1827, Ep.II/1, p. 344.

⁹⁷ M.d.C., illa Rosminis 26 January1831, Ep. III/4, p. 26X6

⁹⁸ Msgr. G. Grasser, cf. p. 46.

⁹⁹ M.d.C., to Dabala, 11 febbraio 1835, Ep. III/5, p. 3851.

¹⁰⁰M.d.C., to Dabala, 28 February 1835, Ep. III/5, p. 3861.

Impressions of Magdalene

In Venice, during the days of the Spiritual Exercises, Magdalene expresses to her daughters who are far away her personal impressions and those of the retreatants on the various preachers.

She writes to the Superior of Verona:

"I can say little about the Spiritual Exercises for we are just starting the third day. As the preacher is new, some like him and some don't, as usually happens in the beginning. But on the whole, I think it is fruitful, for after the sermons many go away feeling contrite. I don't know what is yet to come. The preacher is excellent. He is a certain Fr. Giuseppe Demassari, an ex Bernardine brother and a relative of our dear Floriana Demassari. The ladies are not only many but also differ among themselves ...

Those who stay for the whole day are more numerous than in previous years".¹⁰¹

Again from Venice the following year:

"The Exercises of our pious Ladies are progressing well. Everyone is happy and satisfied with their zealous preacher and so I hope God will reap a great harvest".¹⁰²

It is often the Patriarch himself who opens and closes the Exercises of the Ladies of Venice:

'Friday, the first day of the Novena to the Holy Spirit, the Spiritual Exercises will begin for these good Ladies. His Excellency, the Patriarch Monico has kindly accepted to come and give them an introductory talk. This year, furthermore, they have an excellent preacher, very well-known for holiness and doctrine.

Pray hard for them, so that the Lord may reap from each one the fruit He desires".¹⁰³

To the Superior of Verona, she writes about the enthusiasm of the Ladies regarding the Spiritual Exercises which are held in Venice:

"I want to inform you that here the Spiritual Exercises were officially opened by His Excellency, the Patriarch Monico who gave a very beautiful homily and discourse that charmed the Ladies. I cannot adequately express his kindness and affability".¹⁰⁴

She writes even more enthusiastically to the Superior of Trent:

"On Friday the Spiritual Exercises were begun for these good Ladies of Venice. They were officially opened by His Excellency, the Patriarch Monico, a saintly person. He delivered a very good homily and a discourse full of sentiments, so that these Ladies were greatly encouraged and animated. Also, they have a very good preacher this year so there was more than the usual rush".¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ M.d.C., to Bragato, 18 May 1828, Ep.III/3, p. 1929.

¹⁰² M.d.C., to Bragato, 4 June 1829, Ep.III/3, p. 2142.

¹⁰³ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 27 May 1829, Ep. III/3, p. 2140.

¹⁰⁴ M.d.C., to Bragato, 4 June 1829, Ep. III/3, p. 2143.

¹⁰⁵ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 9 June 1829, Ep.III/3, p. 2144.

The following year too, Magdalene takes part in the Spiritual Exercises conducted for the Ladies in Venice and towards the end of the Exercises she writes to the Superior of Verona about her satisfaction regarding the outcome of the same:

"The discourse His Excellency, the Patriarch gave on Saturday was on the valiant woman, who with her prudent and diligent work brings happiness to the family, wins the heart of all and brings about peace among spouses. In short he praised that family which has the good fortune to be guided by such a woman. He gave this discourse so emphatically and with such eloquence, so proper to the prelate, that the good ladies were more than satisfied with him, in fact they were left speechless. He was also very edified by them and he told me that they were more in number compared with the previous year. It seemed to him that they were about fifty".¹⁰⁶

Magdalene was always punctual in meeting with the ladies every year. She writes her impressions to her niece:

"This year too the ladies who came for the Spiritual Exercises remembered you and spoke about you. I'm sure you knew that it was our Abbot Venturi who gave the Spiritual Exercises. You wouldn't believe how satisfied they were".¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ M.d.C., to Bragato, 2 June 1830, Ep.III/3, p. 2400-01.

¹⁰⁷ M.d.C., to Countess Isotta Ravagnani, 1 June 1831, Ep. I, p. 578.

CHAPTER 4

THE ROLE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY IN THE WORK OF ORGANIZING SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

THE ROLE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY IN ORGANISING THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Magdalene was of the opinion that *"among all the works of charity embraced by the Institute, this is the one that can lead to greater harm and consequences"*. And she gave the reason for this: the Superior and the sisters should be vigilant *"... as it is perhaps the only one in which the Sisters can be blinded and attracted by human appearances"*.¹

The feared *"blindness"* was that the contact with the Ladies of nobility and wealthy class might eventually lead the Daughters of Charity to ask for material favours in exchange for the services they did for their spiritual welfare.

This temptation if given in to, may jeopardize the good they intended to do:

"The sisters should be convinced that if they are not prudent in this they will never receive the good that, with the help of Divine grace, can come from this branch of work".²

Criteria of choice

Magdalene gave the Superiors precise and insistent indications regarding the choice of sisters to be placed in charge of this work of charity.

They should choose, she writes,

". . . sisters who would give themselves willingly out of pure love and for the honour of God to this work of charity".³

There should be

". . . sisters appointed to help and serve them in any need they might have . . . ".⁴

The sisters chosen should be

"... more capable on account of their piety, prudence, culture and dexterity. If, at that time there is no one able to help them in the practices of the Spiritual Exercises ... the Superior will do it herself as this is a very important matter".⁵

¹ M.d.C., Unabridged Rules, P. 1a, p.224

² *ibid*, p. 213

³ M.d.C., Unabridged Rules, P. 1a, p. 206.

⁴ *ibid*, p. 217

⁵ *ibid*, p. 207.

The conduct of the Daughters of Charity must be such as

*". . . to contribute to fostering in these ladies the spirit of recollections"*⁶

As the most evident fruit of Christian testimony is joy, Magdalene recommends to her daughters:

"... gentle manners and ways, especially for example, excluding bad temper, sadness and rudeness, but showing instead by their external appearance the happiness to which Divine Mercy has brought them in the service of God".⁷

And with maternal encouragement she continues:

". . . and if the Lord keeps them in some anxiety or with a cross to bear, they should not only not lament but should keep them only for the eyes of God. For the happiness of those who are in the service of the Lord is the best form of witnessing the contentment of those dedicated to His Service".⁸

The Spiritual Exercises are a branch of the works of charity which are very important for Magdalene and she does not hesitate to transfer the sisters from one house to another. The journeys at that time were neither convenient nor short.

Magdalene leaves Verona to go to Venice where the Spiritual Exercises are to be held with two sisters. The choice of these sisters brings surprise to the Ladies. She informs the Superior of the House of Verona:

"Cecilia Dona and Rosa Della Croce are well and the Ladies are very happy with them. Her mother and Lady Priuli were surprised and beside themselves with joy when they saw them. I had not informed them earlier so as to give them a surprise".⁹

And after some days:

"At moments I feel better and as for secretaries I have none except Rosa della Croce and as the Lord is keeping her in good health she helps to read to the Ladies or to write. The thing is both of us have hardly any time because the Ladies keep us extremely busy".¹⁰

A request for help from the Superior of Bergamo for a course of Spiritual Exercises for the Ladies provokes Magdalene to give a reply that is nearly a reproof:

*"I understand . . . your desire to have Antonietta with another companion from Milan to help you.
My dear daughter, I have no heart to think of taking away Antonietta even for a few moments, You know the house of Milan well and it seems impossible to me that that you could even think of such a thing, and especially that at this moment when there is so much to be done . . ."*¹¹

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 207, n. 116.

⁸ M.d.C., R.s.s., P. Ia, p. 257.

⁹ M.d.C., to Bragato, 26 May 1827. Ep. III/3. p. 1658.

¹⁰ M.d.C., to Bragato, 30 May 1827, Ep.III/3, pp. 1659-1660.

¹¹ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 5 March 1829, Ep.III/3, p. 2098.

The only way of helping the urgent need of the House of Bergamo seemed to be to anticipate the course so as to give a breather for the sisters who are helping:

... if I gave you the companions from Milan, when the Spiritual Exercises in Bergamo end, there will be only one day in between before the Milan Exercises start. So you should anticipate those days as much as you can, to be able to have a little interval between the two Exercises, and also to allow a little rest to my dear Masina whom I imagine will be wanted in Milan".¹²

The availability of the sisters is admirable sinu Magalene can write to the Superior of Milan the following:

"Cinquetti, as you know, is quite old. However, on the day I arrived in Venice, she wanted to go back to the kitchen, for it seemed to her that no one was capable of cooking food for me and she has helped during the Exercises heading up the work in the kitchen in Verona. The fact is that she has held up during the entire Period with the Ladies and continues to do so. Yesterday, however she was going around with a walking stick. She had prayed hard to the Lord to be able to cook for the year 1831 and she has been heard. I can imagine that this winter she will pray to be able to continue to cook for the year 1832 and by continuing in this way she will be my cook until the arrival of Enoch and Elia".¹³

Not only is she unable to give help to the House at Bergamo but she has to ask help for the Spiritual Exercises of Milan. She is in need of a sister who can manage the work in the kitchen:

"... I have written to Milan that if necessary for the few days of the Spiritual Exercises you can lend Rosa for work in the kitchen with another sister to help her. Don't worry my dear daughter, I hope to be able to come. But if I cannot and if Teresa¹⁴ sends someone to fetch Rosina you can also send another companion, one that you can spare. I have already written to Teresa that the day after the conclusion (of the retreat) she must send them back to Bergamo and you can confirm this with them".¹⁵

Magdalene plays the intermediary in transfers from house to house but she also desires above everything that the rapport among the Superiors remain cordial. Therefore she writes in a foot-note to a letter to the same Superior of Bergamo:

"On Friday 6th the Spiritual Exercises start for the Ladies in Milan. So ensure that Rosina gets ready and rests as much as possible. Write at once to Milan that you have orders from me that they can come and take her when they want. I will write about this to them as well, but I don't know what other help you need . . . if you need help for the kitchen or for the school, you can write a polite letter. Don't ask for help if you don't need any. I repeat, that I will also write to them to come and take her, but write to them yourself in a polite way".¹⁶

In 1832, as Magdalene was not able to follow personally, as she would have desired, the Spiritual Exercises of Venice, she decided to send instead her assistant Superior of the House of Verona with three other sisters:

¹² M.d.C., to Faccioli, 5 March 1829, Ep.III/3, p. 2099.

¹³ M.d.C., to Bernardi, 1 July 1831, Ep.III/4, pp. 2836-2837

¹⁴ Teresa Spasciani: for biographical notes see Ep. 1, p. 414.

¹⁵ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 28 March 1829, Ep.III/3, pp. 2107-2108.

¹⁶ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 28 March 1832, Ep.III/4 p. 3052.

"I would like to let you know that the companions are planning to leave here on Tuesday. Abbot Venturi and his companion have decided to leave on Tuesday but as they are leaving separately, don't know who will arrive first".¹⁷

The Superior of Verona, Rosa Dabala would replace Magdalene in directing the course and Teodor; Roggia would replace her in the instructions to be given to the Ladies:

"As the Superior has finally decided that . should stay here a few days more to recuperate completely, I am sending you the Superior Rosa with three companions, two of whom are strong and capable of helping in the kitchen and with other work in the house. The third is Teodora Roggia. I am sending her to you because. let me tell you confidentially, the last time I me the Ladies, they told me that if I was unable come to Venice for the conferences, I should send her because they feel comfortable with her. I hope then, that for the Spiritual Exercises you will be well provided as the Superior is also a suitable person and is very agreeable. To her you can freely say everything about the needs of the House and she will later refer to me when I come and we will take care of what is left to do".¹⁸

Magdalene has maternal care for her daughters. Her desire was that they should expend themselves for the glory of God and for the benefit of their fellow men, but in serenity and peace.

She tells the Superior that she should welcome Rosina as cook for the impending Spiritual Exercises for the Ladies and she should tolerate the habits of the sister. It is important that one should do well what has to be done and it is less important the way it is done and the place where it is done.

"For the Spiritual Exercises of the Ladies I am satisfied with your arrangements as long as they lessen all your fatigue and help you to resolve everything in peace.

About making coffee in that little room, if it is convenient for Rosina and she does not get more tired, having as she does, to attend to the kitchen as well, I am quite happy for you to have it served there. If it is too troublesome, Marietta is quite capable of making coffee, chocolate, lemonade ... if she is of service to you and helpful, let her do it but if she is worried about it, leave her alone.

At present I think you should do as I advise. First ask Rosina if it is more convenient for her to make coffee in that little room. But if it is less tiring for her to do it in the kitchen, let her do it there. Then tell her that I have written saying that Marietta is capable of helping her in this. So if it is convenient for Rosina, let Marietta help her, if not, let her do it alone ... As I say, be calm and do what you think is best".¹⁹

This branch of the work of charity, personally loved and cared for by the Foundress, had to be always carried out with the number and the physical strength of the daughters in mind and *"the primary aims of the Institute which are the schools, teaching of doctrine and the care of the sick in the hospitals should never be sacrificed to this work".²⁰*

¹⁷ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 26 May 1832, Ep. III/4. p. 31

¹⁸ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 28 May 1832. Ep.III/4, p. 3114.

¹⁹ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 13 February Ep. III/5, pp. 3305-06.

²⁰ M.d.C., Ep. II/2, p. 1425

Specific tasks of the Daughters of Charity

Among the various tasks that Magdalene asks the sisters who are in-charge of following the Spiritual Exercises closely one is predominant and insisted upon.

For the various impending courses she warmly recommends the Superiors to pray and to make other pray. All the daughters of the various houses shout take responsibility for praying so that the Lord may work in the hearts of the retreatants, transforming them interiorly, that He may give them a more lively faith, an ardent desire to love Him and serve Him in the poor.

Prayer

Magdalene had just finished the Spiritual Exercises in Bergamo and from Milan where she had just arrived she wrote to the Superior of Venice to entrust to the prayers of that community the success of the Spiritual Exercises for the Ladies:

"On Friday we begin the Spiritual Exercises of the Ladies here. I recommend also this to the charity of your prayers and I hope that the Lord will deign to bless this humble work of ours as result of the prayers said".²¹

The same recommendation is made to the Superior of Bergamo:

"Pray, and get others to pray, so that also the Spiritual Exercises too, for the Ladies of Milan may be blessed by the Lord".²²

The Foundress is constantly on the move from one city to another so as to be able to follow the Spiritual Exercises personally. From Verona she would go to Bergamo and from there she would leave for Venice to be able to guide the Spiritual Exercises there which were to be followed by those of Trent. The prayers of the daughters of Venice accompany her:

"Pray that the Lord may give me the grace to do good and also the strength, for in health or in illness I have many things to do, one after the other. Immediately after I finish with your Spiritual Exercises, I have those of Trent. Of course it is understood that I consider it a special mercy of the Lord that He gives me some little thing to do, but I ask you to help me with your prayers so that I may do what is of benefit".²³

When she is constrained because of illness to replace someone in her place as guide for the Spiritual Exercises, she herself prays and gets others to pray for the success of the same:

"Courage, my dear daughter, even if I cannot assist you in person, I shall not fail to do so with my prayers, in union with all my companions, who are very concerned about praying for you these days while you are helping with the Spiritual Exercises".²⁴

The most holy Mary will be at the side of the Superior as her guide and comfort:

²¹ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 19 March 1828, Ep.III/3, p. 1870.

²² M.d.C., to Faccioli, 13 March 1828, Ep.III/3, p. 1865

²³ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 13 March February 1828, Ep. III/3, p. 1841

²⁴ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 17 March 1829, Ep.III/3, p. 2106.

"I am quite certain that the most Holy Mary will be your companion and will obtain for you everything and that the Lord will be greatly served".²⁵

From Verona she asks for prayers because the devil is putting obstacles in the way of the Spiritual Exercises already programmed for the Ladies of the city.

"Pray for me to the Lord for Him to bless the Spiritual Exercises of the Ladies as it seems that the devil is doing his best to prevent them".²⁶

And she tells the Superior of Trent to pray to the Most Holy Mary so that this branch of the work of charity so opposed by the enemy can be initiated:

"I want to ask you the favour of making a small novena for me of only nine "Hail Mary's" and three "Angel of God" so as to help me to discover if we should hold the Spiritual Exercises for the Ladies in this House for the first time.²⁷ The devil is so furiously trying and wants to obstruct them that I don't know what more he will invent. But I place my trust in the Most Holy Virgin that these Spiritual Exercises will take place and that they will be the cause of great glory for the Lord and that the devil will be humiliated".²⁸

And to the daughters in Venice she writes:

"Lady Teresa Spasciani sends her respects and requests your prayers, as I too request, for the Spiritual Exercises of the Ladies in Verona and for many other activities, all for the glory of the Lord".²⁹

The prayers were effective and the Spiritual Exercises were in full swing:

"I request your prayers for these Ladies and for me, as I find myself lacking in strength".³⁰

In 1833 she is again in Venice, fully engaged in the work of the Spiritual Exercises and though she writes in a hurry to the Superior of Bergamo giving various items of news, she does not fail to request the prayers of all:

"I have the Spiritual Exercises of the Ladies so I am compelled to stop here ... I recommend myself to all your prayers very much"³¹

And the year after, to the Superior of Trent the usual unforgettable recommendation:

"On Tuesday the Spiritual Exercises for the Ladies will begin here in Verona and we recommend ourselves to the prayers of all".³²

²⁵ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 11 March 1829, Ep.III/3, p. 2102.

²⁶ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 21 October 1831, Ep.III/4. pp. 2939-40.

²⁷ Verona

²⁸ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 26 October 1831, Ep. III/4, p. 2946.

²⁹ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 5 November 1831, Ep. III/4, p. 2959

³⁰ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 28 November 1831, Ep.III/4, p. 2971

³¹ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 10 May 1833, Ep. III/5 p. 3355.

³² M.d.C., to Bragato, 8 March 1834, Ep. III/5, p. 3588.

Magdalene not only follows the Spiritual Exercises of the Ladies but also that of the youth who frequent the Institute for various reasons:

"On Monday these good young people will come to have their Spiritual Exercises and on Tuesday we will start. I believe that even Count Passi's two sisters will come. I ask you to pray so that the Lord and the Most Holy Mother will deign to bless all and that we can accomplish a little good".³³

She again informs Bernardi, the Superior of the community of Milan:

"I take advantage of the moments I have between the various activities of the Spiritual Exercises of these good girls to write to you, my dear daughter. First, let me tell you that our retreatants are 12, among whom are the two little Pass Countesses, whose brothers are Religious, educated like angels. I request you and all the dear companions to offer a Communion so that the Lord, for the love of the Most Holy Mary, will give us the grace to see that they truly reap the fruit of this retreat and that they become ever better".³⁴

Assistance

A second task that Magdalene entrusts to the daughters who are responsible for guiding the Ladies during the Spiritual Exercises is their help which should be thorough and full of care. In the treatise which deals with this branch of charity the Foundress specifies:

"... they should possibly try to contribute to fostering in these ladies the spirit of recollection that should inspire their present situation".³⁵

Especially they should

"... make them follow the established timetable...³⁶,... be present during the meditations dictated by the priest so that they are able to help them to recall and, if necessary, making use of the free time during the day to help in clarifying and conducting their spiritual lessons when they gather round the table".³⁷

Other than this they will

"... keep them company during their recreation,³⁸ . . . prepare their meals and food".³⁹

This service requiring continuous attention, a great deal of watchfulness and prudence is indicated by Magdalene:

³³ M.d.C., to Bernardi 17 September 1823, E~p. III/1, pp. 676-7.

³⁴ M.d.C., to Bernardi 24 September 1823, E~p. III/1, pp. 681.

³⁵ M.d.C., to Bragato, 4 June 1829, Ep. III/3, p. 2143.

³⁶ *ibid*, p. 255.

³⁷ *ibid*, p. 258.

³⁸ *ibid*, p. 263

³⁹ *ibid*, P. 255.

"The sisters assigned to help and serve the ladies will not repeat to others, either during the time of the exercises or afterwards, any of the things they have seen or heard regarding these ladies or anything about them".⁴⁰

When the sisters receive personal confidences from some of the ladies:

". . . the sisters should be careful never to meddle in deciding whether faults are mortal or venial, or give theological opinions, and neither should they be too indulgent about past errors but should encourage them to confide in the Infinite Mercy of God regarding the past".⁴¹

And as the Spiritual Exercises, a special branch of the work of charity and temporary by nature, usually increase the normal toil of the Daughters of Charity, Magdalene invites the sisters to be generous in the sacrifice:

"Therefore the sisters should give themselves willingly out of pure love and for the love of God to this exercise of charity".⁴²

If their toil is more than their physical strength can bear and it is impossible to get sisters from other houses to help because they are indispensable there for the works of the Daughters of Charity which Magdalene defines as "perennial and continuous",⁴³ Magdalene advises that they should ask some young girls who frequent the Institute for help.

"The only thing we can try to do is to write to Teresa⁴⁴ and this I will try to do. If it is not too inconvenient for her she could give you two helpers. But I think it will be difficult for her to give you any help as it is the Lenten season now. Nevertheless I will write to ask if it is possible or not.

If that house in Milan cannot give you the two helpers I think you could try to get the help of some of our good girls, as we did last year with Adelaide".⁴⁵

As had been foreseen by the Foundress, the House in Milan was unable to give help. Magdalene hastens to give instructions to the Superior who is waiting for them so that she can take care of the needs in other ways without compromising the Spiritual Exercises:

"From Milan the good Superior Teresa has written that she regrets not being able to provide help for the Spiritual Exercises of the Ladies owing to the sick sisters she has on hand. Don't worry, my dear daughter, trust in the Lord and try to engage our good girls, especially those who are seniors and who are suitable. You can get them to help with manual work and the rest of you can attend to other services in connection with the Spiritual Exercises and the Ladies. Have one sister always present during the meditations and instructions and also in the parlour to invigilate the ladies and those who come to hear the sermons. Last year you had Cristina, who told me that if she had not been vigilant the ladies and the young girls would have got

⁴⁰ M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1a, p.263.

⁴¹ cf. ivi, p. 262.

⁴² M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1a, p. 206.

⁴³ M.d.C., Regole 1828, ms. A 3, VII, p. A.C.R.

⁴⁴ Teresa Spasciani, Superior of Milan.

⁴⁵ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 5 March 1829, Ep.III/3, p. 2099.

together to chat. For this I think Magdalene or Checchina would be suitable. I recommend that you be careful about this for I think it is necessary".⁴⁶

And while the Spiritual Exercises are in progress the encouragement of the Mother is not lacking:

"The consolation I experienced in reading your last letter prompts me to write these few lines to encourage you to trust the Most Holy Mary. I can see that she deigned to assist you in the spiritual Exercises. I am very pleased with all your arrangements, even with your choice of the two young girls, Angelina Ottonara and Luigia Mangiagalli. I am very satisfied and I hope they will be of great help".⁴⁷

Spiritual animation

The spiritual animation, according to Magdalene should be given with the maximum discretion. advice and words of comfort follow and never precede the spontaneous spiritual opening up of the retreatant.

"If these ladies, as can easily occur, open themselves up to the sisters... and ask them any advice... they are to comfort them by making them see the great merit and consolation they will have in death and also now for giving a good education to their children... the sisters will exhort the Ladies to care for their servants, seeing that they go to Christian Doctrine, or at least they are instructed at home".⁴⁸

The social class from which Magdalene came from gave her the knowledge through experience of what particulars need to be touched on and to bring to attention the particular defects of the nobility in counselling. She recommends that

"... the Sisters should make the ladies see how great will be the Glory of God and the edification they will give to their dependents by their modesty of dress and respect in Church".⁴⁹

Besides, she recommends the practice of justice in their dealings:

"... Let the Sisters make known to these ladies through simple conversation, their duty to be attentive so that their servants are not only paid properly but the goods they hand out to them be of good quality".⁵⁰

In the matter of honesty they should prevent "*occasions of temptations*" by not "*leaving money around or other things that might put them in danger of stealing*".⁵¹

They should remind these Ladies that one of the duties of Christian Justice is that

". . . they have the duty to give what is left over to the poor as it belongs to them".⁵²

⁴⁶ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 11 March 1829, Ep. III/3, p. 2102.

⁴⁷ M.d. C. , to Faccioli, 17 March 1823, Ep. III/3, p. 2106.

⁴⁸ M.d.C., Unabridged Rules P la, p 210

⁴⁹ M.d.C., Unabridged Rules P la, p 210

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 211

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 211

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 214

Let them take care that their dependents

"... do not find into certain books in the house that are apt to extinguish every seed of piety and religion".⁵³

The Sisters should recommend to the Ladies

"... to make sure that, as far as possible, their holiday is not a dangerous time or a stumbling block for these poor country girls with regard to gallants or the servants".⁵⁴

Magdalene knows from experience that holidays spent in frivolous idleness can become a period when Evil thrives. So she is concerned that *"the time spent in the countryside be a time of religious and pious animation . . ."*⁵⁵

She warmly recommends to the Ladies highest regard and respect for the priests due to them because of their superior dignity.⁵⁶

To enable the poor farmers *"to live with holy feclr of God"*, she recommends attentiveness in meeting their material needs, providing them with doctors and medicines, remedying their anxieties regarding their lodging,⁵⁷ helping them in their financial needs and their hunger ... and to see to their spiritual needs, taking care to see ... *"whether they are nourished by the Divine Word, whether they have a sufficient number of priests to administer the sacraments"*, things to which *"the Ladies can attend to"*⁵⁸

Then, if the Sisters come to know that these Ladies have not been observing what they are being recommended, they should help them to see *"how the Lord grants them the means of remedying everything by **Confession**"*.⁵⁹

Fraternal Charity

When some Spiritual Exercises were about to be held, Magdalene would advise her daughters, in addition to praying, to have unity among themselves and to give testimony to a joy that is the fruit of a profound union with God.

*"In the meantime pray to the Lord and to Mary Most Holy, Our dear Mother, so that she may set aflame first me, then you and other Ladies who will be making the Spiritual Exercises..."*⁶⁰

For Magdalene joy is the fruit of a profound union with God and a reflection of authentic communion.

"What I recommend is that you should be united with the Lord and among yourselves. If unintentionally there should be among you some displeasure, it is important that you do not make it known to others and especially to the retreatants ... Let the contentment of the state of your life and your happiness in serving only God be known. Joy, equanimity, courtesy, composure and respectful ways for no other reason than for God alone, will sometimes bring

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1a, p. 261

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ «Sempre, ma specialmente in villeggiatura, evitare che i Sacerdoti diventino oggetto di allegria per la brigata... con scandalo della servitù, (M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1a, p. 260).

⁵⁷ «Costretti a non poter dividere, a letto, i figli dai genitori, i fratelli dalle sorelle » (M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1a, p. 261).

⁵⁸ M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1,a, p. 261.

⁵⁹ *ibid*, p 259

⁶⁰ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 18 April 1827, Ep.III/3, p. 1643.

about greater good than sermons. I tell you this with the intention of doing you a favour and I tell you so as to help you".⁶¹

And again announcing her arrival in Venice:

"Prepare yourselves, so that when I arrive I will find you all happy but especially you, happy, laughing, cheerful. In the midst of much work we should always be very happy"⁶²

Spiritual Motivations

Magdalene never failed to suggest to her daughters to offer even the most arduous tasks with the noblest intentions:

"... I beg you during the Spiritual Exercises to work for the Glory of God offering Him all your fatigue for the good of the Church."⁶³

For the Glory of God everything can be sacrificed:

"My dear daughter", she writes to Bernardi, "I am sorry that I will be able to enjoy your company only for a little while in Milan⁶⁴ but it is necessary that we be ready to sacrifice everything for the glory of God ".⁶⁵

To other Superiors she promises prayers, her maternal concern and her ardent wish for the success of the Spiritual Exercises:

"Before you begin your important task", she writes to Rosmini, "for the Spiritual Exercises, I come to give you an embrace, my dear daughter. Be assured that without doubt we will assist you with our prayers in spite of being the miserable creatures that we are. I am consoled by the number of the Ladies which is most satisfactory ... Give my warm greetings to the ladies making the Spiritual Exercises and whom I have the pleasure to know".⁶⁶

And to the Superior of Bergamo:

"I assure you, my dear Daughter, that I experience such happiness in reading your letter that I do not know how to express it. However busy you might be I cannot do without telling you about it".⁶⁷

After some years to the same Superior she writes:

"I hope He (God) has helped you in these Spiritual Exercises too. Courage, my dear daughter. Remember that the Lord is good and wants you as His companions in the Cross, to suffer and to

⁶¹ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 11 March 1829, Ep.III/3, p. 2102

⁶² M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 18 April 1827, Ep.III/3, p. 1643.

⁶³ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 11 March 1832, Ep.III/4, p. 3044.

⁶⁴ She had to stay on in Bergamo in view of the Spiritual Exercises for the Ladies

⁶⁵ M.d.C., to Bernardi, 22 February 1828, Ep.III/3, p. 1840.

⁶⁶ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 14 April 1832, Ep.III/4, pp. 3064-3065.

⁶⁷ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 15 April 1829, Ep.III/3, p. 2122.

work. The reward will be worthy of Him and He will make you partakers of His Glory, as His spouse".⁶⁸

Warnings

This branch of the work of charity gives rise to worries in the heart of Magdalene and she is not able to hide them from her daughters:

"The Superior and all the sisters should remember, that this work of the Institute has been taken on not for any other reason but for the good of these souls and above all for the spreading of the Divine Glory and not for gaining advantages and protection for the Institute".⁶⁹

Her fears made her appeal and make anxious recommendations: Let them be careful

"... they must be more than vigilant not to lose the great good and merit they may acquire, by working for human ends and means ".⁷⁰

Magdalene is convinced that God does not work where there is human motivation and worldliness. So she urges:

"The Institute begun and sustained always by God alone, needs nothing else to better establish itself than to be stripped more and more of everything that is not God and to lean only on Him. It should flee from everything that might undermine even for a moment the confidence it should have in God alone".⁷¹

Again she insists

"... be vigilant, I repeat ... because, of all the works of charity embraced by the Institute, this is the one that can be blinded and attracted by human appearances...⁷²

Magdalene does not want to hear of earthly reward. She aspires to and waits only for that from heaven. She desires the same for her daughters. Spiritual service, she warns, should not expect to be given any other reward:

"Let the sisters remember that in this work too they must expect reward only from the Lord . . . they are forbidden to desire the least thing either in money or in any form from this holy work".⁷³

⁶⁸ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 28 February 1833, Ep. III/5, p. 3312

⁶⁹ M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1a, p. 256.

⁷⁰ M.d.C., unablidsJed rules, p. 1a, p. 223.

⁷¹ *ibid*, p. 205.

⁷² *ibid*, p. 223.

⁷³ *ibid*.

CHAPTER 5

NUMBER OF THE RETREATANTS

NUMBER OF RETREATANTS

The number of participants in the Spiritual Exercises can be learnt better from the correspondence of the Foundress, who was solicitous in communicating to her daughters whatever she did for the glory of God and the good of souls than from the chronicles of the first Communities, who paid more attention to living than to handing down facts to history.

Magdalene was more interested in the quality of the individual and her spiritual progress than the number of the retreatants. In fact she writes from Venice to the Superior of Milan.

" . . . although it was such an unpleasant season, the number of the participants was about twenty-five, among whom were some of the highest nobility, including a few young married ladies".¹

And from Venice, to the Superior of the Community of Bergamo:

" . . . on Sunday we concluded the Exercises. But six ladies remained with us the whole day as they did not wish to leave before evening. This time we started with nineteen and concluded with more than thirty participants"²

From Milan she asks prayers for the good of the Exercises for the Ladies:

"Tuesday after lunch, God willing, we will begin the holy Exercises here for these good ladies. However, again only a few will remain the whole day and stay overnight. Up to now it seems that there will be only six or eight at the most. There will be several, about 18 who remain for the whole day besides those who will be attending only the meditations. I ask you for your prayers for these Exercises and for those of Bergamo which will take place later, as I think I have already written, so that the Lord may bless them abundantly".³

The excellence of this work is such that Magdalene is ready for any fatigue and to make any journey even for a single person. From Bergamo she writes:

"As you know, I have come here for the holy Exercises for the merchants, but as the Lady who proposed it is seriously ill, the devil is trying his very best to prevent them. On my part I feel that we should hold them even for only one person ".⁴

¹ M.d.C. to Bernardi, 16 December 1820, Ep. III/1, p. 398.

² M.d.C. to Dabala, 8 June 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 868.

³ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 16 July 1825, Ep. III/2, p. 1162.

⁴ M.d.C., to Terragnoli. 8 April 1826, Ep. III/2, p. 1353.

Next year she writes thus to the same Superior of the Community of Venice:

*"I confirm, my dear daughter, the good news given by our Teresa, the Superior of Milan. The number of the Ladies who came for the holy Exercises was about sixty, and by the grace of God everything went off well. Later I will tell you everything in person. The Lord and our dear Mother Mary, deigned to hear the prayers of all the sisters and yours".*⁵

And the same year Magdalene writes to the Superior of Verona:

*"The Spiritual Exercises are proceeding well, my health and that of all the sisters is all right except that we are a bit tired. Today we had eight Ladies for lunch. They are resting now, but at any moment they will be calling us. To-morrow, I think, there will be ten of them. I need your prayers for many things".*⁶

At Bergamo the number of the Ladies who frequent the Spiritual Exercises is always on the increase, so much so that in a letter to the Superior of Verona, she writes:

*"Those who come for the Spiritual Exercises are more than a hundred and to write this letter, I have had to do in bits, at the time of the preaching but always interrupted as I have to think of everything".*⁷

And at the conclusion of the same Exercises, she informs the Superior of Venice, with great satisfaction:

*"I am writing you just two lines, my dear daughter, so that you may not be worried about my silence, but today I cannot write much, as we finish the Spiritual Exercises at Bergamo on Monday morning. 150 people participated this time. You can easily imagine how busy we are".*⁸

The social environment of Milan, where she arrived for another course of Exercises was quite different from that of Bergamo. She writes thus humorously:

*"Today I had a good laugh. Seeing the differences between preparations at Milan and those at Bergamo ... up to now we knew of nineteen ladies who will remain the whole day and nine people who will be sleeping in the Convent. We have never had so many sleeping in the Convent. Three of them are coming from Bergamo and one from Como".*⁹

Also in Milan the number of participants is on the increase:

*"This year the gathering is much bigger than in other years. Soon I will be forced not to accept any more Ladies for lunch because we have accommodation for only twenty five and I already have twenty for certain and three or four doubtful. Besides these there are all those who come for the functions. I only beg for your prayers".*¹⁰

⁵ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 18 April 1827, Ep.III/3, p 1642

⁶ M.d.C., to Bragato, 30 May 1827, Ep.III/3, p. 1661

⁷ M.d.C., to Bragato, 5 March 1828, Ep.III/3, p. 1858.

⁸ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 8 March 1828, Ep.III/3, p. 1859.

⁹ M.d.C., to Bragato, 15 March 1828, Ep.III/3, p. 1866.

¹⁰ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 19 March 1828, Ep.III/3, p. 1870

The apostolic work is strenuous and Magdalene's delicate health is affected by it:

"I find myself only a little tired, as the number of retreatants at Milan is rather large. Every day at lunch we have twenty six or twenty seven and to-day I think there will be a few more".¹¹

The year 1830 is particularly busy with journeys and frequent courses.

From Milan she writes to Bragato:

"In a great hurry I embrace you, as to-day, being the first day we have twenty five Ladies who will be staying here the whole day and for lunch"¹²

To the same person from Venice:

*"You can imagine how I have to steal a few moments here and there, as I have the Ladies these days. To-day, as far as I know, we have **eleven for lunch**".¹³*

The Foundress excuses herself with Margaret Rosmini for the delay in replying to her letter:

"Yesterday evening, thanks be to God, we concluded the holy Exercises for the Ladies. This time they were more numerous than usual. This is the first free moment I have. Believe me that during the Exercises, specially: when several of them remain for the whole day, besides those who are also sleeping here, one's head is in spin".¹⁴

¹¹ M.d.C., to Bragato, 26 March 1828, Ep.III/3, p.1880.

¹² M.d.C., to Bragato, 27 March 1830, Ep.III/3; p. 2330.

¹³ M.d.C., to Bragato, 26 May 1830, Ep.III/3, p. 2397.

¹⁴ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 2 June 1830, Ep. III/3 p 2402.

6 . TIME AND DURATION OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

TIME AND DURATION OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

While the three works of the Daughters of Charity: evangelization, integral promotion of the person and assistance to the suffering,¹ are for Magdalene "*permanent and continuous*,"² the activity of the Spiritual Exercises constitutes an intermittent work and always conditioned by the number and possibilities of the sisters.³

The Spiritual Exercises will be held

"... *twice a year* ,, ⁴

but without

"... *fixing an exact time, as it depends on the custom of the various places*". ⁵

But "*once the details are known and experience come by ... a time should be fixed which the Superior will not allow to be altered* ,, ⁶

In principle, "*the time most suitable would be from Friday after the Ascension to Saturday, the vigil of Pentecost and from 14th September, Exaltation of the Holy Cross, for ten consecutive days*". ⁷

The Ladies, according to the opportunities offered by their families can remain day and night in the house or stay only during the day⁸ "*but they should be free before the Angelus in order to avoid abuses during the course of time*".⁹

The "*Plans*" written over a period of little more

The "*Plans*" written over a period of little more than ten years, repeat, without much variation, the same criteria of time and duration.

In the general Plan B.8-8 we read:

The Daughters of Charity

"... *receive in their house, at two different times of the year, the ladies who desire to make the Spiritual Exercises* .. "¹⁰

In the Plan B. 10-9 the duration of each course is added:

¹ cf. M.d.C., Ep. II72, p. 1437; R. .V. pp. 51-52.

² M.d.C., Regole 1828, ms., A3, VII, p. 4, A..R.

³ cf. M.d.C., Ep. II72, p. 1425

⁴ M.d.C., R.s.s., P. Ia, p. 255

⁵ Ibid. p. 256.

⁶ Ibid. n. 113

⁷ 7 cf. M.d.C., R.s.s., P. Ia, 256.

⁸ cf. Ibid. p. 255.

⁹ Ibid., p. 266, n. 137.

¹⁰ M.d.C., Ep. II/2, p. 1425.

" . . . twice a year, for a period of ten consecutive days, they will receive in the houses of the Institute, these Ladies who desire to make the Spiritual Exercises... ".¹¹

In the Plan B. 15 a-13 the initiative is extended to include all categories of people whom the Daughters of Charity meet in their apostolate:

"... twice a year at fixed times they will receive in the houses of the Institute ... for a period of ten consecutive days the Ladies who wish it . . .

So also at other times of the year, they will receive the poor young girls, who frequent the houses of the Institute, to make the Spiritual Exercises".¹²

In the first years of her experience, Magdalene fixed the Exercises at different times and easily changed if the circumstances required it.

Magdalene writes to the Superior of Milan:

"By the end of June I must return to Venice as we have fixed the retreat for the Ladies on July 1st, I am sorry for the season, but it had to be".¹³

But this date was changed and Magdalene wrote from Verona to the lawyer Gavazzeni with whom she was working for the foundation of the house in Bergamo reassuring him that the Spiritual Exercises

". . . will not delay the foundation at Bergamo; I will hold them now, while waiting for the papers, to arrive from Milan and Bergamo".¹⁴

She writes:

"I return to Venice, where the Ladies will start the Spiritual Exercises on 12th of July and end them on 21st. As this is the first time that the Institute has embraced apostolic work, I recommend the good result of it to your prayers and to those of Don Luigi".¹⁵

Over the years Magdalene tried to fix the Spiritual Exercises at a precise time of the year:

"I should tell you that our Exercises¹⁶ were blessed by the Lord in a very special way. The Ladies were very much contented and they decided to hold them every year during the novena of Pentecost. May the Lord help them to carry it out".¹⁶

In a letter addressed to Terragnoli Magdalene explains the reason for the choice of such a period:

"The Ladies of Venice desire to do the Spiritual Exercises during the novena of Pentecost. If I go to Milan it is not possible for me to be there with them. So I tried to see if the Ladies would agree to anticipate it, but I feel that our dear Lady Priuli is right in saying not to change the

¹¹ Ibid., p. 1430.

¹² M.d.C., Ep. II/2, p. 1438.

¹³ M.d.C., to Bernardi, 7 May 1820, Ep. III/1, p. 361.

¹⁴ M.d.C., a Z. Gavazzeni, 21 June 1820, Ep.II/1, p.400.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ At Venice.

*fixed time, so that this holy work may be well established. Also to have it a few weeks after Easter, would be too close to those of the Lenten season".*¹⁷

Also to the Parish Priest of San Giorgio in Milan she writes:

*"I have been with the Ladies of Venice during the novena of Pentecost; since last year they desire to make the Spiritual Exercises at this season. By fixing it at this time they hope to have a fruitful devotion every year at this liturgical season".*¹⁸

Also to the Parish priest of San biorglo m Mllan she writes:

*"I have been with the Ladies of Venice during the novena of Pentecost; since last year they desire to make the Spiritual Exercises at this season. By fixing it at this time they hope to have a fruitful devotion every year at this liturgical season".*¹⁹

And in the following years during the novena of Pentecost Magdalene would punctually be there in Venice:

*"... I go to Venice. As you know I have business on the way. The rest will be in that city, not the least of which are the Spiritual Exercises of the Ladies which are already fixed and will start on the first day of the novena of Pentecost. This time they have engaged that holy and elderly man, Coletti".*²⁰

The Ladies of Venice do not want to make the Spiritual Exercises, without Magdalene. She writes to Msgr. Sardagna:

*". . . I am compelled to stop here for the feast of Pentecost as the Exercises of the Ladies conclude on the day. These Ladies refuse to listen to my excuses and refuse to make the retreat without having me again".*²¹

At Milan initially, the suitable time seemed to be the middle of July:

*"... if nothing contrary to me happens, I will return to Milan for the Exercises of the Ladies which are fixed during the novena of St. Anne"*²²

After reaching Bergamo Magdalene informs Cardinal Zurla:

*". . . I arrived here only last evening from Milan where I had to go again to help those good Ladies who make their spiritual Exercises for the first time in our house, which concluded on Tuesday the feast of St. Anne".*²³

¹⁷ M.d.C. to Rosmini, 9 July 1823, Ep. III/1, p. 647.

¹⁸ M.d.C. to Terragnoli, 3. April 1824, Ep. III/2, p.837.

¹⁹ M.d.C., to Don Burocco, 18 April 1824, Ep. II/1, p. 303.

²⁰ M.d.C., to Dabala, 29 April 1825, Ep. III/2, p. 1108. 2122

²¹ M.d.C., to Mgr. Sardagna, 6 May 1828, Ep. II/1, p. 514.

²² M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 29 June 1825, Ep. III/2, p. 1152.

²³ M.d.C., to Card. Zurla, 30 July 1825, Ep .II/1, p. 596.

Perhaps the excessive heat of July made the Ladies of Milan decide later on to shift the date of the Exercises to the time of Lent:

*"I think your intention is that I should come to Milan during Lent, to be with the Ladies who have decided to have their Spiritual Exercises at that time. It seems to me that the time to start the Exercises would be the third week of Lent so as to finish them on Friday of Passion week ... I remind you ... that I have to leave soon as I have the Exercises of the Ladies at Venice. Following the same system! we will have the Exercises at Bergamo too, during Lent".*²⁴

In 1829 it was already the custom to have the Spiritual Exercises during Passion week:

*"The holy Exercises have begun in Milan; today we had twenty persons for lunch. In the coming days, I think the number will increase. God willing, on Friday we will conclude them. In eight days time, if nothing extraordinary happens, I will write and let you know the day I will be at Bergamo".*²⁵

After finishing the course of Retreat at Milan, she communicates her availability for that of Venice:

*"Yesterday these good Ladies terminated their holy Exercises to their complete satisfaction. Let us thank the Lord for His many mercies. With regard to my coming in time for the Spiritual Exercises of the good Ladies of Venice, believe me, my dear daughter, I will do everything possible to expedite my affairs in order to be there, to please you. I hope to be able to come"*²⁶

At Trent the spiritual Exercises are programmed for the first time in 1830. Magdalene writes thus to Don Burocco:

*"When I was at Trent this October, I arranged with some of the more zealous Priests of the city to start the Spirituyal Exercises for the Ladies there. This year you will surely know the needs of that city, without my having to mention them. As they do not hold Spiritual Exercises even in the Church, we hope some good will come out of it. Whatever fruit is obtained will help the city and the diocese".*²⁷

And she continues in the same letter:

*". . . the time to start the above mentioned Exercises would be within the octave of Easter, but Monsignor says that it is better not to hold them if I do not go there".*²⁸

The Exercises were held regularly every year from 1830 on various dates, due to the difficulty of finding the preachers at appointed dates:

"I hear with great pleasure that Signor Don Giovanni Palazzi has reached Trent safely ... He did not make his entry into his Parish before, as he wanted first to fulfil his commitment to Trent. For this reason, if the Ladies wish to make the Spiritual Exercises, it is better that they do so during Holy week because on Tuesday after Easter he has to leave for Venice . . . If they do

²⁴ M.d.C., to Don Burocco, 17 December 1825, Ep. II/1, p. 330.

²⁵ M.d.C., to Bragato, 4 April 1829, Ep. III/3, p. 2113.

²⁶ M.d.C., to Terragnoli, 11 April 1829, Ep. III/3, p. 2118.

²⁷ M.d.C., to Don Burocco, 7 February 1830, Ep. II/1, p. 344.

²⁸ Ibid.

not make their retreat during the Holy week, I am afraid they may not succeed in making it at all this year. We would have to look for preachers, incurring expenses for the journey which I feel would be too much for the ladies to bear".²⁹

The Foundress was concerned about the spiritual life of her daughters and the regularity of Community life, so she restrained the indiscriminate zeal of the Superior of Trent, who wished to satisfy the demands of persons wishing to make individual Spiritual Exercises during the year:

"To receive persons who desire to do their Spiritual Exercises individually during the year is not according to our custom".³⁰

Two years later, Magdalene again gives the reasons for her refusal, to the Superior who brought this matter up again:

"With regard to your question as to whether you could receive persons desiring to make their Spiritual Exercises during the Year. no,

"With regard to your question as to whether you could receive persons desiring to make their Spiritual Exercises during the year, no, my dear daughter, ~ve cannot and the reason is this. Our Institute is already rather extended in its branches that without a rather large number of members we cannot satisfy everyone. If we assisted, as well as the major work, in the long run it would be rather difficult for us to keep to our regular observances, apart from other disadvantages, of which I will speak personally"³¹

At Verona the Exercises were held for the women and girls of St. Zeno:

". . . we had the women and the girls of St. Zeno make the Spiritual Exercises and let us hope that by the grace of God much fruit will be gained. You can imagine how busy we were."³²

Spiritual Exercises were also conducted for the Ladies of Venice regularly from the year 1831. In 1834 Magdalene writes to the Superior of Trent:

"Thanks to God, my health is satisfactory in spite of fatigue due to the Ladies' Exercises, which ended happily this morning".³³

In 1835, six days before her death, Magdalene wrote to the Superior of Bergamo:

"The Exercises of the Ladies keep me engaged more than my strength permits. When the retreat is over, I hope with a little rest, to be able to recover".³⁴

Instead Christ, whom she had made known to and loved by a multitude of persons here on earth, was waiting to receive her.

²⁹ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 10 March 1832, Ep.III/4, p. 3039.

³⁰ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 11 January 1830, Ep.III/3, p. 2263.

³¹ M.d. C., to Rosmini, 28 August 1832 Ep.III/4 p 3185.

³² M.d.C., to Francesconi, 16 December 1829 Ep. III/5, p.4130.

³³ M.d.C., to Bragato, 20 March 1834 Ep. III/5, p. 3592.

³⁴ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 4 April 1835 Ep. III/5, p 3881.

7. PLACE AND ENVIRONMENT

PLACE AND ENVIRONMENT

Magdalene requested that the Spiritual Exercises be conducted in a nearly austere climate.

The surroundings should be such as to invite the Retreatant to an attentive listening to the word of God and a profound communion with the Lord in order to transform her life.

The sisters who are not suitable for directly assisting the Ladies will refrain from contacting them. The Exercises will be conducted:

" . . . in the house of the Institute, in a place completely separated from the Community. The Sisters should neither converse with the Ladies, nor interfere".¹

In order to preserve the climate of recollection and prayer during the Spiritual Exercises, the Ladies should not be disturbed by outsiders.

"No one should be permitted to enter the quarters of the Ladies during the Exercises, neither their friends nor acquaintances, nor even priests".²

"If any one needs to speak to them there should be a place set aside for that sole purpose on the ground floor, if possible".³

These precise norms have the two-fold aim of maintaining the climate of recollection which is indispensable for a personal encounter with God and for making it possible for the Community to carry on its usual apostolic activity:

"In order not to interrupt their recollection and also because the Sisters cannot see to everything, it is forbidden for the Ladies to invite, even for spiritual motives, any of their friends or any other person, to dine or to have a cup of coffee with them".⁴

Also in the Plans Magdalene codifies and insists in giving norms regarding the locality and the surroundings that mark the period of retreat

"... we receive in our houses those Ladies or women who desire it"⁵

" . . . in a place separate from the Community".⁶

¹ M.d.C., R.s.s., P.la, pp. 255-256

² Ibid. p. 265.

³ M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1;1, p. 265.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ M.d.C., Piano B. 8-8, Ep. II72, p. 1427.

⁶ M.d.C., Plan B. 8-8, Ep. II72, p. 1425.

The topic of the Spiritual Exercises is very frequent in her correspondence and one can notice her preoccupation with preparing, in every house where these are conducted, a climate conducive to spiritual distension.

"My daughter, I beg you to say some extra prayer for here⁷ we begin the Spiritual Exercises of the Ladies, but I am faced with great difficulties hence the need for prayer and likewise for Venice".⁸

When she invites persons of consequence, Magdalene is prepared to put at their disposal all that she has in the Convent of St. Joseph, even her own "apartment," that is to say her humble cell. She writes to her niece, Countess Anna Nuvoloni:

"You will easily guess my purpose in writing to you. It is to inform you that here at St. Joseph's, we are going to begin the Spiritual Exercises for the Ladies, already started in the other houses of our Institute some years ago as it is one of the branches of our work. This will serve as a novena for the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, our dear Mother, to whom I am sure you are devoted, as was your good mother⁹.

... Tuesday evening, at four o'clock, there is the introduction and the following morning at 10 there is the meditation, then Holy Mass and the instruction is at 3.30 and a little before the Angelus it will be over. If you wish to stay overnight you may do so as arrangements have been made for those who desire it, but to you I will give my own apartment, much smaller than yours, I know. You will find it very, very simple as I know that you have many beautiful things. You can also tell your friends who may wish to take advantage of it".¹⁰

And to another niece:

"... my dear Isotta, on Tuesday afternoon, for the first time here, ¹¹ we are beginning the Spiritual Exercises for the Ladies. Although I know that you will find it difficult to take advantage of this opportunity, due to your various occupations, I thought to inform you about it. If you can manage to come, the Convent is all yours—my cell, my bed and I will remain under it to keep you company...Those Ladies wishing to remain overnight may do so. Those who wish only to attend the services can do that too. I am enclosing a copy of the time-table. If you could come for even a few times, you cannot imagine the pleasure it would give me to see you".¹²

The example of the Mother stimulates her daughters to sacrifice themselves in order to make room for the guests.

To the Superior of Bergamo she tranquilly writes:

"I hear that for the Exercises you have a good number, but it is not opportune for you all to sleep in the loft. I mean, you could sleep three or four of you in the two large rooms, that of Sr. Costanza and the one the teachers use—almost the whole Community could be accommodated there"¹³

⁷ Bergamo

⁸ M.d.C., to Dabalà, 22 January 1822, Ep. III/1, p. 477.

⁹ Laura Canossa

¹⁰ M.d.C., ad Anna Nuvoloni, 27 November 1831, Ep. I, pp. 582-3.

¹¹ Verona.

¹² M. .C., to Isotta Orti, 27 November 1831, Ep. 1, pp. 579-580.

¹³ M. .C., to Faccioli, 15 gi no 1831, Ep. I/4, pp. 2811-2812.

And at the end of one of the courses of Spiritual Exercises she writes to the Superior of Verona:

"Thanks be to the Lord, yesterday we concluded the Holy Exercises¹⁴ to everyone's satisfaction and I attribute this grace to the prayers made by you too. The communicants, I think, were more than two hundred. Yesterday morning, at the last function, the Director of the Exercises thought of taking the Crucifix to the choir to be kissed, as there was no place to move in the school room where we had it last time. While they were kissing the Crucifix, we sang the ' Te Deum '. But the crowd was such, that the preacher suggested opening the door of the choir and letting them go out through the Church; the best part was that they were going out from the church and entering the convent, so much so, we had to tell Deodata not to allow them to enter. Everyone, thanks to God, were very much satisfied and this morning some of them come to ask when we would be having it again".¹⁵

¹⁴ A Bergamo.

¹⁵ M.d.C., to Bragato, 12 March 1828, Ep. III/3, pp. 1861-1862.

8. BOARD AND LODGING

BOARD AND LODGING

Magdalene who was very well acquainted with the administration of her complex household, gave precise indications as to what her daughters should prepare for the ladies who would be attending the Spiritual Exercises.

1. At breakfast:

"Coffee or chocolate as desired".¹

At lunch:

"... Soup, boiled meat, a simple fried dish and another dish like wed me and no~hi else"²

At supper:

". . . soup, boiled meat, another dish excluding beef except what is left over from lunch time, but presented in a different way; cooked vegetable or fruits".³

Magdalene insists:

"neither change the number of dishes nor the way of presenting them. They should vary only as far as the quality is concerned, so that we do not neglect to follow the simple life style which is ours".⁴

"The Superior should present these directions to the Ladies when they come to enroll themselves and should never come to terms in order to please them, rather let those unable to adapt themselves refrain from joining the Exercises".⁵

From her letters we realize how far-sighted was our Mother in procuring the provisions needed for the Courses. Magdalene writes from Bergamo to the Superior of Verona, Angela Bragato who was about to leave for Trent, in order to direct the Spiritual Exercises for the Ladies:

"As agreed upon, Michael will do the favour of accompanying you. I have asked him to buy a box of coffee and roast and grind it. Saturday or better Monday buy six chickens which could be killed and dressed on Tuesday night so that; they keep as fresh as possible, and whoever goes to Trent takes them along. Prepare some spices, cloves raisins, pine-seeds, almonds, since in that town you will not find anything of the kind. It would be better, in order to help the Sisters, to prepare the bill since the Ladies will be taking care of the expenses I forgot to add some rice to the list of provisions and any other necessary items you can think of, add them as well. If I do

¹ M.d.C., R.s.s., p. 264.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ M. C., R. s.s., P. la, pp. 264-265.

⁵ Ibid. p. 265.

not manage to come with the coach on Saturday I may give you or Giuseppina⁶, other detailed suggestions ".⁷

To the same (Angela Bragato) Magdalene two days later suggests what could be told Rosa Dabalà, the Vice Superior of the house where Margherita Rosmini is the Superior:

"Tell her from me, privately, that Rosmini tends to be too economical. I do not say to squander, but on these occasions we should not be too exacting. Let her use our own provisions rather than spoil the Spiritual Exercises of the Ladies".⁸

To the Superior of Trent Magdalene gives precise indications regarding the possible way to welcome the Ladies according to the system used in Venice as well.

"At supper, in Venice, we serve the Ladies with soup, boiled meat which can be young pigeons or veal and another dish. For example, if at lunch time they were served with roast veal, in the evening this will be presented cold and finely sliced, croquettes, and then something with fruit. Just one kind, you understand, or a cooked vegetable such as asparagus, and I try to vary the dishes every day".⁹

Magdalene gives instructions down to the minutest detail; she even suggests how to prepare the chicken-feed for the poultry which will be served to the Ladies:

"We have agreed that I shall bring with me all I can of fruits, etc . . . but you must prepare the kitchen stoves¹⁰ as I suggested or else you will consume too much fire-wood without perhaps succeeding in cooking in winter. I will teach you the system used in Verona as I shall be bringing some Sisters from Verona with me in order to help in the kitchen. Besides this, I advise you to have some chicken in the hen-house and to feed them with the proper feed. Please remind Mincolina to boil the feed well (provided it is not grain) and to let it cool off before giving it to the hens to eat...".¹¹

When the Superior of Bergamo raised the possibility of serving the Ladies at two different tables, Magdalene was against the idea and gave her reasons:

"With regard to the two separate tables, I have two objections: First I would not wish to burden the Sisters too much, above all the cook, since two tables means two readings, two recreations, two servings, and aside from the fact I do not like the idea. Such an arrangement might cause some problems. The second reason, my dear daughter, during my last journey, I happened to meet a middle class person, who spoke to me and said that she had been to a certain monastery for a Retreat, where the Princesses dined separately. It seemed that those who belonged to the middle class were served with inferior and insufficient food. Anyway, I did not like such a discrimination and I understood the consequences. For this reason I suggest that you accept fewer persons and of the same social status. Let the Lady who is responsible for the group be the same who accepts them, as I do in MiInn, telling the Lady who, I think, will be Mrs. Salvi, the names of those who apply. In agreement with the others, she chooses whom to admit, and they can eat with those whom they have chosen".¹²

⁶ Rosmini.

⁷ M.d.C. to Bragato, 7 April 1830, Ep.III/3, p. 2342

⁸ M.d.C., to Bragato, 9 April 1830, Ep.III/3, p. 2344.

⁹ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 9 April 1830, Ep.III/3, p. 2350.

¹⁰ 'stoves'.

¹¹ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 18 March 1831, Ep. III/4, p. 2746.

¹² M.d.C., to Faccioli, 5 March 1829, Ep. III/3, pp. 2099-2100.

When the Superior replies by return to her letter with reference to this problem, Magdalene answers in these terms:

"Regarding the two tables, since it is not possible for you to change the arrangement as it has already been fixed and since it does not cause the trouble I thought it would, carry on for this year as you have already agreed upon".¹³

2. Even if it is possible to comply with the needs of catering with temporary help from Sisters of other Communities, it is not always so easy to furnish the Ladies with everything that is required for sleeping facilities and the necessary bed linen.

The Daughters of Charity observe the rule of Poverty and have only what is sufficient for their needs.

Magdalene resolves this problem in the following way:

"... if the Ladies would prefer to remain in the Convent overnight, let them supply their own beds, linen and blankets, etc..."¹⁴

and she adds:

"neither the table linen nor cutlery nor the plain furnishings of the Daughters of Charity are suitable for these Ladies".¹⁵

"The Superior, however, for this particular use should provide a set of plain white earthenware, solid and clean... simple glassware, neither coloured nor gilded, and all conforming to the Rule of Poverty".¹⁶

Such sets:

"should be locked up and used only on such occasions and should be put away again as soon as the Exercises are over".¹⁷

Magdalene writes:

". . . the use of British earthenware, or especially porcelain or similar objects even though they might be given as gifts for the purpose, is to be excluded nor should they be kept in our houses".¹⁸

The poverty professed by the Daughters of Charity *"should stand out"* even in the Ladies' eyes.¹⁹ The furniture too, must be clean but conforming to the requirements of poverty:

"Let the Ladies' tables and other things be clean and tidy, but not luxurious as it is the case in Milan".²⁰

¹³ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 11 March 1829, Ep. III/3, p. 2101.

¹⁴ M.d.C., R.s.s., P. Ia, p. 263.

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Mdc. .R.s.s., P. ap. 263.

¹⁹ cf. Ibid. p. 55.

²⁰ M.d. ., to Faccioli, 10 July 1829, Ep. III/3, p. 2157

To the Superior of Trent Magdalene writes:

*"As for the beds, I should say we ought to have a gold-mine near our garden to be able to buy what seems necessary. I know that it would be very comfortable for our Ladies to have the beds provided, but I understand that to meet such expenses is beyond our means. Also in Milan the expenses were shouldered by the Ladies themselves. Since Trent is not Milan, let us not talk about it further. Let the Ladies each pay a porter to carry their beds for them. Another year you can see what would be easier, but for the first year you should adapt as best as you can in order to start the Exercises of these Ladies".*²¹

Next year Magdalene writes:

*"... at this moment I do not remember everything, but, as I wrote earlier, the Ladies will think of the beds if they want to sleep..."*²²

Even if the participants are the daughters of Deputies, Magdalene makes up for the lack of beds by begging them to bring their own beds, if they intend to sleep in our house:

*"Let us talk about your Spiritual Exercises, since time flies. Firstly, I should tell you that Pollini, sister of one of our novices and two of her friends, daughters of a Deputy of Iseo, whose name is Grassi, were asking to come to Bergamo for the Spiritual Exercises. I wrote to Mr. Grassi as I wrote to Pollini . . . if we have the beds..."*²³

Magdalene is only concerned with the welfare of souls and the glory of God. All other difficulties are surmounted and overcome with the ardent charity that burns within her heart.

²¹ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 11 January 1830, Ep.III/3, p. 2263.

²² M.d.C., to Rosmini, 18 March 1831, Ep.III/4, p. 2746

²³ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 16 February 1830, Ep. III/3, p. 2296.

9. ADMINISTRATION

The constant contemplation of the love of Jesus makes Magdalene consider each of her works of charity towards her neighbour, as a gift. In imitation of God, who always works gratuitously, each Daughter of Charity will lend her apostolic services freely and selflessly.

The Institute should not suffer any financial burden for the work of the Spiritual Exercises.

"It is neither possible nor proper that the house, at any time, should bear the burden of the maintenance of the Ladies. Even if there is sufficient subsistence, whatever is surplus belongs to the poor. The Institute does not wish to have the least temporal gain from this holy Exercise".¹

The Foundress solves the economic problem in the following way:

A lady ". . . of their own choice² will purchase all that is required, keeping an exact account of everything and at the end of the retreat, they will share out the expenses among themselves".³

The Superior

"... will keep an exact account of everything and when a new group comes in for the retreat, she will show the accounts of the previous one and suggest they take up the responsibility and manage in the same way".⁴

However

"... if the ladies do not wish to take over the responsibility, the Superior can assume the charge, but when the retreat is over, she will give an exact account of the expenses and will not receive a penny more than what is spent".⁵

Do not utilize:

"... for the Community any surplus food, but distribute it to the poor, in agreement with the Ladies".⁶

"You will make them understand that we propose this not because they are obliged to and since we cannot receive anything, the extra food should not be thrown away".⁷

"If the remainder of the previous day is food that can be used, presenting it in another form, do so in order to spare expenses for the Ladies, but always remaining faithful to our system".⁸

¹ M.d.C., R.s.s., P.la, p. 264.

² As Bursar.

³ M.d.C., R.s.s., P.la, p. 264.

⁴ M. d.C.,R. s..s.P. la, p. 264

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid. p. 265.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Magdalene foresees the cunning of the god 'mammon' and gives her daughters precise instructions.

It is forbidden to all the Sisters to:

"... receive even the smallest thing either in money or in any other form, as a reward, or even as alm ".⁹

If some of the Ladies express the desire to give alms, it is forbidden to the Sister

"... to speak of the needs of the Institute or of the Schools either directly or inclirectly".¹⁰

With regard to the needs of the hospital, let the Sisters encourage the Ladies to pay visit and assist those in need. Explain to them the needs which have been provided for in the past, but *"never speak of the present needs, no matter how great they are".¹¹*

It is also

". . . forbidden to all the Sisters, to request any of these Ladies to render any assistance to their own families".¹²

Replying to the requests of her daughters, Magdalene specifies certain particulars in her correspondence.

To the Superior of Milan she writes:

"... those who remained for lunch and to sleep this first time, were few. When I come to Milan or Bergamo, I will show you the time and the series of meditations, I will give you a detailed account of the reception given to the Ladies and the expenses, as I have noted down everything."¹³

She notifies the Superior of Bergamo that some of the foodstuff will arrive from Verona, as those items are cheaper there.

"I advise you my dear daughter, not to get coffee, chocolate, raisins and almonds for the retreat at Bergamo as you will get cheaper from Rosa".¹⁴

"On my arrival we shall discuss everything. I am sure Signora Salvi¹⁵ comes up to the expectations".¹⁶

"Regarding the expenses, Rosina and Checchina already know what was done last year, i.e. we have followed the system of giving them a good soup and three dishes".¹⁷

⁹ M.d.C., R.s.s., P.la, p. 266

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 261

¹¹ cf. Ibid .

¹² Ivi, p. 262.

¹³ M d C, to Bernardi, 16 December 1820, Ep. III/1, p. 398.

¹⁴ Masina Rosa da Verona. M.d.C., to Faccioli, 29 February 1832, Ep.III/4, p. 3036.

¹⁵ The Lady in charge of the Retreat at Bergamo

¹⁶ M.d C., to Faccioli, 27 March 1828, Ep.III/3, p. 1883.

¹⁷ M.d C., to Faccioli, 5March 1829, Ep.III/3, p. 2100.

Let some special dishes, writes Magdalene, be prepared in agreement with the Lady in charge and the kitchen Sister.

"For the kitchen I feel you should depend fully on Rosina. She can prepare all the necessities until the time of the Exercises and then give an account to the Lady in charge as we did at Milan".¹⁸

To the Superior of Trent she gives certain norms relative to the Exercises given at the same time both to the Ladies and their maids:

"With regard to the maids of the Ladies, in principle there is no objection. If you keep them overnight, naturally you will have a greater burden. The point is whether we will have enough rooms for them. In Milan, the servants who come are present for the meditations given to the Ladies, as the eternal truths are the same for all, but they do not attend the instructions since it is not good for them to hear certain duties of the mistress.

If for economy and for the convenience of the family some Ladies wish to let their servants come in the morning and then return home, I feel we should make arrangements for this too.

Find out what they do at Milan, also because there are not enough of us to attend to everything. We have an excellent widow and one other person.¹⁹ When the Ladies have finished they will each give the Lady who presides, two szvanziche²⁰ and with this, the Lady who is in charge, will recompense the women and the two men, one who always stays with the two preachers and one who helps in the house, doing the marketing and the other odd jobs; the latter is the one who serves us. In this way the tips will not burden anyone, and since there will be many, all those who work will receive an adequate amount".²¹

Writing to Don Carlo Ferrari, Magdalene reveals how her heart is detached from every economic concern and what is the goal that moves her to sustain such a work. She wishes that her daughters should have the same dispositions:

"You know well that we do everything to serve them and that besides seeing them all one day in Heaven, we cannot accept even a grain of coffee, should they wish to give it to us for any reason".²²

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ per aiuto = to help

²⁰ szvanzica = Austrian coin of Lombardy-Veneto valued at about seventy cents .

²¹ M.d.C., to Rosmini, 19 February 1831, Ep.III/4. pp. 2717-271X

²² M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 2a, p. 118.

10.

RAPPORT WITH THE LADIES AFTER THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

RAPPORT WITH THE LADIES AFTER THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

The rapport between the Daughters of Charity and the Ladies who attend the Spiritual Exercises, could be continued, if the Ladies desire it in view of their spiritual good in mind.

*"If these Ladies show inclination or ask to continue coming to the Convent for their spiritual advantage, the Sisters should not object to it, but should allow them to do so with due permission from the Superior".*³⁸³

Magdalene recommends that in such rapports there should be no personal interest:

*"The Sisters should be extremely careful about seeking friendship or becoming attached to persons for any reason, even holy"*³⁸⁴

The should expect reward for this work, only from God:

*"All the Sisters should be vigilant not to lose the great good and the merit they can acquire by working with human motives and means. Let them always keep before their eyes the great scope of their Institute which is to facilitate the means for these Ladies whereby they can procure for themselves a place in the midst of the poor in the Heavenly Kingdom".*³⁸⁵

While practising the works of mercy, writes the Foundress in one of her 'Plans', the Daughters of Charity:

*". . . must always have the primary aim of bringing everyone to the state of perfect love, procuring for them the most intimate, cordial, familiar and continuous union with God, making them work in favour of their neighbours for the sake of God alone".*³⁸⁶

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.C.R. = Archivio Canossiano Roma (Canossian Archives in Rome)

cf. = confronta. (compare with)

Ep. = Epistolario di Maddalena di Canossa (Correspondence of Magdalene of Canossa)

M.d.C. = Maddalena di Canossa (Magdalene of Canossa)

ms./mss. = manoscritto/manoscritti (manuscript/manuscripts)

P. = parte (part)

p./pp. = pagina/ pagine (page/ pages)

R.d. = Regole dell'Istituto delle Figlie della Carita, 1820, testo diffuso, Milan 1978. (The Rules of the Daughters of Charity, 1820, unabridged text, Milan 1978)

R.s.s. = Maddalena di Canossa, Regole e Scritti Spirituali, vol. 2. ed. Pisani, Isola del Liri, 1984-1985

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