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MAGDALENE OF
CANOSSA:
CATECHIST OF
HER TIME

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PRESENTATION

The zeal of our Foundress, St. Magdalene of Canossa to "*Above all, make Jesus known*", is what identifies us in the Church. We carry out our mission of evangelization in communion of faith and life, inspired by Jesus Crucified in His burning Love for His Father and for men.

We devote our energies to educate children, adolescents and youth, promoting the integral growth of their personality, extending, with time, the loving attention of St. Magdalene towards the sick. We involve ourselves in the various forms of evangelization, aware that "*there is no greater act of charity towards our neighbour than that of helping him to love God*".

The present document "*Magdalene of Canossa: Catechist of her time*" is intended to be a precious aid of the Sisters committed to the ministry of Evangelization so that, penetrating the heart of our Foundress, they may make their own her zeal to make Jesus Christ known and loved, and they may be encouraged to find new ways for communicating the Gospel message, in dynamic fidelity to our charism as well as to the demands of contemporary man.

The text, edited by M. Maria Nicolai, draws from the genuine sources of the writings of our Holy Mother compiled by M. Emilia Dossi, and follows the style of direct documentation as with the other volumes in the series.

May St. Magdalene, who was faithful to the gift of the Holy Spirit, courageous and creative in the fulfillment of her vocation, docile to the Magisterium of the Church, overflowing with boundless zeal, bless every Sister committed to the Church's mission of evangelization and help each of us to be rooted in Christ so that the proclamation may be fruitful.

What touches the hearts of people is our '*following Christ*' and the communion of hearts that shines through our proclamation.

Superior General

INTRODUCTION

Magdalene defines the ministry of evangelization as the work which leads itself most towards reaching the charismatic goal of the Institute. She writes, in fact, in the *"The Rules for Christian Doctrines"*:

" there is no greater act of charity than that of working together so that all may love God, and one of the greatest means of making Him loved is that of making Him known" ¹.

The ideal, in fact, which burns in Magdalene is:

"to make Jesus Christ known since He is not loved because He is not known." ²

This book is aimed at offering the Sisters who are involved in the Second Ministry of Charity a means to trace back its origins and to obtain - against its backdrop - the profile of Magdalene the Catechist.

This is achieved through, first of all, an overview of the political and ecclesial situation of her time, with special reference to the Lombard Venetian region and the Institution of the Schools of Christian Doctrine under the pastoral care of the Bishops of the individual Churches.

Against this background, we will then focus our attention on the second Ministry of Charity in Magdalene through an analysis of the sources:

- The Memoirs and the letters, which preserve the original charismatic intuition,
- the Plans of the Institute and
- the Rules for Christian Doctrine.

The author concludes with a look at how this Ministry is carried out in the first communities founded by Magdalene. Besides the general historical literature of the Lombard Venetian region, its churches during this period and the Canossian sources³, a valuable reference is Fr. Modesto Giacon's book⁴, to which we owe various citations.

There follows an appendix containing a sampling of some unpublished Canossian sources which reveal the creativity and the capacity of Magdalene to adapt to her beneficiaries.

¹ M.d. C., Rules for Christian Doctrine, in R.s.s., ed. by E. Dossi, P^A, p.205

² M.d. C. Rules for the Schools, in R.s.s., P.1t, p 80 M.d. C., Epistolario - R. .s, by E. Dossi

³ M.d. C., Epistolario - R. .s, by E. Dossi

⁴ M. Giacon, Magdalene of Canossa: her charitable and educational works, Rome 1974.

CHAPTER 1

Outline of the Politico-Religious Situation of the Lombard-Venetian Region

To be acquainted with the spiritual world in which Magdalene of Canossa moved, one cannot help referring to the political and cultural air the Church was breathing from the end of the 18th Century to the Restoration. They were years of revolutionary movements and reformatory fears, characterized by political and social upheavals, by cultural and religious crisis. When the French Revolution broke out, Magdalene was 15 years old; thus her youth was spent against a background of wars, pestilence and famine. The initial events of the French Revolution made clear the anti-monarchical and anti-religious tendencies of the movement, while the majority of the Italians, loyal to their principles and attached to their religion, became even more, so to speak, anti-revolutionary.

The precipitating of the revolution towards its most sanguine and violent forms identified it with Jacobism, with the overthrowing of every disciplined way of life and of every form of religious and civil common life. The revolution in Italy was, therefore, felt essentially in its negative aspects, and when the French soldiers appeared in the Alps to bring freedom, equality and brotherhood, they encountered a cold and outright hostile environment.¹

Within herself, Magdalene was aware of the drama and the suffering of the poor who were in the greatest number and the most defenseless victims of the new political agitators and the fiery preachers of the revolution against God and against the Church.

In Verona

Even in Verona, at the beginning of the 19th Century, the moral and spiritual picture was a desolate one: corrupt customs, widespread unbelief, faith profoundly shaken, and in some classes, almost completely suffocated. Besides, religious ignorance grew because of the propaganda, of impiety and of incredulity which assumed alarming proportions and which made many believers waver in their beliefs and reduced others to a passive indifferentism.² Pre-occupied with the situation faced by her city, Magdalene thus writes to her Milanese friend, Carolina Durini³, on May 6, 1801:

*"I don't know if it is an evil only of our country or if it is a common evil even in Milan, but the general ignorance on religious matters is frightening."*⁴

Unfortunately, evil and corruption spread everywhere and Magdalene again expresses herself to Carolina:

*"Oh God! My dear Carolina, I was mortified by what you said in your last letter where you described the seductions in Milan, unfortunately known to me already for a while. The evil is spreading almost everywhere, and despite the adherence of the government to religion, I am afraid that the habit will end with robbing us of our Faith. What could we do to prevent such a great evil? I am very much at a loss, my dear, pray for me, pray for everyone."*⁵

Notwithstanding Napoleon having affirmed in the Concordat of 1803 that no suppression of Ecclesiastical Foundations would take place without the authorization of the Apostolic See, a decree was issued on June 6,

¹ cf. F. Moroni. Corso di Storia, Vol 111, p.124

² cf. M. Giaccon, Magdalene of Canossa: her charitable and educational work, Rome 1974, pp. 148 - 149

³ Countess Carolina Durini: born in 1762, whose parents were Ludovico Trotti Bentivoglio and Costanza Castelbarco Visconti. She married Count Carlo Francesco Durini in 1782. She met Magdalene of Canossa for the first time in 1800 at the Hospital of Mercy in Verona. From this encounter, a friendship and a correspondence began which was very important for the growth of the Institute of the Daughters of Charity. She died on June 15, 1840.

⁴ M.d.C. to Durini, 6 May, 1801, Ep.I p.53

⁵ M.d.C. to Durini, 10 January, 1803, Ep.I p.171

1804 on forfeiture to the State of properties belonging to religious orders. Other decrees followed that of June, 22 on the "joining together of the parishes of the 20 main cities of Italy" and that of July 8, on the concentration of religious orders.⁶

In reference to Verona, R. Fasanari thus describes the situation:

*"In 1805 the city alone with a population of 45,000 inhabitants was ecclesiastically divided into 47 parishes, 43 convents, 53 confraternities and 13 oratories. One can say that the religious factor was the common denominator of public and private life and constituted its backbone. Within five years, from 1805 to 1810, the ecclesiastical composition and structures of Verona was destined for an extraordinary upheaval that no one radical action took place through a decree which suppressed all monastic orders, whether they owned property or not. All buildings were taken over by the State while the religious returned to the lay state... In this way, every trace of monastic institution, with their related religious, educational and assistential activities disappeared from public life. Almost contemporary to the monastic suppression was that of the lay associations which were significant to the life of the Church ... imprinting a profoundly Christian seal on every aspect of human life At the time of the Napoleonic suppression in Verona and its surroundings, there were 536 lay associations of a religious character... If the ecclesiastical re-structuring represented a catastrophe for the Catholic Church, it provided Napoleon with a series of incalculable advantages of a different nature. Besides the liberal disposal of enormous landed property, there was also the free use of a copious number of buildings available for the various civil necessities. Of the 47 parish churches, 19 were kept for worship; the other 28 had been suppressed."*⁷

Magdalene of Canossa lived those sorrowful events with particular concern and when the restrictive decisions appeared to touch also the parish of her confessor, Nicola Galvani⁸, she turns to Carolina for help:

"Oh God! My dear friend, what on earth is happening to this poor Verona; the Parishes are restricted and closed, and would to God if this were the end! You wouldn't have dreamt to see such sorrows in this people ...

In the reduction of the number of parishes, that of St. John in Foro where Fr Galvani is the parish priest, was made an auxiliary church in order to be able to exist. At present it seems that they want to suppress it, in order to re-open instead another that was suppressed.

*Fr. Galvani asks you, with my help, to see if it were possible, in his case, to have his reasons listened to before they suppressed it."*⁹

In Venice

In the 15 years, from 1806 to 1821, profound of the Venetian Church. The upheaval within the Church in Venice was essentially the work of the political authorities, and to a great degree, though not exclusively of the Napoleonic regime. What is written about the significance of Napoleon's presence in Italy applies also to the ecclesiastical situation and the patriarchate in Venice:

*"We must not look only at what he did and what he did not do or could have done, but at the impact that his presence and action had on the surrounding world... on the Italy he took over and the Italy he left behind when the Empire collapsed. Years of immense suffering.... which counted as centuries in the life of a people and stirred up a load of energy capable of bringing about a revolution."*¹⁰

⁶ From N. Dalle Vedove, Vita e pensiero di Gaspare Bertoni, agli albori dell'800 Veronese, P.IA, p. 494

⁷ R. Fasanari, *Il filo storico (il rifugio nazionale) - storia della città di Verona, 1966, pp. 41-49*

⁸ He was archpriest of S. Giovanni in Foro, professor and Dean of Moral Theology in the Seminary for 30 years. A very talented and pious priest. He was confessor and spiritus director of Magdalene of Canossa after the death of Don Luigi Libera

⁹ M.d.C. to Durini, 24 April, 1806, Ep.I pp.274-276

¹⁰ C. Zaghi, Napoleone e l'Italia, in Rivista italiana di studi napoleonici, a. VI (1967) n.16, pp. 41s.

"On December 7, 1807, during his visit to the city of Venice, Napoleon declared his desire "to provide for the needs of our good Venice " promulgating a decree in which among multiple concessions and favours, he contemplated the reduction of 69 urban parishes to 40. 16 parishes remained intact. The other, were amalgamated or reduced to subsidiaries or closed.... After two years, the parishes were subjected to a new re-shuffling: they were reduced to 30. The decree of April 25, 1810 finally brought about the general suppression of monasteries and convents. The religious topography of Venice was thus outlined: 30 parishes, 24 branch churches, 14 subsidiary oratories in 1814, there were 142 sacred places subjected to temporary or definitive suppression and on the whole by then destroyed... Still in this perspective is to be pictured the other disturbing fact of Venetian religious life: the suppression of religious associations... when the French arrived in Venoe, there were 339 Sodalities which by themselves possessed about five million ducats equivalent to 20 million francs.

Between 1806 and 1807, even these disappeared. In the initial period, all their goods were forfeited to the Demesne, with a significant exception however: the patrimony specially applied to the parish or subsidiary churches was respected. Then, save for the big school of San Rocco, there followed the general suppression of confraternities, congregations, lay religious societies and companies which did not have public service or instruction as the aim When Austria came back into the Venetian region, it maintained basically the same orientation, at least initially, even though it repealed the Italian decree of April 25, 1810. It reserved the power to declare which ecclesiastical corporations would be established, with which modifications and means."¹¹

A new situation was introduced both in Verona and Venice during this period of Napoleonic domination: the board of church wardens. It was an organism composed of lay people, subjected to the governmental trusteeship that administered the revenue of the sacred buildings and the parish functions. This new institution was not touched by the old government, rather, the board of church wardens was consolidated.

In Milan

Even Milan suffered the burden of the political upheaval. Abbot Baraldi in a biographical note dedicated to Msgr. Pietro Rudoni, secretary of three Archbishops, presents us with a sketch of the capital of Lombardy:

"We remember far too well the calamities of Milan, Italy and Europe: we saw the two phantoms of republics succeeded by the fleeting shadow of the Italian kingdom, a deluge of ecclesiastical laws swallowed the institutions of our most revered ancestors, and aroused the most impetuous passions, the most insatiable cupidity, the most atrocious persecutions. We saw the churches converted into stables and theatres, external worship banished, bishops and parish priests evicted, solemn vows and pacts made a mockery by the wicked, monasteries of religious emptied, the world of apostates filled up."¹²

A new apostolic impetus

After these most sorrowful events of the French Revolution and Napoleonic reign, the Church, through the works of her "finest children", among whom we also find Magdalene of Canossa, rediscovers new vigour and new impetus.

¹¹ B. Bertoli - S. Tramontin, La visita pastorale di Giovanni Ladislao Pyrker nella diocesi di Venezia (1821), Roma 1971 pp. XIV-XXII

¹² V. Michelini, Le amicizie cristiane, Milano, 1977, p.51

"Having been hit in her material interests, in her freedom and often in the life of her priests, the Church was able to give new martyrs and through their witness, to acquire new authority and new prestige in the awareness of people.

*An outstanding improvement was visible in the clergy. Pastoral life and apostolate in its various forms become thus the aim of priestly life. The life of some Religious Orders and Institutes had to begin from scratch; there was also a large number of male and female religious foundations. Certainly there emerged a new awareness and a diverse sensitivity in the pastoral action of the Italian Bishops after the trying experience of the Revolution and the Napoleonic domination. In spite of the principles of legitimism with which the Restoration supported itself both in Italy and in Europe, there were a number of bExho/)-s in the first half of the 19th Century who gave proof of intelligent zeal, adapting new methods to the changed situation with regards to sacramental pastoral care, the people's catechesis and the formation of the priests in facing the new exigencies of religious society."*¹³

Verona in the first half of the 19th Century, can count on a group of generous persons who give rise to a wonderful variety of works directed to providing for the innumerable needs of a suffering and perturbed humanity.

The re-establishment of religious orders, after the fall of Napoleon, signifies the start of a more ample religious restoration. Among them, those dedicated to youth and to some social work were preferred. Institutions are set up with the following aims:

"- to improve the spiritual and corporal assistance towards the poor sick;

- to provide for Christian education of youth;

- to stem the disorders derived from frequent and long wars;

*- to defend, specially the people, from errors and from the ideologies with preaching, missions, spiritual exercises, catechetical instruction given in the form of dialogue with all, and with special categories, increasing the catechetical discussions."*¹⁴

Msgr. Andrea Avogadro¹⁵ and Msgr. Innocenzo Liruti¹⁶ of Verona are very concerned about the formation of priests, in view of a more effective pastoral action. Recent historical research confirms this. Msgr. Avogadro sums up in three programmes the meaning of his pastoral actions: good preaching on the part of priests, better teaching of Christian doctrine, greater participation in the sacraments on the part of the faithful.¹⁷

¹³ cf. J. Leflon, Storia della Chiesa, Vol. XX, 1 e 2, S.A.I.E. p 1100

¹⁴ G. Casetta, Il servo di Dio Don Carlo Steeb, Fondatore dell'Istituto Sorelle della Misericordia di Verona, Poliglotta Vaticana, 1964, p.76

¹⁵ Msgr. G. Andrea Avogadro: born in Venice in 1735. At 18, he entered the Jesuit novitiate in Parma, where he was ordained priest in 1763. After the suppression of the Company of Jesus he stayed in Verona. In 1790 he was personally elected Bishop of Verona by Pope Pius VI. In 1804 he left the diocese to re-enter the Jesuit novitiate in Parma, where he was ordained priest in 1763. After the suppression of the Company of Jesus he stayed in Verona. In 1790 he was personally elected Bishop of Verona by Pope Pius VI. In 1804 he left the diocese to re-enter the Company. He died in Padua in 1815.

¹⁶ Msgr. Innocenzo Liruti: born in Villafrida (Udine). He joined the Benedictines at a very young age. He was professor, prior and honorary abbot in the Abbey of S. Giustina in Padua. In 1807, he was consecrated Bishop in Milan and he took charge of the diocese of Verona on March 20, 1808. He died in 1827

¹⁷ G. Butturini, L'evoluzione della Chiesa Veronese, in Chiesa et spiritualita' nell'Ottocento italiano, Ed. Mazziana, Verona 1971, p.136.

Bishop Liruti adopts *"energetic action to restore and renew the fundamental structures of the diocese, foreseen by the Council of Trent. the seminary, the Vicariates, parishes and in these, catechetical instruction."*¹⁸

Speaking of the foundation of the Institute of the Daughters of Charity by Magdalene of Canossa, Giovita Riva thus writes:

*"The 19th Century highly clamoured for an institution that was active . . . that improve the moral standards of the growing generation; that gave itself to helping the orphans, the fallen and the miserable ... The only Institute which could be established according to the character and the needs of the time, was that which, with the most sincere philosophical attitude would attend to education and serve the country and humanity. This was the only aim of great and pious souls: to be able to put together the dominant systems and social innovations with the many unjustly abhorred and persecuted Religious Professions. And this is precisely the thread which in her wisdom, Magdalene of Canossa would seize from the very hands of the enemies of the cloistered life."*¹⁹

¹⁸ D. Gallio, Introduzione della storia della fondazioni religiose a Verona nel primo Ottocento, in Chiesa e Spiritualita' nell'Ottocento italiano Ed. Mazziana, Verona 1971, p.268

¹⁹ G. Riva, I, 'Istituto delle Figlie della Carita' Canossiane dimostrato nella sua origine, nella sua forma, e nel suo spirito. Crema 1846, pp. 9-10.

CHAPTER 2

The ecclesial context and the Congregation for the "*Schools of Christian Doctrine*"

The Church can boast of a most ancient tradition in the field of Catechesis, which traces back to the apostolic time. She increasingly enriched herself to be able to answer to the needs of the Christian people and the demands of the Magisterium. The greatest preoccupation of the Church in every age has been the transmission of faith. In fact, faithful to the divine mandate: "*Go and teach all peoples...*"¹, she continues her mission of evangelization till the end of time.

The Veronese Church

The history of the Veronese Church, committed to the promotion of catechetical activities at all levels, through the pastoral care of her Bishops, is to be seen in this context. For us, it is of particular interest to follow the development of the Schools of Christian Doctrine, still alive at the time of Magdalene of Canossa.

To understand the role and the development of this Christian institution in the Veronese Church, it is good to trace back to the great Bishop Gian Matteo Giberti². He, in fact, gave a great contribution to the Counter-reformation and to the Council of Trent, organising the catechetical teaching with really adequate methods. Elected Bishop of Verona in 1524, he began his very intense and demanding pastoral work with the aim of helping the revival of religious and moral life. It was just during this time (16th Century) that the "*Schools of Christian Doctrine*" were set up to promote religious instruction, filling the gaps left by the families. These schools brought new life to the various cities of northern Italy and provided a new thrust for the Christian formation of youth. Their origins were different, but they had one common aim: the teaching of the truths of our faith. With them arose the Congregation of Christian Doctrine, which after the initial difficulties, became an organization with its own Rules.

These Rules had been, in the course of time, reviewed, updated and re-printed by different Prelates but they remained unaltered in substance. The "*Constitutions*" of Bishop Giberti, printed in 1542, are the first written official document for the Schools of Christian Doctrine in Verona. In them, the Bishop, recommended the rectors and priests, to watch with loving care over the religious education of children.³ This Pastor, with his authority and zeal, encouraged and promoted the commitment of all. His successors in the episcopate of the Veronese Church not only preserved but enriched the precious heritage entrusted to them.

The very first Rules for the Congregation of Christian Doctrine, articulated in seven parts, were written by Bishop Agostino Valier.⁴ He was the Bishop of Verona from 1565 to 1606 and published them in 1590.⁵ This Regulation is rich in pedagogical principles and offers practical guidelines for their

¹ Mt. 28. 19.

² Msgr. Gian Matteo Giberti: born in Palermo in 1495. In 1515, he was called to Rome by his father to begin his career in the Offices of the apostolic Curia. Pope Clement VII chose him as the Datary of the Roman Church. On August 8, 1524, he was nominated Bishop of Verona. He died at the age of 48, on October 30, 1543.

³ cfr. Msgr. G.M. Giberti, *Constitutiones*, apud Antonium Putelletum Veronae, 1542, p. 27 towards

⁴ Cardinal Agostino Valier (also called Valerio): born in Venice in 1531 of a noble family. He was made Bishop of Verona in 1565. Pope Gregory XIII nominated him cardinal in 1583. He presided over the diocese of Verona for 41 years. He died in Rome in 1606.

⁵ Cardinal Agostino Valier, *Regole per la Congregazione della Dottrina Cristiana*, Girolamo Stampatore, Verona 1590. B.S .V.VR The Rules are divided into seven parts:

1) The general Body of the Congregation showing how all should conduct themselves.

2) The principal Superiors of the Work of Christian Doctrine.

3) The particular offices of the School.

4) Methods and means for the proper organization of the School.

5) The office of the Workers in the Schools of the Children. 6) Rules for the Schools in the countryside.

7) Without title (regarding the Confraternities)

implementation. In the pastoral letter addressed to the brothers and sisters who teach catechism, he expressed himself thus:

*"It is not a small matter to teach Christian Doctrine and to exercise oneself in a holy work of mercy. Brothers, you are imitators of Christ, ministers of God, my co-helpers, teachers of the City of Verona in an important matter, since there is no greater misery than that of not knowing God as Father, and perpetual benefactor, eternal life consisting in the knowledge of God... Since the Rules of Christian Doctrine, the pious and ancient institution of this Catholic City are printed today, I wish to exhort you with this pastoral letter of mine to give your service, beloved brothers and sisters, as is required, observing the said Rules and being duly diligent, bearing up with the troubles which you may face in this most important task, considering that you serve God and that you will not be without reward."*⁶

The Regulations of Cardinal Agostino Valier was re-printed, with some variations, in 1642, by Msgr Marco Giustiniani⁷, Bishop of Verona from 1631 - 1649. During his episcopate, some pious persons in their last will left their property to the Congregation for Christian Doctrine to be used for worship, for assistance to the poor and the spreading of catechetical instruction. Those legacies were also used by the Superiors of the Congregation for awarding the children who distinguished themselves in the general "debates" to encourage the study of catechism. The best girls were also provided with sufficient funds for their dowry. The solemn "debates", organized annually by the Rector, served "as entertainment for the children, for the edification of the people and for giving greater emphasis to the utility and necessity of Christian Doctrine..."⁸

The chosen children prepared themselves conscientiously because they had to respond with ease and promptness to questions on parts of the catechism before the authority and the people gathered in one or another of the churches. These debates were also organised in Magdalene's time, as confirmed by the Marchioness in some of her letters.⁹

On December 25, 18 ent she writes to her friend asking for some information:

*"I need a piece of information, my dearest Carolina ... Could you please tell me if in the setting-up of your Christian Doctrine in Milan there were funds which could be given for the dowry of the girls who frequent the Christian Doctrine, and for little prizes which are given to the same when they answer the questions, if these funds were existing before, if they exist partly or totally even now, if they belong to the pious work of Christian Doctrine or if truly they are administered by the Congregation of Charity."*¹⁰

During his episcopate, Bishop Marco Giustiniani adopted in the diocese the Catechism of Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino¹¹, a text very much used also in the following years.

Even Bishop Gianfranco Barbarigo¹² took to heart the teaching of Christian Doctrine. He re-established this Congregation and reprinted its Rules in 1703. In them is inserted one of his letters which exhorts the

⁶ Card. Agostino Valier, Lettera pastorale, 1590, Arch. Vesc., Verona.

⁷ Msgr. Marco Giustiniani: born in Venice around 1590. He was already Bishop of Ceneda when he was nominated Bishop of Verona in 1631, where he remained until his death in 1649.

⁸ Card. Agostino Valier, Regole, pp. 4243

⁹ M. d. C., to Bemardi, 19 June 1819, Ep. III\1, p.311.

¹⁰ M. d. C., to Durini, 25 December 1810, Ep. I, p. 351.

¹¹ Card. Roberto Bellarmino: born in 1542 in Montepulciano (Siena). He joined the Company of Jesus in 1560 and was ordained priest in 1570. He was made Cardinal in 1595. In 1597, he wrote the "Brief doctrine" and the "Copious declaration of Christian Doctrine" in 1598. He died in 1621.

¹² Msgr. Giovanni Francesco Barbarigo: born in Venice on 29.4.1698 of noble lineage. He was the nephew of St. Gregorio Barbarigo. He began his diplomatic career at the service of Serenissima, then quickly passed on to the ecclesiastical service. In 1698, he was elected premerius of the basilica of St. Mark and in the same year, nominated Bishop of Verona. In 1714, he passed over as Bishop to Brescia. In 1719, he was appointed Cardinal. In 1723, he became Bishop of Padua, where he died in 1730.

nobles to offer their service to the Congregation for Christian Doctrine and invites all catechists to *"break the bread with maternal and intelligible words."*¹³

In the same century, Msgr. Giovanni Bragadino (or Bragadin)¹⁴, another prelate and follower of Giberti, empowered and restored Christian life in the parishes of the dioceses of Verona first, and then in the patriarchate of Venice. He was nominated Bishop of Verona in 1733 and after 25 years, in 1758, was chosen by the Venetian Senate as Patriarch of Venice.

The years of his episcopate are remembered above all for his preaching, his pastoral instruction, and his care for the formation and the sanctification of priests. In 1734, a year after his nomination as Bishop of Verona, in a pastoral letter, he emphasized that *"he has most at heart that all should frequent the Christian Doctrine, which is the first food of the Catholic faith."*¹⁵ He was concerned with adapting the Rules of the Congregation for Doctrine to the new demands of life and society, although he did not succeed in making a radical revision of all the points.

The new reprint¹⁶ was published in 1751. It was divided into 6 parts:

- I. Of the Novitiate and of the acceptance of the confreres and their general duties
2. Of the General Superiors and other officials and ministers of all the Congregation
3. Of the particular offices of the Schools
4. Method of running the schools for Doctrine
5. Of the schools for girls, and of the various offices of people working in them
6. Of the offices necessary in the village Schools.

The articulation shows how the Congregation cared for the organizational aspect. The overall-in-charge is the Bishop who appoints the Rector who in turn is assisted by a Vice-Rector and a spiritual Father. Then four protectors are chosen, two ecclesiastical and two lay persons, the Visitors, the Chancellor and the Treasurer. The criteria for the choice of these persons called to direct are: competence and religious spirit. They, as the major Superiors of the Congregation, sustain and watch over all the Schools of Doctrine spread over the diocese. However, each school, as prescribed in the third part of the Rules, has its own management body made up of: Prior and Sub-prior who see to the proper running of the School. Teachers and Assistant teachers play an important role. With diligence and charity, they commit themselves to teach catechism in their own class. There are also *"Teachers of Lauds"* to whom is entrusted the teaching of singing, the Nurses, the *"Regulators"*, who have the task of preparing the rooms and keeping the discipline till the arrival of the Teachers. The office of the *"fishermen"* is special. With tact and tenderness they must stimulate the boys who are taken up with games to attend the catechism classes. And finally the porters who ring the bell to call the children in. The schools for girls have the same regulations, described in the 5th part of the Rules, but all the offices, with the exception of the *"Porter"*¹⁷, are filled by women. The fourth part of these Rules is very interesting because it expounds the method to follow for the teaching of Christian Doctrine. But we know that *"good regulations"* are not enough to guarantee the communication of the faith.

Bishop Giovanni Bragadino, a Pastor particularly attentive to the catechetical teaching, writes:

"The Bishop, having discovered in the usual visits he makes every Sunday to the Schools of Christian Doctrine, how the children are drawing little benefit by just learning catechism by heart, without even the least explanation and without the attention on the part of the teachers to see if the children understood what they recited, has, through his zeal, fruitfully introduced the use of questions, which he himself, from class to class, in person, goes about doing. From this the

¹³ Msgr. G. F. Barbarigo, Lettera pastorale, 1703, in Regole per la Congregazione della Dottrina cristiana, Merlo, Verona 1703, B.S.V.VR.

¹⁴ Msgr. Giovanni Bragadino: born in Venice in 1699. He was ordained priest in 1726. He became Bishop of Verona in 1733. In 1758, the Venetian Senate chose him as Patriarch of Venice, where he died in 1775.

¹⁵ Msgr. G. Bragadino, Circular 16.4.1734, Bishop's Archives, Verona.

¹⁶ Bragadino Mons. G., Regole per la Congregazione della Dottrina Cristiana nella città e diocesi di Verona, Stamperia Vescovile del Seminario, Verona 1751, pp. 73-76, B.S.V.VR

¹⁷ Bragadino Mons. G., Regole, P.2A, pp. 3 -23; P. 3^a, pp. 25-37, P. SA pp. 52-

*children have drawn great benefit. Therefore, he orders that ... there be priests or intelligent persons appointed ... to question the children on the things previously learnt by heart, making them tell in their own words and explaining to them if they have not understood."*¹⁸

A serious problem emerged, the catechists were not always in a position to adequately transmit the truths of the faith. Writing on *"the lay Schools of Christian Doctrine"*, Domenico Gottardi emphasizes their lack of preparation:

*"... explaining Doctrine. ... is a task beyond the capacity of the teachers, most of them uneducated and can hardly read... therefore, there is a greater need to have for this same task, honest and civil persons gifted with a sufficient education and capacity required to be able... to explain to the children what they have learnt by heart and to break to them that break which otherwise would be useless for their spiritual nourishment."*¹⁹

In 1782, a very important diocesan synod was held in Verona. It was Bishop Giovanni Morosini²⁰ who wanted it. During his episcopate, he showed a great concern in order that all could indistinctly profit from religious instruction. He also expressed his satisfaction for the good running which he generally found in the Schools of catechism. He introduced a new and qualifying element in his pastoral activity: religious instruction within the Christian communities. Though the Schools of Christian Doctrine were open to children and adults, part of the population for various reasons could not attend them. In this way, the possibility to draw from the gift of truth was open to all. The parish priests were invited to solicit the masters to allow their servants to attend religious instruction.²¹ This initiative of catechesis for servants will also be promoted by Magdalene and she will lend herself to instruct the maids who cannot go to Church.

She writes in her *Memoirs*;

*".... she (Magdalene) felt moved to instruct the neighbour cwn(lJvr l) , we n lo lecl doctrine every Sunday and to explain it to the maid she could not send to Church."*²²

Bishop Morosini has gone down in history as a prelate who was too respectful of the wishes of the Austrian Emperor, Giuseppe II. In fact, some diocesan initiatives, because of the Emperor's wish, seemed to have been curtailed, but not so the Congregation of Christian Doctrine. This is confirmed by Domenico Gottardi in his book written in Bishop Morosini's time:

*"... this very pious institution for the instruction of children and ignorant people, as a noble plant, had its origin in this favourable terrain (Verona) with the help of lay people united in a spiritual brotherhood; from here it spread to many other Italian cities. It has been highly commended ... provided and strengthened with Rules by the Bishops, watched over with solicitude (even today), guarded and sustained..."*²³

In 1790, at Bishop Giovanni Morosini's death, the See of Verona was entrusted to the zealous care of Msgr. Giovanni Andrea Avogadro.²⁴ He had to renounce religious life when it had been suppressed in 1773. He lived in Verona and dedicated himself to preaching and catechesis before being elected Bishop of the city of the Scaligeri. Giuseppe Butturini presented him *"as most devoted to the Holy Father, untiring in preaching the Christian Doctrine to the little ones and the adults."*²⁵

¹⁸ Bragadino Mons. G., Regole, pp. 33-34

¹⁹ Gottardi Domenico, Delle Scuole laicali della Dottrina Cristiana, Ramanzini, Verona 1789, p.20

²⁰ Msgr. Giovanni Morosini (1712-1789). Of noble Venetian family, at 16, he entered the Order of The Cassinese Benedictines in Padua. For 20 years he taught philosophy and theology in Venice.

²¹ cfr. Morosini Mons. Giovanni, Sinodo diocesano 1783, Carattoni, Verona 1783, p.36.

²² M.d.C., Memorie, in R.s.s., P.1a, p.319

²³ Gottardi D., o.c., p.9

²⁴ Avogadro Mons. Giovanni Andrea, cfr. ivi Capo I p. 15 n.15

²⁵ Butturini G., L'evoluzione della Chiesa Veronese, in Chiesa e Spiritualita' dell'Ottocento, p.125

Bishop Avogadro dealt with the catechetical problem in his first pastoral letter. Among other things he affirmed:

*"We consider the exercise of Christian Doctrine . tl~soJt Christian Republic."*²⁶

In fact the dominant note of his pastoral activity is the reorganization of the lay schools of Christian Doctrine. In the circular letter of December 15, 1790, addressed to the Parish priests, to the Superiors, to the Brothers and Sisters of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, he published the Statutes in synthesis. In the introduction, we read:

*"We cannot dispense ourselves from renewing the orders which our most vigilant predecessors prescribed for it (Christian Doctrine) ."*²⁷

In a concise but complete way, he sent out the Regulations, in the form of posters, to be displayed in the various schools of Doctrine. With regard to the "*debates*", in order to avoid too much exteriority, he added in the same circular:

*"If any school intends to hold a public debate, this could be done in accordance with the Rules and the previous approval of the Prior General..."*²⁸

And once again, Bishop Avogadro advised the "*Workers*" of the School of Doctrine:

*"Let them exhort the students of their classes **who can read**, to procure the book of Doctrine, so that they may study it any time and to learn it well."*²⁹

During the Napoleonic domination, Bishop Avogadro asked to be freed from his office. The See remained vacant for four years. Msgr. Innocenzo Liruti³⁰ succeeded him only on March 20, 1808. He guided the diocese through a difficult period, troubled by major political events. The preceding year, on March 20, 1807, Bovara, the Minister of Worship sent to all the Bishops of the Empire a circular in which "*the gift of Catechism was made obligatory in the Church...*".³¹ as a translation of the French "*Catechisme a' l' usage de toutes les Eglises de France*", revised by the oblate of Rho, Fr. Antonio Mussi, doctor of the Ambrosian Library which carried the Nulla Osta of Cardinal Caprara³², Legate of the Holy See. Against the formal prohibition of the Holy Father, Pius VII, the catechism, though substantially sound, contained a lesson on the 4th commandment about the "*Duties towards Napoleon I, the anointed one of the Lord, to whom obedience, fidelity, military service is due; the transgressor incurs eternal punishment.*"³³ The text, in its substance, was the same as that which the great Bishop Bossuet³⁴ had written in 1686 for his diocese of Meaux.

²⁶ Avogadro Mons. G. A. Lettera pastorale, 1790, Carattoni, Verona, B.S.V.VR

²⁷ cfr. Avogadro Mons. G. A. Lettera pastorale, 15.12.1790, Arch. Vesc. VR

²⁸ cfr. ibid

²⁹ cfr. Avogadro Mons. G.A. Lettera pastorale ... o.c.

³⁰ Liruti Mons. Innocenzo: cfr. ibid Capt I, p.15, n.16

³¹ A. S. MI., Circolare 20.3.1807 del Ministro del Culto, Parte moderno, Culto Busta 2227.

³² Caprara Montecuccoli Card. Giovanni Battista: born in Bologna on May 29, 1733. Destined for the ecclesiastical career, he studied in Rome. He graduated in "*utroque iu e*" in 1755. To take on higher offices he received Sacred Orders in 1765 and in 1766, he was nominated archbishop of Iconio and was immediately destined to rule over the Nunciature of Colonia. Pope Pius VII nominated him "*Legato a latere*" of Paris, to take charge of the delicate task of executing the Con ordat. He collaborated in editing the imperial Catechism, to which he gave his approval in 1806. In 1802, Napoleon nominated him Archbishop of Milan. He died in Paris in 1810. (cfr. Dizionario biografico degli Italiani, Treccani, Roma, Vol. XIII, pp. 180186)

³³ Michellini V., o.c., p. 105

³⁴ Bishop Bossuet Jacques. Benigne: born in Digione in 1627. He was ordained priest in 1651. In 1670, he was nominated Tutor of Delfino of France, after which he was made Bishop of Meaux. He died in Paris in 1704.

"The booklet is also made compulsory in Verona and Msgr. Ridolfi³⁵, capitular Vicar, the Regent of the vacant See, communicated to the Minister of Worship, Giovanni Bovara that he had ordered the parish priests of the whole diocese to use the national Little Catechism"³⁶

Bishop Liruti also put aside the Catechism of Bellarmino, adopted during the episcopate of Msgr. Avogadro, without excluding it and followed that of the Italian Empire, making some minor modifications.

Certainly this choice had not been imposed upon him by the new political regime as the text remained substantially the same even after the fall of the Napoleonic reign, in three reprints - 1814, 1823 and 1827. It is known that Bishop Liruti always tried not to clash with the civil authorities but he intervened liberally when it was his duty without letting himself be frightened by threats or allured by honours.³⁷ The main thrust of all his pastoral activities was catechetical teaching. He had a lively interest in the Congregation for Christian Doctrine and its schools. Already in 1808, he personally took a view of the situation, inspecting all the schools of Christian Doctrine in the city.

The law by which Napoleon appropriated to himself the goods of the Schools and of the Confraternities was not applied to this institution. In fact, the Congregation for Christian Doctrine depended directly on the Bishop and continued its activities without interruptions in Verona. The pastoral letter of 1809 also confirmed this. With it, Bishop Liruti recommended vigilance over the various schools of Christian Doctrine to the Vicars forane.

*"The Vicars forane, as it is written in the Rules of Christian Doctrine, Part VI, must draw up a report of the visits made to the Schools of Doctrine, describing the state in which they find them, Church by Church, the diligence of the Parish Priest in teaching and **assisting** them; whether there is need of assistant Teachers; the frequency of the people attending them; and whatever else according to their prudence they want to add. Such reports will be sent by them every six months to the Prior General of Doctrine, Fr Nicola Galvani³⁸. Archpriest of St John in Foro in St. Euphemia, who will in turn refer to the Bishop, adding whatever observations he deems opportune and necessary."³⁹*

A new circular dated March 8, 1814, inserted as preface in the reprint of the catechism, testified that the organization of the schools of catechism had not been changed. The letter was addressed *"To the Workers of Christian Doctrine of the City and Diocese."* The Bishop expressed himself thus:

"The Catechism which is reprinted in Verona on our request, is not new to you, our dearest and well-deserving sons; because it is some years now that you have used it to your merit and with profit to the children of the Christian Doctrine. Neither is the composition new; it is more than 100 years since the well-known Theologian and Bishop Msgr. Bossuet published it for use in his diocese. The author. divided it into two catechisms, one for beginners and the other or the more advanced . But here, since 1807, the whole thing is found together in one catechism only ... in this catechism, not only the things but also the words are mostly those of Bossuet, this, in fact, had been mentioned by the Archbishop of Milan, Cardinal Caprara, in the pastoral letter as premise to the above- mentionent 1807edition, published in Milan. The simplicity and clarity of this catechism are the qualities that ke it truly commendable; hence it fo lows that the Teachers of Christian Doctrine must use it with great satisfaction of hearts."⁴⁰

³⁵ Msgr. RidolfiGualfardo (1745-1818): born in Verona of noble family. He began his ecclesiastical career when he was nominated Canon in 1770. During the invasion of Napoleon, he remained in the French zone of Verona as Vicar General. In 1807, he was consecrated in Milan as Bishop of Rimini.

³⁶ Casetta G., p.c., p.122

³⁷ cfr. Ederle Guglielmo, Dizionario cronologico bio-bibliografico **dei Vescovi di Verona**, Ed. di "Vita veronese", Verona 1965., p.97

³⁸ Galvani don Nicola, cf. ibid, Capo I, p.15, nota 8.

³⁹ Liruti Mons. Innocenzo, Letterapastorale,2.11.1809, A.V .~ R. '

⁴⁰ Liruti Mons. Innocenzo, Catechismo ristampato con le divisioni, in classi per la citta' e diocesi di Verona, Antonio Tommasi, | Biblioteca Capitolare Verona.

Bishop Liruti, during the years of his episcopate, in his homilies and pastoral visits, always showed particular interest in the schools and catechetical teaching. Thus he merited the title of "*Bishop catechist*". The document which shows best his attention to the schools of Doctrine is a little work in which he also praised the work of Bishop Giberti who was the master mind⁴¹ of the institution, even though the schools that started at the same time in the cities of Milan and Venice present certain similarities in their organization.

On the death of Bishop Liruti in 1827, Msgr. Giuseppe Grasser⁴¹ succeeded him. From the diocese of Treviso, he passed to that of Verona and took possession of it on March 25, 1829. In his first pastoral letter, written in Treviso a few days before, he expressed the desire to find priests and lay people committed to "*teaching doctrine suited to the attainment of eternal well-being and to inflame the youth with love for heavenly wisdom*"⁴² **He also ordered that the catechism openly wisdom.**⁴³ **He also ordered Us aL .. vv Bellarmino be adopted again in the Schools of Doctrine. In 1831, he saw to a new edition of the Rules of the** Congregation of Christian Doctrine, following that of his predecessor Msgr. Giovanni Bragadino. It contained some innovations to adapt the catechetical method to the new needs of his time. Besides, he also found it necessary to make the structure of the Congregation more workable hence more effective, by establishing a suitable Council to foster collaboration. In the preface to the Rules, addressing the "*Workers*", the Bishop wrote:

*"on seeing that, with all our work, we will not be able to intervene in the individual Schools of Doctrine as often as we would like, and at the same time, not wanting to leave the same without having people witnessing to their noble and holy cares, we thought it useful and good for the Pious Institute of Christian Doctrine, to appoint some Promoters, besides the Prior and Vice Prior General, (who will visit the School on our behalf and give us a report). In such visits, and in fostering the welfare of the Schools these will be the immediate assistants of the Superior general... and will form together with them the Council of the entire Congregation. They will be ready to do in their place all that the same Superiors will ask."*⁴⁴

The attention of the Pastor was, above all, for the Catechists whom he often visited personally in the Schools of Doctrine, exhorting them to carry out their commitment well. These visits are mentioned by Magdalene of Canossa herself in a letter to her daughter, Domenica Faccioli, on January 16, 1833:

*".. being Sunday, there will be the formal visit of Msgr. Grasser to the parish (of San Zeno); we are very busy instructing the girls preparing for Confirmation, those of the Doctrine in general, and for the debate which they must do on the Doctrine"*⁴⁵

Concluding this brief research on the situation in Verona, we recall that there were two Catechism texts, officially adopted in Magdalene's time: that of Bishop Liruti and the other of Bellarmino, and that the latter had been used both during the episcopate of Msgr. Avogadro as well as that of Msgr. Grasser.

The Venetian Church

Even in the Venetian Church, after the Council of Trent, the Patriarchs aimed at the renewal of Christian life, through their pastoral initiatives. Among these, an outstanding figure was Cardinal Lorenzo Priuli⁴⁶,

⁴¹ Liruti Mons. I., Della prima origine delle Scuole della Dottrina cristiana, per i fanciulli e i giovinetti e dei meriti in questo di Mons. Gian Matteo Giberti, Vescovo di Verona, Tommasi, Verona 1817, II Edizione, B.S.V.VR

⁴² Msgr Giuseppe Grasser: born in Val Venosta in 1762. He studied in the Seminary of Merano, then a diocese of Coira. In 1809, he was professor of Latin in the Seminary of Bressanone. He was elected Bishop of Treviso in 1823, and then passed on to the diocese of Verona in 1829 where he died in 1839.

⁴³ Grasser Mons.G . Lettera pastorale 18.3.1829, Treviso, A. V .VR

⁴⁴ Grasser Mons. G. Prefazione alle Regole per la Congregazione della Dottrina Cristiana nella città e diocesi di Verona, novellamente riformate e adattate agli usi dei tempi, Crescini, Verona, Verona 1831, B.S.V.VR.

⁴⁵ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 16 January 1833, Ep. III/5, p. 3291.

who was designated Patriarch of Venice by the Venetian Senate on August 4, 1590 and made Cardinal in 1596. Of him was written:

*"After being installed as patriarch on January 27, 1591, Cardinal Priuli initiated his pastoral activity with a rich experience of Italian and European men and events. On March 28, he recalled the importance of Christian Doctrine in the parishes: confessors and preachers must exhort the faithful to send their children to it. During Eastertide, at the hour of none, every parish must ring the bell to call the children to the School of Doctrine."*⁴⁷

In 1592, he convoked the diocesan synod and established 30 Schools of Doctrine in the 72 parishes of the city, entrusting the teaching to the parish priest, according to the dispositions of the Tridentine Council.

Msgr. Giovanni Bragadino,⁴⁸ the Bishop of Venice, was another great and zealous pastor as we already noted. He was elected Patriarch of Venice in 1758. The 5 years of his Veronese episcopate have been considered the happiest for that Church. As Patriarch, his activity was prevalently directed, even in the Venetian Church, to spiritual renewal. His first preoccupation was that of restoring the discipline of the clergy whom he invited to rigorously respect the precedent synodal dispositions. As he had done for the diocese of Verona, he gave a new thrust to the Company of Christian Doctrine, reforming the Rules dictated by Msgr. Priuli for the schools for women.⁴⁹

After the Patriarchs Priuli and Bragadino, the Venetian Church had in Patriarch Francesco Maria Milesi⁵⁰ a true and great reformer of the teaching of Christian Doctrine. Under his guidance, after the "Napoleonic cyclone", the Schools of Doctrine were re-structured according to the way indicated in the Rules of Bragadino, published as we have seen in Verona in 1751.⁵¹ It cannot be ignored that even his immediate predecessors had shown great interest in the Schools of Christian Doctrine. In fact, Patriarch Nicola Saverio Gamboni⁵² already in 1807, "orders that every month all parish priests give a report directly to him on the way of teaching catechism, the collaboration of the priests of the parish and the progress made by the pupils".⁵³ It was also known that during his patriarchate the initial reduction of the parishes from 70 to 40 took place.

In his first pastoral letter, published without title in Venice in 1816, Patriarch Milesi admonished the clergy, affirming that their principal pastoral activity must be the preaching and teaching of Christian Doctrine. And soon after his entry in the diocese in 1817, he himself personally undertook a series of frequent visits to the various Schools of Christian Doctrine, and besides, collected data and information through persons appointed for this. In the introduction of the plan of the regulations for the male and female sections of the Schools of Doctrine, he thus declared:

*"We have unfortunately noticed the decadence of the Schools in every respect and consequently we have seen the need to take prompt and efficacious measure."*⁵⁴

⁴⁶ Card. Lorenzo Priuli: born in Venice in 1537, he joined the diplomatic service and proved to be skilful and balanced. He was ambassador to Spain, France and to the Holy See. He was the Mayor of Brescia when he was nominated, on 4.8.1590, by the Venetian Senate as Patriarch of Venice. In 1596, he became Cardinal. He died in Venice on 2.1.1600.

⁴⁷ Niero A., *I Patriarchi di Venezia - Da Lorenzo Giustiniani ai nostri giorni*, Studium Cattolico Veneziano, 1961, p. 102.

⁴⁸ Bragadino Mons. Giovanni, cf. *ibid.*, Capo II, p. 24 n. 14

⁴⁹ *Regole della Congregazione del Governo della Dottrina Cristiana per le Scuole delle Donne rinnovate d'ordine di Mons. Ill.mo e Rev.mo Giovanni Bragadino*, ms. anonimo, in *Archivio Curia Patriarcale*, busta *Dottrina Cristiana*, I, fasc. *notizie storiche*.

⁵⁰ Msgr. Francesco Maria Milesi: born in Venice on March 21, 1744. In 1767, he was ordained priest by Patriarch Bragadino and in 1780, he was entrusted with the parish of St. Silvester in Venice. Napoleon nominated him Bishop of Vigevano. After nine years, he left to return to Venice as Patriarch. On September 23, 1816, the Holy See validated the Emperor's nomination. He died in Venice on September 19.1819.

⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.* Capo II, p. 25, n. 16.

⁵² Msgr. Nicola Saverio Gamboni: born at Naples on December 6, 1746. He was only 30 years of age when he was nominated Bishop of Capri. In 1805, Napoleon nominated him Bishop of Vigevano and in 1807, he was elected Patriarch of Venice. He died in Milan in September, 1808.

⁵³ Niero A. o.c., pp. 159-160

⁵⁴ Cf. Cappelletti, *Storia della Chiesa di Venezia dalla sua fondazione fino ai nostri giorni*. Vol.II, Venezia 1851, pp. 348-387.

He therefore started a series of organizational provisions:

*"In the course of 1818, with two decrees, he (Bishop Milesi) organised the teaching of catechism for boys and girls, so rich in details and didactic method that it became the basis of Venetian catechesis for the whole decade: it was established that the male and female Schools were to depend on a general presidency, 6 patriarchal delegates, (one for each district) and 12 male and female inspectors"*⁵⁵

Magdalene of Canossa too noticed the signs of such a renewal; she communicated it to her daughter Elena Bernardi what Patriarch Milesi was doing through his reform so that catechesis could transform people into real believers"

*"The Patriarch has passed a regulation for the Schools of Christian Doctrine for women, of which as you know there is a very great need, and he wishes and provides every means so that they may be frequented by every category of persons; he visits one church or another. Therefore, let us also be consoled for this."*⁵⁶

The first preoccupation of Patriarch Milesi was that of rebuilding the diocesan structures which had been eliminated with the suppression of the Confraternities, to guarantee uniformity of method and to remove abuses and disorders. The old organisms were not re-activated. In their place new ones were created which were presided over by the Patriarch: *"Since the supreme direction of the teaching of Christian Doctrine in his diocese by divine institution belongs to him, he is also the perpetual president"* while in the past they used to nominate a priest as the effective president. That could mean that the Patriarch intended to involve himself personally in the pastoral sector. The dependence on the hierarchy appeared clearer in fact in the structure of the two organisms whose members were all nominated by the Patriarch while up to then, they had been elected. A stronger clerical character was given to the direction of the female schools. In the male, presidency in fact, the tasks of the priests and lay persons were identical; the female inspectors instead, - contrary to what the preceding rules of Patriarch Bragadino⁵⁷ contemplated - had a different role from that of the priests, being limited to approaching the teachers in the various schools to promote peace and harmony, exactness and fervour, edifying them with their example; they were no longer entrusted with the examination of the running of each school. Besides, even the figures of the General Prior who, from Priuli's rules had always been associated with the president, the vicar and the treasurer, disappeared: they were substituted by two priests, the vice president and the secretary. The women in the individual schools instead assumed leading roles, however, they were always nominated from the top.⁵⁸

In the past the Congregation had accumulated a patrimony constituted by offerings and bequests which served both for expenses for registers and texts as well as to provide for prizes to be distributed every Sunday. An article of the Rule of Patriarch Milesi recommended moderation in such expenses and repealed even certain customs. He fixed the duration of the Catechism class: an hour of teaching by the catechists in the different groups and half an hour altogether with the parish priest. Formerly, Catechism was taught only during summer: now, instead, Patriarch Milesi fixed it for the whole year. The regulations of Msgr. Milesi, however, had a prevalently organizational character. Christian Doctrine became one of the fundamental structures of the Parish. An important moment, which periodically gathered the people of the parish was the so-called "debates", recited by the children in the churches before the people. The Patriarch tried to regulate the ways in which they were conducted, forbidding children below twelve from taking part: in the past, in fact, *"far from contemplating the real advantage to the girls, it was only to feed the ambition of the mothers, who did not understand its purpose but*

⁵⁵ Niero A., o.c., p. 169

⁵⁶ M.d.C., to Bernardi, March 1818, Ep. III/5, p. 3990

⁵⁷ Regola della Congregazione...o.c. A.C.P.VE.

⁵⁸ Bertoli B. - Tramontin S., o.c., p. XXIX-XXX

*through a distorted happiness, were content to hear their children of six or seven years debating doctrines which they had not understood and which they could not understand”.*⁵⁹

The clergy requested the government to close shops and public places during the one and a half hours of teaching. Though the request was granted, these laws were not sufficient to improve the moral situation. The reform by Milesi nevertheless renewed and made the structures more efficient though he did not succeed in infusing a new spirit because he looked more at the formal aspect than the contents. The old catechisms were reprinted; the national catechism used during the Napoleonic period was abolished; the necessity to renew the pastoral and catechetical methodology was not understood. With evangelical simplicity and courage, some Founders of Religious Institutes opened the path of interior renewal. Among them we also find Magdalene of Canossa who had opened a house in Venice on August 1, 1812.

The Patriarch Francesco Maria Milesi died on September 19, 1819 and the Emperor of Austria, Francesco I nominated Giovanni Ladislao Pyrker⁶⁰. Bishop of Zips in Slovakia as Bishop of Venice. His nomination was part of the new course of Austrian religious politics on Italian soil, meant to clinch the dependence on Vienna of the metropolitan Sees.⁶¹ He entered the lagoon city on April 15, 1821.

A few days after his entry into the diocese on May 12, 1821, he announced his pastoral visits to familiarize himself with the situation. Thus he could see in person the real needs of the patria and in particular, of the functioning of the Schools of Christian Doctrine. Being in the parish of St. Jeremiah in May, he visited the School of Christian Doctrine in St. Lucy. In fact, in the report of the pastoral visit, it was written that the female section of St. Lucy was frequented by 150 girls; it had 20 to 30 teachers, sustained mainly by the Daughters of Charity.⁶² Having completed the visit, in his report to the Emperor, Francesco I, the Patriarch praised all the persons who had distinguished themselves with their apostolic zeal for the good of the Church and of the State. Among these persons there was also Magdalene of Canossa to whom the same Patriarch Pyrker wrote thus on January 7, 1822:

"Lady Marchioness

*In the report which I humbly submitted to Our Most Venerable Monarch about the pastoral visit made in my entire diocese, I thought it opportune to remember with gratitude all the persons who have been outstanding in their zeal, activity and intelligence with which they carry out their respective charges for the good of the Church and of the State. Since His Majesty, in His high clemency, has deigned to entrust me with the charge to notify each subject I mentioned of His Sovereign pleasure, I am very happy to fulfil this command in the certainty that it will be the greatest comfort to you, in order to persevere in that zealous solicitude with which you have distinguished yourselves greatly up to now."*⁶³

Magdalene, with the deepest gratitude, thus responded to the Patriarch on January 27, 1822:

*"Filled with the greatest consolation and gratitude, both for your sovereign clemency as well as your infinite goodness, allow me to represent humbly to your Most Rev. Excellency, with my deepest thanks, my ardent desires to be able to correspond to the sublime insights of His Imperial Majesty and your wishes, by committing myself to serve the Lord for the remaining part of my life."*⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Cf. A.C.P.VE., b, Dottrina Cristiana, II, fasc. A.

⁶⁰ Msgr. Giovanni Ladislao Pyrker: born in 1772 in Langh, in Southern Austria. He joined very young the Cistercians of the Abbey of Lilienfeld, where he was ordained priest in 1798. He travelled to Italy and Germany. In 1812, he became Abbot of Lilienfeld. In 1818, he was elected Bishop of Zips in Slovacchia and after two years, in 1820, he was nominated Patriarch of Venice. He was installed in April 14, 1821. He left Venice in April 1827 as he was elected Bishop of the Hungarian diocese of Erlau. He died in Vienna in 1847.

⁶¹ Bertoli B. - Tramontin S., o.c., pP. XLIII-XLIV

⁶² cf. Ibid., p. 61.

⁶³ Pyrker Mons. G.L., to M.a.C. 7 January 1822, Ep. II/1, p. 244

⁶⁴ M.d.C., to the Patriarca Pyrker, 27.1.1822, Ep.II/1, p. 156

Therefore, in his first pastoral visit, the new Patriarch was given *"the most comforting aspect, even if not fully satisfactory, of the situation in the parochial schools of catechism. In fact, following the reform of that important means of formation, carried out sometime before by Patriarch Francesco Maria Milesi, with the support of the government, which had ordered the closure of the inn and prohibited public performances during the time of the Catechism classes, there has been a promising development. Disorders of the past have disappeared; one notices a great revival and following the new regulations, the school of Doctrine is better attended"*.⁶⁵

Patriarch Pyrker continued to work with untiring zeal, to improve the running of the catechetical teaching. He often exhorted the priests to apply themselves more E iduously lo the ministry. He also appealed to the laity to give themselves to that service which was worthy of a true Christian and to the fathers of families, that they should solicit their children to participate. On November 20, 1824, he sent a circular through which he regulated the public *"debates"* so that they might be carried out with seriousness and dignity and that prizes were to be, above all, good books. The text suggested was that of Bellarrnino even if the Austrian authority did not look favourably on it for its *"open exaltation of the papacy and for a certain openness in moral matters"*.⁶⁶ The Catechism of Bellarrnino was also the text most used by Magdalene of Canossa and suggested even by her spiritual director Msgr. Pacetti.⁶⁷ In a letter of 1814, he wrote to her:

*"With regards to the Doctrine, you may use the text of Bellarmino which will be the only one approved."*⁶⁸

How dear the catechetical activity, so fundamental to the care of souls, was to Patriarch Pryker is also confirmed by the fact that in 1824, he decided to *"visit the Schools of Christian Doctrine on Sundays when he had no other commitment and he was back again in all, the parishes of the city to examine how the texts of the Schools of Doctrine were followed and to present at the catechism for children. On these occasions, he took the chance to ask about the directive emanated after the pastoral visit, to meet the people through the celebration of Holy Mass, the homily and the administration of the sacraments."*⁶⁹ Once again, Magdalene, writing to her daughter Rosa Dabala' on June 8, 1824, confirmed Patriarch Pyrker's desire to visit the Schools of catechism:

*"since our most worthy Patriarch had to come to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation to one of our girls who was seriously ill and to another sick girl, he visited our doctrine classes, then he came to greet me, showing the immense goodness he has for our least Institute."*⁷⁰

The Milanese Church

"Not only the Italian Church but the whole Catholic world owes the Church of Milan, or rather its Archbishop St. Charles Borromeo⁷¹, for the great examples of Pastoral Govenance which he left behind and the great lights transmitted to us in his Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis⁷²

⁶⁵ Bertoli B. - Tramontin S., o.c., p. LXVIII

⁶⁶ cf. ibid, p. CXII

⁶⁷ Msgr. Luigi Pacifico Pacetti (1761 - 1819): he was a Jesuit until the suppression of the Order. Apostolic Missionary and direct collaborator of Pius VII. He helped Magdalene of Canossa in the foundation of the Institute and was her spiritual director till his death.

⁶⁸ Pacetti Mons. L.P., to M.d.C., s.d. ms. A 2, XXXI, A.C.R. cf Piccari T., Sola con Dio Solo, p. 264

⁶⁹ cf. A.C.P.VE., Visita pastorale Pyrker, fascicolo allegato, circolare ai parroci del May - June 1824, cf. Bertoli B. Tramontin S., o.c., p. CXII

⁷⁰ M.d.C., to Dabala', 8 June 1824, Ep.III\2, p.868

⁷¹ Cardinal Carlo Borromeo: born on 2.10.1538 in Rocca Borromeo di Arona, he was the son of Pope Pius IV's sister With his uncle, he tried to check Lutheranism and to re-open the Council of Trent, which was concluded later on 3.12.1563 He was Archbishop of Milan from 1560 till 1584. He was chosen from among the promoters of the Catechismus romanus ad Parochos. He died in 1584

⁷² Liruti Mons. I., Della prima origine delle Scuole della Dottrina cristiana per i fanciulli e giovinetti e dei meriti in questo di MonsignoreGio. MatteoGiberti, Verona 1817, p.24, B.S.V.VR

St. Charles Borromeo, in the Acts of the Church of Milan, published the Rules of the Congregation and of the Schools of Christian Doctrine which in time would be followed as models by many Bishops and Prelates of other dioceses.

These Rules had been written to implement the decrees promulgated by the 3rd Milanese Provincial Council in 1583. After the closing of the Council of Trent, St. Charles Borromeo was elected by Pope Pius IV among the promoters of the *Catechismus romanus ad Parochos*. The preparation of the Roman Catechism had been decided by the Council in order to have a single text for the Christian formation of the laity. Magdalene, as we shall see, came to know about these precious texts through her friend Carolina Durini. In his 24 years of pastoral governance, St. Charles made the Schools of Christian Doctrine obligatory for all the children, youth and even the adults of both sexes so that they could learn the first and most important rudiments of the faith and of Christian life. Cardinal Federico Borromeo⁷³ afterwards gave a new orientation through some additions of the Statutes of the Schools of Doctrine, also called "*Schools of Bellarmino*" from which the catechism adopted its name. In them, he insisted not only on the deepening of the truth of the faith of all on Christian formation. Besides, given that the "*Catechismus romanus ad Parochos*" had to be used by the priests, Pope Clement VIII requested Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino to compose for the laity who teach Doctrine, "*two Catechisms: one entitled Brief Christian Doctrine (1567), that could be learnt by heart, the other, a more detailed Declaration of Brief Christian Doctrine (1598) to be used by those who taught it.*"⁷⁴

In 1720, the Rules of the Congregation and of the Schools of Doctrine were increased in number and reprinted by order of Cardinal Benedetto Erba Odescalchi⁷⁵, elected Archbishop of Milan in 1714. Then in 1735, the same Archbishop, turning to the parishes, to all the Superiors of Churches and all the Confraternities, ordered them to publicise his Edict, written by order of His Holiness Clement XII. In it we read:

"... following our Pastoral Ministry, and ratifying all the holy Decrees made by our glorious St. Charles, and re-published by us and our predecessors at different times for the continuation and progress of Christian Doctrine, we now make known to all how His holiness invites all the faithful of both sexes, children as well as adults, noble or common folk and of whatever state or status, and entrust especially to fathers and mothers ... to the masters and any other person who have people dependent on them, to intervene, send and make sure that their children, servants, workers . . . attend Christian Doctrine . . . Those who teach catechism are recommended to use a familiar style which is well understood by all, and my way of questioning, explain and help to learn the principle mysteries of the holy faith. Besides, we ask the parish priests . . . and especially the Prior General of Christian Doctrine, and the General Congregation of St. Dalmazio and its Pious Workers to ensure the execution of what His Holiness has ordered."⁷⁶

In response to the Edict issued by Archbishop Odescalchi, the Prior General of Christian Doctrine, on June 30, 1736, recalled in synthesis, the most important points of the Rules of the Schools of Christian Doctrine from St. Charles onwards. He wrote in fact:

1. That in every School, the Tablets be always well kept with the list of all the workers prescribed by the Rules....
2. That in every School, there be the book of Rules, from this a chapter is to be read and explained with greatest frequency possible...

⁷³ Cardinal Federico Borromeo: he was the cousin of St. Charles, born in Milan on 18.8.1564. He was nominated Cardinal at the age of 23 in 1587, and was Archbishop of Milan in 1595. He died on 21.9.1631

⁷⁴ cf. Gottardi D., o.c., p. 18

⁷⁵ Archbishop Benedetto Erba Odescalchi: born of a noble Milanese family in 1669. He was elected Archbishop of Milan in 1714; he renounced the chair in 1737 for reasons of health. He died in 1740.

⁷⁶ Odescalchi Card. B., Editto, 23 November 1735, in *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, Vol. IV, pp. 1573 - 1575, Curia Arcivescovile, Milano.

3. That the classes be well-divided, separating the small ones from the big ...
4. That in every Class, besides a Teacher, there be a Helper or a Silencer. This applies also to the girls.
5. No one is to be allowed to go into this or that; class, unless ready to change class due to age or achievement...
6. The Debate is to be held every Sunday; and this is to be taught to all in the classes ...
7. The teachers in the classes are to question the children with great charm.
8. No other books or catechisms are to be used in the Schools except that of Bellarmino; Questions and Summary according to the standard of the Schools and the Classes: each teacher is to teach with the book open in the hand. Besides some revision on what has been taught the previous Sunday is to be done, to see how much they have benefitted...
16. The Rev. Parish priests and Assistant priests of the Schools for girls are recommended to be present not only for the sermon but also for the Catechism in the Classes, going from one to another, asking questions...
17. The Priors and Vice-priors are to ensure that ! their respective schools observe the length of time that is prescribed by the Holy Founder.
18. *Finally, the Priors in their respective Schools are to ensure zealously that the said Orders which are to be posted and always exhibited in the Schools, on cardboard or tablets are exactly observed"*⁷⁷

In her "*Rules for Doctrines*", Magdalene also said explicitly that she followed the system "*of Archbishop St. Charles of Milan.*" In fact, she spoke of "*teacher, assistant teacher, of silencer,*" recommended vigilance "*so that the girls do not change class*" .⁷⁸

In 1744, Cardinal Guideppe Pozzobonelli⁷⁹ entered the diocese of Milan. He initiated at once his intense activity of spiritual renewal.

*"The pastoral visit which Card . Pozzobonelli personally carries out in the entire diocese, even to places no longer belonging to the Milanese territory, even if of Ambrosian rite, is protracted almost uninterruptedly for 20 years, from 1744-1764... Faced with the difficulty - already met by his predecessors in holding the synod, since the priests cannot leave the parishes, due to the continuous movement of soldiers, he makes use of the congregation of Vicars forane to make known his admonitions and dispositions to the whole diocese. He enforces above all, the teaching of Christian Doctrine and wishes that the catechism of Bellarmino be used again. He establishes other Schools of Doctrine and other Sunday schools - even those begun by St. Charles Borromeo, so that the youth, even those restricted by certain work schedules, can receive an adequate catechetical preparation."*⁸⁰

With regard to the catechism classes for the "*servants*", in the pastoral letter of September 3, 1748, Cardinal Pozzobonelli thus expressed himself, addressing the parish priests:

*"Having seen that the Schools of Christian Doctrine, which for some years have been instituted for the special instruction of the servants is little frequented, and not knowing, however, if this is caused by the Masters who do not give the servants the time to attend, or if it is the fault of the same because they are distracted by other entertainments or idleness, we request therefore, and we recommend to the most Rev. Parish Priests to take up this point seriously with the Masters, each in their parish, making them understand the duty and the great obligation they have to allow their servants the time to attend Christian Doctrine, so that they may be instructed in the science necessary salvation and Christian living."*⁸¹

⁷⁷cf. Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis, Vol. IV, pp.1576-1580.

⁷⁸ Cf. M.d.C., Regole per le dottrine, in R.s.s. P. 1a, Regola VII e IX, pp. 209-211.

⁷⁹Cardinal Giuseppe Pozzobonelli: born in Milan in 1696. In July 1743, he was consecrated Bishop and in August of the same year, he was made Cardinal. He rules the diocese of Milan from 1744 till his death in 1783.

⁸⁰ cf. Majo Angelo, Storia della Chiesa Ambrosiana - Dto Rifomma Cattolica a Gaetano Gaysruck, Vol. IV, Ned - Milano, Vol.III, pp.109-110

⁸¹ Pozzobonelli Card. G., Lettera Pastorale, 3 September 1748, in Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis, Vol. IV, pp. 1655 - 1656, A.C.ARCIV.MI.

During Cardinal Pozzobonelli's time, the Church passed through difficult moments. The secularistic spirit, widespread during the illuministic age, penetrated every level of society, disfiguring its religious life. The States advanced their rights, claiming the freedom of decision and action. In 1773, we have the most clamorous episode: the suppression of the Jesuit Order. Card. Pozzobonelli could not permit the rights of the Church to be trampled in the name of the presumed rights of the State. When the government of Vienna proposed a reform of studies in the seminaries, one that was clearly Jansenistic, he, with all the Bishops of the region, opposed it so strongly that Vienna had to put it off. But the most stinging controversy came about in 1775 and dragged on to 1789, centred around the Catechism and was fought among the court of Vienna, the governor of Milan, the pontifical curia, the Bishops and the clergy. The teaching of Christian Doctrine, imparted with methodical regularity in almost the whole of Lombardy starting from St. Charles, had, for a long time as its basic text the "*Christian Doctrine*" of Bellarmino which the government of Vienna considered dangerous in that it ignored the rights of the State and of the Princes. Therefore, it claimed control for itself because he considered the Sovereign as the custodian and defender of religion. The government, besides, refused to approve the reprinting of the Catechism of Bellarmino requested by Card. Pozzobonelli and by the Lombard clergy, because they were loyal to the pontifical Curia and imbued with Roman doctrine. The Milan "*ritual*", planned by St. Carlo, with its 11 collegiate churches, 64 parish churches, 15 seminaries and colleges, 35 schools of discipline and 120 schools of Christian Doctrine, without counting monasteries, convents and abbeys, was crushed, together with its rich patrimony of memories. With the death of Pozzobonelli, the political interference of Vienna destroyed also that ecclesiastical pre-eminence which was affirmed with the Council of Trent. On May 9, 1782, Giuseppe II published an edict in which among other things he took upon himself the right to nominate the archbishops and bishops of the dioceses under him.⁸²

When Card. Pozzobonelli died in 1783, the imperial choice for the new Archbishop of Milan fell on Fr. Filippo Visconti.⁸³ He was consecrated Bishop by Pope Pius VI only in July 1784 and made his entry into the Milan diocese on August 29, 1784. His was a hard and difficult episcopate. With word and life, he preached charity.

In October 1789, he presented to the diocese a new book of Christian Doctrine, summary of the Roman Catechism, and presented it with the letter in which he affirmed:

*"In presenting you with a sample of the Exposition of Christian Doctrine, it is our intention that this will from now on serve as a rule for the instruction of the flock which we have entrusted to you. From our Letter which precedes the exposition ... you will see the method which you are to keep in explaining it."*⁸⁴

And in presenting the summary of the Roman Catechism he adds:

"My very beloved sons, here is the exposition of the Christian Doctrine from the Roman Catechism which had been published by St. Pius V ... solicited by our great predecessor St. Charles Borromeo, who wished that this would be the Book of the Parish Priests. . . Our predecessors, penetrated by such wholesome insights, have always regarded the Roman Catechism as a sure guide, canonically adopted, in preference to all the others which have been spread afterwards ... Now, as we consider them as wise authoritative rules we decided to publish this exposition compiled under the guidance of our predecessor (Pozzobonelli) and the Bishops of the Austrian Lombardy, and therefore to give them as guide to the Clergy and the People . . . It seemed opportune to us:

1. to satisfy the desires and needs of adults, who [in order to acquire more knowledge, whom sic]ally turn to or happen to go to one or another summary;

2. to oblige the Catechists to know the value and to penetrate the spirit of the Roman Catechism

⁸² cd. Majo A., o.c., pp. 118- 124

⁸³ Msgr. Filippo Visconti: born in Massino, in the diocese of Novara in 1721. He was nominated Titular of the metropolitan See of Milan in 1783 by the Emperor Giuseppe II. However, the recognition by Pope Pius VI came only in July 1784. He was obliged to participate at the Congress of Lione, where he died in December 1801.

⁸⁴ Visconti Mons. F., De novo Doctrinae Christianae Libro Manuali, October 1789, in Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis, Vol. IV, pp. 1753 - 1754.

3. *to re-direct everyone to the source and to strengthen them in unity, so that as there is one God, and one Faith, so there would be one common rule as well to teach the Faith and instruct the Christians in their religious duties.*"⁸⁵

Then in the same letter, Bishop Visconti, addressing the parish priests and the Catechists, suggested practical ways for the teaching of Catechism:

*"First of all, every Sunday, stop at a discreet portion of the exposition that you propose; then compare it with the respective part in the Roman Catechism which is not quoted . . . After this, diligently record the important places, parables, facts which now and then you will find distinctly quoted in the answers... Once you have thus understood the Doctrine, you will explain it, following the order indicated by us to you, planning your explanation in such a way as to be able to present the whole content in no more than two years. When catechising, you are first to understand the true and precise meaning of the words which express the most important matters and then make the listeners x it well in their minds. This attention is as important as the formation of true Christians ... communicating to them a solid knowledge and not only void words. Having stated that, you are to catechize in a popular way, remembering that you are speaking to children of the Church in the name of Jesus and that you are evangelizing the poor... And since the people are inclined to instructions illustrated with historical facts, be attentive not to overindulge in their inclination by making references to some writers of dubious faith or lacking in critical sense.. . In order to speak clearly, imitate the Divine Master who with parables and images ... reveal to the most simple truths ... Most of all speak to the intellect, preparing them with unction is the most efficacious means to insinuate the love. In the not that this summary, more extensive than others that are invented only as an indication of the most substantial doctrines so that they may then be explained by you who are to be the wise and discreet interpreters in distinguishing and separating the simple things from the higher ones, presenting the former to beginners and the others to the more experienced ."*⁸⁶

Even Magdalene of Canossa and the Daughters of Charity in Milan knew well this summary of the Roman Catechism, written by Bishop Filippo Visconti. In fact, in the chronicle of the House, dated 1818, referring to the text used for the teaching of Catechism, it is stated:

*"The general instruction was starting at the exact time established; the book used as a guide was the Questioning or the so-called Summary of St. Charles."*⁸⁷

In 1790, Emperor Giuseppe II, the "sacristan King" who had interfered in ecclesiastical matters, died. Soon after his death, the Lombard episcopate, headed by the Archbishop of Milan, Filippo Visconti, submitted a general petition to the new Emperor Leopold II, in order to obtain a fair revision of the administrative rights in ecclesiastical matters.⁸⁸ In the same year, the restoration of some Milanese Sunday schools was successfully obtained. They were important centres for catechesis for many youth of all categories. Meanwhile, while the Austrian domination was replaced by that of Napoleon, Milan became the capital of the Cisalpina Republic finally of the Lombard Venetian Reign (1815). Napoleon was not satisfied with the political dominion over his subjects; he wanted to instruct the youth, imposing a Catechism and nominating Bishops loyal to him.

At the death of Bishop Filippo Visconti, he nominated Cardinal Caprara archbishop Legate. The latter collaborated with the drafting of the so-called "National Catechism"⁸⁹ and approved it in 1806. Such a Catechism was made obligatory, as we have already seen, both in Verona and Venice.

⁸⁵ Visconti Mons. F., Lettera, 8 September 1789, in Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis, Vol. IV, pp. 1754 - 1755

⁸⁶ Visconti Mons. F., Lettera ... o.c., pp. 1757 - 1758

⁸⁷ Cronaca della Casa di Milano, Quaderno I, p. 31, A.C.R.

⁸⁸ cf. Michelini V., o.c., pp. 121 - 122

⁸⁹ cf. ibid. Capo 11, p. 31, n. 32

In 1818, after a vacancy of eight years, Card. Gaetano Gaisruck⁹⁰ succeeded Card. Caprara in the See of Milan. The election had been continually postponed both because of the difficult rapport between the Holy See and the Napoleonic Government as well as the reestablished Austrian domination in Milan, a city that was longing for peace but at the same time thirsting for independence.⁹¹ The new Archbishop immediately became the promoter of many activities for the religious restoration. His first concern was the re-organization of the clergy, the reformation of the seminarians, preparing for them a place of studies. As we can read from the chronicles, it was just during Lent of 1818 that the Daughters of Magdalene of Canossa started their catechetical activity in the parish of St. Stefano. Msgr. Francesco Maria Zoppi⁹² had been the parish priest from 1808. His concern, during the 15 years spent as Parish priest in St. Stefano, was to open Sunday Schools for children, re-structure the Schools of Christian Doctrine and to make his Sunday preaching a true and real catechesis. Seven years after the arrival of the Daughters of Charity in Milan, on the occasion of the canonical erection of the Institute, Msgr. Zoppi in his sermon to the people on September 14, 1823, said:

*"... the Daughter of Charity dedicate their cares and fatigue to the good of the lowest classes . . . Every Sunday, each of them instruct in Church the group assigned to her by the Parish Priest or by the Directress of the School of Christian Doctrine. Then each one takes them to the convent with other girls who want to join and continues until evening the useful teaching made pleasant by a good recreation "*⁹³

⁹⁰ Cardinal Gaetano Gaysruck: born in Klangerfurt, Carinzia in 1769. He received the imperial nomination as Archbishop of Milan in 1816; it was ratified only in 1818. In fact, he took possession of the Ambrosian See on 26.7.1818. He was made Cardinal in 1824. He died in Milan on 19.11.1846.

⁹¹ Michelini V., o.c., p. 127

⁹² Msgr. Francesco Maria Zoppi: born in Canobio in 1765. He graduated in theology and Canon Law at the University of Pavia. He was an Oblate priest. He was rector of the Seminary from 1799 to 1803. For 15 years, he served in the parish of S. Stefano in Milan. From 1823 to 1832, he was Bishop of Massa Carrara. Then he returned to Milan where he died in his retreat in Canobio in 1841.

⁹³ Zoppi Mons. F.M. . Istruzione al Popolo per la solenne Erezione dell'Istituto in Milano delle Figlie della Carita', 14 September 1823, A.C.R.

CHAPTER 3

The second ministry of charity Earliest intuitions

* *"Docebo iniquos vias tuas ..."*

Magdalene had to search, pray and suffer before she could clearly see the plan of God's love for her. Her experience in the cloister helped her to understand that the Lord did not want her behind the grills of the Carmelite Monastery, but he was calling her to follow another path. Her director, Fr. Luigi Libera¹ guided her through the difficult discernment. he wrote to her on November 19, 17892:

*"It would give much glory to the Lord and be of great benefit to souls if you would live in the world with the heart of a discalced."*²

In the heart of the Marchioness an ardent desire kept growing progressively: *"To prevent sin... to make Jesus known..."*. She expresses it thus in her Memoirs:

*"... in such a place (Carmelite Monastery) she (Magdalene) would no doubt sanctify herself, but she would not be able to prevent sin, nor to work for the salvation of souls."*³

Intensifying her prayer, Magdalene kept herself open to God's will. She listened to the Word of God and received new light. Above all, her vocation became clearer. She is the one who affirms it:

*"... as she recited the psalm Miserere, on reaching the verse "Docebo iniqu ..." she felt urged to teach Christian Doctrine every Sunday to the maidservants whom she could not send to Church."*⁴

These early insights, preserved in her memory, allowed us to see how the charismatic intuition to teach catechism had progressively grown in her. The young March oness' desire to make Jesus known was no restricted to the Canossa Palace but reached the ex em boundaries of the earth. The universal mission of the manner of living, the Sisters of Charity should be most zealous in this holy work, which gives much pleasure to the Lord, much merit to themselves and is so beneficial to their neighbour. Since this work is most displeasing to the devil, it is certainly, it is certainly necessary to be ready to encounterth Church found a strong echo in her heart which was in love with God. She writes again in the Memoirs:

*"Everytime she heard, during Mass, the Gospel text which reads: Euntes in universum mundum", without knowing why, she was deeply moved and filled with consolation ... The same happened when she attended those Masses having the Divine Glory as a theme ... especially, during thoseyears, she had such a strong desire to prevent sin that ... she would have turned her blood into gold, if she could, thus facing death many a time"*⁵

" ... and she started to teach Christian Doctrine" .

Challenged by the Word of God, especially during the Eucharistic celebration Magdalene acted without delay. Her many commitments at home did not C en her from working for her Church, among her

* M ,1r Memarie in R.s.s.. p. 1A, p. 319

¹ Fr. Luigi Libera (1737 - 1800): was ordained priest in Verona in 1760; he was an esteemed and much sought after confessor. Magdalene of Canossa met him in the monastery of the "Terese" in Verona where he was the Ordinary Confessor during the three-year term 1790 - 1793. He was her spiritual director and guide from 1791 to January 20, 1800.

² Libera L., a M.d.C., 19 november, 1792, Epp.III\5, p.4165

³ M.d.C., Memorie, in R.s.s., P. 1~, p. 318

⁴ Ibid, p.319

⁵ M.d.C., Memorie, in R.s.s., P. 1A, p. 319

people, in fact, she collaborated in the various religious activities promoted in Verona. As we have already seen, Bishop Avogadro, during his episcopate presented in his diocese activities for moral renewal. He gave a great boost to catechesis and in his pastoral letters, he insisted on the urgent need of religious instruction. From Magdalene's letters to her Milanese friend, Caroline, it is easy to capture her interest in the teaching of catechism, which continuously urged her to seek new ways and to compare methods between Milan and Verona. On February 15, 1801 she wrote:

*"I know very well that you have at heart the glory of God ... please send me the Rules of Christian Doctrine of St. Charles, since I have met some Parish priests and other Religious responsible for the School of Doctrine who are willing to make use of them even here. As you know, thanks to God we are not badly off with religion in our place, so I hope that these Rules will bring about much good."*⁶

Desiring to meet adequately the needs of the French soldiers stationed at Verona, she again wrote to Caroline on March 10, 1801:

*"I received from General Chasseloup⁷ the two booklets which you sent and I thank you. I will try, with the help of Fr. Carl⁸ or Fr. Giambattista⁹, to put the catechism in the hands of some French people. If I succeed I will ask you for more" .*¹⁰

After a month she renewed her request:

*".. if it is not too much trouble, please send me some copies of the French catechism to give those who need it."*¹¹

Besides, Magdalene, who knew out of experience how difficult it was for servants to attend the parish catechism, which was held at times when they were serving their masters, she collaborated with Fr. Pietro Leonardi¹² to re-establish the Sunday catechism for servants and other workers at an hour convenient for them. The initiative was not new; Bishop Giovanni Morosini¹³, during the Diocesan Synod of 1782 promoted it in Verona and in Milan, Cardinal Pozzobonelli¹⁴ in 1784, wrote a pastoral letter in which he recommended the Parish priests to facilitate the attendance of servants at the Schools of Christian Doctrine. At the beginning of the 19th Century, the need to revive this initiative was felt. Magdalene informs Caroline Durini thus:

*"... Fr. Pietro is preparing to begin within a few days catechism classes for the servants, for which the book you kindly sent me will be useful."*¹⁵

And on April 28, 1801, going back to the same topic, she specified some details:

⁶ M.d.C., to Durini, 15 February, 1801. Ep.I, p 21

⁷ Chasseloup-Lubat Francois (1754 - 1833): general commander of the army under Napoleon. Friend of the noble families of Canossa and Durini (cf. Dossi, Ep. I, p 1)

⁸ Steeb don Carlo (1773 - 1856): young Lutheran German born in Tubinga. He went to Verona for training in the fabric trade. He was converted to the Catholic faith, joined the priesthood and with Luisa Poloni (1802 - 1855), founded the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy (cf. Dossi, Ep. I, p 12)

⁹ Bertolini P. Giambattista (1748 - 1827): born in 1770, he entered the Congregation of the Filippini Fathers in Verona. He was preacher, apostle and director of souls.

¹⁰ M.d.C., to Durini, 10 March, 1801, Ep. I, p . 31 - 32

¹¹ M.d.C., to Durini, 7 April, 1801, Ep. I, p 42

¹² Leonardi don Pietro: born in Verona in 1769. He was ordained priest in 1794. In 1796, he founded the Evangelical Brotherhood of Priests and Lay hospitaliers and in 1809, he instituted the Daughters of Jesus. He died in Verona in 1844.

¹³ Ibid, Chap. II, p. 27

¹⁴ Ibid, Chap. II, p. 51

¹⁵ M.d.C. to Durini, 14 April, 1801, Ep. I, p. 45

*"Our project for the Catechism of which I spoke to you, due to present circumstances, has not been put into effect. Only next Sunday we shall begin catechism classes for servants, as last year, in the Church next to the Hospital, that is in St. Agnes' ... Fr Pietro would like to find ways to ensure that each family would send all or some of the servants. I hope that with some calm, he will succeed."*¹⁶

Magdalene had this initiative at heart and did not miss any occasion to inform her Milanese friend about its development and most of all its effectiveness. On July 28, she wrote:

*"For sometime now, besides the usual Catechism that you know is used every Sunday morning at the Misericordia (Hospital) he, (Fr. Pietro) has started at the same time in the nearby Church of St. Agnes, catechism classes for servants. This is done by two Religious in the form of dialogue, in which one plays the part of the teacher and the other of the ignorant person, making it very pleasant and beneficial."*¹⁷

Zeal for the Gospel spurred creativity, the Marchioness, like Frs. Pietro Leonardi and Carlo Steeb, became the promoter for the popular Missions. The Church, through this pastoral initiative in which learned and zealous men were involved, showed her commitment to promote and cultivate the human resources of the people, consolidating their faith. This, however, was not appreciated by the democrats of the patriotic society, who solicited the publication of restrictive decrees on matters of religious freedom. In fact, in 1803, the Vicar General of the Diocese of Verona, with a circular letter, informed the parish priests about what had been decreed:

*"The Minister for worship prescribes that from now on, no Mission or extraordinary preaching be carried out in any Church of the Kingdom without a special permission of His excellency, upon information by the Bishop of the Diocese as well as of the respective Prefect of Department. Therefore, only the Lenten and Advent preaching, Sermons, the usual triduum of spiritual exercises during Lent and octaves for the dead, are permitted."*¹⁸

Such restrictions moved people to seek new forms of preaching to stem the spreading of religious and moral disorientation. Hence the extraordinary Spiritual Exercises were promoted. Magdalene informed Caroline Durini in a letter dated January 4, 1804:

*"Finally, thanks to the Lord, Fr. Pietro has found the way to give the extra ordinary Spiritual Exercises, which, just between us, will be the Missions."*¹⁹

When the family responsibilities which tied Magdalene down began to lessen she thought of "her plan", a religious institution. Drawing inspiration from the Rules of Christian Doctrine of St. Charles, she tried to organise a group of young women who desired to dress modestly to fight immorality. It was her intent to also single out among them some companions with whom to share more deeply her apostolic ideals. As usual, Magdalene communicated her project to her Milanese friend:

*"You have sent me ... the book of the Doctrine of St. Charles. The final part speaks of a Company under the protection of Our Lady, for the formation of teachers of Christian Doctrine with a very Christian and pious conduct. Here we do not have this custom; we are instead trying something very similar ... We are twelve to fourteen young women, the majority of whom are members of the Company of the Immaculate Conception of Holy Mary. We made a secret promise between us to be modestly dressed ... I dream of being able to, in this way, attract some young girls to dress modestly and we will also try in some way, to stop this torrent. We will meet in the house of my girls ... I confess to have another aim in such a Mission, that is, to find some companions for my future plans."*²⁰

¹⁶ M.d.C. to Durini, 28 April, 1801, Ep. I, p. 50

¹⁷ M.d.C. to Durini, 18 luglio, 1801, Ep. I, p. 74

¹⁸ Circolare del Vicario Generale di Verona, A. S. MI, Parte moderna, Culto, 2880, Fasc. 55

¹⁹ M.d.C., to Durini, 4 January, 1804, Ep. I. p. 213

²⁰ M.d.C., to Durini, 26 December, 1804, Ep I, pp 244

CHAPTER 4

The second ministry of charity in the "Plans" of Magdalene

The "APOSTOLIC PROJECT" of Magdalene, in its fundamental articulation, emerges from the category of texts commonly called "PLANS", which she wrote within a period of thirty years (1779 - 1829), in order to make her "INSTITUTION" known to the ecclesial and civil authorities.

Plan B.6

The plan with the initial B. 6 is the first example of this series of texts. This is an autographed document, but it has neither date nor title. Two letters of the spiritual director, Fr. Luigi Libera, and one written by Magdalene herself to Antonio Rosmini, allow us to confirm that the Plan dated back to 1799.¹ In it are already outlined the three "needs": that of education, religious instruction and assistance to the sick to whom the religious, both men and women are to devote themselves. Regarding religious instruction, however, in the section about the "Women"(Religious), it is said that their task is to accompany this ecclesial ministry with prayer.

*"With regard to religious instruction, they(women) can assist only with prayer to obtain light and graces for them from the Lord . "*²

To the Religious men instead, besides the instruction of the boys "in holy Religion", she entrusts to them the task of teaching catechism to the servants and to some country people. In the Plan it is written:

*"We move on to speak ... of the second need: Christian instruction. Generally speaking, because of the vigilance of our Superiors and the care of the Parish priests, in our diocese the persons who are greatly in need of these seem to fall under two categories. They seem to fall under two categories. The domestics who serve in the city, because their masters have a late lunch, miss the parish catechism and many of them live in incredible ignorance. The others are some country people who, in spite of the care of the Parish priests, due to the situations of their villages, are forced, especially during winter, to stay without hearing the Word of God for months on end. This Congregation thinks of providing for the need of the first category of people by holding catechism classes every Sunday at an hour most convenient to the domestics, in a Church that will be chosen for it. To the second we would render our help by choosing from among the members of the Congregation according to their respective call, a number of Religious who would go, without any remuneration, to give the Missions in the countryside where their Superiors were to send them. "*³

¹ Libera L., a M.d.C., S luglio, 1799, Ep. III/5, p. 4231 *"The plan, my daughter, is to be handled with prudence, discretion and be easily put into practice."*

II- Libera L., a M.d.C., December 14, 1799, Ep. 111/5. p. 4233 *"The Plan has to be sustained, but it is necessary to adapt to the circumstances."*

III- M.d.C., to Rosmini, 3 october, 1821, Ep. II/2, p. 756 *"... that idea or draft (Plan) which I sent to you in writing, though not completely clear, has been in my mind for more than 20 years..."*

² M.d.C., Plan B. 6-6, in Ep.II/2, p. 1419

³ M.d.C., Plan B. 6-6, in Ep. 11/2, p. 1417

When, as already said above, Magdalene programmed the catechism for servants⁴ with Don Pietro Leonardi, she had in mind this part of Plan B.6, which she called the "*Great Plan*". In fact, she expressed herself thus with her Milanese friend, Caroline, on April 14, 1801:

*"Don Pietro Leonardi is getting ready to begin in a few days catechism classes for the servants ... One of these days he (D. Pietro) is coming to see me; so I will write to you about the way I think we will agree for catechism here, to make it coincide with the Great Plan, without making it obvious."*⁵

Plan B.7

In 1808, Magdalene opened the first house of the Institute in Verona, which she called the "*original house of the Congregation*"⁶. The Institution was being established and Magdalene drafted a document with the title: "*Plan of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity*"⁷ which, together with Plan B.6, would be the basis for the other foundations of the Institute. In it, her capacity to get close to reality, to read under the guidance of the Spirit, "*the signs of the times*" is clearly seen. She saw how in the suburban Parishes like that of S. Zeno and in the countryside, religious ignorance was spreading, due also to the lack of trained catechists, capable of exercising their services fruitfully. In the Plan we read:

*"In the House of the Congregation they will open schools for all the poor and vagrant girls. Since the city is big and, especially in winter, not many girls would be able to avail themselves of this help, these persons (The Sisters of Charity), according to their numbers, will open schools in the parishes, with the consent of the Parish Priests, in the various places from the house of the Congregation. In such schools, they will teach ... Christian Doctrine, not only the words, but they will explain their meaning too. The girls will be educated to acquire good habits and to love the Holy Catholic Religion."*⁸

Magdalene had very much at heart the salvation of her "*neighbours*", so from the beginning of the Institute, she tried to reach out to the greatest possible number of girls to give them Catechetical instruction. She was solicitous that the truths of faith be understood not only at the intellectual level, but may form the conscience and be translated into Christian life, thus promoting moral and spiritual growth.

Plan .8

The General Plan with the initial B..8 bears a date coinciding with the opening of the House in Venice: August 1, 1812. Magdalene, in a "*Detailed report on the origin of the Institute*", sent to C. Durini, called this house the "*first*" because here, the three ministries of charity were carried out from the beginning:

*"The Lord started even this House (Venice) which being the first where the three important ministries of charity are carried out, is considered the first in the Institute"*⁹.

This General Plan assumed a special importance because it indicated that the project of her "*Works*" was already clear to her and that it was progressively establishing itself. In it, Magdalene gave a very precise

⁴ cf ibid, Chap. 111, p.63

⁵ M.d.C., to Durini, 14 April, 1801, Ep. 1, p. 45

⁶ M.d.C., Piano della Congregazione delle Sorelle della Carila' per la Citta' n.n., B.7-7, in Ep. II/2, p. 1421

⁷ ibid., p. 1420

⁸ ibid

⁹ M.d.C., to Durini, 30 January, 1816, Ep. I, p. 435

outline of the evils afflicting a large part of the population. Above all, she was concerned over the spreading of religious ignorance among the faithful.

*"Among the many spiritual needs of the Christian people, she noticed especially the following: the neglect of the poor girls both those of a most tender age and the adolescents; the ignorance of the poor women who either because of their negligence infrequenting the Christian Doctrine well, generally speaking, they do not even know the things necessary for salvation. Moreover, they do not even know how to approach the most Holy Sacraments."*¹⁰

This situation of spiritual poverty challenged the heart of Magdalene who responded by establishing, in the same Plan, how the Daughters of Charity could meet the urgent need of catechesis she had noticed through her attentive reading of reality.

*"With regard to the spiritual need of Doctrine, besides making it compulsory for all the girls to attend, the Sisters will accompany them. They will do the same on the days assigned for attendance at Holy Mass and the most Holy Sacraments. In the Christian Doctrine classes, with the exception of accepting positions of offices, the Sisters will lend themselves to any charge, be it the instruction of the girls or of the women. They receive besides, in a place in the house assigned for this but separate from that of the school, all those women or girls who, either on their own or sent by their confessors, were to come in order to be instructed."*¹¹

The Foundress, already in the General Plan, anticipating what she would say in the Rules, established that in the Schools of Christian Doctrine, the Daughters of Charity should not accept any particular office (Prioress, Sub-prioress) because, as we have seen in the Rules for the Schools of Christian Doctrine,¹² the latter had only to supervise the running of the School while the teaching was not entrusted to them.

Magdalene wants her Daughters to be real catechists who *"break the bread of God's Word"* to those who hunger for the truth and are in need of light. The privileged beneficiaries of this ministry, shown in the Plan, are the girls of the School and of the Parish, the young women who have no possibility to attend either of these, and also adult women who need to be freed from the evil of ignorance. Magdalene showed special interest for youth whom she considered *"the hope of tomorrow"*. In a document, left unfinished, with the initials B.5, she wrote:

*".... for the youth who are the hope of the future, you will see that we try to help ... by instructing them ... taking care that they approach the Holy Sacraments with the right frequency and in the proper ways, and continuing to instruct them in the parish Doctrine; taking custody of them even on Sundays during those hours when they would, otherwise, roam the streets to enjoy themselves..."*¹³

¹⁰ M.d.C., Piano Generale della Istituzione delle Sorelle della Carità, 'Serve dei Poveri, cominciata a piantarsi in Venezia Fanny 1812: il giorno primo d'Agosto, sotto la protezione di Maria SS.ma Addolorata, B.8-8, in Ep.II/2, pp. 1422-1423

¹¹ M.d.C., Piano Generale ... o.c., Ep. II/2, p. 1423

¹² cf. *ibid*, Capo.II, p.25

¹³ M.d.C., Prefazione alle Figlie della Carità, B. 5-5, Ep. II/2, p. 1414.

CHAPTER 5

The second Ministry of Charity in the "Rules" for Christian Doctrine

Magdalene of Canossa, expert educator and Mother, established special "Rules" for the Sisters sent to teach catechism in the parishes. They consisted of an introduction with 14 points in which were formulated the principles which fostered the formation of the Sister catechists and directed them in their ministry. From these we can see that Magdalene knew well the Statutes of the Schools of Christian Doctrine, published by various Bishops, beginning from the Council of Trent down to her time. This is confirmed by Magdalene herself, who stated her adherence to two great promoters: Gian Matteo Giberti, Bishop of Verona, and St. Charles Borromeo, the great Archbishop of Milan.¹ However, an attentive comparison between her "Rules" and those of the Congregations of the Schools of Christian Doctrine of Verona, Venice and Milan brings to light also considerable differences. Magdalene is not concerned about describing an organization or a formal structure; she does not limit herself to a generic affirmation of principles. Instead, she offers to her Daughters precise criteria and suggestions, aimed at fostering the identity of the Canossian catechist and indicating "her" specific way of carrying out this ministry.

The Ministry of Charity "Par Excellence"

Evangelization is the key motive of all the apostolic activities of Magdalene. Moved by the love of God, she seeks his glory, devoting herself with untiring zeal so that all may know and love Him. In order to affect the whole person, religious instruction cannot remain isolated from the real situation of the beneficiaries. One can, therefore, understand the importance of the charismatic intuition of Magdalene who perceives the close relationship between evangelization and the other two ministries of charity. The Word, in fact, demands that the person be disposed to welcome it. This is the task of education; and this Word, which is for life, must show its ability to give meaning and value, even in the limitations that man meets with: this is the task of the pastoral care of the sick. It is just in this light that Magdalene considers the ministry of catechesis the "most perfect" act of charity towards the neighbour, and as the direct offering of the gift of the Word of life. In the introduction to the Rules for Doctrine, she writes:

"... since there is no act of charity as perfect as that of helping one's neighbour to love God. Now one of the best means of making Him loved is to make Him known; hence one of the ministries especially contemplated in this Institute, which is totally dedicated to holy charity, is that of assisting at the Christian Doctrine Schools".²

We can also understand why the entire Institute is "totally dedicated to holy charity". The Foundress invites, therefore, her Daughters to carry out this ministry as a gift of love, to be shared with our brothers, so that they may know and love Jesus Christ, the greatest Love.

Therefore, in her great zeal, Magdalene, whose heart, urged by "Charity", knows no boundaries, wants to proclaim Christ, and make Him known, inviting all to encounter Him, so that they may have "Life".

That Jesus may be known and loved

The Daughter of Charity attains the charismatic aim of this ministry by committing herself to guide her beneficiaries to encounter the living person of Christ.

¹ cfr. M.d.C., Regole per le Dottrine, in R.s.s., P. 1t, Regola VIII, p. 209

² ibid., p. 205

" in the Schools of Christian Doctrine, with the due knowledge of God and the revealed truths, they are to teach (them) especially to know Christ".³

It is a "knowledge" which goes beyond learning and which solicits a vital process, involving the whole personality of the Canossian catechist and of her beneficiaries. It is a "knowing" which leads to an intimate and deep relationship with Christ Crucified "who breathes nothing but charity."⁴

" ,.... **from the heart and in practice**"

Magdalene also indicates to the Sisters the special objective of their catechetical activity: to show how Jesus is truly the greatest Good for man, so that from the heart of the listeners may spring forth the desire and the joy of loving Him and the commitment to live according to His will, thus becoming gifts of love for their neighbours. Magdalene expresses this with the conviction characteristic of the saints:

*" ... in teaching especially the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Sisters necessarily arouse **first Holy Charity in the heart of their pupils, and then teach them how to practise it, through the observance of the commandments of God and of the Church**".⁵*

The knowledge of Jesus Christ is enriched and strengthened through the encounter with Him in the Sacraments. Magdalene suggests to the Sisters to help their beneficiaries to treasure these gifts, so that strengthened in faith, they may express their Christian calling, living a life "full of charity". In the Rules we find written:

"... the Sisters should emphasize the channels Our Lord Jesus Christ left the Church, His Spouse, in order to spread sanctifying grace in her as well as all the other gifts, so that the faithful may be able to live a life full of charity and love, as the life of every Christian should be."⁶

The catechetical instruction which aims at the Christian formation of the girls cannot therefore be limited only to simple religious knowledge, but must foster a mentality of faith, a way of being, thinking and acting as believers. When indicating the sources from which the Daughters of Charity are to draw the gift to be communicated to their neighbours, Magdalene gives us a glimpse of her sacramental life, in particular the Eucharist. It is the source from which she continually draws new energy to overcome the difficulties she meets,⁷ and the love to be able to live always united to the Lord.⁸

We can then understand the exhortation she addresses to the Sisters:

³ ibid

⁴ M.d.C., Della Carita' fratema, R. .s., P.1t, p. 93

⁵ M.d.C., Regole per le Dottrine, in R. .s , P. 1A, p.205

⁶ ibid

⁷ "One morning, feeling more dejected than ever, she told the Lord that if He did not help her she would be crushed under the weight. She made an effort to receive Holy Communion. After that, she felt strengthened and continued to receive communion for some mornings, experiencing after receiving the Sacred Host an inner physical sensation which she did not know how to explain. The final time, after communion, this effect became so violent, that it seemed as if she had the sun within her breast ... but the force of it was such that she feared she could no longer contain neither the Lord nor her soul ... and that her chest would burst." (M. .C., Memoirs, pp. 269

⁸ She also experienced how, through Holy Communion, Christ gives himself to souls who receive Him with faith, transforms and unites them more closely to Him: "Another day while preparing for Holy Communion, it was manifested to her in a way which cannot be explained, how the Divine Son sees the Father and how in Holy Communion, in a certain way, God unites Himself, or better, unites to Himself all souls who receive Him by His grace. This union is similar to the one in God, and God in all souls. Hence she understood how close a union there is among all through Holy Communion." (M.d.C., Memoirs p. 353 cf. Pi cari T., o.c., p. 406)

*"They are to make the girls fall in love with the grace of the Lord, instilling in them the desire for the most Holy Sacraments ..."*⁹

And in the Rules for the Schools"

*"... they are to try to form the girls all for Him (the Lord), by instilling in them a tender, but solid piety, by instructing them, little by little in the matters of their faith, watching that they receive well, often and fruitfully the most Holy Sacraments..."*¹⁰

With attention to the person, "in her own ways"

Magdalene, drawing from Christ the love for man, the whole man, each with his unique traits, tries to make her own pedagogy of Christ. She helps the Sisters to understand how important it is in this ministry to know the beneficiaries in order to respect their needs and their real potential.¹¹ Every person, as such, is unique in his identity, in the rhythm of its development, his intellectual and affective faculties. It is just to this mysterious reality that the Sister catechist is called to come close to, with great respect and love. Magdalene in fact writes thus:

*In order to succeed well in educating these girls, it is fitting that the Sisters study their character and temperament because what serves for one is not necessarily good for another. Aware of this, the Sisters should try to handle each one in the way she is made...and this requires that the Sisters use greater gentleness with one, more forcefulness with another, and more reasoning with another..."*¹²

Catechetical activity demands personalized relationship. Magdalene wanted, as it was already a tradition in the school of Christian Doctrine of her time, that the classes should not be numerous, and that in each class, there be a teacher and her assistant"

*"possibly in every class there should be no more than eight or ten girls and... there be in each class a teacher with an assistant."*¹³

The attention she has for the person is shown by the care she has for the organizational aspect:

*"In each class, there is to be a small cha with the **names of the teacher, her assistant and the girls attending that class. Those of the girls are to be changed when they pass over to the next class.**"*¹⁴

.... not to preach, 'but to break the bread'"

For Magdalene, the transmission of the truths of the faith must lead, as we have seen, not just to learning formulas by heart, but to an interior formation.

*"... trying to form them so that they may become truly Christian children, well grounded in the Doctrine of Christ and of the Church..."*¹⁵

⁹ M.d.C., Regole per le Dottrine, R. .s., P. 1A, Regole IX, p. 12

¹⁰ M.d.C., Regole delle Scuole, R. .s., P. A pp. 179-180

¹¹ cf Giaccon M, o.c., p. 200

¹² M.d.C., Regole delle Scuole, R.s.s. P A, Regola XXXII, p. 196

¹³ M.d.C., Regole per le Dottrine, R.s.s., P. 1^, Regole VIII, p. 209

¹⁴ ibid., p.210

¹⁵ M.d.C., Piano B.3-3, in Ep.II/2, p. 1407

Therefore, the Sister catechist must gradually accompany their pupils, to understand ever more deeply the significance of what they learn, for life:

*"it is very important for their spiritual good that the disciples be well instructed about the meaning of what they repeat by heart"*¹⁶

In order to facilitate the assimilation of the elements of faith, Magdalene indicates the indispensable premises that specify and qualify the catechetical ministry of the Daughters of Charity.

"Therefore, while explaining to the girls the content of that part of the Doctrine which the girls have recited by heart they are to keep; the text in their hands, as we, poor women, are appointed not to preach but to break the bread for the children. They are to teach with simplicity, devotion and respect, keeping to the text of the Doctrine they are explaining. They may even give simple examples, but these should be suited to the holiness of the matter of which they are speaking about.

*They should not give examples which are not from well approved authorities."*¹⁷

Our Holy Foundress, with her usual wisdom and prudence, forcefully invites the Sisters to rigorously respect the conscience, refraining from judging the moral responsibility of the actions of others.

"They must never enter into deciding what might be mortal or venial sin. They should especially try to see that the girls understand what it means to be a Christian and the obligation that this holy character bears with it . . . and try to instil in them a great horror for sin. .

*As was said, they are to do all this with simplicity, and without wanting to show either that they know or that they speak eloquently .*¹⁸

In fidelity to the Church

The Daughters of Charity are called to carry out their service of evangelization in communion and fidelity to the directives of the Church. Ecclesiality, in fact, is the characteristic of the whole of Magdalene's apostolic activity. The Sisters, aware that theirs is a service for the Church, go to the parish every Sunday to proclaim the Christian message, taking with them even their pupils, if they are teachers in the School.

*"... if the Sisters assigned are also teachers in the Schools of Charity ... they will take with them a proportionate number of girls to Church, where there will be the Doctrine of the Parish."*¹⁹

The Sisters must show their fidelity to the Church even in following the methods, texts and systems of the diocese where they are called to serve.

*". .. the sisters, even in their classes, must keep entirely to the method and Catechism text of the Diocese, where they are serving . .. in every diocese there are the general Rules of Christian Doctrine and those must be followed."*²⁰

And again:

"For the spiritual Christian Instruction, will depend filially and completely on their own diocesan Bishop, using the diocesan catechism text to teach Christian Doctrine in their houses to girls and

¹⁶ M.d.C., Regole per le Dottrine, R.s.s., P.1[^], Regola VIII, p.210

¹⁷ ibid., Regola IX, pp. 211 -212

¹⁸ ibid., Regola IX, p 212

¹⁹ ibid., Regola I, p. 206

²⁰ ibid., Regole VII, VIII, pp.208 e 211

women. They will do the same while exercising this office in the Parish churches or chapels depending entirely on the respective Parish priests."²¹

.... in a spirit of service

Magdalene emphasizes that any formative intervention has to manifest love for God and for neighbour. Therefore, the Sisters are called even in this ministry, to assume the style of Jesus, his way of serving man, free from any form of egoism.

*"The Sisters will assist in the Christian Doctrine Schools in the Parishes where the Houses of the Institute are situated ... In these Doctrine Schools, the Sisters will dedicate themselves to assisting and serving in whatever way the Superiors of the Doctrine classes desire ... they are never to accept any presiding role or duty which gives them a position of command."*²²

And again:

*"The Sisters will go to the class which the Superior of the Doctrine School (normally a lay person) will have assigned to them, accepting any class or task. They should be and show themselves fully content even if their place and occupation were to be changed every Sunday. The only thing they are forbidden is to accept any charge ... since ... we must serve and not be served."*²³

The Sisters collaborate with the Parish priest and the Superiors of the Christian Doctrine (Prior and Vice Prior) in a relationship of mutual respect and recognition of the roles:

*"The Sisters are to be most respectful to . . . the Parish priests and all priests who assist at the respective Doctrine classes .. they are to obey them in all they command, when this is compatible with their Rules . . . They are to submit themselves fully to and obey the Superiors of the same Doctrine ... and talk to them meekly and submissively ... not engaging themselves in any conversation which does not concern Christian Doctrine..."*²⁴

Most zealous in this holy exercise

For Magdalene, it was prayer that nourished and enriched every apostolic commitment. From the prayer that united her intimately to God came the zeal to make Him known and loved. Her Daughters too, engaged in this ministry, are invited to be assiduous in prayer, being aware that only the Lord knows how to open the hearts of their beneficiaries to the truth and can suggest the steps to grow as good Christians.

*"On reaching the Church, after having adored the Divine Sacrament... they shall remain in prayer until Doctrine begins. . . As soon as they return home. .. the Superior shall send them to adore the Divine Sacrament..."*²⁵

The Sisters engaged in this ministry are called to share in the Foundress' zeal for the salvation of their neighbour and therefore, to be "most zealous" in this service, being aware of the copious fruits it produces in themselves and in their neighbour and thus give glory to God.

²¹ M.d.C., R.s.s., P.1^, Appendice alle Regole, p. 75

²² M.d.C., R.s.s., P.1^, Carita' verso il prossimo, p. 44

²³ M.d.C., Regole per le Dottrine, R.s.s., P. 1^, Regola III e IV, p. 207

²⁴ ibid., Regola V, VI, pp. 207 - 208

²⁵ ibid., Regola II, XIV, pp. 206-207 e 213

*"Unfortunately ... having observed so great a decadence in the Faith and much depravity in the manner of living, the Sisters of Charity should be most zealous in this holy work, which gives much pleasure to the Lord, much merit to themselves and is so beneficial to their neighbour. Since this work is most displeasing to the devil, it is certainly, it is certainly necessary to be ready to encounter humiliations, mortifications, suffering and fatigue."*²⁶

To love the Lord, "to break His Word ", so that others may know and love Him, is such a great "gift" for the Daughters of Charity that it deserves the commitment of all their energies and resources, and makes them overcome any difficulty and fatigue:

*"Since this work greatly displeases the devil, it is surely necessary that they be ready to meet with humiliations, mortifications, disappointments and fatigue. But they are to remember that anyone who really wants to love the Lord and make Him loved, ought to be ready to embrace any painful encounter at least with patience and gentleness so that they may testify to the Lord that affection which is nothing, as St. Gregory says, when it is not accompanied by deeds. In this Work the Sisters must specially keep in mind what Our Divine Saviour said and did for our salvation when He lived on this earth. Even though He was omnipotent and God Most High, He stated that He had come to serve and not to be served."*²⁷

It is true that one who "is not burning with zeal herself cannot set others aflame"²⁸ The Daughter of Charity is called, by her vocation, to bring the fire of God's love to all hearts. But she knows that she is just a simple instrument in proclaiming Jesus to the world.

This is a gift, a grace! Magdalene reminds her Daughters:

*"... the fruit produced in our neighbour is all the work of grace, which, as the saying of St. Joseph of Copertino goes, uses us as man uses a trumpet, that is useless without sound ..."*²⁹

Magdalene concludes the introduction to the Rules for Doctrine thus:

*"... in this holy exercise, it is recommended that the Sisters renew and purify their intention while going into the Christian Doctrine Schools, as people who have no other care except God and His Glory"*³⁰

Adequately prepared

Magdalene is aware that the effectiveness of the catechetical activity depends on the formation of those called to carry out this ministry. Such awareness is expressed in terms of requirements:

*"... the Superior will not appoint a Sister to teach in the Christian Doctrine Schools if she has not been instructed herself, according to the Rules and traditions of the Institute."*³¹

The Foundress establishes adequate times and ways, so that the Sister catechists may deepen "the mysteries of our faith", under the guidance of the Ministra of Doctrine, the Directress of Novices or other qualified Sisters. In this respect, the special chapter of the Rules dedicated by Magdalene to the formation of the

²⁶ M.d.C., Regole per le Dottrine, R.s.s., P. 1[^], p. 205

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ M.d.C., R.s.s., Prefazione, p. 24

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ M.d.C., Regole per le Dottrine, R.s.s., P.1[^], p. 206

³¹ *ibid.*, Regola IX, p. 212

Sisters is precious. It is entitled: *"Ways to be followed in preparing the Sisters to be able to teach Christian Doctrine."*³²

In it we read:

*"In the fifth Rule of Charity towards the neighbour, it is said that during the days established, at the given hour in the time table, the Sisters will be trained in Christian Doctrine. In order that this be, at the same time, fruitful and serve as a good foundation, the Superior will appoint the Ministra for Doctrine, the Directress of Novices or any other Sisterwell instructed in the same Doctrine, to preside over it."*³³

Magdalene is convinced that the formation for this ministry cannot be sporadic and fragmentary. It must ensure the comprehension and assimilation of the patrimony of faith, but also prepare the Sister catechist to accompany the growth of their beneficiaries. To enable them to "break" the Word effectively, she establishes a period of training under the guidance of the Ministra:

*"After the Sisters are sufficiently prepared in the four essential parts of the Doctrine, the Ministra has to take care that they are well versed in other doctrinal matters that are touched upon ... and how to instruct the girls about Holy Mass and the way to attend... When the Sisters have been trained to explain and ask questions on each part of the Doctrine, the Ministra or the Sister presiding over it must ensure that each of them will practise teaching, following the Doctrine of the diocese where the House is established ... taking care in explaining the contents, of what is taught by the Roman catechism and that of Bellarmino".*³⁴

The wisdom of the Foundress moves her even further. She insists with the Superiors that the Sister catechists should be offered the possibility of evaluating their service with a well qualified priest:

*"All the Superiors, however, must not think that they are dispensed from what had been practised in the Institute up to now, by the fact that the Sisters make use of Catechisms sanctioned and approved by Holy Church and pleasing to her. That is, they are to ask now and then the Confessor of the House and when he cannot, a priest of great virtue and sound doctrine, loyal to the Apostolic See, to kindly examine our way of instructing and teaching, in order to avoid having abuses and errors introduced at any time, endangering or at least making this Holy Week useless."*³⁵

In Verona, Magdalene asks Fr. Nicola Galvani who was the Prior General of the Congregation of the Schools of Christian Doctrine of the Diocese during the episcopacy of Msgr. Innocenza Liruti, to carry out this delicate task with the Sister catechists of the community³⁶ Even witnesses at the ordinary process for the beatification and canonization of the Marchioness attest it:

*"The Foundress, in this matter, (teaching of catechism) was so attentive and precise in not giving to anyone teachings which were not examined by competent persons. Among those I remember, the Archpriest of St Giovanni in Foro, Fr. Galvani, well known theologian, her Spiritual Director and first Superior of this House (Verona)."*³⁷

³² *ibid.*, pp. 214 - 215

³³ *ibid.*, p.214

³⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 214-215

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 215

³⁶ *cf. ibid.*, Capo II, p. 33

³⁷ Sacra Ritum Congregatione, Responsio ad novas animadversiones, Nova Positio super virtutibus, Romae 1909, p.38, A.C.R.

"... they will shine like stars..."

Magdalene, after offering her insights into the gift commitment in regard to this ministry of Charity, concludes by indicating to the Sister catechists how to guarantee fruitfulness in the service that they carry out and their reward.

"The Sisters are to remember that for them, the grace of bearing fruit, even in this work, is bound to the observance of their Rules. The good they do and the fruit they produce in their neighbour usually depend on their fidelity in keeping their Rules."³⁸

Besides, she encourages them to be fervent in this ministry and to serve God enthusiastically, breaking the bread of his Word, sure that the Divine reward will not be lacking, as it is affirmed by the Prophet Daniel: "... those who have instructed many in virtue will shine as bright as stars for all eternity."³⁹

"After all that the Saints have said about the greatness, holiness and excellence of the holy work of teaching Christian Doctrine, and after the Church has shown her approval by giving many indulgences, nothing more remains to be added in order to encourage the Sisters to be attentive and zealous in dedicating themselves to it. Only they are reminded of the special glory promised in heaven to those who dedicate themselves to instructing the ignorant, that is, they will shine as bright as stars for all eternity."⁴⁰

³⁸ M.d.C., Regole per le Dottrine, R.s.s., P. 1[^], p. 213

³⁹ Dn. 12:3

⁴⁰ M.d.C., Regole per le Dottrine, R.s.s., P.1[^], p. 213

CHAPTER 6

The second ministry of Charity in the communities founded by Magdalene

The community in Verona

Magdalene not only wrote the Rules for Christian Doctrine, the Catechisms, the comments on the Sunday
~4

Gospels in the Liturgical Year, but also started concretely, together with her first Daughters, the ministry of evangelization as a specific "*Branch*" of the Institute. Although limited, the written documentation is sufficient to understand how, as soon as a house was opened, the Daughters of Charity dedicated themselves immediately to the Parish catechesis, to the preparation of the girls for the Sacraments, especially those of Confession, Communion and Confirmation. In 1808, the Institute started officially in Verona. Magdalene drew up in the Plan of the Daughters of Charity, the programme for parish doctrine for the girls. In it, we read:

*"some poor women teach their pupils the Rosary and the first elements of Christian Doctrine, but they make them learn by heart without explaining the meaning which they themselves do not know ... The said pious women (the Sisters of Charity) will open, with the consent of the Parish priests ... in such schools, they will teach... Christian Doctrine, not just the letter, but they will also explain its meaning."*¹

From 1808, the teaching of Catechism to the girls of S.Zeno follows the normal rhythm. This is confirmed by a Veronese Lady, Elena Librani Morosi² who collaborates with the Sisters of St. Joseph's Community. Magdalene desired to engage herself, together with this Lady, in this work which was so pleasing to the Lord, but held by commitments in Venice, she replies on January 7, 1813 to Morosi's letter:

*". . . on my return I will help you in all I can and together, I hope we will serve the Lord in assisting in the Christian Doctrine of S. Zeno. I have this very much to heart and I assure you, as you already know, I will do whatever is more helpful to you, and together, we will see what is more conducive to reach the goal, that everything runs smoothly and peacefully, that the Lord be served, and that the work of Doctrine really flourish, as believe me, it is what is most useful and pleasing to the Lord. Besides, I am pleased to hear that you are still ready to depend on the archpriest Don Galvani³. My dear Lady Elena, listen to the same and Leopoldina⁴, and do not doubt that all will be well and you will acquire a beautiful crown."*⁵

The ministry of evangelization is a very important apostolic activity, but it requires great dedication and effort from the Sisters. The Foundress, writing to Elena Bernardi on June 19, 1819, expressed herself thus:

¹ M.d.C., Piano della Congregazione delle Sorelle della Carita', per la citta', n.n. B. 7-7, Ep. IU2, p. 1420

² Librani Morosini Elena (1769 - 1841), married to Luigi Morosi and had two children, Lorenzo and Lucia (cfr. Ep. I, p. 670)

³ Cfr., *ibid.*, Chapter I, note 8.

⁴ Naudet Leopoldina (1773 - 1834): bom in Florence where her father, a Frenchman, had been transferred when he entered the service of the Grand Duke of Toscana. When she was orphaned, she was summoned to live at court, first in Florence and later in Vienna. Together with the Archduchess Maria Anna and her sister Luisa, she was animator and superior, from 1801, of the newly founded Institute of the "Dilette di Gesu" (Beloved of Jesus), which had an Ignatian character. Unfortunately, the Institute did not last very long. After many trials she sought shelter, with her companion, Sofia Gagnere, in Murano. When they were in Venice, they followed the advice of Msgr. Pacetti, who invited them to go to Verona to collaborate with Magdalene of Canossa in the work of the foundation of her Institute. From 1808 to 1816 both groups lived together. Magdalene herself nominated Leopoldina Superior of the Convent of St Giuseppe; the latter remained in that position until she left for the monastery of the "Terese" (cfr. E. Pollonara, Magdalene of Canossa, *Memoirs*, Rusconi 1988, p. 401)

⁵ M.d.C. to Librani Morosi, 7 January 1813, Ep. I, p.671

*" ... we are working very hard with the girls because the Bishop (Innocenzo Liruti) comes to visit this venerable Church of S. Zeno. Therefore, we have the instructions for Confirmation, Holy Communion and also the Debates⁶ of several young girls. "*⁷

Writing again to her Daughter Elena for news, knowing that she was engaged in the catechesis of the First Communion girls, she communicated what she herself was doing in Verona:

*... you must give me news about your health because I imagine that you will be busier than usual with the girls for First Communion. On the other hand I am happy it is over. Here (in Verona) instead, they have ended the instruction for Confirmation on S. Zeno's day, but they have already begun that for Holy Communion. "*⁸

The apostolic labours of the Sisters of the Verona community were many, but they had increased because of the Jubilee celebration. In fact, Magdalene wrote:

*"These (Veronese) companions are overburdened on account of the Holy Jubilee. Because of this event, the girls for First Communion numbered 95. Now there are women, girls, little girls - naturally, there's no end to work. "*⁹

When Msgr. Innocenzo Liruti died, Msgr. Giuseppe Grasser was elected Bishop of Verona¹⁰. Before his entry in Verona, Magdalene had presented to him her homage and that of her Daughters. He replied from Treviso, synthesizing very well the catechetical apostolate of the Daughters of Charity:

*"I know how much Verona and all the other cities where it has joyfully spread, owe to the Institute of the Daughters of Charity. Thanks to them, the class of the most needy women and of the most abandoned female youth receive the most pure milk of Christian piety and are trained from adolescence to carry the yoke of the Lord. "*¹¹

Replying to her Daughter, Domenica Faccioli, on January 16, 1833, Magdalene gives reasons for the delay and the hurry, mainly her urgent apostolic commitment connected with the pastoral visit of Bishop Giuseppe Grasser to S. Zeno's parish:

*"You have reason to complain because it is days I do not rite, but you must know that **since** on Sunday, we shall have the official visit of the Bishop to the parish, we are very busy indeed with the instruction of the girls for Confirmation, the Doctrine classes and a Debate they have to do on the Doctrine".*¹²

A month later, she shares with the same Daughter the consolation she had in seeing a group of big girls busy throughout the Carnival time, preparing a debate on the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist:

"And now for "gnocchi" day. Yesterday, 243 girls were here for lunch. You can imagine the din. Tomorrow, we have a very important debate on the two sacraments of Penance and of the Eucharist, with the relative symbols from Divine Scripture. Those debating are girls from the big

⁶ The "Debate" was considered as a catechetical "entertainment". Some girls prepared themselves on a topic that had already been explained during the Doctrine class, and during a solemn feastday or some special occasion, they would present it in public. This is generally carried out in a church, in the presence of the authorities, of their companions, friends and other believers.

⁷ M.d.C., to Bernardi, 19 June 1819, Ep.IIVI, p.311

⁸ M.d.C., to Bernardi, 23 April 1822, Ep.IIVI p. 512

⁹ M.d.C., to Bernardi, 19 June 1826, Ep. IIV2, pp. 1408- 1409

¹⁰ Cfr. Chapter II, note 42

¹¹ Grasser mons Giuseppe, a M .d.C., 11 February 1829, Ep.II/1. p. 248

¹² (12) M.d.C. to Faccioli, 16 January 1833, Ep.IIV5, pp. 3290 3291

*Union of Our Lady of Sorrows*¹³. All their thoughts throughout the Carnival were holy because they were taken up with learning their Doctrine. Their happiness was and still is for me a real consolation. Tell this to their companions there (Bergamo)" .¹⁴

Angela Bragato, who had lived for many years in the Verona community, as Novice Mistress and Superior, was transferred to Trent in 1833. Our holy Foundress, sure that she would be happy, informed her about the catechetical activities going on in Verona:

"We have the Debate on the Sacraments in general and of Holy Anointing. It was almost completely composed by Isabella ¹⁵ . ." ¹⁶

The Community in Venice

Magdalene of Canossa started the work officially in Venice on August 1, 1812 in a small rented house in Campo S. Andrea in Sestiere di S. Croce. She had only two companions: Elizabeth Mezzaroli, who had come with her from Verona, and Frances Maria Ghezzi **17**, who joined them on April 26, 1812. The apostolic activities were not started as soon as the House was opened. Their first concern was to prepare themselves adequately for their new mission. Magdalene recalled these moments in her Memoirs:

"After this initial stage and because there were only three of us, we did not take up any particular work except visiting hospitals and preparing ourselves for the future." ¹⁷

Magdalene, however, is convinced that in order to establish the House on solid foundations and with all its activities, a monastery was needed. After laborious attempts, she obtained that of St. Lucy, where on October 9, 1813, she moved in with her Daughters. They started to work at once. Their first job is teaching Christian Doctrine because the ecclesial authorities were preoccupied with the scarcity of priests, the widespread ignorance and bad habits. On one occasion, during her stay in Venice, Magdalene reserves the task of preparing some girls for Communion. She spends all her physical and moral energies, and relating the event in the Memoirs,¹⁸ she states her reference for working with the youth over that of consolidating the Institute:

*"... I was privileged to work for the good of some poor girls who had to be prepared for First Communion. God arranged that I should be more occupied in this matter than I expected. To my great joy I felt my old enthusiasms for souls renewed within me. Even though my health deteriorated as a consequence of my commitments, I did not mind falling ill, or even dying, if it were required of me and if obedience would have allowed it...I was surprised to be overflowing with greater joy than I experienced during my ordinary life ~"*¹⁹

When the Patriarch Francesco Maria Milesi²⁰ entered the lagoon city in 1817, he found the social and religious situation very serious. Among the most urgent things to attend to were: assistance to the poor, catechesis and seminary life. During the year 1818, as we have already seen when dealing with the

¹³They were the older girls of the school who formed a group under the spiritual guidance of Mother Christina Pilotti.

¹⁴ M.d.C. to Faccioli, 15 February 1833, Ep. III/5, p. 3307

¹⁵ Countess Isabella Ferrari: native of Rimini, who remained in the Institute although she was sick, through the express will of the Foundress (cfr. Ep. IIV5, p. 4148). She died in 1840.

¹⁶ M.d.C. to Bragato, 2 February 1834, Ep.IIV5, p. 3571

¹⁷ Francesca Maria Ghezzi (1753 - 1818): ex-Superior of the suppressed monastery of the "Dimesse" in Murano. She joined Magdalene in Venice on 26 April 1812.

¹⁸ M.d.C., Memoirs, in R.s.s., P. 1A, p. 329

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 366

²⁰ Cfr., ibid, Chapter n, note 50

Church situation in Venice, the Patriarch tried to reorganize, by establishing two decrees, the Schools of Christian Doctrine for boys and girls. Magdalene wrote as follows to Elena Bernardi:

*"Msgr. Patriarch (Milesi) put a regulation in the schools of Christian Doctrine for the women, which as we know, there is crying need. He wants and provides with every possible means, in order that every person, no matter her conditions, attends the Doctrine. He visits this or that Church. Well, let us console ourselves even for this. "*²¹

Many women and girls were receiving religious instructions from the Daughters of Charity. The Patriarch himself affirms it in his report on the Institute to the Imperial Royal Government on September 10, 1818:

"If there is an Institute which is of greatest interest to my pastoral zeal, which merits special respect and which fits perfectly with the wise aims of the Majesty of His Imperial Highness ... without doubt, it is that of the Daughters of Charity. To give an idea to the Excellency of Your Imperial Government, so that it may support it to the utmost, I am honoured to submit herewith attached, the prospectus:

- Appendix A, with the objects in which the same Daughters of Charity engaged themselves, not omitting to add to it in

*- Appendix B. their name list and the number of girls who ... on Sundays attend their instruction, as well as that of the adult women of every age who frequent the Institute daily for the same purpose. The adult women of every age frequenting the Institute for instruction are about 100. The girls who go on Sundays for prayer and instruction are about 100 "*²²

The Daughters of Charity, with their ardent zeal, are also present in the parish Sunday Catechism. In fact, in the report of the first pastoral visit by the Patriarch Giovanni Ladislao Pyrker²³ to the parish of St. Geremia, to which the oratory of St. Lucy (which housed the female section of Christian Doctrine) belonged, we read:

*"Christian Doctrine: very good and truly consoling both for the solicitude of the clergy and the zealous cooperation of the parishioners: 3 sections ... c) female (section) in St. Lucy with 150 pupils and 20 - 30 teachers, sustained mainly by the "Daughters of Charity" ."*²⁴

In 1824, Patriarch Pyrker visited again personally the catechism schools held by the Daughters of Charity. Magdalene informed Rosa Dabala', Superior at Bergamo:

*"... since our most worthy Patriarch had to come to confirm one of our school girls who was very sick, and also a girl who was sick, he visited our doctrine (school); then he deigned to come and pay me a visit and showed me his great benevolence towards our little Institute. "*²⁵

Once again, in 1833, the Patriarch's Curia of Venice, on request of the Civil Authorities, reports on the actual situation of the community of the Daughters of Charity residing in St. Lucy. He testifies with statistics, how much good the Sisters were doing through their ministries of charity, especially through catechism:

²¹ M.d.C., to Bemardi, (March 1818), Ep. IIV5, p. 3990

²² Patriarca F.M. Milesi, all'Eccelso I.R. Governo, 10 September 1818, Ep.II/1, pp. 210-211 e 215

²³ Cfr. *ibid*, Chapter II, note 60

²⁴ La Visita Pastorale di G. L. Pyrker ... o.c., p. 61

²⁵ M.d.C. to Dabala', 8 June 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 868

*"All lend themselves, Superior included ... to the instruction of adults and assistance of Christian doctrine: 91 attend ... Many come for daily instruction. On Sundays, quite often, they are more than 180."*²⁶

It is true that they are only numbers, but they show with what generosity and dedication the Daughters of Charity lent their services so that all the girls could learn through catechesis, to know and love Jesus Christ.

On January 29, 1835, three months before her own death, Magdalene repeats to the Municipal Delegation of Venice that the Bishops and the Patriarchs are in the know and approve, even through their personal visits, what her Daughters do in the parishes and in their Houses. On this matter, she reminded them that the same Patriarch Giacomo Monico²⁷ had recently visited the catechism classes in St. Lucy, stopping also to listen and to put questions to the girls:

*"The Bishops are fully informed of the instruction and the moral and religious education we give to our very poor girls... now and again, they deign themselves to pay them a visit, to listen and to put questions to the girls, as was the case in Venice, his Eminence, the most Rev. Lord Cardinal Patriarch Monico of Venice deigned to do in our House of St. Lucy in Venice."*²⁸

The Community in Milan

After having been invited many times by her Milanese friends, finally in July 1816, Magdalene of Canossa decided to leave, together with three companions, for Milan, to open there the first House in the Lombard city. On July 11, 1816, she wrote to Caroline Durini:

*"God willing, I hope to leave for Milan on Tuesday, taking with me three companions. Of the three, you know only Elena Bernardi."*²⁹

Meanwhile, her friend, Caroline Durini had prepared the rooms in the rectory of St. Stephen's parish, furnishing them as instructed by Magdalene herself. The first concern of Magdalene is to programme, together with the parish priest, Don Francesco Maria Zoppi³⁰ and Countess Caroline, the apostolic activities. However, the ministry of evangelization starts in a systematic way only in the Lent of 1818. In the chronicle of the House in Milan, we read:

*"At the start of Lent 1818, they lent themselves to instruct in the parish, the girls who had been admitted that year to the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist."*³¹

Continuing, in the same chronicle, it is stated that during the two Easter weeks, *"the Daughters of Charity were tireless in helping as much as they could, to prepare the girls and women to celebrate Easter worthily."*³²

This experience in catechesis became a favourable occasion for knowing not only the girls but their families as well and all their needs. From that moment, as we read again in the Chronicles, there started:

²⁶ Curia Patriarcale di Venezia, 20 novembre 1833, Ep. II/1, p. 252

²⁷ Msgr Giacomo Monico: born in Riese in 1778. He was ordained in 1800. In 1822, he was consecrated Bishop of Ceneda, and in 1829, he became patriarch of Venice and in 1833, he was made Cardinal. He died in Venice in 1851.

²⁸ M.d.C. to Delegazione Municipale di Venezia, 29 January 1835, Ep. IV1, p. 178

²⁹ M.d.C., to Durini, 11 luglio 1816, Ep. I, p. 452

³⁰ Cfr., ibid, Chapter II, note 92

³¹ Cronaca della Casa di Milano, I quaderno, p. 25, A.C.R.

³² Ibid. p. 23

*"the daily schools, holding classes from two to three o' clock, to prepare the girls to receive the Holy Sacraments weekly, on the fixed days; to lead every Sunday and Feastday to the Parish Mass and to the explanation of the Gospel those who had already received their First Communion; and to make the little girls of First Confession attend low Mass . . . "*³³

The apostolic activities kept on flourishing and the Sisters of the community asked for help, but the Foundress had no qualified Sisters. She suggested that they limit their activities and not to expect to work beyond their strength:

*" . . . it is necessary that everywhere, the Sisters do not take on burdens they cannot carry. They should work according to the strength Divine Providence gives them and with prudence, so as not to be impaired for having overworked ourselves in our occupations and labours, and to be able to do the little we can "*³⁴

Magdalene, knowing only too well their generosity and their zeal, was also concerned about their physical health, particularly that of the Superior, Elena Bernardi. She wrote to her:

*"... give me news of your health, since I can imagine you will be more tired than usual because of the First Communion girls. On the other hand, I am happy that it is over."*³⁵

The House of Milan took over seven years before it was canonically erected because it did not have its own premises. It was only in 1823, with the help of benefactors and friends that the Institute came to own a new centre, an ex-hospice that had belonged to the Carthusians, and situated close to S. Michele della Chiusa, in the parish of St. Lawrence. The Milanese, however, objected to the closure of the House in Via della Signora and, therefore, Magdalene had to provide for the coordination and functioning of the Works in both communities. Msgr. Zoppi was from Milan now as he had been consecrated bishop of Massa in 1823. Magdalene keeps him informed on the good that is done through the apostolic activities carried out in the two different zones:

*"In this House of St. Stephen, since the companions are few, I was as firm as I could to keep a limited number of girls and to try to do our work with order and precision ... At the Certosina, I kept the number as small as possible, but the flow of young people coming daily for catechism is over 150. On Sundays, I believe, they are over 400. The companions of the House assist at three Doctrine Schools, a few in each Church."*³⁶

Even in the new premises, the catechetical ministry proceeded in full swing. In addition to the Parish Doctrine, the preparation for the Sacraments demanded the best energies of the Sisters. Magdalene, writing to Elena on April 21, 1825, expressed herself thus:

*"I well imagine, my dear Daughter, how busy you must have been on the occasion of the First Communion, since it was the first time³⁷. I am convinced, however, that there will be even more work to do for Confirmation, since the girls are younger and consequently less sensible. Moreover, their number will be very big."*³⁸

³³ Cronaca della Casa di Milano, I quaderno, p. 28, A.C.R.

³⁴ M.d.C. to Durini, 26 June 1818, Ep. I, p. 49

³⁵ M.d.C. to Bernardi, 23 April 1822, Ep. III/1 p. 512

³⁶ M.d.C., a Mons. Zoppi, 3 December 1824, Ep. IV2, p. 1057

³⁷ It is mentioned ">irst time" because it concerns the house in via della Chiusa.

³⁸ M.d.C to Bernardi, 21 April 1825, Ep. III/2, p. 1097

The Community in Bergamo

After Verona, Venice and Milan, in the year 1820, the fourth House was opened in Bergamo in Borgo S. Caterina. The canonical erection took place on 17th September of the same year. The House, however, was very small, and Magdalene was forced to limit her works of Charity. Count Andrea Camozzi³⁹ came to know of the restrictions experienced by the Daughters of Charity, and offered them as a gift the ex-Convent of the Capuchin Sisters in Borgo Palazzo-Rochetta. Magdalene accepted it gratefully and at once asked permission of the Civil and Religious Authorities to transfer the Works there. The change, however, took place only on July 14, 1821, and from the very start, the apostolic activities which had been neglected previously, were revived. In fact, Magdalene herself started the works of Charity before leaving Bergamo.

Many girls frequented the catechism classes. In the Sunday school particularly, the number of girls kept increasing. In the "*Epistolario*", when speaking of the House in Bergamo, the Foundress dwells on the presentation of an itinerary of religious instruction, in order to follow individually a girl of Hebrew religion from baptism to marriage.

On the first days of October, she wrote to Elena Bernardi:

"... our Jewish girl ... has finished her instruction, but the Godmother for her Holy baptism has yet to be found. Now we are instructing her to dispose her to the other Sacraments ... Moreover, be informed that last Sunday the Bishop⁴⁰ with Canon Tosi⁴¹ honoured us to examine the Jewish girl ... I had just finished the Doctrine to the women because here they do not hold it in autumn. Monsignor wanted me to question the Jew in the presence of the said Canonico. I did it, but they did not allow me to ask even a third, I believe, of what she knew, because they said, they did not want to hear her any further. They said she knew twice as much as was requested. I told them that was our usual method of instruction. They left very happy."⁴²

On 26 October 1821, she wrote again to Bernardi:

"Today, we had the baptism of our Jewish girl".⁴³

Four months later, on 24 February 1822, she rejoices with the Superior at Bergamo, Rosa Dabala', because the girl, after her baptism, received the other Sacraments as well:

"It is a pleasure for me to hear that our neophyte, Maria Teresa, received also the Holy Sacrament of Confirmation. I pray to the Lord to bless her also for her Holy Matrimony, which she told me she will also receive".⁴⁴

Also in the House of Bergamo, the girls of the parish who were preparing for the Sacraments kept increasing in number. Magdalene expressed herself as follows in her letter to Elena Bernardi:

³⁹ Count Andrea Camozzi de' Gherardi (1766 - 1855): belonged to one of the noblest and most ancient families of Bergamo originating from the mountains. They received their title of nobility from the Republic of Venice (cf. Ep. II/1, p.404, note 2)

⁴⁰ Msgr. Pietro Mola (1755 - 1829): ordained priest in 1779 and consecrated Bishop in Milan in 1821. He was destined for the diocese of Bergamo.

⁴¹ Canon Luigi Tosi (1763 - 1845): parish priest and Canon in the Basilica of St. Ambrose in Milan. In 1823, he was consecrated bishop of Pavia.

⁴² M.d.C. to Bernardi, October 1821, Ep. IIV1 pp. 447 - 448

⁴³ M.d.C. to Bernardi, 26 October 1821, Ep. IIV1, p. 451

⁴⁴ M.d.C. to Dabala', 24 February 1822, Ep. IIV1, p. 495

*"The Sisters (of Bergamo) too, have, besides all the rest, 150 girls preparing for communion and confession. To have the church is very, very helpful."*⁴⁵

The expanding of the catechetical activities was for Magdalene a sign of God ' s blessing; she therefore invited the Sisters to thank Him. She encouraged the Superior, Rosa Dabala' to have more courage and greater trust:

*"I hear with pleasure that the Sisters have worked for the Lord with their instruction of the girls. I am glad also that even Don Giovanni Cattaneo was pleased with our instruction. Let us thank the Lord heartily. As for you, my dear Daughter, you should take ever more courage in his service, since you see for yourself that it is the Lord who does everything."*⁴⁶

On 14 April 1824, Magdalene shared with her Daughter Giuseppa Terragnoli about how much work the Sisters at Bergamo were doing:

*"I Found the companions here ... a little tired ... Just imagine! They have 240 girls to instruct for Confession and Communion. Because of this they can hardly breathe."*⁴⁷

Even the Vicar General of Bergamo diocese, Msgr. Marco Celio Passi, in a brief declaration of 20 May 1828 underlines the good done and what the Daughters of Charity were still doing for the good of the Bergamask youth:

*"The Institute of the Daughters of Charity, founded here in this city of Bergamo some years ago, is a work blessed by the Lord and which brings much advantage to society through religious instruction and the change of behaviour... Besides, the Daughters of Charity, as demanded by the Institute, lend themselves to assisting in the Christian Doctrine ... and to the instruction of young girls for their first confession and communion."*⁴⁸

The Community in Trent

The House of Trento was the fifth and last House to be founded directly by Magdalene of Canossa. It was created canonically on 21 June 1828. The work, which required long years of preparation, grew rapidly and strongly. The girls flowed into it at once in great numbers. The Daughters of Charity, already rich in experience and well prepared for the ministries of their Institute, set about their apostolic service with ease and in full accord with the needs of the House. On 12 July 1828, only 20 days after the opening of the same, Magdalene wrote from Trent to Msgr. Traversi⁴⁹, the (ecclesiastical) Superior of the House of Venice:

*"Last Sunday we started to go to the parish doctrine. It is already two Sundays that we receive the girls, as we usually do. I do not know if it is because of the novelty, but they are coming in great numbers."*⁵⁰

On 29 July 1828, she wrote to Msgr Zoppi:

⁴⁵ M.d.C. to Bernardi, 22 March 1822, Ep. IX/1, p. 501

⁴⁶ M.d.C. to Dabala', 6 April 1822, Ep. nV1 p. 507

⁴⁷ M.d.C. to Terragnoli, 14 April 1824, Ep. IIV2, p. 845

⁴⁸ Passi mons. Marco Celio, Dichiarazione, 20 May 1828, Ep. II/1, p. 485

⁴⁹ Msgr. Antonio Maria Traversi: born in Venice in 1765 and was

122 ordained in 1787. In 1836, he was nominated Archbishop of Nazianzo. He died in Rome in 1842.

⁵⁰ M.d.C. to Mons. Traversi, 12 luglio 1828, Ep. II/2, pp. 1159 -1160

*"Since I have the Sisters partly formed and partly well initiated, the House (of Trent) is already well under way. The school, the instruction of the girls in the afternoon, the reception of the girls and the assistance to the parish Doctrine, are already functioning. In a few days, we shall start the instruction of the adult women."*⁵¹

Margherita Rosmini, Superior of the House of Trent, was concerned about preparing teachers for the Christian Doctrine, who would collaborate with the Sisters. Magdalene, in response to her letter, wrote on 5 November 1829, expressing her pleasure, encouraging the initiative and promised to pray:

*"I am greatly consoled about the 12 teachers of Doctrine. I will not fail in asking for prayers so that the thing and the union may well be established. Courage, my dear Daughter. the Lord wants you to work with largeness of soul for your Land."*⁵²

During the summer months, the days are longer and the girls in the Sunday school are more numerous. Margherita Rosmini was not sure if it was better for the Sisters to stay back with the girls or to go back to the community for their prayers. She asked for clarification of the Foundress who, without hesitation, advises her to give priority to the assistance of the girls, adding that the meditation could be done at another time and, in exceptional cases, could be substituted by the ministry of charity:

*"On feastsdays, do not send the girls home earlier in order to allow the Sisters to do their meditation. It is only a question of these few months when the days are very long. Therefore, see that they make their evening meditation at another time, and it is not necessary that they be altogether ... You see to it yourself, my dear Daughter, since the Superior is the living Rule ... and, as you are aware, if necessary, she herself can dispense a Sister from meditation altogether and substitute this with the work of charity, always if this according to God an accidental ..."*⁵³

Margherita Rosmini, with her usual respect, would turn to Magdalene each time she faced a new problem, to avoid creating situations not in keeping with the general practice of the Institute. She would ask her opinion even when it was to decide on the best place to hold the doctrine for the women. Magdalene suggested the Cathedral as the most suitable considering every aspect. She explained to her the reasons:

*"With regard to the doctrine (to the women) . . . if the parish priest were to ask you about it, consult first Msgr. Sardagna⁵⁴, but we have no objection on the part of the Institute. In case you have to consult the Monsignor, present to him these two reflections of mine. The first is that our own church seems to me too small to hold the doctrine for the women. The second is that I find the cathedral to be located in the centre of the parish area. Our House, situated outside the Gate, and if the doctrine were held there, it would be wishful thinking that those living on the other side of the cathedral would come at all both in the hot summers and the cold winters. On the other hand, to have the doctrine in both places is impractical because in Trento, they are so badly off for priests that there will be hardly enough for one (doctrine) Finally, you must also reflect on the dangers that the women and the girls may meet going out of the city."*⁵⁴

The above brief documentation testifies how catechesis has always been the primary apostolic activity carried out by the Daughters of Charity from the beginning of every foundation; around it, all the other ministries are articulated and have the same goal: to bring souls to the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ.

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⁵¹ M.d.C. a Mons. Zoppi, 29 luglio 1828, Ep. IV2, p. 1107

⁵² M.d.C. to Rosmini, 5 november 1829, Ep III/3, p. 2222

⁵³ M.d.C. to Rosmini, 2 June 1830, Ep. IIV3, p. 2403

⁵⁴ Msgr. Carlo Emanuele Sardagna (1772 - 1840): Canon of the Cathedral of Trent in 1802, later became Vicar General of the diocese. He was consecrated Bishop and was transferred to the diocese of Cremona in 1831.

hand, to have the doctrine in both places is impractical because in Trento, they are so badly off for priests that there will be hardly enough for one (doctrine). Finally, you must also reflect on the dangers that the women and the girls may meet going out of the city." ⁵⁵

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⁵⁵ M.d.C. to Rosmini, October 1830, Ep. IIV4, p. 2536.

APPENDIX

MAGDALENE, THE CREATIVE CATECHIST

MEANS ADAPTED TO THE NEEDS OF THE BENEFICIARIES

In the chapter on the catechetical apostolate, Fr Giacon¹ has dwelt amply on the catechism texts which Magdalene wrote in order to simplify the work of her Daughters involved in the ministry of catechesis. Evidently dependent on the official catechisms, as Giacon clearly illustrates, and according, on the other hand, to Magdalene's intentions which she put at the base of the catechetical formation of the Sisters:

*"Twice a week, for their spiritual reading, they will use some good catechism like that of Bellarmino, the Roman catechism and such like."*²

Msgr. Pacetti himself, writing to her in 1814 advises her, as we noted already, to use the catechism of Bellarmino:

*"With regard to Doctrine, you can go ahead with that of Bellarmino as it will be the only one approved."*³

In the Rules for Schools, Magdalene recommends:

*"For the instruction or explanation of doctrine... the Sisters should not depart from our customary way of teaching, as they had been instructed in the Novitiate. Let them not deviate in explaining to the girls the doctrine of their respective dioceses from what the Roman Catechism and that of Bellarmino teach. Let them teach with simplicity coupled with clarity so as not to confuse the girls."*⁴

Even in the Rules for Doctrine, she exhorts:

*"... to keep strictly to what is taught in the Roman and in the Bellarmino's catechisms."*⁵

They are texts which testify to a Magdalene who is extremely concerned about making the rote learning easier and more understandable for her beneficiaries. The "Epistolario" presents us in turn with the image of a Magdalene who, absorbed by the business inherent to the foundations of houses and the spiritual growth of the Sisters, dedicates herself to the evaluation and compilation of catechism texts, helped by some of her Daughters. On 10 January 1818, she writes to Elena Bernardi:

*"I hear that the little Marquis Arconati will be able to go to Venice. If so, send through him our catechism or that of the feasts or that of the convalescents. Send me also, now or when you write, the note of those you have. I will have them copied and send you also those that we have here (Verona) and you do not have."*⁶

¹ Giacon, Magdalene of Canossa, her charitable and educational apostolate, pp. 193-236

² M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1A, p. 28

³ Pacetti Mons. L. Pacifico a M.d.C., (1814) Ep. IV1, p. 711. (4)

⁴ M.d.C., Regole delle Scuole, in R.s.s., P.1^, p. 188

⁵ M.d.C., Regole per le Dottrine, in R.s.s., P.1^, p. 214

⁶ M.d.C., to Bernardi, 10.1.1818, Ep.III/1, p. 149

From Venice, she writes again to Bernardi on 23 December 1818:

"With regard to the Doctrine you are preparing, do not tire yourself with writing because the uncertainty of my permanence in any one place makes it impossible for me to get involved with the "debates" . It is sufficient that you tell me, because if I got it, whether in this Doctrine, there is the second, third and fourth article of the Creed,⁷ because the one here does not have them "⁸

In 1819, she continues:

"I am sorry for your effort, but I am not sorry that the doctrine is written. Know that I will be able to make it. I have started to write the Sacrament of Penance and that of the Eucharist."⁹

While in Bergamo, in order to continue drafting in the evening, she writes to Bragato on 6 October 1827, asking her to send the "Packet of Doctrines":

"Look in Christina's cupboard and see if you find the packet of the doctrines. See also if Carolina can take them to Bergamo because I would like to see whether in the evenings I can write something. You have to understand me. Christina says she thinks she left them in the drawers opposite Isabella's room. On the packet there is written: "Packet of Doctrines" ."¹⁰

Let us return to the two manuscripts of Magdalene's catechisms cited by Fr. Giacón. They are partially edited by him, who from time to time, compares them with the official texts of Liruti and of Bellarmino,¹¹ and in full by Dossi,¹² with the exception of the "Instruction for the little girls" of which she makes no mention of the explanations "in brief" and of the "Gospel of the Sundays throughout the year." In her introduction, Dossi states the reasons for her choices: the explanations in brief "repeats almost word for word Liruti's synthesis and the comments on the gospels comparing it with the text:

"The Gospel of every Sunday - explained - in the literal and spiritual sense. Published by a Clergyman of Mondovì, Venice 1818",¹³

they were copied almost integrally except for the Latin texts and those paragraphs that to the Foundress appeared an unnecessary addition to the explanation. In this appendix we include the text of the "instruction to the little girls", the "Brief Creed" and the Gospel of the Sundays throughout the year. We hope it is profitable to the reader if we present a foretaste of this material, otherwise difficult to come by, as it seems to us a clear example of how Magdalene made use, simplified and made practical a very abstract source.

⁷ Speaking of the 3 distinct articles of the Creed, Magdalene was referring to the manuscript entitled "Explanations of the twelve articles of the Apostles' Symbol", and not to that of the Rules for the Schools.

⁸ M.d.C., to Bernardi, 23.12.1818, Ep. III/1, p. 218

⁹ M.d.C., to Bernardi, May 1819, Ep. III/5, p. 4065

¹⁰ M.d.C., to Bragato, 6 October 1827, Ep. IIV3, p. 1736

¹¹ Giacón, p.213-218 (cfr. Bellarmino/Canossa on the lesson of the Lord's Prayer); p. 218-220 (extracts from the "Explanations of the Creed"; p. 222-223 (cfr. Liruti/Canossa proposing the "duties of Christians towards the Princes who govern them"; p. 224 - 225 (some examples from "The Gospel of the Sundays throughout the year").

¹² Dossi, R.s.s, 2^a p 233 -322.

¹³ Dossi, R.s.s 2^a, p. 230

INSTRUCTION TO THE LITTLE GIRLS

In the two model catechisms composed by Magdalene for the Schools, the articulation of the contents is as follows:

- On the Principal Mysteries of our Faith
- On the Sign of the Christian
- Of the reasons for our Faith

At this juncture, there is an addition, not found in Bellarmino's, on "*Instruction to the little girls*"¹. Even here, Magdalene's constant concern for the good of the children is evident. It is a compendium of the essential truths of our faith which needs to be known.

"Q. Make the sign of the Cross.

A. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Q. Who made you and put you in the world ?

A. God.

Q. Who is God?

A. The Creator of Heaven and earth

Q. Why did God create you?

A. To know Him, to love Him and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him in Heaven.

Q. Where is God ?

A. In Heaven, on earth and everywhere.

Q. Has God always been?

A. Yes, God has always been and will always be.

Q. Does He have a body?

A. No, He is a pure spirit.

Q. How many and what are the principal Mysteries of our Faith?

A. There are two. The first is the Unity and Trinity of God; the second is the Incarnation and Death of our Saviour.

Q. What does "Unity" mean?

A. (That there is) only one God.

Q. What does "Trinity" mean?

A. (That there are) three Divine Persons. They are called Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Q. Is the Father God ?

A. Yes.

Q. Is the Son God ?

A. Yes.

Q. Is the Holy Spirit God ?

A. Yes.

Q. Are these Divine persons three Gods then?

A. No, they are only one God.

Q. Why are they only one God ?

A. Because they have the same Essence, the same Power, the same Goodness.

Q. From whom does the Father proceed?

A. From no one.

Q. From whom does the Son proceed ?

A. From the Father.

Q. From whom does the Holy Spirit proceed ?

A. From the Father and the Son.

¹ L'Istruzione delle bambine, Dottrina composta dal Venerabile Canossa per uso delle scuole, ms, AC. Verona.

- Q. Is the Father older than the Son and the Holy Spirit?
A. No, they existed from all eternity: indeed, they are equal in everything because they are but only one God.
- Q. What does the Incarnation and Death of our Saviour mean?
A. It means that the second person of the Blessed Trinity, that is, the Son, became man and died on the Cross to save us.
- Q. How did he become Man?
A. He took on a body and a soul like ours, in the sacred womb of the Virgin Mary, by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Q. What is the Son of God made man called?
A. He is called Jesus Christ our Lord and Redeemer, true God and true man.
- Q. Why did he become man?
A. To free us with his death from being lost, and to merit for us eternal life.
- Q. Why did He take upon himself our miseries and die for us?
A. Because man, having offended His infinite Majesty through sin, deserved hell; he needed infinite merits to repay fully and to gain Heaven, and this no one but only the God-man can do.
- Q. How many natures are there in Jesus Christ?
A. Two natures: the Divine and the human.
- Q. From whom did He receive His Divine nature?
A. From His Eternal Father.
- Q. From whom did He receive His human nature?
A. From Mary most Holy, His Mother.
- Q. How can God have a Mother?
A. In so far as he is God he has no Mother; and in so far as He is Man, he has a Mother.
- Q. How was Jesus born?
A. In a stable in Bethlehem.
- Q. How many persons are there in Jesus Christ?
A. There is only one person and He is divine.
- Q. What did Jesus do before he was 30 years old?
A. The Gospel only says that He was subject and obedient to Mary most Holy and St. Joseph.
- Q. And what did He do in the last three years of His life?
A. He preached the Holy Gospel to the people and called the twelve Apostles to follow Him.
- Q. Where did He die?
A. On Mt. Calvary, nailed to the Cross.
- Q. Did he die as God or as Man?
A. As man, because as God, He could neither suffer nor die. However, Jesus Christ being the same divine person, we can say that God suffered and died.
- Q. Where was the sacred body of Jesus Christ buried ?
A. He was buried in a new tomb.
- Q. How long did He remain in the tomb?
A. Almost three days, that is, part of Friday, the whole of Saturday and part of Sunday.
- Q. What did He do on the third day?
A. He rose, glorious and triumphant, never to die again.
- Q. Did He remain on earth after the resurrection?
A. He remained for 40 days during which He confirmed His resurrection through many apparitions; after this, He ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father.
- Q. In whose presence did He ascend into heaven?
A. In the presence of Most Holy Mother, of His Apostles and disciples.
- Q. Where did the Holy Apostles go after the ascension of Jesus Christ?
A. To the cenacle, with Mary Most Holy, to pray.

- Q. How long did they remain there?
A. Ten days.
- Q. What did they receive after ten days?
A. The Holy Spirit, in the form of tongues Of fire.
- Q. Where did the Holy Apostles go after they received the Holy Spirit?
A. To preach the Gospel throughout the world, thus laying the foundations of the Holy Catholic Church. The union of all the faithful who are baptized, who believe and profess their faith in Jesus Christ, who receive the same Sacraments, under the guidance of the legitimate Bishop, and who recognise the Holy Father in Rome as the Vicar of Jesus Christ.
- Q. How were we received into the Church?
A. Through Holy Baptism.
- Q. Where is our Lord Jesus Christ?
A. As God, He is everywhere, and as Godman, He is in Heaven and in the Blessed Sacrament.
- Q. What is there in the Blessed Sacrament?
A. There is the Body, the Blood, the Soul and the Divinity of Jesus Christ, under the species of bread and wine.
- Q. Will Jesus Christ return more visibly to earth?
A. He will return on Judgement Day, with great majesty to judge the living and the dead, sending also the bodies to enjoy the reward or face the punishment meted out to the soul at the particular Judgement, at the moment of our death.
- Q. But won't we all be dead on Judgement Day?
A. Yes, in the body, we will all die, but on that day, we will all rise.
- Q. What do you mean when you say that Jesus Christ will judge the living and the dead ?
A. By living, I mean the good who will live by grace; and by the dead, I mean the wicked who will be dead to grace.
- Q. What does it mean that the Lord is the rewarder?
A. It means that God exercises and will exercise justice with all, rewarding those who do good and punishing those who do evil.
- Q. How will He reward the good?
A. With Heaven.
- Q. What will we enjoy in heaven?
A. The vision of God and everything that is good.
- Q. How long does heaven last?
A. Forever.
- Q. How will he punish the wicked?
A. With Hell.
- Q. How does one suffer in Hell?
A. Loss of the vision of God, fire and all kinds of evil.
- Q. How long does hell last?
A. Forever

EXPLANATION OF THE CREED IN BRIEF

After this brief synthesis of the truth, the catechism continues with the explanation of the CREED "*in brief*"¹. Those who wish to compare it with Bellarmino's text will discover that the Catechism of the Foundress is simpler and more analytical, making it easier to assimilate the truths of our faith.

"Q. What are the tenets of our faith?

A. The Apostles' Symbol, which ordinarily is called the Creed.

Q. What is the meaning of the word Symbol?

A. It means summarized, compendium, a sign; and in this case, something established by common agreement.

Q. Who composed the Creed?

A. The twelve Apostles.

Q. How many parts are there in the Creed?

A. Twelve parts and they are called articles.

Q. What is the meaning of this word "Article"?

A. A small part of the whole.

Q. Recite the Creed.

A. I believe, etc...

Q. When did the Holy Apostles compose the Creed?

A. After they had received the Holy Spirit, before parting ways to preach the Gospel.

Q. Why did the Apostles compose the Creed?

A. So as to have a common guideline to present to the faithful.

Q. Of the twelve articles in the Creed, how many refer to God?

A. Eight.

Q. How many refer to the Church?

A. Four.

Q. How many articles refer to God the Father?

A. One.

Q. How many refer to the Son?

A. Six.

Q. How many refer to the Holy Spirit?

A. One.

Q. Did you tell me that the last four belong to the Church?

A. Yes, they refer to the Church and to the goods that are found in it.

Q. Tell me the first article of the Creed.

A. I believe in GOD the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth.

Q. What are we to believe in this first article?

A. That God exists, that He is only one, that the first person of the Blessed Trinity is Father, that this God is all Powerful, and has created Heaven and earth out of nothing.

Q. Recite the second article.

A. And in Jesus Christ, his Son and our only Lord.

Q. What are we to believe in this second article?

A. In the second person of the Blessed Trinity, that is, in the Son of God made man.

Q. Recite the third article.

A. Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, was born of the Virgin Mary.

Q. What are we to believe in this article?

A. We are to believe that Jesus Christ was conceived through the work of the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary.

¹ Spiegazione del Credo in breve, Dottrina composta dal Venerabile Canossa per uso delle scuole, ms. 12, 12-16, AC. Verona

- Q. Recite the fourth article.
- A. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.
- Q. What are we to believe in this article?
- A. We are to believe that Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.
- Q. Recite the fifth article.
- A. He descended into Hell, the third day He rose from the dead.
- Q. What are we to believe in this article?
- A. We are to believe that Jesus Christ after His death, descended, with His most holy soul, into Limbo to the Holy Fathers, and that He rose on the third day.
- Q. Recite the sixth article.
- A. He ascended into Heaven, sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
- Q. What are we to believe in this creed?
- A. We are to believe that Jesus Christ, forty days after His Resurrection, ascended into Heaven, where He sits at the right Hand of His Divine Almighty Father.
- Q. Recite the seventh article.
- A. Thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.
- Q. What are we to believe in this article?
- A. We are to believe that Jesus Christ, at the end of the world, will come from Heaven to judge the living and the dead.
- Q. What do you mean by "the living and the dead", if on that day all will be resurrected?
- A. By "the living" I mean the good who will be in the grace of God, and by "the dead" I mean those who will not be in the grace of God.
- Q. Recite the eighth article.
- A. I believe in the Holy Spirit.
- Q. What are we to believe in this article?
- A. We are to believe in the third person of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit.
- Q. Recite the ninth article.
- A. The Holy Catholic Church and the communion of Saints.
- Q. What are we to believe in this article?
- A. We are to believe the Catholic Church and that in it there is the communion of Saints.
- Q. What do you mean by "Communion of Saints".
- A. That all Christians share in the good done by the individual Christians.
- Q. Recite the tenth article.
- A. The forgiveness of sins.
- Q. What are we to believe in this article?
- A. We are to believe that in the Church there is forgiveness of sins through the Holy Sacraments.
- Q. Which Sacraments in particular remit sin?
- A. Baptism and Penance.
- Q. Recite the eleventh article.
- A. The resurrection of the flesh.
- Q. What are we to believe in this article?
- A. We are to believe that on Judgement Day, all will rise with the same body we had on earth.
- Q. Recite the twelfth article.
- A. Eternal life.
- Q. What are we to believe in this article?
- A. That there is Eternal life, that is, Heaven for the good and hell for the wicked.
- Q. What is the meaning here of the word "Amen"?
- A. It means: It is truly so.

GOSPEL OF THE SUNDAYS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

This supplement must have been useful to the Sisters when they explained to the girls the Sunday gospel. In fact, Magdalene wrote:

"... they will read the Holy Gospel of the day to the girls in Italian and, on Sundays and on the various Solemnities, they will explain to them the recurring Mystery, but in such a way as not to bore them. At the end, the Sisters will ask them some questions on the explanation they have given them."¹

The comments on the Sunday gospels, according to the liturgical order at that time, aimed at encouraging the girls, beneficiaries of the Word that is "broken", to let their daily lives be penetrated and transformed by the teachings of Jesus Christ. In the document, they are drawn up according to this structure:

- indication of the Sunday of the liturgical season; - Gospel passage in Italian, preceded by a suitable title;
- brief comment.

Here, we include only the comments grouped together according to the liturgical seasons and premised by the title given to the liturgical text.

The four Sundays of Advent:

THE FINAL JUDGEMENT

- 1) *"The Church puts before us the final terrible judgement to move us to correct our defects and to practise virtue. What will be our eternal destiny?"*

DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST AND PRAISE OF THE PRECURSOR

- 2) *"The Divinity of Jesus Christ is manifested through the voice that comes down from heaven, through the testimonies of many who were present at the great wonders. Jesus praises the virtues of John the Baptist, his mortification and calls him his precursor Angel. "*

HUMILITY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

- 3) 1st Necessity and difficulty of a sincere knowledge of oneself.
2nd Reasons for humility - Our weakness - Infidelities towards God - Our spiritual blindness.

NECESSITY TO DO PENANCE

- 4) 1st St. John preached penance. First by example, then by preaching.
2nd He preached to prepare people for the coming of the Messiah.
3rd The duty we have to prepare our hearts.

¹ "Vangelo nelle Dorneniche dell'anno", in the appendix to one of the models of the "Dottrina composta della Venerabile Canossa per uso delle scuole, ms. AC. Verona

The six Sundays after Epiphany

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

- 1) 1st Lesson that they give: Jesus, Mary and Joseph.
- 2nd The loss of Jesus. Our diligence in order never to lose him through sin

JESUS AT THE MARRIAGE FEAST IN CANA

- 2) 1st The presence of Jesus brings honour - it is most useful - causes joy.
- 2nd Mary's concern for the welfare of people. Her power with God must increase our trust in her.

CLEANSING OF A LEPER, AND HEALING OF THE CENTURION SERVANT

- 3) 1st Prayer of the leper - The cancer of leper, symbol of the passions of the soul - The sick touched by Jesus heals instantly. Desire that Jesus will heal us of the evils of the soul.
- 2nd Gratitude of the leper shown in telling others about the healing.
- 3rd Humility of the Centurion and Faith that merited the admiration of Jesus - Imitating him especially when we go to receive Holy Communion.

THE CALMING OF THE STORM AT TIBERIA

- 4) 1st Mysterious sleep of Jesus - He seems to sleep, but he answers to our call - he allows temptation and desolation to keep us in humility: to show us that we need his help.
- 2nd The union of the soul with God - Whoever unites himself to God lives by his spirit - The soul loses the taste for whatever is not of God, of God himself. We reach this by a generous abandonment to His will.

THE WEEDS AMONG THE WHEAT

- 5) 1st Even in the Church, there is a mixture of good and evil.
The Church is also compared to Noah's ark which contained all kinds of animals; at the wedding banquet in which some enter without the wedding garment.
God permits the mixture to test the just and then makes clear his Judgement.
- 2nd When will the mixture of good and evil end? The Lord does not let it end here on earth in order to test and to cleanse his chosen ones. Let us try our best not to be the destructive weed.

THE MUSTARD SEED AND THE LEAVEN

- 6) 1st Simplicity of the Gospel - demonstrated in the smallness of the mustard seed and in its power to become a tree which is greater than all the others. We are humble and simple in accepting the laws of God and his Authority, especially in the voice of his Ministers.
- 2nd Power of the norms of the Gospel - Men, women, weak by nature, become capable of trampling on honour, riches, comforts of life; become capable of undergoing the most horrendous torments, sustained by the marvellous power of a Faith spread throughout the world by twelve fishermen.

Septuagint, Sexuagint, Quinquagint Sundays:

THE WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD

- 1st God obliges us to serve him God is the Father of the family; we are the workers; the vineyard is our soul, and the Church. God is our master and we must make use of time and things according to his will, with detachment.
- 2nd How God wishes to be served by us.
- I. To be totally in God.
 - II. To be only His - regardless of self or others.
 - III. To serve Him always
 - IV. To serve Him with love and only for His glory, because He rewards us not for the length of days, but for our fervour.

THE PARABLE OF THE SEED

- 1st What kind of soil (among souls) is least disposed to receive the Divine Word?
- I. Continuous dissipation.
 - II. The maxims of the world.
 - III. Vanity, interests and dangerous amusements. The infertile soil is close to disaster.
- 2nd What kind of soil is good? Souls eager to know the truth and to live by the practice of virtue and correspondence to divine inspirations.

JESUS PREDICTS HIS PASSION AND DEATH

The mystery of the Cross. It is not understood by those who live according to nature. God 's grace helps us to discover the mystery of the Cross and the advantages hidden in sufferings.

Love induced Jesus to sacrifice himself on the Cross. Our sacrifices, our sufferings will be the test of our true love for Him.

Sundays of Lent, Passion Sunday, Palm Sunday:

JESUS IS TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL IN THE DESERT

- 1st Jesus conquers the devil and obtains for us the grace to overcome evil. -
We can conquer the devil by virtue of the humility and patience of Jesus who experienced temptation.
- 2nd Jesus is our model in fighting temptations. God allows us to be tempted in order to test our constancy and to humiliate our pride. Prayer is the invincible weapon.

THE TRANSFIGURATION AND PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

The mysteries of the Transfiguration and Passion are closely related to each other. The glory and the ignominy; joy and sorrow are not separated for long; in our pain, we must encourage ourselves with the certainty of the eternal reward. Many souls try to separate these two mysteries. Whoever wishes to share the glory of Jesus must also remain with him on Calvary and share in his passion.

THE DUMB DEMONIAK

Contradictions tolerated by Jesus - The dumb and blind man is the soul possessed by passion. The crowd in their simplicity and candour admire the works of Jesus. On the contrary, the Pharisees who have unclean hearts judge him badly.

The sweetness of Jesus:

- I. bears injuries.
- II. continues to do good to those who calumniate him

THE MULTIPLICATION OF BREAD

Goodness of Jesus Christ. On seeing the miracle, the people wanted to make him king; Jesus continues to work marvels, making the land fruitful, and yet we do not appreciate this great help. The love of Jesus in multiplying the Eucharistic bread. This marvel of divine Love is unknown, despised and blasphemed. Our duty to love, to adore and to appreciate the goodness of Jesus Christ.

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM

Differing judgements passed on Our Lord by the Jews. - Those who work openly for the glory of God are always reproached by the majority but are praised by the best. However, they must not be discouraged. And we must not be scandalized by this contradiction.

THE TRIUMPHANT ENTRY OF JESUS INTO JERUSALEM

Main circumstances of this entry. - Jerusalem is the image of the soul in whom Jesus wishes to be king and to establish his throne. But to enter there, he wants to find humility and simplicity; this mount constitutes his triumph. The disciples exult in the triumph of Jesus.

We must grieve in seeing him offended and rejoice in seeing him glorified; and follow him with equal promptness and joy to Jerusalem and to Calvary.

The seven words of Jesus spoken from the Cross:

1st **Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.**

Jesus forgets his own interests and his sorrows. His Heart nourishes feelings of mercy and forgiveness towards his enemies. We must imitate the mercy of Jesus.

2nd **Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.**

Jesus immediately rewards the virtue and the fidelity of the good thief. He punishes the stubborn sinners with everlasting fire.

3rd **Woman, this is your son; Son, this is your Mother.**

Mary's sorrow and oneness with the will of God. Mary loves us as she loved Jesus; we must love Her, to deserve this love, in particular, with purity and virginity.

4th **My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**

It is the cry of Christ's humanity which did not receive

any divine consolation. He wanted to experience all the bitterness of his chalice and even the Father's abandonment; to teach us to suffer without seeking the comfort of creatures, and even of God.

5th **I thirst !!!**

The tormenting and mysterious thirst of Jesus. He suffered real thirst through the great loss of Blood.

I. in the garden.

II. during the scourging,

III. in the crowning with thorns.

IV. due to the torments and fatigue of the journey and the long hours, and

V. the cruel crucifixion.

But Jesus still thirsts for suffering; thirsts for love and for the well-being of souls.

6th **It is accomplished.**

Jesus had fulfilled everything that the Prophets had predicted about Him. As for us, He could say "it is accomplished" because He had paid all our debts and won paradise again. It is up to us to complete the work of our redemption. Happy are we if we can overcome all the obstacles and say: Consummatum est!

7th **Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.** Our filial confidence, amidst the toughest trials, is very pleasing to God and our total abandonment in Him gives Him great honour. Let us commend ourselves into the hands of God, and not let ourselves be preoccupied by temporal things.

Feast of Easter and First Sunday after Easter:

THE HOLY WOMEN AT THE SEPULCHRE.

GIFTS OF THE GLORIOUS BODY OF JESUS.

The solicitude of the pious women to go to Jesus. To find Jesus, we must bring with us a loving heart, good works and prayer; courage and confidence to overcome difficulties. Impassibility and lightness of the Body of Jesus. Because the body of Jesus was subjected to death, he deserved the reward. Whoever fights and wins receives the prize. - Agility and brightness. They are a reproach to our sluggishness in practising virtue, to our wilful ignorance and to the darkness of sin.

JESUS CHRIST APPEARS TO THE APOSTLES AND DISCIPLES

The coarseness of the Apostles, the lovingness of Jesus. As soon as they see Jesus, instead of arising from table to adore Him, they doubt His real presence, although He has already appeared to Peter and the two from Emmaus. But Jesus, full of love, assures them and invites them to touch Him and sits down with them till the end of their meal. We too do the same, approaching Holy Communion coldly, not entrusting ourselves to Him. Jesus gives his peace to his friends. If we live united with Jesus, we will enjoy his peace in our pains and sorrows; we will find strength in times of temptations, especially against faith.

APPARITIONS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

1st **Jesus appears to his Holy Mother.**

Mary loved Jesus more than any other creature and suffered for Him more than anyone else. Therefore, she deserved the privilege of being the first to see her beloved Son. God never forgets to reward us for our patience and resignation, and makes us experience calm and joy in times of sadness and sorrow.

2nd **Jesus appears to Magdalene.**

Our love for God must be vigilant, active, constant and generous.

3rd **He appears to the holy Women, with Magdalene.**

The Lord wanted to honour them and make them ambassadors of His resurrection, after the Apostles, to reward them for their piety; let us try to honour Jesus, specially by making them known and loved by others, by word and example.

4th **To St. Peter.**

- I. He wanted to appear first to St. Peter to assure him of his Pardon and because He loved specially the fishermen who truly repented of their faults.
- II. Because St. Peter had been made Head of the Church.

5th **To the two disciples of Emmaus**

Jesus consoles them in their sadness and gently revives their weak faith.

6th **To the Apostles and disciples, gathered together with St. Thomas.**

The coarseness of the Apostles and the lovingness of Jesus.

7th **To St. Thomas in the Cenacle with the other Apostles.**

The stubbornness of St. Thomas which could have led him to infidelity if Jesus had not come to his aid.

8th **To the disciples who were fishing at the sea of Tiberia.**

The plentiful catch of fish as reward for obedience. Concern of Jesus for his friends who, tired out by the night's labour, needed rest.

9th **To the 500 disciples in Galilee on the top of the mountain.**

Jesus gives them spiritual power, saying: "Go, teach and baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

10th **To the eleven while they were at table.**

Jesus reproaches them for their disbelief, for not believing those who had seen him risen - Promise of the Holy Spirit.

11th **Ascension Day - From Mount Olive**

Sadness of the Apostles. The Angel consoles them, promising help from Heaven. Comforted, they begin their apostolate.

2nd 3rd 4th 5th Sundays after Easter.

JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

In Jesus we find the qualities of the Good Shepherd. For our sake, He became poor, suffered hardships, fatigue, contempt and finally gave His life for us. He has guided and guides us along the way of salvation and has gone before us with the sceptre of the Cross, and more than the shepherd, He went as far as to give His flesh for food. In return, He desires nothing more than that we prove to be true sheep, gentle and meek. Duties of a sheep towards the good Shepherd. Jesus knows His sheep because they follow Him and recognise His voice; can we be considered as such? Are we gentle and obedient to His Call, to His inspirations. Or rather, hoping to find happiness elsewhere, we have separated ourselves from Him? What does our conscience tell us?

THE WORLDLY AND THE JUST

Joy and mourning of the worldly. God grants pleasures, honours and riches to the worldly, and this is all the happiness they will get, but they are not lasting and true, because the heart of man thirsts only for the truth, which is not found in created things; these, they have to abandon at their death, to pass into everlasting mourning. Sadness and joy of the just. Sadness, the tears, the Cross carried for love of Jesus Christ have the appearance of mourning, but leaves behind the purest joy in the soul which is the pledge of what they will enjoy in Heaven. The joy that is experienced by a clear conscience, or when one hears a voice within that says: "*God is happy with you*" are sufficient to prove how true this is.

OUR PILGRIMAGE TOWARDS GOD

Life is a pilgrimage.

1st Jesus has ascended into Heaven

I. To prepare for us a place in His kingdom;

II. To send the Holy Spirit;

III. To exercise the faith of the believers (removing Himself from our sight)

2nd Life is a pilgrimage towards Heaven; whoever wishes to reach it takes the straight road which is the shortest; whoever leads this life seeks in everything the glory of God and the fulfillment of His Will. Helps that lead us to God Good and evil accepted with Holy indifference.

ROGATIONS

Necessity of prayer. With this act, we admit our misery and we attribute to God the honour that is due to Him, and it draws down on us His blessings. The attention given to prayer distinguishes the fervent soul from the tepid. Progress in virtue is proportionate to progress in prayer. It is the invincible weapon in times of temptation, helps us remove defects, and to acquire virtue.

Ascension, 6th Sunday after Easter

ASCENSION

By constantly practising virtue and detaching ourselves from all the cares and affections of the world, let us try to merit for ourselves the grace of seeing the triumphant Jesus, without the veil, in His throne of glory forever.

FRUITS OF THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

JESUS CHRIST

Jesus is our advocate before the Father. Ascending into Heaven, Jesus took possession of the glory for Himself and for us: because He is our lawful advocate; because He has gained it through His merits and because He is most grateful to the Father who loves Him as His own. What consolations should come from this consideration! How much ought we to love Jesus! The ascension of Jesus brings the theological virtues to perfection.

- I. Faith: because, ascending into Heaven, He is removed from our sensible vision.
- II. Hope: because, where the Head is, there its members hope to be.
- III. Charity: which is even more inflamed with the desire to be united with Him

PENTECOST

CONTEMPLATION

Persons. The Apostles are gathered in silence and prayer, with mortification which prepares them to receive the Holy Spirit. Words, works. The Holy Spirit transforms, makes zealous the slow-moving, and inflames the cold hearted; but we must be ever attentive, because he makes quick and unexpected visits. The distracted soul is not aware of such visits and remains deprived of the help such divine inspirations bring.

The twenty-four Sundays after Pentecost:

FEAST OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

Man must give homage of faith, hope and charity to the Triune God, for this mystery, the most incomprehensible to man's intellect. He gives the Creator the greatest glory when he submits himself in humility. Man must give to the Triune God a homage of imitation. Man must consider himself one with his neighbour. The defects of the latter must be his own. From this common brotherhood there must blossom that charity which is the characteristic of the followers of Christ. Just as the Father loves the Son, and as the Son loves the Father and from this love proceeds the Holy Spirit.

THE GREAT SUPPER (II SUNDAY)

Pride and covetousness: two obstacles to spiritual health.

- 1st Those who work to gain the esteem of this world, will be rewarded with annoyance and a troublesome life, and a death filled with anguish.
 - 2nd Those who accumulate riches will soon have to leave them.
- The third obstacle is sensuality. Love for our body, the allurements of pleasure, the repugnance of mortification lead us towards a very dangerous position, and cause us to commit many defects; at the end, it makes us insensitive to the voice of God who invites us to enjoy the things of heaven through the way of mortification.

THE LOST SHEEP (III SUNDAY)

How souls get lost. By allowing themselves to be overcome by pleasures; they do not notice the dangers that are hidden in them and fall. How Jesus Christ labours to save souls. As soon as he notices the loss, he promptly sets out in search of the sheep, not worrying about leaving behind the others, and

he does not give up until he finds it; then joyfully, he takes it on his shoulders and invites his friends to celebrate.

FIRST MIRACULOUS CATCH OF FISH IN THE LAKE OF GENESARET (IV SUNDAY)

The futile efforts of the disciples. That happens to those who do even good works Fruit of obedience God does not leave unrewarded even the little that we do for Him.

PERFECTION AND CHARITY (V SUNDAY)

The virtue of a follower of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ abhorred the hypocrisy of the Pharisees who under beautiful appearances his horrendous vices. Christian perfection requires solid, interior virtue, so that they make us pleasing to God. The charity demanded by Jesus Christ. As I loved you, so you must love one another, and more: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you.

SECOND MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES (VI SUNDAY)

God at times allows us to lack the necessary things to exercise our trust in providence. Let us trust Him. He keeps count of the time that we serve Him, appreciates the sacrifices, knows the dangers, the temptations in which we find ourselves and He will help us, if necessary, even with a miracle. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice.

THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST AND OF THE WORLD (VII SUNDAY)

Jesus is the foundation of our perfection. Our perfection lies in working according to the spirit of Jesus Christ, that is, spirit of humility, of sweetness, of abnegation, of peace, of love for our neighbour who is loved for love of God. In a word, to do the Will of the Father. Good works are necessary for eternal salvation. Whoever does not perform good works does not love God, because love is active. God calls us to walk the narrow path, taken by only a few, and not to follow the maxims of those who wish to combine the maxims of the Gospel with the exigencies of the world.

THE UNFAITHFUL STEWARD (VIII SUNDAY)

The debt that each one has with God. For the sins committed, for the graces received . Convinced of having misused the good entrusted, let us make amends at once, with ardour and solicitude, because the time of the great reckoning may be near.

JESUS WEEPS OVER JERUSALEM (IX SUNDAY)

Reasons for the tears of Jesus Christ. The stubbornness and ingratitude of men. our life on earth is precious, for acquiring eternal goods. Our refusal of this time and lack of correspondence to the call of God is already sufficient reason for punishment. The tears of Jesus Christ condemn the joys of the world. Jesus never laughed; but He cried because He felt deeply, and when He experienced the sorrow or horror, always for moral reasons or for sins. We must fear only sin, because it alone draws all the anger of God, and it has to be punished in this life or in the next.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN (X SUNDAY)

Characteristics of proud, pious persons. The proud person admires his own gifts, wants to dominate and suffocate others, but tries to hide this baseness with the veil of humility, making others believe that what he is and what he does is out of duty.

Characteristics of the humble of heart. He feels unworthy of forgiveness, but repentant and mortified by his wretchedness, he trusts in the mercies of God.

THE DEAF MUTE (XI SUNDAY)

Danger of spiritual deafness. It makes us insensitive to the truth of our Faith and to inspirations; this happens inadvertently with the multiplication of venial sins.

Means to cure it. Solitude - prayer - mortification, even in little things, with regard to the senses, the mind and the heart.

A CONFUSED JUDGE (XII SUNDAY)

We must love God for his perfections, because in that lies our salvation, because He alone satisfies us, indebted to justice since all we have comes from Him. We must love our neighbour as ordered by God.

THE TEN LEPERS (XIII SUNDAY)

What feelings ought to accompany our contrition. Love must move us to understand the gravity of our sins; humility must accompany our prayer.

Ingratitude of the nine lepers. We are always ready to ask for health but afterwards, we are not as quick to thank our benefactor. How much pain this ingratitude of ours brings to Jesus who is so loving.

GOD IS THE ONLY TRUE MASTER (XIV SUNDAY)

God alone deserves to be served. Let our words, works and pains be for Him.

THE SON OF THE WIDOW OF NAIN (XV SUNDAY)

Desire for the glory of God. Charity towards neighbours. Jesus chooses the best circumstances to draw attention to the miracle. Humility is misunderstood as hiding from others' view what can give glory to God. We must be ready to console those who are sad. Consolations and effects of the thought of death. The soul that thinks often about death keeps far from sin and rests tranquilly on the mercies of God, from whom He depends for His eternal happiness.

HUMILITY (XVI SUNDAY)

In what does humility consist? Not in words that often conceal a subtle pride; but it consists in recognising and showing concretely one's nothingness, and attributing every good thing to God.

CHARITY TOWARDS GOD (XVII)

Reasons. Infinite loveliness of God, his liberality should be sufficient reason for loving Him, but our ingratitude makes us oblivious to this need. Love must be from within, active and constant.

JESUS HEALS A PARALYTIC (XVIII SUNDAY)

Reasons for tepidity. Tepidity is the paralysis of the soul, resulting in neglect of the things of the spirit, and originates:

- 1) from the neglect of the eternal maxims,
- 2) from lack of mortification and
- 3) from not fearing its evil effects.

It makes us despise the little things, omit our duty, and do everything with negligence and boredom.

THE BANQUET OF THE KING (XIX SUNDAY)

Why? Why do few people think seriously about eternal life and have weak will, lack energy, fear sacrifice, and are damned with many who take the easy road.?

HEALING OF THE CENTURION'S SON (XX SUNDAY)

Recourse of the Centurion and the reproach of Jesus. We learn to turn to God at once from whom alone even the other means draw their efficacy. Jesus reprimands the Centurion for his weak faith. but He humbles Himself and grows in His trust, thus deserving more than He had previously asked.

THE UNFORGIVING DEBTOR (XXI SUNDAY)

The duties we have with divine justice. To come before it with a pure conscience; to fear it; and if we have sinned, to make amends, with humility, prayer, mortification and love towards our neighbour.

THE TRIBUTE TO CAESAR (XXII SUNDAY)

The Pharisees try to condemn Jesus. We must not be discouraged by the snares of the enemies of God against the Church. God has His own time and His goals in every event, and all His adversaries will be won over and everything will be restored to His greater glory. The two mites of the widow. Jesus tells His disciples. Truly, this woman has given more than the others because she gave all she had. Everything will be noted and appreciated by God, even a thought, out of love for Him; He does not look at the value of the gifts but at the sentiments of the heart.

WOMAN WITH A HAEMORRHAGE, THE TWO BLIND MEN HEALED (XXIII SUNDAY)

Humble confidence obtains everything from Jesus. The woman with a haemorrhage is a perfect model: she believes that Jesus can heal her by a mere touch without her expressing her need. How often are **our prayers** unheard because we lack Faith, humility and trust!

PREDICTION OF THE FINAL JUDGEMENT (XXIV SUNDAY)

Jesus will appear in His majesty and power; before Him, the great, the proud will prostrate themselves, before Him they will shout aloud: This is He whom we have despised and ill-treated. The elect will see Him. There will be the Separation between the good and the wicked. These will go into eternal damnation, those to their reward for their pains, with the blessed invitation: Come, all you blessed, and possess my Kingdom prepared for you from all eternity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

SOURCES

OTHER WORKS

ABBREVIATIONS

DOCUMENTS OF THE INSTITUTE

M.d.C. = Magdalene of Canossa

Ep = Epistolario

R.s.s. = Regole e scritti spirituali

ARCHIVES

OTHERS

cfr. = confronta