

Mundelein Seminary  
1000 East Maple Avenue  
Mundelein IL 60060  
[jhenchey@gmail.com](mailto:jhenchey@gmail.com)

FEBRUARY 5, 2018  
Feast of St. Agatha

Dear Members of the Stigmatine Laity,

St. Agatha is a well known early Church Saint, especially to us “old-timers” – as she is mentioned in the first Eucharistic Prayer. In the list of the early young lady Saints, along with Agnes, Cecilia, Lucy and Anastasia – we also find Agatha. Very popular in Sicily – her place of birth – there are several Churches in Rome dedicated to her. Our General House Chapel is Sant’Agata Dei Goti! [a Church dedicated by Pope St. Gregory the Great]. The Stigmatine General Curia community moved in there in 1927 – 91 years ago! Prior to our coming, St. Agatha’s served from 1837-1927 as the Irish College. Among their outstanding graduates of that old Irish College was a saintly Dom Columbia Marmion, once a priest of the House of Dublin and then a Benedictine Monk. His spiritual output was steeped in the Liturgy, Scripture and Thomism!

The Irish moved to a new place near St. John Lateran Church in 1927 – and before leaving, they sold some of the property once attached to the Church [which is now the Bank of Italy!] – this had served for centuries as a local cemetery! In the transition, all the remains were all collected and they are interred under the present Church.

As I write these lines, the 37<sup>th</sup> Stigmatine General Chapter has opened in Rome. So our efforts this year will be on reflecting on the actual Minutes of some of our General Chapters over the years, from 1871 – 1911 - right up the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hopefully this might familiarize those interested with some of the wonderful Stigmatines who preceded us, and who tried so hard to hand on and adapt the precious charism of St. Gaspar Bertoni for later generations. Our plan is each month to send out some of the early Chapter Minutes – and for this month we will send out the Chapters of 1871 – by sheer accident, in that one year we had perhaps 3 General Chapters, ## 1-3.

In American terminology, a “General Chapter” is something like a Congress, that meets ordinarily every six years for the purpose of reviewing our past, and striving to make a plan for the future. At the end of the proceedings, the Superior General and his Council are elected for a six year term.

The Stigmatine history seems to have been one immersed in this aspect of the Paschal Mystery: the Sorrowful Wounds of Good Friday and the Glorious Stigmata on Easter Sunday revealed by Christ as the source of the Apostolic Mission. He showed His wounds, and proclaimed: *As the Father sent Me, so I now send you!* Over the years the community suffered much in the loss of so many young and promising confreres, and yet experienced and handed on some of the consolations of the service of the Risen Lord. Let us continue to pray for each other!

Respectfully and lovingly in the Sacred Stigmata,

*Fr. Joseph Henchey, CSS*

Acting Spiritual Director

Appendix:

The Stigmatine Calendar for the month of February. Compiled by Rev. Joseph Henchey, CSS [1967].

Enclosed document:

- The First Three Stigmatine General Chapters [1871]. English translation by Rev. Joseph Henchey, CSS.

**FEBRUARY****1**

- 1809:** Fr. Bertoni noted in his Spiritual Diary that he had experienced a powerful recollection on the Life of Christ, with an equally strong desire to correspond to it.
- 1857:** Fr. John Rigoni, Pastor at Cerea and Vicar of St. John in Valle, entered the Congregation.
- 1868:** Vigil of the Purification – Fr. Marani, Superior General, went to Villazzano to be with the students for one week.
- 1873:** The lawyer, Alexander Brasca, was very content with the decision made at the Court of Venice in favor of the Congregation on the day before.
- 1876:** Fr. Vincent Vignola, Fr. Morando and Bro. Zadra left to open the new House in Parma. From the start they applied themselves to youth work.
- 1877:** On this day, Bishop di Canossa appointed Fr. John Rigoni as Director of the Diocesan Seminary in Verona – he would hold this post about one year. On this same day, Fr. Joseph Sembianti, Fr. Julius Zanini and Bro. Zadra opened the new House at Bassano. Bro. Salocher took Bro. Zadra's place at Parma, and Fr. Charles Zara took Fr. Zembianti's place as Director of the Stimate.
- 1900:** Fr. Joseph Marchesini signed his Will on this date leaving all his earthly goods to Fr. Stephen Rosa. A Court case developed from this later, as a nephew of Fr. Marchesini contested the will later on.
- 1902:** Fr. Fantozzi became Chaplain at a Reform School at Certosa, Parma. He had to resign a few months later as the Superintendent would not allow any ministrations for the inmates.

**2**

- 1840:** Fr. Odescalchi, former Cardinal Vicar of Rome for His Holiness, the Pope – who had resigned that post in order to become a Jesuit - pronounced his First Vows.
- 1854:** Monsignor Prella, Apostolic Nuncio, forwarded to Rome Fr. Marani's request for Approbation from the Holy See. It seems to have become lost in the files there.
- 1856:** Fr. Lenotti preached the Forty Hours' Devotion in the Church of St. John, *in Lupatoto*, Verona.

- 1857:** The Mission at Vignasio ended this day – the local Pastor and two town officials accompanied the departing Missionaries.
- 1860:** The Mission at Soave, preached by Frs. Lenotti and Peter Vignola, was in full swing today. The first Mass was at 7:30 a.m., and there was a High Mass at 10:00 a.m. At 2:00 p.m., the boys assembled in one Church of the town - and the girls at another for services.
- 1862:** The Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, long at odds with the local Pastor at Lazise, had a meeting in which some of their difficulties were ironed out. That evening, the Missionaries from Verona preached on Mary, the Queen of Peace.
- 1870:** The Parish Mission at Mezzotedesco [Mezzocorona] came to a close. Monsignor Gobbi had given a sermon of welcome in the Cathedral for the three members of the Congregation who had come there to open a House for the Congregation.
- 1878:** The Holy Father, Pope Pius IX, who had the longest reign [33 years] of all the Popes [with the exception, perhaps, of St. Peter] in the history of the Church, died. The Congregation lost a true friend.
- 1895:** On this date, some of the Fathers of the Congregation presented the traditional candle to the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII. The Pope himself offered the Congregation the Church of the Stigmata of St. Francis, known as the *Stimate*, in Largo Argentina, Rome, to the Congregation. This became the third Church in Rome that the Congregation cared for at this same time - the other two were *S. Nicola dei Prefetti*, and *S. Maria dei Miracoli*.
- 1907:** Cardinal Ferrari of Milan blessed the Pavillion converted into a Church by the Congregation in his Archdiocese – it went by the name of Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

### 3

- 1813:** Fr. Bertoni was scheduled to hear the Sisters' Confessions at 10:00 a.m. this Wednesday at St. Firmus.
- 1829:** Fr. Bertoni celebrated Mass this day – but, then not again for a month.
- 1868:** Feast of St. Blaise. Fr. Benciolini wrote to encourage Fr. Rigoni at Florence. He told him that they were in the month of 'Mary's Sorrows', and that she was the Holy Advocate who would help him in the legal struggles he was having.

4

- 1809:** Fr. Bertoni wrote in his Spiritual Diary that if Priests do not pray well, they can never speak well of God.
- 1813:** Fr. Bertoni went to St. Joseph's Convent to speak with the Sisters on this Wednesday, after dinner.
- 1830:** Fr. Bertoni wrote to a Father Cavanis – actually there were two by this name who were brothers – Fr. Anthony and Fr. Mark Anthony. They were of the nobility and had founded Schools of Charity in Venice.
- 1860:** The Mass Book today at the Stimate contains the names of Fr. Lenotti and Fr. Peter Vignola. They had returned from the Mission at Soave.
- 1862:** The turbulent Mission at Lazise came to a close. The Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, now restored to the good graces of the local Pastor, took part – as did a band from the neighborhood of Bardolino. This town and Lazise had long been feuding – it seems that peace was restored!
- 1888:** The 'Abbot' of Bassano wrote to the Superior General, Fr. Peter Vignola, and in no uncertain terms made his displeasure known concerning the community at Bassano, and regarding the Congregation as a whole.

5

- 1811:** Mother Naudet noted in her Spiritual Diary how she seemed to be repaying God's Goodness with her own ingratitude.
- 1856:** Frs. Marani and Benciolini finished their Mission at St. George's and Fr. Lenotti finished at St. John's.
- 1874:** Fr. Bragato wrote from Prague in response to Fr. Lenotti's request for advice concerning St. Teresa's. He advised Fr. Lenotti against giving the Convent to the Sisters and even suggested that they should pay some rent.
- 1879:** The Professed Students of the Congregation [the 'Scholastics'] had been enrolled at the Diocesan Seminary of Trent, if they were of Trentine origin – otherwise they would have been inducted into the army. Joseph Nicolini, in his 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Theology, died this day at San Bernardino's in Trent.

6

- 1810:** Fr. Bertoni's beloved Mother, Brunora [Ravelli] died this day. Shortly after this, Fr. Bertoni was transferred from St. Paul's Church to Sts. Firmus and Rusticus.

**1881:** A statue of the Sorrowful Mother, sculptured by the Veronese artist, Spazzi, was placed in the Stimate this day.

## 7

**1811:** Mother Naudet wrote in her Spiritual Diary that she began this day to examine herself hourly. This has been suggested to her by Fr. Bertoni. She wrote that she found many defects of hers that she was being distracted due to her many faults, and that were impeding her spiritual progress.

## 8

**1810:** Fr. Bertoni names Joseph Scudellini [who was married to Rosa Ravelli, his Mother's sister] as the lawyer to regain the Family Estate squandered by his Father, Francis Bertoni.

**1811:** Mother Naudet wrote in her Spiritual Diary that the hourly examen that Fr. Bertoni had suggested to her was proving to be a great help to her.

**1860:** Fr. Anthony Sperti wrote to Fr. Marani, Superior General, and told him he hoped the Congregation would accept the offered Parish of St. Rocco and also the Orphanage. Fr. Sperti thanked Fr. Marani for his advice and that he would try in the future never to anticipate the Will of God, but would accept it when it was made known - as Fr. Bertoni consistently taught in his lifetime.

**1868:** Fr. Marani returned to Verona after a restful week at Villazzano with the Students.

## 9

**1876:** Fr. Vincent Vignola, Fr. Morando and Bro. Zadra were finding life difficult in Parma due to the lack of any finances.

## 10

**1829:** Pope Leo XII died.

**1854:** The civil authorities granted permission this day for Fr. Bertoni's body to be returned to the Church of the Stimate.

**1883:** The Church of S. Nicola dei Prefeti in Rome was adjoined to a House that would one day be occupied by the Fathers of the Congregation. On this day, a part of it was sold to a Mr. Cesar Lozza who would figure later in the transactions involving the Congregation.

**11**

- 1809:** Fr. Bertoni cited St. Augustine's saying: *fear Jesus passing me by!* - in his Spiritual Diary. His recorded comment on this date was that his greatest fear was to fail to correspond to God's grace.
- 1813:** Fr. Bertoni remarked on this date that there are really very few who do the will of God.
- 1858:** Frs. Marani and Benciolini went to Zevio to preach a Mission for young girls.
- 1876:** An old House Chronicle of Parma shows the dire economic straits of the Congregation's early days there. Bro. Zadra was preparing supper and discovered there was no more polenta – and he was much chagrined to find that the store across the street was almost as badly off as the Stigmatine House in Parma – no polenta!

**12**

- 1806:** Frs. Bertoni, Allegri and Farinati started a Retreat at the Little Sisters of St. Francis di Paola. Fr. Marani, newly ordained, helped somewhat, as did a young lad by the name of J. B. Ruffoni. This Retreat seemed to be for young students.
- 1832:** Louis Biadego was ordained on this 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after the Epiphany, in the Chapel of Bishop Grasser's Residence.
- 1857:** Fr. Benciolini and the Novice, Fr. Vincent Vignola, preached a very fruitful Mission at St. Peter of 'Morubio'.

**13**

- 1806:** Fr. Bertoni preached this Thursday morning's Meditation at St. Francis di Paola on 'The End of Man'. Fr. Allegri preached the evening Meditation on 'Sin.'
- 1832:** Fr. Biadego celebrated his First Mass at the Stimmate.
- 1835:** Elizabeth Ambrosini, penitent of Fr. Bertoni, made her Perpetual Profession on her death bed, to Mother Naudet.

**14**

**1806:** Friday – the Fathers continue the retreat for the young students. On this date, some of the subjects discussed were: ‘Death’, ‘The Necessity for a Guide’, ‘The Necessity of avoiding Mortal Sin.’

**15**

**1806:** Saturday: on this date the Fathers preached on ‘Hell’, ‘The Examen of Conscience’, and ‘Mercy.’

**1829:** Fr. Bertoni wrote to Mother Naudet to tell her that God is the Master and we are the servants; he also jotted some observations on a plan that she had sent for his perusal.

**1834:** The bells of the Stimmate rang out, as was customary Saturday nights, and the eve of Feasts.

**1842:** Fr. Biadego received Viaticum.

**16**

**1806:** At the Retreat of St. Francis di Paola, Fr. Farinati preached on the ‘Kingdom of Christ’ – other sermons were on ‘Confession’ and the ‘Last Day’.

**1811:** Mother Naudet wrote in her Spiritual Diary that her task in life is to love and please God in all things.

**1834:** The bells of the Stimmate rang out in ‘*tono minore*’ for four minutes on this Sunday morning, as was the custom. This was the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent.

**1842:** Fr. Biadego was visited by Fr. Fenzi, Pastor at the *Trinità*, predecessor of Fr. Giacobbe. Fr. Biadego was now near death.

**1873:** Lawyer Brasca wrote to Fr. Rigoni concerning the Venice Court’s favorable decision of the previous January 31<sup>st</sup>. He suggested that they do not manifest their joy publicly, lest the decision be reversed.

**17**

**1799:** Bishop Avogadro confirmed John Mary Marani.

**1806:** The Retreat for the Students at the Little Sisters continued this Monday – the sermons were on Meekness, as a remedy for anger, and the life of Christ.

**1837:** This date was the last entry in Fr. Cainer’s Chronicle called the *Memorie*.



- 1842:** Fr. Biadego died this Thursday afternoon, at about 5:00 p.m., at the age of 34.
- 1855:** Bishop Riccabona wrote to the Congregation at the Stimate asking them to establish a House in his Diocese of Trent. A letter was also received this same day from Monsignor Gasparini, Pastor of Trabaleno, about the same matter.
- 1865:** Frs. Benciolini, Lenotti and DaPrato made a promise to St. Joseph that they would celebrate 100 Masses each annually in the Saint's honor, that some day the Congregation would receive papal approval. Fr. Marani had procured the **Decree of Praise** ten years earlier but nothing seemed to happen since.
- 1876:** On this date at St. Teresa's, which was now used for the Students of the Congregation, Fr. Sembianti Director at both the Stimate and St. Teresa's, gave a Domestic Exhortation. It was followed by a discussion period and copious notes were taken by the Novice, Louis Tomasi – which have come down to us.
- 1891:** On this date, the custom in the Congregation of reading a short account of a Confrere's life on his anniversary of death began. It was later sanctioned by the Constitutions.
- 1897:** Fr. Fantozzi wrote on this date to the authorities stating that the Congregation was willing to come to Lisbon. He received no answer to this letter for two years.

## 18

- 1806:** The day before Ash Wednesday. Fr. Bertoni, Fr. Allegri and Fr. Farinati were concluding their Retreat to the young Students. Fr. Farinati preached on the Blessed Sacrament.
- 1842:** Fr. Brugnoli commented on the death of Fr. Biadego and the loss to the Congregation.
- 1881:** The 10<sup>th</sup> General Chapter convened to elect a Superior General. Fr. Peter Vignola was elected for life. The General Councilors elected were: Frs. Bassi, Sembianti, Vincent Vignola and Charles Zara. Fr. Marini was elected Procurator General.
- 1882:** A silk back-drop, interwoven with gold, was presented to the Church of the Stimate for the altar of the Sorrowful Mother.

19

- 1831:** Paul Lenotti, the Uncle of young John, Joseph and Francis, studying at the Stimmate, was enrolled as a member of the Marian Oratory- he was 31 years of age.
- 1868:** Fr. Rigoni wrote from Florence again to tell of his lack of progress in the attempt to regain the confiscated property.
- 1892:** Fr. Francis Benciolini died at the age of 86. He had been the first Vicar General of the Congregation. Bro. Dal Sasso said that he died about 1:00 a.m., and that his death was serene. He was laid out in the Oratory of the Immaculate Conception.

20

- 1816:** A Retreat began at Sts. Firmus and Rusticus in preparation for the Oratory that was to be established there the following Sunday, *Quinquagesima* Sunday.
- 1824:** Mother Naudet wrote to Fr. Bertoni asking for his guidance and direction.
- 1873:** A new Pope was elected, and he chose the name as Leo XIII.
- 1889:** Fr. Camillieri, OSA, Consultor to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars made 21 Observations concerning the Constitutions presented to him by Fr. Peter Vignola, Superior General, who was seeking the Papal Approbation for the Congregation. One of the suggestions was that the Superior General no longer be elected for life – as Fr. Vignola had been. As the result, Fr. General began thinking about convoking the General Chapter of Elections.
- 1902:** On this date, Fr. Joseph Marchesini sold a part of his extensive holdings to Fr. Stephen Rosa and Fr. Victor Gurisatti, for 120,000 Lira!

21

- 1873:** By Decree of the Superior General, Fr. Joseph Sembianti was promoted to the **Grade of Apostolic Missionary**. He was the last member so promoted in Fr. Lenotti's life-time. There were none during Fr. Marani's 18 year administration, 1853-1871.
- 1880:** While the 9<sup>th</sup> General Chapter was in Session, Louis Battisti was ordained a Priest. During this General Chapter, Fr. Rigoni resigned as General Councilor and Procurator General. He was succeeded as Councilor by Fr. Bassi, and as Procurator General, by Fr. James Marini.

**1892:** Fr. Rigoni eulogized Fr. Benciolini and stated that, when Fr. Bertoni died in 1853, he actually lived on in Fr. Benciolini – and asked: ‘Who was there in Verona who did not know Fr. Benciolini?!’

## 22

**1803:** Fr. Bertoni preached on undertaking the Lenten Fast joyfully – he said that any penance we do, will repair any damage that has been inflicted on our souls by sin.

**1847:** The Sacred Congregation of Indulgences extends the indulgences for the *Portiuncula* [that can be gained from noon August 1<sup>st</sup> through mid-night, August 2<sup>nd</sup>] to ***toties quoties***, i.e., it can be gained as often as the conditions for it are fulfilled.

**1878:** A solemn commemorative service was held at the Stimate for the deceased Holy Father, Pius IX, who in his life time so often blessed this “Little Flock” [***Crescat Pusillus Grex!***] at the Stimate.

## 23

**1819:** Mother Naudet wrote to Fr. Bertoni that these days had been for her a time of discouragement.

**1854:** Fr. Marani, Superior General, had sent Fr. Bertoni’s ***Original Constitutions*** to a friend, Fr. J. Fusari, SJ – who said that he had read them and that he had admired the spirit with which they had been written. Fr. Fusari suggested that they be sent to a Fr. Mignardi who could offer a better critical view of them.

**1868:** Fr. Benciolini wrote to Fr. Rigoni in Florence and cautioned him not to have too many lawyers handle their case, for as many lawyers as there are, there will be that many opinions!

**1880:** Fr. Louis Battisti celebrated his First Mass at the Stimate.

## 24

**1874:** The big news of the Congregation on this date was that the 5<sup>th</sup> General Chapter has convened at the Stimate.

## 25

**1816:** *Quinquagesima* Sunday, and the date of the Solemn Religious Erection of a Marian Oratory in the Parish of Sts. Firmus and Rusticus. The first four names of this new Oratory were: Frs. Bertoni, Nicholas Mazza, Marani, and

Gramego. Fr. Marani gave much time to this Oratory until about November of 1819.

- 1829:** A Fr. Guerrieri visited Fr. Bertoni to talk over the details of ceding the Convent of St. Teresa's to Mother Naudet's Sisters of the Holy Family for their perpetual use. Fr. Bertoni frequently consulted this Fr. Guerrieri. It was said, however, that he was a bit too speculative for practical matters, but was frequently consulted by the Religious of his time for their spiritual lives. He was a Dominican, and mentioned in Fr. Bertoni's *Epistolario*.
- 1835:** Sister Elizabeth Ambrosini, former penitent of Fr. Bertoni, died this day as a Sister of the Holy Family.
- 1848:** A Fr. DalBosco wrote to Fr. Marani from Karthum, Egypt. He stated that he and his companions still cherished the happy memories of the retreat that they made at the Stimate the previous summer. He said that Africa was vast and that there was much work for Catholic Missionaries there.
- 1874:** During the 5<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, it was noted that the Superior General, Fr. John Lenotti, had appointed a number of the members of the Congregation to the **Grade of Apostolic Missionaries**, but that he himself had never been made one! And the technicality arose that, in Fr. Bertoni's Original Constitutions, only an **Apostolic Missionary** could be elected Superior General. This was disposed of with the solution that by his very Election, *ipso facto*, Fr. Lenotti was an **Apostolic Missionary!**

## 26

- 1809:** Fr. Bertoni wrote in his Spiritual Diary that it is our job to make a copy of Jesus Christ in ourselves.
- 1829:** Fr. Anthony Rosmini, aged 29, visited Fr. Bertoni for the first time at the request of Mother Madeline di Canossa.
- 1831:** John Lenotti, age 14, and his brother, Joseph, age 12, were enrolled as members of the Marian Oratory at the Stimate.



Painting of the young Fr. Bertoni with the boys at a Marian Oratory

- 1864:** Fr. Innocent Venturini died at 9:00 a.m. He was eulogized by Fr. Joseph Zenti in the paper *Cronaca Camilliana*. His death was sorely felt at the Stimate.
- 1867:** A very promising young Novice in his second year of Novitiate, Joseph Nardelli, left the Congregation today. His departure was a great disappointment to the Congregation.
- 1873:** Fr. Lenotti, Superior General, wrote to Fr. Vincent Vignola, Director of the Student House at Villazzano, and recommended silence and humility to all, as 'these are all that we need.'
- 1906:** Cardinal Tripepi, the Pro-Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, obtained an affirmative reply to the question of the Founder's Cause being introduced in Rome.

## 27

- 1815:** Napoleon slipped away from Elba at noon.
- 1865:** Frs. Lenotti, Benciolini and DaPrato made a petition to Fr. Marani, Superior General, to renew negotiations with the Holy See to obtain Papal Approbation from the Holy See.

**1867:** Fr. Lenotti offered a Votive Mass in honor of St. Joseph that more vocations be sent to the struggling Congregation.

## 28

**1813:** Fr. Bertoni wrote to Mother Naudet and told her that he was at the bedside of one Bartholomew Ruffoni - he was the 'Dominic Savio' of Fr. Bertoni's Oratory, and its Prefect.

**1826:** Fr. Venturini received the degree from the government to teach school.

**1855:** A Decree from the Magistrates's office read to the effect that the Congregation could indeed apply for the approbation from the Holy See. This was necessary in those times!

**1857:** The *Trinità* became the Novitiate for the first time. There were 13 Novices, 7 Students, and 4 Brothers. Fr. Lenotti was Novice Master – and Bro. Zanoli carried on his customary number of tasks!

**1882:** A gift was received at the Stimate of some decorations for the altar of the Sorrowful Mother.

**1890:** The Constitutions approved by the 11<sup>th</sup> General Chapter [September 25, 1889] were sent to Rome along with some Testimonial Letters. Bishop [later Cardinal] Riboldi of Pavia wrote that when he was looking for a male Congregation for his Diocese, the Congregation of the Apostolic Missionaries was highly recommended. Now that they had been active in his Diocese, he could state, from his own experience, that they were learned, holy, zealous, well educated Priests, with a special reverence for the Holy See.

## 29

**1832:** This was a 'Leap Year' and on this date, a Fr. Peter Riegler, follower of Fr. Rosmini, celebrated Mass at the Stimate.

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