

Mundelein Seminary
1000 East Maple Avenue
Mundelein IL 60060

December 5, 2018

Dear Stigmatine Lay Member and Confreres,

The desire for the Apostolic Mission to be lived also outside of Italy was felt by the younger Stigmatines as was evidenced by the challenging 12th General Chapter in 1890. In 1905 the Stigmatines came to the USA – and so also in 1910, they came to Brazil:

1910: Fr. Alexander Grigoli¹, Fr. Henry Adami and Bro. Dominic Valzacchi are the first Stigmatines in South America.



(L-R) Fr. Henry Adami, Fr. Alexander Grigoli and Bro. Dominic Valzacchi: the first Stigmatines in South America (Brazil).

As a kind of personal opinion, it seems to me that one of the diverse “modi” [manners] of following Christ from St. Ignatius, his main reference seemed to have been “soldiers” for Christ – St. Gaspar, as may be clear in the Espousals tradition among us, hoped more for a family spirit. The Jesuit Constitutions often refer to the Father General by a military term [Prepositius Generalis – cf. CSJ Part IX, ## 719, ff.] regarding the government of the community – St. Gaspar seems to use more familial terms: ... *quamvis Superior uti debeat consilio fratrum. In gubernando...* [cf. CF # 298].

¹ Fr. Grigoli preached the Ordination retreat for the compiler of this Stigmatine Calendar, in Grottaferrata, outside of Rome – in June 1956. Fr. Adami also worked for a time in North America. NB: On a personal note, it was also my privilege to meet the latter when I was a young Novice on Maple St., Springfield MA, 1949-1950.

It seems that in the light of the Incarnation, Fr. Bertoni also thought of the grace of a vocation as that of “filiation” – this is interesting also for the sake of the Irish “Venerable, or Blessed”, Dom Columba Marmion, OSB – who was ordained a priest in the Chapel of the old Irish College [from 1837-1927], which was conducted at St. Agatha’s in Rome – our present General Curia since 1927. Dom Marmion’s fundamental interpretation was: “Baptism, the Sacrament of Adoption and Initiation: Death and Life”².

St. Gaspar seems to present a strong sense of “Filiation” in his Christmas entry to his Spiritual Diary. St. Gaspar wrote on December 25, 1808, with Fr. Stofella’s commentary:

25th December 1808

[93.] During the three [Christmas] Masses: recollection and an experience of the great benefit of [my] vocation. What a great blessing it is to become oblivious and stripped of all created things. To seek only God. How much did God honor and love His humiliated Son. Oh, what a responsibility do we have to do for Him, partly at least, what He firstly did for us.

Christmas fell on Sunday that year. Fr. Bertoni was overwhelmed by the blessings he had received, which he shares through brief hints and interjections.

The benefit of his Vocation is to be understood as total Vocation: a vocation to the priesthood and a vocation to holiness. When St. Gaspar contemplated mystically the stripping and humiliation of God he felt he could justify his own ascetic work of self-denial which appeared no longer as a sacrifice but rather as a grace and a privilege. One feels that God was showing, there, much gratification.

What is left for us is perhaps to pick up quietly that spiritual surprise with which Fr. Bertoni could contemplate: how much did God honor and love His humiliated Son. He made comparisons and concluded for himself and for us: What a responsibility do we have to do for Him, partly at least, what He firstly did for us. May Fr. Gaspar obtain for us the grace to be struck by awe at God's action.

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² Christ the Life of the Soul, Spiritual Conferences. London/ Glasgow – 10th edition 1925. Cf. also “*Condivisione della relazione filiale propria di Gesù Cristo: porto singolare di Dom Marmion*” – cf. Paolo Maria Gionta, *Le virtù teologali nel pensiero di Dom Columba Marmion*. Roma: Edizioni Univ. della S. Croce, 1998.

With this letter, I am moved to make known to all of you, kind readers, that this will be my last Stigmatine Laity letter. At the age of 88 [going on 89 in June], my “attention span” is lessening with less energy. So, I thank you for whatever use you might have able to make of the avalanche of documentation I have sent you each month.

Speaking of this, I owe the very dear Tereza and Vicente Lopes, Brazilians, presently living in Plano TX, USA – especially for Tereza’s careful editing and suggestions she would make to me all this time - as I am sure you are more than well aware. It has been because of her that I have been able to put all this material together at such regularity, demanding so much of dear Tereza’s expertise and hard work. They both served our Lay Stigmatine Association so well since the group first came together. Love and prayers and sincere thanks aways for their contribution and to all of you, for accepting these efforts for so long.

Happy holidays to all, and a blessed New Year! Let us continue on in our joint efforts to live the sacred charism of St. Gaspar Bertoni as long as we live!

Respectfully in our Merciful Lord, in and through His Sacred Stigmata,

Fr. Joseph Henchey, CSS

Acting Spiritual Director

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Appendices:

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

Enclosed documents:

- The Redemptive Mystery of Divine Filiation according to St. Thomas Aquinas – by Rev. Joseph Henchey, CSS [2007].
- Roster of the Deceased Stigmatines in December.

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DECEMBER**1**

- 1812:** In a letter on this date, Fr. Bertoni directed Mother Naudet to turn her sights toward heaven – such a vision turns sadness into joy.
- 1837:** On this day, Fr. Bertoni wrote a letter to Fr. Bragato who was at the Imperial Court in Vienna. Fr. Bertoni wrote in glowing terms of Fr. Marani's competent, busy and varied apostolate – a good idea of Fr. Bertoni's ideal for the ***Apostolic Missionary***. Fr. Marani was giving evening conferences to the **clergy** – hearing **confessions** – teaching **catechism** – examining vocations in the **seminary**. Fr. Bertoni also sent a book to Fr. Bragato for the March devotions in honor of St. Joseph.

2

- 1808:** Fr. Bertoni noted in his Spiritual Diary on this date that we must above all take good care that we do not fail God, as we are sure that, on His part, He will never fail us.
- 1846:** On this date, Celestine Marani – Fr. Marani's father - died at the age of 86 in St. Paul's Parish.

3

- 1808:** Out of love for us, God shows us the Cross that we are to carry - Fr. Bertoni noted in his Spiritual Diary on this date. It is for us to have good will, and He will be with us in carrying our Cross through life.
- 1812** On this date, Fr. Bertoni wrote to Mother Naudet. He promised her that he would say some Masses for her, and he had already begun them in honor of St. Francis Xavier.
- 1845:** A young man by the name of Louis Toffaloni died on this date at the age of 18. He had been a member of Fr. Bertoni's Oratory, and was mourned by Fr. Fedellini.

4

- 1816:** Fr. Michaelangelo Gramego entered the Congregation, a month after Frs. Bertoni and Marani and Bro. Paul Zanolì.
- 1835:** On this date, Fr. Bertoni began preaching a course of the Spiritual Exercises for some young **seminarians** about to receive Holy Orders

5

- 1812:** On this date, Fr. Bertoni wrote to Mother Naudet – he told her that the religious soul must impede anything that interferes with union with God.
- 1837:** On this date, 140,500 Lira [up 500 Lira from the previous offer] was proposed for the purchase of Sezano. This was done in the name of Fr. Bertoni – but, still no sale.
- 1910:** **Fr. Alexander Grigoli³, Fr. Henry Adami and Bro. Dominic Valzacchi are the first Stigmatines in South America.**

6

- 1910:** Fr. Grigoli made arrangements to see Bishop Braga, in **Curitiba⁴** for a possible foundation for the Congregation in his Diocese. The three Stigmatines stayed with the Missionaries of St. Charles – their Father General, Fr. Dominic Vicentini, was a former Stigmatine.

7

- 1837:** Fr. Bertoni wrote to Sister Bussetti to express his best wishes for the holiday season. She was the Mother General of the Sisters of the Holy Family.
- 1838:** Pope Gregory XVI responded to Fr. Bertoni's letter of August 9, 1838, in which the Founder offered the Holy Father all the property owned then by the Congregation. The Pope answered, thanking Fr. Bertoni for the gracious offer – it was said that the Pope remarked, on receiving Fr. Bertoni's letter, that it was a great source of encouragement as Pope to know that there were Priests like Fr. Bertoni working hard for the glory of God.
- 1852:** A newly ordained Priest, Fr. Mark Bassi, celebrated one of his first Masses at the Stimate.
- 1853:** Bishop Peter Aurelius Mutti, OSB, Patriarch of Venice and former Bishop of Verona, wrote a letter of recommendation to the Holy See in behalf of the Congregation at Fr. Marani's request.
- 1857:** Fr. Benciolini wrote that the Fathers heard Confessions at Bovolone, from almost 4:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m.!

³ Fr. Grigoli preached the Ordination retreat for the compiler of this Stigmatine Calendar, in Grottaferrata, outside of Rome – in June 1956. Fr. Adami also worked for a time in North America.

⁴ On June 18, 2004 – another Stigmatine – Dom Moacyr Vitti, CSS, was installed as the Archbishop of Curitiba, PR, Brazil.

8

- 1805:** Fr. Bertoni preached on death this day. He said that the love for this life makes any death bitter. One terrible moment decides all eternity.
- 1833:** Feast of the Immaculate Conception celebrated at the Stimate. The little Oratory of the Immaculate Conception was left open all day, with four candles burning. The bells rang out from the Stimate.
- 1854:** Fr. Richard DaPrato began his two year Novitiate. This was the first formal Novitiate - previously, members on entrance, just donned the habit, and then they were members of the Congregation.
- 1856:** Fr. DaPrato made his Religious Profession.
- 1857:** Perpetual Profession was made today by Bro. Joseph Reale.
- 1864:** This was the original date chosen for Anthony Caucigh's Vestition – it was delayed a month, though, until January 6th, 1865, at Fr. Marani's direction, because of a rather poor showing Caucigh had made in Latin.

9

- 1804:** Fr. Bertoni preached on the Coming of Christ - sinners have a special reason to rejoice at His Coming – our misery is more than enough reason to harbor high hopes.
- 1834:** Fr. Bertoni preached a Retreat to Seminarians about to receive Holy Orders in the Oratory dedicated to St. Stanislaus.
- 1842:** Fr. Cainer said Mass this day, but experienced some difficulty - he would not be able to say Mass again for about six more months.
- 1855:** Today was the Vestition of Bro. Louis Falzi and two Students.

10

- 1828:** Joseph Reale was born at Corrido Como. He would one day enter the Congregation and die in it as a Professed Brother.
- 1863:** The Novitiate Chapel at the *Trinità* was finished on this day, and Bishop di Canossa celebrated Mass for the Novices.

11

- 1812:** In his letter of this date, Fr. Bertoni agreed to review Mother Naudet's Constitutions which she had written. This letter also contains Fr. Bertoni's views on the spiritual life.
- 1847:** Fr. Lenotti preached to the faithful who came regularly to the Friday night Devotions at the Stimate.

12

- 1834:** Three days earlier, Fr. Bertoni began a Retreat for **Seminarians** preparing for the Priesthood. Fr. Bertoni fell ill on this day, and the retreat was continued by Fr. Marani.
- 1853:** The '**Report**' that Fr. Marani had drawn up for presentation to the Holy See to obtain the Decree of Praise bore this date.
- 1856:** Fr. Bragato wrote to Fr. Marani from Vienna – to encourage him in his work.

13

- 1801:** Fr. Bertoni preached this day in the Church of St. Paul in Campo Marzo, on the Feast of the House of Loreto. He compared the House of the Holy Family to the heart of the Christian sincerely desirous of being the House of God. The only true happiness for us is to have God dwelling within us.
- 1807:** Fr. Bertoni preached again in St. Paul's on this day – in the course of his sermon, he remarked that the youth of that time were being subject to so many difficulties that it was hard for them to keep from sin.
- 1808:** On this date, Fr. Bertoni wrote in his Spiritual Diary that people of God must expect severe temptations.
- 1813:** On this date, Fr. Bertoni visited the College of Acolytes in Verona. He himself had once studied here preparing for the Priesthood.

14

- 1812:** Fr. Bertoni wrote to Mother Naudet concerning her Constitutions. He told her of his recent illness and felt that God was 'joking' with him. He suggested to her for one part of her rule, that 'Vicar' was a better title than 'Provincial.' He expressed the hope that the French branch of the Sisters would join Mother Naudet. [They were led by St. Sophie Marie and are known as the 'Madames of the Sacred Heart.']

1813: Fr. Bertoni wrote in his letter to Mother Naudet that a Vocation is the work of God. He recommended his 'poor Father' to her prayers.

1822: The Emperor Francis I, who had been visiting Verona, left this day. About this same time, Fr. Galvani fell seriously ill and Fr. Bertoni sent Fr. Marani to assist the old Benefactor of the Congregation.

1855: Fr. Marani sent a rather bulky array of documents to the Holy See, petitioning the Decree of Praise for the Congregation.

15

1838: Bishop Joseph Grasser, present Bishop of Treviso, was named Bishop of Verona.

1866: Fr. Marani had ordered Fr. Vincent Vignola to prepare a newsletter containing information on the events of interest within the Congregation, that was divided for the first time. The newsletter was a forerunner of the modern ***IL BERTONIANO*** and was entitled: ***Il Nuovo Messaggero Tirolese***.

16

1828: Fr. Bertoni spoke on this day of his hopes of finishing the construction soon at the Stimate, and he feared for the safety of Bro. Zanoli, who worked so very hard on the renovation.

1856: Fr. Cajetan Brugnoli celebrated his last recorded Mass.

1857: Fr. Marani, assisted by Frs. Rigoni and Benciolini, preached the Christmas Novena at Grezzana, that began this night.

17

1808: Fr. Bertoni noted in his Spiritual Diary that he had been reading the ***Spiritual Combat***, by Dom Scupoli, and the ***Imitation of Christ*** attributed to Thomas a Kempis – he resolved to flee negligence.

1859: St. Teresa's Convent at this time had been used as a hospital. The government was presently using it as a barracks for the soldiers. Fr. Marani was taking legal action to have them ousted.

18

1813: The Church of St. Teresa's opened again for public worship, after being closed for some time, due to Napoleon's occupation of Verona.

1818: Francis Cartolari was ordained a Priest.

1819: Monsignor Louis Pacetti died – on **December 20, 1817** he had obtained for Fr. Bertoni the Papal Title of **Apostolic Missionary**.

1841: Ember Saturday⁵ – in Bishop Mutti's residence chapel, John Lenotti was ordained a Deacon.

19

1805: One of the last acts of the Chancery Office under Bishop Avogadro was the signing of the Decree for John Marani's Vestition on this day.

1850: Frs. Lenotti and Fedelini left for a two week Mission at Avio, Trent. It was the first Mission preached by the Fathers of the Congregation in the 'Tyrol.'

20

1801: Michaelangelo Gramego was vested this day in the Church of Sts. Firmus and Rusticus.

1808: Fr. Bertoni noted in his Spiritual Diary that the Vow of Obedience for Superiors binds them directly to God.

1814: Fr. Bertoni wrote to Mother Naudet – she was afraid that should the Salesian Sisters come to Verona, it might put her very Congregation into some jeopardy.

1817: The Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith named Fr. Bertoni an *Apostolic Missionary* on this date. This Decree describes the Missionary Obedience, or Manner, with its repeated emphasis on obedience, serving the purposes of the Bishop, of carrying out the end, or purpose, for the members of the Congregation – which for a number of decades would be known as the Congregation of Apostolic Missionaries.

1833: On this date, the Sisters of the Holy Family founded by Mother Naudet, received approval from Rome.

1873: Ember Saturday⁶ - Richard Tabarelli was ordained.

21

1812: Fr. Bertoni wrote to Mother Naudet on this day and told her that he found her Constitutions praiseworthy.

⁵ i.b.: footnote 15, p. 75.

⁶ i.b.: footnote 15, p. 75.

1833: Cajetan Giaccobbe was ordained a Priest this day – the future and first Biographer of Fr. Gaspar Bertoni.



The Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith named Fr. Bertoni an *Apostolic Missionary* on December 20, 1817.

22

1805: In a sermon on this day, Fr. Bertoni described penance as a most sweet fruit that reconciles one with God – sin destroys the soul, whereas penance reconstructs it.

1832: Bishop Grasser ordained Charles Fedelini a Deacon.

1887: The Congregation celebrated the Golden Jubilee of Pope Leo XIII's ordination to the Priesthood. A special program [an *Accademia*] was held at the Stimate which Cardinal di Canossa attended. In January of this year, the Cardinal himself had celebrated the Silver Jubilee of his Episcopal consecration. Fr. Sterza composed a number of poems that were later published, and Fr. Tabarelli wrote his first theological work, and dedicated it to Leo XIII.

23

1808: Fr. Bertoni noted in his Spiritual Diary that we are to seek God and not consolations.

1853: In seeking approval from the government for the Congregation, Fr. Marani sent his array of documents to Fr. Bragato to be reviewed before presentation to Francis Joseph I.

1876: Melchiade Vivari was ordained a Priest on this day.

24

1865: Sunday – the Fathers of the Congregation, preaching at Riva, as the conclusion of the Mission established a Union to oppose Blasphemy, that was their custom as the conclusion to the Missions they preached.

25

1825: The Holy Year of 1825 and its Indulgences was extended by the Holy Father for six more months. Fr. Bertoni wrote of his satisfaction.

1883: The Golden Jubilee of Fr. Giacobbe's ordination was celebrated today. He was the first biographer of Fr. Bertoni. On this day, Fr. Rigoni preached the sermon.

26

1804: Fr. Bertoni delivered a sermon on the death of the 'just' and the 'unjust.' He stated that even a toothache causes much discomfort – we should think now of the last agony, when our pains may make it impossible to pray – we should do that now.

1805: The 'Peace of Presburg' was signed, which meant that now both sides of the Adige River in Verona was now under French Domination.

1841: On this Feast of St. Stephen, Fr. Biadego was very seriously ill – he suffered a bad spell in the morning, and another one in the evening.

1855: Four of the five Priests at the Stimate left Verona by train to preach the Mission at Caravaggio. Their efforts proved so successful that the Congregation was offered a foundation there, which had to be refused because of lack of members.

1858: A Fr. Achetti wrote to Fr. Marani to thank him for the wonderful Mission that Frs. Lenotti and Vincent Vignola had preached in his parish of St. Peter's in Cariano. Fr. Achetti wrote that the two Priests proved to be most assiduous and charitable Confessors in handling the long lines that came to them.

27

1813: Francis Louis Bertoni, father of Fr. Gaspar Bertoni, died. The register at St. Paul's Parish stated: 'He died strengthened by the Most Holy Eucharist.'

1829: Fr. Bertoni wrote to Mother Naudet that a legal document that would grant the Sisters of the Holy Family the perpetual use of St. Teresa's Convent was being drawn up by a Count Vener.

1835: A young Priest, Fr. Louis Benasutti, offered his First Mass in the Oratory at the Stimate. He had once been a student there at the Stimate as a boy.

1841: Fr. Biadego was dying – and he stated that he was at peace, and the end would soon come for him.

28

1836: A Fr. Louis Pacchera, newly ordained, came back to the Stimate, where he had gone to school as a boy, to offer his First Mass as a Priest.

29

1824: The Holy Father declared that the year 1825 would be the Holy Year.

1828: Fr. Bertoni wrote to Mother Naudet and told her that Fr. Marani was still suffering – he suffered many difficult years from a stomach ailment and also from gall stones.

30

1830: Fr. Bertoni wrote this day that he was glad that the epidemic of smallpox that had scourged Verona was now over.

1868: Fr. Marani, Superior General, visited the Student House at Villazzano – he brought with him an ordained Deacon from Pergine, Trent – Stephen Oss Bals – who had already begun his Novitiate in Verona, and who would continue it at Villazzano.

31

1796: Young Gaspar Bertoni was vested in the Seminary Chapel.

1803: Fr. Bertoni preached on Divine Blessings – he stated that there is a marvelous Divine Providence in all things.

1839: Fr. Cajetan Benciolini, Uncle of Fr. Francis Benciolini, died on this day.

1840: A Dr. Manzoni came to the Stimate for the first time, to treat the ailing student, Louis Ferrari.

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FATHER BERTONI

[1777 – †1853]

AN APOSTLE OF YOUTH