

DOCUMENTATION SERIES

MAGDALENE OF CANOSSA – FOUNDRRESS

Of the same Series:

1. Pollonara Elda, Training Courses for the Country Teachers, Rome 1986
2. Pollonara Elda, The Spiritual Exercises in the Early Days of the Institute, Rome 1986
3. Pollonara Elda, Magdalene of Canossa and the First Formation, Rome 1987
4. Nicolai Maria, Magdalene of Canossa and the Genesis of the Rule of the Daughters of Charity, Rome 1991
5. Nicolai Maria, Magdalene of Canossa, catechist in her time, Rome 1992

MARIA NICOLAI

MAGDALENE
OF CANOSSA
- EDUCATOR -

Rome 1994

Maria Nicolai F.d.C.C. - Original Title:
MADDALENA DI CANOSSA : EDUCATRICE
Rome 1993 - translation from Italian by:
ESME DA CUNHA, F.d.C.C.
MARIA ROSSONI, F.d.C.C.

General Curia
Canossian Institute
Via Stazione Ottavia, 70
00135 Roma
Tel.06/308280

FOREWORD

This volume, *Magdalene of Canossa-Educator*, like those of this series is remarkable for its method of direct documentation.

Information is obtained from the genuine sources of the Foundress' writings: letters, plans and rules, which were edited by M. Emilia Dossi. The author, Sr. M. Nicolai, after an overview of the problem of education in Italy, in both the civil and the ecclesial milieu of the period of Illuminism and Restoration, runs through the historical setting of Magdalene of Canossa's work, starting from Magdalene's first insights into the type of work, up to their practical implementation in the communities founded by Magdalene.

The volume offers the Sister, involved in the ministry of education, valuable hints on how to carry out research and utilize the sources, stimulating stimulates them to deepen further this "special branch".

Besides, it allows us to grasp the urgency and preciousness of the school and of any educational-promotional activity for the youth as privileged means to "prevent evil in society".

May the Sisters engaged in "forming the heart of youth" to human and Christian values through "**sacrifice**" and "**patience**", be comforted by the certainty that "there is no greater opportunity than this to show the Lord true love".

M. Elide Testa
Superior General

**MAGDALENE
OF CANOSSA:
SCHOOL
AND EDUCATIONAL
PROMOTIONAL
ACTIVITIES**

INTRODUCTION

Education, as the promotion of "women" of every age, was for Magdalene of Canossa the most urgent response to the spiritual and social needs of her time.

The time and place where she lived were extremely deficient from the promotional point of view.

Hers were stormy times with an Italy divided into many States, a historical period marked by glaring differences among the various classes of society. Education and culture were privileges only accessible to the nobility and the richer middle classes.

Magdalene considered the promotion and the religious formation and growth of the person as one and the same thing; or rather, the former was the necessary condition for the latter.

Society requires not only efficient professionals but persons who are formed in all aspects, especially in morals and religion.

Educating a person means making her free not only from being conditioned by the psychological and social environment, but also from that greatest of evils, sin.

Magdalene had the intuition that education was an act of love exercised through interpersonal relationships that did not stop at the emotional level but went directly to that Eternal Love that gives life to the person loved.

The entire task of education, in fact, is seen as a constant attitude of self-giving. Every simple gesture, word or look is an act of genuine love for the total growth of the person in all her richness.

It is true that Magdalene is not preoccupied about theorizing on education. Nor does she stop to reflect on pedagogical and scholastic problems. Instead, with her "Schools of charity" and other promotional educational activities she offers to society a gratuitous service, thus witnessing to the gratuitousness of the salvific love of Christ.

The school entails many sacrifices but is an expression of love that gives greater glory to God than any other type of service. In the school a person is helped to develop all his natural giftedness to which is added that supernatural gift of divine adoption.

THE PROBLEM OF EDUCATION AND OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTRUCTION BETWEEN THE XVIII CENTURY AND THE EARLY XIX CENTURY

In the first half of the 18th Century the conditions of education were very miserable. There was no schooling for the masses and the working classes except for the generous initiatives of some Religious Congregations: the Barnabites, the Somaschi, the Scolopi and the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

Instruction and educational methods followed the orientations of the aristocratic traditions. Learning was considered the privilege of the few. Because of this concept the Italian States were not bothered about raising the cultural level of the people.

Perini wrote: The Venetian aristocracy cared little about the instruction of the people. While the Republic existed there was no trace of paying schools or centres of learning for the common people¹

The fact that the masses were left in ignorance was not a phenomenon only of the Venetian Court, but as we have already stated, was prevalent everywhere because of political reasons.

In the second half of the 1700s instead, the problem of instruction was considered the responsibility of the State.

Illuminism with its new trend of thinking forced science to review and take "man" into consideration again. "The illuminists believe that mankind is moving towards progress. There is no other way but to liberate oneself from all that for centuries has been enslaving the mind of man: prejudices, superstitions, errors, deceptions ...

Man is moving towards an autonomy of his own conscience, his way of thinking, his person. He will surely be able to shatter the clouds of ignorance by the light of reason and prepare himself worthily for his destiny."² As a person, an individual has the right to be educated and instructed. Keeping these tendencies in mind the pedagogists of those times gave education a more realistic slant. Studies were more practical and closer to life.

However, the School took on a lay and civil character. It was meant to form a citizen. The State reserved to itself the delicate task of shaping consciences.³ This is how it was with an emerging State-run school. When complete State jurisdiction in the field of education was imposed, instruction was snatched away from clerical interference.

In 1773, the Society of Jesus was suppressed, and the Jesuits who till then had a monopoly over education, with schools everywhere for the nobility and the rich, were hunted down in all the States. Their expulsion became an effective incentive to raise public interest in the field of instruction and schools.

In fact, in the second half of the 1700s there was a spate of writers who dealt with pedagogical and scholastic matters.

Educational plans and scholastic proposals

The Italian illuministic movement had two important centres from which various proposals for renewal were circulated: Naples and Milan.

¹ Perini O., *Storia di Verona dal 1790 al 1822*, Vol I, Verona 1873, Introduzione, p. LXXIII

² Liguori E., *Educazione e scuola durante l'Illuminismo e il Romanticismo*, in *Questioni di storia della pedagogia La Scuola*, Brescia 1963, p.306

³ Cf. *ibid.* pp.317 -318

At Naples we find Antonio Genovesi (1712 -1769), an economist and writer of political pedagogy who advocated that the instruction of the people is the prime factor in the progress of a nation.

"Appointed by the minister Tanucci to organise the public schools and the free boarding houses, he drew up a plan for the schools, that extended from the lowest levels to the higher ones. He visualized instituting centres for scientific and practical subjects, special schools for sailors, as well as schools for children. For the ruling classes he proposed the setting up of boarding houses where together with the study of literature they would also study geography, history and the sciences. For the lower classes he suggested establishing common and free public schools, open even to farmers, where they would learn reading, writing, practical arithmetic, religion and the dogmas of the faith, revised according to some historical and moral orientations." ⁴

Again at Naples, Gaetano Filangeri (1752-1788), a disciple of Genovesi and an illuminist like him, in his "Libro IV della Scienza della legislazione" considered instruction of the people as the best means for a moral and political reformation of humanity.

At Milan the group of illuminists gathered around the newspaper "Il caffè", founded by the brothers Pietro (1728-1797) and Alessandro Verri (1741-1816). This group was not directly concerned with the problem of education. It was very involved with the culture of its time and contributed to the transformation of the traditional concept of education. ⁵

Gian Rinaldo Carli (1720-1795) and Giuseppe Gorani (1740 -1819) belonged to this group. The former was the author of "Nuovo metodo per le scuole pubbliche d'Italia" which proved him to be a person-oriented and original educationist. His book influenced the "General Official Regulations" of Felbiger for the schools of Austria. He envisaged a network of schools for basic education to guarantee a minimum of public instruction for all. The other, Gorani, wrote the "Essay on public education" in which he maintained that instruction was a duty of the State, that the School should be laicised and that the clergy should be excluded, so that the masses may imbibe a culture free from class-consciousness. ⁶ To these writers we may add Gaspare Gozzi (1713-1786) who worked for the reform of the Venetian schools.

In 1773, the year of the suppression of the Society of Jesus, the Venetian government asked him to write a report on the way the schools of Venice and Padua, run by the Jesuits, could be substituted by other schools that would respond better to the new requirements.

All Gozzi's plans remained dead letter because the Venetian aristocracy did not make the least effort to raise the basic culture of the people.

In the 1700s even the education of women became a matter for consideration.

In 1774 Pier Domenico Soresi, the tutor of the Serbelloni and a friend of Parini, published at Milan an "Essay on the necessity and easy method of teaching children". Contrary to the old persisting prejudices he clearly demonstrated not only the need of offering women an intellectual and moral education, but also the possibility of success." ⁷ This type of education is seen as an essential condition for the total reformation of society and of the civil world.

The Scolopian Fr. Gaspare Morardo, born in Liguria but resident in Turin, had the same idea. In 1787 he wrote an essay entitled "The educated young lady". He stated that the education of girls is closely related not only to private but also public welfare." ⁸

Education brings happiness to the girls and also to their families. Working out a plan of study for them he declared that the various disciplines help them attain the "virtues proposed in the Catechism". ⁹ He suggested that their study be complemented by manual work according to the

4. Gambaro A., La pedagogia italiana nell'età del Risorgimento, in *Questione di storia della pedagogia*, La Scuola, Brescia 1963, p.410

5. Cf. Liguori E., o.c., p.320

6. Gambaro A., o.c., p.411

7. Gambaro A., o.c., p.414

8. Morardo G., *La damigella istruita*, Torino 1787, p 5

9. *Ibid.*, p 47

social conditions of the girls. These could be: attending to household chores, spinning and even sewing, which according to the writer "is always in fashion".¹⁰

All the writers mentioned here and many others who were preoccupied about the problem of education, certainly drew the attention of the public and also got them to reflect on the urgent problems connected with instruction. In fact, they made it clear that a new mentality was necessary in order to effect these reforms and that to achieve an education for the masses, the social problem of poverty should be resolved.

It is not possible to instruct and educate if at the same time the economic and social conditions of the people are not raised.

"But in the reform policy of all the illuministic princes there was a serpent that ate into and annulled their good resolutions, mainly because they considered the instruction of the people as a generous gift of their despotism, as an ornament and credit to the State, without any regard for human rights and those of citizens. The outbreak of the Revolution implicated the explosive principle that the instruction of the people is a fundamental function of the State and its unavoidable duty; moreover, that it is an absolute right of man and of every citizen. This impeded the desire of the sovereigns to promote reforms. Thus there was a fatal return to the outdated institutions of the past and to tradition."¹¹

The reforms and schools during the reign of Napoleon

The task of the reformation of the schools in this period was considered as a special example of the political, administrative and religious activity of Napoleon in Italy.

He wanted to monopolize all the aspects of the social complex affirming the need of State control over them.

The French Empire had promoted the germs of a radical renovation in the scholastic field. It sought to introduce the plan of education that was the result of all the pedagogical discussions of the various assemblies of the Revolution.

In 1797, in the Constitutions of the Transalpine Republic, the obligation to offer public instruction was affirmed. In order to attain this goal a Commission was nominated to draw up a General Plan to bring about an organic reform.

The central idea of this reform was the lay and gratuitous nature of the elementary schools. These schools were considered as means to form the democratic and national conscience of the people, and therefore they had to be open to the masses. The instruction imparted consisted of learning to read, to write, to make accounts, and also a study of the principles of public morals. The programme also emphasized the historical and literary values of the Italian traditions. Lack of funds however prevented the realization of this plan.

From 1800-1814 Napoleon made his influence greatly felt in the area of public education. Instruction was becoming more and more laicized and used for political ends. Military discipline was introduced so as to form soldiers and not citizens.

In 1802, a law on education was promulgated which continued to have effect even during the Italian Regime. According to this law on instruction, there were 3 grades of schools: university, grammar schools, gymnasia, primary and special schools. The elementary schools were established in every Commune and possibly in every Parish. It had two classes, each of two years duration.

However, Napoleon's primary concern was about the Middle and High Schools. He overlooked the elementary schools or rather regarded them merely from the political point of view. Three Boarding schools for girls were established at Bologna, Verona and Milan.

Regarding the one at Verona, the guidelines for the programme and the principles laid down by the French Government were considerably reduced because of actual financial difficulties. Thus, many discussions and good intentions were destined to remain at the theoretical level.

¹⁰. Ibid., p 39

¹¹. Gambaro A., o.c., p.432

The need for an education of the masses was debated many times in the "Società patriottica", founded on 27 April 1797. The interest in such an education was aimed at consolidating a democratic government. Fasanari wrote: "To support a democratic government that was accepted and sustained by a minority, a radical work of re-educating the whole population was necessary, with special attention to the younger generations."¹²

In the "Hall of Public Instruction" the Veronese democrats held discussions on the need for educating the people in order to conscientize them regarding the disparity of classes and to make them understand the importance of their presence in society.

"With such programmes the "Hall of Public Instruction" actually entered into a phase of radical renovation so that to the old traditional aims of religious and literary instruction was now added an extensive programme of civic education and technical training. A need was felt to extend these to every citizen, male and female. The greatest efforts of the Hall were aimed at education as a means of social uplift."¹³

Even women should not be deprived of instruction. Fasanari gave a brief description of the "citizen Ida Mattei".¹⁴ In her discourses at the "Hall of Public Instruction", she strongly recommended the question of the education of women through which, she said, a democratic education for men would also be promoted. In fact, she stated: "Education is for everybody. The first seeds are the most effective. And the first seeds of education are planted by mothers."¹⁵ From the education of women and consequently of mothers, comes also the education of children. She also maintained "the son of an aristocratic woman can never be democratic because men preserve in their hearts the most enduring principles imbibed during their infancy. It will therefore be difficult for Italians to maintain the freedom they received thanks to the French, if they do not educate women."¹⁶

The social uplift of women through education became a sign of importance which we could attribute to the presence of some influential women in this new society. Yet in the first decade of the 1800s there is no trace of any public and free school being opened for girls in Verona.

In this city as elsewhere, there was education only for girls of the nobility, and that, too, only with regard to their family environment, ignoring their role in society.

At Verona, the abbot Antonio Zamboni, a professor of Philosophy, presented to the municipality in 1801, a "New Plan for Public Instruction". In it he urged that the authorities take up the education of girls. "The women do not need to be lettered: but among the lower classes it would be useful if they have some knowledge and skills that are indispensable or useful for the internal economy and management of the family. For the upper classes it would be gracious if their undeveloped intellect could be adequately cultivated ... the widespread ignorance of the fairer sex is a shame to society and will be harmful to mankind."¹⁷

All these statements of principles were not put into practice. "The resolutions to defend, solidify and honour culture ... ,says Gambaro, were good and wise, but often these met with serious obstacles: the persistent prejudices of the upper classes and many municipal authorities who believed that education is a real privilege and that the masses are destined by fate to remain in ignorance, ... the scarcity of available funds, the cultural and didactic inadequacy of the personnel involved in education, the brief period of the Italian Regime ... the turbulence of political and military events. Nonetheless we cannot deny that the Italian Regime represented a noteworthy progress in public education. It made efforts to widen the spheres of education especially for the masses and for women. We can appreciate the advantages of a uniformity in the various types of schools; the methodology was improved. The Italian language was maintained as a binding factor

¹². Fasanari R., *Gli albori del Risorgimento a Verona (1785-1801)*, Verona 1950, p.142

¹³. Gallas L., *Tendenze illuministiche ed esperienze giacobine a Verona alla fine del '700*, Verona 1970, p.112

¹⁴. Cf. Fasanari R., *Le donne del Risorgimento veronese*, Verona 1952, pp.7-9

¹⁵. Gallas L., o.c., p.113

¹⁶. *Ibid.*

¹⁷. Zamboni A., *Nuovo piano di pubblica istruzione, C.VI*, Verona 1801, p. 39

for a national feeling. Through appropriate circulars, studies in the Grammar schools were warmly recommended and praised; and political offices were entrusted to Italian citizens." ¹⁸

The Schools in Lombardy and Veneto during the Restoration period

With the fall of the Napoleonic Empire, the Austrian Government entered into Lombardy and Veneto. The new Rulers were immediately concerned about the schools. They brought back the scholastic setup to the conditions they were in before the French Regime. In 1817 they began by collecting "Detailed information about the scholastic institutions in view of a general reform to enhance the culture of the people". ¹⁹

The reforms of teaching started from the university of Padua and Pavia down to the elementary schools.

On 7 Dec.1818, the Government of Milan published the "Regulations for instruction in the Elementary School". The document first established the quality of the school, dividing it thus: a lower elementary for 2 years, an upper elementary consisting of 3 or 4 classes and a technical elementary.

"The Lower Elementary School should be set up in every Parish and town of the countryside, one for boys and another for girls. The programme is: religion ie. Catechism and the explanation of the Sunday Gospel, reading, writing, mental and written arithmetic, the elements of Grammar, spelling and the first steps for a logical exposition of one's ideas. In the school for girls they would also learn feminine skills necessary for a good economical management of the family." ²⁰

In the Upper Elementary Schools, besides the subjects mentioned they would also be taught Sacred History of the Old and New Testament, Italian Grammar, composition etc.

Regarding the method of teaching, the Regulations stated that these should be suitable to the subjects taught, the character of the children, their capacity and needs. There would be half yearly examinations.

At Milan and Venice one of the Upper Elementary Schools would be called the Normal School. Attached to this School there would be courses in methodology for teacher-trainees. This course would last for 6 months for those wanting to teach in the Upper Elementary Schools and for 3 months for the teachers of the Lower Elementary School. The course would be followed by a year of training and an examination in the presence of an Inspector who would award a diploma of proficiency.

Certainly in founding these schools, Austria was not moved only by the desire to liberate the people from their ignorance, but primarily by an exquisitely political motivation to inculcate in their subjects, from childhood, an awareness of their duties.

Even Religion was considered by Austria as an "instrument for the Government". "The desire to attach the Lower Elementary School to the Parish is not only a means of relieving the State budget of a financial burden and shifting it to the communes and to institutions; it is also a very useful politico-ecclesiastical means to control and dominate over public feelings." ²¹

With the advent of the Austrian Regime, even in Verona education remained a burning issue. Because of the disastrous economic situation the Government decided to leave space for private initiatives in the schools, but under strict supervision.

It was in this historical, political and social context that Magdalene of Canossa and all the other founders worked for an education that would give youth a Christian formation.

¹⁸. Gambaro A., o.c., p.437

¹⁹. Ibid., p.448

²⁰. Ibid., p.449

²¹ Niccià C., La scuola di carita' di Maddalena di Canossa, Monza 1978 (opera inedita), p.24

THE SCHOOLS OF CHARITY IN MAGDALENE OF CANOSSA'S TIME

In comparison with the State Schools, the Schools of charity were considered private institutions with definite aims and characteristics, especially that of being free schools. They were looked upon as means to raise the social level of those most affected by the moral evils of misery and ignorance. In fact, through education, the poor and abandoned youth would be raised materially and morally, and reinstated into a Christian way of life.

So the schools of charity, in the very act of working for social uplift, also contributed to restoring the fidelity of the people to the Church at a period in which she was "humiliated, suffering, exiled, a prisoner in the person of her Pontiffs Pius VI and Pius VII, opposed and attacked, deprived of freedom and prestige - a Church abandoned by the poor, the suffering, the intellectuals." ²²

At the time of Magdalene of Canossa there already were schools of charity and educational institutions for poor youth of both sexes, at Verona with Don Pietro Leonardi ²³, at Mantua with the

Filippini Fr. Domenico Bellavite²⁴, at Venice with the Cavanis brothers ²⁵, and at Milan with Barnabite Fr. Felice De Vecchi ²⁶.

Magdalene inserted herself into this great educational movement. Even before the foundation of her own Institute she had a friendly relationship with this band of holy Priests and Founders, through meetings and exchange of ideas.

Verona

Don Pietro Leonardi was a very active priest, full of untiring charity. While he was engaged in assisting the sick through the activities of the "Fratellanza" (Brotherhood), he felt great compassion towards those youth who, having left the hospital, found themselves on the streets without any support. He decided to take up this challenge privately so as to be able to help at least a few of them.

²² Gallio D., *Introduzione alla storia delle fondazioni religiose a Verona nel primo Ottocento*, in *Chiesa e Spiritualità nell'Ottocento italiano*, Ed. Mazziana, Verona 1971, p.236

²³ Leonardi Don Pietro., born at Verona 17 July 1769, the tenth of twelve children. He was ordained in 1794. In 1796 he founded the "Evangelical Brotherhood of Priests and lay hospital personnel". In 1799 he began collecting abandoned children to form the Institute for street urchins. Between 1800 and 1812 he founded the religious Institute of the Daughters of Jesus to take care of poor girls. He died at Verona in 1844.

²⁴ Bellavite P. Domenico, born at Verona in 1753. He was already a priest when in 1784 he asked for and obtained entrance into the Congregation of the Filippini at Mantua. When this Congregation was suppressed he stayed on at Mantua. In 1796 he started a private orphanage for poor and abandoned girls. In 1801 he opened a new home called "Home for the poor and abandoned". He wrote "Regulations for a home erected at Mantua in 1801 for abandoned girls to educate them in the duties of Religion and skills proper to their condition in life". In 1809 he also founded the "Pious Institute of the Daughters of Mary". He died at Mantua in 1821.

²⁵ Counts Cavanis, Antonio Angelo and Marco -Antonio, born at Venice in 1772 and 1774 respectively. They were initiated into the Magistrature of the Republic. On 21 March 1795 Antonio Angelo was ordained a Priest and Marco Antonio on 13 Feb. 1806. The two brothers discovered their real vocation together. In 1802 they founded a Marian Congregation for young people. In 1804 they opened their first school of charity at Venice for boys. In 1808 they opened even a house for poor girls, to start which they called on Marchioness Magdalene of Canossa in 1810. Marco Antonio died in 1853 and Angelo Antonio in 1858.

²⁶ Fr. Felice De Vecchi, born in 1745. He entered the Congregation of the Barnabites and became Parish Priest of St. Alessandro's parish at Milan. He directed a small group of chosen souls committed to work for Christian renewal. Among these was also the Countess Carolina Durini who had the honour of presenting Fr. Felice to Magdalene of Canossa. He was a great preacher and was famous almost throughout Italy for his missionary activities. In 1801 he founded near the Main Hospital of Milan, a Pious Union of Charity and Christian generosity of which he became Director. He died in 1812.

In his biography of Don Pietro Leonardi, Bresciani emphasised that while Magdalene of Canossa was occupied with the organization and assistance of her first group of girls, Don Pietro had begun collecting "street urchins". He was preoccupied about their complete maintenance and hoped to give them a moral, civic and especially a Christian education.²⁷

Even Magdalene spoke of the beginning of this work while writing to her Milanese friend, Carolina Durini.²⁸

She wrote on 24 Nov.1801:

*" I forgot to tell you that finally Don Pietro has decided to occupy a house close to the hospital where he will take the boys he has already gathered. I feel that now he will really be able to begin this work. But everything will be done by him as a private individual..."*²⁹

The educational activities for these boys did not exhaust the apostolic zeal of this great Veronese priest. This was only a transitional phase towards a permanent establishment, that is, the foundation of the religious Institute of the "Daughters of Jesus", who would be engaged in schools of charity for poor girls.

This Institute was founded between 1809 and 1812. In the meantime Magdalene of Canossa had already opened 2 Houses, one at Verona and the other at Venice, had decided upon the ministries of charity proper to her Institute and was drawing up the definitive Rules of the Daughters of Charity.

In 1816 Don Pietro Leonardi published a pamphlet to make known the aims and programme of his schools. It bore the descriptive title: A Proposal for the foundation at Verona of an Institution for schools of charity for the Christian and civic education of poor girls". Instead, Leonardi advised the reader to observe along the streets and in poor families, how many girls live in idleness and ignorance. As adults they will be incapable of earning their bread, and will be ignorant with regard to religion and their civic duties. To attain these aims Leonardi believed in an efficacious and immediate educational activity that was totally christian. In this he was in line with all the Veronese Founders of the 1800s who felt urged to reconstruct society through religion".³⁰ In this way, as was observed, he changed his sphere of action from his previous vocation as manifested by the "Fratellanza".³¹

Fr. Domenico Bellavite too spent the whole of his life caring for abandoned youth. In 1796 he opened an orphanage for boys at Mantua and in 1801 a home for girls. For the latter he wrote "Regulations for a Home erected at Mantua in 1801 for abandoned girls, to educate them in the duties of Religion and skills proper to their condition in life". In the first chapter we read: "The first rule that is laid down for any girl who by the grace of God is accepted or is to be accepted here, in this newly-erected Home ... mainly consists in the obligation to make every effort to acquire the Christian perfection proper to her state and condition in life." ³²

Magdalene herself described the work of Fr. Bellavite in some of her letters to C. Durini:

²⁷ Cf. Bresciani C., Vita di Don Pietro Leonardi, Verona 1855, pp.11-15.

²⁸ Countess Carolina Durini, born at Milan in 1762 to Ludovico Trotti Bentivoglio and Costanza Castelbarco Visconti. She had two sisters, Paola and Teresa, and a brother, Lorenzo Galeazzo. In 1782 she married Count Carlo Francesco Durini. Carolina was very dedicated to works of charity. She met Magdalene of Canossa at Verona in the Hospital of Mercy during one of her frequent journeys for educational purposes. With that meeting a deep life-long friendship and collaboration developed between the two ladies. Hundreds of letters exchanged between them give witness to this friendship.

²⁹ Magdalene of Canossa, to Durini, 24 Nov.1801, Ep.I, pp. 96-97

³⁰ Manfredini M., L'attività di Don Pietro Leonardi (1769- 1844) per la fondazione delle Scuole di Carità in Verona. Bologna 1972 (opera inedita), pp.116-118

³¹ Cf. Gallio D.,o.c.,p.262

³². Regolamento di una casa... ,p. 3

" I am tempted to make a trip to Mantua. The main reason for this is to be able to talk to Fr.Bellavite and to see his orphanage for girls... In these two orphanages he now has about 101 persons to care for." ³³

A few days later she wrote:

"..I had the fortune to speak to Fr. Bellavite twice. He was good enough to let me see everything in his orphanage for girls, and replied satisfactorily to all my questions ... I assure you that speaking to him and speaking to a saint, in my opinion, is one and the same thing. The house is so clean, and as modest as a monastery. There is nothing more you could wish for ... If I am not mistaken, there are 52 girls, and of different categories with regard to the training. Some of them work on cloth, others learn tailoring, sewing and similar trades. All of them are taught reading, writing and arithmetic. There are 5 teachers. Between these 2 orphanages I think he has more than a hundred persons under his care. The Lord blesses his faith and holiness, and provides, I could almost say, sustenance for all of them, from day to day." ³⁴

This charitable activity attracted the attention of Magdalene so much so that at one moment she even contemplated the possibility of working together with Fr.Bellavite, but after other providential meetings, and above all, after reading the "Regulations..." which she felt were too rigid for her girls, she understood that that was not God's will for her. Replying to her Milanese friend to whom she had sent the "Regulations..." of Fr. Bellavite she affirmed:

"I too feel that his Rules are full of the spirit of God. They clearly reveal the heart of the writer. But, to tell you the truth, I feel, undoubtedly because of my weakness, that they are too perfect for the girls." ³⁵

Venice

Even at Venice the lack of good schools for the children of the common people was one of the factors that made the corruption of customs and the moral decadence all the more serious in that city of lagoons.

Observing so much misery and poverty, the two Cavanis brothers, Antonio Angelo and Marco Antonio felt interiorly urged by an ardent desire to save the Venetian youth and to go out to meet their spiritual needs. They dedicated their whole life to the Christian education of these young people. In 1802 they began by starting the Marian Congregation in their Parish of St. Agnes. At the same time they saw the need for an integral education of its members, to strengthen their love for the Congregation and so that they might persevere in the practice of a Christian way of living.

Through some benefactors, Providence came to their help, and in 1804 "the two brothers opened the first school of charity in Venice. Thus, even before the establishment of public schools, they dedicated themselves to snatch away many young people from idleness, vice and ignorance, to get them to be useful to society and to form them in the love and fear of God through a deeper study of catechism. With a school that also integrated an oratory and recreational facilities, they became the real pioneers and forerunners of the splendid series of educational institutions of the 19th Century." ³⁶ Because the love of Christ is boundless, the Cavanis brothers always relied on divine providence. So they even turned their paternal and priestly hearts to the education of poor and abandoned girls. This work had humble beginnings as did the work started for the boys. In fact, it began in simplicity, poverty and hiddenness.

³³. M.d C., to Durini, 6 May 1801, Ep. I, p.52

³⁴. M.d.C. to Durini 2 June.1801, Ep. I, p.58

³⁵. M.d.C. to Durini, 16 October 1803, Ep.I, p.206

³⁶ Cavanis A. and M., Epistolario e Memorie, a cura di P.Servini A., Rome 1985, Introduzione, p.XII

The first House was opened on 10 Sept.1808 in the same Parish of St. Agnes. After a lot of negotiations by Fr. Marco with the government officials, the girls were moved to the ex-monastery of the Holy Spirit in 1810. A year later they were shifted to the ex-Convent of the Eremite in the Parish of St.Thomas. It was in 1810 that the Cavanis brothers invited Magdalene of Canossa to initiate their institution.

Fr. Marco made the following entry in his diary:

*" 2 June - Today, being Saturday, we began the School for the day scholars in the same monastery, with 4 girls entrusted to a teacher Angioletta Pedranzon. She has been well trained for this charitable work by the Marchioness Magdalene of Canossa. Since the Marchioness herself directs a similar institute in Verona, she agreed with great kindness to come to Venice to get our poor House better organised. For this purpose she stayed here for a long time. Her extreme kindness endeared her to all and was a source of great edification."*³⁷

The Educational Plan formulated by the Cavanis brothers could be summarised as follows:"The needs of the poor abandoned girls were provided for by the Pious Institution in two ways - with a charitable boarding House and a School of charity for day scholars.

The parents of the girls coming here do not have to pay anything for admission and for the education received. The girls so admitted have to be accompanied to the School and back to their homes. They are carefully instructed in the duties of religion and trained in useful feminine skills.

They gather in the School even on Sundays and feastdays. Some very special cases are taken care of even for their daily maintenance. Others are accepted free of charge in the charitable boarding House. Here more than 30 persons (including the teachers) are provided for daily, without burdening their families in the least and without any help from the State. The girls accepted are not sent away until a suitable place is found for them." ³⁸

Milan

Moving to the city of Milan we have to state that the Barnabite Fr. Felice De Vecchi, Director of the Pious Union of charity and generosity, was the point of reference and the coordinator of all the charitable and educational activities in that Lombard metropolis. He directed the people who generously worked for the good of the poorest.

During his frequent visits to the General Hospital Fr. De Vecchi was always moved to compassion and pity at the sight of so many abandoned girls.

Fr. Luigi Valdani, in his biography of this confrere wrote: " However, what most moved his fatherly heart were the many girls of tender age who were either left to themselves or badly brought up by their wayward parents. These girls were exposed to danger and even total ruin. In fact, he provided for the assistance and maintenance of many of these children from his own resources. He cared for some others through the Ladies of the Pious Union who were not always willing to support the suggestions of the Servant of God with their generosity and graciousness." ³⁹

In fact, many Ladies and Gentlemen of Milan belonging to this Pious Union were in agreement with their Director that a House of rehabilitation should be opened at Porta Tosa for the little "abandoned" girls and another at Contrada di Brisa for the bigger girls. They also desired to establish new schools of charity in the various quarters of the city so that all the girls in need of assistance would be reached through them.

To guide those who would direct or teach in these schools, Fr. De Vecchi published the "Regulations of the Schools of charity for the poor girls of the city of Milan" in 1807.

³⁷ Zanon F.S. I Servi di Dio P.Anton'Angelo e P.Marcantonio conti Cavanis, Venezia 1925, vol 1 , pp.374-375

³⁸ Ibid., p.403

³⁹ Valdani L., Vita del R.Padre Don Felice De Vecchi, Milano 1821, p.134

Addressing the Ladies and Gentlemen of the Pious Union he wrote: "Here is another beautiful result of your generous charity - providing for the schools of charity for the benefit of so many poor girls. These young girls would otherwise have been neglected and would have grown up without culture, religion and training in a trade to enable them to earn an honest living. They would then have been in danger of growing up in a disordered and scandalous manner and of being lost eternally.

Thus these schools benefit not only the girls themselves but religion and society as well. A good education given to these girls will not only help to eradicate several disorders and scandals, but will also enable them to be good mothers of families, efficient in service, skilled workers and good edifying Christians." ⁴⁰

In the "Regulations" Fr. De Vecchi prescribed that in the rehabilitation Houses as well as in the Schools of charity, the teachers should have a spiritual lesson for the pupils for 15 minutes in the morning and another 15 minutes in the afternoon. To this end he published a book in 1810, entitled "Rules of behaviour for the abandoned girls in the Boarding Houses and the Schools of charity of the city of Milan". This book could be considered a treatise on the spiritual life. He proposed the exercise of many virtues and also spiritual practices necessary for any one who wants to live his Christianity to the full.

While presenting this work to the directors and teachers he said: "*You have been called by God, to be faithful collaborators of His providence and mercy; to help these girls whom He has gathered together, snatching them away from the dangers they were exposed to. Through your learned education they are to be helped in their present and future lives. You should certainly console yourselves, realising in this call the exceptional predilection of God's goodness and that He is preparing the greatest treasures of His graces for you...You should not be disheartened by the difficulties you encounter, for surely, God who has chosen you for this task, is always faithful to His promises. You will never be deprived of enlightenment and the most suitable means to support and carry on this work in a holy manner...*

So that I too may give you a helping hand, I have already presented you with some norms to guide you in the form of the Rules printed at the Motta printing press. Now I offer you these Rules of behaviour which deal with some very important points in order to form the girls well in Religion, for society and for their own good". ⁴¹

⁴⁰ Regolamento delle Scuole di Carità per le povere figlie nella città di Milano, Milano 1807, pp.3-4

⁴¹ Regole di Costume per le figlie derelitte nelle loro Case di educazione e per le scuole di carità nella città di Milano, Milano 1810, pp.IX-X

MAGDALENE OF CANOSSA'S EDUCATIONAL MISSION BEFORE FOUNDING THE INSTITUTE

The tiny seed

Magdalene of Canossa, a woman ever open to welcome any authentic value, interpreted attentively the urgent needs of the Church and of society at her time.

Political and military events had spread ruin, corruption and moral and material misery everywhere.

Mmgr. Giovanni Andrea Avogadro¹, Bishop of Verona, to whom the young Marchioness, by the end of 1799, had expressed her wish to devote herself to the welfare of the poor, asked her to take up the delicate task of Christian education of abandoned and indisciplined girls through charity schools.

The Prelate understood how precarious the educational sector was: in fact, the number of youth roaming in the streets was increasing in an alarming way. Besides, a severe famine had caused the cost of living to soar so that it was impossible to support the needy children of two orphanages, existing in Verona, the Derelicts and the Mendicants and therefore a mass of uncontrollable, invaded the city.²

Besides, women in precarious conditions were exposed to the most degrading experiences, to servile work, prostitution and illiteracy.

In view of this situation, Magdalene accepted the educational project and revealed it to her friend Durini:

"Oh God, my dear Caroline, I felt downcast at the contents of your last letter as you mentioned the seduction in Milan. Alas! It was brought to my notice some time ago. Evil is spreading everywhere...I fear that such behaviour in the end will rob us of our faith. What is necessary to prevent such a great evil? I feel lost, my dear; pray for me, pray for everybody".³

Later, Magdalene wrote to her about how she had begun her educational activity :

"Called by Divine Providence to assist the Poor...I began gathering some poor little girls in moral danger, in a rented house and placed them under the supervision of some teachers..."⁴

Even Don Luigi Libera⁵, her spiritual director, exhorted her to begin her apostolate starting with educational work. On 5 July, 1799 he wrote to her:

..."I exhort you with all my strength and if you so wish I also command you, to begin the institution of these girls. Others might join the two (girls), and at the beginning, it is not inconvenient at all to welcome in school those who return home. Make sure that they are little girls from honest parents and sufficiently good social condition".⁶

¹ Msgr. Giovanni Andrea Avogadro was born in Verona in 1735. He entered the Society of Jesus very young and became one of the most well known preachers. When the Jesuits were suppressed he settled down in Verona. He was Bishop of Verona from 1790 to 1804. In 1804 he renounced the charge of the Diocese and re-joined the Society of Jesus. He died at Padua in 1815.

² Cf. Cristofali G.A. Cenni sugli spedali ed Istituti di pubblica beneficenza della citta' di Verona, Verona 1839, Ep. I,p.171.

³ M.d.C., to Durini, 10 January 1803, Ep.I,p.171.

⁴ M.d.C. pro Memoria to Count Mellerio, 25 March 1818, Ep.II/1, p.103.

⁵ Luigi don Libera was born at Verona in 1737. He was ordained a priest in 1760. He was an ordinary confessor at St. Theresa's Convent from 1790 to 1793. Meeting him was very important for the formation of Magdalene of Canossa whom he guided from 1791 to the threshold of 1800, the most delicate period for the discernment of her vocation. He guided Magdalene to seek the Lord through deep asceticism and intense life of prayer. He died on 22 January, 1800.

⁶ Libera L. to M.d.C. 5 July 1799, Ep. III/5,p.4231

The first seed of Magdalene's great work was already sown. "The beginning was small, like a mustard seed, but it was characterized by concreteness, prudence and patient waiting".⁷Magdalene proceeded to make further attempts following her method, starting "little by little without drawing people's attention.. "⁸

The first house she rented for her girls, who were temporarily housed by a certain lady, Christina by name, was a beautiful, salubrious building, located in the Filippini Fathers' premises. The Marchioness was happy because she thought that, though the house was far away from Canossa Palace, her girls could be assisted spiritually by those Religious.

Magdalene herself described the itinerary of her work in her letters to Durini. On 29 January 1801, she addressed her as follows:

"...I am negotiating for a very convenient house, located almost in front of the house of the Filippini; the contract is almost over, and I would like to congratulate myself for having at last found a place convenient in every respect, but above all, for the spiritual assistance of these girls by that pious Congregation, and I hope to link them to those good Religious".⁹

15 days later she wrote:

" At last I can say that the deal of the house for my girls at the Filippini is concluded. If nothing happens, they will shift at the beginning of March."¹⁰

And finally:

" At last today, 3 March, Cristina and the two older girls have shifted to the House of the Filippini. In the current week I hope to place also the small girl. My God, how happy I am ! The house is close to the Filippini and also beautiful and salubrious. There is a garden and the cost is very modest."¹¹

One of Magdalene's goals seemed to be achieved. The contract was to last seven years. Instead in August, that same year, the house was sold because the number of girls increased and Cristina resigned as a teacher.

Worried, yet full of trust in God, the Marchioness asked for prayers:

"...I tell you at once what has happened so that you may pray for me and tell others to pray as well.

First of all, the house for my girls was sold. Besides having to look for a house, I am also compelled to look for one, rather for two teachers, because Cristina and her mother have gone back to their home... You may understand, my dear Caroline, how worried I am, however, I hope for the best in everything, but I need prayer.

I do not know if I told you that I have five girls and that the sixth one is on the way".¹²

It was necessary to look for a new lodging and new teachers, but on 6 September she could inform her friend Durini as follows:

"I tell you first of all that the house, through God's help, was found. It is a few steps away from my home. I am also firmly convinced that I shall find two very appropriate teachers".¹³

⁷ M.d.C., Memorie, Commento di Pollonara E., Rusconi 1989, p.44.

⁸ M.d.C. to Durini, 1 March 1801, Ep.I,p.30.

⁹ M.d.C., to Durini, 29 January 1801, Ep. I, p.14-15.

¹⁰ M.d.C., to Durini, 15 February 1801, Ep.I,p.24.

¹¹ M.d.C., to Durini, 1 March, 1801, Ep. I,p.29.

¹² M.d.C., to Durini, 22 August, 1801, Ep.I,p.77.

¹³ M.d.C., to Durini, 6 September 1801, Ep. I, p.80.

On 13 October, Magdalene wrote triumphantly:

*" Finally, last Monday I have shifted my girls to the new house which is close by."*¹⁴

Solicited by the growing number of resident girls and by the desire to open a school free of charge for non- residents, Magdalene tried to look for a larger house. On 7 August, 1802 she informed her Milanese friend on the matter:

"My dear, I want to tell you something about my plans as I need much prayer in this regard. I am trying to buy a house for my girls and I need that the Lord may inspire a generous person to donate it.

*I am contacting a third teacher who, I believe, will also be able to train the teachers, because, as I am told, she has the qualifications and the qualities needed for it. Finally, after settling all this, I will begin in the girls' house, in a room separated from them, a free school for poor girls. I have in view also a fourth teacher, who has introduced herself to me. She seems to me quite capable".*¹⁵

The Lord granted Magdalene her request by inspiring the Veronese priest, Don Carlo Franceschini¹⁶ to donate the house he owned in St.Zeno district, Via Regaste,5. The contract was signed on 21 September, 1802¹⁷.

More than the outcome of a bargain, the house was a gift, as Magdalene explained in her letter to Durini :

*"I have obtained the house I spoke to you about through a simple transaction,, without paying any money. I have engaged a third teacher so that , if the Lord blesses the Work, in a few months' time we shall begin the school".*¹⁸

On 19 November Magdalene informed Durini about having to transfer the girls to the new house:

*"I am very busy because in a few days' time my girls will move in to the house I bought. At the moment I will not be able to begin the school because the second teacher is going away and only the first and the last will remain with me. Both are persons so holy that I am unworthy of them. I will wait until the Lord will provide me with other subjects.".*¹⁹

It was July 1803. When a third teacher was available, Magdalene began the school for non - resident girls and, as usual, informed her friend :

*"At last I opened the school for non-resident girls, but I have only four small children, as the school began functioning a week ago only."*²⁰

With this initial attempt for a school of charity, one of the main "Branches of Charity" of the Institute began to emerge.

¹⁴ M.d.C., to Durini, 10 October 1801, Ep.I, p.86.

¹⁵ M.d.C., to Durini, 7 August 1802, Ep.I, p.145.

¹⁶ Franceschini don Carlo was a Veronese priest from the St.Zeno in Oratory district. He donated to Magdalene the House he owned in Via Regaste,5. On 21 September 1802, Magdalene was absent and the donation contract was signed by Matilde Giarola, her companion.

¹⁷ Cf. Contract of the House in St. Zeno in Oratorio, A3, XVIII,A.C.R.

¹⁸ M.d.C., to Durini, 17 October 1802, Ep.I, p.153.

¹⁹ M.d.C., to Durini, 19 November 1802, Ep. I,p.160.

²⁰ M.d.C., to Durini, 10 July 1803, Ep.I, p.195.

b) Not enough to "gather girls"

For Magdalene, charitable activity was not simply alms giving, but a choice of life. In fact, she did not intend to gather abandoned girls just to offer them a shelter: the many letters she addressed to her friend Durini help us gauge her educational concern.

Worried about how inadequately girls from orphanages inserted themselves in life and society, Magdalene realized that gathering girls was not enough and that, to solve the problem, it was urgent to prepare the teachers:

"To gather girls seems to me a small thing. It is done in many countries. But to educate them well and to see positive results in those coming from Orphanages, in the sense that these girls become good Christian mothers of families, does not happen often. I think the fault lies in the lack of persons who devote themselves to education out of love of God and by vocation".²¹

Being very tied down to her family, Magdalene's greatest preoccupation was to look for teachers who were suitable and totally available for her girls.

On 19 November, 1802 Magdalene explained to her Milanese friend:

"This, my dear, is what I find most difficult in this Work. There are many pious women, but true vocations are difficult to find".²²

Magdalene did not become an educator all of a sudden but searched for all the means available to prepare herself for the great mission God was entrusting to her. The letters she wrote to her friend Durini reveal the inner conflict Magdalene faced: on one hand the awareness of her incapacity and inexperience and on the other, her continuous and untiring search for whatever might help her to support her ideas on education.

In fact, in 1801 and 1802, as we mentioned earlier, she visited charitable institutions and boarding homes, met persons with similar educational concerns, received and read regularly methods²³ suitable to educate abandoned girls.

After visiting Fr. Bellavite's work at Mantua, Magdalene was so thrilled that she would have associated herself to him and abandoned her plan, if it were God's will.

On 4 October she wrote to Durini:

"After proposing to him my ideas concerning the formation of teachers and persuading him about it, I declared to him that when he really thinks of forming a solid union under his guidance, were I certain that it is God's will, as soon as my brother gets married and Carlino (24) is taken care of by a teacher, I, too, will join him."²⁴

Magdalene's wish, as we know, stopped just at planning level, because God's plans did not coincide with hers. While she was looking for new people with whom to begin a school for external girls in the house at St. Zeno in Oratory,²⁵ a group of religious by the name "Recluses of the Christian Retreat"²⁶ came to Verona.

²¹ M.d.C., to Durini, 27 September 1801, Ep.I,p.83.

²² M.d.C. to Durini, 27 September 1801, Ep.I, p.83.

²³ Cf. Tronconi C., Note sullo sviluppo dell'Istituto delle Figlie della Carita'-Canossiane- in Milano ed aspetti storici, economici e sociali della sua evoluzione, Milano1973,(opera inedita) A.C.R., p.28.

²⁴ Canossa Carlo (Carlino) was Magdalene's cousin. He was born in 1797 to Marquis Jerome and Countess Maria Buri. The latter on her death-bed entrusted her barely two month old son to her niece Magdalene, as to a mother. He died in 1844.

²⁵ M.d.C., to Durini, 4 October 1801, Ep.I, p.84

²⁶ The Society of the Recluses of Christian Retreat was founded in 1799 by Fr. Anthony Silvester Receveur, parish priest of Fontanelles in Besancon diocese. It comprised a male and female branch. The members had no vows. They promised obedience to the Rules and the Superior of the Society. During the French Revolution they migrated to other Countries and a group went also to Verona.

Since they had a similar educational apostolate, the Marchioness thought she might join them and open schools free of charge for poor girls, instead of "getting mad" searching for suitable teachers and conveyed her new idea to her Milanese friend :

*"The Recluses of the Christian Retreat came here again and again... They have no vows and their life of great silence and union with God is very austere. Their main aim is education of the poor girls they gather, but especially instruction through charity schools, as I would like...It came to my mind that instead of getting mad, as I do, in looking for teachers and then forming them for the school, were it useful and agreeable, I could take this into account, though with caution and after asking for information."*²⁷

Magdalene's new idea of integrating herself with the Recluses of the Christian Retreat was again a mere pious wish.

Magdalene kept on asking for information about the running of schools, sought for advice, observed and reflected.

She went to Parma because she wanted to know personally the Institute (Conservatorio) of the Luigine.²⁸

In her letter to Caroline, dated 1 January 1803, she expressed her awe for such an Institute and described in detail the charitable activity of the Luigine:

*"(The Institute) is called "the Luigine" because St.Louis is their patron. It is very similar to the Institute of the Daughters of Charity. It is a lay Institution. The members have neither vows nor enclosure. There are twenty of them: twelve are teachers, two unmarried young ladies are under training to be teachers and the others are domestic servants. They have three houses in the poorest spots in town. Every Monday morning, three teachers go to one of the three houses for the whole week. On Sunday, having no school, they spend the day altogether at the Institute. Next to the Institute there is a hall where three teachers hold a school of charity for poor girls and pay their work. When I went to Parma the four schools comprised three hundred girls altogether".*²⁹

In July 1803, as we mentioned earlier, the school for externs in the girls' house in via Regaste had begun and even the number of interns had increased. Magdalene saw the results, but was still uncertain whether to proceed autonomously by renouncing to be absorbed by similar initiatives. Two great priests and apostolic missionaries, first Fr. Felice de Vecchi,³⁰ then, definitely, Canon Luigi Pacifico Pacetti³¹, persuaded her not to associate with others at all.

"These priests' foresight made it possible for Magdalene to slowly, but continuously mature her mission to the educational apostolate."³² In fact while the Milanese friends wanted her in Milan as their direct collaborator, Fr. Felice De Vecchi solved all her perplexity and uncertainty, affirming that the Lord called her to follow her vocation by remaining in Verona, her native town and that there she had to initiate her institution.

Thus she wrote to Durini:

²⁷ M.d.C., to Durini, 26 December 1802, Ep.I, p.165-166.

²⁸ Luigine's Institute (Conservatorio): began in 1755 when the Foundress, Rosa Orzi (1706-1783), welcomed home the first six poor girls, abandoned by their parents. In 1799 the Institute was juridically approved by Duke Dom Ferdinand of Borbons. Co-founder of her work was Fr.Eugenio Porta, OP, Orzi's spiritual director. Goal of the Institution was to enable poor girls to teach poor girls in the town. (Cf.Ep.I, p.167).

²⁹ M.d.C., to Durini, 1 January 1803, Ep. I., p. 167-168.

³⁰ De Vecchi Fr.Felice, cf.ivi, Chapter II, note n.5.

³¹ Canon Luigi Pacetti was born at Montefiore on Aso (Marche). In 1761. He entered the Society of Jesus. When the Society was suppressed he became an apostolic missionary and a direct collaborator of Pius VII. He was in Verona for the first time for a mission in 1799 and once again in 1804 for the Feast of Corpus Domini. At this time he met Magdalene. He was first Superior of the Institute. He invited Magdalene to write the Rules of the Institute and presented them personally to Pius VII in 1816. He also persuaded Magdalene to write her Memoirs. He died in 1819.

³² Giacon M., L'azione caritativa e formativa di Maddalena di Canossa, Isola del Liri, 1974, p.87.

only: you might have heard of his determination that I follow my vocation by remaining in Verona. ³³

c) ... more setbacks, difficulties and anxieties

In 1804 Magdalene was to be set free from family ties.

In December 1803 her brother Boniface had married, in February 1804 her grand-uncle Francis Borgia ³⁴ died and in November her uncle Jerome entrusted Carlino to a teacher. Magdalene informed her friend about her uncle's decision:

"Know, my dear, that the Lord has disposed that my uncle provides Carlino with a tutor. This will permit me to be perfectly free soon. Please, redouble your prayers for me, so that God may enlighten me on how to follow what truly pleases Him. There is no greater proof of your friendship than this, because, as you well understand, my beloved Caroline, on such decision of mine depends my eternal salvation". ³⁵

Magdalene felt that she was now free to follow her own vocation and to work, without any limit, for the formation of her girls. A favourable occasion for detaching herself was the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte's arrival at Verona in June 1805, when the Emperor lodged as a guest in her palace.

During Napoleon's temporary stay, she obtained from her family permission to withdraw to her girls' house in St. Zeno in Oratorio. She thought the moment was opportune to reveal her plans and to leave her family definitely. She related the step she was taking in two letters : one, dated 26 June 1805³⁶ was addressed to Durini, and the other, dated 19 August 1805 ³⁷, to Canon Pacetti respectively.

But God's ways, once more, were not Magdalene's ways.

She returned home once again, not out of weakness, but to insist with her family on some conditions necessary to bring her work to completion, asked for help to find a suitable place and freedom to follow her vocation once this obstacle was over.

Setbacks and delay caused her great suffering, yet she did not desist from her plan. She prayed, was patient and went on searching. She kept an eye on the Monastery of Sts. Joseph and Fidenzio, which had become a State property after the law on concentration of Religious Communities had come into action.

Her choice was motivated by the people's poverty and she resolved to try all ways in order to help them to overcome it. In fact she wrote:

³³ M.d.C., to Durini, 2 June 1805, Ep.I, p.253.

³⁴ Marquis Francis Borgia Canossa (1772-1804) was Magdalene's grand-father's brother. He was a bachelor and lived in Canossa Palace with his brothers and nephews. His grand-niece, Magdalene, assisted him lovingly in his last, long illness.

³⁵ M.d.C., to Durini, 27 November 1804, Ep. I, p.242.

³⁶"... when the Emperor was in Verona, being a guest in our house, I went to live in our girls' home and remained eight days. I took this opportunity, my dear, in order to disclose to my family my vocation, which I mentioned to you many times. As you may understand, I intend to join my girls and then begin a way of life for me and the companions whom the Lord will call, and externally engage ourselves in works of charity. You may imagine how much opposition came from my family. Yet, after much talking and dispute, thanks to the Lord, they have agreed to let me go as soon as I find a more decent place where I can transfer the work of my girls" (Cf. Ep.I, p.255).

³⁷ After Napoleon's departure I told my brother's and my uncle's confessor respectively, to reveal to them my intention, adding that I wished that everything be settled in perfect harmony, that I had come to such decision for no other motivation but to follow the Divine Will and that I had done it in this way to spare both the sorrow of separation; as to the temporal goods, I would be happy with whatever they decide, even not to receive anything from them, if they wished so, not minding my own interest. To show them my real sentiments I declared that as much as the commitments of my vocation allow me, I would serve them with similar affection in illness and in other needs as I have always done. This news brought great displeasure and their reply was that they would not allow me to take such steps on my own at all and among other things, they said that until I had no place worthy of my family they will never consent, but above all,

*" I was not resolved to leave the people of St. Zeno district. They were the most deprived in the city, being made up entirely of poor, and also because of their lively character..."*³⁸

Before proceeding to buy the Monastery, Magdalene consulted Msgr. Pacetti, who on 5 September 1806 wrote to her from Venice about a papal directive:

*" About purchasing the Monastery, I assure you that you are doing the best you can; you may purchase the House but with the clause that if the Monastery is given back (to the Nuns) you will acknowledge it, in case the Holy Father will not allow you to purchase it"*³⁹

And on 6 February 1807 she wrote to Durini:

*"The extreme need of the poor district of St. Zeno, compels me to attempt buying that locality, as my brother, now, seems willing to help me..."*⁴⁰

Magdalene's only hope was that the price of the Monastery be reasonable enough for her to afford: the cost established by the Government was well beyond her funds, because she could only dispose of her dowry as income. To succeed in the bargain Magdalene turned to Marquis Alessandro Carlotti ⁴¹pleading with him to help her in this deal so dear to her: the small house in St. Zeno in Oratorio was insufficient for the poor girls of the district and it was necessary to buy St. Joseph's Monastery before it was sold by auction.⁴²

The Property Office estimate was very high and Magdalene was compelled to abandon the deal with the Property Office and find a solution through a long ministerial path.

Even this proved to be hard.

Meanwhile she wrote again to Marquis Carlotti persuading him to solicit the conclusion of the contract of St. Joseph's Convent. She felt quite disappointed when on 18 November 1807 the Prefect of Adige Department informed her of the conditions laid down by the Minister of Finance so that His Highness, the Emperor might approve the release of the Monastery.

The building would be handed over free of charge and the orchard on rental according to an expert estimate, on condition: that Magdalene brings up on her own, in the same place, at least twelve orphan girls, that is, instructs them, trains them in house-work, settles them for marriage at the opportune time; that she replaces those who would leave so that twelve be the constant number of girls; that the charity school be open to all the girls who are poor and in moral danger in the city, according to the capacity of the place. ⁴³

Other onerous conditions were added and Magdalene thought of not accepting them at all. She was sad about it, but as no final decision had yet been made, she realized it was worthwhile to carry on the deal.

In order to reach a possible agreement with the Minister's proposal, she replied to the Prefect of Adige Department pointing out the heavy impositions she was not able to accept.

Meanwhile, a possible solution came about when a favourable opportunity was given by Napoleon's sojourn in Verona in 1807. Napoleon was twice guest at the Marquis Canossa's Palace. At the Sovereign's first coming on 27 November, Magdalene was impeded to meet him because when her brother Boniface, asked by the Emperor about his family was telling him of his sisters, the Viceroy of Italy, Eugene Beauharnais, intervened saying that one of them was not married, that she was engaged in charitable work to the benefit of poor girls and that he himself was looking for a place suitable for her. Napoleon praised the young Marchioness, but made no offer.

³⁸ M.d.C., Pro-memoria to Count Mellerio, 25 May 1818, Ep.II/1, p.104.

³⁹ Msgr. Pacetti, to M.d.C. 5 September 1806, ms. autograph, A 2, XXXI, A.C.R.

⁴⁰ M.d.C., to Durini, 6 February 1807, Ep.I, p.288.

⁴¹ Marquis Carlotti Alessandro (1770-1828) was a Milanese. He was a Knight of the Royal Order of the Iron Crown, a Member of the Legion of Honour. He will take to heart Magdalene of Canossa's concern about renting St. Joseph's Monastery.

⁴² M.d.C., to Carlotti, 6 June 1807, Ep. II/1, p. 14.

⁴³ Cf. Il Prefetto del Dipartimento dell'Adige a M.d.C., 18 November 1807, Ep. II/1, pp. 186-187.

On his return from Venice on 13 December, Napoleon was once again Canossa's guest. Magdalene and her family welcomed him in the hall of the Palace and the Viceroy introduced her to the Sovereign. She decided to ask for an interview, but neither at that moment, nor later on, did the interview take place.⁴⁴

Magdalene's patience as she tried to reach a solution in purchasing the building had reached its limit. Yet she did not want to renounce that place which was the only one suitable in the very poor district where she intended to begin her work.

She wrote to her Milanese friend as follows:

*"I confess that my patience is on the verge of being lost, but the idea of having to abandon St. Zeno keeps me firm, because if I lose this locality there is no way to settle in this poor district, as no other accommodation is suitable. It means having to abandon five or six hundred miserable little girls whose kind you have seen. By and by I would like to take all of them".*⁴⁵

On 16 March 1808, the Verona Prefecture despatched to the Marchioness a new, less burdensome proposal of the Finance Minister.⁴⁶

Magdalene accepted the conditions and expressed deep gratitude to the persons who had helped her towards a happy solution to the deal.

In early April, 1808 the news that the Decree of transfer of the Monastery has been signed, reached Milan.

Magdalene thanked Durini as follows:

*" My dear Caroline, I enclose Carlotti's reply notifying me that the Decree regarding St. Joseph's was signed. Thank you for everything...
Now pray, my dear, that I may complete what still remains to be done, but above all, that the Lord may help us to establish ourselves with a true spirit of internal and external charity as the Work demands; pray that I may really begin to serve the Lord...."*⁴⁷

Magdalene asked for prayers because entering St. Joseph's meant for her responding to a new call in a new way: new things have a special beginning and are irrepeatable. For Magdalene entering St. Joseph's was a great event. We might say that on that day, the Congregation, the Lord had requested of her to wait for so long, was born at last.

⁴⁴ Cf. M.d.C., to Carlotti, 22 December 1808, Ep.II/1, pp.30- 32.

⁴⁵ M.d.C., to Durini, no date, Ep. I, p.305

⁴⁶ Cf. Prefetto del Dipartimento dell'Adige a M.d.C., 16 March,1808, Ep. II/1,p.188.

⁴⁷ M.d.C. to Durini, 11 April 1808, Ep.I, pp.306-307.

THE SCHOOL AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN THE FIRST THREE PLANS OF THE INSTITUTE

Plan B.6

The first Plan, B.6, contains the guidelines for all the Works of Magdalene of Canossa. It reveals what deep love urged Magdalene to meet the spiritual and material needs of the poor, who are the first and main beneficiaries of the whole apostolic life of the Institute.

It is an autographic document. It bears no date, it has no heading. It was completed before any concrete application was made. It dates back to 1799, a date confirmed by two letters written by the spiritual director, Don Luigi Libera to the young Marchioness¹ and by a third one ², written by Magdalene to Don Antonio Rosmini.³

In this Plan Magdalene presented a range of activities in which male and female Religious (here called "Women") will operate. She wrote:

"Some persons wishing to dedicate themselves to the Glory and service of God, reflected on the actual circumstances...They are thinking of instituting a Congregation or Pious Union which has as its object the fulfilment of the two great Precepts of Charity: to love God and to love Neighbour and consequently, through this means, to sanctify themselves and to meet also the needs they discover in their Country...

The needs of our Neighbour, it seems to us, can be summarized into three: the need of education, the need of instruction, the need of assistance and of help in sickness and death". From these also derive almost all evils."⁴

As this first Plan refers to the Male Religious as well as to the "Women", she indicated what they should do to stem evil spreading in society.⁵

With respect to the need of education, the "Women" ought to:

..."assist in the need of education for the abandoned and vagrant girls, ...should do all that the Religious do for the boys. These women will not only gather and educate in a Christian way the above named girls but they will also teach them all that is necessary to know for their sex. They will strive to possibly form these girls in such a way that, reaching the marriageable age, they could be of assistance and a source of harmony in the families they are to be married into".⁶

Hence the whole educational project aimed at awakening and enhancing the potentiality of the poorest and most abandoned youth.

Already in this first Plan Magdalene tried to explain how to deal with specific problems in education and who should be the beneficiaries of Religious Men and Women:

"The way in which this Congregation wants to assist their Neighbour in the field of education is not the same as that carried out by some other Religious. The way of this Congregation would be to educate only abandoned boys (or girls) or those who roam the streets without any

¹ Libera don Luigi to M.d.C., 5 July 1799, in Ep.III/5,p.4231; idem, 14 December 1799, Ep.III/5,p.4234.

² M.d.C., to Rosmini, 3 October 1821, Ep.II/2, p.756.

³ Rosmini don Antonio was born at Rovereto (TN) on 24 March 1797. He died at Stresa on 1 July 1855. He was a philosopher, a theologian and the founder of the Rosminian Fathers and Sisters. According to Magdalene's wish he should have been the initiator of the Canossian Institute of the Sons of Charity.

⁴ M.d.C., Plan B.6-6, in Ep. II/2, pp.1415-1416.

⁵ M.d.C., Plan B.6-6, Ep.II/2 p.1418

⁶ Ibid., pp. 1416-1417.

*assistance for their soul, or those who, even though they may not be roaming, are really deprived of any help and attention. First of all they will be gathered together and given nourishment...They will be instructed particularly in our holy Religion while taking care that they learn some skill. In short, to help these poor vagrants find in the Religious (in the "Women") the love and affection of the parents they do not have or, perhaps, it was better they did not have "*⁷

The autographic manuscript of Plan B.6 ends with a very important pedagogical and psychological remark on the principle of continuity in education with regard to educators as well as methodology. In fact, Magdalene stressed that one of the obstacles in the apostolate is:

... "the continuous change of rules and methods which come about when the personnel is changed frequently.

*These variations are very prejudicial to the communities but particularly so to education".*⁸

Plan of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity, for the town n.n. (B.7)

When Magdalene wrote Plan, B.7, she was starting the Institution of the Daughters of Charity. At her time and in her place, human formation was very much lacking, in particular, the formation of women.

At Napoleon's time and under Austrian rule, basic instruction, especially for females, was not taken care of. Magdalene realized that, to heal corruption in society, it was necessary to form people's conscience, to take away young girls from the road and unemployment and teach them a skill by which they could honestly earn their living, because lack of basic necessities fosters vice.

She wrote in her Plan:

*"Many pious persons, have been aware of the ignorance of the common people, and how the city has no school for girls...wish to form a Congregation of Charity to meet these spiritual needs".*⁹

To respond to these urgent needs, she proposed free schools for all the poor and abandoned girls:

"In the house of the Congregation they will open free schools for all the poor and vagrant girls. Since the city is big and, especially in winter, not many girls could avail themselves of this help, these persons will open schools in the parishes, with the consent of the parish priests in the various places away from the house of the Congregation...".

Already in this Plan Magdalene stressed a very important pedagogical principle: when opening new schools, the girls taken should be proportionate to the number of educators available for this ministry. Having girls in excess does not help to make education personal.

Magdalene upheld the principle of personalization also with regard to teaching contents. In fact, work was oriented to value fully the potentialities of each girl and to respond to her needs.

She wrote:

*... "In these schools they will teach reading, writing.. The pupils will be educated to moral living and in the love of the Catholic Religion. Also the works suitable to the state of life of each will be taught".*¹⁰

⁷ Ibid, p.1419.

⁸ M.d.C., Plan of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity, for the town n.n. (B.7), in Ep.II/2, p.142O.

⁹ Ibid., p. 142O.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 142O

General Plan of the Institution of the Sisters of Charity, servants of the poor which was established in Venice in the year 1812: the first day of August, under the protection of Mary Most Sorrowful (Plan B.8)

The document is dated 1 August 1812.

In this General Plan, B.8, Magdalene introduced herself and her work that was functioning in Verona and in Venice. The Plan was written to get the Superiors' approval for her incipient Institution.

"Some years ago, a few persons more deeply aware of the various spiritual needs of many souls... proposed to form an Institution... The Lord deigned to give the singular grace of seeing the beginning of this great plan to only one of these persons, the most incapable of them all. The same person, wishing to make herself ever more sure of the will of the Lord, humbly presents to her Superiors...the objectives they had in mind since the beginning of the Institution and the means they judged necessary to reach the desired end...".¹¹

As in other Plans the needs of the time are taken into consideration, but priority is given to meeting the needs of the poorest, abandoned youth:

"Among the many needs of the Christian people, they noticed especially the following: the neglect of poor youth, both girls of a most tender age and the adolescents. The common ignorance of the poor women...".¹²

With clear psychological intuition, in education Magdalene tried not only, as we have mentioned earlier, to care for the needs of each person, but also to adapt to the time and place where this ministry of charity was carried out.

The General Plan reads:

"In the House where they live, but in the place purposely set aside to meet this first need of these young people, they will open free charity schools where, together with the holy fear of God, reading and Christian Doctrine, they will also teach the girls attending these classes the skills they are more apt to and the customs of their country. They will give to the girls themselves any profit accrued from these skills".¹³

When Magdalene wrote to the new Governor of Venice, Count Goess, about the activities the Daughters of Charity were called to perform, she pointed out again the main beneficiaries and the necessity to adapt to the concrete situation of a place:

"The instruction and the schools of charity for girls and the miserable ones...are carried out in a town in one way and in a different manner in another, to help the needy better".¹⁴

Since in a big city one school was not sufficient, in the General Plan, Magdalene anticipated that, on weekdays and on Sunday morning, groups of at least three Sisters could go to various parts of the city to educate the poorest girls:

"Since, however, a single place for the first above-mentioned need of the girls would be too little for a city, they (the Sisters) thought of opening in various specific places in the city some

¹¹ M.d.C., Plan B.8, in Ep. II/2, p.1422.

¹² Ibid., p. 1422.

¹³ Ibid., p. 1423.

¹⁴ M.d.C., to Count Goess, (1815), Ep.II/1, p.61.

*schools altogether similar to those of the House of the Institution. The Sisters will go to these places every morning, three Sisters in each place. They will return home half an hour before the "Angelus".*¹⁵

The Plan ends with Magdalene declaring her obedience to her Superiors and her availability to embark, if necessary, on other works of charity:

*"Finally, the one (Magdalene) who humbly submits the present Plan to her Superiors, because of her vocation, is also disposed, with their approval, to carry out any Works of Charity compatible with her state, the circumstances and the number of her Sisters, while always giving priority to the main objectives of her Institution..."*¹⁶

In a following Plan, B.15, Magdalene reiterated her willingness to serve, stressing that she would extend the School of Charity to include her response to the need of education of great number of youth and women, who were excluded from school, because they could not attend it regularly. She would promote their formation and enable them to insert themselves into society with an honest work, by implementing courses with simple programmes suitable to them:

"Besides these (the pupils of the school of charity) they (the Sisters) receive at a fixed time other poor girls ...for their instruction in Christian Doctrine, and in reading, taking care that they approach the Holy Sacraments duly prepared..."

*The Sisters lend the same assistance of instruction even in the House of the Institute to the poor women and those poor girls who cannot frequent the schools of the Daughters of Charity because of their family commitments. This, of course, is carried out in a place separate from that of the school and the instruction, too, is given separately to the adults".*¹⁷

¹⁵ M.d.C. General Plan, Ep.II/2,p.1424.

¹⁶ M.d.C., General Plan, Ep. II/2, p.1425

¹⁷ M.d.C., Plan B. 15a-13, Ep.II/2, p. 1437.

MAGDALENE OF CANOSSA'S SCHOOL SYSTEM IN THE LIGHT OF THE RULE

Introduction

Magdalene was aware of the importance and nobility of the ministry of the School and education.

How much she took this to heart is illustrated by the 37 Rules she drew up in the Rules for the Schools to ensure efficacy in education.

We might think that the Rules are too many and that the saintly Foundress intended to impose methods restricting the educator's creativity. Not at all! The Rules were suggestions, warnings and also guidelines helping the Sisters to fulfill thoroughly their vocation as true educators and apostles.

Magdalene confirmed this at the end of the Rules for the Schools:

"Let the Sisters of Charity not be surprised at seeing such a great number of Rules for a ministry which is regarded by the world as a thing of little significance. We must look at it with completely different eyes. It is indispensable for us to do well all that concerns the work in itself. We have also to do it well in order to preserve, while doing it, the spirit of the Institute and its Rules in the practice of the Virtues and in carrying out the various types of work".¹

As we have mentioned earlier, when Magdalene wrote the Rules for the School, there existed the Regulations for the poor girls gathered by Fr. Domenico Bellavite² at Mantua, the Regulations for the Schools of Charity³ for poor daughters in Milan and the Rules on good conduct⁴ by the Director of the Pious Union of Charity, Fr. Felice De Vecchi.⁵ The goal of Fr. Domenico Bellavite's and Fr. De Vecchi's Regulations was similar to that of Magdalene's Rules, that is, to educate in a Christian way the poor girls. However, their Regulations were systematic, had a proper structure, methodology and style, so, they differed greatly from Magdalene's Rules for the Schools.

1. The schools of charity and the charism

"A greater opportunity to show the Lord true love"

Magdalene of Canossa's Rules for the Schools consist of an introduction which focusses on the charismatic root of this branch of charity and of Rules depicting its implementation, suggest a methodology for the Canossian Schools and outline the identity of the Sisters involved in this work.

"One of the branches particularly contemplated"

The broad introduction points to the basic key-motifs of this ministry of charity : the educational mission is too important and requires the sacrifice of the whole person continuously.

... "the behaviour of a person in life usually depends on the education received".⁶

¹ M.d.C., Rules for the Schools, R.s.s.,P.1, p.198.

² Bellavite Fr. Domenico, cf. Ch. II, note n.3.

³ Regulations for the Schools of Charity for the poor daughters of the city of Milan, cf. Ch. II ,note n.18.

⁴ Rules of conduct, cf.Ch.II, note n.19.

⁵ De Vecchi Fr.Felice, cf. Ch.II,note n.5.

⁶ M.d.C. Rules for the Schools, R.s.s., P.1,p.179.

Magdalene envisaged the school as the most suitable environment for the integral formation of the person, as the most opportune means to curb society's moral and material poverty and as the preferential means in the building up of God's kingdom.

The school is also the ministry of charity by which the Sisters could show greater love to the Lord because, through the school not only sins but also evil can be prevented; in fact, by educating the whole person, intellect, will, feelings, the school will help to uproot evil.

The Preface to the Rules for the Schools reads:

*"One of the branches particularly contemplated in this Work is the Charity School. In these schools the Sisters will really have greater occasions to show the Lord true Love...if the conversion of sinners is considered ...a great proof of love for God, how much better will it be to prevent and impede sins before they are committed..."*⁷

"...This is the harvest which costs the most"

Our saintly Foundress chose a very definite category of girls for the schools of charity: the most wretched and abandoned ones, whom the Daughter of Charity will meet in her educational mission:

*" girls and young ladies often
- rough
- ignorant
- and very poor
those who have been brought up either
- on the street
- or without any principle
- or without any discipline
- or by parents similar to them..."*⁸

Even the term "School of Charity" signifies what type of girls should attend the school:

*" those who are found to be in the greatest need.
The poorest and most abandoned girls must be put first as they have the real right to these schools which were specially instituted for them"*⁹

*The Institute, which was born to remedy the spiritual and social evils of the poor and needy class, offers gratuitous service above all, to witness to Christ's gratuitous and salvific love."*¹⁰

The Rules for the Schools state:

*"The Sisters must never receive the smallest thing as a gift or in the name of gratitude or alms either from the girls or their relatives as they have to do everything gratuitously and only for the love of the Lord".*¹¹

Gratuitousness in the Schools of Charity (which distinguished them from the public schools) is not to be understood only in the economic sense, but, first of all, in the theological sense: it follows the fact that the main aim of the Institute is the fulfilment of the two commandments of love.

⁷ Ivi, p. 179.

⁸ Cf. M.d.C., Rules for the Schools, R.s.s., P.1, p. 179.

⁹ Ivi, p. 180, Rule II.

¹⁰ Cf. Niccia' C., La Scuola...o.c.,p.58.

¹¹ M.d.C., Rules for the Schools, R. s.s., P.1, p.197, Reg. XXXII.

The certificates Magdalene requested of the girls attending her schools were: the certificate of poverty and the medical certificate proving that they had no contagious disease:

"Before the girls are accepted in these schools they must produce a certificate of poverty from their Parish Priest...On it should be their age and whether or not they have been confirmed. They will also be examined by the Doctor of the House for assurance that they carry no contagious diseases".¹²

Magdalene added that, if there were still vacancies and Sisters available, after having given priority to the poorest girls, other girls should be welcomed, but still on condition that they were poor:

"If the number of these girls is not sufficient to engage the Sisters available, then they may take on other girls to make up the number, taking heed that even if these are not of the poorest, they ought to be at least poor...".¹³

On Feast-days there was a variation as to the "quality" of girls to be accepted in the schools:

"...on Feastsdays ...besides the usual pupils, they will accept in the Schools of the Daughters of Charity those girls whose parents desire it, on condition that they are well behaved and observe the common Rules of the Schools".¹⁴

Yet, any girl found to be incorrigible, after the Sisters had tried every means to correct her, was to be dismissed from the schools of the Daughters of Charity:

..."any girl...bold in character, or a bad example be it in word or deed to the others...".¹⁵

..."in case any of the girls is a stumbling block to the others...It is better to lose one than ruin all of them".¹⁶

"In the exercise of such holy work"

To fulfill their mission well, the Sisters ought to be nourished by biblical-theological motivations. As it is stated in the Rules for the Schools, a true Daughter of Charity should be guided by great faith and trust in the Word of the Lord, who welcomes whatever is done out of love for the poor as done to Himself:

..."the Sisters are reminded of the saying of Christ: that whoever welcomes and cares for such children in His Name, welcomes Him...

...that Sister ...who has behaved as a true Daughter of Charity in the exercise of such a Holy Work...will ...be welcomed in the Eternal Tabernacles having herself welcomed, protected and guarded Him many times in His images".¹⁷

And it is also true that those Sisters who love their pupils for human motives and for personal interests and do not see the face of Christ in those poor girls, will, in the end, experience great confusion and shame:

¹² M.d.C., Rules for the Schools, R.s.s., P.1, p.181, Regola IV.

¹³ Ibid., p.181, Rule III.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 187, Rule VIII.

¹⁵ Cf. ivi, p. 197, Rule XXXIV.

¹⁶ M.d.C., The Sister in charge of the School, R.s.s., P.1, p.149.

¹⁷ M.d.C., Rules for the Schools, R.s.s., P.1, p.179.

"...On the contrary, how great will be the confusion and pain of that Sister who after death, on fixing her gaze for the first time on the loving face of Jesus Christ, should feel reproved for either having rejected Him in His images because He was too poor, or treated Him impatiently or badly because He was defective, or neglected Him out of laziness, or had forgotten Him on account of His lack of talents and other natural gifts that are loved more for human ends than for spiritual or heavenly ones".¹⁸

"...try to form them all for Him"

Magdalene's daughters had "to put always the Kingdom of God before any human interest".

Therefore, the main goal of the ministry of education, as that of any apostolic activity of the Institute, was God's Glory. It was achieved preventing sin and making the Lord known and loved.

The aim of this ministry was clear: to bring the person back to God, to help youth to retrace or discover their own identity as the basis of their value and dignity as persons, and the motivation for their very being and actions.

The Sisters' first "aim", therefore, ought to be as follows:

"...to welcome these children as they would welcome Our Divine Saviour. Let them try to form them all for Him by instilling in them a tender but solid piety, by instructing them little by little in the matters of their Holy Faith, by watching that they receive well, often and with fruit the Holy Sacraments. Above all...let the Sisters bring the children to the knowledge of Jesus Christ as He is not loved because He is not known".¹⁹

Thus in the harmonious development of the person the religious aspect was considered the most important.

By stressing spiritual formation Magdalene did not mean to undermine the duty of teaching and professional training. In fact honest work controls tendency to evil and potentiates the person's productive activity necessary for livelihood.

Magdalene only intended to emphasize that these values should not be inverted. In fact she wrote:

"However, this does not mean excluding having particular attention so that they succeed in being capable and even excellent in their work. On the contrary, one of the most opportune means of keeping the poor away from offending God is that of giving them the opportunity of earning their bread honourably...".²⁰

In Rule III she reiterated:

"(They)...must always aim at catering for both their temporal and spiritual needs. The former, however, always to lead to the latter, since the end for which these schools are instituted is not only to train good workers, but chiefly to form good mothers of families who are also God-fearing".²¹

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 179.

¹⁹ M.d.C., Rules for the Schools, R.s.s., P.1, p.179-180.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 121.

²¹ Ibid., p.181, Rule III.

The formation of youth is complete, when faith becomes the central nucleus and the point of reference around which the affective, social, family and work life of the young is organized and from which it draws its vitality.

2. The rules :

"means by which they can attain what is recommended to them"

The first 3 Rules, by and large, give some indications on putting into practice the key-motifs presented in the introduction.

There are annotations regarding: (a) the structural elements, and corresponding responsibilities; (b) some criteria about beneficiaries, settling of classes, number of pupils, and time-table; (c) finally an outline of some attitudes and skills the girls should be trained to and (d) some remarks concerning the harmony of educational mediations.

The “Ministra” of the Schools or first Teacher

The Superior ought to choose as “Ministra” of the Schools or first Teacher a Sister capable of organizing the school, of coordinating the Sisters' work and above all, of animating them with the spirit of charity so necessary to people operating in this ministry.²²

To the “Ministra” or first Teacher the Sisters engaged in this work should:

- "* obey entirely in all that regards the schools*
- * give an account of all that concerns the School*
- * have recourse for all that they need in school*
- * bear the same respect as they do for the Superior".²³*

The “Ministra” should be guided by the light of faith. She should value rightly the Ministry of Schools of Charity, appraise it as something sacred or better as the works of God deserve, as Magdalene elsewhere reminded:

"...in order to succeed well in her ministry it is necessary for the Sister in charge of the school to treat everything by looking at them in the light of faith..."²⁴

The true spirit which should animate this "holy work" is the spirit of Charity, the spirit of Christ Jesus. If this spirit is lacking, the Schools of Charity would lose their charismatic character and their reason to exist.

Magdalene wrote:

"In fact, if we take away the spirit of charity that must animate this holy work, there is hardly any difference from an ordinary school. However, giving the work its right value, the Daughters of Charity will be seen to be well employed with the poor girls for each one of whom the Son of God did not hesitate, after 33 years of infinite humiliations, fatigue and sweat, to leave this life in a sea of torments".²⁵

²² Cf. M.d.C., Rules for the Schools U.R. p. 345 ff., Rule I.

²³ M.d.C., The “Ministra” of the School, U.R., p.122, Rule I.

²⁴ M.d.C., The “Ministra” of the School, U.R., p. 345.

²⁵ Ibid.

To keep up the true spirit in the Schools of Charity, it is necessary to be alert not to run into risks of routine and evaluation based only on human principles:

"...let the ("Ministra") remember that this branch of charity, more easily than the others, may cool down and degenerate into routine as it is a matter of daily occupations that have nothing attractive, humanly speaking, as there is nothing more common than holding schools for girls".²⁶

If one is not vigilant, the humdrum of daily life may lead to little transgressions, which by and by, day after day, may demolish the authentic spirit of the work:

"...the school is a daily task and therefore there is more danger that routine may allow small negligences and liberty which like wolf-cubs destroy the Lord's vineyard a little at a time".²⁷

Only the observance of the Rules keeps alive this spirit of charity and is a guarantee for the Lord to grant us the grace to bear good fruit in this delicate "mission":

"Let the Sister in charge of the Schools... be totally persuaded...that in order to have this spirit she must sustain it by means of the exact observance of the Rules. God will never grant us the grace of bearing fruit if we do not use the means He requires of us ... these are precisely our Rules".²⁸

By following with a great sense of responsibility what the Foundress recommends, the headmistress can contribute to maintaining and obtaining from the Lord the true spirit of the Institute:

"...let the Sister in charge put the following Rule in practice in her ministry so that she may contribute to and maintain in the Institute the great spirit of charity if the Lord has given it to her, and to ask Him for it, if through lack of correspondence we have not yet been worthy of it".²⁹

The saintly Foundress assured the Sister in charge of the Schools that in being faithful to her duties, she will surely become a saint:

"By animating all the exercises of this ministry with the real spirit of charity and faith, the Sister in charge will not only entirely satisfy all these duties but will also find abundant means to work out her own sanctification".³⁰

Structural elements

Magdalene directed the structural elements of the School of Charity towards a personalized education so that they could contribute positively to the integral formation of each pupil.

- Classes:

Magdalene was not in favour of the masses, because the person gets lost in them. Though for the benefit of the girls, she wished to establish more classes, this objective being unattainable in all places and circumstances, she opted for three classes:

"The first comprises the little girls from four or five years of age up to ten years.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ M.d.C., The "Ministra" of the School, U.R., p.345

³⁰ Ibid., p.350.

The second class for girls from ten to about thirteen years of age. The last is then made up of the bigger girls. It would be desirable to divide these too".³¹

Settling of classes was not done following school programmes or according to the girls' mental age, but with respect to the girls' educational needs:

"...experience has shown that the older ones are often harmful for the little ones..."³²

Grouping, however, had to be very flexible, having to combine pupils from various classes according to their type of work and instruction. In fact, in the afternoon there were groups involved in reading and memorizing Christian Doctrine.

The Rules for the Schools read:

"It is better to make another distinction as well.

Often there are certain kinds of work such as dress making, flower making and the like, where it is necessarily better to keep the big girls together with the small ones. In such cases the shrewdness and charity of the Sisters assigned to teach must come into play so that conversations or anything else unseemly do not occur in which the little ones may be scandalized...³³

After lunch the school will reopen at 2 o' clock. If the size of the House allows it, in a place separate from the school, the Sisters will teach the girls to read...dividing them into classes... the Sisters will make the girls recite the Doctrine...even this they will do class by class, taking care that they make those who still do not know the theological virtues to repeat them..."³⁴

Magdalene met the needs also of those girls who, for family reasons or for lack of requisites, could not attend school regularly:

"...to these too, the Sisters will teach reading and Christian Doctrine but in a place apart from the School...The Sisters, however, are recommended ...to teach them to write, to train them in keeping accounts and a small register and to write some ordinary letters, in a word to make them as capable as possible of being useful to their poor families..."³⁵

- Number:

In principle, Magdalene was also attentive that the number of girls be proportionate to the Sisters and to the capacity of the house:

"The number of girls to be received has to be in proportion to the number of Sisters and the size of the House..."³⁶

With large numbers the activity of the educator would be less effective and valuable, because it might not always respond to the real needs of the pupils; besides, it would be hard to establish a teacher- pupil relationship. For education to be personal, it was necessary to limit the number of girls attending school.

In fact the Rules for the Schools read:

³¹ M.d.C., Rules for the Schools, U.R. p.124, Rule V

³² Ibid..

³³ M.d.C., Rules for the Schools, U.R., p.124, Rule V.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 126, Rule VII.

³⁵ M.d.C., Charity towards neighbours, U.R., p.49 .

³⁶ Ibid..

*"Up to now experience has taught us that thirty girls are sufficient for two teachers. It could also be excessive especially at the beginning when one has to start from scratch..."*³⁷

In particular situations, the saintly Foundress allowed the local Superior to decide according to wisdom and discretion, because the latter, knowing concrete circumstances, was facilitated to evaluate them better.³⁸

- Time-Table

According to Magdalene's plan, the School of Charity was a full time school and was open even on Feastdays, though with different modalities and activities.

The time-table did not exact a rigid observance.

It is stated:

*..."it will depend on the charity, prudence and experience of the Superior and her companions".*³⁹

Flexibility as to the time to begin lessons reveals, once again, Magdalene of Canossa's respect for the principles of personalization and adaptation. She took into account the limitations imposed on the pupils by family and environmental conditions.

Magdalene wrote:

*..."we should keep in mind that we are not dealing with girls of the Conservatory to whom methods and unchangeable times are given, but with girls who live in their own homes and as a consequence, in the impoverished situations of their families, where they cannot fix an exact time to come to school...."*⁴⁰

The time-table stretched ordinarily from nine o' clock in the morning to twelve noon and from two o' clock in the afternoon to half an hour before the "Angelus":

*"The time-table ...is what is opportune for the place where it has been written and followed. It is the following: in the morning the school will open at nine o' clock and last until noon... After lunch the school will reopen at 2 o' clock...the end of school...is fixed at half an hour before the Ave Maria so that the girls may be home by the time it rings".*⁴¹

Once the time-table was fixed it was the task of the "Ministra" of the school to take care that it was implemented:

*..."(She will also see) that the school neither starts nor finishes before or after the time established, since by doing otherwise the internal Rules of the House would collapse".*⁴²

Sunday timetable ought to respond not only to the needs of the village, but also of the Parishes:

*..."it is impossible to fix a definite timetable even for two schools in the same town where there are two Houses given not only the different customs of places but also those of the different Parishes".*⁴³

³⁷ M.d.C., Rules for the School, U.R., p.137, Rule XX.

³⁸ Ibid., p.138 Rule XX

³⁹ Ibid., p.126, Rule VII.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 127, Rule VII.

⁴¹ Ibid., U.R. p. 126, Rule VII.

⁴² M.d.C., The "Ministra" of the School, U.R., p.347-348.

⁴³ M.d.C., Rules for the School,U.R., pp.130-132, Rule VIII.

On feastdays the Sisters were requested to practice more patience, sacrifice and creativity in keeping the girls busy and away from dangers.⁴⁴

To help her daughters Magdalene suggested, with good psychology, that on Sunday they should alternate the explanation of the Gospel, attendance to Mass, catechesis and prayer with moments of relaxation, games and songs.

In fact, she stated that planning should take into account:

... "due intervals and relaxation in order not to bore the girls".⁴⁵

Attitudes to foster:

"The Sisters should try to accustom..."

As to the contents of education, besides a basic education (reading, writing and arithmetic), Magdalene provided for her girls first of all religious instruction and practical skills. In the overall prospect of the Institute Magdalene stated that the Daughters of Charity were engaged:

... "In running free schools for the education of poor girls. They teach them the duties of Holy Religion, and also reading, writing and elements of arithmetic and also domestic work so as to make it easier for them to have means to a Christian livelihood."⁴⁶

The main goal of the school was, as we have mentioned earlier, forming the youth to a true Christian life. Magdalene, in fact, insisted:

... "the end for which these schools are instituted is not only to train good workers, but chiefly to form good God-fearing mothers of families".⁴⁷

Even the school programme shows the saintly Foundress' clear perspective that teaching should be geared to foster Christian life as well as respond to the needs and the practical demands of the poorest class.

Though the contents is not dealt with in detail, the arrangement of the time table on week-days and feast-days shows clearly which attentions, according to Magdalene, should be given priority to, so that the total person be formed following the three directives recommended in the introduction of the Rules for the Schools: knowledge of "the contents of their Holy Faith", frequent and fruitful reception of the Holy Sacraments and professional skills.

Besides, some attitudes and behaviour patterns the girls should be "accustomed to" are pointed out: the first refers to sacramental practice (in particular, confession)⁴⁸, to active participation at Mass,⁴⁹ and to a sound and balanced devotion⁵⁰; the second, instead, aims at fostering attitudes for the promotion of the person and her dignity.⁵¹

Harmony in educational mediations

With equally fine educational intuition Magdalene stressed collaboration and mutual harmony among educators, not only when decision-making is difficult, but also in ordinary daily living. The

⁴⁴ Cf. Ibid., pp.130-132, Rule VIII.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.133, Rule VIII.

⁴⁶ M.d.C., Plan B. 11, in Ep.II/2, p.1429.

⁴⁷ M.d.c. Rules for the School, U.R., p.123

⁴⁸ Ibid., Rules XI-XII, p.134.

⁴⁹ Ibid, Rule XIII, p.135.

⁵⁰ Ibid., Rule XIV, p.135-136; Rule XXVI, p.140.

⁵¹ Ibid., P. 136-140, RuleS XVI, XVII, XX, XXIII, XXV.

Sisters should convince themselves that what counts most is not so much being endowed with great teaching skills as, above all, being living witnesses at all costs.

In fact, Magdalene wrote:

"Let the Sisters be very attentive not to blame one another when correcting the girls. If a Sister were to think it better to act in a different way, she should consult the Superior about the matter...If it were necessary to do the thing on the spur of the moment, she must speak to the Sisters in such a way that the girls do not realize there is a difference of opinion".⁵²

Magdalene was concerned for the internal running of the school as well as for other formative environments the girls lived in : the parish and the family. For example, with regard to the time-table on feast-days, she stated clearly that it should take into account not only "the customs of different places, but of different parishes, too"⁵³, and about the type of work the girls should be trained to, she stressed it was better that the Sisters adapt themselves "to the requests of the parents of the girls" and orient them to "jobs suited to the needs of their families".⁵⁴

3. Educational style : " Formation of the heart "

Rule XXXII contains a series of suggestions and important methodological devices on the central theme of the "formation of the heart". They are described right in the introduction and interspersed in the rest of the Rules for the Schools, not systematically.

Attitudes to foster:

"The Sisters should try to accustom..."

As to the contents of education, besides a basic education (reading, writing and arithmetic), Magdalene provided for her girls first of all religious instruction and practical skills. In the overall prospect of the Institute Magdalene stated that the Daughters of Charity were engaged:

..."In running free schools for the education of poor girls.They teach them the duties of Holy Religion, and also reading, writing and elements of arithmetic and also domestic work so as to make it easier for them to have means to a Christian livelihood."⁵⁵

The main goal of the school was, as we have mentioned earlier, forming the youth to a true Christian life. Magdalene, in fact, insisted:

..."the end for which these schools are instituted is not only to train good workers, but chiefly to form good God-fearing mothers of families".⁵⁶

Even the school programme shows the saintly Foundress' clear perspective that teaching should be geared to foster Christian life as well as respond to the needs and the practical demands of the poorest class.

Though the contents is not dealt with in detail, the arrangement of the time table on week-days and feast-days shows clearly which attentions, according to Magdalene, should be given priority to, so that the total person be formed following the three directives recommended in the introduction of the Rules for the Schools: knowledge of "the contents of their Holy Faith", frequent and fruitful reception of the Holy Sacraments and professional skills.

⁵² M.d.C. Rule for the School, U.R., P. 139, Rule XXIII.

⁵³ Cf. Ibid., p.130, Rule VIII.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.136, Rule XV.

⁵⁵ M.d.C., Plan B. 11, in Ep.II/2, p.1429.

⁵⁶ M.d.c. Rules for the School, U.R., p.123

Besides, some attitudes and behaviour patterns the girls should be "accustomed to" are pointed out: the first refers to sacramental practice (in particular, confession)⁵⁷, to active participation at Mass,⁵⁸ and to a sound and balanced devotion⁵⁹; the second, instead, aims at fostering attitudes for the promotion of the person and her dignity.⁶⁰

Harmony in educational mediations

With equally fine educational intuition Magdalene stressed collaboration and mutual harmony among educators, not only when decision-making is difficult, but also in ordinary daily living. The Sisters should convince themselves that what counts most is not so much being endowed with great teaching skills as, above all, being living witnesses at all costs.

In fact, Magdalene wrote:

"Let the Sisters be very attentive not to blame one another when correcting the girls. If a Sister were to think it better to act in a different way, she should consult the Superior about the matter...If it were necessary to do the thing on the spur of the moment, she must speak to the Sisters in such a way that the girls do not realize there is a difference of opinion".⁶¹

Magdalene was concerned for the internal running of the school as well as for other formative environments the girls lived in : the parish and the family. For example, with regard to the time-table on feast-days, she stated clearly that it should take into account not only "the customs of different places, but of different parishes, too"⁶², and about the type of work the girls should be trained to, she stressed it was better that the Sisters adapt themselves "to the requests of the parents of the girls" and orient them to "jobs suited to the needs of their families".⁶³

3. Educational style : " Formation of the heart "

Rule XXXII contains a series of suggestions and important methodological devices on the central theme of the "formation of the heart". They are described right in the introduction and interspersed in the rest of the Rules for the Schools, not systematically.

In the "Method for training rural girls" Magdalene wrote as follows:

"It has already been stated in the General Plan that the Institute, being a charitable Institution, must be concerned as much as possible in every way about the good and salvation of our neighbours. On the one hand, it is impossible to have such a large number of Daughters of Charity to see to the people's needs in all the towns, especially in small villages. On the other hand, it would be very easy to help many of these places by having a kind of training course in our House so that some rural girls from their respective villages, be accepted for a fixed period of time and trained for this purpose. Here we are giving some ideas..."⁶⁴

Mother Elda Pollonara, in the preface to her book "Training Courses for teachers in the beginning of the Institute" stated that "the work of the 'Courses' arose as something proposed in

⁵⁷ Ibid., Rules XI-XII, p.134.

⁵⁸ Ibid, Rule XIII, p.135.

⁵⁹ Ibid., Rule XIV, p.135-136; Rule XXVI, p.140.

⁶⁰ Ibid., P. 136-140, RuleS XVI, XVII, XX, XXIII, XXV.

⁶¹ M.d.C. Rule for the School, U.R., P. 139, Rule XXIII.

⁶² Cf. Ibid., p.130, Rule VIII.

⁶³ Ibid., p.136, Rule XV.

⁶⁴ M.d.C., Sistema per le Contadine, R.s.s.,P.233.

collaboration with the pastors of the Church and as a help to meet the needs of the parishes, especially those remote and neglected. The training course for the teachers, true workers of the *Lord, is a workshop where one learns to give herself in total availability to serve Christ in the poor...*⁶⁵

The same author, dealing with the goal of the 'Courses' wrote:" But more than just being concerned with the formation of teachers who will make up for the negligence of this duty on the part of the various Italian States at this precise historical era, Magdalene planned to form authentic apostles, capable of elevating the woman to her dignity as a person and above all as a daughter of God. With an active faith typical of the saints she had already long ago committed herself and her Institute to prepare lay apostles as a help to the local Churches."⁶⁶

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

*"...according to the wishes of their respective parish priests offer themselves for the Divine Glory, for His service and for the good of their neighbour".*⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Pollonara E., Training Courses for teachers in the beginning of the Institute, S.G.S., Rome 1986, p.8.

⁶⁶ Ivi, pp.13-14.

⁶⁷ Cf. M.d.C., Sistema per le Contadine, R.s.s.,P.1,p.246.

**FIRST MINISTRY OF CHARITY
IN THE COMMUNITIES
FOUNDED BY MAGDALENE**

At Verona

The beginning of the School of Charity and of other educational activities took place in Verona before the official founding of the Institute, which occurred on 8 May, 1808 in the Monastery of Sts. Joseph and Fidentius.

In fact, on 10 July, 1803 Magdalene wrote to Durini:

"At last I have opened a school for non resident girls. I have only four little girls because the school was open only one week ago".¹

However, the number of girls kept on increasing every day and the small House at St. Zeno in Oratorio was not sufficient any more.

The deal for a bigger place was neither easy, nor brief.

The Prefect was disposed to hand over St. Joseph's Monastery to the Marchioness on condition that she welcomed girls of any age and adult women from all over Verona. Magdalene rejected firmly the offer stating that beneficiaries of her educational work were only the poor girls of St. Zeno district:

"The Canossa has never intended to open a school for girls in moral danger, nor for all the Veronese, but for poor girls in need of education of St. Zeno district, where there are plenty..."²

And to the Mayor of Verona who asked her how many and who were the girls educated in the small house in St.Zeno in Oratorio, Magdalene, on 27 February, 1808 replied :

"...you are enquiring about how many were the poor girls assisted by me in the small house for educating them. I have to split these young girls into two classes, one for those who are provided with accomodation, education and total sustenance: these were twelve to fourteen a year...As to the other class which is provided with instruction, works and some help, it is impossible for me to write precisely how many...I think they are about two hundred a year, a number which, considering the circumstances, is not enough to lighten the burden of and civilize the poor and populated district of St.Zeno".³

When, after acquiring St. Joseph's Convent, she turned to the Bishop of Verona, Msgr. Innocenzo Liruti⁴ to obtain permission that Mass be celebrated and the Blessed Sacrament be kept in the same Church, she re-affirmed that her work was established:

"...for the instruction and education of poor girls especially from the parish of St. Zeno Major..."⁵

¹ M.d.C., to Durini, 10 July 1803, Ep.I, p.195.

² M.d.C., to the Prefect of Adige Department, 21 December 1807, Ep.II/1, p. 34.

³ M.d.C., to the Podesta' of Verona, 27 February 1808, Ep.II/1, pp.44-45.

⁴ Msgr. Liruti Innocenzo was born at Villafreda (Udine) on 7 October, 1741. He entered the Order of the Benedictines at a very young age. He was a professor, prior and an honorary abbot in St. Justina's abbey. In 1807 he was consecrated bishop in Milan and on 20 March 1808 took over the diocese of Verona. He died in 1827.

⁵ M.d.C., to Bishop Liruti, 22 April 1808, Ep. II/1, p.52.

In the big convent, there was plenty of work: from poor houses there came a great number of rugged, ignorant girls whose behaviour was often uncivilized.

Twelve days after entering St. Joseph's, Magdalene wrote to her Milanese friend:

"I have been in the new locality for 12 days...Work is not missing, and being at the centre of the district the number of people coming is large. Pray to the Lord that He may bless our little sacrifices and may his grace bring about some fruit".⁶

In the beginning, educational activity was carried out in two ways: daily assistance to the boarders and school for the girls of St. Zeno's. The rhythm of work was intense, but orderly and serene.

From 1810 onward, the history of the House of Verona is interwoven with the Venetian events.

In 1817 the Government enquired about the Institutes engaged in instruction and education and the Marchioness, replying to the questionnaire, presented broadly the goal, the beneficiaries and the method followed in her institution. Summarizing what she had established in the Rules for the Schools, she wrote:

"The origin therefore of this (Institute) comes from the desire of some persons, especially of the one who presides, to devote themselves to the relief and assistance of the poor as much as their circumstances permit, and among the objectives of charity contemplated and practiced by them there is a special branch, that of keeping free schools for the education of poor and mendicant girls...they tried little by little to teach these girls not only the duties of Holy Religion, but also reading and work according to their social condition and age, training them for adulthood so that they may overcome misery and not be a burden to others...

...The content of instruction, the girls being poor, will be Religion, Morals, reading and domestic work besides trying to educate them.

There are two classes: one for the girls who come for a simple instruction on Christian Doctrine and to learn how to read and the other for those who also train themselves to work...

The method followed is the one which we think is more suitable to them, that is, they are in school for the whole day, except two hours when they go for lunch and have some relaxation.

Through a fixed and well arranged time-table, together with the duties of a Christian they are taught one of their main duties, that is, to work as they are doing".⁷

At the beginning of the work in St. Joseph's Retreat, Magdalene and her companions had carried out educational activity to the benefit of boarders as well as of non-resident girls, but after opening a house in Venice, having clearer the perspective of the charismatic intuition of the Institute, Magdalene decided to devote herself to non-resident girls only, considering this work more fruitful and more in keeping with the spirit of the Institute, which proposes to make Jesus known and loved to many people through its apostolic activities. On 16 December 1817, Magdalene communicated her decision to the Royal Delegate of the province of Verona as follows:

"...she (Magdalene) had opened day schools for poor girls and had welcomed ten and sometimes more equally poor and abandoned girls...

Experience made the under-signed realize that keeping boarders is very costly and comparatively less fruitful than the school for external girls...for the miserable conditions of the girls coming (to our schools)...to instruct and educate them usefully we cannot separate the benefit of teaching from the benefit of alms; certainly the school for external girls is infinitely more fruitful. To this therefore, the undersigned turned and devoted herself and, knowing that she would not be able to cater for both, she resolved to give up the school for boarders, being less useful".⁸

⁶ M.d.C., to Durini, 19 May 1808, Ep. I, p.309.

⁷ M.d.C., to the Government (1817), Ep. II/1, pp.86-86.

⁸ M.d.C., to the Royal Delegate of the Province of Verona, 16 December 1817, Ep. II/1, p.94.

Magdalene of Canossa communicated her decision also to the Emperor Francis I, stating that this preference allowed her to embrace in charity a larger number of poor and abandoned girls:

*"...the coming of many poor girls to the Schools, and therefore the need to multiply Educators, many of whom are very poor, to be welcomed free of charge; it is also necessary to provide for the pupils to ensure and render their education more fruitful; the under-signed realized that she had to give up helping boarders, as a less fruitful work, to employ freely her poor strength, her whole person and her companions in the external Charity which is more necessary and fruitful and also because it is proper to the Institute."*⁹

At Verona the first fruits of the apostolic work among the poor girls of St. Zeno began to appear. It was confirmed by a report the Bishop, Msgr. Liruti, wrote to the Government on 3 October, 1818:

"...the Monastery of Sts. Joseph and Fidentius... is at the heart of St. Zenone street, which is situated in the remotest corner of the city. There are mostly uneducated and poor people, without religion and civil education and in constant danger of falling into licentiousness. It is particularly so for the girls. There were a thousand disorders here and they are corrected greatly through the zeal, fatigue and undaunted charity of the noble Governess and her companions through the work of the Institute I mentioned...

*The praiseworthy Daughters of Charity who now live together in that Building and engage themselves in public welfare, are those whom I described in the herewith- enclosed sheet B. They are all capable of fulfilling the objectives and exercises of their holy vocation. The same list includes also the number of girls attending the schools and prayer and christian instruction on feast-days and also ladies of any age who similarly go daily to the house of the Institute."*¹⁰

A document dated 18 January 1822, of which the draft only is available, informs us of the increasing number of pupils, the number of educators and the educational contents proper to the Schools of Charity of the Daughters of Charity:

"The free schools for poor girls, which the Daughters of Charity established in the Monastery of Sts. Joseph and Fidentius in St.Zeno Street according to the goal of their own Institute and their approved Rules, consist of two classes: the class where all the girls are trained to read and also learn Christian instruction and any feminine work is at present made up of 66 girls and has four teachers...; a separate class for girls who come at a fixed time to learn reading and Christian Instruction is attended by about 130 girls and has six Teachers.

Besides, there are two more teachers who instruct the girls of Class One and Class Two in reading, writing and some arithmetic, as much as possible and as the situation and the ability of these girls permit.

*Therefore the total number of girls attending the schools of the Daughters of Charity is about 200: all of them, or at least the greater part, are from St.Zeno Street"*¹¹

The Saintly Foundress was never tired of recommending to her daughters that the number of girls in the school be proportionate to the energy and the number of educators; in fact, replying to the Superior of Verona, Angela Bragato, she approved her for accepting an impoverished noble girl, but, about the other girls pressing to be enrolled in school, she exhorted her to regulate herself and take into account the overall circumstances not to over-burden the teachers:

⁹ M.d.C., to the Emperor, January 1818, Ep.II/1, p.100.

¹⁰ Bishop Liruti, to the Government, 3 October 1818, Ep.II/1, p.213.

¹¹ Schools of Charity, Verona 18 January 1822, ms,draft, A.C.VR.

"As for the girl of noble birth, but impoverished, which the Archpriest recommended that we accept in school, welcome her. I am happy about it. Withn respect to the girls who would like to come to school...act in the best way you can in proportion to the strength of the teachers and the circumstances ".¹²

And to the same daughter she wrote again:

"With reference to receiving girls in the school, go slow so as not to displeas those persons we are so much obliged to, at the same time we cannot over-burden the companions".¹³

Also the new Bishop of Verona, Msgr. Giuseppe Grasser¹⁴, confirmed that the Lord was blessing and making ever more fruitful the educational work of the Daughters of Charity. The Prelate, replying to the congratulations of the Marchioness, expressed his deepest appreciation for the apostolic work the Institute was carrying out to help especially the youth of the poorest classes:

"...through the Institute of the Daughters of Charity the poorest women and abandoned girls receive the purest milk of Christian piety and learn, very early in life, how to carry the yoke of the Lord. This being so, I express in writing my heartfelt thanks to the lucky.Mother and wise legislator of these daughters...for the great good accomplished in the new mystic vineyard entrusted to me...¹⁵

On 8 May 1831, Magdalene herself, entreating the Viceroy Rainieri, expressed her joy for the Lord's blessing on the effort of her daughters who care for the spiritual and material good of many poor girls in the district of St. Zeno:

"This entreaty aims at completing, or at least at promoting the growth of the little good which His Divine Mercy deigned to accomplish through the least Institute which...was established 23 years ago in St. Zeno parish in Verona. It is already well known to Your Imperial Highness that in this parish the poorest families of our city reside permanently. In order to assist the daughters of these poor people, the one who is entreating chose to establish herself here. She is consoled to see that in the period the Institute of the Daughters of Charity is established here, the Lord in His goodness has blessed the fatigue of her companions working for the benefit of the spiritual, temporal and civil welfare of these poor girls, some of whom, being already married, are good mothers of families".¹⁶

At Venice

The first Community of the Daughters of Charity in Venice began on 1 August 1812, in an ordinary small house in Campo St.Andrew, in the district of the Holy Cross.

In October 1812, Magdalene, on her return from Padua to Venice, brought two new companions along with her. The Community was then made up of seven members. At last they could open a small school of charity with a modest programme, responding to the needs of the poor people in the district.

The Memoirs read:

¹² M.d.C., to Bragato, 5 March 1828, Ep.III/3, pp.1856-1857.

¹³ M.d.C., to Bragato, 27 November (1830), Ep.III/4, pp.2595-2596.

¹⁴ Msgr.Giuseppe Grasser was born in Val Venosta in 1762. He was a student in Merano Seminary, then in Coira Diocese. In 1809 he was a professor of Latin in Bressanone Seminary. He was elected Bishop of Treviso in 1823 and in 1829 Bishop of Verona. He died at Verona in 1839

¹⁵ Msgr.Giuseppe Grasser to M.d.C, 11 February 1829, Ep.II/1, p.248

¹⁶ M.d.C., to Viceroy Ranieri, 8 May 1831, Ep. II/2, p.858.

"When I returned from Padua with these two companions I made them follow a Course of Spiritual Exercises; I then started with the school, trying to establish the most suitable system for that foundation".¹⁷

Magdalene, however, always wished to acquire a monastery, being convinced that only in a monastery she could start the Institute well with respect to the interior observance as well as to the apostolic activities.

After negotiating for some months, she managed to rent the Monastery of St. Lucy. On 9 October 1813, Magdalene and her companions left the small house at St. Andrew's and settled in Cannaregio district, in St. Lucy's Convent.

Here, too, as the poor kept on increasing, many were the activities and the worries.

On 7 October 1813, Magdalene wrote to her friend Caroline:

"I am very busy, because on Saturday I will shift to the new house where I hope we will assist many poor".¹⁸

And one week later:

"On Saturday I have moved to the new house. In a few weeks' time we shall open the school for the Canal Reggio girls".¹⁹

The number of unruly and rowdy girls of Cannaregio attending the Institute was similar to the girls of St. Zenò district and was ever on the increase.

Meanwhile, in October 1815, after disastrous political events, Venice welcomed for the first time the Emperor Francis I, who, after Napoleon's fall, returned as master of the Lombardy-Venetian kingdom.

Magdalene was graced with the opportunity of meeting him personally in St. Lucy's Convent and handed him a petition on matters concerning the establishment of the Institute on solid foundation. She wrote that the Institute:

"...has as its objectives the instruction and schools of charity for poor girls: assistance in the parish Christian Doctrine, visiting the women patients in the hospitals and any other works of charity suitable to the feminine sex. The three main branches are carried out in the two cities, mentioned above (Verona and Venice), as the Governess deemed them more useful for meeting the greater needs of the poor of their respective Countries".²⁰

After explaining to the Sovereign her problems, Magdalene took him around to visit the schools and other quarters in the monastery; the Emperor expressed his deep satisfaction and promised to see personally that her requests be granted. Magdalene described the imperial visit in details to her Milanese friend, as follows:

"When His Majesty entered, I thanked him for being so kind to visit our place for the poor. He replied thanking me for the good I am carrying out and added that the State cannot see to everything...

I took him round the school and to see the rest of the convent. In his goodness, he expressed his satisfaction in every thing.²¹

¹⁷ M.d.C., Memoirs, in R.s.s. P.1, p.332.

¹⁸ M.d.C., to Durini, 7 October 1813, Ep.I, p. 384.

¹⁹ M.d.C., to Durini, 14 October 1813, Ep. I, p.386.

²⁰ M.d.C., to the Emperor Francis I, 9 November 1815, Ep. II/1, p. 63.

²¹ M.d.C., to Durini, 11 November 1825, Ep. I, pp. 425-426.

With the donation of the Convent and the approval of the activities by the Sovereign, all the difficulties of the house of Venice seemed to be solved. Instead, serious complications arose to dampen the spirit.

Influential and not well informed people wanted to sell the Monastery of St. Lucy and were preparing a report showing that the work of the Daughters of Charity was not only useless, but even dangerous to society.

Magdalene, informed of the threat, rallied all her Milanese friends so that they might intervene promptly to obtain from the Government the urgent imperial Decree.

On January 1816, she wrote to Durini about her concern:

" I confess that I was amazed to see that the matters of this Institute were settling so peacefully...my dear friend, I need your friendly cooperation... I need that...you have concern for the work of the Lord, which is going to be hit in such a way that it may be certainly destroyed here (at Venice) and consequently in Verona...

I have been told by a friend to try to obtain in Milan, as secretly as possible, the Decree confirming the gift donated to me orally by His Majesty, because in this Government, some persons would like to take over the convent...

They have also written a report on this work showing that this work is not only useless, but also harmful to the public welfare, because by accepting the poor into our schools and educating them, there will consequently be no more washerwomen and street sweepers, in short, the poor will not perform such ordinary chores any more".²²

Magdalene of Canossa never forgets that the beneficiaries of her works are the poorest. In her reply to the questionnaire which she despatched to the Delegation of Venice on 3 April 1817, she wrote:

"...the Institute considers the custody and education of many youth as one of its main branches...

With respect to the girls to be welcomed in school they are to be really poor and have no contagious diseases".²³

The 17 May, 1818 Spalatro Decree, by which many religious Orders suppressed during Napoleon's rule were reinstated, was to be applied. It was, therefore, necessary that the three Prelates of Venice, Verona and Milan send to Vienna a report stating that the Institute of the Daughters of Charity was useful and offered services to the benefit of society.

The Patriarch of Venice, Msgr. Francis Maria Milesi²⁴ was the first Prelate to present to the Government the Institute of the Daughters of Charity as one of the most appreciated Institutes operating in his diocese. In fact, on 10 September 1818, he wrote as follows:

"...the project of the Daughters of Charity...aims at teaching poor abandoned girls and ladies of low social status.

The Institute in which for my pastoral zeal I am mostly interested and which deserves special appreciation and is perfectly in line with the wise objectives ...of our Beloved Sovereign, is doubtlessly that of the Daughters of Charity...May God grant that it may spread and multiply everywhere so that soon we may notice the beneficial effects in the instruction and in the

²² M.d.C. to Durini, 12 January 1816, Ep. I, pp. 426-427

²³ M.d.C. to Venice Delegation, 3 April 1817, Ep. II71, pp. 83-84.

²⁴ Milesi mons. Francesco Maria: nasce a Venezia il 21 marzo 1744; nel 1767 è ordinato sacerdote dal Patriarca Bragadino e nel 1780 gli viene affidata la parrocchia di S. Silvestro in Venezia. Napoleone lo nomina alla sede episcopale di Vigevano che lascia dopo nove anni per ritornare, come patriarca a Venezia, dopo che la Santa Sede, in data 23 settembre 1816, convalida la nomina fatta dall'Imperatore. Muore a Venezia il 19 settembre 1819.

spiritual and temporal education of the feminine sex and a great success for the good of the families of our Italy".²⁵

Attached to the report was a sheet with the list of the Daughters of Charity who in 1818 were members of the Community of St. Lucy in Venice and the number of girls attending the schools:

"Girls attending the school daily to learn sewing, knitting, embroidery, reading, etc.

They are about 60.

Women of every age attending instruction in the Institute.

They are about 100.

Girls attending prayers and instruction on feast-days.

They are about 100.²⁶

Meanwhile, Magdalene received from the Patriarch the Government Dispatch acknowledging and approving the Institute.

On 4 June 1819, she wrote to the Prelate thanking him for helping her and pledged to follow as much as possible the requests of the Government:

"With reference to the schools, though I think I am bound to follow what is in the Plan and in the Constitutions, I will be happy to implement as much as possible the wise views of the High Government concerning the elementary schools".²⁷

After Msgr. Milesi's death, Msgr. Giovanni Ladislao Pyrker²⁸ Bishop of Zips in Slovenia, was chosen as Patriarch.

On 12 May 1821, that is, a few weeks after entering the diocese, he announced his pastoral visit in order to get acquainted with the situation of the patriarchate and become personally aware of the real needs of the diocese.

In the report he made to the Emperor on 30 November 1821, concerning his first pastoral visit, he wrote about the Daughters of Charity as follows:

"The under-signed has visited all the female Convents and all the Institutes for female education...The Sisters of Charity have done the same (that is, they engaged themselves voluntarily to instruct girls). Their Institutes here in Verona, in Bergamo and in Milan are organized, with the approval of your Majesty, by the Marchioness of Canossa and guarantee good results".²⁹

In 1827 the Venice Inspectorate asked again for data on colleges, boarding schools, private institutions for education existing in Venice and on 20 May 1827, Magdalene replied pointing out the beneficiaries and the educational activities pertinent to her Institute:

"To reply about what I am being asked for in the mentioned sheet, I would like to let you know that in the House of St. Lucy of the Daughters of Charity there is neither a boarding house, nor

²⁵ Patriarca Milesi, all'Eccelso I.R. Governo, 10 settembre 1818, Ep. II/1, p. 210.

²⁶ Elenco nominale delle Figlie della Carità della Comunità di S. Lucia in Venezia, Ep. II/1, p. 215.

²⁷ .M.d.C., a Mons. Milesi, 4 giugno 1819, Ep. II/1, 137.

²⁸ Pyrker mons. Giovanni Ladislao: nasce nel 1772 a Langh, nell'Austria meridionale. Entra molto giovane tra i cistercensi della abbazia di Lilienfeld, dove è ordinato sacerdote nel 1798. Viaggia in Italia e in Germania. Nel 1812 assume l'incarico di, Abate di Lilienfeld. Viene eletto nel 1818 Vescovo di Zips in Slovacchia e dopo due anni, nel 1820 è nominato Patriarca di Venezia. Il suo ingresso in diocesi avviene il 14 aprile 1821. Lascia Venezia nell'aprile del 1827 perché eletto Vescovo della diocesi ungherese di Erlau. Muore a Vienna nel 1847.

²⁹ Ertoli E., Tramontin S., La visita pastorale di Giovanni Ladislao Pyrker nella diocesi di Venezia (1821), Roma 1971, p. 218.

a boarding school as this Branch is not embraced by the Institute which was founded by the undersigned with the approval your Majesty expressed to her on 18 February, 1818. However, all the works of charity practiced by the Institute, including the gratuitous charitable assistance by which only the poorest girls are helped temporarily, as well as the methods, the Rules, the Discipline were acknowledged and approved by the High R.I. General Government... "30.

On 26 June 1827, the new Patriarch of Venice, Msgr. Giacomo Monico ³¹expressed his satisfaction to Magdalene for the presence in his diocese of the Institute of the Sisters of Charity, who devote themselves with love to many poor people. He wished that the Daughters of Charity might multiply in order to spread the glory of God and save many souls:

"Being placed by divine disposition at the helm of the spiritual administration of this illustrious metropolis, we consider it a special grace from heaven having an Institute which brings much comfort to the poor sick, does much good to poor girls and is so edifying for the Christian Ladies.

Noble and virtuous Matron, may the Houses founded and directed by you multiply and prosper ever more so that the Glory of God may increase and the morality of the world be improved.³²

On 29 January, just 3 months before her death, Magdalene replied to a request of the Civic Delegation of Venice and mentioned again the Institute and the beneficiaries:

"The writer is similarly honoured to let the Illustrious Municipal Assembly know that this Institute, being really a religious Institute, by its nature and the sovereign's will, depends directly on the various Bishops (Ordinaries).

The latter are fully informed about the instruction and moral and religious education we are imparting to the poor girls which the Institute welcomes free of charge to its charity school. Now and again they visit, listen, question these youth as his Eminence, the Right Reverend Cardinal Patriarch (Monico) did in our house of St. Lucy in Venice". ³³

At Milan

Countess Caroline Durini, friend and confidante of Magdalene who entrusted all her projects to her, insisted on having a foundation in Milan. As the letters of both testify, Magdalene, before accepting the invitation to go to the Lombard metropolis, dealt with her friend at length.

In the end, after much delay, Magdalene's departure for Milan took place on 16 July 1816, Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Magdalene brought along Elena Bernardi, Cristina Pilotti and Angela Simeoni, the Milanese pioneers who shared the Foundress' projects, hopes and sacrifices.

On 11 July 1816, she had written to Durini as follows:

"At last, God willing, on Tuesday I will leave for Milan. I shall take along three companions. Of them you know Elena only. I will stay one night...and another at Caravaggio so that in the morning I may visit Our Holy Mother and entrust to her the business you already know and on account of which we travel".³⁴

³⁰ M.d.C., all'Ispettorato di Venezia, 20 maggio 1827, Ep. II/1, p.161.

³¹ Monico mons. Giacomo: nasce a Riese nel 1778. Viene ordinato sacerdote nel 1800; è chiamato a reggere la parrocchia di S. Vito di Asolo e nel 1822 Pio VII lo consacra vescovo di Ceneda; cinque anni dopo, nel 1827, Leone XII lo promuove patriarca di Venezia e, nel 1833, Gregorio XVI lo crea cardinale. Muore a Venezia nel 1851.

³² Msgr. Monico G., to M.d.C., 26 June 1827, Ep.II/1, p.249.

³³ M.d.C., to Venice Town Delegation, 29 January 1835, Ep.II, p.178.

³⁴ M.d.C. to Durini, 11 July 1816, Ep. I, p.452.

At Caravaggio, in the Sanctuary of the Holy Virgin, the pilgrims gathered in prayer to strengthen their faith, to let their love grow so as to work more zealously for the glory of the Lord in the new foundation. They reached Milan on 18 July, 1816.

Seven rooms were set for them in the parsonage of St. Stephen's parish where Don Francis Maria Zoppi³⁵ was parish priest.

Soon the daughters of Magdalene of Canossa opened their heart and their doors to welcome poor women. Day by day the clientele increased : children and vagrant girls were welcomed with affectionate care, fed and initiated into the knowledge of God.

The Chronicles of Milan read:

"Shortly after the mothers, the daughters came...poor abandoned girls who, spending the whole day on Verzaro were growing wilder than the wild plants...".³⁶

And again:

"The majority of the girls attending the Institute then, were very dirty, ragged, rough and they were welcomed by the Daughters of Charity with respectful warmth...".³⁷

The number of girls kept on increasing, mostly on Sunday afternoons.

The House Chronicles read:

"...the girls coming on Sunday afternoon were so many that it was impossible to count them and they were welcomed so long as there was space available. Quite often, not to send these girls away, because we thought they were sent by the Holy Angels, it was necessary to free the room next to their classroom and carry the bed to some corner next to the kitchen".³⁸

It was therefore urgent to open a school of charity, but space was scanty : the seven rooms in St.Stephen parsonage were insufficient.

A house, still in Via della Signora, was rented and when renovations were over, the Sisters shifted there and started the school.

Thus Magdalene wrote to Don Francesco Zoppi:

*"I hope that this week the renovation work may be completed. If it is so, next week we will be able to start at least the instruction and perhaps even the school, because, as you will understand, I would like to see the activities initiated as soon as possible..."*³⁹

The work instead was slow to proceed and on 11 December Magdalene replied to Don Francesco Zoppi that she agreed on limiting for the moment the number of girls and reminded him that the beneficiaries of the school of the Daughters of Charity were the poor girls:

"As for the school I, too, agree that the number should be very limited, otherwise it will be impossible to manage them...and I think that 18 girls, the number you suggest, are the most we can welcome at the moment. As to which girls to take in first, you know better than I which are

³⁵ Msgr. Francesco Maria Zoppi was born at Canobio in 1765. He graduated in theology and canon law at Pavia University. He was an oblate priest. He was rector of the Seminary from 1799 to 1803. He was parish priest of St.Stephen's parish in Milan for 15 years. From 1823 to 1832 he was bishop of Massa Carrara. Then he returned to Milan and died at his retreat in Canobio in 1841.

³⁶ Chronicles of the House of Milan, 1816-1847, p.29, A.C.M.

³⁷ Ibid., p.56.

³⁸ Chronicles of the House of Milan, pp.55-56.

³⁹ M.d.C., to Don Zoppi, 14 October 1817, Ep.II/1,p.280.

the best...I cannot refrain from telling you that our vocation of serving the poor, urges me to have for our schools the poorest and abandoned girls..."⁴⁰

In 1818 the Daughters of Charity, having discovered the special needs of each child when preparing the children to receive the Sacraments, decided to begin "day-care schools" for girls whose families, being at work the whole day long, could not take care of them, as well as a "one hour per day school" as an "expedient" to establish or keep up the relationship with the numerous youth who had already an occupation.

The Milanese Chronicles read:

"Among the girls admitted to first Communion and Confession they opened a day-school for the daughters of those poor persons who, to earn a livelihood for their family, are away from their daughters the whole day long or take them along to their business in public places. This entails that the girls are either left to themselves, or spend most of the day roaming along the streets (as it is for almost all the daughters of retailers of fruits or vegetables); therefore, the Daughters of Charity, seeing how these girls are on the verge of moral danger,...begged their parents to let them go to them every day and promised that they would instruct them in whatever is necessary for young Christian girls like them...

Since several of these girls, who needed much to be instructed in the love of God, were already in a school or in a shop, or had to be of help at home, they decided to let them come for an hour a day..."⁴¹

While her Milanese friends were looking for a building where to establish the Institute, on 11 December 1819, Magdalene wrote to the Archbishop of Milan, Carlo Gaetano Gaisruck⁴² explaining what ministries her daughters were carrying out in Via della Signora:

" Now, I cannot say exactly where the place is, because some pious persons are inspecting some buildings and contracts are on to ensure one...In the house in Via della Signora, 72, where we are at present, we are able to carry out sufficiently many duties of the Institute, especially those connected with the school, reading, writing and feminine work, religious instruction and assistance in the hospital".⁴³

An appropriate and functional place was found in Via della Chiusa, in St.Lawrence's parish, a building which being at one time the property of the Certosa of Pavia was called "Certosina". Soon Magdalene's benefactors, first of all Count Giacomo Mellerio⁴⁴ bought it and donated it to the Daughters of Charity.

As there were no more obstacles, the canonical erection was held solemnly in St. Stephen's Church. On this occasion Msgr.Zoppi, who was consecrated bishop that year, on 14 September 1823 delivered his famous speech exalting the fruitfulness of the charitable work of the daughters of Magdalene of Canossa:

"Filled as they are with God's light and zeal they begin instructing poor girls, who otherwise would grow ignorant and perhaps also fall into vice. They do it continuously regardless of age and persons, even for small ones, as long as they wish to be instructed.

⁴⁰ M.d.C., to Don Zoppi, 11 December 1817, Ep., II/1,p.283.

⁴¹ Chronicles of the House of Milan, pp.81-82.

⁴² Card. Carlo Gaetano Gaysruck was born at Klangefurt in Carinzia in 1769. He was nominated Archbishop of Milan by the Emperor in 1816, but his nomination was ratified by the Pope only in the year 1818. In fact he took over the Ambrosian See on 26 July 1818. He was elected Cardinal in 1824. He died at Milan on 19 November 1846.

⁴³ M.d.C., to Card. Gaisruck, 11 December 1819, Ep.II/1,p.289.

⁴⁴ Count Giacomo Mellerio (1777-1847) was born in Varese Province. He was the last descendant of a rich family of finance officers. As a member of the Regency of the Government in Lombardy, he was well known for his loyalty to Austria. He was an upright, intelligent and generous person. He devoted himself zealously to works of charity and religion. He was one of the most valid collaborators of Magdalene in Milan and in Venice.

They know that to these innocent people the kingdom of heaven belongs. Though these girls are rugged and dull, they are dear to them and if they are poor they are dearer to them still, as they are most in need of their charitable activity: they care patiently for the shy and hard to deal with as they do with joy for those who are mild and docile; similarly they offer milk to the beginners and solid food to the adult and poor women... they gently caress them, take great care of their needs; their charity so captivates their hearts that the girls willingly prefer recollection, training and innocent relaxation at the Daughters of Charity's retreat and, were they excluded, they would feel like being punished..."⁴⁵

When she was going to shift to the House in Via Chiusa, Magdalene faced opposition from the people in the district who prevented her from closing down the House in Via della Signora. Thus she was compelled to accept running two houses in the Lombard capital.

To the head Inspector of Elementary Schools, who on 18 February 1835 requested to be informed about the opening and the running of the two schools of charity as well as the enrolment of pupils, Magdalene replied:

"At last I have the pleasure to inform your distinguished Lordship about our two schools of charity, one of which was open in our new House of the Certosa in St. Lawrence's parish in St. Michele alla Chiusa, 9.

The Daughters of Charity who are teaching are: Vimercati Angela, Trioni Francesca, Lavagno Antonia, Poli Rosa, Brun Vittoria. At present there are 50 pupils. The other school of the Institute is situated in St. Stephen's parish, Via della Signora, 72. There are three Daughters of Charity: Gaspani Maria, Crippa Maddalena, Gaggiotti Luigia and there are 38 pupils.

The two schools in the above mentioned Houses are open from 8.30 in the morning till noon and from 2.00 p.m. till half an hour before the "Ave Maria" in the evening. All the pupils are taught religious instruction as well as reading, some also writing, all of them Italian grammar, arithmetic and works pertaining to women.

In addition to these schools, every week day from 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. religious instruction, reading, writing, and rudiments of arithmetic are imparted to girls who may attend this school according to their circumstances. In fact, having to assist their family, or being engaged in tailoring or in modelling, these girls cannot attend the ordinary school. There are about 150 such girls in the House at Certosina.

In St. Stephen's House there are 42 girls.

The above mentioned Sisters teach these girls. They are also helped by all the Daughters of Charity not involved in other important branches of the Institute, the Superior and her Assistant included.

Summary	Girls attending	
	schools	ordinary instruction from 2.00 to 4.00 p.m.
St. Michael's House	N.50	N. 150
St. Stephen's Home	38	42
	N.88	N. 193" ⁴⁶

In a letter dated 24 March 1825, addressed to Domenica Faccioli, our Saintly Mother recommended her to limit the number of girls as it would be impossible to teach them how to work well and as a consequence one of the fundamental aim of the school of Charity would not be achieved:

⁴⁵ Msgr. Zoppi F.M., Discorso pronunciato nella Basilica di S. Stefano on 14 September 1823, A.C.M.

⁴⁶ M.d.C., to the Inspector of Elementary Schools, 18 February 1825, Ep. II/1, pp.314-315.

"...I exhort you, in general, not to burden too much the school, because it will be impossible to teach well how to work and. If the women do not work and do not know how to do it well, they will avoid one pitfall, but they will fall into another".⁴⁷

On 21 April 1825, Mother Elena Bernardi, Superior of Milan, wrote to the saintly Foundress that an inspector, while visiting the school, was surprised to see that there were no big girls; Magdalene replied that since the Institute was following the regulations of Lower Elementary Schools, it was not possible to accept girls above twelve years of age. Regarding the opening of a new school, she advised her to take into account the Sisters' strength and the Parish priest's advice on the matter:

"As for the second school, you know, my dear, that I follow the Parish priest's opinion. Let him discern the case as I told him. With respect to that gentlemen who was suprised to see that we have no big girls, it means that he never inspected government schools where girls above twelve years cannot be accepted. We follow the Regulations of the Lower Elementary Schools, therefore, there is no need to be astonished".⁴⁸

In June 1825 the Empress Caroline Augusta of Baviera visited St. Michael alla Chiusa's schools and Magdalene, following government directives, on 14 June 1825, informed the Government Councillor as follows:

"This morning, at eleven Her Majesty the Empress deigned to visit our Institute. In her goodness she stayed at length in our schools observing the work of our poor girls, letting me question some of them on Christian Doctrine and after having expressed her satisfaction, she left. I, the companions and the girls felt deep sentiments of admiration and humble attachment".⁴⁹

The last letter addressed to the Houses in Milan is dated 14 November, 1834 and is addressed to Msgr. Antonio Maria Traversi⁵⁰ Magdalene stated that she was consoled by the amount of good her daughters accomplished in Milan for the benefit of youth:

"These good daughters are over-loaded with works of charity. They do a lot of good. A great number of youth is saved from perils. In this country the spiritual needs of youth are too many to describe. The number of companions is small...The Superiors insist that they do not tire themselves out, but since the needs are particular they do not wish to abandon them".⁵¹

At Bergamo

The time for the foundation of the House in Bergamo came about in 1820.

The lawyer Saverio Gavazzeni, being informed of the good the Daughters of Charity were accomplishing in Verona, Venice and Milan turned to Magdalene so as to have Sisters for his city. To render this foundation possible he offered a small house he owned. in Borgo St. Catherine. Magdalene accepted the request and on 19 December 1819, the Bishop's See being vacant, sent in an application

⁴⁷ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 24 March 1825, Ep. III/2, p. 1075.

⁴⁸ M.d.C., to Bernardi, 12 April 1825, Ep.III/2, pp.1097-1098.

⁴⁹ M.d.C., to the Government Councillor, 14 June 1825, Ep. II/1, p. 324.

⁵⁰ Msgr. Antonio Maria Traversi was born at Venice in 1765. He was ordained priest in 1787. He was director of the I.R.Liceo Convitto in Venice. In 1827 he became spiritual Father of the Daughters of Charity in Venice. In 1836 Pope Gregory XVI nominated him bishop of Nizianzo. He died at Rome in 1842.

⁵¹ M.d.C., to Msgr. Traversi, 14 November 1834, Ep. II/1,p.363.

to the Capitular Vicar, Msgr. Marco Celio of Count Passi⁵² asking for church approval and mediation at Government level so that this foundation might soon come about.

Imperial approval arrived on 25 July 1820 and on 17 September, feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, the canonical erection took place.

Soon the poor and especially the girls filled the place which proved to be insufficient and Magdalene had to restrict the ministries of charity of the Institute.

Meanwhile, Count Andrea Camozzi de' Gherardi⁵³ realized that the place the Daughters of Charity were living in was small and donated to the Marchioness the convent of the ex-Capuchin Sisters at Rocchetta which he had bought over from the Property Office.

This donation was for Magdalene a sign of Divine Providence; she accepted it willingly and, explaining her motivations, petitioned the diocesan Curia for permission to move there:

"...the noble Count Andrea Camozzi, in his goodness, considering small the place we live in, was pleased to offer us as a gift the already suppressed Monastery of the Capuchin Sisters in Rocchetta and the annexed Church. It is a house more convenient than the first and we could move the Institute there.

As I saw the location of this house, closer to a greater number of poor, the convenience of the close by church, the larger capacity of the house, I realized that such spontaneous offer was once again a sign of Divine Providence on our behalf. But, before I can benefit from it, I would like to beg for permission from this Reverend Episcopal Curia to transfer the Institute from this house to the above mentioned monastery".⁵⁴

The transfer to the new house took place in July 1821; then, a fruitful apostolate began to take shape.

In the Almanac of the "Country News" of Bergamo the work of the Daughters of Charity is presented as follows:

"The objective of their institution is instruction free of charge for poor girls in the scientific as well as in the working sphere and above all in morality, but it would not be enough to achieve the aim in morals if the girls were not entertained in a pleasant manner also on Sundays during the time free from exercises of piety. During the time mentioned above, girls from any condition, especially those who cannot be controlled or looked after by their respective parents gather in this monastery. Here, loving and prudent educators care to provide healthy entertainment and combine physical relaxation with growth in the spirit. They temper gently their behaviour, provide them with ample knowledge on how to become good mothers of families. They keep them from vanity without turning them into extravagant people, and therefore, save them from moral danger. The girls become reserved and modest, but not rude and impolite; quiet and home lovers without being lazy and shy to go out, learned but not high-brow, pleasant and not pretentious, proud, or flirty. They are trained in such a way that they provide help and satisfaction to their families and to the rest of society and are not a burden or a trouble to them.

These are the beneficial effects these worthy persons provide for the youth".⁵⁵

⁵²Msgr. Marco Celio Passi was an Arch-priest of Bergamo Cathedral from 1797 to 1821. He was General Vicar when the Episcopal See of Bergamo was vacant from 1819 to 1821. It was at his time that the House of the Daughters of Charity was opened in Bergamo. He died at Bergamo in 1830.

⁵³ Count Andrea Camozzi de' Gherardi (1766-1855), married Countess Elisabetta Vertova. He was a father to six children. He was from one of the noblest and most ancient families of Bergamo. In spite of his high aristocracy his behaviour was simple and open.

⁵⁴ M.d.C., to the Episcopal Curia, 31 January 1821, Ep.II/1, pp.404-405

⁵⁵ Bergamo ossia Notizie Patrie raccolte da Carlo Facchinetti, 1831 Almanac, XVII Year, Bergamo Mazzoleni Press, pp.72-74

When writing to her Daughters, Magdalene always pointed out that preference should be for poor girls.

On 17 August 1822, she replied to Rosa Dabala', Superior in Bergamo who was worried about a forthcoming inspection. She reminded her that just in Bergamo she had rejected a Government elementary school because the Institute worked for the poor, without any obligation and free of charge and taught her how to face such a possible inspection:

"Be assured that no inspection will come about now. But if it does, do not worry so much. First of all, trust in our Holy Mother Mary who is always at work in her houses. Then, if they come, show them the school, let the girls read as they normally do. Let the teacher question them on our doctrine as they keep the Normal Catechism on their desk to show them how we do it, and how we really will do when the girls will be well instructed on the prescribed text. Show them the exercise-book the girls learn from and tell them that the girls, being good and intelligent, will learn easily. Add that the Institute in Bergamo being at the initial stage, it was impossible for us to do a lot of things in a short span of time and that if we were to accept many girls, we are too few, we could not see to everything. The reason for not accepting the running of the elementary schools is that our vocation is to assist the poor as much as we can".⁵⁶

On 25 January 1827, Magdalene wrote again to Rosa Dabala' so that she informed the Inspector that the schools of the Daughters of Charity never had any inspection as the pupils attending them are unable to follow fixed time-tables and programmes, and that the only aim of the Institute is to work for the benefit of the poorest girls:

"My dear daughter, I'm replying to your letter at once in reference to the one you have received from Count Canon Tomini. I, too, agree that you ask him to intervene: let him know that we never had exams, neither at Bergamo, nor anywhere else, because, given the objectives of our Institute, it is not possible to take them without compromising the good of the poor, the only aim of our Institute. By so doing, for some time we would not be able to keep the school going as only the poorest come to us. They need food and if in summer they are not welcomed by us, at times even at six o'clock in the morning, they roam in the streets along with the boys. Hence they are with us the whole day long and when they are older, they go to spin.

For those wishing to do the exams, follow programmes and the like, it is better to stick to a fixed time-table. This can be done in a public school, not in a school like ours which is purely for charity..

Just for your knowledge, my dear daughter, not only in Veneto, but also in Milan no School of Charity was ever subjected to exams or syllabuses as only the poorest attend these schools, while the better-off attend Elementary public Schools. Perhaps it was a mistake, or just a circular letter. Due to the number of girls and their type, if we had to follow the exam system and the School programmes, at present we would be compelled to close down our school".⁵⁷

Abbot Carpani, general Inspector of the Schools of the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia, had dispatched a questionnaire to Bergamo.

On 21 July 1827, the saintly Foundress, writing to Rosa on how to reply to the Inspector, outlined briefly the aim and the method of her schools of charity:

"I will not fail to pray for the visit of Mr Carpani. But, my dear daughter, do not forget to remind him of the remark I made to our dear Sovereign (Caroline Augusta of Baviera), that is, that our school is made up, as a majority, of girls who come to school for a week, or a month and then go to look after the sheep or to harvest maize and wheat or to feed silk-worms and animals in the stables or go to the spinning-mill. We welcome them and teach them mainly how to save their souls and to earn their daily bread, when they have no other way. Therefore,

⁵⁶ M.d.C., to Dabala', 17 January 1822, Ep.III/1, p.473.

⁵⁷ M.d.C., to Dabala', 25 January 1827, R.s.s., Pt 2, p.353.

*teaching them a way to appease their hunger, replaces reading, writing, grammar and arithmetic. Nothing could be done, if this is not taken care of".*⁵⁸

The General Vicar, Msgr. Marco Celio Passi, in a 20 May 1828 declaration, pointed out how much good the Institute of the Daughters of Charity was doing for the poor and abandoned youth of Bergamo:

"The Institute of the Daughters of Charity which was founded a few years ago in this city of Bergamo, is blessed by the Lord. It provides a great help to society through religious instruction and changing patterns of behaviour.

*The objectives of Christian charity this useful and worthy Institute is devoted to in a special manner are multiple and very important. There is a free school for the poorest and vagrant girls...".*⁵⁹

In training the girls for work, Magdalene followed, as we have mentioned earlier, the criterion of essentials, that is, she only chose works indispensable to live a life with dignity.

In the Rules for the Schools she exhorted the Sisters not to accept any work which did not foster modesty:

*"In the schools do not accept or sew dresses or other indecent items. Do not be afraid that, by doing so, work will be lacking, because the Lord is at work to provide for it".*⁶⁰

On 13 December 1830, Magdalene again renews her recommendations to Domenica Faccioli:

*"...I do not think it necessary that in our schools... you teach how to make bags, braces, and some other fanciful item; in this way, they (the Sisters) waste the time they should spend in caring for souls".*⁶¹

At Trent

The Daughters of Charity opened a house at Trent after long and difficult bureaucratic procedures.

This foundation was connected with eminent personalities. Together with Magdalene, they have contributed to the good of the city of Trent and of the local church. Among them were: Msgr. Carlo Emanuele Count Sardagna⁶², then Capitular Vicar of Trent, the great philosopher Antonio Rosmini⁶³ and his sister Margherita⁶⁴

⁵⁸ M.d.C., to Dabala', 17 January 1822, Ep.III/1, p.473.

⁵⁹ Passi mons. Marco Celio, 20 maggio 1828, Ep. II/1, p. 485.

⁶⁰ M.d.C., Rules for the Schools, R.s.s., Pt.1, p.195, Rule XXVII.

⁶¹ M.d.C., to Faccioli, 13 December 1830, Ep.III/4, pp.2624-2625.

⁶² Msgr. Count Carlo Emanuele Sardagna (1772-1840) was a student in the German College in Rome. He was consecrated priest and was the first Arch-priest of Mori(TN). In 1802 he was a Canon in the Cathedral of Trent. He was Capitular Vicar of Trent when the foundation of the House of the Daughters of Charity took place. Later he was consecrated bishop and in 1831 he took charge of Cremona diocese.

⁶³ Rosmini don Antonio (1797-1855) was born at Rovereto of a noble Catholic family. He devoted himself to classical philosophy, and theology. In 1820 he met Magdalene of Canossa for the first time at Verona and introduced his sister Margherita to her. Magdalene hoped he would be her co-founder for the Sons of Charity (Canossians). Instead, he founded the Institute of Charity (The Rosminians).

⁶⁴ Margherita Rosmini was born at Rovereto in 1794. She was a student in the boarding school of the Institute of the Ursulines at Insbruk. In 1820 she and her brother met Magdalene for the first time. In 1824 she entered the Canossian Novitiate in Verona. In 1828 Magdalene nominated her the first Superior of the house of Trent. She died at Verona in June 1833.

Since their first encounter, Marchioness Magdalene and Margherita Rosmini established a friendship born of great reciprocal esteem and admiration. This friendship became communion when in 1824 Margherita joined the Daughters of Charity.

Magdalene's letters to her friend Rosmini before the foundation of the House of Trent, give us a glimpse into the educational goal of our Foundress and the beneficiaries of her schools.

Magdalene was ready to begin at once the apostolate in Trent, but she rejected the running of a public school and on 10 March 1821, informed Rosmini as follows:

"You might know (from your brother Anthony), how we have spoken about Trent, which, when the Lord shows the way, I would like to start off personally. Reflecting on this, I realized that accepting so suddenly...a public school as a first foundation, is not spiritually convenient and opportune to the Institute, which due to much work will be deprived of the inner spirit, without which the exterior works of charity have no vigour and duration..."⁶⁵

Since Margherita Rosmini insisted that the public school was not a burden beyond their strength, Magdalene explained again in an ample manner why it was good for the Institute not to accept such an offer:

"...from your description about the methods of those schools, I understand that it is absolutely necessary to divide the schools into various classes and I suppose that the instruction for the rich girls will be different from that for the poor to whom we devote ourselves. Besides reading, writing, arithmetic, it will be necessary to teach them at least some elements of history, geography, grammar, that is, correct Italian and spelling. To be able to do so trained people are needed or it is necessary to train them...for us consecrated totally to the service of the poor only reading, writing and some elements of arithmetic are necessary. I fear that the class of young rich ladies, which is more attractive to our human weakness, may be harmful to the spirit of the Institute as well as to our attitude towards learning".⁶⁶

Magdalene was satisfied only when she was assured that, to found a house in Trent, it was not necessary to accept the running of a public school, but it was possible to open a school for everybody, in particular for the poor, in keeping with the spirit of the Institute.

On 12 July 1821, Magdalene's reply to Margherita Rosmini was:

"From your dear letter, I understand that it is not necessary to accept a public school and that in our school we can welcome girls according to our number and the capacity of the place. If this is the case, I have no difficulty to accept such a foundation as long as we can prefer the poor girls to the rich ones. We may welcome also the latter but the poor have to be taken care of first. I say this because the schools are one of the most interesting branches of our Institute, and therefore we do it because of our vocation. The normal method of teaching does not exclude teaching simple reading, writing, some elements of arithmetic, catechism and basic grammar, as you say, together with work, they are not contrary to the spirit of the Institute which will not embrace more than what the Lower Elementary school in Italy teaches, so that we may work as we do here free of charge and without being tied up with the Government".⁶⁷

While renovations of St. Francis' Convent was in progress, Don Giulio Todeschi, Director of Trent Seminary, asked his friend Antonio Rosmini about the aim of the Institute of the Daughters of Charity. On 9 May 1826, Rosmini replied:

⁶⁵M.d.C. to Rosmini, 10 March 1821, Ep.III/1,pp.407-408.

⁶⁶M.d.C., to Rosmini, 12 April 1821, Ep.III/1, p.414.

⁶⁷M.d.C., to Rosmini, 12 July 1821, Ep. III/1, p.436.

"Here I am at your service, my very gentle and appreciated friend...You start your letter with a topic very dear to me, that is, with the Sisters of Charity. Yes, I hope that soon they will begin a foundation in Trent. The Emperor has donated the Convent to the great Lady of Canossa, and some Sisters from Tirolo are ready to move in. But it is necessary to renovate the place. It will take some time because it is rather messy, but, through the zeal of our Vicar, soon it will look new... The general aim of the Sisters of Charity, which you want to know about, is to care especially for the class of people most neglected and despised by society, that is, for the most needy, the class dearest to our Divine Saviour, that is the poor. To assist sick women in hospitals, teaching them Christian doctrine...have schools for the poor teaching them what is most useful: reading, writing, works pertaining to women, etc...

The whole life of these very good Sisters, as the name they bear tells us, is total charity".⁶⁸

Finally on 21 June 1828, the canonical erection took place and Magdalene nominated Margherita Rosmini as first Superior. Apostolic activities began soon and flourished fast: the number of girls who came along was beyond all expectations.

On 12 July 1828, Magdalene wrote to Msgr. Traversi as follows with reference to the development of the work at Trent:

"...It is already two Sundays that we are welcoming the girls according to our method. I do not know whether they come out of novelty only, but their inflow is great. Tomorrow, God willing, school will begin. May the Lord bring to completion the work He has begun".⁶⁹

After a few days, she informed Msgr. Zoppi about the same topic:

"Let me speak now about Trent where I am since two months ago...Having subjects formed and well trained, the House is already at work: there is a school, and afternoon instruction for girls. Youth are welcomed on Sundays... In a few days, we shall begin instructing adult women".⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Rosmini A., to Giulio Todeschi, 9 May 1826, Epistolario Completo, Antonio Rosmini-Serbati, Second Volume, Casale Monferrato 1887, pp.84-85. 12 April 1821, Ep. III/1, p.414.

⁶⁹ M.d.C., to Msgr. Traversi, 12 July 1828, Ep. II/2, pp.1159-1160.

⁷⁰ M.d.C., to Msgr. Zoppi, 29 July 1828, Ep. II/2, p.1107.

CONCLUSION

By an attentive analysis of St. Magdalene of Canossa's writings we were able to capture the decisive and energetic role of Magdalene in the religious and social reality of her time.

Solicited by the poverty and the moral and material misery of the girls and women of her time, she combined contemplative spirituality and active apostolate in a dynamic and vital manner.

Christ's charity urged her to take care above all of the education and instruction of youth.

Through her human sensitiveness, Magdalene realized the need to foster more and more the promotion and integral formation of the woman: the schools of charity for poor girls were an intelligent response to such need.

Her writings are so rich in principles and pedagogical methods and uphold so many educational values and attitudes that they enable us to understand clearly her main criteria in educating the girls attending the Schools of Charity she founded for them.

Magdalene, as we have mentioned earlier, was always very attentive to interpret the needs of her time with regard to the promotion and social uplift of woman. She was a passionate and untiring educator, and as such she continues to be a vivid and untiring example.

The Daughters of Charity who are called, like her, to be for Christ a gift to the poor, ought to confront themselves with the early implementation of the charism, so that continuity and faithful actualization of the charism be ensured in different cultural contexts and times.

We, Daughters of Magdalene, should not copy structures and methods that were specially valid and efficacious in Magdalene's historical time. Rather, we should draw from the saintly Foundress' enthusiasm and operational vitality and respond to the educational needs of the girls of today who attend our schools and participate in all our promotional activities.

The task of forming youth is, at all times, an exacting and crucial one.

We shall draw apostolic energy and untiring dedication to education as we place ourselves at the school of the Crucifix and, faithful to our charism, contemplate at length the mystery of His total self-gift, of His boundless love, of His compassion for man.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sources

MADDALENA DI CANOSSA, Epistolario, edizione integrale a cura di Dossi E., 8vol. Isola del Liri 1976-1983.

MADDALENA DI CANOSSA, Regole e Scritti Spirituali, a cura di Dossi E., 2 vol. Isola del Liri 1984-1985

VARIOUS WORKS

Bergamo o sia Notizie Patrie raccolte da Carlo Facchinetti, Almanacco per l'anno 1831, Anno XVII, Bergamo, Stamperia Mazzoleni.

BERTOLI B.-TRAMONTIN S., La visita pastorale di Giovanni Ladislao Pyrker nella diocesi di Venezia (1821), Roma 1971.

BRESCIANI C.C., Vita di Don Pietro Leonardi, sacerdote veronese missionario apostolico, Fondatore della Congregazione delle Figlie di Gesu', Verona 1855.

CAVANIS A. E M., Epistolario e Memorie, a cura di P.Servini A., Roma 1985.

CRISTOFALI G.A., Cenni sugli Spedali ed Istituti di pubblica beneficenza della citta' di Verona, Verona 1839.

FASANARI R., Gli albori del Risorgimento a Verona (1705-1801), Verona 1950.

FASANARI R., Le donne del Risorgimento veronese, Verona 1952.

GALLAS L., Tendenze illuministiche ed esperienze giacobine a Verona alla fine del '700, Verona 1970.

GALLIO D., Introduzione alla storia delle fondazioni a Verona nel Primo Ottocento, in Chiesa e Spiritualita' nell'Ottocento italiano, Ed. Mazziana, Verona 1971.

GAMBARO A., La Pedagogia italiana nell'eta' del Risorgimento, in Questioni di storia della pedagogia, La Scuola, Brescia 1963.

GIACON M., L'azione caritativa e formativa di Maddalena di Canossa, Isola del Liri 1974.

LIGUORI L., Educazione e Scuola durante l'Illuminismo e il Romanticismo, in Questioni di storia della pedagogia, La Scuola, Brescia, 1963.

MADDALENA DI CANOSSA, Memorie. Una contemplativa nell'azione, commento a cura di Pollonara E., Rusconi, Milano 1988.

MANFREDINI M., L'attivita' di Don Pietro Leonardi (1769-1844) per la fondazione delle Scuole di Carita' in Verona, Bologna 1972 (opera inedita).

MORARDO G., La damigella istruita, Torino 1787.

Niccia' C., La scuola di carita' di Maddalena di Canossa, Monza 1978 (opera inedita).

PERINI O., Storia di Verona dal 1790 al 1822, I,II,III, Verona 1873-1875.

POLLONARA E., Seminari per le maestre all'origine dell'Istituto, S.G.S., Roma 1986

Regolamento delle Scuole di Carita' per le povere figlie nella citta' di Milano, Milano 1807.

Regolamento di una casa eretta in Mantova l'anno 1801 dove si raccolgono derelitte fanciulle per essere ivi educate nei doveri di Religione ed ammaestrate nei lavori propri della loro condizione, Verona 1803.

Regole di Costume per le figlie derelitte nelle loro Case di Educazione e per le Scuole di Carita' nella citta' di Milano, Milano 1810.

ROSMINI-SERBATI A., Epistolario completo, Casale Monferrato 1887.

TRONCONI C., Note sullo sviluppo dell'Istituto delle Figlie della Carita'- Canossiane- in Milano, ed aspetti storici, economici e sociali della sua evoluzione, Milano 1973 (opera inedita).

VALDANI L., Vita del Rev. P. don Felice De Vecchi chierico regolare di S.Paolo e parroco di S.Alessandro in Milano, Milano 1821.

ZAMBONI A., Nuovo piano di pubblica istruzione, C. VI, Verona 1801.

ZANON F.S., I Servi di Dio P.Anton' Angelo e P.Marcantonio conti Cavanis, 2 vol. Venezia 1925.

ABBREVIATIONS

DOCUMENTS OF THE INSTITUTE

M.d.C. = Maddalena di Canossa
Ep. = Epistolario
R. s.s. = Regole e scritti spirituali

ARCHIVES

A.C.R. = Archivio Canossiano di Roma
A.C.M. = Archivio Canossiano di Milano

OTHERS

cf. = confront
p./pp. = page-pages
P. = Part

INDEX

Foreword

Magdalene of Canossa - An Educator

Magdalene of Canossa: her educational and promotional scholastic activity

Introduction

Chapter 1

The problem of education and of public and private instruction between the XVIII Century and the Early XIX Century

- Educational plans and scholastic proposals
- The reforms and schools during the reign of Napoleon
- c) The schools in Lombardy and Veneto during the Restoration period

Chapter 2

The schools of charity in the time of Magdalene of Canossa

- Verona
- Venice
- Milan

Chapter 3

Magdalene of Canossa's educational mission before founding the Institute

- the tiny seed
- Not enough "to gather girls"
- ...more set backs, difficulties and anxiety

Chapter 4

School and other educational activities in the first three Plans of the Institute

- Plan B.6
- Plan of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity, for the town n.n. (B.7)
- General Plan of the Institution of the Sisters of Charity...(Plan B.8)

Chapter 5

Magdalene of Canossa's school system in the light of the Rule

Introduction

1. Schools of Charity and the Charism
"greater opportunity to show the Lord true love"

- "One of the branches particularly contemplated"
- "...This is the harvest which costs the most"
- "In the exercise of such Holy work"
- "...try to form them all for Him"

2. Rules: "means by which they can attain what is recommended to them"

- The Sister in charge of the Schools or first teacher
- Structural elements
- Attitudes to foster:
"The Sisters should try to accustom."
- Harmony in educational mediations

3. Educational style: "Formation of the heart"

- "Handle each one in the way she is made"
- With "gentleness", "forcefulness", "reasoning"
- "It is only for their good"

4. The Vocation/Formation of Teachers: "It is indispensable for us to do well all that concerns the work in itself"

5. A fruit of charismatic vitality : parish schools and training of country teachers

Chapter 6

The first ministry of charity in the communities founded by Magdalene

- At Verona
- At Venice
- At Milan
- At Bergamo
- At Trent

Conclusion

Bibliography

Abbreviations