

Mundelein Seminary  
1000 East Maple Avenue  
Mundelein IL 60060

October 9 2018  
Fr. Bertoni's Birthday in 1777!

Dear Stigmatine Lay Member,

The month of October contains a number of important entries for our Stigmatine history: First of all, St. Gaspar was born on October 9, 1777. He received the name "Gaspar" from his paternal Grand-father; "Louis" from his own Father; and "Dennis", the saint of October 9<sup>th</sup>.

While the Founder's Diary might be somewhat familiar to some of you, it is interesting to read it from the perspective of the Saint's insights into the most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, the Holy Eucharist. We open this letter with the entry the Saint wrote on his 31<sup>st</sup> birthday, remembering his First Holy Communion Day many years earlier. I include the entry in this letter in the hopes that by making use of the table of contents noted in the documentation for this month, you might take note of his many "Eucharistic" entries. They are quite inspiring.

Taking a line from our late distinguished Stigmatine Confrere – Fr. Cornelio Fabro – he noted this Eucharistic characteristic as accompanying the reality of the Founder's life-long suffering. It seems that these were the meanings that God used in cooperation with St. Gaspar, in developing his personal spirituality, as a "Model of Holy Abandonment" as another of our Stigmatine Confreres, Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove wrote in his Doctoral thesis defended in Rome at the ANGELICUM about 70 years ago.

So, with the fall of the autumn leaves, let us lift up our hearts in hope in the knowledge that the trials of life are best met by uniting them to the sufferings and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as St. Peter tells us in the first Encyclical ever written to the Church: ... *'Come to Him, a living stone, rejected by human beings. But chosen and precious in the sight of God, and, like living stones. Let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ'* ... [cf. 1 P 2:5, ff.].

God bless you all – our best "birthday present" to St. Gaspar would be our own Catholic life, fully lived –with more emphasis on the Eucharist!

Respectfully yours in the Healing Wounds of Jesus Christ,

*Fr. Joseph Henchey, CSS*

Acting Spiritual Director

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Appendices:

An Excerpt of the Spiritual Diary [*Memoriale Privato*] of Fr. Bertoni – October 9, 1808.  
English Translation by Fr. Giancarlo Mittempergher, CSS.

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

Enclosed documents:

- Stigmatine Devotions, by Fr. Joseph Henchey, CSS. Paluch Lecture at the University  
St. Mary of the Lake [Mundelein Seminary], 2008.
- St. Gaspar Bertoni: The Spiritual Journal [*Memoriale Privato*] – with a Commentary by  
Fr. Joseph Stofella, CSS [1962]. English translation by Fr. Giancarlo Mittempergher,  
CSS [1992].
- The Eternity of the Priesthood of Jesus Christ and the Unity of the Sacrifice of the  
Cross and the Altar – by Fr. P. M. M. Matthijs, OP [Rome, 1963]. Pontifical University  
of Studies St. Thomas Aquinas in Urbe – Theological Studies.
- Roster of the Deceased Stigmatines in October.

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**9th OCTOBER 1808**

[59.]      Feast of St. Denis and the Maternity of the Virgin Mary.

During the Eucharistic prayer of the Mass near the time of the *memento*, it seemed that my mind opened up to know with Whom was I speaking. I felt great affection and an enthusiasm of love in prayer. Then some outbursts of my heart for God and some impulses of my spirit towards God. I seemed to be like a person overwhelmed by the appearance of a great friend who had not been seen for a long time and on seeing him suddenly, he wants to throw himself at him and embrace him. Then I felt a desire that the vision could increase and an impulse to be able to reach the Supreme Good. Since I was in public I feared [the feeling of] some vanity and I [made an effort to] think of my most serious sins. As a consequence [I felt] an increase of knowledge of goodness and love which dissolved in most soothing tears which lasted until after Holy Communion. In the meantime faith and confidence increased very much together with humility and loving reverence. Lastly, at Communion, a very intense devotion and sentiment similar to that of my First Holy Communion: an experience that I am not aware of having felt since. The recollection lasted for another hour and it remained for the rest of the evening.

It was the second Sunday of October, the 18th after Pentecost, and Fr. Bertoni's birthday. He was 31 years old. It was also his name-day because Denis was the third name given him on his Baptism day. That day the commemoration of St. Denis had to give liturgical precedence to the celebration of the feast of the Maternity of the Virgin Mary. That feast was commemorated in the regions under the Venetian Dominions on the second Sunday of October. Could not all this have had some bearing in preparing the soul of Fr. Bertoni for the visits of His Divine Majesty?

It seems that one should read this day's entry on one's knees! What can we say? Fr. Gaspar found himself taken over by a very special state of grace. Let us note first that opening of his mind and heart. This prompted these outbursts of his spirit toward God. Such a desire and impulse reached Him. Then, on the apparent threshold of ecstasy, in order not to fall into vanity in front of the public, he made an effort to think of his very serious sins. This reminds us of what St. Teresa of Avila used to say to her nuns:

*... Let us be on guard when we are taken by these great impulses of such desires, not to add anything nor to increase them. We have to cut the thread gently with some other consideration...*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> St. Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*, c. 19.

However, it seems as though Grace took firm hold of Fr. Gaspar even after the ecstasy. He was given a certain consciousness of the Divine Goodness. He experienced gentle tears, and an increase in virtues. He was being granted literally what he prayed for in that familiar Ignatian prayer written for his own private use: 'Give me humility and loving reverence (cf. 12 July). What can be said about his remembrance of his First Holy Communion day? ... The sway of grace in his soul seems to go back a long time in his life.

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**OCTOBER****1**

**1875:** The Students of the Congregation, who were born in Trent, were transferred from the House of Studies, in Verona, to the House of San Bernardino Vecchio, in Trent. The reason for this was that there was a law at that time that would grant exemption from military service only to those young men of Trentine origin who were attending the Diocesan Seminary in Trent. The students of the Congregation attended classes in Philosophy and Theology at the Seminary of Trent.

**2**

**1815:** Fr. Galvani wrote on this day that the Bishop still had not given Fr. Farinati permission to leave the Diocese to join the Jesuits.

**1833:** After supper on this day, Fr. Bertoni gave a short Domestic Exhortation to the Community, in the refectory at the Stimate.

**1905:** Fr. Anthony Dalla Porta and Fr. Ludovicus Luchi set sail from Lehavre, France, to establish the Congregation in the New World, in North America.

**3**

**1806:** Fr. Bertoni preached on the meaning of 'External Cult.' He said that the very soul of all devotion is in the heart. By His Incarnation, Christ Himself experienced all the needs and trials of mankind, save sin – our worship answers a basic human need.

**1822:** The Vigil of the Feast of St. Francis. At 3:00 p.m., the Church of the Stimate was opened once again to the public after being closed for many years. Fr. Brugnoli preached on this occasion – and from this time onward in the little Church, there were **weekly devotions in honor of the Five Wounds**. Fr. Gramego celebrated the first Mass on the main altar dedicated to the Espousals of Mary and Joseph. Bishop Liruti had given permission for the Blessed Sacrament to be reserved in the Church.

**1857:** Fr. Bragato, again this year, spent his summer vacation with the Students at Sezano. On this date, he blessed a statue as he left for another year.

**4**

**1807:** Fr. Bertoni preached on the Rosary. He said that it was a devotion of most noble origin - we must imitate what the mysteries contain and strive for

what they promise. He stated that the Rosary is a devotion approved by the highest Church authority. [Interestingly enough, Fr. Bertoni did not see need to insist much on the Rosary as a required practice – he just believed that a good Religious would offer it daily on his own.

- 1828:** Louis Biadego, a cleric in Minor Orders, entered the Stimate. He left his home at 4:00 a.m.. On this day, as he was leaving, his father told him that he did not know where the rest of his belongings were, and that his mother was already out in the fields! His father told his son to give Fr. Bertoni and Fr. Marani his best regards – and ‘to all the others who will have to put up with your company!’
- 1834:** The annual celebration of the Feast of St. Francis occurred at the Stimate on this day. Fr. Francis Benciolini preached the sermon - 41 Masses were celebrated at the Stimate.
- 1836:** It was also the Feast of the Most Holy Rosary this year – 18 Masses were celebrated at the Stimate. Fr. Benciolini preached.
- 1866:** This is the date of Fr. Vincent Vignola’s Biography of Anthony Caucigh.
- 1867:** Fr. Marani, Superior General, received the first eviction notice at the Stimate. It was to be effective within 15 days – however, a ‘stay’ of another ten days was granted.
- 1871:** The 3<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter convened at the Stimate – there were 10 Capitulars present.

## 5

- 1823:** Fr. Bertoni was ill at this time, but he responded to Mother Naudet’s letter and agreed that the First Communicants should be enrolled in the Oratory.
- 1867:** Fr. Marani, the day after he received the eviction notice at the Stimate, went up to the Student House ‘in exile’ in Villazzano, Trent to tell the Students about it. Despite all the difficulties for the Congregation, it proved to be a happy day for all.
- 1871:** The 10 Capitulars attending the 3<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter spent the day in quiet prayer on the choice to be made on the morrow for the successor of the deceased Fr. Marani.

6

- 1863:** Frs. Benciolini and Bassi preached to the Tertiaries at San Bernadino's Parish in Verona.
- 1871:** The date of an encouraging letter from Fr. Benciolini, Vicar General, to Fr. Rigoni, Procurator General, who was in Florence trying to save the property of the Congregation that had been left by Fr. Bertoni in Fr. Benciolini's name.
- 1871:** Fr. John Baptist Lenotti was elected the 2<sup>nd</sup> Superior General of the Congregation by the 3<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter, to a five year term – he would not complete this term [as he died on September 5, 1875, after serving only three years and 11 months]. On this date of his election, he received 7 Votes; Fr. Benciolini received one – and the Vignola brothers, Fr. Peter and Fr. Vincent, received one each. The General Councilors elected were: Frs. Peter Vignola, Richard DaPrato, Francis Benciolini – this last named was also chosen to be 'Father Admonitor' of the Superior General - and John Rigoni, also chosen as Procurator General. A motion was made and carried to elevate Fr. Louis Bragato as the first official ***Apostolic Missionary*** so declared by the Congregation – as Fr. Marani had not named anyone during his 18 year administration. The Chapter adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

7

- 1812:** Mother Naudet wrote to Fr. Bertoni on this day stating that she was experiencing many difficulties in her spiritual life at this time.
- 1868:** Fr. Lenotti preached the annual retreat for the Madames at Rovereto.

8

- 1871:** Fr. John B. Lenotti, newly elected Superior General, wrote his first 'Circular Letter' and it was to the Students at Villazzano. His purpose in writing it was to inform them of the proceedings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter, just completed. He told the students that he was just the 'Legate' of Mary and Joseph, under whose care the Congregation has been placed by its Founder. He told them that they all had a cross to carry, but that he, as Superior General, had a larger share of that cross and so asked for their prayers. He also asked that they dedicate themselves to their main task before them, their studies and to maintain regular observance. He recalled to their minds the memories of Fr. Bertoni and Fr. Marani. It was in this Letter that he recommended a second half hour of Meditation for Novices, to be held in the afternoon.

**1874:** Fr. Louis Bragato, almost on his return from Reichstadt, fell seriously ill at Prague.

**9**

**1777:** Gaspar Louis Denis Bertoni was born on this Feast of St. Denis to Francis Louis Bertoni and Brunora [Ravelli]. He had only one sister, Metilda, who was born at Caldiero – outside of Verona – on March 18, 1783 – and she died as an child of three and one half, on November 11, 1786.

**1808:** Fr. Bertoni, offering Mass on his 31<sup>st</sup> birthday, had a mystical experience of the Divine Teacher.

**1867:** Fr. Marani wrote to Fr. Rigoni, Procurator General, who was in Florence trying to save the property that would soon be taken away from the Congregation by the government. Fr. Marani dated his letter: **“The 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Fr. Gaspar”**.

**1877:** The first centenary of the Founder’s birth was celebrated with great solemnity at the Stimate.



The House where Gaspar Bertoni was born, on October 9, 1777, after restoration. The plaque between the windows reads:

‘In this house, there was born, on October 9, 1777, Blessed Gaspar Bertoni, Pearl of the Clergy of Verona, Founder of the Stigmatines.



10

- 1827:** Monsignor Dionisi, Vicar General of the Diocese of Verona, signed the Decree of Vestition for the young Cleric of the Congregation, Louis Biadego.
- 1838:** Ursula [Rabbi] Marani, the Mother of Fr. John Marani, died today.
- 1898:** Bro. Fortunato Marini fell ill and received the Last Sacraments – he would die a week later. He was eulogized as ‘a good Brother, and only 19!’
- 1862:** Frs. Benciolini and Lenotti returned to Callera Veneto where they had preached a Mission to establish a Pious Union to combat Blasphemy.



St. Paul Parish in Campo Marzio, in Verona, where Gaspar Bertoni was baptized on October 10, 1977. At the Baptismal font, the plaque reads:

‘In this baptismal font, on October 10, 1977, the Blessed Gaspar Bertoni was born into the life of son of God the Glittering Gem of the Veronese Clergy, Apostle of the Youth, Founder of the Stigmatine Fathers.

The Parish of St. Paul exultant venerates him and relies on his protection, on the second centenary of his birth.

Verona, October 9, 1977

11

- 1808:** Fr. Bertoni noted in his Spiritual Diary that any religious who does not tend to his own personal perfection, impedes the entire Congregation.
- 1813:** On this date, a layman by the name of Joseph Bellotti signed a bill of purchase of the Stimate, the *Dereletti*, St. Teresa's and a house near the *Trinità*. He would one day leave these to Fr. Galvani, who in turn would leave them to Fr. Bertoni - who in turn would put them in Fr. Benciolini's name.
- 1817:** Fr. Cajetan Brugnoli entered the Congregation.
- 1867:** Fr. Marani, Superior General, painfully ill once again – at this time, there were only 6 more days until the eviction notice from the Stimate was to be effective.
- 1888:** Fr. Camilieri, OSA, Consultor to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, gave a favorable reply regarding the Constitutions of the Congregation which had been presented to the Holy See by the Superior General, Fr. Peter Vignola.

12

- 1808:** Fr. Bertoni noted in his Spiritual Diary that, if one feels himself attracted to high virtue, he should not be impeded by anyone else in the Community who may be of lesser virtue.

13

- 1816:** Fr. Bertoni was in Mantua, just a few weeks prior to coming to the Stimate. **He was with Monsignor Louis Pacetti, preaching the annual retreat to the Diocesan Clergy there.**
- 1830:** A Dr. Vanni noted that Fr. Francis Benciolini had better than average health. Dr. Vanni proved to be a prophet! Fr. Benciolini died on February 19, 1892, at the age of 86!
- 1835:** The last recorded Mass for Fr. Bertoni for nine months.
- 1857:** Fr. Marani took Fr. Bragato's place at the Imperial Palace at Stra' so that Fr. Bragato might spend his annual vacation with the Students at Sezano.
- 1867:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of October, Feast of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Fr. Benciolini wrote to Fr. Rigoni at Florence to tell him of Fr. Marani's relapse.

**1905:** The Stigmatine Congregation comes to North America. On this date, Fr. Anthony Dalla Porta and Fr. Ludovico Luchi were received by the Bishop of Scranton, Pennsylvania. They were the first Stigmatines in North America.

#### 14

**1857:** Fr. Lenotti preached a private retreat to **four Priests** who had come to the Stimate to make their annual Retreat. One of these Priests was Fr. Vincent Vignola, one of five blood brothers, all of whom were Priests. Later on, Fr. Vincent Vignola entered the Congregation and some time later, he was followed by one of his brothers, Fr. Peter Vignola – who went on [with Fr. Vincent's deciding vote in the Chapter] to be elected the 3<sup>rd</sup> Superior General of the Congregation. He was first elected on September 16, 1875 by the 6<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, and held this post until his very sudden death almost 16 years later, on August 23, 1891.

#### 15

**1818:** This is the date of the Last Will and Testament of Fr. Nicholas Galvani that made Fr. Bertoni the legal owner of the Stimate, the Convent of St. Teresa's. The *Dereletti* and a house near the *Trinità*.

#### 16

**1812:** This was the birth date of a Francis Stevanoni – he later became a Brother in the Congregation, and was one of the four Brothers present there in the day of the Founder's death at the Stimate, June 12, 1853.

**1825:** Fr. Bertoni wrote to Mother Naudet this day and promised his prayers that she might find a good Spiritual Director.

**1866:** Italian troops enter Verona after the defeat of Austria – they hung flags on the Stimate, the *Dereletti*, and from St. Teresa's.

#### 17

**1808:** Fr. Bertoni noted in his Spiritual Diary that on this day, at the noon visit, he experienced an intense realization of the presence of God.

**1865:** Melchiade Vivari entered the Congregation – most of his life as a Priest, he expressed the hope to go one day to the Foreign Missions, but this favor was never granted to him. He did go to Lisbon [1899-1901], and translated several books from German into Italian.

**18**

**1811:** A young man by the name of Cajetan Brugnoli was discharged on this day from Napoleon's Noble Guard. In later years, a number of his confreres in arms perished in Napoleon's disastrous attempt to conquer Russia. Bishop Riccabona would in 1854 compare the small Congregation of the Stimmate to Napoleon's Noble Guard, 'small in number, but would inflict the decisive blow for God in battle!'

**19**

**1819:** Fr. Matthew Farinati returned to his native Alcenago in an attempt to regain his health. He had been an earlier follower of Fr. Bertoni, and took his place as Prison Chaplain. In this work he contracted a disease that was to prove fatal.

**1865:** Fr. Picchia, Spiritual Director of the Handmaids of Charity, who conducted the Hospital in Udine, wrote to Fr. Marani to thank him for sending Fr. Lenotti to preach the annual retreat to the Sisters there. He stated that the Sisters had expressed to him the hope that some day Fr. Lenotti would come back to preach to them, as he had that summer.

**1866:** Fr. Marani, Superior General, made a quick visit to Villazzano to be with the Students who had recently gone there from Verona 'in exile' from the menacing government.

**1867:** The eviction order that Fr. Marani had received at the Stimmate 15 days earlier was due to be effective this date, but it was postponed 10 more days, perhaps because of Fr. Marani's poor health.

**20**

**1893:** Birth date of Charles Joseph Zanotti, first Provincial of North America.

**21**

**1805:** Fr. Bertoni preached on the Purity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

**1835:** On this date, Fr. Bertoni wrote to Fr. Bragato, who in July of that year had been named Confessor of the Imperial Court of Vienna to the Empress, Marianna. This letter was dictated by Fr. Bertoni but was actually written by Fr. Gramego. There was much sickness at the Stimmate at this time. Fr. Bertoni told Fr. Bragato of Fr. Benciolini's excellent preaching.

22

- 1847:** At the regular Friday devotions at the Stimate, Fr. Lenotti concluded his series of Sermons on the Book of Ecclesiasticus.
- 1866:** Fr. Richard DaPrato, appointed Novice Master to succeed Fr. Lenotti, arrived at Villazzano with the last of the Students. All of the Students of the Congregation left Verona shortly after the death of Anthony Caucigh, that occurred at the *Trinità* on August 11, 1866.

23

- 1800:** Fr. Bertoni, a Priest of but one month, gave a sermon on the Fear of God. He distinguished between Servile and Filial Fear. He said that Fear of the Lord is necessary not only for the sinner, but also for the just – without it, there could be no salvation.

24

- 1816:** Charles Fedelini, a boy of 16, entered the Congregation.
- 1851:** At the Friday Devotions at the Stimate, Fr. Lenotti preached at the services on the Book of Wisdom.
- 1854:** Fr. Marani, Superior General, and Bro. Louis Ferrari, had a Private Audience with Pope Pius IX. Fr. Marani spoke candidly to the Holy Father about the Congregation. The Pope asked Fr. Marani if Bro. Ferrari also went out on the Missions with the Priests. Fr. Marani answered that he did not; so the Pope said that the Brothers of the Congregation should be the Masters of every trade. It was during this Audience that Pius IX stated that the little Congregation of the Stimate was 'his' Congregation, and he expressed the often quoted wish: ***Crescat Pusillus Grex!*** [May the Little Flock grow!].
- 1856:** Frs. Benciolini and Fedelini [who had not yet starting teaching at the Seminary for the new School Year] left the Stimate to preach a Mission at Cerro.

25

- 1854:** Fr. Marani, Superior General, and in Rome, wrote to Fr. Brugnoli back at the Stimate – as Fr. Brugnoli was the oldest – to tell the Community of the happiness that he and Bro. Ferrari experiences the day before in their Audience with the Pope.

**1866:** At 9:45 a.m., three Carabinieri came to the Stimate with a search warrant seeking to obtain incriminating evidence against the Jesuits, as the government considered them to be an international spy organization. With the prospect of sudden searches at the Stimate, Fr. Marani about this time burned a number of papers that had been kept for many years in the Archives at the Stimate.

**1867:** Fr. Marani wrote to Fr. Rigoni in Florence telling him that their eviction from the Stimate was imminent. Fr. Marani as yet had not found a place to live.

## 26

**1812:** Fr. Bertoni fell seriously ill. He was plagued through his life by a painful and massive leg ailment [a fistula?] that was lanced over 200 times.

**1823:** Fr. Bertoni wrote to Mother Naudet, who was seeking approbation for her Congregation. He advised her not to write so soon, as the new Pope, Leo XII, had not as yet been crowned.

## 27

**1808:** Fr. Bertoni noted in his Spiritual Diary that at the Examination of Conscience that day at noon, he experienced a lively realization of the presence of God.

## 28

**1867:** Fr. Marani wrote to Fr. Rigoni in Florence and told him that on the morrow all the members of the Congregation would be evicted from the Stimate.

## 29

**1831:** Fr. Anthony Rosmini celebrated Mass at the Stimate.

**1847:** At the Friday devotions at the Stimate, Fr. Lenotti preached on the Book of Ecclesiastes

**1861:** Tuesday – Frs. Lenotti, Rigoni and Peter Vignola left Verona for the Mission in Vigasio.

**1867: The ‘Darkest Hour’ for the Congregation** – the men were evicted from the House of the Stimate. It was almost 51 years to the day that Fr. Marani first came there with Fr. Bertoni and Bro. Paul Zanoli. They were allowed to have the Church, and a few rooms upstairs and a kitchen. Fr.

Marani went to live with a widowed niece, a Mrs. Massalongo – and he never came back to the Stimate, dying ‘in exile’ on July 1, 1871.

### 30

**1826:** Charles Fedelini, aged 16, vested at the Stimate.

**1828:** Fr. Louis Bragato returned to the Congregation. He had entered earlier but left due to poor health.

**1846:** Fr. Lenotti preached at the Friday Devotions at the Stimate for the first time. His text was from the Book of Ecclesiasticus 50:9.

**1863:** The Sisters of the Holy Family rented the Convent of St. Teresa’s to the government for use as a military barracks.

### 31

**1828:** A Fr. Maggi took Fr. Bertoni’s place as Confessor to Mother Naudet.

**1834:** The Priests at the Stimate swap rooms. Some of the Priests there at the time were Frs. Cainer, Cartolari and Raimondi.

**1854:** Fr. Marani and Bro. Ferrari left Rome after their successful visit there to obtain the **Decree of Praise** for the Congregation. It would be granted on **April 16, 1855.**

**1862:** Frs. Benciolini and Bassi preached a successful Mission at Ala in the Tyrol.

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The only portrait of Fr. Bertoni painted with him in life. The painter was Cajetan Vedovelli, and tells the history that Fr. Bertoni did not know this was being made. He never consented his portrait be painted; however, as he was myopic, arrangements were made for the painter stand out of reach of his eye-sight, while somebody else was talking with him.