Mundelein Seminary 1000 East Maple Avenue Mundelein IL 60060

Nov. 4th 2018 202nd birthday of the Congregation!

Dear Stigmatine Lay Member and Confreres,

Nov. 4

1816: The birthday of the Congregation. On this day, Fr. Bertoni, Fr. John Mary Marani and Brother Paul Zanoli came to the Stimmate to take up residence. The beginnings of the Congregation.

While within our small congregation for years we have celebrated this as the "birthday" of the Congregation - November 4, 1816 – and we do this year - as we all know the universal Church celebrates November as the month of the Holy Souls – seeking prayers for the faithful departed. This reminds us of a central Article [# 12] of the Apostles' Creed [cf. CCC ## 1020- 1065]. In these weeks as the leaves fall in the northern hemisphere, we are all invited to reflect on the Dogma of Purgatory and of the pious practice of praying for the "poor souls in purgatory". As we celebrate the 'birth' of the Congregation, let us not forget the deaths of the faithful departed, as the Church teaches:

<u>1030</u> All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.

1031 The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire:

As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come.

<u>1032</u> This teaching is also based on the practice of prayer for the dead, already mentioned in Sacred Scripture: "Therefore Judas Maccabeus]

made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin." From the beginning the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God. The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead:

Let us help and commemorate them. If Job's sons were purified by their father's sacrifice, why would we doubt that our offerings for the dead bring them some consolation? Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them.

In the early Christian literature, we are taught that death is a new "birth" unto eternity. While there may be in some natural fears, whatever Christ has assumed, He has redeemed. Let us lift up our hearts and trust in the <u>Lead, Kindly Light</u>¹, where the venerable Cardinal hopes for some kind of mysterious reunion with the precious faces we have loved and lost for a while.

Some reflections from St. Gaspar:

24th July 1808

[13.] "Making the most of your time" (Ep 5:16). Time never comes back. We have therefore to use it with great diligence.

In this note there are three separate parts that seem to be closely connected to a warning of the *Imitation of Christ*.² This is also in three parts:

... Keep always in your mind the end. The lost time never comes back. You will never acquire virtue without care and diligence...

The second and third parts of this warning are openly related to each other. In the second there is an identity of concept and almost the same words are used. The third seems to be a development and a fulfillment. The Pauline *making the most of your time* finds in the quotation of the *Imitation of Christ* the stimulus to pass to action. If we understand the phrase as *remember your last end*, which is not so far from us, this is the glory of God and our own sanctification; our final end is the beginning of eternal life.

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¹ Editor's note: *Lead, Kindly Light* is a hymn with words written in 1833 by John Henry Newman as a poem titled "the Pillar of the Cloud". A pillar of cloud was one of the manifestations of the presence of God of Israel in the Torah. In the book of Exodus [Ex 13:21-22], the pillar of cloud guided the Israelites in their exodus from Egypt, showing them the way and giving them light during the night, as they could travel both day and night. Source: Wikipedia.

² Book I, c. 25, 11.

23rd December 1808

[90.] When people are at the threshold of death and are well prepared to die, it is not to appeal that the Lord should lengthen their lives. Death is like a bridge between two eternities: the one before and the one afterwards... It is just a step. When a person can be assured to take this step well, he should not be encouraged not to seize this opportune moment. It is too difficult to keep the faith in this present life. We do not wish any good person to live [longer] in this life.

The first sentence is simply a maxim of good Christian wisdom. The sentences which follow clearly justify it. The passage across the bridge which divides a previous eternity from the subsequent eternity is reminiscent of scholastic discussions. Passing from time to eternity is a sure passage, which nobody can avoid. It is most unsure, though, as far as the precise moment of it. When therefore the opportunity of knowing this presents itself clearly, it is a great risk to let it escape. Will it come back again? Therefore...

Fr. Gaspar was of this opinion also during his last years of life. One day, Fr Marani (spiritual director of the Sisters of the Holy Family) went to consult with Fr. Bertoni. He told him how saddened he was by the death of some young Sisters. He got the following comforting words: These young Sisters came to the convent to make a good death. They have had the great blessing to make it. So: Sursum corda! (Lift up your hearts!).

Some could find some fault with Fr. Bertoni's statement: It is too difficult to keep the faith in this present life. It sounds something like a conclusion against the discernment and justice of God. To us, though, it seems that he intended only to recognize a fact. He was not concerned about the justice of God, but rather about the slothful irresponsibility of man. We should also consider that what we translate with too (the Italian troppo), in the archaic language can mean just much. In his youth, Fr. Bertoni had been taught by the language expert Cesari.

With regard to the last sentence: 'We do not wish...', we see a reference to Wisdom 4:10.11: He pleased God and was beloved, and living among sinners he was translated. He was taken away lest wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul...

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³ *Collectanea Stigmatina,* Vol. 3, p. 385.

⁴ Cf. F. Palazzi, *Italian Dictionary – troppo* is an archaic word, meaning *much*.

14th MARCH 1809

[124.] If we do not take heed of the loving appeals of [God's] Mercy, what else is left for us except to fall into the terrible hands of [God's] Justice?

On 28 November 1802 Fr. Gaspar preached about the Last Judgment and cried from the pulpit⁵:

... O sinners, sinners all! The judge has already sounded against you His immutable sentence: Desist from your sins, desist from them. Depart from Me, go away from Me, you accursed...: ... depart from Me, you accursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels... [Mt 25:41] ...

Why would you delay any longer? Why do you hesitate from throwing yourselves into the arms of this Mercy while there is still time? Act now before this Mercy gives way to all our offenses, to an enraged Justice - why not? Now is the acceptable time for our repentance: for then, it will be absolutely vain and useless. These are the days to insure our salvation. On that day, all hope will be lost: ... for it shall surely come, it shall not be slack... [Hab 2:3]. When we are least thinking about it, it will come.

To neglect a matter of such importance is the same as declaring to wish one's own damnation. To put off deliberation, means to expose oneself to the supreme danger. It is the matter of a soul: once it is lost, it is lost forever. This is a matter of a state that will be perpetually unchangeable. This is a concern of an eternity, either of glory, or of pain. Why, then, do you delay?

This Man-God, our Judge, no matter how tenderly He loves us as a loving Father, acts in a given way so that He will not lose us eternally, His Children, under the scourge of His most just vengeance. He threatens us, He warns us, and cries out strongly so that we do not fall under the bitter fatal blow. He commits all His Blood in order to wash our sins. He shows us His merits, because we are invested with the just rights of His Kingdom. He makes us participants in His satisfactions, to lighten for us the weight of our penance: ... Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you... [Mt 11:28].

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⁵ Pagine di Vita Cristiana, pp. 92, f. - Sermon 10, On the Universal Judgment. November 28, 1802. MssB ## 710, ff.

O merciful, infinitely kind Lord! Indeed anyone would be most worthy to share with the demons should he refuse now to participate with such a good Lord. It is only right that such a person should experience all the fury of Your inflexible justice. This is fitting for whoever would disdain Your most excessive Mercy. Anyone rejecting You, merits to be struck down on that day, with that very bitter condemnation: "Depart from Me!". This will be the lot of anyone who still remains deaf to the gentle invitation: "Come to Me!"

Fr. Bertoni's basic spirituality was "Christological" and "Ignatian" - the full living of the Petition of the Our Father: Thy Will be done! It is also the full response to Mary's enjoinder at the Wedding Feast of Cana: FIAT: You do whatever He tells you! [Jn 2:5]. It is a development of heroic hope – for us, Fr. Bertoni is indeed a Model of Holy Abandonment.

God bless you all! Let us continue to pray for each other.

Respectfully yours in the Merciful Redeemer's Stigmata,

Fr. Joseph Henchey, CSS

Acting Spiritual Director

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Appendices:

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

Enclosed documents:

- Gaspar Bertoni: Priest of Verona, Founder of the Stigmatines. His Devotions and Service of the Church: the Sacred Stigmata of the Lord, the Espousals of Mary and Joseph and the Sacred Heart of Jesus – by Rev. Joseph Henchey, CSS [1989].
- Roster of the Deceased Stigmatines in November.

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NOVEMBER

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- **1805**: Fr. Bertoni preached on the Souls in Purgatory; he described it as a torturous prison purgation is achieved either by fire [the pain of Purgatory] or, it can also be obtained now, by water [the tears of repentance]. There are many advantages for those who pray for the dead.
- **1806**: Fr. Bertoni preached on the Beatitudes they are as a ladder that one must ascend to reach heaven.
- **1825**: Young Charles Fedelini is enrolled at the Marian Oratory at the Stimmate.
- **1847**: Fr. Lenotti preached to the members of the Oratory and urged them to imitate the Saints of God.
- **1853**: Charles Salocher entered the Congregation, but had to leave a few months later due to illness he re-entered 1871, and made Perpetual Profession on July 17, 1874.
- **1854**: Fr. Marani and Bro. Louis Ferrari arrived back in Verona after their stay of almost 4 months in Rome, where they had a Private Audience with Pope Pius IX [on October 24, 1854]. Their visit achieved the conferral on the Congregation of the much coveted **Decree of Praise**, granted on **April 16**, **1855**.

<u>2</u>

1902: Bro. Charles Salocher died at *Santa Maria dei Miracoli*, in Rome. All his life he had been very observant of the Suffrages for the Poor Souls in Purgatory.

<u>3</u>

1863: Fr. Dominic Rossi died. At one time, he was Economus General.

<u>4</u>

- 1794: Francis Peter Faber Pacificus Leonard Cartolari was born, the son of Peter.
- 1816: The birthday of the Congregation. On this day, Fr. Bertoni, Fr. John Mary Marani and Brother Paul Zanoli came to the Stimmate to take up residence. The beginnings of the Congregation.



The Stimmate at the time of foundation

1862: The Novitiate was transferred from the Stimmate to the *Trinità* for the second time. Fr. Marani, Superior General, blessed the House that had been renovated. Fr. Vincent Vignola celebrated the Mass. The *Trinità* had been vacant for the past three years, due to the work going on there. There were three Professed Students: Charles Zara, Francis Sogaro and Louis Morando [these last two would pass away as Consecrated Bishops]. There were four Novice Students: Andrew Sterza, Joseph DeVai, Joseph Sembianti and one other. There were also several Brothers there: Bro. Zanoli, Infirmarian and laundry; Bro. Nicora, Porter and tailor; Bro. Reali, Cook. Among the Aspirants were Anthony Caucigh, Pio Gurisatti and James Marini.

1866: This was the <u>Golden Jubilee of the Congregation</u>. It was the first Sunday of November. The day was celebrated both at the Stimmate and at Villazzano, Trent, where the Students of the Congregation were living 'in exile.'

1885: On this date, Bishop Riboldi [later Cardinal], welcomed the Congregation of the Stimmate into his Diocese. The Congregation had come to Pavia to assist with the Oratory of St. Aloysius; to conduct a night school for workers and to preach Missions throughout the Diocese as long as this did not conflict with the other functions there.

<u>5</u>

1822: The School at the Stimmate and the School at the Convent of St. Teresa's Convent are investigated by the government in a routine investigation. Fr. Bertoni assisted Mother Naudet in filling out her questionnaire.

1841: [The date of a Letter from Fr. Bertoni to Fr. Bragato in Vienna, in which Fr. Bertoni asked for prayers for the work of writing the booklet of his *Original Constitutions*. Fr. Stofella has more rightly placed this as **May 11, 1841**].

<u>6</u>

1822: Mother Naudet had asked for more specific details in answering the questionnaire on her School. Fr. Bertoni wrote in greater detail.

<u>7</u>

- 1847: Fr. Lenotti preached to the young boys of the Oratory. He continued the explanation of St. Matthew's Gospel where his predecessor, Fr. Fedelini, had left off. Fr. Fedelini had returned home due to illness. He did not return to the Congregation until after Fr. Bertoni's death, almost six years later.
- **1854**: Fr. Marani wrote to Bishop Riccabona informing him that Fr. DaPrato and another Diocesan Priest wanted to enter the Congregation.
- **1858**: Fr. Lenotti, Novice Maser, gave a Domestic Exhortation to the Novices, telling them to pray often for the Congregation, that was suffering so much at that time. Fr. Marani, the Superior General, had been seriously ill; Fr. Brugnoli was dying and Brother Marini had just died at the age of 19.
- **1861**: Anthony Caucigh was enrolled at the Seminary of Udine.
- **1891**: Fr. Morando, the Superior at the Stimmate, celebrated a solemn Memorial Mass for the deceased Superior General, Fr. Peter Vignola.

<u>8</u>

1822: In the questionnaire Fr. Bertoni filled out for the investigation of the Stimmate, on this date, it was evident that the Congregation at that time numbered five Priests e one Brother – and there were 74 Students attending school at the Stimmate.

- **1834**: Fr. Bertoni wrote a letter to Sister Bussetti, who had been elected to succeed Mother Naudet as Superior of the Sisters of the Holy Family. Mother Naudet had died a few months previously, August 17, 1834.
- **1844**: A man by the name of Stephen Debboni died at Caldiero. He had been caretaker of the Bertoni property there, and he left two daughters 'of marriageable age, and other children' who had no means of support.

<u>9</u>

1816: Mother Naudet took over the Convent of St. Teresa's in Verona. She was to do a similar work for girls there as Fr. Bertoni was doing for boys at the Stimmate.

1896: John Baptist Zaupa entered the Congregation.

<u> 10</u>

- **1856**: Fr. Marani, Superior General, and Fr. Lenotti, Novice Master, begin a Retreat in Cremona for the 'Madames.'
- **1858**: Frs. Lenotti and Vincent Vignola begin a Mission at Villa Lagarina, Trent.
- 1910: Fr. Alexander Grigolli, Fr. Henry Adami and Bro. Dominic Valzacchi leave Trieste for <u>Brazil</u>. The first Foundation in South America for the Congregation was thus established.



Fr. Henry Adami, Fr. Alexander Grigoli and Bro. Dominic Valzacchi: the First Stigmatines in South America.

- : Matilda Bertoni, younger sister of Gaspar, died this day at the age of three and a half. He was nine years old at the time. Her existence is not even noted in the first Biography of the Founder, by Fr. Giaccobbe.
- : Bishop Liruti remains firm in his refusal of allowing Fr. Matthew Farinati to join the Jesuits.
- : An ordained Priest, Fr. Francis Benciolini, entered the Congregation, 'with the consent of his entire family'. The Chronicle noted that he had 'a very frank way, a German air!'
- : Young Angelo Casella entered the Congregation. It was the Feast of St. Martin, and nearly all the men at the Stimmate were 'sick' at the time!
- : Fr. Bertoni was bleeding profusely, so he was unable to attend the opening of school this day.

- 1855: Canon Bertinelli, the host of Fr. Marani and Bro. Ferrari during their lengthy stay in Rome [June November 1854], wrote to Fr. Marani this day. He told Fr. Marani that he did not have the heart to tell him of the many obstacles that he faced in coming to Rome to obtain the **Decree of Praise** for so small a Congregation. He told Fr. Marani that Cardinal Fransoni still spoke of Fr. Marani and of the wonderful impression he had made in Rome.
- : School opens again at the Stimmate for the first time since 1843, when Fr. Bertoni closed it in favor of the Jesuits.

: School opens at the Stimmate for the first time under Fr. Bertoni's direction. It remained open for 27 years – in this time, there were 70 Priests ordained from its alumni.

- 1833: Fr. Anthony Rosmini celebrated Mass at the Seminary.
- : Fr. Rosmini returns to the Stimmate again on this date, and offered Mass. He used Fr. Bertoni's room to write a 'small book' [*The Five Wounds of the Church*?

1835: Fr. Bragato was promoted to the title of 'Honorary Chaplain' at the Imperial Court of Vienna. He wrote back and said that the only 'uniform' that he would ever wear would be the habit of the Congregation.

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1842: The last school year at the Stimmate during Fr. Bertoni's life time began this day.

<u>16</u>

- **1808**: Fr. Bertoni noted in his Spiritual Diary that some try to build a spiritual life without a foundation he noted that one must always start with an interior spirit.
- **1812**: Fr. Bertoni wrote to Mother Naudet and told her that he was convalescing from his recent, serious and painful illness. He told her that there was no need to confess her feelings of lack of faith as she had described them in the previous letter.
- **1834**: Fr. Brugnoli went to Sts. Firmus and Rusticus 'at the bridge' to offer Mass, at the request of Fr. Albertini.

<u>17</u>

- **1811**: Mother Naudet noted that she had prayed this day that Mary and Joseph would be the true 'Superiors' of her Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family. She prayed that she would practically unite the active and contemplative lives. It was the Feast of the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- **1854**: There was a solemn commemorative service held at the Stimmate this day for Fr. Bertoni, who had died 17 months earlier. Permission had been granted to return his body to the Stimmate. There was a terrible wind and rain today the service was held this Friday morning. Forty Mass were celebrated at the Stimmate on this day. Monsignor Marchi, Vicar General of the Diocese, celebrated a Solemn Mass.

18

1810: It was the 3rd Sunday of the month, and the feast of the Patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Fr. Bertoni preached that the Church was the House of God, and that Mary was its door, or 'the Gate of Heaven.'

1834: A number of complaints had been received at the Chancery Office concerning the bell ringing at the Stimmate. Bishop Grasser defended the Fathers there in his response to the complaint.

1844: A Vincent Rufo wrote to Fr. Bertoni interceding for the family of the late Stephen Debboni, who had died 10 days earlier. Fr. Bertoni answered immediately and told Mr. Rufo that the widow could stay on the property there, and could keep one half of all the produce of the farm.

<u> 19</u>

1798: Modesto Cainer was born.

1828: Fr. Giaccobbe's father died.

1829: Fr. Benciolini was enrolled in a school to obtain civil certification to teach Elementary School.

1854: Bishop Riccabona wrote to Fr. Marani and expressed some pride that two of his Priests were about to enter the Congregation. He said that he was especially sorry to lose Fr. Richard DaPrato, but that he gave his permission for both to enter.

<u>20</u>

1808: Bishop Liruti dropped in unexpectedly on Fr. Bertoni as he was teaching Catechism to some adults. Fr. Bertoni noted that night in his Spiritual Diary that he should always be ready to appear before the Tribunal of Christ – which could come just as unexpectedly.

1816: Pope Pius VII granted a Decree of Praise to the Congregation founded by Mother Madeline di Canossa.

1824: Matilda di Canossa, niece of Mother Madelline di Canossa, entered the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family, founded by Mother Naudet. Years later, Matilda di Canossa became Vicaress General of these Sisters.

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1832: Donnadei Conti Martelli entered the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family. She had been a penitent of Fr. Bertoni. In 1840, she became the 2nd Superior General of the Sisters of the Holy Family.

- : A Papal Decree emanated proclaiming the following year to be the 'Holy Year of Jubilee'. The Pope was unable to proclaim 1850 as the 'Holy Year', as he had to flee Rome.
- : A Fr. Peter Slenzi, Pastor at Villa Lagarina, wrote to Fr. Marani and told him that Fr. Lenotti and Fr. Vincent Vignola were tireless Confessors in the Mission they had just completed in his Parish, and that they had won many sheep back into the fold.
- : Feast of the Presentation Frs. Benciolini and Peter Vignola preached this day at Nove, near Vicenza.

- : Michaelangelo Gramego approved for Vestition.
- : Cajetan Brugnoli was vested by his Uncle, Fr. Francis Brugnoli, in the Church of St. Peter in Monastero.
- **1837**: Public sale was held for the property at Sezano. A Dr. Lawrence Maggi represented Fr. Bertoni at this sale and offered 140,000 Lira for the property.
- : Bishop Joseph Grasser died. He was the first Bishop of Verona younger than the Founder. He was assisted by Fr. Bertoni, and Fr. Odescalchi, SJ. [Fr. Odescalchi had been the Cardinal Vicar of Pope Gregory XVI, and resigned the Cardinalate to enter the Jesuit Novitiate in November 1838].
- : The date of the will of one Anthony Lenotti. He divided the family inheritance among the Lenotti brothers and sisters. The oldest of the three sisters, Marietta, was already deceased.

1853: All the deceased of the Congregation at this time were transferred to the lot in the city cemetery purchased by Fr. Marani. The deceased reinterred on this day were: Bro. Casella; Fr. Biadego; Cleric Louis Ferrari; Fr. Bertoni; Fr. Gramego and Bro. Bandora. Fr. Cainer and Fr. Cartolari had been buried in their family lots.

: The Students of the Congregation left Sale di Povo, near Villazzano, in Trent, and returned to Verona. The Students had been 'in exile' for eight years. They left Verona shortly after the death of one of their own, the

beloved Anthony Caucigh – on August 11, 1866 – due to the unfavorable political climate of that era.

25

- **1810**: Fr. Bertoni preached to the young Seminarians of the Diocese of Verona. He told them to invoke Mary in any difficulties with their vocations.
- **1812**: Fr. Bertoni was received this day by Bishop Liruti. Fr. Bertoni explained to the Bishop that the offered position in the Diocese as Vice-Rector of the Seminary he felt to be alien to his vocation.
- **1820**: In the Church of the Stimmate, the Altar of St. Catherine was used for the first time. Over the altar, hung a painting by Voltolini, depicting the Betrothal of the Saint. Fr. Marani said the first Mass on the new Altar; Fr. Gramego the second and Fr. Bertoni the third.
- **1833**: The new bells at the Stimmate rang out on this Feast of St. Catherine of Siena. Each bell was in honor of a different saint. Fr. Bertoni was ordered to bed at noon he underwent a bleeding, and by night fall, he had a high fever, that caused some alarm.

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- **1812**: Fr. Louis Fortis, SJ, assisted Fr. Bertoni during his illness today. He was the Founder's first Spiritual Director in his teen years, and later became Superior General of the restored Jesuits.
- **1854**: On this Sunday evening, the former Canon, Fr. Richard DaPrato, entered the Congregation.

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- **1801**: Sebastian Gramego, the Father of Michaelangelo Gramego, died this day at 7:00 a.m. He was buried in the cemetery of the *Trinità*.
- **1813**: Fr. Bertoni wrote to Mother Naudet that he would be at the Convent the following day, so that they could discuss a number of items that she had mentioned.
- **1822**: On this day, Bishop Liruti celebrated his 80th birthday. In a conversation this day, he praised Fr. Bertoni as 'learned and venerable.'

- **1802**: Fr. Bertoni preached on the General Judgment. For the wicked, there can only be a useless remorse and an unchangeable condemnation.
- **1856**: Fr. Vincent Vignola entered the Congregation. He was to be followed later by his brother, Fr. Peter Vignola, who became the 3rd Superior General
- **1857**: Frs. Benciolini, Lenotti and Peter Vignola left Verona to preach a Mission in Bovolone.

1860: Frs. Benciolini and Lenotti prepare for the Mission at San Ambrogio. In the ten years that he was Novice Master, Fr. Lenotti preached over 30 Missions – and about the same number of Retreats to Sisters and to the Clergy, as well as many other Retreats to various other groups.

<u>30</u>

- **1834**: Fr. Bertoni offered some advice to Sister Bussetti, who succeeded Mother Naudet in the government of the Sisters of the Holy Family.
- **1857**: Fr. Marani, Superior General, began a Mission at Bovolone. He was assisted by Fr. Rigoni.
- **1858**: Fr. Lenotti gave a Novena in preparation for the Immaculate Conception to the Novices. He asked them to pray that Fr. Marani, Superior General, soon be restored to health and that the Congregation might be blessed with more vocations.
- **1869**: Louis Morando was ordained a Priest this day he would die as Archbishop of Brindisi.

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