LETTERS OF



FR. JOHN CALABRIA

TO THE

POOR SERVANTS.



TO MY BELOVED BROTHERS

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As the air

penetrates your lungs

and heals you and strengthens you,

so let the thought of God,

of his Providence,

of the greatness of the Opera,

of your very special vocation,

penetrate and pervade all your being

Christians and religious

and let this strengthen you in order to fight

usque ad sanguinem

for the holy Kingdom of God

and for the souls.

(John Calabria 20 August 1928)

Presentation of the Casante

"In this letter I write you with paternal heart, as always at the foot of my Crucifix…" (Lett. 48, Lent 1946).

I put this phrase that we find in one of the letter of Fr. Calabria to his religious, at the beginning of this short presentation of mine because it seems to me that it fully represents the spirit and the intention that vibrate in the letters of the Father to the religious of that time, and to all the religious who came and will come after them.

In these pages, which at each new reading always make the soul startle, we find his "heart of a Father". We as his children cannot remain indifferent in the face of heartfelt appeals that continually resonate in these lines. These texts are a great gift because they truly offer the possibility of a profound revision not only of our life style, but of the whole of our soul: intentions, desires, dreams, hopes that dwell in our hearts are here sifted and evaluated in front of the great call that God gives us and by which he makes us worthy.

These words of our Father John bring us to the root of our call and enjoin an earnest and deep revision. An attentive reading with an openness to conversion, can effectively be an injection of vital lifeblood for our heart, often constrained by preoccupations, and immersed in various problems.

I consider the publication of this book in this time of preparation for the next general Chapter (IX, 2002 – *n.o.t.*), as a further proof of the need to prepare ourselves, in the first place, in a spiritual way to this central event in the life of our religious Family.

In the light of the words of Fr. John we can put aside many a things, but on the other hand we must revive many other things and make the most out of them. It's important to give heed to the living word of Fr. John. In fact we cannot expect to make a realistic inculturation of the charism, a task necessary than ever today, without having fully internalized the original voice of our Founder.

These letters are the most actual means we can have at our disposal for our development as Poor Servants of Divine Providence; they are the mirror in which we can compare our image and eventually bring about appropriate corrections, so that our face shines with greater authenticity the "pure and genuine spirit" with which these pages are pregnant.

And I, while thanking the brothers, who have worked behind this new and expanded edition, for their humble patience and meticulous seriousness, conclude with a good omen. Our Father was writing these letters "at the foot of my Crucifix", then it is our absolute task to read them "at the foot of our Crucifix". This is the perspective through which we have to look at our life, at the Congregation and the entire world. We have to do a continuous *Lectio* (reading and meditation) of the life and existence of Fr. Calabria, in order to metabolize it in all its aspects and make it part and parcel of our life.

May the daily reading, I would dare to say the prayed reading, of these pages accompany our life of the Poor Servants making us first of all holy and, then capable to make bold choices, in conformity with the great call for which the Lord has made us worthy, and wholly dedicated to "Seek first the Kingdom of God".

Fr. Waldemar J. Longo

Verona, 2002

Note to the Readers

This is the third publication of Italian Delegation, edited in order to make the writings of our Father Don Giovanni at hand of the Poor Servants. We started with "*Ti chiamerai Stanislao*" (You Will Be Named Stanislav) (26 November 1997); "*Ai miei cari novizi*" (To May Dear Novices) followed (Epiphany of the Lord 1999); and here is the third publication "*Miei amatissimi fratelli*" (My Dearest Brothers).

As well as the precedent ones, this edition too was conceived for the Poor Servants, so that, according to the same thinking of Don Giovanni, they can be *pervaded, penetrated* and *imbued* by the true spirit, and make treasure of it for their advancement in the divine service inside of the Opera of the Lord.

That's the reason of this publication. Here we have *all the letters of our Father sent to the Poor Servants*. We have the preceding collection "*Lettere del Padre don Giovanni Calabria ai suoi religiosi*" (Letters of Fr. John Calabria to His Religious), care of Fr. Pietro Murari, printed in 1956 by the Press School of Ferrara, and *all other letters that never were published* and perhaps many of us never saw. Some of them were founded in the note books of the Father.

Finally, at the end of this volume we find some letters without any date.

We decided to keep in each letter the same *Code* it has in the Historical Archives.

We already observed in "*Ti chiamerai Stanislao*" that "the style of Don Giovanni sometime is involved, and because he writes as he speaks, we find many suspensions and changes of subjects in his sentences. The ardor to communicate his thinking is meeting often with the slowness of the pen, so that *commas* and *full stops* are left… to the reader".

That's why considering the goal of this book we have cared particularly the understanding of the text, modifying mainly the punctuation, aiming not at betraying Fr. Calabria but rather at making him clearer and more immediate.

We wish the Poor Servants, besides an assiduous reading and meditation, "to personalize" the word of the Father, underlining and commenting, according to their "relish" and "method", what it is saying to their heart. It shall be a further occasion given by the Lord so that his word, mediated by our venerated Father, enters into our life: "The words I say to you are not mine but the Lord's".

We deemed fit to put in the beginning also the *Presentation* that then Casante (Custodian, Superior General) Fr. Luigi Pedrollo made of the book "*Lettere del Padre don Giovanni Calabria ai suoi religiosi*" (Letters of Fr. Giovanni Calabria to His Religious) and the *Press Review* that Domenico Mondrone made in the magazine "*La Civiltà Cattolica*", with an article – known by very few of us – titled "*Colligite fragmenta* (Gather the Crumbs) – *Lettere di Don Giovanni Calabria*" (A. 108, Vol. IV, Quad. 2576, pp. 167-170).

As a conclusion of these short notes, let's consider the exhortation of Don Giovanni:

"*My dear and very beloved brothers, I am really sure that you all will turn into account these poor words of mine. Do not pay attention to the way they are said, but look at the heart they leave from. And just from this moment I can tell you: Blessed!*" (18.12.1918).

Presentation of the first edition of

Letters of the Father to his Religious

My dear and beloved brothers,

Here I am to offer you the first flower, blossomed at the beginning of this fiftieth year [1957, *n.o.t.*] of our humble Opera. We must be grateful to the divine Providence that disposes everything with maternal delicacy and elegance.

I don't spend any word to recommend you to profit from these (letters): I know how much you longed and waited for them. Make them an object of attentive reading and pious meditation. The local Superiors shall apply to them often and preferably, with references and comments, in their weekly meetings.

For us and for those who will come after us the Letters of the Father shall be:

- *A cleansed spring*, from which they will draw the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera;

- *A precious mine*, where we shall discover treasures of teachings and recommendations, of paternal warnings and advices;

- *The last will of the Father*, genuine expression for us of his desires and the last will, to which we shall keep faithful or rather most faithful;

- The *magna charta*, that we always shall consult in order to resolve new problems and delicate questions.

In this way, dear brothers, we shall assure for us the protection and blessing of the heavenly Father, and we know that "*The blessing of the Father makes steady the houses of the sons*" (Sir 3).

Always united in the charity and peace of the Lord, and asking for the help of your prayer, I profess myself as your most beloved in C. J.

Fr. Luigi Pedrollo

Press Review[1] Colligate Fragments

Letters of Fr. John Calabria

The volume appears in an excellent typographical look,[2] I would even say elegant, and it is homage of gratitude offered to the Father by his sons, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Opera of the Poor Servants of Divine Providence, founded by him. And this solicitude demonstrates the esteem and love they cultivate for the word of their founder.

The value of the volume, indeed, is just here: it isn't a biography, or a profile, or a panegyric of the priest recently passed away. It is his frank and genuine word as it flowed from that heart, so humble, simple and paternal, through which he was moulding one by one the souls of his sons, the shape of his communities and the whole feature of his Opera. It is he who reveals himself as he was and remains, who unwillingly offers us the features of his self-portrait. There is no need to say that, just for this, the volume is now fundamental for anybody who wants to write the life of this authentic gem of Italian clergy.

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1 Domenico Mondrone, *Colligite fragmenta*, *Lettere di Don Giovanni Calabria*, in "La Civiltà Cattolica", 12 October 1957, Quaderno 2576, pp. 167-170.

2 Fr. Pietro Murari (c/o), *Lettere del Padre ai religiosi*, Ferrara, Tipografia Casa dei Buoni Fanciulli, 1956, in 8°, pp. 452.

Fr. John Calabria was born neither with a vocation nor with gifts – as commonly they are intended – of a writer. He didn't write any so called treatise. He didn't leave to his own any systematic code of spirituality. However if somebody reads these letters with attention, he may easily find, along with the physiognomy of the man, that of his teaching. Indeed there is a series of basic principles, a logicality of theoretical and practical developments and a homogeneous line of orientation so that we can find all the necessary elements to constitute a treatise.

Certainly Fr. Calabria never thought to compose anything like that. If the unitary, coherent and solid aspect of his teaching doesn't come from a premeditated design systematically elaborated, it surely blossoms from the compactness of his soul that was seeing everything through the integral and unitary simplicity of the gospel, the genuine and unconditioned docility to the Church, the apostolic and disinterested charity toward the souls. Nothing is disharmonic in his life and thinking, in his hidden but fecund activity of priest and founder: that's because of this marvellous convergence of everything to the *unum necessarium* (the only necessary thing) he constantly observed.

Another aspect that strikes the reader of these pages is that they are so stripped of any small shadow of originality. If with originality we intend the search of novelty and things that draw attention, we must say that Fr. Calabria is the negation of all these things. Yet in this commitment not to go out from simple and traditional things lies the secret by which we feel him so near and lively, so actual and modern. And having made his own,

through an assiduous meditation, the spirit of the gospel, he *profert de thesauro suo nova et vetera* (draws out from his treasure new and old things – Mt 13:52). So that the more he advances in his age the more we observe in him an enrichment of sensibility before the actual problems and the needs of the souls.

* * *

The ones gathered in this volume are eighty eight letters, from February 1932 up to October 1954: a little more than twenty years. However, they are only a small part of all the letters Fr. John Calabria wrote from his small room of San Zeno in Monte; if we can gather all of them we shall fill various volumes. We have here only the letters to religious, to his religious. Therefore, though in their humble form, they have a clear character of circular letters, aimed at imparting directives and exhortations. They are like a periodical conversation he was having with his own, and of the conversation they keep the taste of intimacy, the desire to entertain with each one of them, above all in order to insist on some points he considers very important for their formation and the maintenance of the spirit by which he tried to enrich the Poor Servants of Divine Providence.

But, as it happens for all the teachings coming from some men full of God, thus the word of Fr. Calabria, as it is in these letters, does no more remain a monopoly reserved to his religious family. It becomes substantial bread for all, mainly for secular and regular priests and for all who work in the field of apostolate. Those who fill a

need of an enlightened and sure word, of an advice about how to give without exhausting themselves, how to work without being sterile, how to draw other out from mud without staining themselves, in these letters without speculative flights and psychological deepening, they will find the secret of what they desire, communicated to them with such a simplicity that hardly we can find elsewhere.

What characterizes better the spiritual and formation teachings of this priest of God is the absolute denying of any accommodation and conformism with the world. He implacably hates the spirit of the world that he considers and identifies with the spirit of Satan, the irreducible antagonist of God and of the whole work of God. If we try to resume in few words advises, directives and warnings we find in these letters, we could reduce all in only one binomial: "Beware of the world... Put on Jesus Christ". This is the nail he beats and on which he returns on each page, also when a letter seems to be conceived with another goal. I rather would say that the only anxiety able to trouble his soul so abandoned and anchored in God, for himself and the destiny of his family, is that insinuated by the fear that the worldly spirit can infiltrate in only one of his sons, and through him into the framework of the Opera, that he wants to be considered all and only as an Opera of God.

Aware as he is of the arts by which the world uses to catch the souls by noose, mainly those consecrated to God, Fr. Calabria is searching them out one by one in their journey, unmasks their deceits, and all the illusions that very often are insinuated under the appearance of good, gives the criteria how to beware of them, how to discern the genuine gold from the false one, and indicates every

time the pillars to which they have to anchor not to deviate from the spirit of Christ. It is continuous, often impressing at his sight the vision of a drifting world, of the overturn of the spiritual values, the ruin by which the souls are swept away, and the remote and immediate causes that contribute to these problems. Among them, with firm and conscious insistence, he denounces the responsibility of those who should be the salt of the earth and they are not, the light of the world and they are not, the models of a gospel integrally lived, before than preached, and they are not.

* * *

"Our spirit, remember well, is the opposite of the spirit of the world. *Nolite conformari huic saeculo!* Do not conform yourself to this world! The Poor Servant must be in opposition to the world, mainly the today's world. Woe if he allows the spirit of the world to penetrate into his heart! We are *in* the world, it's true, but the duty impends not to be *of* the world; like the ship that ploughs the sea, but the sea does not penetrate into it at all".

And insisting on this gracious image: "The ship, Fr. Calabria goes on, keeps over the water; in the same manner we have to stay over the mud and corruption of the world, despising the maxims and perverse examples; were we overcome, as the ship that would be immersed into the whirlpool of the ocean, it should be the shipwrecked and the ruin.

And again: “The ship does not linger in the sea, but follows its route to the arbour; thus we must never forget the end of creation, the goal of our vocation; we have to think that the end of our day is not so far, and at the end of our life a prize will be reserved for us if, like the good servants, our Owner will find us vigilant in our goo works”.

Embittered before the incoherence between the exigencies of the gospel and the practical life that dominates everywhere, he tries to put at the sight of his sons all the kinds of this incoherence. To pray, to live of supernatural values, to be detached from all things, to aim constantly at the renewal, to keep abandoned to the hands of the Providence, to be jealous of the designs of God on the Opera, to understand and live its actuality in today’s times, to love poverty in spirit and actual poverty, to renounce any research of human support, to have in horror what can attempt to diminish submission and absolute love for the Church, not to neglect even one of the classic cautions used and inculcated by the saints in order to keep the religious and priestly spirit: all this is not still enough for Fr. Calabria.

It’s not enough; and here Fr. Calabria goes down to some details that a superficial person could judge as minuteness, littleness, and meanness, good to lessen the souls, to form a closed mentality and introduce a formalist spirit. See for example the importance he attaches to the absolute prohibition against smoking in public and private, against certain worldly affectations of dressing, of cultivating hair, against the free use of photo camera and being photographed in groups with women, using the bicycle without need, taking part in feast meals among privates, in

trips for pleasure, in playing cards,[3] in attaching to some places and persons, to pretend some particular treatment, and so on.

Are they truly minuteness? For a saint certainly they are not. And Fr. Calabria doesn't know any logic than the saints', that finally is the logic of the gospel. It is the same gospel led to its extreme nuances, accepted in its fullness, without glosses and escapes. This is a gospel give by a crucified God, whose doctrine being based on the crucifixion, is the complete overturn of what the world loves and is searching for. Thus Fr. Calabria sanctified himself, and his teaching is either wholly accepted or it is no more his own.

Domenico Mondrone S.J.

[3] Fr. Calabria since his childhood was ill impressed by the card game made in the pubs, often accompanied with frays and blasphemies.

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE

In the humble abode of the Calabrian family, Giovanni Oreste Maria Calabria, the seventh and the youngest son of Luigi Calabria and Angela Foschio was born in Verona, Italy on October 8, 1873. Poverty was his mistress right from his birth. But despite of this, the Divine Providence intervened and helped him carry these tough sufferings. Nothing else was in the heart and mind of this boy but to become a priest in order to serve the poor, especially the poorest of the poor. Very early he became orphan of the father and was obliged to work in order to help the family. But, by its wonderful ways, the divine Providence helped him to complete his studies in the seminary, overcoming very hard difficulties, in the person Fr. Pietro Scapini, rector of San Lorenzo, who noticed the virtues of this boy and prepared him privately for the admission examination into the seminary. Having passed the exams, he was admitted to the higher secondary school, but his studies were interrupted by two years of military service.

Having terminated his military service, he resumed his studies. One very cold night in 1897, as he was returning home from a visit to the sick, he found a boy crouching on the doorstep of his house; he had run away from the Gypsies. Fr. Calabria picked him up, took him in, kept him in his house and shared his room with him. According to him, “There is always a place for a son of God”. It was the beginning of his works in favor of the orphaned and the abandoned boys.

A few months later he founded the "Pious Union for Assistance to the Sick". These were only the beginnings of a life marked by charity. "Every instant of his life was a personification of St. Paul's marvelous hymn on charity", wrote a Jewish woman doctor in her "Lettera Postulatoria" to Paul VI about Fr. Calabria. She had been on hiding from Nazi-Fascist persecution in one of his religious institutes.

After being ordained as a priest on August 11, 1901, he was appointed confessor of the seminary and curate of St. Stephen's Church. He devoted himself to hear confessions and to charitable works, helping the poor and the marginalized. Fr. Calabria was seen to go through the streets of the city personally in search of young homeless, to propose them a shelter, education and Christian formation.

In the first years of the apostolate of Fr. Calabria there occurred a beautiful incident in his life. In fact, he shared this event to Msgr. Chiot. Fr. Calabria said to Msgr. Chiot: "I have something great to tell you. Last night, I have read the whole Gospel". And Msgr. Chiot said: "This is not a great thing; which priest has not read the Gospel?" But Fr. Calabria explained: "I have read it and preached it many times. However, the night before yesterday after an unhappy day, I felt something strange. I was surprised and bewildered. What a great thing is the Gospel! Listen, 'do not worry about food, about clothes, do not worry, your Father knows'".

He continued turning and turning again those pages really entrancing. He had particularly underlined the "paradoxes" of the Gospel. They are so opposite to current values that they seem impracticable. However, they are not so for a saint. God deeply conquered his soul. "Conversion to the Gospel" would lead all his life.

In 1907, he was appointed vicar of St. Benedict "al Monte". On November 26, 1907, he founded the "*Casa Buoni Fanciulli*" (the "*Good Boys Home*"). The following year it move definitively to Via San Zeno in Monte, considered today the motherhouse of his religious Congregation.

The service of the poor children was lived in the most absolute poverty, totally trusting in the Divine Providence. Thus was born the Congregation of the "Poor Servants of Divine Providence", composed of Priests and Brothers. The Lord also sent him lay people wishing to offer their lives to God. This nucleus of men was the foundation of the Congregation of the Poor Servants of Divine Providence, approved by the Bishop of Verona on February 11, 1932 and receiving pontifical approval on April 25, 1949.

Immediately after the diocesan approval, the Congregation spread to various parts of Italy, serving the poor, the abandoned and the marginalized. It also extended its works to the elderly and to the sick. In 1910, he founded the female branch, which later became a Congregation of diocesan right on March 25, 1952 with the name of Poor Servants of Divine Providence Sisters; on December 25, 1981 it obtained pontifical approval.

He became a prophetic voice; Bishops, priests, religious and the laity found in him a sure guide for themselves and their projects. He gave lay people the possibility of living the same charism but at home with their families and in a professional setting. And in 1944, he founded the "Family of External Brothers", made solely of laymen.

Father Calabria always refused to be given the title of "founder". He said the real founder of the Congregation is God. The charism of the Poor Servants, drawn from the Gospel, is to

live and restore in the world faith in God the Father, totally abandoned in His divine Providence, dedicating themselves to the poorest and the marginalized, in order to show that God cares for His creatures.

Father Calabria was also a true man of the universal Church. His love for the Church was shown in his obedience to the Bishop, in sending religious to the missions, in his care for priests in need of spiritual recovery, in his gratuitousness for vocations coming from poor sick people. He prayed, wrote, suffered and made himself animator of courageous initiatives for an apostolic return to the Gospel and worked with zeal for the unity of Christians.

After 1950, he would spend the remaining years of his life in great sufferings. However, for Father Calabria the suffering he lived was – as he wrote – "a gift of God", and he lived it in patience, prayer and abandonment to the will of God.

On the eve of his death he made his last act of charity, offering his life to God for the dying Pope Pius XII. The Lord accepted this offer; indeed while he was dying, the Pope mysteriously and unexpectedly recovered and lived for another four years. Fr. Calabria died on December 4, 1954 and Pope John Paul II canonized him on April 18, 1999.

The work, St. John Calabria had begun is now continued on a wider scale not only in Italy but throughout the world, present in 13 countries: India, Philippines, Italy, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Colombia, Romania, Russia, Angola and Kenya.

The Letters of the Father to his Religious

Editors notes.

Almost all the letters of Fr. Calabria to his religious are ending with “in C.J. Sac. J. Calabria”; it means: “in Corde Jesu (in the Heart of Jesus) Father John Calabria” (see for ex. lett. *6282, 18-6-1911). We translated: “in C.J. Fr. J. Calabria”.

We also respected the different ways in which the dates are written; for example, the months sometime are written by a number and sometime by letters.

The direct speech sometime is written in inverted commas and sometime without these signs, sometime it starts with a capital letter, sometime with a small letter; in any case we respected the option of Fr. Calabria.

Sometime Fr. Calabria uses capital letters for the words House, Brother, etc. and sometime he uses small letters. Again, we respected the options of Fr. Calabria.

*6481 Verona 24-12-1909

My dearest brothers

If I were not tired, I would personally have come to give you my most kind and sincere regards for the Holy Christmas. What great solemnity is it for a Christian the feast of tomorrow! However, for us this day has a greater and more significant meaning: it marks the beginning of a new spiritual life, all directed towards the good of the souls the Divine Providence has deigned to entrust to our care.

Beloved brothers, my Fr. Diodato, let us all gather around the grotto of Bethlehem and let us tell the Divine Baby that we really want to consecrate ourselves to Him and to sacrifice everything for His glory and for the good of the souls. This, dear brothers, is the divine will, this is the purpose for which the beloved Christ has gathered us all together.

My brothers, we are united with the affable chain of charity. So let love always reign in the House of the God of charity.

I urge this charity so much to everyone.

Charity is the only means why this house reigns and spreads out.

In these days, I have prayed so much to Jesus so that he may grant me the grace to know what is useful to this house, to our inmates and, I confess you, I have felt in my heart this voice: goodness.

So charity among you, among us; let us bear each other, let us always deal gently; charity, charity with our boys: so that they can see and perceive that we are just moved by love towards them.

Let punishment be rare, let us take them from our heart, because this is the will of God, and when they are punished let them see and understand that we are more saddened in punishing them than they in receiving.

I urge you then the practice of piety and I recommend you a special devotion for the holy Eucharist. Oh, yes! To Jesus, we have in our house; let us tell him everything, and literally everything.

I also propose you the observance of the Rules, my dear brothers, and then, let us go forward with cheerfulness, because we are in the House of the Lord.

Don Diodato and you my brothers, throwing at your feet I humbly beg your forgiveness for everything and, by the grace of Child Jesus, I promise to begin a good and holy life.

Happy Christmas! Let God make you all saints.

I invoke God's blessing,

Yours faithfully in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

6282 18-6-1911

My dear brothers,

A word, as spontaneously it comes, I address you, my dear brothers, and the word is the following one: blessed are you who are counted among those the beloved Jesus has a special fondness. Yes, my dear brothers, I really feel that our Lord, thru you, by listening to this poor priest, wants to do great things for his glory, for the good of souls and for the sanctification of your souls. For God's sake, for God's sake, cooperate!

I recommend you the Rules. Be careful to observe them. When you feel bored, tired, raise your eyes, up, up, look at Jesus, think of him and say only a little while and then ... eternal joy.

My God, what ruin of souls, what a sad society! Moreover, you, in God's plan, have to save it. How? By learning from Jesus, and imitating and learning from the life of the Apostles.

Dear brothers pray for me very much: listen to me, have compassion on me and we shall be happy. Let us try to become like rags and, thus, we'll do great things.

Invoking upon every one the best, yours faithfully in *Corde Jesu.*

Fr. J. Calabria

*8091 Verona – St. Mattia[4] 18-12- 1918

To my dear and much beloved brothers on the forthcoming holy Christmas feast.

My dearest and much beloved,

How I thank and praise the divine Providence that has made me possible, the necessity to refresh a little my poor health, brothers, to go out of the House here in silence. And the same Providence gives me the great grace to write you, at the foot of the Cross these poor words of mine that tell all my great love for you, for your souls, for the House we all by pure grace belong to by the mercy of God.

Beloved brothers, what all things I should like to tell you, in these holy days that precede the great feast of the Holy Christmas. Moreover, how many recommendations I wish to make in the name of the absolute Master who rules over and governs this House of his, with a particular Providence, He, and not others has founded[5].

But you know that I am poor, really poor. But do not let that my poverty prevents you from listening

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4 The family Ederle had set at the disposition of Fr. John a flat in their house at St. Matthias where he could take rest in some special moment of tiredness.

5 The readers must be ready to read a bit twisted thought, but understandable, the Father in manifold ways exposes to his religious.

these poor words, as they spring spontaneously out of my heart. Because, my dear, in the place of the Custodian I am for the pure Mercy of God, the Absolute Master. He dictates and says what he wants and all that is useful for his glory, for our sanctification and for the good of the Opera, to which we all belong free of charge because of his goodness.

My dearest brothers, for God's sake listen count it important, and put into practice all that I am telling you! Remember that a day will come, a moment will come and this will be when we shall appear in front of the Divine Judge. At that moment, we shall be much accountable for the observance of our Rules! And woe to us if we let fall this seed, because, let us keep well in our minds, from this (observance of our rules) depends our eternal happiness or grief. But I hope, or I am sure that we shall observe our Rules till the end with the help of blessed Jesus and with the intercession of the Immaculate Virgin. They also will be useful for us like a pass for Heaven. And we shall start, immediately, during these holy days that precede the Holy Christmas to commit ourselves in their clear-cut observance.

My dear brothers, I am conscious that I have said and said many times that this House is a great One and that all those who live in it are fortunate. This is because if people who are here live well and correspond to their special vocation they are granted with their blessed eternity.

Brothers, we have no uniforms, we have no special badge, because the great Master does not want them for us, but remember to keep well in your minds that our badge, our uniforms must be the practice of the holy Gospel. Our

life has to be a continuously open book, where everyone can read and learn great and divine lessons, not only here, in the House, but also out in the world. We must be light and salt for everybody, with the grace of God.

We call ourselves and we are all brothers. Oh, what a beautiful word this is! How many things this nice, sweet and dear word can tell us. Oh my dear brothers, for God's sake, do not let that this word is ever and ever denied in its practical meaning! We are all equal, there is no difference, no speciality, because we are all equally called by the great Master, we are all under the same roof, we have all the same job, we have all the same goal.

If you have a particular gift, remember that this quality comes from God who has given it graciously to you and that he can take it out. One day you will have to answer for it to God, according to the divine saying: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luke 12, 48)

I recommend you the mutual love; treat each other with charity, sweetness, with good manner and with reciprocal compassion. We are brothers; we are in the hand of the divine Providence.

Providence! Oh, how beautiful is this word for all Christians, but particularly, for us who are his favorite sons. It has for us its own singular particularities, as special must be the virtues that distinguish us!

Dear brothers, let us live like rags, like clay in the hands of the divine Providence.

The temporality, the human means ... we do not have to think about them because they are supplementary

things that our good mother, the divine Providence, gives us on condition that we search the Kingdom of God and his justice.

If we follow this program we shall astonish the entire world.

Nobody is necessary in this House. The Providence needs nobody, or, better, it needs that we are humble, that we are rags, that we are without our head.

It wants us willing to everything but not in theory but in the practice.

That is to say to stay in one place and to go to another, to be in that position and to go to the last place in order to obey the one who leads the House in the name of God.

And because I am speaking about obedience, let me, dear brothers, recommend to you so much this virtue so necessary for our spiritual advantage and very necessary for the life of the community. Obey promptly, blindly, cheerfully, without complaints, without comments about the third or the fourth (comma), without showing, with our faces or speeches etc. to the others that you have obeyed but reluctantly.

Many times, the person who, in the name of God governs the House thinks that it is necessary to give a particular order to do a particular thing but he does not give it because he foresees that, that order will not be done or they'll do it unwillingly. So, in order to avoid all these disadvantages, he is obliged to defer those orders, those instructions to more suitable times even if they would be

useful for the greater glory of God and for the good of the House.

Dear brothers, do not ever impede the plans of God, always obey and remember that obedience is the daughter of humility.

Maintain humility, oh dear brothers, humility. Let us ask it with urgency in our prayers, we priests in the holy Mass, let us ask this virtue that is the foundation of all others. Because, my dear, without this virtue all our deeds, our actions, our plans melt away like the snow in the sun or like the dust in the wind! Do not let us lose the sight of our divine model, Jesus Christ.

If we have the humility, we'll also have the other very important virtue: the charity that Saint Paul calls the bond of perfection.

Charity, my dear brothers, here is our uniform, here is our particular sign. Together with charity we have all the other virtues: patience, sweetness, mutual compassion towards our defaults. So do not let us tell a single word against charity. Let us keep well in mind that communities that were really flourishing were destroyed for the lack of this virtue.

The Master of this House is God, who is called "Charity" in the Holy Scriptures, *"Deus Caritas Est"* (1 John 4: 8) and it is impossible that he can live in a place where charity is unknown or is not practiced.

If unfortunately some little friction could happen, some lack of charity towards our own brothers, let us remember, my dear, a point of our holy Rule. It says that we should not go and have a rest before becoming

reconciled according to the principle of the holy gospel from which all our holy Rules come.

The Rules! For all I can and know I recommend you the strict observance of all the Rules in general and of each of them in particular. The assurance, the diffusion, the steadiness of this great house is committed to us by the observance of the holy Rules. As you know they are rules dictated by the one who governs this Opera in the name of the Absolute Master. And woe is to us, terrible woe if this Opera stops because of carelessness or negligence.

Brothers, I recommend you the Rules, the observance of the Rules. Do not let anybody be exempted from this but with the explicit permission of the Custodian.

Unfortunately, my dear brothers, in the past, for various circumstances, many of our rules were not strictly observed. With the help of the grace we must commit ourselves to observe them so that, at death's door, we won't hear these words*: "Vae vobis"*

And at this point it is important to remember what I said speaking about obedience. If you could know how it is painful to call this or that brother to order because he does not observe this or that Rule! Please, my dear brothers save me this sorrow and observe or better let us all observe our holy Rules. Do this for the good of your souls and for the triumph and the diffusion of this great Opera!

In this letter I would like to tell you some particularities about Rules but God willing, I shall speak about it in the spiritual retreats I shall have together with

the brothers. I only particularly recommend to you the Rule about the practice of piety that it is necessary we do together. Let us be punctual, precise: let us do the holy meditation, the spiritual reading, the examination of our conscience, the visit to the Most Blessed Sacrament.

My dear brothers we continuously have to give, but in order to give we need first to receive and we receive from the great spiritual nourishment given by the practices of piety.

I recommend you the rule of the monthly statement and that of penitence that are so precious for our souls. And I also recommend you that no drawers are closed and, in case it is the Custodian should have the spare key.

My so beloved brothers, very soon, with the grace of God, our dear young brothers will come back from military training. With the grace of God they all come back full of salutary enthusiasm. Let us really be a light of good example for these of our dear brothers and all united in one only body let us accomplish the great plan God, our absolute master, has in mind for this House that will be rich and assured if we observe our holy Rules with true spirit and for the love of God.

My dear and very beloved brothers, I am really sure that you all will turn into account these poor words of mine. Do not pay attention to the way they are said, but look at the heart they leave from. And just from this moment I can tell you: blessed!

This House will go on and no obstacle will be able to stop it only if we maintain that spirit, that force, which

life God has put like a base. Moreover we shall continuously, like the sun, communicate this life, this spirit to many others and they will do the same with others and so on.

Brothers, we have a great mission to accomplish. God gives us so that we too give to the others. The poor, the sick, the spiritually dead are a lot. With the grace of God let us cure, comfort, and give rise to them!

Dear brothers I always pray and I shall particularly pray during these holy days and I offer my pain for you and this House, but you too remember to pray for me! I really need great mercy. Let us be united in charity of blessed Jesus in these few days.

Let us share together the bread of grief and of the suffering and then we shall be all united forever in the blessed native land that is the Heaven.

From the depth of my heart I greet you and I send you my most sincere greetings for the Christmas feast; let us all give rise to a totally spiritual life

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria.

***14 18-4-1920**

To my dear and beloved brothers of the subsidiary House in St. Gaetano (Costozza – Vicenza)

My dear, at this moment I'd like to be near you also with my body, because I am always near you with my spirit, my soul, my prayer to tell you the word of the Father. He loves you so much and so ardently desires first your sanctification and then the sanctification of the souls Jesus has entrusted to you. Moreover he desires the execution of the great plans that the blessed Jesus has about this House. This achievement is strictly and merely linked to your cooperation and to the important grace Jesus has done to you all. It is a grace given to you by calling you to become part of this really great Opera that has the holy gospel as a base, a principle.

My dear, for God's sake, and for your souls, for the blood of blessed Jesus, please do your best to live according to your vocation: This vocation is really proper in these present, disastrous, sad times, but, they are also, times of great mercy from the blessed Jesus. He has risen you, my dear brothers and you are the instruments to cure, to comfort, to recall to the right path so many souls.

My dear, if you live virtuously according to your vocation, you will not have to envy those who were, are, and will be, great before the world, the kings, the important people in this world because you are directly and in a particular way, God's.

My dear brothers ensure and continue this way; do we live like rags, with great faith and abandonment in the divine Providence? Be without reasoning, humble and listen to the one who governs this House in the name of Lord.

All depends on you. My God what great responsibility weighs on you, on us but at the same time

what weight of glory! I assure you that before dying you will see, like Saint Stephen, the open sky and ahead of time you will taste the rapture of Heaven.

In the plans of God you have another task in addition to that of being a spiritual and material advantage for the creatures entrusted to you. Remember it well. And the task is to be light, to be an esteemed light house.

My dear brothers everybody looks at us and wants to see in us what Jesus has given us. For God's sake! Let us be light, light and light! All that for a secular person a silly thing is serious matter for us, is a sacrilege. So be careful for God's sake!

Let us keep in mind that all passes and that death will come. Woe to us if it happened to be lacking in virtue at that hour while we have been so much time in spiritual riches!

Ah, but I hope that you all will understand! Won't you?

Give great importance to the Rules, do love Jesus and every being in His name, let charity reign supreme among you. Remember that the Opera goes up in smoke and in ruin if it lacks charity.

About the angelic virtue I have no sufficient words to tell you how it is necessary and to tell you what ruin, what malediction it would be to be the victim, even for a little time, of the opposite vice.

My dear brothers, I have written these poor words at the feet of the Cross and for the good of your souls and

of the Opera. Please listen to them and put them into practice, for God's sake!

Do, please, pray, pray, pray for me so that the great mercy of God forgives all my sins and we all can meet in Heaven one day.

I bless you, in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria.

*32 17-11-1920

To my dear and so beloved brothers of the House at Costozza.

Since a lot of time I have deeply desired in my heart to write you, my beloved friends, and to tell you in the Lord what I feel. And I desire to do so first for the good of your souls and for your sanctification and then for the steadiness and the diffusion of this Opera, that is a prodigy and mercy of our times.

My dear and beloved friends, for God's sake, mind to correspond to the really great grace God has done to you calling you to take part freely of this Opera! The Congregation is extraordinary like extraordinary will be the prize the Lord will give you if you are faithful to it. But if unfortunately, do not let God happen it! Somebody did not correspond to it, it would be better for him not have entered this Congregation, because this would be his ruin and malediction.

Dear and beloved brothers, you, we, have received a lot from God. So let us remember well that we have a lot to give.

The absolute, whole abandonment in the loving arms of the divine Providence is the capital and main point of this Congregation. So, my dear brothers, our eyes, our minds, all our selves have to see, to think, to be of the Providence. So a whole abandonment: let that all that happens and occurs like mishaps, trials, persecutions etc. come from the Providence that orders and permits for our benefit.

Let us remember to be faithful and generous in the trials, because they are the great assets of God for us. Woe to the one who could not see and bless the hand of God that comes through those trials, purify, test us and make us stronger in our great vocation!

From the primary point that is the abandonment in the arms of the divine Providence, derives the practice of the fraternal charity. I really recommend it to you because this is the great flywheel of the religious communities in general and particularly of our community. If you want that the absolute Master be always among us and that we are with him, let us love and practise charity: *Deus caritas est...*[6]

Far, far from us be the damned grumbling. Love each other. Do not let anybody criticize his brother, whisper about his behavior. If anybody lacks in this important virtue, should happen because of human fragility, my dear, become reconciled with your brother

[6] God is love.

before the sunset. Holy charity is such a delicate virtue and we can be short of it in thousands of ways. So, my dear brothers, be careful! Be only one heart, only one soul, respect ourselves reciprocally: no more witticisms, no insinuations, and no words that can insult your brother.

I particularly recommend you the charity, the good example at the presence of these boys who are collected here to receive this good example.

Together with the abandonment to God and the charity I recommend you the holy humility that is the foundation of the holy religion. Many times we lack charity because we are not humble. Let us keep carved in our minds our being nothing. Because, if we have some gift, remember it is not ours it comes from God. And God does not need anybody and he uses only humble people and he pushes away and abases the vain. About this conceit do not let us forget Jesus Christ, our model. Do not ever forget his divine words: ”if any man will come after me, let him deny himself ...”(Matthew 16,24; Mark 8,34; Luke 9,23). If we are able to make our ego die, we are sure we shall find God.

Abandonment, charity, humility and obedience. And let the last one be quick, blind cheerful. Do not do anything without asking and depending from the one Lord has put to govern this House and, you know that this man is Fr. Luigi Woe to that brother who wanted to be independent and do by himself: he would dig his own ditch!

Christian virtues lead to the others therefore together with humility, charity and obedience, also poverty and purity come.

Dear brothers, let Jesus the poor, be your model, let Jesus the pure, holy and spotless be your standard. As much as we can say, the virtue of the holy purity is not recommended enough. My God, if we had to be lacking about this beautiful virtue of purity, what a great ruin would be for the brother and for this Opera!

Dear brothers I recommend you vigilance, vigilance, vigilance. God can see me!

Be cautious in the relationships, be guarded in everything. You know our Rules, in a special manner about this point: never lay hands on anybody, neither just kidding, do not take boys by the hand, or worse caress them and kiss them and tell them confidentially something that our Lord does not certainly like. Remember that I am extremely resolute about this point because it is of great importance. Let everybody control and nobody is exempted from this close watch.

Keep the boys where they are supposed to be. Do not let any of them receive special tasks or be removed from his place without a due permission given by the person who is put as the custodian of this subsidiary House.

Let every brother be faithful to the task given to him by the Providence and do not fiddle with others' business. I give full and absolute power to my dear Fr. Luigi about the assignments in the House. Let him arrange things as he desires in the name of God and let all obey him not as if they were forced, but for the love of God and for the holy virtue of obedience.

Let every letter or correspondence received or sent by the brothers be first read by Fr. Luigi, who fully represents your Fr. John Calabra.

I should tell you many other things, my dear and beloved brothers. I delegate our Fr. Luigi to express voice to my thought and to tell you what I have personally told him.

Pray, pray, pray the mercy of God on me.

Deeply from my heart I bless you and pray that we can meet one day in Heaven.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria.

P.S. I desire that Fr. Luigi, give me a precise account of the House and of the Brothers every month. So we can help each other to go ahead in the way of God

4229 Verona, 12-11-1921.

My dear little brothers[7],

Let the grace of Jesus be always with you. Oh, how you have been preferred by Jesus! You must not envy none

[7] To the community of Costozza.

of the Apostles and none of the first Christians, because Jesus has sheltered you with graces and mercies. I am extremely sure of it. For God's sake, do please correspond to this, with the divine help, and you will be blessed now and in the eternity!

We know that the devil will not stay still and that he will try every kind of ways, but you, who are strong, listen to your Fr. Luigi, arm yourselves with the weapons of the prayer, of mercy and of the sacraments and you will be terrible for the devils.

Cogo, I wish to see you, to take care of the church; Faccioli I desire to see you fat and full of love for God, united to the quiet Ceriani and to the reckless Trotti[8].

Be cheerful in God even if it is cold. Pray for me, very much. On the first November I have renewed the promises of the holy Baptism and, while I am writing,

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[8] Augusto Cogo, born in 1902, entered the Opera in 1946. Ordained priest on 6.6.1925, made religious profession immediately after the diocesan approval, on 4.3.1932 and was expelled by the Apostolic Visitor, Ab. Caronti on 12.2.1936. The Bishop of Verona incardinated him suddenly in his diocese.
Angelo Faccioli was affected by a grave exhaustion, perhaps as a consequence of the hard diseases of military life during the war 1915-18. Because of this physical frailty, with his regret and Fr. Calabria's, left the Congregation in 1924.
Giulio Ceriani took part in the war, got prisoner and was brought to Sigmuorberg (Austria). Left the Congregation, studied theology at Ferrara and became a priest. Afterwards returned to the diocese of Verona, was a parish priest at Finetti and finally a helper in the Cathedral.
Of Trotti we couldn't have any news.

I am only 12 days passed! Let Jesus give me the perseverance as a gift.

Let our Lord be with you and let us all have the possibility of meeting in Heaven.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***5408 10-4-1925**

My dear,[9]

The Risen Jesus comes into you all with graces and special help. Let him grant you the grace of loving him so much and allow you to sacrifice everything for his love, with the certainty to receive one day, the great gift and the eternal happiness.

Always pray for the poor in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

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[9] To the community of Este. This house was opened in 1920, and after many painful events, was closed in November 1927. On 28 May of that year Fr. Calabria writes in his *Diary*: "After seven years of sorrows and tests the house of Este, given by the Providence in a particular way, was taken away from us. *Dominus dedit*… May all things be for the greatest glory of God and the good of souls. God is right and is able to treat his Works in a manner fit for God. *Fiat, fiat*".

4111 Verona 22-9-1925

To all my dearest brothers in Este.

Deep in my heart I invoke all the most elected blessings and I wish that, with the divine grace they increase more and more the spirit of this very great Opera and gain many merits for the Paradise.

Always pray for yours in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

8239 24-1-1926

Dear brothers,[10]

I deeply recommend you to go on behaving well under the eyes of God and the observance of our Rules. Blessed you if you will behave this way! My pains continue; pray.

Always near you, I bless you

Yours very affectionately in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

[10] To the community of Este.

*277 Verona 21-3-1926

My dearest brothers,

Having tears in my eyes, I recommend you to be united in the love of Jesus, in full charity. Oh, how many things you will do, what a beautiful place in Paradise you'll have if you live in charity, in love towards God and the fellow creatures!

Trials, pains, sorrows will not lack, but they will be blessed trials that will cement God's Opera.

Dear priests, be one, you all, brothers, only one.

Pray for me and forgive your in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria.

*8241 Verona, 24-3-1926

My dearest brothers *in Domino*,[11]

I am far but at the same time very near you all. I hope that my continuous trials and pains blessed by Jesus

[11] To the community of Este.

will give advantage to your souls and also to the Congregation in Este that continuously and in different manners, saddens me. I recommend you the spirit of the Opera

that is humility, charity, observance of the Rules and also I advise you to be ready to everything.

Pray for me, but remember and comfort, with your holy religious life the person who, blessing you, proclaims himself in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***8242 Verona, 25-4-1926**

My beloved brothers,[12]

my thought often flies also to Este and, in the midst of my continuous trials I address my poor prayer also to you and to this House. I tell Jesus to look at you, to bless you, to make you saints so that we can all meet up there in the holy Heaven one-day.

I recommend your holy vocation to you. Oh, remember that it is great and take care to conform to it! Be docile, be humble, let all be for Jesus; be light of good example to the dear sons and fortunate you!

[12] To the community of Este.

The holy month dedicated to the Madonna is approaching. Live it well, better than the other years, do it also following my intention.

Pray for me, I really need your prayer. I suffer and pray for you and for the Opera.

I dearly greet and bless you

Yours affectionately in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***8243 9-5-1926**

My dear brothers in Jesus Christ,[13]

Let grace and the peace of blessed Jesus be always with you.

As many other times I told you, I always keep you in my mind and in my heart and I pray to Jesus our Lord, so that you can always understand the very great grace that he gave you. The grace of calling you in this extremely great Opera that was born and has grown up in his sacred Side.

For God's sake, please conform to it! All the secret of this great Opera is within us. If we live according to our

[13] To the community of Este.

spirit and our holy Rules, ready to everything, like rags, oh, we are sure that no human strength, no devilish attack can damage this House! This divine plant will grow to the glory of God and to the benefits of souls.

My new cross, which has started in Rome, continues from more to less.[14] Let that all of them be in expiation of my sins for your goodness and sanctification, and for the goodness of this House. I am very comforted in knowing you are good and ready to everything. Pray for me, raise your eyes up to the sky, and let our thought go to the Paradise.

I bless you all

Yours affectionately in J.C.

Fr. John Calabria

***4973 Verona, 4-10-1926**

Beloved brothers,[15]

[14] In the *Diary*, on 29 October 1925, Fr. Calabria writes: "From 17 to 26 I was in Rome. I suffered days of agony". And on 11 November again he notes: "I suffer physical pains, but above all moral that cannot be expressed by words. I have some slight glimmer of light, but immediately afterwards, thick darkness…" On 24 February 1926 he returns to the same subject: "From my going to Rome I started a new series of sorrows and pains that still continues…"

[15] To the community of Este.

Let the spirit of blessed Jesus pervade all your souls and bless you. I am always under pressure, pray a lot for me, please. Let the holy will of God come true.

Brother Savietto can come tomorrow, but I do not yet know which the exact day is, I hope he will come on 6th.

Blessing you all in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

Listen your Fr. Soga[16] as if I was myself and God will bless you.

*140 Verona, 16-10-1927

Dear brothers in Costozza,

Please, conform to your great vocation; be humble, ready to do everything, only aim at the holy Kingdom of God and his justice. As long as I know and as I can, I recommend you to listen and to obey in everything to your Fr. Luigi, who was put there by God as your custodian and guide of sanctification.

Pray a lot for your poor in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

[16] Fr. Giovanni Soga, Superior of the community of Este.

I bless you all.

P.S. The one who tells you that you do not possess the spirit of the House is a liar; nobody told this, never, and take care that nobody ever tells this too.

10340 Verona, 20-10-1927

To the religious Poor Servants – Costozza.

The holy monthly spiritual retreat to prepare for a good death is such a grace given us by Jesus that only when we are at the death' door we will be able to esteem.

For God's sake, let us act well during this holy spiritual retreat! In these few hours let us only think of our souls and not of earthly or secular things: which profits to gain, what we can put away for eternity. Let us weep, deeply detest over our sins and let us do, with the grace of God, some serious objectives.

Happy that young man who does well good things for his eternal life!

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*141 26-10-1927

My beloved Fr. Luigi and my dear brothers,[17]

Just yesterday I was thinking to write to you and to all my beloved brothers, to tell you something directly coming from my heart, in occasion of the feast[18] we are all having to thank our Lord for these years he has granted us. I also wanted to examine a little, first of all I personally, the way we have conformed ourselves to such great grace and mercy, when I have received your letter and the one of the brothers'.

This letter makes me immediately write another one even if I am so suffering.

Dear Fr. Luigi, dear brothers, the twentieth anniversary must make us all think about the great goodness, the great mercy of God in founding this Congregation. In his plans it is great, very great, on condition that in this Opera we are acephalous, rags, humble and full of faith and abandonment to his Providence and rocky foundation of this Congregation.

Unfortunately I have to get confused and to humiliate myself by promising to give to my Lord the rest of my life. Let everyone among you examine and all of you do your resolutions in this new change our Lord allows us to perceive.

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[17] To the community of Costozza.

[18] Twentieth anniversary of the foundation of the Opera (26.11.1907-1927).

It is sure that our Lord wants us to sanctify ourselves. We can be a few, but if we are in the right spirit the few will become many. *We have to consider great our Opera not for its territorial aggrandizement, but great in the spirit* and the more this spirit will be according to the holy Gospel the more the Congregation will accomplish great plans.

Dear Fr. Luigi, make the brothers in Costozza certain and sure that all are my beloved brothers, as the brothers who are here. I love them very much but please, tell them what I am saying here: let us sanctify by purifying ourselves. The only reason for my not coming there with my body is my health; let them know that I am always near them.

My beloved Fr. Luigi, do not worry: your spirit and your abandonment uplifts me. Pray for me and for the Congregation. Do a good and holy retreat. Let all of us have the proposal of looking for the holy Kingdom of God only.

I bless you all.

Yours affectionately in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

5439 15-11-1927

Beloved brothers in Costozza,

I am always near you with my heart, my mind and my prayer. Deep from my heart I pray for you every kind of goodness and every celestial comfort.

I recommend you your particular vocation.

Live according to the Providence. Let God be your only thought together with his glory and souls. Do not let secular things worry you: these things will come after, also with a miracle on condition you look only for God.

Our Congregation is great, very great and we shall understand it in the eternity. Let we all be lucky if we have lived according to our vocation!

I greet and bless each of you; always pray for me. Only God knows how I need it. Let Jesus have mercy on me and I wish we can all meet in Heaven.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***10374 Verona 1927**

My dear brothers,

Oh, ourselves with the divine grace, living as religious of the Poor Servants have to live, or it is better for us to go away before our Lord himself turns us out.

The Congregation is special, so our life must be special too. We have no doubts on the help of the Lord and

we thank him, but He wants our cooperation by living the genuine program we all know.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***10374/A 20-8-1928**

My dearest brothers *in Domino*,

As the air penetrates your lungs and heals and strengthens you, so let the thought of God, of his Providence, of the greatness of the Congregation, of your very special vocation, penetrate and pervade all your being Christians and religious. And let this strengthen you in order to fight *usque ad sanguinem*[19] for the holy Kingdom of God and for his souls.

Pray for me. I bless you, in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

[19] Till the shed of blood.

10011 Verona, 2-2-1929

My dear, or better, my dearest brothers,

Just now I would like to possess a completely special language to tell you about the greatness of this Congregation and about the great luckiness we have to have part in it.

At the same time I want to recommend you to conform to so many graces by living, as our program wants. That is to say by maintaining a great faith in God, in his Providence and by thinking that He is the Master and He is the one who leads this Opera with a really particular care.

Men feel sure when they have the special protection of another great man in this world, if great is the word we can use. But we are sure, we are really sure because we have the special protection of God; we are his privileged sons. For God's sake, let us all try to be worthy of it, like rags, like clay, like mud, acephalous, by listening and putting into practice also the desires of the one God, in his mercy, has put like Custodian (Casante).

Dear brothers, in the present obscurity, the House must produce light and it will do it if we maintain the oil in this great oil-lamp. And the oil is to live according to the will of God, with no thoughts except the *Quaerite primum* ...

Dear brothers, pray, pray much, always pray for the mercy of God on me.

Let us all meet in the light of God to enjoy the special prize reserved to the brothers in this House.

I bless you all. In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***6828 12-11-1929**

To my dear brothers in Costozza,

Thank you, thanks very much for your wishes for the holy Feasts and, more than all, for your prayers. I pray you, as much as I know and as I can, to continue.

Deep from my heart I invoke you every really true good.

Let God increase his love for you and I wish you could continue your great mission as brothers of this great Opera. And I also wish you all, being rich of the divine charity, can do this in this Institute that has written "Congregation of God" in its frontispiece.

How lucky you are in heaven and in the earth if you conform to your vocation.

I bless you all, one by one: brother Luigi, Brother Francesco, brother Spadoni, brother Andrighetti, brother

Perin, brother Giovanni, brother Penasa, brother Piantavigna.

I wish we may we all may meet in Paradise.

Yours affectionately in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***6828/B 1930**

My dearest brothers,[20]

If you only knew how I pray and how I wish to see you. I join my pains to yours. Let us consider them a sacrifice to God and let us hope for the best.

Pray for me. In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***5441 16-4-1931**

Beloved brothers in Costozza,

Let God bless you and give you all his graces, and in particular the grace of conforming to the special

[20] To the community of Costozza.

vocation of brothers of this Congregation. It is entirely of God, because it was founded and led by him, with a very particular Providence.

As much as I know and as I can, I recommend you to live all for Jesus, for Him, for his glory, for your souls, for all souls.

Be humble and with humility you will possess all the other virtues of your condition.

Remember that we, with the spirit of the Congregation, are our assets, our cash: *Quaerite, quaerite.*

Do not worry about secular things.

Our Lord demands faith, abandonment in God particularly in difficult moments; virtues, virtues, observance of the Rules and also to be rags and clay in order to accomplish his great plans.

I am always near you, I always pray you, but you too be near me, you too pray very much for me, I really need it.

Deep from my heart I bless you starting from Fr. Franchini and ending with our good Fr. Mario.[21]

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

[21] Fr. Mario Tessary.

*6908 Pentecost 1931 (24th May)

Here it is what I, poor, say in the light of the Lord for the greater glory of God and for the goodness oh this Congregation that is his own.

First of all: I can perceive and see that San Zeno in Monte, that is a holy and privileged land blessed by God, is used, according to the will of God, together with Nazareth to form priests, brothers and young people. All of them can feel in their hearts the impetus towards the apostolate in the broader and true sense of the word. And also in the same places is prepared, to tell it in the right manner, the genuine products of our good Lord in order to be tomorrow in the middle of the world. We priests and brothers have to cooperate in order to achieve this purpose. Do not worry or have apprehension about the material: God will trace the way. Let Fr. Adami be completely free from the responsibility of the treasurer. Fr. Pedrollo will have this task till a new arrangement and brother Savietto will materially support him. Fr. Adami can note all that is spent.

Jesus, also in the most difficult moments, wants a full abandonment in Him. This is a characteristic of the Congregation together with the observance of the holy Rules.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***5442 19-6-1931**

My regards to all my dearest brothers and boys in Costozza and deep from my heart my blessing so that you can all love and serve God, the way He wants, only and always looking for the holy Kingdom of God . Pray, pray for your, in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***6177 1931**

To my dear priests as a remembrance of the Spiritual Exercises in 1931.[22]

I) – Let us love the inner life and attentiveness. Let us think about *Jesus in his house in Nazareth*. For no other reason the Lord has reserved this House to us, a house, by its name indicates us a program.

II) – let us not be hyper passionate for external apostolate. Let us be guided by obedience and do not let us anticipate the way of divine Providence. What did Jesus do for thirty years in Nazareth?

III) – Let us try to love one another in the House,

[22] Printed on a sheet on which the Father wrote the name of each priest.

considerate, respect, esteem one another and speak well among us especially in front of the brothers and the strngers.

IV) – Let us remember that the one who acts here is the blessed Jesus. If he, in His great kindliness, uses us we have only to think that we are anything but instruments in his hands. For this reason we do not have to make our *ego* show up, other than *the Opera of God*

V) – Let us always and everywhere remember that we are priests, religious, and special religious. So everywhere we have to give an example of religious life, in the House and out of it and show everywhere our spirit of complete abandonment to the Divine Providence.

VI) – Let all the priests in the Congregation have singleness of targets. This oneness must attain from the Apostolic Institute of Nazareth, that is the Mother house of the priests in the Congregation.

VII) – To this purpose let all observe this little *Code*, attached to the *Rules of the Apostolic Institute*, that is a matter for *clerics and priests* who already has the approval of the ecclesiastic authority.

VIII) – Let all the priests, even those who have their own tasks in different Houses keep united to the House of Nazareth. Let them also obtain from here particularly on assuming some engagements connected with the ministry, that is to say preaching, confessions, etc. They must keep in their minds that, even if they are far from the Mother House they are members of the *Apostolic Institute.*

IX) – When we are in the house, in addition to the Divine Office we do in common; let us do the other

practices of piety together with the community especially the meditation and spiritual reading. If it is impossible let him do it by oneself but making his Superior informed.

X) – Brothers must be much esteemed, employed, encouraged, but we do not have to tell them certain things in all confidence, things that directly deal with us priests and our ministry. Let us also keep in mind that priests in the different Houses have the duty and the responsibility of the management.[23]

XI) – The ordinary rule prescribes that the visit to our families will be as long as the parents are alive; it is once a year and that it will possible to remain *ad nutum* Superior's.

XII) – If we have to stay, for a while, out of the House, because of Ministry, let us use the maximum of discretion and do not let us go to dinners or reunions without the Superior's permission.

Always pray the mercy of God

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

[23] The Constitutions the Bishop of Verona was about to approve, according to the Canon Law but not according to the thinking of Fr. Calabria, were demanding this. And Fr. Calabria had to defend himself in front of the Bishop and the Apostolic Visitor from the accusation of disobedience to this rule (cf Memorandum N° 5910/B of 6.11.1934).

***9451 1931**

To my dear brothers Luigi Zanini, Francesco and Silvio,[24] the dear caretakers of the House of God, so that they remind me to the Lord and they, in the porter's lodge, sanctify their souls and all those the Providence make them meet.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

**** LETTER 1 24 February 1932**

To my dearest and beloved priests who leave for Rome in order to accomplish one of the greatest plans the divine Providence has about its Congregation of the Poor Servants of the Divine Providence.

My dear in Jesus Christ, with your departure we are in front of a clear and precise fact, like the light of the sun. It expresses how the divine Providence look at this Congregation in a really particular way and how it has been gradually doing the great plans it has since all the eternity.

Meditate this well because the Lord himself has elected you among thousand and thousand of people, to be destined to go to the city of Saints, of Martyrs, of the Vicar

[24] "Francesco" was Bro. Perez and "Silvio" probably was an aggregate, whose family name is unknown.

of Christ in the earth. I should say that your departure is an almost extraordinary calling; it is certainly a fact, happening that moves. It should call everyone to do some serious reflections about the greatness of the Congregation we are lucky to belong to. At the same time we have to consider the great responsibility that weighs on you who are leaving and on us who are staying here.

My dearest brothers I have always told and repeated to you, in the course of these years, that the Congregation is great and that God has great plans to accomplish. That also those plans will be performed on condition that we are docile, humble instruments like rags, like acephalous people, like clay. I say and repeat this to you even now that you are leaving me and I give you this same thing as my testament.

Surely when I usually thought about you I could not think, in the least suspect, that the Providence wanted you, and so soon, in Rome, the center of the Catholic Church. I did not certainly think that other not less important plans could come through soon after the setting up to a diocesan Congregation. Remember that these plans will be performed in suffering, struggle, and pain because only in suffering and cross this plant of God will possess its lymph to season flowers and fruit, fruit of glory of God and of good to souls.

My dearest brothers, you go to Rome.

Remember that the one who sends you there is the same Jesus that one day has sent his Apostles all round the world to preach and, first of all, to practice the holy gospel.

I assure you that when I was a young priest and I read that gospel passage that says how the Apostles, sent by the Redeemer , had to go without walking stick, without footwear, with a great faith in God, all these words impressed me very much and I always brought them with me, carved in my soul. Now I understand the reason of that impression: it was the sign of the will of God the fact that you, that we in this Congregation had this spirit.

So go, but go the same way the Apostles did without any care about secular things, without anxieties. Pay attention that this is your uniform. God will never abandon you, but you will be always rich in your poverty and, if it is necessary I am sure that God will perform also miracles for you.

Bring to Rome the spirit that inspires our Congregation. Have a unique care: the Kingdom of God and the health of souls. Be the living Gospel and before preaching, practice.

Apply the letter of the Gospel. Only in this is your patrimony, the secret to perform great things.

In this moment I feel all that I have to suffer, that you have to suffer too from

Satan who seethes and quiver and I do not know how far he will be able to arrive.

My dear brothers let us gather round the Cross and invoke Jesus' help together with the patronage of the Sorrowful Virgin and go on.

Consider that your journey to Rome is not a pleasure trip it is a trip towards the Calvary and when you

arrive here you'll have always to stay on the Calvary: this is the condition why God can bless your ministry. You have to stay in Rome like the seafaring is on the ship that travels on the sea but it is necessary that the sea should not enter the ship.

You have understood me. For God's sake, I wish the profane, Pharisaic spirit did not cling to you! Let your eyes be turned whether to the Apostles, to the Saints, or to the Martyrs. Only so you can perform and do the divine will. Do not do anything without prayers and advice. All that you say or do must be first of all from the heart and practiced by you.

Go to Rome and stay there the same manner the Apostles, Saints and Martyrs did. Consider that souls are acquired to God with pity, charity, only with charity. When you cannot speak to souls, and then speak to God about your souls. Do not ever stop to the crust, look at the spine, and consider that they are souls redeemed by the blood of God.

Be your journey and your stay in Rome under the protection of blessed Virgin, of Saint Joseph, of Saint Teresa of Jesus Child and of the Pope Pious X.

I affectionately greet and bless you and recommend myself to your prayers. I recommend you the obedience and the union to the Motherhouse and I leave you hoping to meet you all one day in Paradise.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*383 Verona, 4-5-1932

My dear Father Stanislao and sons,[25]

Let the grace and the peace of blessed Jesus be always with you and with all the souls the Providence makes you meet.

It has been two months, but they seem to me only yesterday, since you have left your dear nest in Verona and in Nazareth to come to Rome. There the divine Providence has wanted you to be light and salt in favor of so many poor souls and to perform some divine plans. Since the moment you have been leaving I should say that there has not been any moment without thinking at you and without recommending you to the Lord.

Dear father Stanislao, dear father Isaia and dear father Bellarini, for God's sake, take care to be up to your great and special vocation! Keep well in your mind that the moment when you, or we, to crown it all, had to lack our special vocation also doing holy deeds but not according to the very special spirit the Providence has given us poor servants, for us, for you, it is the end.

It is necessary for us always to remember the clear and precise words God has told us by means of our Grace the Bishop. Do you remember them? Oh, Of course I remember them: "If you change the spirit, you will not live, but you will die"! But I am certain and sure that, with the help of the divine grace, you will try to live according to the spirit of our Congregation that is and must be just the

[25] Of the community of Rome.

spirit of the Apostles and of the holy Gospel. Only so you will perform the great plans of God and also in Rome you will be light for the goodness of so many souls. If you do not put any obstacles, I think that the divine Providence will perform some great action for the glory of God and for the health of souls.

Keep in your mind, my dear brothers, the present world is like a very stormy sea and that in order to stem the furious waves there is no other remedy except to come back to the holy gospel. And this Gospel should be believed, lived and practised by Catholics and particularly by priests. Holy priests, apostolic priests: here is the great and unique means to save the poor society that is sinking.

I enjoy and thank so much our Lord for all the goodness you do: go on with the divine grace. Take care to be lights for yourselves, first of all, with the practice of the inner life and with the full and exact observance of your holy Constitutions.

As I told you I am always very near to you. I would like to be a little bird to fly often where you are and tell you the word of the Father, of the brother who loves you so much in the Lord. In fact just now I am praying and I hope that you too will pray to see if the Providence, without considering my sins, could give me the grace to come to Rome. How should I really be happy, how should I see you with pleasure! But, as I told you in Verona, this would be a too difficult grace because of my physical pains and my continuous trials and afflictions!

I hope you all are well. I recommend you to take care also of your physical health, because also with the health we can do some good actions. Be near your house

like the vine stalk to the vine. Write often, depend on everything on God and remember that the deeds of God must be proved. You can have the trials just now. Satan squirms with impatience, but God will be with you if you stay with Him and do not ever forget the divine promise to the good faithful servants in the last day.

I leave you to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, at the foot of blessed Virgin. For God's sake continue to pray for your father John! I really need that our Lord uses his great mercy for me.

Father Stanislao, I thank you very much about the coins. I have really appreciated them, but I am short of the golden ones. Be sure that I am waiting for them; we really need the Providence, but it will surely come on condition that all of us are trying to look for the holy Kingdom of God and his justice.

I'd like to tell you many and many things, but you and you all understand me.

I summarize them in these words: *buseta e taneta*,[26] be careful to fear human protections, to have faith in God, to love all souls without exceptions and to wait for the reward of God.

I stop here because I am tired. I greet you, father Stanislao, father Isaia, father Bellarini, bye Merlin I'll write to you, pray for me, bye Tovazzi. I bless you all

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

[26] Concealment in a small pit and hole.

*386 Verona, 6-7-1932

My dearest brothers in Lord,[27]

Let the grace and peace of blessed Jesus be always with you and with all the souls the divine Providence makes you meet. I feel a strong, a very strong desire to write to you. It really seems to me that this time Jesus wants to speak to you by means of this poor and old channel. For God's sake, please, listen to me and put in good account what I am telling you.

Remember; let all of us remember that the greatness, the steadiness, the diffusion, the fulfillment of the great and divine plans of the Providence are linked only to our really special and particular spirit. It is our distinguishing spirit: *buseta e taneta* (see lett. *383, 4-5-1932) that tells us to be small in order to be great and to stay in Nazareth, as Jesus did till the age of thirty. Moreover this spirit is present in our prayers, in the continuous union with God, in the study of our daily spiritual progress, in working in the only field the divine Providence has trusted to us. And we have to do this without any thought, any desire but the desire that all that you do is known by anybody except Jesus, the absolute Master of the Congregation.

If we, if you, remain hidden, God will look for you and will use you. Then, at the appropriate time, he will show himself to his glory and to the goodness of souls; but if we break out before time, God will abandon us.

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[27] Community of Rome.

So I recommend you: you know where to go in the course of your need, your doubts, your trials you have to go to Jesus who is truly and really present in the holy tabernacle.

Satan squirms with impatience. I give notice to you, he will try, like a sharp snake, to hidden himself in the grass and to deceive you with specious masks. Do not worry, you will be victorious if you are humble, if you live the spirit of our Congregation that you have to love more than your father and mother.

In fact, just in passing, I'd like a little report: how do you spend your spiritual days?

I recommend you to love and to have a predilection for the poor, the outcasts and the most abandoned. These are the people Jesus loves best.

I repeat you again: stay away and do not beg for patronage and human approval. God is very jealous.

I hope you will be all well and you always walk in the light of the holy gospel in Jesus, with Jesus and for Jesus, because only so the divine plans will be performed.

I am always on my Calvary and I think about you, pray for you and bless you. Pray for me, I really need it, I particularly need mercy.

I wish to see you, it is your task to pray. I should have so many things to tell you, but Jesus will tell you when you are in front of Him in the sacred Tabernacle. Greetings and a blessing to the dear brothers so best loved by God, if they do what He wants. The only important thing is to know and do the divine will. I bless you all.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 2 26 November 1932

My dearest brothers in the Lord,

In the last days, for the greatest grace of blessed God, absolute Master of this Congregation that is called Congregation of the Poor Servants of the Divine Providence, we have attended to the feasts of the Jubilee with joy and gratitude.

It has been twenty-five years since the divine Providence has founded this Congregation with a really special eye and care. The purpose was to make it light and health to so many souls and in our mind many thoughts have passed.

We have meditated all the long series of favors, graces, benefits, the Lord has given to this Opera in the course of these 25 years. And we are not considering the other graces, the other gifts, and the other benefits that are not meditated and appreciated by us like all that we can see and perceive by our senses.

But the fact is that this Congregation, as I told you many times, in the plans of God performs all these wonderful things only by existing.

Believe me, it is great and it brightens many and many minds that live in the obscurity and that, illuminated

by this light, run towards God, serve Him. Moreover God receives them as a gift.

This Congregation is a voice that continuously calls so many poor brothers of ours who are on the wrong path and compels them to think, to meditate. So their hearts, supported by the divine grace turns from the ephemeral and miserable things in this earth to the eternal things in heaven. They act so because they are convinced that if they thought to God and to search His reign, the divine Providence would give the means and the secular things in addition. Doesn't seem to you, my brothers that this is a great House in the plans of the Providence?

Only in Paradise we shall be able to understand, to comprehend both the good and the plans the Lord has performed by means of this Opera. This will be true if we live according to the really particular spirit of this Congregation. I am sure that this point will have been object of great meditations and spring of new and effective intentions in this twenty-fifth anniversary of its foundation. The Lord calling us to take part in this very great Congregation has given a very great grace. And He Himself has really crowned this grace with the approval of his Church.

But, my dear brothers, let us remember, at the same time, that a very great responsibility weighs on us, because it depends only on us, on us that this Congregation lives, flourishes, spreads so accomplishing the good for which the Providence has founded it.

My beloved friends, what else can I tell you about this Congregation? Ah, it is a very great and perfect train!

Nothing lacks. Some travelers continuously get on this train, this ship and they ask to be led to the harbor. Oh, an engine driver who does not perform his duty, who does not pay attention, how much responsibility, how much ruin, which death can cause and which punishment can he deserve!

My brothers, we are the engine drivers of this mystic train the Lord has given us to make us drive it. Which great responsibility weighs on us, which report must we give to the Lord in the day of the great calling and which punishment shall we deserve if it is our fault if souls could not travel and have lost themselves!

Oh, dear brothers, now I, myself, am praying, begging you, to think, to see if we all live, act, operate as God is willing and as our sacred Constitutions demands. I pray you to read them often, to keep them in your mind and in your heart!

As I have continuously told you so many times: our concern, our care is only in looking for the holy Kingdom of God . No anxieties, no troubles, cares, concerns for all that is secular. Let our concern and our care be for the exact observance of our holy Rules, for the perfect fidelity when we are concerned in actions of piety particularly in those regarding the community.

Leave everything but do not leave the actions of piety. When I see that someone is lacking in something, I feel a pang in my heart because I can see a disappointment in the Congregation. I can also perceive that the devil is exulting and that that poor man remains under a false light.

Then I recommend for us, priests, a great spirit of faith in our ministry and that the holy office is celebrated in the church and in common. Then, how the holy Mass has to be celebrated! A holy Mass piously celebrated how much wealth can be for our souls, for our ministry, for our Congregation!

I add a warm exhortation to all that I have written. Let us all have a great charity: let priests and brothers be a unique body. We have to help one another in performing the will of God in this holy Congregation.

In the events, in the trials we have always to perceive Jesus who wants or permits such things both for our goodness and for this Congregation's and we have always to say *"Dominus est"*.

We brothers, members of this holy Congregation, have to remember well that we have to be like many lights inflamed by the divine Providence, continuously fuelled by our very special spirit. I am absolutely certain that if we, with the divine grace, practically live with this spirit, the goodness we do will be really great. And also the plans the divine Providence will perform through us will be innumerable. But it is our task to keep alive and inflamed this lamp of God that will be so if we fuel it with the oil of the faith, the love of God and the charity.

My dear bothers, on bended knee and with my hands joined I beg, pray and implore you that this virtue always reigns supreme in our Congregation. Let also all criticisms, rumors and envies be banished!

Let us all remember that we are all workers and peasants of the same master, who is God, all put here to

work in his field divided in different places: Nazareth, S; Zeno in Monte, Costozza, Aspiranti, Madonna di Campagna, Rome. There is a unique field and each has to work his part, but always considering that his part is a part of the same field of God.

So let us be happy when one part is better cultivated and richer and, on the contrary, help the poorer one and vice versa, always keeping in our minds that we are in one unique field.

Let us all ask the Lord this grace, this spirit and the charity in our prayers, in our visits, in the Holy Communion because this is what is worth and, as I told you other times, nothing can destroy or stop this Opera. Only the lack of charity among us can make it stop or deviate together with the spirit of criticism, envy, rumors that are all part of our self-respect and of our pride.

There are some days that are happy and others that are sad, days of trials, of pains for everyone; let us divide them among us, they are trials sustained by the same family.

Also let the faith in the Providence be our balance, our rock. Let us remember that our faith will never and never lack if we do our part.

More faith and more observance of the Rules will certainly give us all that we need in the difficult moments.

Let us all remember that laboratories are a great means of Providence and it is a real duty the fact that all brothers cooperate under the responsibility of the brothers who is charged, to their good functioning. And all this must be done without anxieties or cares remembering that by

doing this we give glory to God, we keep high the good name of the Congregation and we sanctify our own souls.

Fr J. Calabria

*LETTER 5 2 February 1933[28]

My dear brothers in Christ,

When one is near to the age of 60, with many troubles and new and old pains, he cannot but give the importance it deserves to the word of the person, even poor and miserable put by the divine Providence as the Custodian (Casante) in this very great Congregation of the Lord, born and grown in his divine Ribs.

I have written this introduction to what I have to tell you, in the name of God both because you have to pay more attention than usual, and attach importance to all that I am telling you and because I could be called by the Lord at any moment to give account as you all also will have to do one day.

The Congregation of the Poor Servants of the Divine Providence, as we all know, has passed its first

[28] In the 1st edition of 1956 this letter is dated 6th October 1933, that's why it was indicated by the N° 5. But in the Archives now there is a letter signed by Fr. Calabria with the note: "2nd February 1933, feast of the Presentation".

Jubilee, 25 years after the foundation made by the blessed Jesus here in Verona and just here in the beautiful San Zeno in Monte. It has been a light and an appeal towards so many poor souls, full of great spiritual needs. In this manner it has conquered the approval of the holy Church that has come to crown its 25th year of life. This approval is the tangible and secure sign that this is the Congregation of the Lord.

We are nothing but poor instruments "poor servants", as the motto put in the perpetual offices that is written on the front door of the House.

But let us all remember well that, being poor servants, we have to do our best and behave as we are requested. Such part is assigned to us by the holy Rules, by our Constitutions that we have the sacrosanct duty to observe till the Providence will not modify it in the way and in the manner It will like.

But do we really observe those blessed Rules?

Let each of us see and examine himself. I must say and with a huge pain that it seems to me that on this point there is a great levity. And also that we often let go past many things we should not do and that give a huge damage to the Congregation of the Lord and a great ruin to our souls.

For God's sake, on bended knee, I recommend you to read often and to practise the holy Rules, especially, I want to say, the holy Charity. This Rule, in fact, is the life of all communities and of our community in a particular way.

And here I have to say that we lack this virtue and we act in a very human manner. No, no! Let the charity of Christ be the virtue that imprints all our actions, all our deeds.

"Quid nunc Christus?". What should Jesus do in this or that situation? Let us, with the divine grace, try to do the same. It is right to remind and remember that the Congregation of the Poor Servants is unique, not divided and that consequently each of us has to love it all in full, not in part.

Each of us has one part to cultivate, but that part is a part of a whole and, as I have said many times, if one part flourishes, it must help the other that is weaker. We have many members, but they are all members of the same body. So we love our arm, our head and all the parts of our body and when one of these is suffering, Mother Nature teaches us that all the body helps and everything is where we are suffering trying to relieve our pain.

So, my dear brothers, let us do the same with our Congregation, to which we have the grace to belong.

Let us remember that Jesus has trusted it to us and for this reason a *great* responsibility weighs on us. For God's sake, let us live according to the will of Jesus!

Woe, woe to us if this Opera levels out to the others! It does not live, but it dies.

I recommend you to guard on the portion the Lord has given to you to govern and to look after. Be careful so that charity reigns and we give a really great importance to the inner life. We must care, more than anything else, about the life of the spirit.

To look after the material offices has to be without detriment of our soul.

Priests and brothers, brothers and priests, heart and arms, we are members of the same body, sons of the same mother. Let our dear Congregation be one unique heart and one unique soul. Discordance in what we feel and what we want must not exist. Recalling ourselves to the blessed Jesus we have to want and to think the same things We have to want our sanctification, the search of the Kingdom of God , the goodness of souls and to think to all those things that will be useful for us to achieve the main and supreme purpose of our life on the hearth.

So charity, great charity, perceived charity, practical charity, *super omnia caritatem habete qod est vinculum perfectionis.*[29] And let all the people who approach us leave illuminated by the spirit of sweetness, of charity, of respect, of kindness, of compassion we have to be rich of and which are the spirit of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us particularly respect the Masters of practical activities in the laboratories: they are almost some of our collaborators. We do not have to treat them as the masters of the world usually treat their dependents.

I recommend you that the work in the laboratories is without anxieties, without problems. We must commit ourselves, be diligent and cooperate to achieve good results, but be careful not to set us the goal of producing and producing more and more.

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[29] "Above all, then, let the charity be there, which is the bond of perfection" (Col 3:14).

The Providence will give us what we need and it will give it to us in proportion to our faith.

I recommend that no one of our priests gives a bad example to the others and, in my opinion, I forbid smoking, to go to receptions, to receive gifts from other people and to lead souls spiritually from afar. I remember that I have seen true spiritual disasters that had begun in the best manner and with the purpose of acting well. Be careful, be careful!

Then I recommend you to listen always and in everything what this poor priest tells you, but, till the Providence is with me, it is God who speaks through this poor channel.

Listen also to the desires of this poor man; keep united to him. Have confidence, all the confidence. Do your report as Constitutions prescribe, because only if we are united and compact we can accomplish the plans of God. Because as I told you the Congregation is big, the plans of God are many, it is up to us to cooperate; And lucky us!

The present time is very serious. We do not know what the Providence reserves to us. The storm is getting bigger and we can foresee the exit that is as much disastrous as men do not care about it. Even the good ones and also religious and priests do not worry about and they continue to live like in the time when Noé lived, unmindful of the notices and of the threats of the Lord. For God's sake, let us live well and let the Lord find in us and in our Congregation a supply of virtues and goodness so that He can save many other souls and us.

Let us then walk in order to deserve the divine complaisance and his blessing.

Father John Calabria

Poor among the poor of the Divine Providence

Candlemas Feast 1933

*LETTER 3 19 March 1933

My dear brothers,

The holy Lent is a time of a serious meditation for all Christians, but for us, Poor Servants of the Divine Providence, this period must have a really special importance. It must be a strong and powerful warning on ourselves so that we can see and study about our personal sanctification and that of the Congregation to which we have the great honor to belong. The reason is, my dear brothers, that our sanctification as I have told you many times, the soul, the life of the Congregation of the Poor Servants of the Divine Providence are our spiritual improvement; our virtue

If we do not live according to our special vocation, we give death to our souls and to this Congregation. My God, what great responsibility!

Let us all and each of us, till we are on time, do our duty and hold, in a certain sense, our soul in our hands and examine our spiritual profit.

Dear brothers, our Congregation is about to fall. Now it seems to me like a great building in danger, which is supported so that it cannot fall. Do you think that it should be a good remedy to hide this problem or do not speak about it?

Ah, I do not think so, my dear and beloved brothers. If the Congregation is in danger, it is in danger because of us. Then we have to strengthen it, to cure it, to put it into the previous state. We are still in time if all of us do our spiritual reforms in this holy time of the Lent, in this Holy Year the mercy of God is giving us.

It is necessary to come back because we have been out in our way. It is necessary that we detest our life that has been so warmish, so far from the purpose of our Congregation. It is necessary that we can live the life of the faith and of the abandonment, as our program requires and that we know that this kind of life is internally and externally sanctified.

Internally with a great pity and with an intense spiritual life, externally with the very exact observance of our Rules. All these aspects have been almost forgotten for a long time, fallen into desuetude. In this manner all our deeds have been considered equal. This means to destroy the Congregation of God.

Dear brothers, let us be frank, let us study ourselves at the light of the faith and of the Cross and ask this question: are the Opera and the spirit the same as they were

at the beginning? We must say no. We have lain down, we have walked the ordinary way while our way had to be an extraordinary one. For God's sake, please listen to me and give to my words the importance they deserve!

Also here, I must say that one day people listened more than now to this poor priest and gave a greater weight to his poor words. Till the mercy of God keeps me here, you have to listen to me, to give a special importance to all that I tell you, but you have to listen not only to me, but also to "any" Custodian (Casante) the Providence will put, as the keeper of this Congregation.

Here is the Lord who wants to do everything, with his goodness and his great mercy.

Do not let us forget that our purpose is to show to the world that the divine Providence exists, that God is not a stranger but is a Father. He thinks to us on condition that we think about Him and we do our part, that is to say we try to look for the holy Kingdom of God .

This is the point, the special program I stop on and ask to myself and then I ask to you: How can I look for the holy Kingdom of God ? How do you look for the holy Kingdom of God ? And let us here examine our day, from evening to morning, from morning to evening.

Are we pervaded by this thought: am I here in the House of God, for him who has founded this Opera and he did it with clear and manifest signs of his extraordinary Providence? And do I trust myself to this faith and am I living it?

Am I only longing for the souls who enter to take part of this Opera, do I look only to these and, as much

they are alone, abandoned, miserable do I think that they are receiving special cares from Jesus? And am I sure, am I really sure that Jesus will not abandon them if I, in His name, pick them up, help them, feed them? Oh, how is this spirit necessary!

And do I think, do I consider that the only thing that can ruin this Congregation is the sin? And what value do I set on the sin? Let us knock this, my brothers, into the kids, the boys who are reunited here. Oh, I hope I did not sin. Have I sinned, me, in the House of my God? Ah, my dear, we detest our sins, we really purpose to begin a life like true churchmen and we do not doubt for one moment about the help of the divine Providence!

I have told you again and I repeat it: if it is necessary the Lord, at the right time, will perform also some miracles on condition that we are faithful to our program: *Quaerite primum …*

We have to search the Kingdom of God in the practical study of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Each churchman must be another Christ. Please, let us study this divine model, especially in this Holy Year, constituted by the Holy Father to recall men to great reflections, to great considerations!

Let the humility of Jesus grow within us and then all other virtues that are maids of this queen will reign with us. If we are humble, then we shall also be docile, charitable, merciful, and peaceful. In one word we will possess all the virtues that spring out from it. So I really recommend you humility very much.

Dear brothers I hope that the divine plans do not interrupt on account of us and that this reign is not given to others because we have been punished These plans will be suspended and this Opera will be given to others if we do not live as Jesus wants

Do not have any anxieties, any problems. Let that all which is perceived like profane be far from us and also all that which could be a subject of human prudence in the eye of our brother

The Congregation of the Poor Servants is great, even it is so small and it will always be big, if it maintains itself small, if it does not go in search of protections and of human supports. The same will happen if we are able to keep this holy and blessed land that is the Congregation of the Poor Servants of the Divine Providence clear, ploughed and clean. Yes, my dear and beloved brothers, the Lord, our divine farmer, will continuously put new seeds coming from this holy earth. He will trust them to us if we live, as He wants, that is to say with our really special and particular spirit. Only so these seeds will become plants where so many souls will come and have a rest. I have told you, the plans of God for this Opera are great and it is sufficient to have eyes to ascertain the fact.

As I told you, the Congregation itself is a continuous recall, a continuous sermon, a great light that lights up and brightens many unaware souls in addition to the souls collected here. These latter here can find spiritual and material bread, who are precious gems, gifts from God who, for them, has made himself man and died on the Cross. The Congregation of the Apostolic priests, the Congregation of the Brothers, the Congregation of the Missions that is on the point of starting, they are all seeds

God has put here in our Congregation, so that we can make them grow for the glory of God and the goodness of souls.

Beloved brothers on bended knee I recommend you your personal sanctification and the sanctification for this Institute trusted to us. Lucky us if when the divine Master Jesus comes at the end of our life he can find us ready and faithful. Oh, what joy we can prove now in our life and oh, what gift in the beatific eternity! Oh, yes, yes, let God make effective what every morning I repeat in the thanksgiving to the Holy Mass: *ut cum fratibus meis et pueris tuis laudem te in saecula saeculorum.* [30] God bless you.

Pray, pray for your father John, who asks you to be forgiven for all the faults and the failings committed during all these 25 years since the Congregation has been born and during all his life. Let the Holy Year that is opening very soon, be for all of us a year of remission and true indulgence, a year of renewal, of sanctification for the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Fr J. Calabria

[30] "With my brothers and your children may I give you praise for ever and ever".

*LETTER 4 11 September 1933

My best-loved brothers, we have arrived, because of the greatest grace and mercy of God, at the eve of holy days, days that we have experienced many and many times for the holy, divine efficacy they have brought into our souls: I want to say the holy and Spiritual Exercises. On my bended knees I pray and implore you, in the name of blessed Jesus, so that you take advantage of this great grace the goodness and the mercy of God wants to give us. The Lord himself directly comes towards us to speak to us, to call us, to tell us many things and to make us know his great plans for the goodness of our souls.

Please, for God's sake, let us enter the holy Exercises with that particular spirit which is necessary so that these holy days give advantage to our souls! Let us enter, with great faith, the goodness of God, with full and complete abandonment in Him, disposed to everything in order to follow his divine will.

Do not have any thought, any anxiety during these days. The only and unique thought must be to save our soul, to see the way we have corresponded to the great grace the Lord has done to us. The grace of calling us here in the House, in his Congregation of the Poor Servants of the Divine Providence that is one of his works, as I have told you so many times, but in a very special way. He founded it and only He leads it. Lucky we if we correspond and understand this Congregation in all its wideness and in all its depth.

Yes, my dear brothers and loved sons, I recommend you, in these holy days consecrated to the silence and prayers to bring together with our books of prayers, another golden book that must be, for us, all the blessed book of our holy Constitutions.

Let us examine ourselves in front of the Cross, near the Most Blessed Sacrament, as if we were near the divine report, in order to see how we have observed our holy Rules and which was the spirit we had to practise them. Let us keep well in our minds that our Constitutions are our *charta magna* for us, they are all we need for our sanctification and for the sanctification of the Opera to which we have the grace to belong. Moreover it depends only on our cooperation to accomplish the divine plans the Lord has on it. These plans will be fulfilled without any doubt according to our faith, our generosity, our humility and our love for God.

Dear brothers, let us put ourselves to meditate seriously in these holy Spiritual Exercises we have the grace to do, during this Holy Year, in this centenary of the divine Redemption. And let that just this year is the one that must sign for us the principle of our true sanctification. And this because, as I have told you many times and I do not feel tired to repeat it to you, we are here, in the House of the Lord only to sanctify and look for the holy Kingdom of God .

Let us listen to Jesus who calls us, Jesus who wants us near and let us enter these holy exercises all ourselves, in the true sense of the world, with our miseries, with our defaults. Let us end them and be all of Jesus like the Apostles out from the Holy Cenacle, full of love for God in order to communicate this love to all the souls the Lord

has trusted to us and will make us meet. Oh, yes, let that this love be our uniform here in the world to make us all united with Jesus Christ in heaven one day!

Imagine how I pray and how I suffer during these holy Spiritual Exercises so that they bring great advantage to me and to you. I also pray so that they bring the spirit of Jesus into our Organization so that the life of the holy gospel and the practical love towards our holy Constitutions are within us.

They are also for us mines of so many other graces and of so many divine plans the Lord will perform on us and on this Congregation if we are docile and humble instruments. We have to be instruments who listen in everything and always the one the Providence has put as a guard of this Opera of his.

The devil will not keep us quiet. He will use some new and special skills to betray us. Let us be careful about his illusions … but we will not lack the means to know him, to win him.

Remember that you have the touchstone in this poor priest who is nothing. Till the mercy of God will let him among you, you have to listen to him as if he was the voice of God himself about the plans of this Opera. You have always to see the Lord in him and in the man who will come after him. Lucky we if we take advantage of all these graces the divine Providence continuously gives to us!

Remember also that the Lord cures desperate diseases with desperate cures and this Congregation is destined to great things in his merciful plans: it is up to us

that we do not hinder his plans. Let these holy Exercises really enlighten us and make us worthy to cooperate with the Lord.

Let God bless you very much and let the Immaculate Virgin, our Patron, be near you during these blessed days. I will pray very much for you all!

My best-loved brothers and sons, we have to meet all together, all held in the brotherly chain that has united us here in our life, in a day that will never had sunset up there in Paradise.

I recommend you myself to the charity of your prayers. Your best-loved in Jesus Christ. I bless you deep from my hearth.

Fr. J. Calabria

***8986 Verona, 22-10-1933**

My dear brothers,[31]

Let the peace of blessed Jesus be always with you.

I always remember you and I bless you heartily. In a particular manner I recommend you to walk ahead by

[31] To the community of Villa San Sebastiano, a Parish in the Diocese of Avezzano.

leaps and bounds along the way of your religious sanctification, in humility, in charity, in obedience to your holy Constitutions that are, only they, the expression of the divine will.

Write to me often and listen this poor priest in all he tells you. He teaches you, in the name of God, all that you have to do to sanctify the others and yourselves.

Pray for me. Blessing Villa San Sebastiano in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 6 6 November 1933

My dearest sons in Jesus Christ,

Let the grace and the peace of Jesus be always with you.

I am always happy when I write to you or when I can address my poor words to you; even if they pass through this miserable channel, they are always words of God and you have to receive and to listen to them as they are. But this time I am particularly happy because I feel that these words will descend into your souls and into your hearts of religious people and will bring so much light, so much peace, so much love of God and new strength. They will descend into you to perform the great plans the divine Providence wants to do by means of this beloved

Congregation of ours that is called Congregation of the "Poor Servants".

The Congregation is God, let us think it well! He founded it and leads it with a particular Providence, whatever is the instrument He can use.

He could do everything by himself, but he condescends to use us. And here let us remember that God needs humble instruments. He does not know what to do of proud people, on the contrary he rejects them far from Him, as history can attest. So to be called in this Opera is more than one reason for us in order to keep ourselves humble.

My dearest, let us think to the great report we shall have to give to the Lord one day for the particular grace to have belonged to this Congregation of his. Let each of us live in the Congregation according to the will of God in order to be sure about that great report. So we have to live like wax , like clay, acephalous completely abandoned in God and his will.

For this reason I recommend you to keep well in your minds that we are only able to ruin the plans of God. But if we are faithful to our holy Rules and Constitutions, united to the instrument God uses the most tightly we shall be able, despite we are nothing, we shall acquire a superhuman, divine strength that no violence will be able to block.

I have told you many times: I do not fear the assaults and the trials that come from the outside: on the contrary, they are useful to consolidate the Opera and the whole Congregation to a greater extent. Only if we

correspond badly we can annihilate and destroy this building God has condescended to raise for his glory.

We have the Constitutions that are the expression of the divine will. Let us conform to them with all our souls. Let us be quiet and serene about this point of capital importance and let us live with the soul and the firm will of practicing them. Do not worry about the future. Only the Lord will be able to modify, widen, perfect, if necessary, our Opera, because he is the only Master. But all this will solely happen by means of that "any" man who, even miserable, he put like the Custodian (Casante) of the Congregation.

Everything is in the hands of God and He only knows what will be necessary in the future. So He will care to suggest, at the right moment, the person who govern this Congregation in his name.

Meanwhile the Constitutions are his expressed will for the present times. So we have to keep linked to them with the most generous stability by following them exactly. If you have some doubts or uncertainties remember that Father John is the only one who can give you some explanations about the problem you have, because he is the only one who is the genuine interpreter of the divine will showed in the Constitutions. Turn to him only and only to him expose every possible difficulty and conform to all that he will dispose in the name of God and with the approval of the Church.

My dear sons, I recommend you the brotherly union with all the strength of my soul, an intimate, strict and indissoluble union in the charity of God. We are all one unique body, one unique person. So

we are united in searching the Kingdom of God that is the purpose for which this Congregation was founded in these times. Let us be careful and watchful on this point of the brotherly union because it is too difficult to break it. We are human and so we can fail. I repeat to you: one unique body, one unique person.

The priest and the brother complete themselves mutually in the exercise of the Apostleship, that is great and universal both for the first and for the second. Therefore how much the fusion of the priest with the brother is necessary in the charity of Christ and how is necessary the filial and unconditional obedience towards the person who leads in the name of the Lord! Charity and humility are inseparable. Only so we can usefully work for the development of the Congregation and for the attainment of our special purpose.

The devil who is the enemy of every good will make any effort to sow discord and to bring disunion; he knows well that that a reign which is divided goes to ruin and desolation.

If any disagreement should begin, if some clouds should come and obscure the clear horizon of charity, let harmony and peace grow stronger. Do not let ever the sun go down under possible dissents. We are men among men, so some type of inconvenient may happen, but also here, let us be careful so that we have not to cavil, to exaggerate to generalize. Let us see everything in the true light of God, in the peace and tranquility of our spirit.

Let us imitate the Lord who is so forbearing with us. Woe to us if he immediately condemned us according to our actions! So let us use towards one another

great generosity. In this manner we shall be readily able to disperse each danger of breaking-off.

Let us work in a commonly harmony. Each disagreement and aversion always come, if we pay attention, from our self-respect and from our untidy inner life.

So let us be careful to deepen well the concept of holy humility and we shall see that, in this manner, we can reach an agreement on everything.

Be always a unique body in the house and outside of it: sustain one another and I assure you that you will make miracles. When does the body function well? When the entire single parts, also the smallest and the humblest are well.

If one limb is sick also the heart suffers. So any limb cannot work well if the heart is not in a good order. You understand my dear brothers what I want to tell you with this parallel.

Here is what St. Paul writes about this concept:

“ Only let your conversation be as it becomes the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit … If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Look not every man on his own things, bur every man also on the things of others" (Ph 1: 27. 2: 1-4)

We have been called to the great work of souls. Moreover the field trusted to us by the divine Providence is just the one of the most abandoned souls, so of the souls favored by God.

As much as I know and as I can I recommend you the full and cordial fusion between priests and brothers. We are a unique body: so let us try to integrate each other. So let us banish those distinctions that our self-respect suggests. To say: this is not my task, that other thing is not up to my dignity and also that other one is too mean. All these sentences are not suitable to religious people because they are not up to the teachings and to the examples of our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact he declared with his words and demonstrated with his actions that he had not come here to be served but to serve. The superiors will think to distribute the different tasks according to the attitudes and the dispositions of everyone. But if the true spirit of Jesus Christ animates us, we shall go to search occasions to humiliate ourselves, to serve God by serving the fellow creatures, to prevent ourselves with the honor debt and the practical cooperation.

In this manner we shall exercise the most fertile and the noblest apostolate even if we had to live in the most complete dissimulation. Let us remember how many years Jesus has passed in the laboratory of Nazareth, He who had

come to preach the Kingdom of God and who possessed all the virtues in an excellent, divine degree.

In order to assure this charity and this brotherly union better and better I recommend that you cultivate a strict communication between students and aspirants.

Because they are destined to form a unique family, the family of the "Poor Servants" it is a good idea for them to start, since the beginning, to know themselves, to love one another, to dream the common ideal together. Let both grow being instructing according to their capacities to be suitable to perform their mission one day; mission that is different in the practical aspects but equal in the purpose.

And please, look at this poor priest who is speaking to you like the center that unites and leads all of you. Have the greatest confidence in him like sons in their father. Tell him openly your pains, your aspirations, your desires especially with the report recommended by the Constitutions, and then be quiet and calm about what he tells you from God.

I recommend you your inner life, the perceived and solid piety. Faithfully do those practices of devotion the Rules prescribe: holy Mass, meditation, reading, etc.. Try to perform some other practices according to your possibilities like, for example the Office of blessed Virgin.

Have a stable confessor if you want to proceed along the ways of perfection and of holiness. Do not change him easily. Treat your spiritual personal interests with great frankness and regularity with your confessor.

About the spiritual and disciplinary course of the Congregation, keep well in your mind that it is really

unsuitable to let foreign people in on what happens in the Congregation, even in order to receive some advice and some guidelines. Foreign people did not receive the mission from God. Always and only appeal to people who have received the mission to be the Superior and expose only to him all that concerns the course of the Congregation.

Let us work for the glory of the Lord, my dear brothers and for the diffusion of his reign in the souls. Any human purpose be far from us. Let us escape from every semblance of gain. Let us bring from the Lord all that he offers to us, without worrying if it is little, or very much or nothing.

Souls and souls!

Remember well that if we do not follow our spirit the Congregation fails and dies. Which responsibility should we have!

I recommend you so much and again, with all the strength of my heart, to put these words of mine to good account, words that I write to you after having meditated them at the feet of the Cross. Pray very much for me, for my poor soul so that the Lord forgive me my sins and grants me to practice first what I told you.

With all my love I invoke on you and on your religious Opera of "Poor Servant" the most elected blessings of the Lord.

Yours faithfully in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

5240 27-11-1933

My dearest and beloved brothers,[32]

I desire that as soon as you have arrived at the holy town of the Apostles, of the Martyrs and of the Saints you read this letter. It tells you all my love, my everlasting thought for you and the wish that you have to obtain great spiritual advantage from the holy Jubilee that is the first purpose by which the divine Providence has sent you to Rome.

I feel that this travel will certainly bring a great contribution also to this very great Congregation of the Lord. With the contrast that comes from it[33] you will be able to perceive the great grace the Lord has done to us calling us in this holy house of Lord. Here He will make great things provided we are as He wants us, that is to say, rags and acephalous.

My dearest, pray a lot, more than usual, for your father John who loves you so much.

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[32] The letter is addressed to Fr. Augusto Cogo, who, with Fr. Rosa, Fr. Toaiari, Fr. Pomini and Fr. Giacomini had gone to Rome for the Holy Year. Don Giovanni precedes them with this affectionate letter, sent to Rome by mail, at San Filippo where they would have lodged.

[33] Contrast between the poverty, smallness and simplicity of the Opera on one hand, and on the other hand the roman greatness, sumptuousness, richness, pomp and bureaucracy (*n.o.e.*)

Oh, I really need mercy from the Lord for my poor soul and grace to do the divine will till the end among the indescribable trials inherent to the works of the Lord.

Dear father Augusto, father Rosa, father Toaiari, father Pomini, father Giacomini, God blesses you, floods you with his peace and grace and makes you come back all fire of love for God and goodness for souls.

Greet all the friends in Rome and in San Sebastiano I remember and bless.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 7 Christmas – Holy Year 1933

To all my dear religious brothers,

Let the peace of blessed Jesus, that peace the holy Angels have announced at the grotto in Bethlehem be with all you, my dear and loved brothers and be fruit of your good will. Let us be disposed so that this peace fills our hearts, our souls. We are near the great celebration of the holy Christmas and we all already foretaste, before the sunrise of that day, the peace and the grace that will bring that dear celebrity to our souls of priests.

Dear brothers, I so much love you in the Lord, how much I desire that you can run along the way it has been assigned to us in this holy House! Permit me that once more I can make you hear my poor word, that is not mine but the Lord's. Let it be guide and light for you all to perform the plans the divine Providence wants to accomplish through us, on condition that we are always docile and humble instruments. I repeat you what I told you so many times: this is a really particular Opera. The Lord has impressed a really special track and appearance on it. Woe to us if for our fault this appearance had to change, if this track had to cancel itself, if this spirit had to be lost! It would be the ruin not only of each of us, but also of the Opera itself. Which responsibility for us!

Let us keep well in mind that it depends on us, on our cooperation and fidelity to keep our spirit untouched. Then this Congregation will go forward and will perform the divine plans and we shall eternally thank the Lord who has called us here for his goodness and mercy.

We have to declare war to our Ego, to our self-respect that make us think to be something, while we, ourselves, are not able to do anything. Let us stay meek and humble. Let us cultivate, with the grace of God, the conviction of being nothing.

We shall cultivate it especially with our interior life. On bended knee I recommend you, my dear brothers, *and the inner life*. Before going towards souls with the Apostleship on the holy ministry, let us be sure to be full of what we have to say and do. It's a true illusion to think to be the ones who operate: it is the Lord who makes everything. Let us remember that we are in the field of the supernatural. So we have to assign to the Lord the fruit of

what he gave us of graces and helps. The task to cooperate with the grace and to support the divine action is up to us.

Let us keep in mind, *first of all for us,* that we are religious. So we have to sanctify ourselves before doing the same for the others. I recommend the meditation, the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, the spiritual reading, in one word the practices of piety the first of which is the holy Mass, spring of every other grace.

Let us try to be not only channel that distribute but also *basin together with channels*.

If we have God within us, we shall do so much good to our fellow creatures also with only our passage.

Do not lean on the estimation of people; evaluation that today can exalt and tomorrow

can lower. All for God, and His glory. And if some hard trial happens to us, let us say with that holy man: "Neither for you I have started, nor for you I shall go forward and shall end".

Pay attention, I repeat it to you once more; the others can serve the Lord with an ordinary life, you cannot. If we fail the spirit of the House, we do not live, but we die.

And here I recommend you to estimate also little things very much; they are said small, but they have a great importance. We have to be convinced that not great virtues produce holy people, but small virtues lead to the true perfection, so little faults, shortcomings and light deviations lead to a great ruin of the soul and to the loss of the religious spirit.

I cannot avoid repeating another exhortation to you: have the reciprocal charities. It is the cement that unites souls and one only thing from all of us. *Cor unum et anima una*.[34]

This is the unity Our Lord Jesus Christ asked to his Apostles: he wanted that they were among them a unique thing as he was with the father. For God's sake do not let distinctions be among religious people: only one body, only one person! Apostleship is as wide as the world and both the head and the foot are great, either the arm or the finger. It is sufficient to practise obedience.

Let the person who has a position exercise it with great humility being conscious of the inherent responsibility. Moreover it is important that he acts so that the use of his authority exercises a salutary influence on his religious people who are his subjects: like the sun that dominates on all people but his dominion is healthy and salutary.

Avoid the spirit of criticism on facts and words of others. Do not try to make our mind a tribunal always ready to judge the brothers. We have the duty of thinking well: this is charity and also the justice that claims its rights wants that we produce some trials before censuring the brothers. But to judge it is necessary to be invested with the authority of doing it. Now the Holy Spirit says: who are you for judging our fellows? We know well that the Lord reserves to himself the right of judging and he gives it only to the one who has the position to exercise it.

[34] With one heart and soul.

We, ourselves, are nothing but blind people. Who can presume to know the intentions of the brother? *"Home videt in facie; Deus autem intuetur cor"*[30]So we have to think about ourselves before thinking of others. We have to live and to treat the others with that really simple warmth that is the consequence of the true fraternity and is the richness of the Congregation.

I recommend the spirit of faith and a very special faith. Do not let us worry of our necessities: they do not pertain to us. We are concerned in looking for the Kingdom of God , in looking for souls, in observing the Rules. Let us be sure, really sure that the Lord will give us also what remains. "Jesus says: "The one who believes in me, will do the actions i do and even more". Let us remember that this is the special purpose of the Congregation.

Dear brothers, we are small and we shall be great; we are poor and we shall be rich; let us be far from human protections, on the contrary, let us fear them and we shall have the protection of God.

Let us often read and meditate the holy Rules and Constitutions so that to transform them in lively juice of our being and of our activity. I recommend you the report that the Rules prescribe. Appeal with all your confidence to this poor Custodian (Casante). Listen to the one who has been put there or he has delegated as a guard of the Congregation because the same spirit circulates and passes.

I recommend that each Family keeps in contact with the Family in Verona. Let the Lord do so that these families multiply in the field of the Church and that each

one be like a luminous lighthouse of good example for all those who can see us. Each Family has its own Superior: let us all be plainly united to him in holy charity.

I end with some rules I thought about at the feet of the Cross and that seem to me suitable to keep our spirit incorrupt. This is not as much for you who are present and living so near the origin of the Congregation you have got inside it, but much more for those who will come after us and who will look at us like their models:

1. Let each superior of a Family send a moral a spiritual report of his Family each month.

2. Do not accept invitations to dinner of feasts even if religious ones like Baptism and weddings: a kind refusal will serve as a great edification for our fellows.

3. Do not permit anybody to smoke, for any reason: it is apparently a small thing, but in my opinion it is of capital importance. No priest will use the bicycle. If there are particular circumstances or a special need appeal to me and refer to me the reasons that seem to suggest its use. Do not create too easily occasions for using the bicycle. Remember that God will take into account the discomforts you have to meet for your ministry.

4. Keep regular the spiritual monthly retreat.

5. Let us all spend the last Friday of the month with a spirit of expiation, not only in general, as our devotion to the sacred Heart involves, but, in particular for the sins and faults we commit in this holy House. The single superiors of each family will have the duty of remembering this intention to their brothers.

6. No one has to be photographed alone, if he has not the permission from me: it would not be an edifying situation for a priest and it would seem vainglorious. Neither be easy to make yourselves photographed in group, even if of good and holy associations and absolutely never in female groups. I do not waste my words to convince you of the opportunity of this rule.

Let Jesus give to you all the abundance of his peace and of his blessings that are useful to you to consolidate in the holy religious vocation and to correspond to the so many graces his divine Providence continuously gives us.

Let the immaculate Virgin, Jesus' and our Mother, intercede with her Son for us.

Pray very much and really a lot for me so that I can first correspond to the graces of the Lord and to the plans of his Providence.

I invoke the entire holy Blessing on you.

Yours faithfully

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 8 Verona, Lent 1934, A.S.

My dearest brothers,

let the grace and the peace of God be always with you.

My dear and beloved friends, isn'it true that every now and then it is necessary to clean, to adjust and to examine if some pieces in the machines that then have to perform the jobs they are destined for are out of order? If there is some dust, if some pieces is worn out or is not exactly where he had to be, it is no doubt that the machine stops or is not useful or is badly used for the purpose it was destined.

If this happen to machines and so much care and attention is given to them destined, we should say, to perform precise works (precious, but always material and worldly) how more it will be necessary to do this for machines, let me say so, destined not to worldly, but to heavenly and eternal works!

You have certainly understood me that these machines are all the deeds made by God, deeds He, in his fatherly Providence produces in his great field that is the Church, various deeds and always correspondent to the needs of the times.

And let us all remember well, my dear brothers that one of these is the Congregation of the Poor Servants of the Divine Providence to which, for a special behavior of the goodness and of the mercy of the Lord we have the fortune and the grace to belong. And it has been produced just in a time when men forget the true values, that is to say, God, soul, eternity. Moreover they do not believe, or live as if they did not believe, thinking that God does not exist or that He has not an active part in the government of the world and of men even if He has it of course.In this

manner they only count on money, on profit and on what they have and possess. The Lord has trusted it to us so that we protect it, we make it function for his glory, for our goodness and for the goodness of many and many souls. So we have the obligation and the duty, every now and then, of examining more carefully than usual this special machine in order to see if it is clean, if it has some dust, if it lacks some pieces. Then we have to put it right, in perfect order and efficiency so that it can continue his job according to the purpose it was made for.

We know that every period is suitable to do this job, but, without any doubts there are some that are particularly suggested and appropriate. And which is the time more convenient than the one we are living, my dear? In fact we are in the middle of the holy Lent and you certainly know the words that at the beginning of the Lent the Church, that is a pious communal mother, addresses to its sons. The Church says: “Now there is the suitable time, now there are the healthy days”. Do not let us lose such a precious time to weep our sins and our infidelities and disagreements and, for this reason, to receive the divine mercy.

But, my dear brothers, the Lent of this year prepares ourselves to the closing of the Holy Year claimed by the Sovereign Pope in honor of the one hundred thousandth Commemoration of the great mysteries of the human Redemption.

The very painful drama of the passion and death of God performed this Redemption.

Here is a new title for a stronger and more efficient recall to reflect on ourselves and to shake us truly and put

ourselves again to our place, that is to say to the height and greatness of our very special vocation.

But, as if this was not sufficient, while we are going on the divine Providence multiplies the incentives, the invitations, the appeals to great reflections and to generous proposals. My beloved brothers, here we are near two great events, that is to say the Canonization of blessed Cottolengo and of blessed Father Bosco.

These events are great for the Church and for the Christians, but they are particularly important for the small House of the divine Providence of blessed Cottolengo and for the great, huge Salesian Family. But it is also great for us, my dear brothers, because Father Bosco occupies the place of Counselor in the perpetual offices in our House. And the blessed Cottolengo occupies the office of Cashier and celestial treasurer. From one part how should we truly be happy and enjoy to have, among our special Patrons, holy people who are so near us and so great! From the other part, however, we have to strive to imitate them in their special and distinctive virtues for which they have been chosen to be our special Protectors.

The blessed Cottolengo gives us an example of a great faith in God and of a full, brotherly abandonment in Him and in his Providence.

The blessed Father Bosco, the great father of young people is a model for us in the system of education of young people all founded on the love of God and his souls. He follows the footpaths, the teachings and the examples of the divine Master who said:"Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not …Verily I say into you:

whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me" (Luke 18,16; Mark 10,14; Matthew 18,5)

My dear brothers, which other stronger reasons could we desire to determine each of us and to examine carefully ourselves? And to do all these things to see if this machine, this very great Congregation of the Lord has stopped for our faults or id does not work well and is not completely efficient?

If it were so this would be the sign that there are some obstacles, some damages, some dust and that it is necessary to clean it at once and put it in order so that it can continue its work for the glory of God and the goodness of souls.

My dear brothers, let us remember that everyone in the House, but particularly we all who live under the divine pavilions have all our part of spiritual work in this Operas. And woe to us if we do not do it. We'd be in trouble if, at the end of our life, when we have to present ourselves in front of God and make a report of what we have done! Which confusion and pain if, unluckily, we have not corresponded to our tasks even though we entered this Congregation and saw the wonders of God. And moreover there is no more time, only the *"redde rationem",* the great report is approaching!

Let all of us do the first and great job in this Congregation till we are in time! And you know it, we all know which is because it is continuously said and repeated: it consists in putting into practice and in living the "*quaerite primum regnum Dei*"! This is our program, the program that forms the granitic base of this Congregation that is the essential condition of life, of

stability and of its progress even through the inevitable trials it will have to sustain.

Dear brothers, in the same manner we are continuously invested by the air and it gives the life and maintains it so we continuously have to keep in mind that we are united here and collected in order to search and practise the Kingdom of God ! Yes, my dear, this has to be our study: to search God in the creatures trusted by him to us, to search God and his glory in all our actions and pains, in all our sacrifices. Do I do this? Do you do this? Ah, let us examine ourselves, but really, in this moment! Perhaps, on the contrary, we have looked for our satisfaction, we have forgotten that all our sons shine of the beauty of God and perhaps we have preferred those who we liked more. We have not considered the defaults of these, defaults that we should not have passed over for others, we have had some preferences that it is hopeful they have not been harmful to our souls in addition to the others'. They have not certainly got a good example and I hope they were not shocked.

Dear brothers as long as I know and as I can I recommend you not to act the "non-acceptance of people". If, for chance, it happened to you to use it for that person, for that son you like the least, for the most necessitous let us remember that all are souls. Moreover God wants, for his courtesy, our help, our participation in this very divine among His divine deeds, the salvation of souls. So let our purpose be the advantage, the profit, the perfection of those dear souls in the school, in the courtyard, in the workshops, in the dormitories, everywhere. Under whatever crust they are great

masterpieces of God who, one day will ask us a rigorous report about them.

There will certainly be some moments of trial, of discomfort especially when we have to work and sacrifice ourselves a lot and to collect so little. Then, dear brothers, let our thoughts go to what Jesus has suffered and endured.

Many times it seems to us, , to see a poor fruit, but let us remember that we cannot see the secret work the Lord does and that he takes his account and reward “not according to the fruit but to the labor”.

For our part we work, we act as if all had to depend on us and then we entrust everything to God who has his own time, his own days, his own ways.

Let we think to the Saints, particularly to the Blessed Father Bosco, but, in general, to all those who have been consumed in the deeds of God. How many pains and troubles and contradictions and struggles! They have passed some moments when it seemed to them they had to die, to be overwhelmed by all these pains but because they loved the Lord and they only aimed at his glory and the goodness of souls the Lord, at the right moment, came towards them. He also comforted them and showed them his prodigies, his miracles that had been obtained by those pains, by those struggles that seemed to destroy and to annihilate his deeds.

Dear brothers it has always been so and it always will be. The economy of the Lord is the economy of love, grace and mercy towards us. Do not let trials,

struggles and pains depress us. Let us look for God and do not let us doubt for anything.

As the sun always lights up and spreads its benefits on the earth, so God will maintain this Opera of his, this sun created for our Verona, for the whole world despite clouds and storms. They will be able to hidden it but never to destroy it, never keep it from light up. But this happens if,for this Opera, we maintain that particular feature the Lord, absolute Master wanted and wants.

Beloved brothers I hope that the "*Quaerite primum regnum Dei*" (cfr. Mt 6: 24-34) is not only written on the fronton of the House but also in our minds, in our hearts, in our operations. Let us look for God, let us abandon to Him.

Let us remember well that just in the moment when our faith staggers and we doubt before a difficulty and a trial and we let our human prudence leads us the Providence retires. This happens if we lose sight of the Lord, of his glory and of souls. So the Providence leaves everything to us and what could we do? We certainly will ruin and destroy everything. For heaven's sake I hope that such misfortune does not happen! And this will never happen, let us impress it in our minds if we are faithful to the great divine program of looking for the holy Kingdom of God living a life of faith and following our holy Rules for love.

My dear brothers, the other great plans God will accomplish in the course of the time are linked to this faith. And more than anything else to collect those good young people God calls for himself, to his service with the

priestly vocation and who cannot find any help because they are poor. They are God's plans.

Oh, what a great Opera is this! To form priests according to the Heart of God, who live "*more Apostolorum, sine pera, sine sacculo; gratis accepistis, gratis date*".[35]

Also Satan knows and deduces this and he will try any way to ruin this plan. My dear brothers, let us all try to bring our contribution of goodness, defense, help! But the Congregation of priests would not be complete without the Congregation of brothers. And here is the second great plan. The plan is to form brothers full of fire and love for God who can spread everywhere lighting people with the good example, the word, the evangelic spirit.

They also educate the poor abandoned creatures, without any means, without any help and so forming good Christians, honest workers and excellent fathers.

Now they are speaking very much of the Catholic Action. The Pope wants it, he continuously inculcates it and desires it even in the private Institutes among different classes of people, in the religious Houses themselves. The Catholic Action, as the Pope says is the participation of seculars to the hierarchical Apostleship of the Church. That is to say it is the cooperation of the seculars with the priests to spread the holy Kingdom of God . Doesn't seem to you, my dear brothers, to see your own mission in this? The difference is in the greater

[35] "The apostolic way: without purse and knapsack… You received freely, give freely" (Mt 10:8; Lk 10:4).

perfection, without any comparison, requested to you than to the simple seculars. But, just because of this, how greater fecundity is possible in the work directed to souls! Because God, remember it well cooperates and fecundates according to the virtue and to the holiness. And if you live so in the sacrifice, in a great faith, with a full abandonment in the Providence and with the full and total obedience to the person who, even poor, now is governing and will later govern this Opera of God, you will be the heralds of the Catholic Action. And this will be done according to the full and absolute meaning of the word. My dear Brothers consider the greatness and the nobility of your mission! But which responsibility is looming on all of us. I recommend you to be up to your mission, to watch, to look after, to guard these souls and to wait the great and special reward only from God.

Priests and brothers, brothers and priests, we are only one, heart, mind, and arms, a necessary complement for one another. So let us do mutual charity, reciprocal appraisal, respect and mutual help. Remember that, even in different conditions you are all brothers, all sons of the same Mother, that is to say the Congregation of the Poor Servants! Do not afflict these Mother by lacking that mutual charity that is essential so that God is in us and we are in God.

Also the Missions are a great plan of God. Yes, my dear, God wants them, but he wants them always linked to the great program: "*Quaerite…*" One day if we are faithful, if we love God some big rocks will come off from this Opera and will become the foundations of a great divine action. The action of bringing the holy Gospel to so

many and many souls that have never heard anything about God, Jesus Christ, the eternal life.

How wide is our program that has to "heal all that is sick, find all that has been lost, resuscitate all that is dead", in the supernatural order! My dear brothers, how it is necessary for us to humiliate ourselves in front of all this and, at the same time, to thank the goodness of God who has chosen us and not others as his instruments! And he gave us a type of deposit of the great gifts he will give us at the end of our days!

Please, keep notice that I have literally taken these last words from a conference written in 1928.[36] I tell you this so that you can perceive that the Lord does not linger to accomplish the great plans he has about this very great Opera on condition that we correspond.

Brothers I end with the recommendation of the Father, of the brother: let us be careful so that we will never become unworthy of the grace the Lord has done to us. Let us, then, live a life of faith. Let us ask it for the good offices of blessed Cottolengo whose life and deeds can be considered a miracle of faith. About him they said that he alone had more faith than the whole Torino. He too knew the difficulties, the trials, the need, but how much faith and serenity in every circumstances! If we have the same faith he had we shall do the same deeds he performed.

I recommend you the holy humility: let us be humble in everything. Let us remember that our angers, our disagreements, our murmurs, all that causes disorder or mess spring out of pride. Humility and docility are

[36] Cfr. Notebook N° 7, doc. N° 5607 of 20-2-1928.

necessary to everybody, but particularly to us who, as you know, have to be acephalous, like rags, clay, disposed to everything.

Let us act so that humility walks together with charity. I invite you and, I end with this consideration, to meditate and to put into practice the words pronounced by St. Paul about this virtue: "Though I speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profits me nothing. Charity suffers long, and is kind; charity envies not; charity vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly, seekes not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil; rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hops all things, endures all things. Charity never fails" (1Cor 13: 1-8).

Pray a lot for me, for my poor soul so needy of the divine mercy. I always keep you in my mind and in my heart. Let us all meet one day in Heaven, for the merits of blessed Jesus who has suffered so much and died to acquire them. He also wanted copious and abundant our Redemption to make us easier the way to Heaven.

Heartily blessing, in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 9 5 May 1934

To be read to the dear priests and brothers of the venerable religious Family.

My dearest brothers in the Lord,

Let the peace of Jesus Christ be always with you. The divine Providence that leads this Congregation, that is one of his deeds, with a very particular care, God willing, at the end of this year will send some brothers to India under the responsibility of the Bishop Monsignor Vismara. They will go and work among the people of the most miserable social class: the pariah. This plan was born twelve years ago and now is starting. If one brother or one priest could feel this very particular vocation, it would be proper to expose to myself this desire letting then the Providence decide if he can or cannot go.

What a divine deed is that of the Missions, especially among the poorest and the most abandoned! It is sure that the first people who will go there are disposed to everything according to our spirit.

Then I lively recommend you, my dear priests, to watch so that in their rooms or among the objects

they use they have[33] something in contrast with poverty. For God's sake, let them send me these objects. Jesus will appreciate it very much. I bless you all, yours faithfully

Fr. J. Calabria

Who recommend you so much to remember him in your prayers.

*LETTER 10 St. John Baptist 1934

My dearest brothers in Jesus Christ,

Let the peace and the grace of blessed Jesus be always with you and with all the souls the divine Providence through your Apostleship and priestly ministry permits you to meet.[37]

Every time the Lord inspires me to write to you, my dear and beloved brothers I feel a certain thrill in my fatherly heart and keeper of this very great Congregation, born from one of the Sacred Ribs of the Crucifix Jesus.

[37] This letter was sent to all the religious and not only to the priests working in the parishes. In the Archives are kept two copies typewritten, with authentic notes signed by Fr. Calabria.

I feel a certain sensation I cannot describe with my words but that the Lord certainly will make you understand and feel. Because he never uses to begin something without refining and ending it later.

It is sure that I always, but particularly in this moment, I address to the Lord this prayer: "My Lord, do not let that this word of yours that passes through your poor and mean Custodian (Casante), be unheard".

My dear brothers, this would be the greatest of the accidents. Woe is to those who do not listen and for the Opera of God that, in this manner, lacks those means and ordinary helps of the economy of the Congregation of the Lord so that they live, grow, spread and perform the divine plans!

These are the words that I, *in visceribus Christi*,[38] tell you and pray to listen to and to put into practice: till the divine Providence, for a special intention of his divine mercy, keeps me here, in this Congregation of his. Remember that all of you have the sacred duty to listen to me. And why this? Because the Lord wants it so, absolute Master of this Opera and all the life of the Congregation of God is linked to it. What great, terrible responsibility for those who, *quod Deus avertat* give no value and importance to my words and recommendations. Give no value to all that the one who, in the name of God and for the goodness and development of the Congregation has been made as a Custodian (Casante) and as a guard of it by the divine Providence!

[38] In the love of Jesus.

I told you many times and I repeat it to you: the Lord has some other plans on this Opera and he shows me these plans even if I am poor and miserable. And he will perform them on condition that you listen to me and follow me in the ins and in the outs. What responsibility for those who do not listen to my words that are poor but that are words coming from God!

For this reason I pray you to listen to what the Holy Spirit tells you through the channel of this Congregation. In fact the Holy Spirit has and will always have special lights and graces to lead towards the harbor this mystic ship and so to perform the divine plans. I speak to you with clearness and firmness to be quiet in the day of my death and not to reproach myself like the prophet: "Woe to me because I didn't speak!"

And let me also recommend you another thing, so important and necessary in all the religious communities, but that in our Opera is necessary in a way that I should say, special. This is my dear brothers, the virtue of charity. Let us love one another in the Lord, let us pity ourselves, let us be generous in bearing and in forgetting so many little things that often menace to break this beautiful virtue that is the queen of all virtues.

In this connection I cannot do anything but to quote a passage I read in the life of Dom Columbia Marmion and that will be a stimulus, an encouragement and a warning to keep the brotherly charity for us.

"Without wanting, often without knowing we get irritated one another: this happens according to our condition of poor human creatures …

The history of saints is full of similar disagreements, of these misunderstandings that derive from the temperament, the character, the tendencies of the spirit, from the education, from the ideal dreamed by each of us …

The pain of the life in community is as much hard as the spirit is refined and the soul delicate … Human nature sometimes presents such weakness, such gap so that even souls that are sincerely in search of God and are linked one to another in the charity of Christ, provoke real reasons of mortification…It is a real mortification to bear such troubles with patience, with charity, without complaining every day …" and he added: "You will objected to me, but isn't it the convent the antechamber of heaven? It certainly is! But it can be extremely heavy and it can ask a great quantity of endurance to live for a long time in a place and wait and stay between monotony and contrariety".

And now, beloved brothers, I tell you the names of the lucky, privileged people that the divine Providence has chosen since the eternity to be the first in our Congregation to go and bring the light of the holy gospel, to bring our divine program <<*Quaerite*>> into the lands of the infidels.

What grace gives the Lord to them! Lucky and happy! If the reward for those who leave everything to devote themselves to the service of God in the religious life is great, much greater is the reward destined to the missionary! Many people asked to me to go to the Missions and this was and is a motive of great comfort.

I cannot please all of them but also those who stay, in front of the Lord, have already disposed to everything and I do not know what the Providence deserves to them. But they do not have to fear because it is God who sends them. The trial is the blessing asked and obtained just from the beginning of His Excellence Mons.our Bishop and that of the Holy See. Moreover just in these last days I have received a very nice letter from it. Some people already know it others will soon be informed. And then, my dear brothers, isn't it worth your repeating: *si Deus pro nobis, quis contra nos?"*[39]

So they are: I – Brother Edoardo Farina; II – Nov. Aldo Farina; III – Nov. Guido Tovazzi;[40] IV– Aggreg. Francesco Cornale.

Now we can but thank much and much the Lord who, through pains and troubles, perform his great plans. Let us do so that we all give our contribution of enthusiasm, of prayers, of mortification and sacrifices for the Missions. The devil is certainly squirming with impatience I do not know what he will do, but he will not able to do anything if you stay united to this poor Custodian (Casante) and you listen to him. Then we shall be victorious in all the struggles, superior in every trial, strong in all the difficulties and we shall do great things for the glory of God and the goodness of souls.

Let God give this to us for the good offices of the Immaculate Virgin, patron of our Congregation, for the good offices of the Holy Protectors and then for the

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[39] "If God is for us, who shall be against us?" (Rm 8: 31).

[40] Hoping that the novices have the great grace to do the religious profession [This note was made by Fr. Calabria].

good offices of the great Precursor Giovanni Battista whose feast we soon celebrate.

I bless you yours in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 11 24 August 1934

My dearest,

Let the peace and the grace of blessed Jesus be always with all of you.

I repeat this greeting I have addressed to you so many times with an always-new fervor, because I desire nothing but to see you happy and cheerful in the service of God. You will be so if you maintain, within you, that particular grace that is fruit of the very precious blood of Jesus the Redeemer. And also if you maintain that peace only God can give to you because it is not an earthly but a heavenly thing.

We are near the holy spiritual exercises that must have a special importance this year when there is the Holy Jubilee of our Redemption. My dear I feel pushed to address my poor words to you in order to exhort you to take advantage, better than possible, of this grace that

comes from the Lord. I also express you some of my fervid desires only addressed to see you

to make progress in the holiness peculiar to your vocation and to cooperate for the better development of this Congregation to which w e belong, for the grace of God.

I have told and repeated to you so many times: this is a special Opera that God wanted

In our time, destined to do a lot of goodness to the world on condition that we faithfully correspond to the plans of God, that are great.

We are only at the beginning: it is a great honor for us, but also a great responsibility. I keep in my mind the words that the Most Excellent Bishop said: "Woe to us if the Congregation had to decline, to fail or to darken just from the beginning! It would be a great misfortune, on the contrary it would not live but it would die". And it is really so. The Bishop told me what I myself feel.

My dear and beloved brothers do you want something sure and infallible to keep such a danger far from us? I show you with my soul full of confusion for my misery and unworthiness, but, at the same time, being really sure that I do not make a mistake. You have to listen to this poor priest, to follow him inside out, to try to carry out every order and also every desire that I express. Keep it well in your mind, today, this is the plan of the divine Providence. As long as I am here, you have to listen to me, to pay attention to every thing I tell you about the Congregation and to keep in your heart, like a divine seed, my poor words that are not mine but God's. And they will

have to be useful also later when I will not be here. Here is what it is necessary to keep us equal to our vocation and to contribute to the always-greater development of this Opera. As long as I am here this is the will of the Lord. When the Lord puts me apart then the interpreter of the divine Providence will be another.

My dear brothers, this Opera is like a statue. I tell you this consideration of mine that I have had after the holy Mass. But the statue is not complete, on the contrary, it is just roughcast. Till a statue is not finished the sculptor goes on working it all around, to take something off, to add, to scratch, to smooth it. Then when he can see it finished and he can perceive it as corresponding to the model that he had conceived then the statue goes out of his studio to adorn a palace, a garden and a basilica. Now the divine Sculptor is working on this statue, the Congregation of the Poor Servants, a statue destined to become a masterpiece deserving the universal admiration.

I am anything but a poor guard and a Custodian (Casante) of it, chosen by God among the most unfitted to great things so that it is more evident that He, God, does everything inside here and we do not do anything but damages. So when this statue will be finished and will make a beautiful parade of it only He will receive glory.

In ancient times, you know it from the history, there were some cities that were a shelter and those who entered them could receive some special favors of the human justice. Later on this privilege was extended to the palaces of the great lords and to the statues of the famous personalities.

It seems to me that this is our case: in these times of great confusion and of paganism, the Congregation is just a shelter where souls who want to draw spiritual and, sometimes also material goods can go to. God has thought so since the eternity and, in the present days has made it spring for the goodness of souls.

My dear brothers listen to those poor words that spontaneously come from at the feet of the Cross. God wants to perform many and great plans by means of this Congregation. What we can see now is nothing in comparison with what it will be in the future. But the condition is that we all united collaborate in the manner I have just told you. You have to listen to me with the docility proper to sons without making any opposition, never, and more than all you do not have to judge and to criticize what I tell and what I do. This would be a great attack to the Congregation because I assure you that all that I suggest you is always examined in the light of God. The only purpose is the goodness of this Opera and the desire to do the divine will as it shows itself.

As I told you so many times I do not fear the external struggles that can rise against the Congregation. I only fear the internal disunion, the lack of charity, the division between brothers and sons, brothers and brothers: I really fear these situations because this would be the ruin of the Congregation of God.

In your spiritual exercises, meditate and reflect about these things and manage to keep strong resolutions about it. By doing this you will contribute to the wellbeing of this holy Opera.

Be ready to everything, like rags, like clay, ready also to every sacrifice, generously, to support the desires of this poor Custodian (Casante). Only so I'll. be peaceful in the running of the Congregation, that costs, as you know, so many pains and troubles.

In the silence and in the concentration of the spiritual exercises look at this Opera and you will see it great, providential and you will appreciate the great grace of belonging to it.

Look at it, I pray you, in the light of the faith and not with a human eye. Think and impress well in your mind that it is a unique Opera, only one, a unique operating body, even if multiple and various are the purposes it establishes to reach.

No divisions, no comparisons among the different parts of it: one unique Congregation, one unique Opera constituted by priests and brothers who reciprocally complete themselves.

Not two distinct branches, but one unique tree. Priests and brothers constitute one unique structure: this is our special peculiarity and characteristic.

We have priests and brothers ready to everything in theory and in practice particularly to the mission of educating the poor creatures ant to all those other missions the Providence will trust to us later. If a priest or a brother did not feel in this disposition and said, foe example, that he feels an attitude and a disposition only to stay in the laboratory or to be a teacher at school or other things, he has to agree that he is not suitable to this Opera.

There are so many other Operas made by good priests or good religious, but our Congregation is Different. Here it is necessary to be in the disposition that I told you, I have always told you, since the beginning: the disposition of the House. That is to say, to be ready to everything, like rags, so that one can cover honorable positions and also perform humble tasks, if we can call them humble – while in the House of God everything is great.

Ready to act in the high ministry, if we can tell so, and to work in the hiding and in the silence of a religious house

Ready to set our sights only on souls and not to limit our actions and our aims on particular tasks, but on the contrary, to see in every place, in every work the means to practise a productive and practical Apostleship.

Then you have particularly to be attracted by the poor and abandoned young people.

My dear brothers let us never forget that the Congregation was born, has lived and is now living just with this purpose, with this mission. The mission is that of taking care of poor abandoned children, who need someone, who, in the name of God can be father and mother for them, brother, teacher and everyone else. To act otherwise would be to deny the will of God. I should fear to betray my mission if I did not tell you my thought clearly, thought that it is not mine but God's.

If in the past you have heard me to speak about the heart and the arms of the Congregation, believe me, it was not done in order to create some differences or to exalt one

part over the other. That was a way of speaking suitable to the moment in order to express some temporary needs of prayers and actions. Now it is not the case to speak so: all is heart, all is arms in the Congregation or, better, it is a whole body where each part is of a very vital importance.

This is the will of God and you have to support me with the prayers, with the docility, with a ready cooperation.

The outline has to be studied, worked to go gradually to the wanted perfection. This happens to every human thing, even the most blessed. At the beginning there is the substance of the thing, but there is not all the outline that ripens later. So our Opera needs work, some retouching, some developments always new and, with the grace of God, I am resolute to go to the end to give the right features to this Opera as they are wanted by God.

But I trust very much on you, on your prayer, on your observance of the holy Rules, on your readiness and filial docility to the orders I suggest you *in Domine*.

Pray, pray very much for the Missions that start the day after the Spiritual Exercises. Oh, what great things are the Missions! What great hour God gives us to cooperate for the diffusion of his reign among the infidels. Let us all try to cooperate: both the ones who leave and those who stay.

The Congregation of the Missions was prodigiously born. It is just like the little stone that spontaneously comes loose away: this is a stronger reason

to cooperate, with the prayer, with the sacrifices and by fervently speaking about them.

My dear I stop by recommending you the holy humility that is the basis of every virtue and the charity that has to hold all of us in one unique brotherly tie for the communal work of our sanctification and of the development of this Opera of God.

Apart I send you a nice booklet about Don Bosco[41] that has benefited me so much. I am sure that it will benefit you too very much. As a matter of fact I wish you read a part of it every day: this will be a drop of goodness, a grain of holiness that deposits on our heart.

Pray a lot for me so that I can always correspond to the plans of God at the cost of every sacrifice. I wish all of us could meet all united in the Paradise after having worked here, in the earth in brotherly union. Let us remember it always: in each work and mission we have to take aim the blessed target, the holy Heaven.

Blessing you heartily,

Yours faithfully

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 12 Christmas 1934

[41] Unfortunately we could note trace it.

To my dear sons in Jesus Christ, priests and brothers,

My dearest,

Let the peace and the grace of blessed Jesus be always with you, my dear brothers.

I always keep you in my mind and in my hearth and I pray the divine Redeemer so that he maintains you faithful to his service in this great House. I hope so for his greater glory and for the goodness of souls so that we can all meet in the blessed land, the holy Paradise one day to enjoy together that God we have together served in this life.

Dear brothers, we are near holy days, days of great happiness, because these are days when we remember the sublime action of love of that God who, to save us, to give us peace and grace, became man and lived among us, suffered and died for us. If these are holy days for us, days of peace for everybody, they have to be so for us in a special manner. The Congregation, of which we are members, can compare to the Holy Ark where our Lord saved his privileged people from the Deluge to repopulate the world. We are the people privileged by God. He wants to use us to reveal the spirit of the holy gospel to the corrupted world that continuously goes towards the spiritual ruin.

My dearest brothers, this is the primary purpose of our Congregation: to do all we can so that souls come back

to God, the world recovers and the light of truth and of the Gospel shines in the mind and in the heart of everybody.

Our Congregation, as I told you many times bears a really special stamp or feature.

In the blessed land of this garden, Jesus, absolute Master has placed many seeds of great works. It is up to us to make them rise and grow, for the glory of God and the goodness of souls.

But, my dear brothers, in order to do so keep well in your mind that as the Opera is special, also our life must be so. We have to maintain a great faith, a total abandonment in God, a deep humility, a brotherly docility towards the one who has been put here to lead this Opera. He is the keeper and the interpreter of the divine wills, the one you have to listen to. These virtues are the precious gems that have to enrich our souls.

Beloved brothers, let us perceive and see if we possess these virtues in words and in actions. To be without these virtues could destroy this Congregation: what responsibility it should be for us!

Dear brothers, at this point I have to tell you something you already know: I should tell you about the deep pain that I shall bring with me till my death, because it has stricken me in the deepest part of my soul.[42] But, with the help of the divine Providence, also this fact will be useful to perform the divine plans, because the Lord does not permit bad actions for anything but only to get a proportional good from it. This is the economy of the Lord

[42] Fr. Calabria is hinting here at the first skirmishes of the contest that brought to the Apostolic Visit.

in his great works: he permits great trials for his highest purposes...

Let us pray so that the hour of the trial passes soon, so that it clears up again and with alacrity we can retake our job in the most genuine and constructive brotherhood.

All this must be done for the advantage of the souls charged to us, the humblest, the most neglected and disregarded. In the meantime I suffer and pray, together with you, waiting for a sign of the Providence of God that assures me that it is not me who is the obstacle to the accomplishment of the divine plans and also assures me that He still wants me in the Congregation...

Always listen to this poor priest who speaks to you. I am nothing but the head of the workers in this mystic workshop of God. Great masterpieces must go away from here on condition that we all concordant and unanimous labour following the instructions of the one who has the job of leading. I wish you heartily a Happy Christmas: let Jesus Child fill you with his gifts of grace and health for next year 1935 and for many years on.

Pray for this poor Father who, blessing you heartily, is your affectionate in C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*5240/B 1934 [?][43]

Let the peace of God be with you[44] and with all of you.

Only God knows how I remember, I really remember all the people of the roman community and it is for this reason that I am here in front of my Cross to write this poor letter to you. This letter is poor but comes from my heart to tell you those words and to send you those exhortations the Lord is suggesting me in this moment. I hope to do it well, for the goodness of our souls and of the souls that the Lord, in his divine Providence, has trusted to your cares. God will bless only those cares and he will make them efficient if we, with the divine help, shall put into practice what I told you many times and I repeat you again also for the tranquillity of my soul. Soul that soon will have to present itself to the divine report, like Custodian (Casante) and guard of this very great Opera.

My dear Father Stanislao, the Opera is great, the Opera is God's and you know that all the Opera wanted by God have a special, particular imprinting but we who are religious must only have the purpose of looking for the holy Kingdom of God .

And we have to do this in the way and in the shape He will show by means of the Custodian (Casante), the keeper of this Opera.

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[43] This is a letter written on a note book. The end is missed and we don't know if the letter was sent like that.

[44] The letter was sent to Fr. Stanislao, for the whole community.

Here is all that we need: to keep well carved in our minds and in our heart the words that from the beginning of this Opera I have always told and repeated. We have to be acephalous, rags, clay, disposed to everything, sure to be zero, miserable. We have to be sure that all that God has given to us is his gift. We also have to act for the glory of God and the health of souls.

It is necessary to assert this principle and to think that we, by ourselves, do not do anything but to ruin, to damage the plans of God.

These plans come true with a real, pure spirit, with many prayers, great faith in Him, intimate union with Jesus, vine stalks and grapevine. From here comes the importance of the inner life.

Let everything but do not let the holy meditation, the holy Service and the actions of piety. Let us give the right place to the hour dedicated to the blessed Jesus and to the report and the exact observance of the Rules and also let us examine our conscience...

Dear Father Stanislao, I recommend you to watch all these things being the responsible: watch the practices of piety and then watch so that they observe those rules I tell ...

Each religious has to be a living Gospel.

I wish all knew and see within us the humility of Jesus Christ, the mortification of Christ, the poverty of Christ.

Only so the Lord will measure our life of religious: it will be a lamp that illuminates, salt that restores to health.

And dear Father Stanislao I recommend you very much to meditate this letter of mine and to make it observed. Our life, the life of this great Congregation of God depends not on the human approvals or on the earthly means. The life of this Opera is the accomplishment of the divine plans.

Let us all be united and linked to our program.

Watch so that everybody observes our Rules, everybody depends on you for everything and does the monthly spiritual retreat. With humility and discretion recommend the Rules you will give in the name of God. Let them love and stay where the Providence has put them ... Be always happy, *Dominus est*. No regret: where the Lord sends, there the person will do some good... The entire world is God's.

Dear Father Stanislao, pay attention so that you inculcate this concept "ready to everything". Let them always aim not to the branches, but to the tree, that is to say to the Congregation.

Poor is that religious who moves only in his niche without aiming...

As I have still told you, I feel that the Lord himself has new plans. But remember well, remember well to everybody that these plans are linked to the spirit of humility and obedience towards the man who, in the name of God leads this Congregation, no matter who may he be. Let nobody want to claim the order of God, it will be given at the right time...

*6963 7-1-1935

My really beloved brothers,[45]

To my dear brothers bursars,

Let the peace of our good Lord be always with you.

Beloved brothers, the Providence of God has done to you the greatest grace to make you bursars, administrators of his House. Do not doubt of anything, be always faithful bursars of our good Lord. Have always faith and do not fear anything.

Pray a lot for me.

I bless you in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*5911 Mantova, 7-2-1935

To my dear brothers treasurers,

The peace of the good God be with you always.

Beloved brothers, whom the Providence of the Lord granted with the grace to be treasures, administrators

[45] To the missionary brothers in India.

of its House, don't doubt anything, being always faithful treasures of the good God, have a great faith and fear nothing. Pray a lot for me.

I bless you, in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***6968 18-2-1935**

My really beloved brothers,[46]

Let the peace of our good Lord be always with you. Oh, how your job will be rich and blessed with the peace, with the grace, with the love of our Lord, how many merits you will put away for your souls, how you will expand the holy Kingdom of God , how many souls will go to Jesus!

Be always fresh religious, full of faith, all united in Jesus and be blessed! Let your eyes be fixed in Jesus, our Master in the difficulties and in the pains.

Consider that in order to give you have first to have. Each day ask to Jesus, by means of the Madonna, all that is necessary to your souls and to souls in general. Oh, how I remember you, how I am near you, how I bless you! You are *genus electum*, you are the foundation stones

[46] To the missionary brothers in India.

(cornerstones) of great works. Be stones well planted in the humility, in the charity, in the abandonment to God.

Pray a lot for me, for my soul. Pay homage to all the Fathers, ask for a blessing to Monsignor the Bishop I consider of the Congregation. Many wishes to Father Iodato: I am waiting for one of his letters.

Write also to Costozza. Bye to brother Edoardo, Farina, Guido, Cornale. United *in Domino.*

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 13 19 March 1935

Dear Father Stanislao and brothers,

Let the peace of our good Lord be always with you my beloved brothers. You are so best-loved by the blessed Jesus that He has called you so near Him, as he did with the Apostles one day, to take part of the most divine among the other divine works, that is to say the job of helping Him to save souls.

Oh, I wish I were near you and often remember the great, special, very special graces the divine Providence has done to you. Among them your dignity, your greatness, the divine treasures Jesus has given and continuously gives you, for you, for your personal sanctification and for the souls the divine Providence has trusted to you and will trust you later on!

Souls! My God, what a great word this is, particularly for us priests, ministers of a God who became man. He has given his life for us, to save souls in the middle of a flood of pains, with the most dreadful death And He continuously sacrifices himself for the souls' sake on our altars.

Woe to us, particularly to us, if we do not keep in our minds and in our heart this thought. Woe to us if we do not have this love for souls in particular for the poorest, the most abandoned, the most rejected, for the poor sinners who were a special object of the love of the Lord, of that Lord we are ministers of!

Oh, my dearest, I recommend you souls, the health of souls! To support a soul is to support a world, a saint said and another saint, Saint Charles, said that one soul is a diocese wide enough for a Bishop.

My God, how many souls are out, far from God, in need of everything, because they do not receive those great and divine riches we priests have! What great responsibility! *"Sanguinem eorum de manu tua requirem!"*[47] (Ez. 3: 18). How I tremble because of this sentence that comes from the Holy Scriptures! Let Saint Joseph, the church is celebrating today, help us to understand, especially we, the value of souls, the science of souls.

This is a science of great humility, of prayer, of mortification, of love for Jesus Christ and intimate union to him, because "*sine me nihil potestis facere*"[48]Only so

[47] "Of their death I will ask account from you"

[48] "Apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15: 5).

our holy ministry can be considered productive and fruitful and can save so many souls together with our soul.

Dear brothers on bended knees I implore you to support the glory of God and the goodness of souls, indifferent to places and tasks like Jesus Eucharistical who do not look at different places. He goes everywhere in order to help, to comfort, to health souls, to nourish them with his blood.

Oh, how much we need priests who are living Hosts, all dedicated to God, to souls, in a continuous zeal, in a continuos sacrifice! Oh, yes, so we can enjoy an anticipate paradise in the middle of pains! Blessed are we if we are so and we have to be so because we breathe continuous graces from God!

My dear, I am old, near the death and unfortunately only now I am starting to understand what I have written to you.

Pray for me the divine mercy and I hope this will not happen to you. I bless you in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*6960 Verona, 26-3-1935

My dear and beloved brothers,[49]

Let the peace of our blessed Jesus our Lord be always with you and with all, really all the souls the divine Providence makes you approach.

Till now six months have been passing since you left everything, for the love for God, for his glory and for expanding his holy reign. You left everything to go away, far from here in order to work, to labour , to pray and to suffer so that souls save themselves.. You did all this so that the Kingdom of God expands and the sky fills up with saints and souls that praise the Lord forever.

Oh, which grace which gift the Lord has done to you offering you the missionary vocation! This is a grace and a gift that you'll be able to understand a little only in the eternity, on your deathbed.

Oh, my dear and beloved brothers pay attention in order to estimate and love your vocation very much, living like true and holy missionaries, worthy son and followers of the first and divine Missionary, Jesus Christ. His life, his divine laws have both to be the code of your religious life. Let your thought be addressed to Jesus in the moments of trials, in the moments of obscurity that will not certainly lack.

[49] To the missionary brothers in India.

Faith, great faith in Him, in his words, in his orders.

Oh, I feel that you will perform miracles and that God will use you to accomplish great deeds by means of inner life and with the spirit of the Congregation if you are faithful religious ready to sacrifice and to the continuous union with God. ! Satan won't certainly stay still. He will look for every way, he will try everything and use any means, also the most particular ones to make you diverge. Brothers, be careful: "I am God's, woe to anybody who touches me!".

As much as I know and as I can I recommend you the inner life, the virtue, the good example in everything, the search of souls, souls, souls.

I receive your letters with great pleasure.

Write often to me and try to pray and make the others pray for me. We are so far and while I am writing to you it seems to me to be near you, to see you ...I always remember you. I pray for you, for your work, for your souls and I continuously offer my trials and pains.

Dear brothers, early products of great fruit, be serene, love our Lord and work for Him, looking at the great gift that our Lord keeps for you.

Bye brother Edoardo, Aldo, Guido, Cornale; be one only heart, one only soul.

I am tired, be patient for my writing. I bless you. In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*6976 Easter 1935 [21-4]

Beloved brothers,[50]

Great divine plans will accomplish with the divine grace in your mission if you are docile, humble, full of faith, of holiness. And then what a gift in the Paradise! I bless you all and all of you pray the mercy of God for me.

In In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*6962 18-5-1935

Beloved brothers,[51]

Let the peace of God be always with you and let his blessings and graces support, help you and give you the holy solace to see that his reign expands.

[50] To the missionary brothers in India.
[51] To the missionary brothers in India.

Think what it did cost to Jesus to redeem the world! Go on with faith, with great love. God will enrich your work and will bless it.

Pray the divine mercy for my poor soul, I bless you heartily.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***6964 3-6-1935**

My best-loved friends,[52]

Let the peace of God be always with you and with all the dear souls our Lord makes you meet.

Only God knows how many things I would like to tell you! From the deep of my heart I pray Him to tell them to you in the secret of your religious soul. I can assure you that I am always near you with my prayer and my suffering. Let the Lord give you the grace of walking always along his path, with Jesus, for Jesus and in Jesus.

Oh, what a prize, what a great prize is expecting you near the divine Creator at the end of your working day!

Pay attention to the Enemy. God will be always with you if you are always with him, in the humility, in the

[52] To the missionary brothers in India.

charity, in the holy obedience and in the full exercise of the Christian and religious virtues.

Pray a lot and make the others pray for your Father John. God only knows how I need them.

Bye Bro. Edoardo*, esto fortis,* love Jesus a lot and make Him be loved. I greet you, Bro. Aldo, continue your way together with Bro. Guido and Cornale.

From the heaven they look at you and help you.

I bless you all, in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***6959 30-7-1935**

Beloved brothers missionaries in India,

You are the first in my heart. You are the privileged by Jesus who looks at you in a really special manner because you are the foundation.

Blessed you if you are always Jesus'!

Pray, pray, for me. I bless you in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*6967 Verona, 19-8-1935

My dearest brothers,

Let the peace of blessed Jesus be always with you. With my heart overflowing with happiness I give you a happy information. As you will see from the letter I herewith enclosed of the Reverend (most Reverend?) Father Visitor, the suspension of the holy vows has been taken off. Two courses of spiritual exercises have been proclaimed to prepare us to renew our religious profession for another year.[53]

This fact, my dear, represents a new trial of the goodness and of the mercy of the Lord towards us. He did not look at our miseries and ingratitude, but only at his great Opera and to the great plans he wants to perform by means of it.

Blessed we if we correspond to such grace and such mercy! But woe to us if we do not know the day of the visit of the Lord! And woe to us if we do not take advantage of the graces and of the favours He still deserves to us in this new year of health!

I should fear that what we can read in the Gospel about the dried fig could happen to us.

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[53] The letter of the Ab. Caronti has the date of 19 July 1935. Both the courses of retreat were preached in Nazareth (Verona) by Fr. Cenere S.J. The first one from 1st to 8th September, the second from 30th September to 7th October.

"A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down *ad quid terram occupat*?"[54]

And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it, and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down".

My dear brothers let us seriously examine our conscience. The heavenly farmer of this beautiful tree that is our dear Congregation perhaps did not see the fruit he wanted when he came to see and visit it. Because he is not content with ordinary fruits. As special is the Congregation, as special must be our correspondence.

So the Lord still gives us his mercy.

He gives us one year more so that we can remedy our past and strongly commit ourselves to aim to our sanctification from which the sanctification of all the Congregation depends. Will our Lord be disappointed in his expectations? Woe to us, my dear brothers!

But how will you sanctify yourselves? Leaving the general interests apart I only want to recommend you only this: listen to the man, anyone could he be, the divine Providence put as a Custodian (Casante) of his Congregation. Till the time the divine mercy keeps me here take care to listen to me! I need to be helped, listened to with docility, with humility, with spirit of faith. You can

[54] "Why must it occupy the land?" (Lk 13: 7).

do so if you look at me not as a man with all his defaults, but as the one who represents God.

Again I recommend you to receive the most Reverend Father Visitor with the same spirit of faith and also to turn all the dispositions he has given and will give to you to good account. We have to recognise in him the Angel sent by God for our goodness and the goodness of our dear Opera.

I do not go on too long. I keep you all in my fatherly heart, but you also pray a lot for me so that I can follow the holy will of God till the end.

I bless you.

Yours faithfully in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***6965 12-10-1935**

My beloved brothers,[55]

Let the grace, the peace of blessed Jesus be always with you and with all, really all the souls the divine Providence makes you approach.

Oh, I keep you in my mind and in my heart, and how I pray and suffer because the blessed Jesus, the first and divine Missionary is always near you with his graces and his blessings encouraging and helping you in the most divine of his jobs. The job of co-operating with him to save

[55] To the missionary brothers in India.

souls! Souls! What a great word this is! Souls cost but the Lord will give you a great prize.

So go on along the way God has traced for you. Work and labour for Him in the holy humility, in the obedience, in the charity, in the spirit of faith. Do this always perceiving Jesus himself in the fellow creatures, in the abandoned, in the rejected, in the poor, in the suffering people. Blessed you if you possess this spirit. The holy Kingdom of God will expand and souls will save themselves!

Dear brothers pray for me, for my poor soul and live united in the holy love of God with our eyes to the Paradise.

Beloved brother Edoardo, tomorrow will be your Saint's day: many wishes to you: I am near you, I remember your family, your revered mother I visited, holy woman. I send you a blessing for the missions.

Do homage to all the most Reverends Superiors: recommend me to their prayers.

I bless all our dear Indians. Bye brother Edoardo, Farina, Aldo, Tovazzi, Cornale.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*6966 16-11-1935

My dear brothers missionaries,

Let the grace, the peace of blessed Jesus be always with you and with all, really all the souls the divine Providence makes you approach.

Souls! My God, what a great word this is for us religious who are ministers, coadjutors of a God who became man, as we are. And he did it to save souls and to give us the means and the graces fit to sign our way to go towards him and to save so many souls.

You two[56] blessed, my dear brothers missionaries who are in the front rank, in the advance place, under the guide of the divine Missionary Jesus Christ. Oh, always follow him and imitate him in all. Be sure that you will win because you are supported by him, helped and blessed!

I know and I measure your trials, your pains, your troubles and the disillusions you will meet, but do not fear. God is and will always be with you, with his grace, with his blessings and particular helps according to your need.

But on bended knees I particularly recommend you to keep the spirit of the Congregation in you. Great faith, particularly in the difficult moments that are the moments of God, full abandonment in Him, great love towards the

[56] "You two", because Fr. Calabria, though addressing the letter to the superior of the community ("Greet my dear Indians and tell them…"), wanted to direct a particular wish to the Brothers Aldo Farina and Francesco Cornale, who were accompanying Bishop Vismara in his apostolic journeys at Secundrabad.

poor, the disdained, the rejected. Remember that all these are the best loved, the favoured by God. Always keep in your minds that under the rough skin, under the rags, in the feeble and sick bodies, there is always a priceless pearl. To look for it you abandoned everything and became missionaries of the Poor Servants. I mean the soul and for the soul nothing has to stop you.

What prize later, what a beautiful place in Paradise!

I hope you are well because the health is necessary. I pray the Providence. Pray it you too because it seems to me that soon the moment has arrived to send one of our priests, so the Congregation will be completed.

Here we are going on. I bless the Lord for the trials we sustained and for the ones He will send us again. In the hands of God they represent real gifts and great richness for his Opera.

I recommend you very much to pray and to make the others pray for me who am old, full of infirmities and so poor in everything. I remember you in a really special way and I am near you. Greet my dear Indians and tell them to pray for me. I heartily bless them. Do homage to the Reverend Superiors.

Bye brother Edoardo, Farina, Aldo, Tovazzi, Cornale.

Be saints, the Congregation of the Missions depends on you all. Blessing in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

6971 20-12-1935

To the brothers missionaries.

The wish I send to my dear brothers I always bring in my mind and in my heart is to have graces, blessings and great love from God. Pray for me.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

6975 25-12-1935

My dear brothers missionaries,

Let the grace, the peace of blessed Jesus be always with you, my dear and beloved brothers.

Oh, how I have you in my mind and how I pray, particularly in the holy mass, so that the Lord makes you always understand more and more the very great grace he gave you. He gave you the grace of choosing you among thousands and thousands and made you his direct cooperators in the most divine of the divine job: that is to say the job of saving souls!

Souls! Which great word this is for us priests and for you brothers missionaries! On bended knee I pray you, I implore you to cooperate with such grace living the genuine spirit of our Congregation. This is a spirit of great faith, of humility, of charity and of abandonment into the loving arms of the divine Providence!

Dear brothers, it seems to me to see all the sky looking at you waiting great deeds from you. But remember that these great things cost crosses, pains and troubles, but do not fear. The Lord will be with you in a really particular way and when we have God we have all.

I recommend you the inner life, first of all your personal sanctification. It will bring you to the sanctification of souls. Love, look for souls and take care to favour the poorest, the most abandoned, the most disdained, because all these are the dearest souls to God.

I have a great, the greatest need of prayers for my poor soul by now... and then for the Congregation; make also the other souls pray.

Bye brother Edoardo, Aldo, Tovazzi, Cornale.

Let God bless you and give you the grace of being the cornerstones.

I bless you, in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

Do homage to Monsignor the Bishop I remember.

6974 20-2-1936

My dearest brothers missionaries,

Let the peace of God be always with you and it will be so if you all live with the spirit of the Congregation. So be acephalous, clay and abandon yourselves to the Providence. See the Lord in everything. We save and sanctify souls first by means of our personal sanctification. And this, in the end, is, remember it well the obedience. Let God bless you.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

5912 2-4-1936

Letter to the Advisers.

In the name of the Lord, absolute Master of this Congregation; I open the current session after the painful trial the goodness of God has sent to us to purify our souls and to put this Congregation on the right way. Let us remember well that this Opera entirely belongs to God, in the true and full meaning of the world. God only knows

how I should like to participate to it, but I am not able to do it.

I pray so that the Holy Spirit can enlighten your minds, in this session and always, in the decisions I later shall approve for the goodness of this Opera.

My dear brothers, let us always keep in our minds that this Congregation is a divine creature that belongs to the present time. As I have told you many and many times the Lord wants to perform great things within it. And he will accomplish these things by means of us, if we are docile and humble instruments full of faith and love for Him, for his glory and for souls. So we shall perform the greater and divine plan that is the human redemption, in the hiding, in the obedience, in the trial, in the cross.

What grace, what action of preference the Lord has used with us calling us to take part in it and also, I should say, to help Him. But what great responsibility, if we do not reciprocate it in return This would be the greatest of our accidents!

Let us correspond, trying to sanctify our souls more and more, trying to perceive Him, the Lord, in all the things we approach. And this should be specially done for the "one" he will put as the Custodian (Casante) of this Opera.

Let us all forget our egos in the discussions and let us see and consider everything in the light of God as if we were in the deathbed. It does not deal with us, but with the Congregation, always with the Congregation, the goodness of the Congregation: here is our only thought.

Blessed are we, if we are so, our sanctification will be sure! The Congregation will go on, it will spread its

light all over the earth as the holy Gospel of which this Opera has to be the eldest daughter.

I am certain and sure that you pray for me. Continue, please, with this charity. God only knows how much I need it! I pray for you so that we can all meet in heaven.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***6972 2-4-1936**

Dear brothers Edoardo, Aldo, Cornale and Tovazzi,[57]

Your Father John loves you in the pain, in the continuous suffering and in the prayers. He blesses you and exhorts you to see everything in the will of God. After the *via crucis*, the *via lucis*.

Pray for me, in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

[57] Missionaries in India.

*6969 5-4-1936

My best beloved brothers,[58]

Let the Lord be with us and with all the souls the Lord makes you approach. I am always very near you with the prayer and with the pain. All these are great gifts the Lord gives us for the goodness of our souls and to accomplish the divine plans.

I have forefelt your trials and your pains.[59] Jesus loves you and has a predilection for you. For God's sake I pray you to keep you very tight to the cross Jesus gives you! There is no possible better gift. Surely we have to see it with faith and in the light of God and to see the instruments of God in all that surrounds us and makes us suffer.

Keep you in the healthy humility, in the virtue and in the great love of God and of Jesus, the first Missionary. Do not fear: you will be the foundation of great deeds. Pray for me and for the Congregation.

I bless you in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

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[58] Missionaries in India.

[59] Fr. Calabria was feeling that Ab. Caronti was about to call to the fatherland all the missionaries brothers and to close the Indian Mission.

6970 1-5-1936

Dear brother Edoardo,[60]

Let the peace of God be always with you and with all my dear, very dear brothers who are missionaries.

I feel your trials, the trials the good Lord sends you to see your generosity and to accomplish his divine plans.

As much greater is the Congregation, as greater are the pains and the sufferings. Oh, how really great, very great, is the Opera of the Mission of the Poor Servants! For this reason it must be accomplished in the cross and only so it will provide fruit. Be strong. Try to see everything in the light of the Lord.

Pray for me, for everybody. I bless you. I remember all of you. All of you remain in the love of God, in the charity.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

[60] Bro. Edoardo Farina was the superior of the missionaries sent to India.

*6973 21-6-1936

Beloved brothers,

We can always perceive in everything the mark of the Lord for our goodness.[61] In my poverty I keep you in my mind and in my heart and I pray so that you correspond to the great graces the Lord has done to you and so that you are always worthy of following the divine Missionary. Pray for me. I bless your souls and I desire very much to see you again, God willing.

Bye to you Brothers Edoardo, Guido, Aldo, Cornale.

Yours in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 14 3 December 1936

My dear father Stanislao,

Let the grace and the peace of blessed Jesus be always with you, with all our dear brothers of the roman

[61] Fr. John Calabria already knew that the missionaries brothers in India had received from the Apostolic Visitor Ab. Caronti the order to be ready to go back to Italy.

community and with all the souls the good Lord makes you meet by means of your holy ministry.

For many days I have vividly and strongly felt the desire of writing to you. I wanted to tell you that I always keep in my mind and in my heart all and each of you. Then I always preach our divine and beloved Redeemer so that he can more and more fulfill you and all us of his divine Spirit.

First of all for the goodness and sanctification of our religious souls and then so that we are able to perform all that Jesus wants for the greater glory of the divine Father and for the health of souls.

Dear father Stanislao this is the right time to rise from our sleep. Believe me, this is a terrible hour, this time belongs to Satan and in a very special way. It is useless to delude ourselves.

For God's sake, let us prepare ourselves, like soldiers and ministers of God, to withstand the collision and to be able to win with the divine grace. To win by using the arms the divine Captain has put in our hands and that the Apostles and all saints used in order to win in the centuries.

Dear Father Stanislao we always need priests and holy religious but now in a special way. We need them as if they were living gospels and as if that the community was a continuous sermon.

Oh, yes, it is not sufficient to sermonize, to speak and to act. All these deeds are fine and good but first of all it is necessary to practise all that Jesus and the Apostles preached! *"Sacerdos alter Christus"!* Jesus lives a poor

and humble life. (His pleasure is) he loves staying with poor people, the people he prefers. He loves and looks for sinners, he despises earthly things. He tells us that we are not fit for the earth, but for the sky and that down here we are brothers, his sons.He also tells us that we have only to search the holy Kingdom of God , that we are sent by Christ. And as Christ was sent by his Father to save the world and he saved the world through the sufferance, the pains and the death in the cross so we have to do the same.

My dear Father Stanislao, souls are saved not through the comfort, not through the human prudence, but through the cross, the sacrifice, shortly through holiness. Oh, I wish our Lord could, more and more give us the grace of aiming to the holiness!

Remember, recall to our brothers too that according to the plans of God you came to Rome and passed through the door of the parish. But this was simply a door. Watch out because the Lord, particularly in these times, wants to perform some great deeds and he will do it if we are and live according to the divine grace like the Apostles did.

So it is necessary that we sanctify ourselves in order to sanctify souls. And here is the great importance of the inner life, all united to Him, like vine stalks to vine, bowls in order to became channels later on.

When we go towards souls, let take care in order to be united to God.

So, dear Stanislao, as long as I know and as I can, I recommend you the inner life, the holy meditation because here is the place where the fire of love of God and of souls catches fire.

The person who does not meditate is a person on the edge of an abyss.

Together with the meditation take care so that they give importance to the daily visit to Jesus as a Sacrament. Where there is our treasure, there will also be our heart – it is written –, and our treasure, dear Father Stanislao, must be the tabernacle, Jesus in the Sacrament of Eucharist

When we are in doubt, when we are uncertain, when we are in need of great things for our souls and for our holy ministry, let us go towards the holy tabernacle, let us think that our God is really, truly and substantially there.

Look so that also the Divine Office has the first place. Do not wait until the night, but act so that it finishes before the night and that the office of the following day is put forward at night[62]

It is necessary to pay attention so that the occupations do not suffocate this divine fire.

If some people are waiting for us, let us end our Office and let us tell the people what we are doing. This will certainly be considered an action of edification. In our holy ministry everything depends on the Office: if it is well done and, about the holy Mass, if it is well celebrated.

However just with regard to the holy Mass the words pronounced by St. John Eudes really impressed me: "To offer the holy Mass three eternities would be

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[62] Before the liturgical reform after the Vatican Council II, the divine Office was longer than now, and the Office of Reading – then called Matutinal – commendably was often anticipated at the preceding evening.

necessary: one eternity to prepare oneself, the other to celebrate and the third to thank".

How many other things I should tell you! For instance how to recall to your minds other orders I gave you in other circulars and here shortly summarized.

Smoking is absolutely forbidden; in my opinion this is really important for us. If one wants to smoke he can abandon us.

Nobody has to go to and have dinner parties during feasts even if they are religious feasts such as baptisms, weddings etc…This will be considered an action of edification if it will be accompanied by a kind denial.

Nobody should use the camera without my permission; none of you should be photographed without permission. Believe me, all this is vainglory. Also do not be photographed too easily being in groups even if they are made of good and holy associations and never, absolutely never, in groups of women.

Use the bicycle only for the ministry, never for pleasure and always with the permission. The Lord will take into account your discomforts you will have to meet for your holy ministry and he will bless them.

I recommend you to be clean, but not with studied elegance. Away the locks and certain tight fits that belong to the social whirl. Instead of building they destroy.

Be careful about playing cards; you should never play them. You can permit it, but you should not do it. Be careful.

Dear Father Stanislao, and here I finish, I follow you with my greeting and with my holy bless for you, Faher Stanislao, for your souls, for the souls trusted to our dear brothers.

I follow Father Rosa, the privileged one, and I feel that Jesus will help him in his difficult enterprise. I greatly recommend to Father Isaia that small seed. I hope that all of them will act well. I hope to know something about it. I send my blessing to Father Pomini, Father Toaiari, Father Dalla Riva. Father Pomini I hope you will continue your life of work in the holy Humility. Father Toaiari, be always united to Jesus and you, Father Dalla Riva always try to imitate the first and divine Missionary, that is to say Jesus.

Pray and make the others pray for me so that I myself can be able to practise it. Let Jesus forgive me and, at the end of our day, I hope we shall meet, forever united, in the Holy Paradise.

Yours very affectionately in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 15 4 December 1937

My dearest brothers,

Our dearest Bro. Francesco Perez has died.

At 4.30, this morning, just the day after the first Friday in the month and after the feast of Saint Francesco Saverio, at the first hours of the first Saturday of the month, especially consecrated to the Madonna he was very devotional of, his beautiful soul took flight straight towards the sky. We have lots of reasons for believing it arrived there, at his prize, without any delay.

He has always morally built many things for us and our House will keep the perfume of his virtues for a lot of time. A general voice tells that a holy man died! On receiving such a piece of news more than one person has expressed his thought telling "we do not know if it's right to condole with you for the loss or congratulate. It is sure that dear Francesco was a column for the house, a very high type of income. This is our comfort: if while he was living with us he represented a kind of magnet of graces, up there he will be a heavy rain.

His last moments were uplifting. Just a few moments before midnight he asked the time. At 12 o'clock he declaimed the *Angelus Domini* with a clear voice; later he declaimed the whole hymn *Ave Maris Stella* with fervency.

The brother who stayed near him, seeing that he was taking a turn for the worse, asked him if he wanted a priest; "But Father John is here!" he said. And turning towards him as if he was really speaking with Fr. John he thanked about what he had done for him. "Please be with me and stay till the end" he told him. And in the meantime he made the sign of the Cross as he used to do when he received the blessing of the Father.

He felt worse about the three in the night; "Stop it, I can't bear it anymore!" he repeated many times. Then he remained quiet. He declaimed the whole ejaculation: "Jesus, Joseph, Mary". Then he added: "I feel that the Lord is calling me". And he started praying for Father John, for the peace in the world, for the Bishop, for his dear ones, for the brothers, for the Houses, for everybody. He also added an intention not well understood near the name of everybody. At a certain moment, looking up he said: "Those roses are not, they are really not for me. I am nothing but a poor miserable man".[63]

Just a few moments before dying he said with serious accents: "*Memento homo quia pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris*".[64] And he added*:* "*In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum!*"[65]

He entered in very short death throes and then, he felt asleep in Lord's hands almost without giving any sign. The priest, who was present, on seeing him still, perceived that he was dead and recited the first prayers of the dead.

My dear brothers, what an enviable death! But we have to say that this death was really en echo of his life. Let our Lord give us the gift of living, by the good offices of Mary, like he did so that we can deserve dying as he did.

I bless you. In C.J. *Fr. J. Calabria*

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[63] Bro. Francesco was an expert cultivator of flowers. His greenhouses of Zevio were famous. That's why Fr. Calabria entrusted to him the care of the garden, and in the church there were always fresh and beautiful flowers, and among them the roses were dominant.

[64] "Remember, man, that you are dust and unto dust you shall return".

[65] "Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit".

*8766 Easter 1938 [17 April]

To the religious Poor Servants,

To all my dearest brothers, to all those of the House at St. Zeno in Monte, to all the components of this really great Opera of the Lord, at this moment I spontaneously from my heart wishes you a happy Easter.

Yes, Yes, Happy Easter, my dearest. Let that this holy day mark the beginning of a more holy life for all of us. A holy life for us who have the great fortune of living, of residing in this divine ship that lives in the sea. But the sea will never enter our own ship if we do not want it.

Happy and Holy Easter!

I bring you all in my mind and in my heart and I hope so that my trials and pains will bring a rich heritage of holiness to all and to each of us.

Again have a Happy Easter. I bless you all, more with my heart than with my hand.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

* LETTER 16 Verona, 26 April 1938

My dearest friends

I am happy to show you the beautiful letter the most Reverend Apostolic Visitor sent us during Easter period answering to our wishes.

As long as I know and as I can I recommend you *in caritate Christi* to read carefully the fatherly exhortations and to put them into practice.

During these times when from everywhere we can perceive the invitation to unite ourselves and to get stronger to withstand the dangers we priests have a need. We, more than anybody else, should have the need to collect more and more strictly in the charity of Christ, in the brotherly fraternity and get stronger especially in the virtues connected with our holy vocation.

Only so we will be able to withstand to the attacks of the alluring enemy and perform the divine plans for the glory of God and for the goodness of souls.

I bless you in Lord and I really recommend you a lot to pray for me so that I can save my soul.

Yours affectionately

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 17 Subiaco, 24 April 1938

My dearest brothers in Lord,

In the peace and in the grace of the Holy Spirit.

I particularly appreciate the wishes coming from San Zeno. Your good words so full of the spirit of the Lord descend to my soul.

I thank you heartily and I reciprocate as much as I can your wishes. I also assure you that we have always been, in a really particular way, in communion of souls and prayers during the holy days when the Church has celebrated ad renewed the mysteries of our faith.

In these circumstances we have to confirm our intent to live according to the spirit of our holy vocation. We can see the disciples of our Lord, poor, dismayed, fugitives who become instruments of redemption. But to arrive at this point they have to rid themselves of their humanity and to abandon themselves to the work of the grace.

Then and only then the poor fishermen become true Apostles and organs fit to the sanctification of souls.

So the Poor Servants of the Divine Providence have to die first, to renounce to their will, to their way of feeling and of perceiving reality and to stay abandoned in the hands of the obedience. The obedience, in fact, represents the will of the celestial Father: they have to die as Jesus Christ did according to the demands of their own vocation.

And what vocation is ours, my dearest brothers! While the entire world runs to follow the earthly things, we have only to aim to the sky, to the holiness. We have the mission of showing to all men that the spirit of the Lord is present only in the humility and in the poverty and in the unconditional abandonment to the divine Providence.

The Lord so fully blesses our Congregation! All of us have to understand the responsibility we have. The responsibility of acting well like true servants of the Providence, feeding the charity and the union among all of us and practicing the most absolute subjection to the superiors.

Differently each of us put an obstacle to the blessings of God and can be the reason why some deeds cannot develop.

So we all have to be concordant, united in the charity and in the obedience: this is the sure and infallible way to keep our Lord with us. *Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est*.[66]

I recommend you the charity of recommending my poor soul to the Lord so that he has mercy of me.

I bless you and embrace you in the Lord. In Jesus Christ

Dom Emanuele Caronti O.S.B.

[66] "Where charity and love is there, God is there".

*LETTER 18 April 1938

My dearest brothers,

The grace and peace of blessed Jesus be always with you.

The day before yesterday I was at Costozza and I felt like telling those dear brothers of ours a thought that I felt just coming from the Holy Spirit. For this reason I have prayed so that they could write it to you too.[67]

I pray to put it to good account and to consider it and examine it carefully. Our Lord passes near us many times and now is passing by means of my poor words.

It's our job do not permit that it passes in vain.

I bless you.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

Dear Father Bettini and dear community,

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with all the holy community at Costozza.. At this moment I feel a very lively desire that this

[67] It is the following letter.

community can be a center of love for God and for souls, in this manner, performing the plans of God.

Dear brothers, now I am repeating to you and moreover to me, what I told you yesterday Yes, it seems to me that the Lord gives us the *ultimatum* to see us living, in the end, the way our holy vocation requires. That is to say living abandoned to our divine Providence in everything, having no anxieties except the one of the glory of God for the goodness and for the health of the fellow creatures, certain and sure that earthly things will be given to us in addition.
This is what our divine Redeemer assures us in the holy gospel.

Dear brothers, for God's sake, let us all commit ourselves: let us sanctify in order to sanctify and we shall sanctify ourselves with the full observance of our holy Rules, the same Rules I recommend you on bent knees,

The present time is a time of terrible storms. Our Congregation is like the Ark of God where so many souls will find the health and the life.

What responsibility for the person, who, being called to work and to serve the Lord in this Congregation, does not correspond! Let the Lord, for the good offices of the Madonna, give to all of us the grace of really correspond to Him! Blessed we!

Pray for me, I bless you all. In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*8766/A 3-6-1938

I am always among you. I pray, I suffer and I bless you all. I recommend you my poor soul and the other souls who can save themselves only by means of the cross. I like the vestment very much.[68] The activity of Maguzzano is great.

Let God reward you, in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

* LETTER 19 4 September 1938

This is the first time that I do not do the spiritual retreats with you, my dear and beloved brothers.

We have always to thank and bless the Lord, also when our poor and little mind cannot understand the divine dispositions: “My ways are your ways, tells the Lord”.

This year the Lord has asked me, poor man, a new sacrifice and, with the divine grace, I accept it willingly

[68] He is hinting at the liturgical vestment given him by the community of Maguzzano.

first for my poor soul and then for you, for your sanctification, beloved friends. Because, remember it well, personal sanctification, virtue, love for God, his glory together with the goodness of souls, that are the life and the patrimony of the Congregation itself, cannot be disjoined.

Only if we reform ourselves, sanctify ourselves, live the life of the true religious men the Congregation of the Poor Servants, without any other human help, will become a giant and will quickly continue along the way the Divine Providence has assigned to her. If we do the contrary we will concur to destroy the Opera. My God, which responsibility for all and for each of us if we live as the Lord wants! Do not let us go to beg reasons, excuses or other things to justify us if our Apostleship is fruitless. Such reasons and pretensions are nothing but the compassionate embellishment of our self-respect. This is only and solely our fault.

I pray and suffer so that these holy exercises bring us to the primitive, genuine fervor, to the primitive and genuine spirit that is the life of the Congregation. Remember it well: let all our thoughts meet in only one point, in our personal sanctification. This is always the same refrain, but I have to repeat it, so that I do not consider myself responsible to have kept silent.

Yes, my dear and beloved brothers, let that our greater care is to study and to discover the great riches that God has put in our disposal, in the supernatural order of things. These treasures and riches are all opposed to those of the world. These last riches, even if great wear out while time passes and are reduced to a handful of sand.

And do you know which our riches are? We are nothing but a medley of malice and sin, only the goodness and the mercy of the Lord have inserted us into his grace and have put us in the Congregation of the Poor Servants. Servants, brothers! Servants! Servants! So we are not masters, so we do not have to confide in our enlightenment, assert our own opinions perhaps to the prejudice of Rules. This is not to serve but to command. I repeat it to you, my dear brothers: servants! We are servants! I hope that one day we should not have to give reports about this and that this name should not be reproached because we did not live like servants, like Poor Servants.

Here are our riches, our weapons: to study our Lord Jesus Christ, to observe the holy Rules, to practise virtues and especially humility, purity. Here are our riches and our weapons.

Remember it well: no strength will be able to destroy the Congregation.

I have never feared the struggles coming from the outside. These are useful to give the seal of the works of God and they will strengthen it more and more. I fear our weak virtue, sloth and spiritual tepidness. What responsibility!

Remember again: stay aside from human protections! If we are small we shall be great.

Let us do everything to please Him, only Him, not to cadge or beg a human and earthly praise. Let us keep hidden the goodness we do, nobody has to know it.

Do not let us say: I did this, I did that. “I have seen Satan-Jesus said- falling from the sky” For heaven’s sake

let that the self-respect, the pride do not steal the merits we can achieve in our sacred ministry and Apostleship.

I keep you all in my heart and in my mind, especially you, my dear sons in Rome: Fr. Rosa, Fr. Isaia, Fr. Dalla Riva, Fr. Gerardo and you all, my dearest brothers I'd like to call one after the other.

In Rome I saw many things, good and bad. Be luminous lights. Let your light shine in front of men so that they can see your good deeds and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Pray for me so that I am not like those who illuminate the others staying themselves in the darkness.

I wrote this letter from my bed, because it seems to me that the Lord wanted this.

I bless you and I wish you that the present spiritual Exercises are really fruitful for you and for the Congregation and so that, one day, we can all meet in the holy Paradise.

I bless you more with my heart than with my hand.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

8744 8-9-1938

My beloved friends,

Only a few words that tell you about my great attachment in the Lord for you, for your souls that are irradiated by the divine light of the holy vows in this holy day.

You are God's, we are God's! What can we desire more, beloved brothers? Let us keep ourselves in the holy intentions that you made, for the grace of God, in the holy Spiritual Exercises. Moreover when the spirit of the world and of our self-respect would like to make us abandon this intention we should say: I am of God, all of God, woe to anybody who touches me!

God only knows how much I need prayers to be able to feel well, that is to say to be able to do the holy will of God, because only in that moment we can say to feel well.

Let the Madonna help us to be always of God and of his sons.

I bless you heartily being poor *inter pauperes*, in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*469 Verona, 1-4-1939

To my dear religious Poor Servants of the church of St. Filippo.

To the dear religious Poor Servants: let these holy days that remind the passion and the death of the divine Redeemer be for our religious souls days of great love to God and to souls and also be days of strong intentions for the life Jesus gives us.

Pray for me poor man, in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 20 7 August 1939

My dearest brothers,

The grace of Our Lord be with us all and help us to become always more and better, worthy Servants, even if poor, of the divine Providence.

I write you these few words, with my heart of very affectionate father, during these days of convalescence the Lord gives me after the visit he paid to me.

I have never meditated about the preciousness of the sufferance as I did during this time of trial. It is

precious when you accept it, dutifully, from the hands of the heavenly Father with the serene faith that this can be the right thing for you. During that material inaction caused by our illness, how much profitable work can be done in the vineyard of God to increase the holy Kingdom of God in our souls! With the patience, the resignation, with the prayer, the sick person exercises a very effective influence and an industrious Apostleship for the advantage of the Church and of souls. The Lord puts the sufferance; invisibly, near that priest, that missionary, that teacher, that community so that pains can make blessed and prolific his job.

I also think that I have brought some contribution to your Apostleship of Poor Servants not because of my merits, but because of the grace of Jesus Crucifix. I did it with my small pains that I used to offer for all and each of you, my dearest sons in addition to the expiation for my sins. You were always present to me and I followed you with my thought and with my spirit in your assignments.

As much as I could I prayed for you pleading helps and graces from our Lord. I know how much you too you have prayed for me in these days and I, poor man, thank you really very much assuring you that more than my gratitude the prize that our Lord has registered for you in the book of eternity is worthy for you.

My first thought, now that I can start my work again, is for you, for us all, to exhort you to consider more seriously your job and to really correspond more to the many graces our Lord gives us in this Congregation of his. Let us all remember well, my dear, that neither our sights, nor our abilities, nor our projects bear fruit in our souls, but the spirit that moves us in our deeds does it. The external

work, the preaching, the instructions, the various actions moved by zeal are important, necessary, you know it, but they are nothing but the body, if we can call them so, of the Apostleship. Now you know that a body is not worthy if there is not the soul that gives the life to it.

The soul of our Apostleship is given by the inner and spiritual life that the good worker of Christ has to cultivate with the practices of piety, particularly the daily meditation, the frequent and pious use of the holy Sacraments, the regular prayer, the observance of the holy Rules etc. Only in this manner we assure to ourselves the blessing of the Lord on our efforts.

Differently all these efforts will value nothing, zero, nice if you want to call them so, but zeros that do not value anything.

If we act with the spirit of our vocation, we shall be worthy so that our Lord uses to perform the great divine plans He has decided to accomplish by means of the Poor Servants. Moreover our Congregation will become really an ark of safety that crosses safe and sure the tempests that menace the sinner world, keeping the germs of a healthy renewal of Christian life in his breast;

From the small seed, the Lord will draw a great plant that will give us fertile fruit. From the small herd, that today we are, the Lord will form an army composed of numerous soldiers

who will spread out along the roads of the earth to collect souls for the holy Kingdom of God . But the condition is that we are today as the heavenly Father desires.

I do not spend more words to make myself quite clear. You know our program and you also know my desires that are not only mine, but God's because I am nothing but the poor Custodian (Casante), the voice of his Providence towards us till the goodness and the mercy of God support us.

So let us listen to me with spirit of life and let us try to put into practice all that I tell you.

Keep far from the human protections. If they come, let us thank the Lord, but do not let us worry how to buy them up.

Humility and dissimulation, oh my dearest, and love for the poor, the abandoned that the Providence has assigned to us as our field of work and who are the privileged by God.

Always at our place, like true priests and brothers. Act so that our attitude and our speaking is uplifting. It is no use to recall to your mind the so important rule of prudence about not maintaining communication with the places where you worked when, for obedience, you have been sent somewhere else.

Disposed to everything, indifferent to every place and every task. Let every one be at his own place, working in the charity of Christ and in the union with the brothers.

No care for human and material means: these will be given to us in addition to the others, if we are faithful to our program of searching only the Kingdom of God. They will lack, sometimes, or they will be wanting, but remember that this happens or because God wants to test us or because we do not correspond him. So let us put our

hand on our heart, let us feel repentance and come back to the right way and go on *in Domino*.

Woe to us if we lack the program! We could not live any more, it would be our death, because we should not do the interests of God. Heaven helps us when we arrive at the great Report, if we had this accident! Those who look at us and know us have knowledge of our program and we have to build them up with our fidelity. Let's act well, my dear, let us live like true religious and then you will see how the Lord will help us. On our deathbed, the good Jesus, mild and cheerful, will approach us to tell us those comforting words: "Come, good and faithful servant, come into the joyfulness of your Lord".

Pray for me as I pray for you.

I bless you heartily. Yours faithfully in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***LETTER 21 October 1939**

My dearest and beloved brothers,

The grace and peace of blessed Jesus be always with you and support you along the path of the Christian and religious perfection.

I write you some words among those the Lord has granted me to say aloud to the brothers of the second turn of the spiritual Exercises. These are words I repeat to you as they have gushed from my heart and I pray you to receive it with your usual docility.

Dear brothers, we all thank the good God who, without any charge, has called us here in his House to help him in the great work of souls trying to spread his holy reign. What great grace, what special favor the Lord has done and does to us! Ah, let us try to be worthy!

Let our life be the life of the Congregation of God, aiming, first of all, to our personal sanctification according to the advice of the holy Gospel and then to the exercise of the virtues exactly observing our holy Constitution.

If we do not sanctify ourselves, the Congregation is a body without soul. And we shall sanctify ourselves if we live the pure and genuine spirit of the Congregation, a spirit we all know well; but more than knowing him we need to live it. And this in order to perform great, wide and new plans. Which responsibility if, for our fault, these plans should not be performed!

What sad sunset of our life, what great report to the divine Judge!

Dear brothers, let our Lord give us the grace of living as he wants, of working translating into practice the name we possess, never forgetting that we are the Poor Servants of the Divine Providence. So no personal selfishness, no attachment to ourselves, to our things, no attachment to our personal works, ready to everything, in every good action, till the sacrifice and immolation. Let

our job ignore every individualism and put only and ever the Opera, the Opera, the Opera into light! In one word let us work for God, for his glory, for souls.

Let us religious, priests, keep ourselves at the disposal of the holy Church without any human purpose, but only to serve our Lord in the goodness and in the redemption of souls.

Brothers as long as I know and as I can I recommend you always to listen the one the Lord has put and will put as House-Keeper of this Opera: listen to him unconditionally, without any discussions with a spirit of renunciation and of abnegation. All united at the Center of the Opera, of the Motherhouse. From there the light comes, from there we have to know the pure and genuine spirit that have to pass to the faraway sons like the lymph that arrives as far as the farthest branches from the trunk.

As long as I know and as I can I recommend you the program: "*buseta e taneta"* (see lett. *383, 4-5-1932), hidden under ground, we do not have to let us be hit by the external enchantment, from the appraisal of men, from the appeal of the so called human glory.

I recommend you charity too.

How many times I told you that no strength will never be able to destroy the Congregation! But we can really destroy, especially if we do not live united and tight in the holy and mutual charity.

Let charity reign absolute among the members of the single Houses and within the Houses.

Let us love each other, let us sympathize with one another, let us reciprocally help.

There is a lot of hate in the world: let us offer to the world itself the imagine of people who really love each other in the Lord like the first Christians did, as the blessed Jesus orders us: ”Love each other as I have loved you”.

Only so, my dear brothers we shall perform the great plans of God on us and on this great Opera.

And so, how much peace, how much happiness in our hearts and which ahead of time heaven we shall taste just from the time in this earth! And then the sunset of our life will be happy waiting for our Lord telling us ”Good and faithful servant, come into the happiness of your Lord”.

Dear brothers, be always up to your vocation. To every place you go, show yourselves like you are called: Poor Servants of the Divine Providence. And pay attention that also the instructions of external orders I have inculcated into you in the name of the Lord are really useful for this purpose.

In occasions such as Baptisms, weddings etc; when you have finished to officiate the holy rite in the church, do not let us add anything else, let us retire, without participating to the external feasts. Do not let us give way to dissipation and to amusements, to travels and trips. Avoid some secular plays like the game of charts; smoking in private or public places. Moreover, about this problem – I am speaking about a fact happened twenty years ago- I want to tell you a fact that really impressed me. A refined and learned priest had kept a conference to our boys,

arousing a lot of enthusiasm. Later on he came back towards them with a cigar in his mouth. I tell you that all the goodness he had done had vanished. I do not want to tell you that smoking is bad, but it is not according to our spirit, remember it well.

When, for plausible reasons, we should think useful or necessary to organize a travel (I am speaking about the brothers in charge of parishes) let them make sure to ask for permission and for the blessing of the superior.

When you go to a place for the ministry reasons, do what you have to do and then come back humbly to your own place without keeping relations that have nothing to do with the goodness of souls, but, on the contrary are a manifestation of secret selfishness and self-respect.

When speaking and treating with people of the other sex, let's try to have due discretion.

This is a shield for the nice virtue and a safeguard against painful surprises. It is also an object of edification for our fellows and favors their respect. I remember as a rule of prudence that you should not shake their hands and do not let you be photographed with them for any reason.

I really recommend you these and others things very much for your goodness, to maintain the spirit of the Congregation and to do some goodness to souls. You already know that if we do not have the blessing of God any effort of ours is unuseful and vain and the blessing is only given to that servant who keeps himself good and faithful also in the small great things.

Be really firm in the holy Rules and in the meritorious habits of the Congregation. When you think it

appropriate, mildly suggest to your fellows that you act so because our Rules order us to do this. I am sure that your frank profession will attire the appraisal of the upright people.

I finish by warmly recommending me to your prayers. Oh, how much I need them for my soul and for the Congregation of the Lord!

Pray, pray, so that God can forgive my sins and I am not an obstacle for his Work.

Blessing you I remain your in

C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***LETTER 22 4 January 1940**

My dear brothers,

Also this year the beloved Father Visitor I always call "our Angel", has wanted to send you his Christmas wishes that I've thought to print so that each of you can have a copy of.

Meditate more than read all that he says.

You will find the recommendations, I so often tell you, repeated almost to the letter. This means that our Lord has really invested him of the spirit of our Congregation. Ah, how much we have to be grateful to the divine Providence! But be also grateful to the venerated Father Abbey praying every day for him and following his holy instructions.

I recommend you to pray a lot also for me, I really need it. I thank you for your wishes.

I keep you all in my mind and in my heart. I repeat to you all that I told the brothers in the refectory at S. Zeno: let the year 1940 be the year of our personal sanctification in order to sanctify the Congregation and get graces, forgiveness and peace to the world.

Yours in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 23 Subiaco, 10 December 1939

PAX

My dearest brothers in the Lord,

In the peace and in the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Your dear letter, so full of the Lord and of his spirit has arrived to me among the shower of Christmas letters and I could not answer you soon. But I have tried to be with you in the Holy night, like last year, dedicating one of his holy Masses to our dear and venerable Father John and to all his sons. I hope that the Lord will have accepted the prayer of this poor and unworthy minister. Today I feel the necessity of writing a word to thank you deep from my heart and to repeat to you that the best wish you can send me is that of making you always seen faithful to the spirit of our dear Congregation. Like in Bethlehem and in Nazareth the Opera must live only with God and of God, in the simplicity, in the humility, in the poverty, in the full abandonment to the divine Providence and to the divine will of the heavenly Father.

Look at your Father: he gives you a lively, constant example; so correspond to his fatherly solicitude. Always and wherever you are obey to him and with an intimate spiritual adhesion. Be worthy of him with your holy conversation and of his holy ideals he was made instrument and the ministry of. The secret of his success is not in the means the world estimates so much, but in this spirit of hiding and of dedication. So and only so, the blessed Jesus has won the world and has redeemed the human genre.

And pray for me because I need it so much.

Pray again so that I can be spiritually united to you and I can receive the comfort of doing some good for you.

I embrace you in the charity of the Lord and I bless you fatherly. In Jesus Christ

Emanuele Caronti O.S.B.

*171 Costozza, 28-5-1940

To the venerable community of the Poor Servants in Costozza.

I send to all my dear brothers my poor thought and my prayer so that our Lord, by means of the pure and genuine spirit of the Congregation, can perform his divine plans without looking to my poverty and misery. I recommend me to your prayers. I bless you all. Poor in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

* LETTER 24 1 November 1940

My dear brothers,

The grace and the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us.

We have just finished our holy Spiritual Exercises, that are truly "day of health and acceptable time" because, during this time, our Lord liberally gives his graces, his gifts while our hearts are better disposed to receive them.

Our souls, I should say, are almost filled by the divine light and still taste the joy and the peace of the union with God.

And I feel appropriate to tell you my poor words. Now that you have come back to the places where you work and to your jobs with renewed proposal of working and laboring only for the glory of God and the goodness of the souls the Divine Providence has trusted to us.

They have been thought and written at the foot of my Cross uniquely for the advantage of your religious souls and of this Opera. As I have told you many times this Congregation is great in the thought and in the plans of God. Moreover he has a lot of plans on it and he has chosen and called us so that we help him to accomplish them.

How did we correspond to them till now? Which responsibility if, instead of corresponding to them we should obstacle them! For God's sake, let us live well, at the height of our holy vocation, trying to be really those they are called " Poor Servants of the Divine Providence"!

Do not let the Lord, in the day of our great report, reproach the name we have and do not tell us:

"You called yourself "*poor"*, but where is your spirit of poverty, while you have always loved your comfortableness and made efforts so that nothing could lack you complaining about any little deprivation?

You called yourself "*servant"*: but how did you serve me?

Why all those oppositions to the obedience, those criticisms and murmurs, all those attempt to dominate

instead of obeying. Why that lack of dependence trying to be the master more than the servant?

You called yourself a man of "*the Divine Providence*": so you had to abandon yourself in it, not to look for human supports. God only had to be your support. Why that distrust, that discouragement in the trials, that adjustment more with the reason than with the principles of faith?".

My dear and beloved brothers, let us seriously think that we have to give report of ourselves not only like Christians, but also like religious and much more like members of this Congregation, born in the holy ribs of blessed Jesus.

Let us comfort Jesus, who cries on the great evils that are incumbent over our poor mankind and over the reasons that provoked them. But we have not to believe that He is grieved and offended only by the sins that are committed in the world. No, my dear brothers! He is particularly grieved and offended by the sins we too commit, because they are made by us who know the light and the knowledge and, for this reason, are without any excuse.

When some disaster happens we immediately open an inquiry in order to establish the responsibility and the people guilty of the misdeed are very seriously punished.

Brothers, let us put our hand on our breast and let us look at the evils that at the moment are afflicting us. Do not let us look for the cause far from us. Let us recognize us truly guilty and let ask to be forgiven and let us promise to live a new life, a life according to our holy vocation.

And in order to arrive to the particularities, as long as I know and as I can, I recommend you your inner life. Remember the words I am always repeating to you: “Be like vine stalks and grapevine, like bowls and channels”;

Let us keep in our minds the words of Jesus: “Without me you cannot do anything”.

I recommend you the actions of piety in order to feed your inner life: that is to say the holy meditation, the spiritual reading, the visit to the most blessed Holy Sacrament. Moreover consider the rosary, possibly the entire one and for us priests, the Divine Office, declaimed together as much as possible in fixed hours and in the Church.

I recommend you to be punctual and precise in the various practices of piety: do them with care and fervor. Think that you go and treat the most important affairs that concern your eternal health and your sanctification. In an even more particularly way I recommend you the Holy Communion, made with pious preparation and thanks and the Confession.

Confess yourself regularly. Be humble and sincere in your accusation. Have a stable confessor who knows you well. Do not change him so easily. I have been going to my Spiritual Father for forty years and I am always blessing and thanking the Lord about this grace! When we are ill we go to our own doctor, the doctor of the house who knows well all the familiar previous events. So it is the same for your spiritual life. Go to your Father Confessor, to the Confessors of the House. They will be able to lead you better. But remember also that, in addition to the confessor who is important for the more intimate

things of your soul, you also have your Superiors who are priests. Have confidence in them and open your heart also to them particularly about all that is concerning your religious life and your vocation.

Then have all your confidence with your Father John. Appeal to him every time you need and desire. You know how I love you in the name of our Lord and how I do not desire anything but your personal sanctification, and together with it, the sanctification of the whole Congregation. But you have to listen to me. Be careful also about a simple hint, a desire, a moving of the eye. Sometimes I speak and if you do not act as I told you I keep myself silent and painful. I do not insist any more and I leave everything to the Lord. I hope that this will never happen, my dear and beloved friends, so that you do not have to give a report to the Lord one day!

I told you many times, I am poor and miserable, but you have to listen to me till the divine mercy keeps me here. And the Casante will have lights, graces and special charisma to lead well the Congregation of the Lord not only now, but also in the future. Woe is to those who think to be more enlightened than He is and refuse to obey! It would be a dry branch on the trunk of the Opera that is not good enough but to be cut by the divine Boss.

I still recommend you not to look for yourself or your satisfactions, but only God. So live detached from the world and from its false saws, far from human protections, detached from your own offices and ministries, always ready to change. And when the obedience wants to bring you from one place to the other, there is no valid reason for keeping relations with the people you knew before. Be

careful because the self-respect can easily make you think plausible reasons all that are simple excuses.

Do not easily receive gifts from secular people: these are ties and bonds and we have to keep ourselves and to feel free. Notice that the one who receives a gift is no more the same towards the giver. He will feel weaker and less disposed to that firmness and impartiality we have to get when we inculcate the sayings of the evangelic moral.

Remember, my dear brothers, that we are religious and special religious men. The time we are passing through is a terrible time. Nobody knows what we are going to meet. Without any doubt God will get a great goodness from this general disorder of things and principles.

But how shall we be able to arrive at this goodness? We are going to meet an order of new things, that want to renew everything and we too have to renew ourselves: "Or we renew ourselves or we die!" There is no other way. So we shall renew ourselves, if we practically live the holy Gospel, if we are living Gospels.

We have to say that there is too much discordance between all that the Gospel teaches and the actions we put into practice. We have to take this contrast off. So we shall no more be able to say that the Church belongs to a bygone time and that it does no more answer to the present demands. Only the one who reproduces the evangelical sayings, always old and always new in himself, will be able to preach them usefully: God, the soul, the Paradise, the Hell, the Eternity, the actual life that is a preparation to the future one. And moreover the Redemption, the Holy Communion, the love of God who suffers and dies for us, who makes himself our food in this earth of exile to be

then, our resurrection and our life in the heaven, our true Native Land. We have to recall and to teach this truth, and we have to conform to it in the practical life and, only so, we shall contribute to health the poor human kind that, in spite of all its progress is beat down the abyss.

We have to be poor with Christ, the Poor. We have to hide our richness in the breast of the poor, as the deacon St, Lorenzo did. We have to go towards the poorest, the humblest; the sick, the most unfortunate who are so dear to God; Jesus wants to be represented by them: here is our peculiarity. Our Lord does not send us towards the great people but towards the little ones.

Let us be humble, *buseta e taneta* (see lett. *383, 4-5-1932), do not let us look for the human protections. These protections are important together with the material means that are useful to survive, but it is the Lord who will put us near this person or that one at the appropriate time. We are only searching God and his holy reign, souls, souls, souls.

Here is my poor word, get it like my testament. I keep you all in my mind and in my heart. I reassured myself by seeing and verify your good spirit and I blessed my Lord in the secrecy of my heart. . But prosecute along this way and always aim at the stars. Only in this manner we shall correspond to our holy and particular vocation and we shall be worthy of the divine blessings. Pray, pray a lot for me, I really need it. I do not tell you that for pure formality, just do this for me. I pray for you and from the deep of my heart. I fatherly bless you

Yours truly in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

P.S. I believe it is a good idea to recall and to assert some past rules and among them these ones: never accept to be invited to dinner, do not be photographed in groups with women or in mixed groups; use the bicycle only for your ministry, do not play cards pretending to do some good or to prevent the evil.

The same people who are happy to be in your company, deep down, will estimate you less considering you at your level. I recommend you: do not smoke, I rather prefer you to go away. And about your hair, no affectation, no locks, no secular hairdressing. Do not participate to trips or to mixed, or worse than all, to female pilgrimages; if you are in doubt ask for the permission.

Small and great things are those that are useful to distinguish us from the secular people. They keep high our prestige and they will make more fruitful our ministry.

I like to tell you an episode. A distinguished woman, a teacher, appears, in front to a priest, to receive some advice. She feels disgusted and she does not ask him anything about what she cared for: “I have found the man – she later said – not the priest” Why? The answer was: “He stinks of a pipe”.

*LETTER 25 Christmas 1940

My dear and beloved brothers,

The grace and the peace of Jesus the Child be always with us and with all the souls the divine Providence makes you approach. This time, I shall make you read, more than my words, the enlightened words of His Excellence Monsignor, the Bishop in Verona and those of our Most Reverend Father Visitor. They answered with so beautiful and inspired letters that I feel the desire of making you know almost entirely.

I am certain and sure that if you read and meditate them as it is convenient they will make a lot of good to your souls.

So here it is the letter Of His Excellence Monsignor the Bishop:

The most reverend and dearest father John,

Among the large quantity of wishes I received during these days, I particularly appreciate your wishes, because I know the heart from which they left and that they are accompanied with ardent prayers. Let the Lord reciprocate you! I have sent and send you my wishes to You and to all your sons with fatherly affection and I try to accompany these wishes the better I can with my poor prayers. *The word of our Lord that has become the uniform of your Opera* is leading me in these wishes. First of all the Kingdom of God and his holy Grace! Here is all that I wish

for you, to each of your priests and brothers and to all his pupils. I wish a growth in this love and in this progress for you all and also a growth of efficacy in their Apostleship. And then I wish all that, different from this, the Lord has promised to you.

I wish that also these gifts can follow, with great abundance, those former ones really more important and precious!

I send You and to all your sons my Pastoral blessing with all my heart.

Let the Lord make effective this blessing, for the good offices of his Virgin Mary!

Yours affectionate in Jesus Christ

+ *Girolamo the Bishop*

In the same manner the letter of the Father Abate is thick with thought and it is all marked with the genuine spirit of our Congregation.

My dearest brothers in the Lord,

In the grace and in the spirit of the holy Spirit.

I do not overstate if I tell you that your wishes are among those that I consider the most welcome and the dearest every year. You know how much I love you all and so I am sure that you will believe to all that I tell you

without any trouble. So I thank you for your wishes and I reciprocate with my blessings with all my heart.

I thank you for your prayers that I try to return as better as I can. Yes, we can do it all strictly united to the Lord, so that we all can be sanctify in accordance with our vocation.

Be faithful to the spirit of your Institute that is the spirit of Father John.

The Poor Servants of the Divine Providence with their detachment from the earth, with their filial abandonment, with their humility, with the zeal of their Apostleship and with their absolute obedience, today, more than ever, preach the way along which the Lord wants to lead the society. It is a work of God! Be worthy of it with the faithful correspondence to it and with the sanctity of your life.

I embrace you in the Lord

Dom Emanuele Caronti O.S.B.

We thank our Lord who condescends to make us hear his words by means of those who represent Him. Let us put it to good account for the goodness of our souls, of the Congregation and of the world. Because, my dear friends, if we live as our Lord wants, according to our spirit, we shall be salt and light for the world. And how this is necessary! They speak about a "new order"; we too have to feel the need to cooperate to it.

But let us remember, my dear that, as always in the past, also in the present time the true new order will be

made by the Saints. And we have to aim to this purpose, to this goal like Christians, like religious and religious of this very great Congregation on which, as I often told you, the Lord has great plans. But He will perform them only on condition that we do not put obstacles, that we are holy people and that we come back to the pure and genuine springs of the Holy Gospel, living like the former Christians, without selfishness and without parochialism. We have to consider that the entire world is of God so we have to be unselfish in working for the goodness, only looking for anything else but souls, souls, souls.

Before ending I recommend you two things that I really have at heart.

More than anything else I remember you that the "*Octave of prayers*" you all already know is forthcoming. This year and then always in the future I desire it is done in every House with a very special commitment and solemnity.

Let the holy Kingdom of God spread on the earth, that the wanderings come back to the unity of the faith and that all the unfaithful come to the knowledge of the holy Gospel: this must be the breath of our religious ministerial souls.

You know that one of the two main purposes by means of which the ministerial Eucharistic worship has begun at Maguzzano is just the purpose of praying for the union of the dissentient Churches so that also on the earth we can build only one sheepfold under only one Shepherd.

The second thing I want to recommend you is this one.

In Switzerland an international Congregation called: "*Catholica Unio"* was born. Its aim is to cooperate to the coming back of the Oriental Churches to the bosom of the Holy Mother Church. I unite a report for you that will clarify the purpose better to you and also the means and the spiritual advantages of the Congregation. I have felt like ascribing our entire Congregation to it, so that all the Poor Servants are also members of the *Catholica Unio*.

I desire that your local superiors speak about it elucidating it. Moreover in the hour of the weekly worship I desire that at each station of the Rosary you add the invocation: *Ut omnes errantes* etc. and then the usual prayer of Consecration to the Holy. Heart of Jesus (*Oh our Sweetest Jesus*…) that is also the special prayer of the Association itself.

I hope you will not forget all that I am telling you now and all that so many times I told you. Because, let us remember it well, woe to us if we do not keep ourselves at the height of our spirit and we bend to the common level. The Congregation could not live, it would die as once His Excellence and beloved Bishop said in a talk he held in the House. My God, what responsibility it would be ours!

Pray a lot for me, I really need it so much; you know that I always remember and bless you.

Yours very affectionately in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

P.S. I think it necessary, this time, to recall you all that I have already told you about the use of the bicycle. It

must be strictly limited to the necessities of the holy ministry. For other reasons, use the ordinary means. Also the brothers do not have to use the bicycle for long trips hat overpass, for example, 30 kilometers.

Remember also that you have always to get the permission of the local Superior who assumes the responsibility of it.

2219 Verona, 24-5-1941

My dear brothers, your Father John remembers you more than ever, prays for you and blesses you, first wishing you holiness for your souls and then because you always sanctify more your dear house in Costozza.

Pray a lot for me. God only knows how I need it. In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

**4283 Maguzzano, 30-5-1941*

My dear brothers,

I am far from you, but, at the same time, near you with my heart, as much as I know and as can I recommend you your personal sanctification: it is the true richness of

the Congregation. I really need prayers. I bless all of you starting from my dear Father Zanetti[69] and Father Sandri.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

* LETTER 26 Verona, Octave of Assumption. 1941

My dear and beloved brothers,

The grace and the peace of Jesus the Child be always with us!

I take advantage of the holy Exercises that are near, by now, to turn my poor words to you, as they come out from my heart. I shall not tell you new things, I shall not do anything but assert old concepts that, however I hope will do some good to your souls.

But, first I feel the necessity of thanking you for your filial participation to my forty-year period of my priesthood. You have offered prayers and little sacrifices to the Lord for my poor soul: you know that this is, for me, the greatest charity and the best gift.

[69] Fr. Giuseppe Zanetti was an aggregate.

As I already wrote in *l'Amico,*[70] I am really poor of everything and this is the reason why the divine mercy has put me and keeps me in this of its Opera so that it is clearer that God makes and leads his Opera. I am nothing but a poor House-keeper. However I feel necessary to repeat to you all that I have told you many times: as long as I am here, you have to listen to me and put into account also a simple hint and a simple desire.

Then you wished all the best to me, but if you want that I live and that I remain with you, try to be my breath. I feel revived when I see a religious who follows the Rules and who is faithful to his practices of piety corresponding, in this manner, to his vocation But if one religious does not correspond I feel like not to be able to bear such a pain. But I am certain and sure that you will correspond. If something has to be corrected in your behavior, my dear brothers, here are the Holy Exercises, that have the special purpose of reforming us and renewing us spiritually. For God's sake, take advantage of this new grace the Lord gives to you so that, during this year, the Exercises mark a new stage along the path of your life! I told you again: "Or you renew yourselves or you die!" This is particularly true for us belonging to this Opera. If we do not remain at the height where the Lord wants us, if we bend to the common level, we shall not be able to live! What responsibility and what report!

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[70] *L'Amico dei Buoni fanciulli*, a magazine of the House that the same Fr. Calabria wanted to take his word, the spirit and the news of the Opera to the families of the students, the old students, the External Brothers and the friends of the Opera.

Last year in the first Exercises, preached with so much zeal by that holy priest who is Father John Rossi, this great saying has been repeated to us: "*Nolite conformari huic saeculo*!"[71] This is the first exhortation I want to give you.

A Poor Servant must set himself against the world, especially with the world of our time. Woe if he permits that the spirit of the world penetrates into his heart and into his soul!

It is true that we are in the world but we have the duty of not being "of the world", as it happens with the ship that ploughs the waves, but it is not penetrated by the sea.

Then the ship is on the water and we have to stay over the mud and the corruption of the world and despise its sayings and his wicked examples. If we let ourselves be overcome, as a ship that sinks into the eddies of the ocean, a shipwreck and a ruin surely happen. Then the ship does not linger on the sea, but is on its course towards the harbor. So, we too, do not have to lose the sight of the purpose of the creation and the aim of our holy Vocation. We have to think that the end of our day is not far and that, at the end of our life we shall receive a gift, if, like good servants, the divine Lord will find us alert in doing good actions.

But, my dear brothers, the ship does not often goes along a quiet route. Winds often blow and waves surge ominously. It is often necessary to appeal to extreme measures to avoid the shipwrecking. And we too have to

[71] "Don't conform yourselves to the mentality of this world" (Rm 12: 2).

meet difficulties, to overcome obstacles, join battle against the enemies of our life: "*Militia est vita hominis super terram*".[72] But if we keep yourselves united to God, if you have confidence with your superiors, more than anything else with your John, you will certainly arrive at the harbor of the eternal safety. For this reason I recommend you so much the report. It is necessary if you want to win. Even if this will cost some sacrifice to you, think to the great advantages that you will get, do it and do it regularly.

They speak about a "new order". I have told you many times, not men will make the true new order, the Lord will do it and the Lord won't use the learned, the rich, the strong, the powerful people, but only the saints.

It seems to me that also our Congregation, divine cell, in the plan of God has to be a stock of our good Lord in order to contribute to form the new order.

But, if, unfortunately, we could not find the holiness and be could not be saint how could the divine plans be performed? My God, which responsibility weighs on each of us!

For this reason as long as I know and as I can, I recommend you the internal life that is a life of union with our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have to keep ourselves united to God like the vine stalks to the vine, if we want to do something good, because, my dear brothers, we are not able to do anything but to ruin. We have to be convinced about this, do not rely only on our strength, but also on the help of God that will not lack if we are worthy of it. And we shall deserve it if

[72] The life of man on this earth is a straggle" (Gb 7: 1).

we are really humble, docile, headless; rags and clay, disposed to everything not only theoretically, but practically.

Then if you want to feed your internal life, I recommend you the practices of piety: the holy Meditation and the spiritual reading, the holy Mass and the Communion, etc….

I recommend you the punctuality, be exact and be very faithful. Without all these things we shall lack the oil of our lamp, and good heavens, if we are extinguished lamps in the House of the Lord! What would they be useful for? They could only be removed! The loss of vocation, my God, what misfortune for a religious and particularly for a Poor Servant!

Humility and hiding are the peculiarities of the Poor Servants. Our Opera will be great, if it is small it will do as much goodness as it can do if it is hidden. If we live according to our spirit as we have to act, we shall do a lot even doing apparently little. God is the one who does, my dear brothers, not we. He cooperates with humility, with the hidden virtue, with the ignored and offered sacrifice in the secret of our hearths only to Him.

Let us deepen these concepts, if we want to be as our very special vocation requires. Let us give great importance to small things. We do not have to tell or to think that we can pass over small things or little defaults or disobedience or to a light lack of dependence.

No, no, my dear! Who can tell that all that can hold back a great goodness is only a little evil? Isn't the ocean itself composed of an infinite number of small drops? Let

us remember the notice of the Holy Spirit: the one who fears the Lord does not neglect anything.

I also recommend you charity, the queen of all virtues. Priests and brothers be only one heart and only one soul, help, pity and give a good example to each other.

The evil of muttering and of criticism should not appear, it is also necessary to avoid every friction.

If because of the human fragility, something should happen, become reconciled, as the holy Rules say, and do not keep resentment or coldness towards the brother.

Then keep your spirit of faith that is the characteristics of our Congregation. God is active with us, he can see our necessities. Do not let us ever doubt of his divine Providence. Let us do our part and the Lord will not lack doing his.

Let us continuously keep in our mind the granitic program of the Congregation: "*Quaerite primum regnum Dei… et haec omnia adiicientur vobis*".[73]

We set a lot of value, particularly in this period of time, on the words told by men.

As much great as they can be, their words are only human words, that pass and are often misleading. So how is it possible that we don't give importance to the words of God about which it is written:" Heaven and earth will pass, by the words of God remain"? Let us increase the value of this divine word within us and let us preach it together with

[73] "Seek first the Kingdom of God… and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mt 6: 33).

the example of a holy and blameless behavior in front of God and men.

During the holy exercises, my dear and beloved brothers, keep present these essential points and try to reform yourselves, to renew in the spirit of your special vocation to perform the new and great plans God has about us and about the Congregation.

As I told you at the beginning, pray a lot for me. Each day I remember and I pray for you so that after your day of pain, struggle and job we can all meet up there to enjoy the prize in the holy Paradise.

Blessing you from the deep of my heart, I am your affectionate in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***LETTER 27 September 1941.**

My dear brothers in Jesus Christ, (*This letter Fr. John red during his visit to the Novitiate on the 5th October 1941.)*

During these holy and blessed days that our good Lord gives you for the goodness and the sanctification of your religious and Christian souls, I feel strong and pressing the desire of telling you a word. I want to tell you the same word the heart of the Father told me and I pray the Holy Spirit so that he can fecundate it with his graces

and his lights. In this manner he can bring that spiritual richness that is necessary to you who have the grace of doing the holy Spiritual Exercises to form some firm and generous intents like a particular fruit in these days of goodness and mercy.

Let everyone do those intents he feels more necessary for the particular condition of his soul. But I exhort, I pray and I beg you to do a strong and generous resolution that will be useful to you first and to the very great Opera of the Lord. The intention is this: I have to worry in order to have a great concept of the responsibility that weighs on me. And woe to me if I do not correspond to it! I am a "Poor Servant of the Divine Providence"!

My dear brothers, in this intention there is all the program of your religious life, in this intention there is the heritage that will make you rich of great richness. In this intention you will accomplish all those plans the Divine Providence wants to accomplish, little by little, without any hurry by means of crosses and trials of every different types.

My dear brothers, I have told you again: no strength, no struggle, nothing can destroy this Opera; on the contrary the struggles and the contradictions will harden them more. Only we can destroy it if we do not live that program the Lord traced for you by means of this poor and mean priest.

My dear brothers, the Opera is of God and He has put it in our hands. Which, which responsibility! For God's sake, let us support this Opera of God! And we can support it with our inner life that I recommend you so much.

Do not forget the actions of piety: they are our lungs. I recommend you the holy humility, the charity. If I knew that a religious person does not possess charity, on bended knee I should pray him to go away because he would be the ruin of the Congregation.

I also recommend you, together with the charity, the report. If we are small and hidden our Lord will then come in search of us and, if he judges it necessary, He will put us on the candelabrum.

Just in the occasion of my fortieth anniversary I received a letter from a distinguished but secular person where he told me: they are all angels. Which idea the world has about us, but also which responsibility if we are not so!

During these days I have received a great comfort. A big Bishop wrote to me telling me about the goodness that is done in Rome. I thanked the Lord very much and I have immediately prayed and offered my pains so that the great plans the divine Providence wants to perform are accomplished. And we shall perform them if we live conforming to the holy rules, if we stay quiet and faithful to our program and if we listen to this poor priest who speaks to you in the name of God. Lucky you!

Let these holy days mark a new stage in our life, as I told you, for the goodness of your soul and the Congregation of God.

Pray a lot for me. You know how I need it. Be my breath. When I tell you something and then I let everything go it is a bad mark.

I repeat it to you, listen to me. Listen also to only one desire, one eyelash. Our Lord will accompany all this with great graces.

I bless you with all my heart,

Fr. J. Calabria

***4294 3-11-1941**

My dear brothers[74] in Jesus Christ,

Let the peace and the grace of the Lord be always with us.

My heart is always among you and I continuously pray so that the spirit of Jesus can animate your entire job to the advantage of souls trusted to you. Work and do everything for God's sake: the prize will be great. Pray for me. In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

[74] It seems it is directed to roman community.

* 4294/A 2-12-1941

I heartily pray and bless all my dear, very dear brothers whom I keep in my mind and in my heart and for whom I pray. I also offer my pains to them so that they can be the rich patrimony of this great Opera: a heritage of faith, humility, generosity and all of us for the Lord and for souls and for the Congregation.

The Opera lives, will live and will spread if we are all like rags, full of love for the virtue and for the Lord.

Special wishes to our dear Fr. Adani, Fr. Zanetti, Fr. Grigolato, Fr. Sandri, Fr. Pio[75] who are ministries of God. Pray for me, in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

* LETTER 28 6 February 1942

My dear and beloved brothers, Let the grace and the peace of blessed Jesus be always with you!

It is always a great joy for me to stay a little with you, even if only writing to you. But I confess you that a really particular joy fills my heart. This joy comes from the fact that I have to write to you in a really extraordinary

[75] Fr. Pio Ducati.

recurrence that we cannot pass under silence. I want to speak about the tenth anniversary since the time our dear Opera was approved, since we have been called to Rome. And this occurred with a really peculiar Providence when we really did not think about it.

These are two very important days for us, my dear brothers. The words a Venerable Monsignor of our Diocese, now dead (passed to eternity) wrote to me are impressed in my mind as soon as he had news about what had happened: “Father John, now you have the sign and the seal of the approval of God. Go on. You will have to suffer, but God will be always with You”.

This is really true, my dear brothers! How much more happiness than to know ourselves within the holy will of God, approved, blessed, protected by Him! When the Congregation is approved also rules are approved and the spirit that is to say that the royal and sure way of our sanctification is traced on condition that we correspond.

And what shall we do to correspond?

Beloved friends, I repeat to you what I told you so many other times: listen to this poor priest that the divine Providence has put like a Casante and caretaker of his Congregation. So till the divine Providence keeps me here, take in great account what I tell you. Be careful also to only one eyelash. Do not stop looking at the poverty of the person who is talking to you, but lift up your eyes a little over your head and gaze upon the One who he, even if poor and mean, is representing you all. Many times I speak and then I keep silent and I let things go.

But this is not a good sign. Which responsibility, my dear brothers, we have especially when, at the end of our day, presenting us in front of the divine tribunal, we shall see that many plans of God on us and on the Congregation were not performed because you did not listen to me.

And you do not have only to listen to me, but also the one who will come after me and so on.

This must be a characteristic of the Congregation: to look at the Casante because I am certain and sure that the Lord will give you lights and special graces for the goodness of the Congregation, in general and of the single members of it in particular. It is the Lord, my dear brothers, who, with very special care and Providence, leads this creature of his and the Casante, even poor, is his representative, his speaking trumpet. For God's sake, let us live this spirit, because the smallest change shifts the spirit of the Congregation, like the wave of the radio for which it is sufficient the smallest shift to lose the channel and to prevent hearing the broadcast.

Let us then commit ourselves taking advantage of this solemn circumstance; let us try to do a serious soul-searching. First of all I want to do it myself and, after having begged for permission, I shall offer to God this last period of time to do all that he wants with his divine help. But do it yourselves too, my dear brothers. Humiliate you, beg for forgiveness and then we can all do some fixed intentions for the future.

Oh, my dear brothers, how big the Congregation of the Poor Servant is in the mind of God! Which plans will the Providence accomplish if we, who are members of this

creature of God, shall live according to the pure and genuine spirit that the Lord wanted to give to you!

The words of the Holy Gospel have always impressed me when I read them in the holy Mass.

”Do not worry about your life or about what you will eat and drink, neither for your body, of what you will dress; watch the birds in the air and the lilies in the earth”. And these other words: ”When I sent you around without no bag and no food, did you lack something?”.

They tell them: ”No”. And I thought that the word of God does not change and it is true now as it was true at that time.

Why do you think I have these strong impressions in me, in reading these passages of the Gospel? Perhaps, my dear brothers, the Lord, since that time, said that our spirit had to be of full and whole abandonment in the loving arms of the divine Providence particularly in the difficult moments of trials.

And then we are rags, clay, disposed to everything. On our part there must be total hiding waiting for God who will come and look for us. He will put us on the candelabrum if this is for his glory and for the goodness of souls.

Let us that the only thought of ours is that of searching the holy Kingdom of God and his justice by means of the practical study of Our Lord Jesus Christ, trying, with his help, to be many living gospels, full, really full of charity towards everyone, for every soul.

I mean friends, enemies, good and bad people, learned and ignorant, rich and poor, healthy and ill, the just and the unjust, the heretical and the unfaithful. They are all brothers regenerated and repurchased with the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we are convinced that only so, with the charity, with our example and with our *lived Credo,* we can take off every difference between all that we believe in and all that we practise.

Only so we can contribute to that unit for which the blessed Jesus has prayed so much and he has hoped for before dying on the cross. My dear brothers I feel that this will concur to form that *new order* to which our small Congregation will have a great part. But woe to us, heaven help us, if we do not have to correspond: We should be the traitors of the blood of God!

Let us think well about it.

But this is not sufficient, my dear brothers. We have to accomplish all our duties, to watch the serious obligations we have received with our religious profession! But, my dear brothers, we have given our word to God, we have committed ourselves with the holy vows. If we do not follow them, what a shame, what confusion for us, while so many people in the world, without any vows, serve the Lord becoming so our condemn. But if we follow our vows, if we live the life of poverty, chastity and obedience we shall prove the heaven ahead of time also in the earth.

And this will also be the better means to benefit our dear brothers. No anxiety for them and for what they need.

With the experience of so many years I have seen that the Lord blesses them in the same measure that we are able to accomplish our duties and to look for the holy Kingdom of God. How many times did I tell also to our old students that corresponding to the graces they received in the House, they would have been worthy of special blessings also for their relatives and for their families. My dear brothers this is much more effective for you. You do your part and you will see that our Lord will do his part and will help your relatives spiritually and materially. Let your relatives know this thought of mine. They will surely be comforted and your vocation will be assured in front of God and in front of men.

But together with the ten-year period of the approval also the decade of Rome approaches. There we were called foe the particular grace of God so that other great plans more than the one of the parish were accomplished just in the City that is the center of Christianity from where the light of the gospel spreads out all over the world.

You will remember, my dear brothers in Rome, that I have always told you that the parish was the door to open in order to perform these plans. You will also remember the way you went there: just *more Apostolorum*, without any bag and food. We should not have done in this manner if we reason humanly, but you went there trusting to the divine Providence. You have worked and the Lord has blessed and fecundated your struggles. After St. Philip other souls have joined us among the poorest and the most abandoned in the Hamlet Gordiani and at Tormarancio. Now they are putting the foundation for an Opera like St. Zeno, for the poor and abandoned children. How much

glory will it come to the Lord, how much goodness to the souls! But there are some more plans that you will perform if you persist in this unique thought that is to say the purpose of searching the holy Kingdom of God abandoning yourselves in the loving arms of the divine Providence. There will be some difficulties; Satan squirms with impatience, bur do not fear. If Jesus is with us, we shall be able to support every trial and overcome every difficulty.

In this decade other branches have sprouted out of the trunk of the Opera. For instance the dear House of the Sacred Heart in Negrar, divine cell, that is destined to become great to receive so many sick brothers in his pavilions. Otherwise these brothers would languish, without any other possibility to be put into other hospitals, with nuns, male nurses, nurses and our doctors to increase the value of the Christian charity as much as possible. That is the only means to make our Lord Jesus Christ come back to our present society that is so perturbed and disrupted.

The House of the Sacred Heart is also the seat of the UMMI (Union of the Medical Italian Missionaries), that joins the Congregation of the Poor Servants with the blessing of our Apostolic Visitor.

Which plan has our Lord on it? We do not know yet, but surely, if we do not put obstacles it will be able to extend and greatly help the Missions all over the world. Pray also for this.

Another one is also the dear house at Roncà, that would have been able to belong to the Congregation more than twenty years ago and that, on the contrary, was given to others. I have let everything to the Lord. You can see

how we have to abandon ourselves to Him! If we correspond nothing will be able to put obstacles to the divine plans that are coming true little by little. And how our dear Novices feel well at Roncà. To be so isolated from the world is so helpful to their formation. And you, please, pray so that when leaving the House of the apprenticeship the Novices keep their roots in it to receive from it the food for their entire life.

You also know how Maguzzano has come! Many and not a few obstacles were born, but the Lord has helped us to overcome everything. You know that I dream to build a great Sacerdotal work at Maguzzano, but it is necessary to pray and to pray a lot so that this great plan can be performed for the glory of God and the goodness of the Holy Church.

But here I feel necessary to add a word also for our good sisters. It seems that also they are going to a final destination and to the approval. I am happy for the good spirit they are pushed by. Now they have their Mother House where there is also their novitiate. Our Lord goes slowly. It is the characteristics of his Opera the slowness. But He, in the same time, ripens his plans. Pray so that the divine will of the Lord is accomplished also for the Sisters.

Finally we have to add to all these benefits also the benefit of the Apostolic Visitor. Oh, how grateful have we to be to the Lord who has given him to us! We have to look at him and to listen to him in everything, because the Lord has given and will give him special lights for the goodness of the Congregation. So, more than to listen to him, we have to pray for him because he is the Messenger, the Representative of God for us. I am sure, really sure about this because I have had certain signs of it.

And then, in this great solemn circumstance, let the hymn of our thanks for all these benefits ascend towards the Lord from whom all good comes. I wish that the last three-days period of the Novena of the Virgin Lourdes is addressed to thank heartily the Lord for the wonders performed and for the graces given to us during these ten years. So let us sing a solemn *Te Deum* every 11th of February.

But this mustn't be sufficient to us: let our supernatural life, renewed and intensified, be our best thank and so we shall be able to receive more new graces and favors.

I am always so near you, but particularly in this recurrence. Be sure that your thought is the Congregation, the life of the Congregation. Do not look at ourselves, we have to disappear. I always remember the warning, the announcement of the venerated and mourned my Spiritual Father, Father Natale: "Sanctify yourself, sanctify the members and the Congregation is solid".

Let the Lord gives us this grace! Pray a lot for me, all of you follow me in everything, my dear brothers and let that we can meet, united together in the holy Paradise, one day.

I bless you more with my hearth than with my hand, yours affectionately in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 29 15 May 1942

My dear Father Stanislao,

Let the grace and the peace of blessed Jesus be always with us.

I take the pen in my hand with difficulty to tell my poor word to you first and then to the dear brothers of the roman community in this special and for me so very painful hour

On my blessed knee for the blood, the life, the death of blessed Jesus our Redemptory I recommend you to be always united in the charity of Jesus towards St. Philip.

St. Philip's Parish must be the heart of the roman community and all the brothers must converge at St. Philip's and depend, in their general lines, on the Vicar. And you are the Vicar, my dear father Stanislao, particularly in the pure and genuine spirit of our Congregation that must be the spirit of great charity, humility and obedience. We have to be rags and clay disposed to everything and this not only with our words, but also with our facts. In fact it is the foundation of the Congregation of our Lord to accomplish the divine and new plans by means of our *small* Congregation that is small but - and let us remember it well – *great* in the mind of God.

Ah, which responsibility, which terrible responsibility weighs on all of us and particularly on the roman community. And this happens because despite so many graces, so many mercies so much light and I should say so many miracles made by Him, we cannot be able to live according to the pure and genuine spirit of the Congregation. And this spirit consists in the full abandonment to the divine Providence, in studying and helping our Lord Jesus Christ with the only thought of his major glory. And we should do so aiming at the souls, all the souls our Lord has pained for and died, convinced of our meanness. Because only we cannot but ruin it and only with Him we can do great things in the present time, with his grace and with our cooperation by means of an internal life of sacrifice and of hiding!

Dear father Stanislao, our Lord always but especially now asks for priests and religious, it does not matter the number because the number is made by the essence of priests and religious who are all full of God, of sky and of souls being living gospels. For God's sake do not let that any of us lack the spirit! If any of us felt that he does not possess this spirit, for God's sake, let him go before he could become the ruin of his soul and of the Opera of the Lord![76]

Jesus needs humble, docile, obedient, instruments full of faith: these are the true richness and the secret to accomplish the divine will and to make possible that the

[76] Fr. Calabria adds at foot of the first page of this letter: "Let's sanctify ourselves first then we shall sanctify the souls, all the souls".

divine Congregation of the Poor Servants is an ark of peace and the health for all the souls and for all humanity.

The words "*if one does not fell like living according to the spirit of the Congregation*" have slipped out of my mouth. I believe that this does not correspond to anybody. On the contrary, from the trials, from the rage that Satan shows to us, we all have to strengthen with the spirit of the holy gospel, to love Jesus a lot and to serve him till our death.

Deep from my heart I bless you all and I recommend myself to the charity of the prayers.

Yours in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 30 Pentecost, 24 May 1942

My dear and beloved friends,

Let the grace and the peace of blessed Jesus be always with us!

With my great edification I always read the weekly letters that that Apostle of Fr. John Rossi, sends to the

friends of the *Pro Civitate Christiana*[77], but I had a particular impression from the last one. In fact it particularly emphasizes the reality and also because it asserts those concepts on which I often preach. Do you remember, my dear brothers, how many times I told you that we, being only ourselves, are not able to do nothing but to ruin the work of God and that we have to be bowls and not only channels. Moreover we have to remember that the external work must have its roots in our intimate personality so that it can be fertile. And is this true for all but, in a very particular way, for us, Poor Servants of the Divine Providence? How many times I told you that we have to try to stay hidden. If God wants, he will think to put us on the candelabrum, but, on our side, let us look for the last place, "*buseta e taneta"* (see lett. *383, 4-5-1932), far from the human protections. We shall be great, if we are small, we shall be rich if we are poor.

Even if we are a few, but we are full of the spirit of God, we shall perform great things. So let us be happy of every task, either great or small, because everything is great in front of God, if we do everything with great love for Him. Let's be happy to change, to come back in the shadow and to go out of it, if the obedience wants so, always humble, docile, depending on the Superiors for everything and remembering that only all that we do with their blessing will also receive the blessing of God. I do not tell you anything more; always pray, pray a lot for me, I really need it. Do not be accustomed to hear these words,

[77] Fr. Giovanni Rossi (1887-1975), intimate friend and correspondent of Fr. Calabria, is the founder of the movement "*Pro Civitate Christiana*" of Assisi.

my dear brothers, and I bless you at heart, invoking the grace and the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Here is the letter:

"I have planted, Apollo has watered, but God has given the real growth". Many times we discuss among ourselves in order to find out which is the best method to do a modern and social Apostleship.

But if, in nature, the seeding of the corn and the watering is useless, if God does not send the heat of the sun to make the grain, that is buried in the furrow, to germinate; plainly speaking in the same manner the seeding, of the word of God and the watering made by the apostolic perspiration is useless, if Jesus does not fecundate the words, the written pages and the example of the Apostle with the holy Spirit.

The only method both old and new to convert souls is the method used by Jesus himself and by the first Apostles and all the holy evangelizers: *the prayer*.

It is like the saliva used by Jesus to shape the mud he cured the blind – born with.

The marvelous history of all saints, who performed their social vocation, does not find any other explanation except in their piety: they did not have loudspeakers and they converted innumerable crowd.

We shall not repeat enough to ourselves the evangelic axiom: much more we shall pray and much more

we shall act more efficiently and largely in the great field of souls.

The activities of the Apostleship often absorb and divert ourselves from the contemplation and from the conversation in front of the Tabernacle of Jesus Christ.

For this reason many times we arrive till the night tired and weary, often saddened and disenchanted with our hands and our heart empty because we have neglected to pray.

It is useless to find out new methods to do the Apostleship.

This is the only, irreplaceable and allpowerful method the grace of our God the Redemptory will save the world with.

How long the Apostle is committed in various jobs, how much he has to remember that he has the responsibility of praying.

“Apart from me you can do nothing”, Jesus told the Apostles in his last great evening of his testamentary memories.

The prayer is more necessary to the Apostle than to the Carthusian.

Jesus said: “The master is only me” and nobody can reveal the truth to the souls if he has not filled the lamp with the oil of the prayer, the oil by which the light of Christ can be lighted.

Jesus said:" I came to bring the fire on the earth", but nobody will be able to fire the world if he has not been fired by the fire of his heart in the prayer.

Jesus said: "I am the doctor" and nobody can decide to cure souls if he is not able to become the balsam of the Good Samaritan in the prayer.

"I am the door" and nobody can make a soul enter into the grace and the glory if he does not become, in the prayer, the key with which Christ opens.

Let this holy Pentecost that comes back bring us the gift of piety for the intercession of the Madonna of the Cenacle.

When in a parish or in a community the church, that is the house of the prayers, is closed or is empty, also souls are empty of grace and closed to the glory of the Apostleship,

Fr. John Rossi

Yours affectionately in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 31 Verona, Spiritual retraete 1942

My dear and beloved friends,

Let the grace and the peace of blessed Jesus be always with us!

Here we have arrived this year too, for the maximum of the goodness and of the mercy of the Lord at the holy Spiritual Exercises. With all my heart I wish to take advantage of the favorable occasion to exchange a word with you as it comes spontaneously from my heart.

I shall not tell you new things, no I shall not. These are the usual exhortations, but corroborated with the divine grace. I hope they will give you great advantage to your souls.

And first of all I pray and I beg you, my dear brothers, to take advantage from this *very acceptable time*, from these days of *health*.

Acceptable time, because the Lord who never despises a repentant and humiliated heart, will accept with greater benevolence the tears we shall pour continuously in expiation of our sins giving us a general and entire forgiveness, an entire indulgence.

Days of health because the Lord keeps innumerable and also extraordinary graces at our disposal by means of which it will not be difficult for us to set out that reform of ourselves that is the main purpose of the Exercises. And we should really and particularly need that during this sad and obscure time we are going through.

What will the future prepare for us, my dear brothers? We do not know. The powers of the evil are

certainly satanically organized and plotted *"adversus Dominum et adversus Christum eius"*.[78]

People do not want God; they want to undermine his reign that is the Church, from its fundaments, denying the supernatural, turning all his values over.

The Christian moral seems to be out of time. People worship the body stamping the laws of the spirit living worse than the beasts because they act following the instinct, created by an infinite wisdom, while the man denying the reason and the faith puts himself at the lowest level than dirty animals.

There is no more faith! We can say that the air is polluted and like the air it penetrates into the houses, into the rooms, into the resorts, everywhere. The blow of the corruption pollutes everything; also good people take offence of it and run a very great danger. And we, who, enriched by very special graces, being Christians and religious people and members of this Congregation of God, are we remaining impassible?

It would be the greatest misfortune. Also because the remedy is in our hands. And the remedy is this. The remedy is to go back and to draw from the pure springs of the holy gospel and to live our life as the Apostles and the first Christians did.

I got a great impression from the words of Clemenceau, a distinguished French personage who was against our holy Religion:

[78] "Against the Lord and against his Massiah" (Ps 2: 2)

"No revolution would be necessary and it would not be possible, if the Christians lived according to their faith!" This means that we are, like part of the human family, responsible of the very hard trial fallen on the poor humanity because we did not lived as we should have lived. There is only one remedy to restore the order and give a remedy to this quantity of evils: the remedy is to live our faith.

We have preached so much, we have discussed, we have kept conferences, we have done apologetics, we have printed books and magazines, but this is only the frame of the painting. Examples are necessary – *exempla tradunt* –. The first pagans converted themselves by looking at the examples of the first Christians.

We often delude ourselves when the crowd comes to the church in certain circumstances; this is not enough.

It is necessary to evangelize the person, to form the Christian family and to make the believers aware of their faith. And all this depends on us, because we irradiate even without knowing. As the root brings lymph as far as the last leaves of a great tree so we too can and we have to bring the lymph of our Lord Jesus Christ, *"usque ad finem terrae*, to the souls who live at the extreme limits of the earth.

Also the most stubborn adversaries disarm in front of the practical examples and the trials of the facts and of the actions of charity.

And it is only so that we can prepare the divine material for that new order that only the Lord will be able to found. And as other many times I told you, it seems to

me that, within this order, our humble Congregation has to accomplish a special mission.

My God, which responsibility weighs on us if we do not correspond, if we frustrate the plans of our Lord!

And here is, my dear and beloved brothers, the appropriate moment to do a serious exam about ourselves to see if we have lived according to the genuine spirit of the Congregation; and this is a necessary revision.

Also in this moment they do a lot of military revisions to declare if a person is fit or not. By doing a diligent spiritual revision we shall be able to understand if we are appropriate instruments for the Lord or if we are religious only in name.

For example, about poverty, are we faithful in observing it? You know that our vow takes us off the right of possessing and disposing of everything we want, so we cannot neither give, nor receive, nor take possession of anything without permission.

But the vow is the mean to acquire virtue and the virtue of poverty must bring us to an absolute detachment from everything and from ourselves. And this detachment must be the characteristics of the Poor Servants. The teaching of the holy gospel for them is especially proper: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; not yet for your body, what ye shall put on…" So when you are sent into a House or you receive a task, do not bring a lot of things with you. Be content of what you will find, be sure that the Divine Providence will not make you lack of the necessary. And then I recommend you: " Do not possess many superfluous or sophisticated

things. And also for the necessary things mortify the nature and be content of what the Providence gives you. For food and dress and for the bed and for any other things that can be necessary to you be always disposed to suffer sometimes the deprivation of something necessary.

Those who live in the world often give us lessons of poverty so that we feel confused, because they do this without having received the vows or the profession, and how can we be so delicate that we do not want to suffer for anything? So let be virtuously detached from everything, also from the minimal things because it matters so little to be tied with a rope or with a very simple thread, even it is a golden one. When we are tied we are not free and we cannot freely serve the Lord.

I also recommend you that you do not easily receive presents from extraneous people especially in occasion of the name-day or something else. If they want it would be preferable that they offer something to the Church, or to the House in place of the person. We know that we are superior to so many petty details that urge our self-respect and bind our heart.

Also I recommend you, as long as I know and as I can, my dear brothers, another necessary detachment; that is to say the detachment from the relatives. We have to love our relatives and we shall love them if we are faithful to our spirit. Relatives can bring great regrets with the exception of our parents, let us keep far from them and they have to keep far from us. If they are near they can paralyze our holy ministry especially if their behavior is not corresponding to what we are teaching or we are preaching to the others. Also for them our world will be more effective if they are kept apart. If then they need something

you have to speak with our superiors because the Congregation is not a stepmother, but a mother. Be careful, then, so that you do not multiply the reasons to go and visit them. The visits are not necessary to the relatives, they do not help, but, on the contrary, they strongly damage the spirit.

And what should I tell you about the good virtue? I only recommend you this: *"Ab omni specie mala abstinete vos*"![79] Not only you have to abstain from evil, but also from the unique appearance of it. Secular people are rotten as far as the bones and they think that also the others are so. The example of a holy life is a continuous and strong reproach for them, so they are all eyes in order to find out a pretext to denigrate. And you know that people believe in evil more than in goodness.

Be lighted lamps, so keep them full of the oil of the inner life. Be punctual in the practices of piety and in the observance of the holy Rules. Avoid every looseness but love studying, working and a retired life. If for chance, you should meet some serious danger in your way open your heart to your Superiors, and do it with filial confidence, with your father John. You know how he loves you. For God's sake, do not let the devil make you be silent: this would be your ruin!

And you, my dear brothers who have to deal with young people, think that every soul is a masterpiece of God. So I recommend you a lot to give a good example, do not permit to yourselves any confidence and stay at your place. If you do a mean action, you lose every prestige,

[79] "Beware from any appearance of evil" (1Ts 5: 22).

every authority and you will not have the courage of correcting and of reproaching anybody.

Do not enter the sanctuary of the conscience. You will form the conscience with your good example and with your prayers. And be watchful, pray and sacrifice yourselves in order to keep the sin apart from the souls of the young people trusted to you. Remember that in order to avoid even only one sin, especially in the House of God, also an entire life would be spent well.

About the obedience, you know that this is the most precious vow among the previous ones. I mean that because if with the poverty we do a sacrifice of our things and with the chastity we give our body to the Lord, with the obedience, on the contrary, we sacrifice our freedom, freedom about which the Holy Scriptures tell: "The obedience is better than every victim" (1 Sam 15,22).

Remember the words of the holy Pope Benedetto XIV: "Give me a religious who observes exactly his Rules and I shall canonize him while living".

How much peace, how much safety the obedient religious will have on his deathbed! It does not matter if he did not do anything great. If he can say that he has always obeyed, he will not have anything to fear. Even poor and miserable as I am, one of my greatest comforts for me is this one: the fact that I have always obeyed to my Spiritual Father.

Be docile, that is to say be easy and ready to whatsoever order your Superiors can give you, disposed to everything, to do a work, to start an office even if it seems to you against your aptitudes, because you will acquire

great merits. And be united in what you do to your Superiors and depend on them. Do not look at the man when looking at them, but the Lord and the thing will be easy to you, if you get used to look at the people three fingers up their head.

Then I recommend you charity very much. The Poor Servants must carry into effect the great words of Jesus: "*Ut unum sint*".[80] Be only one thing among you and among your superiors. Help and pity each other, have good manners, do each others services, help each others to bear weighs: "*Omnia vestra in caritate fian*t".[81]

And try to take off everything that could trouble the charity, the union and the peace among brothers. Do not let the sun set on your rage, let the peace, that is momentarily disturbed, come back among you and do it with a true spirit.

And do not get particularly excited about politics. As a matter of fact I forbid you to speak about it and to make discussions about it. The Apostle tells that we have to obey and to be subjected to the constituted authorities. We have to remain with the Rules that come from the Holy Father, the Vicar of Our Lord Jesus Christ, we religious have to obey to more than the simple faithful people. Our politics is the politics of the holy Gospel that is to say God and souls, our sanctification and that of our fellow creatures. The one who lacks about this point would give trial that he does not know and does not possess the spirit of the Congregation.

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[80] "That they may be one (Jn 17: 21).

[81] "May all things be done with charity among you" (1Cor 16: 14).

So I recommend that you do not read too many magazines and newspapers, and do not loose too much time by chattering and by doing secular conversations, and do not abuse the radio that is barely tolerated in our Houses. I want that the Superior of each House regulates its use and it depends entirely on him and I leave the responsibility to him.

I recommend you the spirit of faith and of the holy humility and the love for the Congregation. Let that only the Congregation appear in all that we do; we have to disappear.

Sanctify your time, cultivate the union with God; that is the secret to do some good and to deserve the divine protection. This is true especially during this period about what I like to tell you the following serious words of the holy Archbishop in Florence. And these are words that I should like that everybody considered: "I do not want to be a prophet of misfortunes, but if the dark present announced a dark future, if serious times for the Church and for its ministries are under way should we be really prepared? And why do not we fortify our spiritual weapons while we wait in the silence, in the prayer, in the meditation?…"

Before closing this letter of mine I ask you the charity of your prayers. God only knows how much I need them, because souls and the works of God cost. In my poverty I always remember you and; even if you are far from here, I follow you step by step, it seems to me to be able to see you. I offer, for you, my dear my prayers and my sufferance.

And let the blessing, I am giving you now more with my heart than with my hand, be the pledge of my benevolence with the wishing to meet you all in the holy Paradise.

Yours in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

I think to remind you here some things, small things if you want, but of great importance. You can see if there are some little breaches that are open. I pray and I beg you to close them immediately.

1) - Tthe bicycle: priests have to use it with a lot of discernment and only for the fulfillment of the holy ministry; the brothers should use it only for not long trips

2) - Do not participate to games that are not fit to the priestly and religious gravity, like the card games.

3) - Do not let anybody smoke for any reason.

4) -Do not take care of your hair; everything has to breathe austerity, seriousness, property, cleanness and nothing else.

5) - Do not use cameras without the permission of the superior, permission that must be asked every time. It would be a sign of worldliness to use it too often. And also do not participate to photographic groups where there can be people of different sex, even if it is in the occasions

of the First Communion, of meetings of the catholic Action or something different meetings. Be cautious.

6) - Examine if you have some unuseful things in your rooms, in this case renounce to them for the love of God.

7) - Among all the Rules I remind you the rule of reciting the prayer and receiving the blessing before going out. At the same time I remind you the Rule of the Great Silence when you come back. Stay at your place after the prayers of the evening. Avoid speaking unless there is an absolute necessity and then make it in a whisper. Also in the laboratories every type of work should be avoided during this period.

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My dear brothers, Lucky you! Everybody is looking at you, everybody is waiting from you, from us. You do not have any uniform. God does not want it, but he wants that you have the uniform of the virtue, of the faith, of the charity.

Beloved friends, I recommend you to pray for me always, I really need it and I am aware that you are my breath, my life. I am always near all of you and I bless you more with my heart than with my hands and I wish you a good end and a good beginning of the year in the Lord.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 32 Holy Lent 1943

My dear brothers in Christ,

I am here sitting near my little table, in front of my Cross, that is the way, the truth and the life and I am thinking a lot about you, beloved and dear friends that have the great, really great grace to belong to this Congregation. Only in the Paradise you can appreciate this, the fact that the Lord, has aroused this Opera, with a special mercy and goodness in this troubled and sad time to shake us and to recall humanity towards him. This poor humanity that, abandoning Him, his law, and trusting in itself and abusing the gifts it received by him, also for the happiness of the present life, has forgotten that it has received gifts and richness of the present life only from Him. All these natural and supernatural presents were given us only to arrive to eternal life, and to God, the only purpose of the present life.

Dear brothers, how mach should we be grateful to the Lord for this divine calling! But which responsibility is also looming up upon all of us and upon each of us, if we do not live according that pure and genuine spirit that the Lord has put in this Opera. This is the only reason of its

existence, of its life to perform the great, the very great plans that the Providence wants to perform!

This is the reason why I feel a strong and urgent need of writing to you all this letter of mine.

I ‘d like it was almost my testament and the *magna charta* , so that this Opera of the Lord is protected and defended from the Satanic arts that the devil will try to perform. And he will try to do it in a lot of manners and of ways in order that this Opera is not like Jesus, the absolute Master, wants it.

My dear brothers the first condition in order that the Opera lives and can perform the divine plans is that we are and live at the height of our vocation. Every other Opera will be able to live even if it lacks in something but we cannot do this: or we live as God wants or otherwise we die.

My God, which responsibility! Brothers let us aim to our personal sanctification giving great importance to our inner life: the holy meditation, the spiritual reading, the visit to the Holy Sacrament, the continuous union with God, addressing all our actions to the greater glory of God and to the goodness of souls.

Brother, leave everything except the practices of piety. Be bowls and channels, but bowls, first of all. We cannot give anything if we do not have anything and the Lord gives in abundance to those who are waiting everything from him.

Brothers, for God’s sake, take into account, a great account these poor words: poor words because they pass

through a miserable and poor channel, but they are always words of God.

Till the mercy and the goodness of God keep me here as the Casante and the guard of this Congregation, you have sacrosanct duty of listening to my words and of putting them into practice!

I tell you everything for the goodness of your souls first of all and then to maintain the Congregation along the track the Providence assigned to us. It must run along this track in order to perform the great and divine plans that the Lord has previewed since the eternity.

My dear brothers the Congregation is not of the man, but of God. It was born, as I told you many times, under the robe and the protection of the Immaculate Virgin.

Be careful that the positions I wrote 25 years ago are not written carelessly; the Lord wanted them so because we could exercise the faith and the full abandonment in God, appealing to Him and to his saints when we need them. The Lord, my dear brothers, is active with us and the saints are valid and powerful intercessors. They obtain, if we preach them with faith all that men, also great men, cannot obtain.

All the Operas are of God but, remember it well, each Opera has its footprint, its features, footprint and features God gives to them. And we have to conform to them.

Our Opera, the Opera of the Poor Servants receives a very special footprint from God, fit to our present times. Woe to us if we wanted to change it! This would be the

ruin and the death of the Congregation. And then the devil, great sneaker, pays attention and has tried and will always try so that this footprint and this pure and genuine spirit which aims to the abandonment in God and his Providence moves over. Be careful! Because it is sufficient a minimum thing, a moment to change it as it happens in the radio set when a slight movement is sufficient to lose the hour and the broadcast.

Dear brothers, the Congregation must be a great light, a sun that shows the divine Providence to everyone. It also shows that God exists and thinks about us and that his words, his divine words, does not faint, never. Go and search, he said, go and search the Kingdom of God and his justice and you will have all the other things in addition.

So do not have anxieties, no thoughts about secular things, no afflictions. Secular things will certainly come also from the stones, from the rocks, on condition that we look for the Lord, our sanctification and the souls. All souls particularly the most abandoned, the most derelict, the poorest: these are the gems, these form our patrimony.

We believe or not and then if we do not believe we have to tear the Gospel!

There will be surely some moments of trial, some difficult moments, but the difficult moments are the moments of God. Then, have more faith, do more prayers, have more love for God and the trial will be crowned and our faith will be rewarded.

The Opera is great if it is small, it will be rich if it is poor, it will have the protection of God if we do not search the protection of men.

I have always considered the Congregation like a big field with a lot of seeds in the hands of the divine farmer. He will spread these seeds if the field is ploughed and well cultivated. These seeds will grow and will become many plants, different plants and each of them will give some great fruit.

Brothers, in the world they need light and salt; they need love, charity; they need faith. And the Congregation will be light, will be charity, will be love if it is as God wants it and as he has founded it and as he has trusted to us. He did it so that we jealously look after it, make it live and proceed for the goodness of souls.

As long as I know and as I can I recommend you the exercise of virtue: the holy humility. Let the one who wants to be the first among us become the servant of all. Let we all be all brothers, either if they are priests or not, let them be only one person. Brothers and priests: heart and arms or better, soul and body, disposed to everything, because everything is great in the family of God.

Do not let us lose sight of the example of the divine Priest Jesus: thirty years at Nazareth, three years of Apostleship, but always supported and assisted by the brothers who were the Apostles and the disciples.

All is for the Lord. Pay attention that is the sure characteristics of the Congregation; the Lord has wanted and wants it so. Humility, charity! Let then the division, the murmurs and the envy be far from us. Try to see the Lord in the Superiors and try to listen to them and to put into practice and obey. And all these things must be done neither because of servility nor because of politics, but for supernatural virtue.

The actual and the future guard and Custodian (Casante) of this Congregation has to be like a great father of a big family. He will always have lights and very particular graces to lead this Congregation of ours and perform all that the Lord wants. Everybody has to listen to him.

Pay attention to the fact that what we have, all that the Lord gives us, we have it aiming at the Congregation; so we have to disappear and only the Opera has to appear. And when I tell the Opera I particularly mean the trunk and not the branches. And the trunk is St. Zeno in Monte. This is the ground where God, the absolute Master, has put the seed of this Congregation. I believe that if we remain in our route we shall go *usque ad finem terrae*.

Brothers, have humility, charity and faith! Everything must be done for Jesus, with Jesus, for Him, foe souls! We are Poor Servants, we are miserable instruments in the hands of God.

The Congregation is composed of priests and brothers, as I told you, but both of them with the apostolic spirit. Priests have always been the beat of my heart since the first years of my priesthood. Oh, how should I be able to come back in order to mend and to live as the Apostles and so many holy priests did! I often reread the words I have written in my diary thirty years ago about the future priests of the Congregation. Then I was alone and I felt all the greatness and the characteristics of the priests of the Opera, who have to form only one thing with the brothers. Here are the words:"The boat cannot go on without oars. Priests will be the oars and they are grown up and are formed with the spirit of the Congregation. One priest, even a holy one, but who does not possess the spirit of the

Congregation, will represent a damage and a ruin to the Congregation itself if he remained. My God, which responsibility!" Let us live according to our Spirit.

I am not attracted by the quantity, but by the quality. *The few will make the many*. A brother, a priest who have the pure and the genuine spirit of the Congregation supplies hundreds and even more. The organism that form the Congregation must be completely supernatural. Only so it can spread and perform all that the Lord wants.

My dear brothers, let us make any efforts in order to be, with the grace of God, different from many others. Let us live and change into blood our holy Rules. "*Buseta e taneta*" (see lett. *383, 4-5-1932), hidden under the ground. If it is necessary, the Lord will put us on the candelabrum. We do not do it, no we cannot do it.

I fear only one thing that can ruin the Congregation: I fear that I am not able to live according to the pure and genuine spirit and I fear the sin. I only fear this; all the remaining things will occur to perform the great, divine plans and, if tomorrow everything could happen be sure that the Lord himself, perhaps with a miracle, will help his Opera. I am convinced that the Lord is going to give us now the charisma of the first times of the Church, if we follow our program and live our spirit.

We are now during the holy Lent that is a time of prayers and penance. Dear brothers, let us remember that we can convert the sinners by the penance, and we have the way of making penance fitting ourselves to the sacrifices inherent to our vocation, observing the rules and

the notices of our Superiors: "*Mea maxima paenitentia, vita communis*" a holy man said.[82]

The church that is our benign, uses a very great largeness in these difficult times, but does not dispense us from the obligation and from the need we have to do penance.

The Madonna herself, appearing at Fatima, twenty five years ago as she had done at Lourdes, has exhorted to the penance to propitiate the divine mercy all over the world.

So let us do our penance, let us mortify our will first of all, "the rational one", St Philip said. Let us give to our Superiors "three fingers over their heads"[83] and we shall contribute to the Opera and to the entire world. Let us try to feel this need of penance also the corporal one, first for us, for our sins and for the charity towards the brothers who suffer so much. And they suffer in this time of trials for everybody, time of justice and also of mercy from the Lord who, by means of so many pains, wants to health all the people in the world.

Pray a lot for me, so that the Lord forgives me all my sins. I also shall pray for you, as I do since a lot of time: "*Ut cum fratribus meis et pueris tuis laudem te in saecula saeculorum, amen*" (see let. 3, 19-3-1933).

I fatherly bless you. Yours in C.J.

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[82] "My greatest penance is the community life" (St John Berchmans).

[83] Here Fr. Calabria hints to his exhortation: "Do not look at the man when looking at the superiors, but the Lord; and the thing will be easy to you, if you get used to look at the people three fingers up their head (Lett. 31, Spiritual Retreat 1942).

Fr. J. Calabria

P.S. – I remember you once more some rules I gave you, small rules, but great things: Do not smoke; have proper hair and no affectation, do not accept invitation for lunch, do not use the bicycle unless it is for your ministry and after having received the permission (this is for priests). Do not let you make photographed in groups with people of different sexes, do not assume direction and spiritual fatherhood of certain souls (how it is important, in this case to depend on the Superior!), do not accept, in general, personal presents, especially from souls that you direct in the spirit. You will say that these are small things, but for me they are really important. And if somebody does not agree with me, he can go away. But I hope that this will not happen; and that everybody, as usual, will take into great account my poor words that are the interpreter of the holy will of God for us and for the Congregation.

*SOLEMN PROMISE[84] 9 September 1943

Preliminary statement: the night of the 8th of September, the feast of the Nativity of Mary, the radio broadcast the piece of news that the Government had required the armistice. The night was spent quietly, but the day after, at about 9.30, the town started resounding sinister shootings. German people reacted, occupied the barracks and disarmed the soldiers.

Considering all these events and the probable future complications that can be seriously harmful for our city:

In front of the Lord, the undersigned, as father and Casante of the Congregation, feeling almost a representative of my fellow-citizens, has promised to the Madonna that for her feast of the Seven Pains (on the 15th of September) things will go better for our town and for all our nation. And I do this in the presence of the undersigned witnesses.

I shall arrange all the following things in honor of the same Mother of God, Mary and in everlasting memory of the illustrious benefit:

1) We shall set and conveniently decorate the Grotto of the Immaculate and its surroundings, also with a

[84] This document corresponds to the LETTER 37 (p. 324). That letter is without signatures, later amplified, and dated on 2-7-1944, on the Feast of Visitation. Here we put this original document, signed by Fr. Calabria and the other witnesses. We put this document before the letter 15-10-1943 to respect the chronologic order (see the different position in the Italian version, p. 236).

decent access to the Cross of the Redemption.

2) Every first Saturday of the month will be dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of St. Mary. The community, in her honor, if the weather permits, will go in procession to the Grotto with a thankful spirit, reciting the Rosary.

3) Once a year, during the anniversary of the reaching of the peace, we shall do a solemn service, according to the order established every time.

4) As soon as possible we shall embellish the block so that it can become almost a monument of gratitude to the Providence. So it can recall to the citizens the memory of God and of the graces received during these days.

5) A votive tablet will remind the future generations of the received grace.

Father John Calabria

Witnesses

Fr. Luigi Pedrollo

Fr. Ppietro Murari

Fr. Luigi Adami

Bro. Prospero Oliviero

Bro. Giovanni Corradin

**** 184 /A 15-10-1943***

My really beloved friends,[85]

Let the grace of the Lord be always with all of you.

I feel moved in reading your beautiful and fervent letters and knowing the holy proposals you advanced during the days of the spiritual Exercises. This is the greatest comfort that my fatherly heart could wish on this earth while I am the Custodian (Casante) of this great Opera of the Lord, destined to bring light of goodness and of virtue to this poor world.

Be faithful to your vocation. Remember the sweet impressions of these days of peace and of divine light. Be faithful to your practices of piety, united to the God with your internal life, depending on the person who leads you in the name of God and seeing everything in the light of the holy faith.

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[85] To the brethrens of Costozza.

The divine Providence favors us and you can see it and you can touch it with your hands. So let us try to correspond with generosity in order to deserve new graces and to perform the plans of the Lord on favor of souls.

I should like to write a particular word to each of you, but I cannot do it. But you can read a great love for you coming from my heart and you can perceive all that I want to write to you.

Be my breath, my lungs acting well and living according to the spirit of the vocation.

I bless you all, together with the dear young people the divine Providence trusts to your cures. In them you can perceive the Lord. Think to the beautiful gifts he keeps for you if you are faithful and holy people.

Always pray for me. In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

Tell my and your dear Fr. Tibaldo,[86] you will listen to as he was myself, that I remember him very much and that I bless him and I hope he will pray for me.

Fr. J. Calabria

[86] Fr. Anacleto Tibaldo, superior of the community and very weak in health. He died at Negrar on 11-11-1951.

*9693 Verona, 7-11-1943

Venerable community of the House of the Sacred Heart, at Negrar.

I am always near you with my heart, with mind, with my prayers, with my pains so that the Lord does not find out any obstacle in any of us and he can accomplish his divine plans for the glory of the Father and for the goodness and the health of souls.

And these plans are those that are fit to the present time, time fit to a total revision, especially we priests and religious.

I recommend you so much, but really a lot the charity of the prayers. God only knows how I need them.

I bless you all, in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*286 9-11-1943

My dear brothers,[81]

Let the grace and the peace of blessed Jesus be always with you.

I write this poor letter to you all, my beloved brothers, because I feel that the great moment of my

departure and of my arrival in front of my Jesus, who is merciful Savior, but also judge, is coming very quickly.

For this reason, after having asked to Him, divine Redemptory, to be forgiven for all my sins, completely trusting to his divine goodness and mercy and praying to be dipped into his precious blood I feel the necessity of asking also to you all to be forgiven before I approach Him as a judge

I would like to do so, to plunge into his blood that is pledge of health and eternal life.

I apologize for the aversions or the bad examples that I could have done to you in the course of my long mission that the divine Providence has trusted to me as the poor Custodian (Casante) in this divine Operas of his. Our blessed Jesus wanted to found it in our dear Verona, for the light and health of the poor souls and for the comfort and help of the poor and of the suffering people especially in these times.

My dear brothers and priests, for God's sake I recommend you to live the pure and genuine spirit of this Opera that was born in the Sacred Ribs of Jesus and fit to the present times. Here the Lord has great and new plans to perform on condition that you are as he wants you to be, in the full observance of your sacred Rules.

Always listen with spirit of faith the Casante the divine Providence will assign to you. He will always have particular lights and graces.

For God's sake, do not let anybody betray his apostolic vocation. What a special gift will be destined for

all those who will be faithful till the end of their lives, but also what a punishment for the lacking!

The few will form the many. I recommend you. Be bowls and channels. I hope that all this poor humanity can be freely come and can drink the pure and genuine waters of the holy Gospel. Be living Gospels. Never doubt of the special help of Jesus you must always have in front of you as a model. Remember that the good example is all that is worth.

Be light and be salt.

Now I leave you but I hope that one day we shall meet all united in the family of God. Pray and always support my poor soul.

Your Father John blesses you and tells you good bye, in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

How much have I loved you all in the Lord, my dear brothers! Bye, bye! Bro. Antonio, Prospero, my loved Fr. Luigi, Fr. Adami, father Rossi, all of you, all of you, but really all of you! Pray for me, I tell you again, pray for my poor soul. I bless you all my Verona: let it deserve the grace to have in it this Opera that must *go usque ad finem terrae.*

24 January 1946

For grace of God I have read again my poor letter today that I confirm in the Lord.

Pray, pray for my poor soul. Let us all meet in Paradise.

I am waiting for you.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 33 8 December 1943

THE WORD OF THE FATHER[87]

Read and practise these poor words of mine, I tell you as they are spontaneously born in my Heart in the name of blessed Jesus, absolute Master. We have to depend on him in everything and I tell these words like poor Custodian (Casante) and guard of this Opera of the Poor Servants of the Divine Providence, in order to propitiate the divine mercy for us and for our brothers in the serious hour that hangs on all the poor humanity.

As much as I know and as I can I recommend you:

-Be faithful to the practices of piety: holy meditation, spiritual reading, Holy Mass, Holy Communion, rosary etc. "Let everything but do not neglect the practices of piety": it would be our ruin and the others'.

[87] This "Word of the Father", for an explicit his desire, had being read each Friday, after the prayer before lunch.

- Cultivate the inner life: be united to our Lord like the vine stalk to the grapevine. Remember the word of Jesus: “Apart from me you can do nothing”. It is true we have to do everything as if everything should depend on us, but let us all remember that we are nothing but “useless servants”.

- Observe the sacred Rules, expressions of the holy will of God, and then indispensable condition to reach your sanctification, supreme purpose of the religious life. I particularly recommend you the Greater Silence.

When the hour has come retire into your rooms and do not speak about anything else. The Lord speaks in the silence. If you speak too much your soul is emptied of the good spirit. Remember the warning of the Holy Spirit: “There is the time of the silence and there is the time of the speech”.

- I recommend you the great preaching of the “good example” in the house and outside. Let that all realize that you are religious and special religious. You do not have any uniform. Your uniform, your distinguishing mark must be the virtue. Ant this virtue has to be showed in your behaviour, in your conversation, in the treating of business, etc.; but woe to the ones who give a bad example especially to young people! It would be better to die! My God, which responsibility! Let God save us from such misfortunes!

- I recommend you a lot the charity! Let it reign sovereign in your hearts! Let our charity be supernatural, universal. It loves everyone without any distinction, but it particularly loves the poorest, the most abandoned, the old, the sick, the sinners. These are the gems our Opera has to look for and it has to become rich of.

Remember the brotherly charity above all: help each other, pity each other. Do not let anybody to criticize and to murmur. Where there is charity; there are God; his grace and his spirit. To look for the Kingdom of God means to make efforts so that charity can always reign and in everybody;

- Remember that the dress, the crown and the Cross are beautiful and holy things but these things are not the things that form the true religious man, but the holy life. These objects, on the contrary, can be our punishment in front of the divine Court.

Do, or better, let us do a serious exam of conscience looking for the things we need to correct, changing what must be changed in our behaviour. And with the grace of God let us commit ourselves in order to become saints. Let that the continuous recalling to God be an effective incentive in the present times. In this manner we shall cooperate so that the days of the trial are shortened and the hour of the forgiveness, of the mercy and of the peace is anticipated. Amen

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***LETTER 34 20 January 1944**

Let the grace and the peace of blessed Jesus be always with us.

At the end of the actual Octave of prayer (18-25 January)and so in occasion of the coming back of the dissentient brothers to the unique true church, in our chapel at St. Zeno in Monte we shall celebrate a solemn three days period of Eucharistic Worship precisely on the 23rd 24th and 25th of this month. On communicating this piece of news to those who share the blazing wish of faith and love to Jesus who is continuously present for us in the Sacrament of his love, we ask for their participation, at least spiritual, in brotherly charity of prayers.

We certainly cannot remain identical in front of the huge multitude of brothers who, since ages, live separated from the only sheepfold of Our Jesus Christ. But, more than this, who cannot see the importance and the necessity of the prayer during these moments of solicitous anxiety when the invitation of God to cry for your own sins and to do right penance is more and more pressing and vivid? And what about the fact that a sincere coming back to the observance of the divine law is what matters? So we too pray for this, for this we invite many others to unite to us remembering the solemn promise of Jesus: “Again I say unto you that, if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.” (Mt 18: 19).

In the name of blessed Jesus I thank of the contribution that you will bring us to the good success of the three-day period. We also hope for the unification of the great Christian family in only one sheepfold under only one Shepherd. We also vow so that it is good to shorten the

days of the trial and to speed up the hour of the peace blessing you in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 35 22 February 1944

My dear and beloved brothers,

Let the grace and the peace of blessed Jesus be always with us.

Once more I feel pushed to tell you a word and to make you a warm recommendation. It seems to me that the Lord himself and also the Madonna wants it.

And the word is this: God continuously and persistently calls us all, especially the religious ones, the priests and the Christians to the full observance of his divine law, but till this moment, unfortunately, people have not listened to this divine and merciful call. They continue to insult the Lord also under his severe punishment.

We insult him when we desecrate his feast, we tell horrible oaths, in the most impudent immorality; churches are still deserted while palaces of amusements and sins are crowded.

The sanctuary of the family is so often desecrated and the holy law of the Lord is so proudly trampled on.

And all these things happen in spite of so many pains, so many sufferings and ruins.

Dear brothers, first of all, it is necessary that all of us, especially we, by humiliating ourselves under the powerful hand of God who punishes us in order to correct us, make a serious exam of ourselves. We do not easily believe that we have no blame while Paul, the Apostle used to tell humbly about himself:

"For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord." (1 Corinthians 4, 4)

Let us remember that the servant of the gospel was condemned only because he did not make yield the talent his master gave him. My God how many considerations can we draw from all of these things!

Are we doing all the goodness we could and we should do? And also, how are we doing that part of goodness we believe to do? Aren't our self-respect and our natural aptitude connected to this? Are we always and only aiming to the glory of God, the goodness of souls, our sanctification? How are we making the precious talent of our precious and holy vocation pay?

But there is another very important point to consider.

We are part of the great Christian and human family and so also the sins committed by the others concern us. We can have our part of responsibility in them. Perhaps we have not done anything to prevent them at least in part; perhaps, we too, have [83]influenced them with bad examples, neglecting the prayer and the graces of God. So

we should use and make our prayer the prayer of the holy King David: "*Ab occultis mei munda me, Domine, et ab alienis parce servo tuo*" [88]But even if we had no part in the sins of the brothers, we should consider our task to mend and to expiate and we should do this pushed by an act of charity.. And we should do this according to the example of Jesus who was the innocence himself and who has taken on him the responsibility of our sins expiating them by pouring his blood till the last drop.

So, being aware of our part of responsibility, the firm resolution of spiritually renewing ourselves and living and being as the Lord wants us will be natural to us.

" So your light can shine – he tells us – in front of men so that they can see our good actions and glorify your Lord who is in Heaven".

But the Christian people have lost the memory of their divine origin, the meaning and the purpose of their lives and do not estimate any more the grace of God because they do not know it any more.

My dear and beloved friends, a great duty, for us and for thers, is incumbent on us.

We have to sanctify ourselves. And by doing this we shall sanctify our Congregation, the souls the divine Providence makes us meet, our town, our country, all the world. "*Unicuique mandavit Deus de proximo tuo*".[89]

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[88] "Absolve me, Lord, from the sins I don't know, and from haughtiness save you servant" (Ps 18: 13-14).

[89] God entrusted our neigbours to each one of us" (Sir 17: 12).

And, for this reason, I feel like telling you that in all our Houses we celebrate a solemn Novena to the immaculate heart of Mary, praying Her to become our Mediator by the throne of his divine Son. We also pray Her so that she can first obtain for us the grace to renew us modelling our life on the life of the first Disciples of Christ and of the Apostles. Believe me: still today similar examples should produce the same effects. Our brothers, even the most distant, those to whom our voice cannot arrive will consider themselves as defeated, because they cannot hold out against the light and the strength of our examples.

I wish this Novena we shall finish, with the grace of God, on the first Sunday of March at the Sanctuary of the Madonna of Campagna who is there invoked with the sweet title of Madonna or Queen of the Peace, obtain for us the great gift of the peace.

And I wish that this can happen soon after the renewal of us.

I also wish that the peace is a lasting and right peace based on the eternal principles of the Holy Gospel!

Let us appeal, with unlimited faith, to the Woman who is the Mother of God and also our Mother, the Refuge of sinners, the Comforter of the afflicted people, the Help of the Christians.

It is true there is no hint that the peace is about but can you remember all that happens at the time of the Prophet Elia? It had been three years since a drop of rain fell, because of a right punishment of God, on the ungrateful country of Israel that had abandoned the Lord

to embrace idolatry. The Prophet, who was moved by his people, implored the Lord for seven times, humbly prostrated in the dust so that He could give the grace of the desired rain.

Watching the sky towards the sea he discovered a small cloud at the end of the horizon and, immediately feeling that his prayer was answered he told the people near him: ”I am already hearing the loud noise of a lot of rain”.

In fact the sky became dark and the turgid clouds opened and a very heavy rain fell and this rain ended the famine and also ended the great trial of the Lord.

In this cloud, my dear friends, Mary is painted. Many times the Pope ordered us to invoke her especially during the months of May and October. The other year he wanted to consecrate the entire month to the immaculate heart of Mary during the propitious recurrence of the 25th anniversary of the Appearance of Fatima. Also our beloved Bishop often exhorted us to appeal to Mary. I hope that this solemn Novena represents the seventh prayer of the Prophet. After this prayer the Lord will certainly raise the rainbow of the peace, by the intercession of Mary. In this manner he will give us the grace of living a really Christian, religious, priestly life by means of which we can, above all, usefully and efficiently work for the goodness of souls. And we shall able to do this until he gives us the last of the graces, the grace of entering and possess the eternal glory, the purpose and the gift of the terrestrial pilgrimage in the heavenly Jerusalem, in our true country, the holy Paradise.

Pray a lot for me. I always remember you and bless you.

Yours in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

P.S.

1) The Novena will start for us on Friday 25th of February and it will last till the 4th of March, the first Saturday of the month. During the Novena the following prayers will be said: the Holy Rosary, Litanies to the Immaculate Heart of Mary – Eucharistic Blessing;

The service in the end (4th march) will be held at the sanctuary of the Madonna at Campagna with the following schedule: at 7.30 High and Sung Mass with speech and general Communion. In the night function, after the Rosary, we shall sing the *Miserere*; a prayer of Consecration to the Immaculate heart of Mary of the St. Father Poi XII.

2) I think it is a good idea that a lot of people meet, at least in the spirit, to our solemn Novena and, for this reason I recommend you so that you publicize the piece of new particularly among the religious Institutes. Let the Lord receive our supplications and satisfy them.

*523 Verona, 26-4-1944

My dearest brothers,[90]

Let the grace and the peace of blessed Jesus flood your hearts and give you the courage to sustain the terrible trials of these days of pain, with spirit of faith and blazing charity.

I risk this letter,[91] hoping it will arrive at you to tell you how much I keep you near me and deep in my heart. My thought often flies to Rome to look for each of you, my dear sons who share the anxiety of our Pope about the situation of so many of his sons.

With great pleasure I have received your wishes for Easter. I should have liked to answer to each of you, as you had separately written, but perhaps I have not enough time or I fear I cannot send you back the answers, so I decided to send collectively to you my thanks for your wishes and for your prayers.

Let the Lord fill you with his grace and with his peace and protect you with his Providence against any spiritual and then temporal danger. And I wish you can sing the thanksgiving hymn to God for the graces you have received in spite of the menaced dangers.

Stay still and firm according to the genuine spirit of our Congregation. Love the Lord and look for his glory and

[90] To the Poor Servants of Rome.
[91] The North Italy was divided from Rome by the front of German troops.

his approval. Stay far from the human support and faithful only on his help. In this manner you will do great things.

During this time of misleading and perturbation, be at the height of the vocation and of the received graces. Correspond to the loving plans of the Providence.

Souls, souls, everything else is not important!

How many things I would tell you while I feel my fatherly love for you. Today, as you can imagine, you occupy a special place in my heart. Your anxiety is mine, your pains are mine. I often, very often recommend you to the Lord in my prayer and in the pains by means of which the Lord visits me. I invoke graces and convenient gifts from Him so that this stormy period can pass. Gain force in the spirit of your vocation, in the will of looking for the Kingdom of God . Let that everybody, each one in his place, profit in order to become better, to sanctify and became a worthy instrument of the divine Providence in order to accomplish the plans of the mercy he has decided for our Congregation.

I bless you all, one after the other: priests, brothers, sisters, young people, all the members of the beloved roman family; I hope that you are all a unique heart and a unique soul in the charity of Christ.

I bless the benefactors, particularly the most commendable and attached.

Let the Lord fill them of his graces and of his favors now and of his happiness in the holy Paradise.

Lucky those the Providence finds worthy to became ministers of goodness for this Opera of the Lord!

A particular blessing to you, my dear Father Stanislao who will be the interpreter of my feelings to you all.

Do homage to the most Reverend Father Abate, to whom I feel superfluous to say that I always remember him and I always pray for him.

A particular blessing to my dear Bro. Morelli, so privileged by the Lord for his work. Lucky him!

Bro. Riccardi sent to us, from the Paradise, another young doctor for Negrar. This is a great Opera for which God uses him.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 36 May 1944

My dear and beloved brothers,

Let the grace and the peace of blessed Jesus be with us always, but particularly during this beautiful month of May all dedicated to the devotion towards our dear Mother in the sky, the Madonna. I exhort you to spend each year suitably in order to honor Her in the best way. As you know in our "Perpetual Charges" she has been constituted as the patron of the House and of the

Congregation. This year I feel pushed to do this with greater reason because this is unfortunately the fifth May of war. Ruins, afflictions, deaths and a lot of different pains have multiplied in the world with a terrible, apocalyptic rhythm. Moreover the devastating whirl has fallen also on our beloved land.

It is the Lord, my dear brothers, who calls us strongly, but nobody unfortunately listens to him. Yes, I do not call this whirl only a war, because it is a general perturbation, a huge impact of wrong principles and systems that have unhinged men, drawing them out of the unchangeable, eternal principles of the order. This war has a special purpose in the plan of God like the deluge, the fire in Sodoma and Gomorra, the wars and the public calamities sent by God. to the chosen people

So we should not look at this war as an ordinary fact, no! It marks a really particular time of the Lord, the hour of one of his great calling for everybody, because we all have made mistakes, but particularly for the Christians, for the religious and priests. Unfortunately we humbly have to recognize and to confess it. We have estranged too much from the holy Gospel, and from the observance of the divine law.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is mutilated, is veiled. We do not recognize any more his true divine face. And this unfortunately happens for our fault. We all have to come back to the Gospel, particularly to the Gospel put into practice and lived. And for us, my dear and beloved brothers the Gospel is, in a certain sense, summarized in the great and really strong program of the Congregation: "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his*

righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mt 6: 33).

The Gospel never contradicts itself: "*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away*" (Mt 24: 35).

We have been living the experience of it for 35 years and also at present we are moved on perceiving how the Providence helps the ones who rely on it and abandon themselves to It.

Let us try so that we do not forfeit the benefits and the graces of the Lord.

On the contrary let us increase our adhesion to the sayings and to the principles of the holy Gospel: we are living gospels and we radiate the light that comes out of the actions. We live a life of faith thinking that we are passing here and that our actual life is not an end in itself but the preparation to the true life of blessed eternity to which we have to coordinate everything.

God created us according to an action of infinite love and has put us on this earth which even if it is a place of trials and exile it is also rich of many gifts and of many beautiful and pleasant things. All these things must be considered as a ladder that permits us to climb to God but the same things shouldn't be the ones that stop us or the ones where we put our hearts. They are made for men and men are made for God: "*Omnia propter hominem et homo propter Deum*" (St. Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises*).

But how easily do men forget the nobility of his origin and his great and eternal destiny!

They want to find out their Paradise here by supporting their own passions. So they get into the mud, they rebel against God, the do not want to know anything about his law, they want to be free to enjoy their life as they want. Ad by doing this they forget the evangelic warning: "*For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*" (Mk 8: 36).

And so the earth fills itself of sins, life is not a Christian but a pagan life, the world does not become anything but, as St. John tells us: "… *lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life*" (1 Jn 2: 16). And all this can justify the refusal of Jesus to pray for the earth: "*Non pro mundo rogo*" (Jn 17: 9).

Here is the reason why there are the divine punishments; punishments that always hide plans of mercy. The same as when the Father punishes his son even if He loves him. He acts so because he can see that we are fragile as a consequence of the serious wounds coming to us from the original sin. And He is always ready to forgive us. But it is important that sin is not systemic in order to obtain this forgiveness and that we do not try to justify it, that we do not tell that evil is goodness. And this is unfortunately all that we can see it is happening at the present times. And this is what provokes the divine justice against us, more than anything else and that makes the repentance impossible and prevents the sincere coming back to God.

In this connection do you remember the appeal I sent to you in 1937, when we had still time to divert the hurricane that menaced everybody? At that time I told you that, after 19 centuries of Redemption, that world was very far away from it and did not seem to take any profit from

it. Jesus came and is still coming among us and we, who are his creatures, do not want to recognize and to listen to Him. On the contrary we do not fear to repeat the Satanic cry: *"We will not have this man to reign over us"* (Lk 19: 14)

Life has bent far from its purpose. Men impudently insult the divine legislator; his really wise laws are trampled. Marriage is desecrated, family is disrupted, workers are cheated, poor are despised, the day of God is profaned, the words of God, the Gospel, and the catechism are not listened.

Many Christians think that only some practices of cult are sufficient. They do not know, they do not think that the Gospel must cover all the life, the private and the public one because we do not have two different consciences. Only in this manner we can content the Lord who looks through our hearts: "*The Father seeks such to worship him in spirit and in truth*" (Jn 4: 23).

At that time I told you so and now again this is what I feel I must repeat to you, insisting and repeating the same concepts.

But from whom, my dear brothers, will the light come? Aren't the same words told to the Apostles fit to us too? "*You are the salt of the earth… You are the light of the world*.(Mt 5: 13-14).

And then, if the world is in the darkness whose fault is this? How many times did I tell you that we should be like the machinists of a train! If the machinists do their duty all the travellers are safe and the train will reach his destination without any danger.

But are we sure that we are the way we should be?

I often think that if so many unfaithful Buddhists and Maomethans should wish to come here in order to see how we know, love and imitate our Lord Jesus Christ they would be scandalized and they would be compelled to repeat: we are better than you with our beliefs, with our rites. What responsibility we should have!

So let us first start living like the first Christians who were one unique heart and souls. Let us first live following the spirit of brotherly charity in the community of temporal goods and of spiritual ideals so that they attired the interest of the pagans who said: " Look how Christians love each other!"[87]

And they convert themselves because of similar examples.

Union of charity, mutual comprehension and indulgence, mutual help, honesty, discipline and obedience are virtues that today are more necessary than ever. This is because they do not only sanctify the people who practise them, but they constitute the better contribution that each of us can and must give to our loved country in this period of humiliation and trial.

We cannot certainly do this only by our strength but the Lord will give us his grace and we shall be able to do this with this help.

So let us be happy because of the month of May that is the month of Mary, a month of graces. I really trust that the Madonna, who is the Mother of Mercy, can first obtain for us the change of our lives and the so desired

peace. And She will do it because at last so many pains will move her.

Do you remember the solemn Novena we did a little time ago in honor of his Immaculate Heart? At that time I told you that Mary is often painted on a little cloud looked by the Elias prophet who very soon covered the sky of clouds. Then he gave a restoring, superabundant rain to the earth sun baked by a long drought. And also I expressed the hope that that Novena of ours represented almost the seventh prayer of the same Prophet after which our Lord, pacified by the motherly intercession made by Mary, made the rainbow of peace rise. In this manner he could give us the grace of living a really Christian, religious, priestly life. In this letter I repeat the same auspice and, because in May we shall also have the feast of Pentecost we appeal to Mary in order to have and to deserve a larger infusion of the graces and of the gifts of the Holy Spirits as the Apostles had long time ago, among whom she prayed while waiting for the great happening.

I am afraid but Christian people know little of the Holy Spirit and, perhaps, we speak about it less than we should do. We should think that if Jesus is the head of the Church, his Mystical Body, the Holy Spirit is its soul. Every part of the body to which the vital flow of the soul does not arrive, dries and dies.

But in order to operate, it is not sufficient to live in a certain way, intensity in our lives is necessary This life and this intensity and exuberance of supernatural life is fruit of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit operated into the Apostles that wonderful transformation by means of which they could

gloriously witness to Our Jesus Christ, day and night. And they did it working hard and happily suffering for Him till they lost their lives witnessing the truth. Without the assistance and the guide of the Holy Spirit how could the Church resist to the huge knock of persecutions and struggles overcoming victoriously the strength of the evil that were in and out and were Satanically conspiring against it? But, just for the reason that the blow of the Holy Spirit led it, this mystic ship sails safe and sure among the rocks and the breakers of a treacherous sea towards the harbor of blessed eternity.

And also for us the Holy Spirit is a spirit of light and truth, spirit of grace and holiness, spirit of wisdom and strength, of piety and joy.

We should always feel the desire of appealing to the Holy Spirit, but particularly now, while the really unhappy times, the times predicted by St. Paul, seem to have arrived. Times where "*some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils*" (1 Tm 4: 1)

For this reason I greatly desire that in all our houses we recite the Novena with a particular commitment in preparation for the Pentecost adding the song *Veni Creator* to the recital of the rosary. As you can see I do not prescribe any different prayer from the usual we had the other years, but I let the task of adding to your devotion, if you want, some more exercises of piety. For example, the recital of the crown of the Holy Spirit I give you copy of. But more than all I recommend you to pray this Novena with the Holy Mary, so that she can pray with us and for us in this time such serious for the Church and for the poor humanity. I speak to you my dear and beloved brothers,

but I'd like that this poor word of mine, a word of a priest could be received by others. I think that if we multiply the requests we ask to God by means of the Holy Mary, our Celestial Mother, more easily we can be listened to and satisfied by praying also with and in us "*with groaning which cannot be uttered*" (Rm 8: 26)

More than anything else I invite the sacerdotal and religious souls that is to say the members of the Institutes to unite to our prayer during the next Novena.. They all live under the wings of the religion and of the Christian charity and I also invite all those souls who, living in the world, walk along the way of the evangelic perfection.

I wish that the face of the earth is renewed according to the irresistible blow of this Holy Spirit and a new Pentecost is obtained for the Church so that the Christian spirit can blossom again and hate can stop.

I hope also that the dormant Christian charity can awake, the ties of the true brotherhood are strengthened, and errands can be able to find out the way of the truth and of the justice and those who are separated can come back to the unique true Church. So that since in the earth there is only one sheepfold under only one Shepherd and we all can surely arrive to the harbor of he eternal salvation.

Pray a lot for me. I bring you in my mind and in my heart while I bless you with brotherly love

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

I have thought to collect here altogether some dispositions I gave to you in various circumstances so that you could observe them better, keeping them continuously present.

1. I recommend that you do not to speak about politics and also do not be warmed to it. Our politics is the politics of the Gospel and of souls

2. Do not let anybody listen to the radio without the permission of the superior who will permit you to use it in a very moderate and legitimate way.

3. I remember you that smoking is not allowed and also playing cards, sitting in front of the camera in groups with people of the other sex even it is in occasion of First Communion, Confirmation…

4. I recommend you to use the bicycle with discernment and always with the permission of the superior and, for the priests, only for reasons of ministry.

5. Do not read novels, magazines and newspapers in the house and outside without the prescribed permission.

6. Do not accept to be invited for dinner especially in occasion of weddings. Neither enter private houses that are not close relatives' and, in this case, with the prescribed permission.

7. Do not use a fashionable hairstyle and particularly: a) they have to be cut in the front and in the back at the same level; b) do not have your hair cut too low

in the nape and in the temples; c) do not part your hair in the middle; d) do not use perfumes. The devil would use all these things to lead us out of the House and make us lose the great grace of the religious vocation.

In some particular cases, in special circumstances, the Superior will give us some exemptions about them.

Pray a lot for me.

I bless you in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 37[92] 2-7-1944, Feast of Visitation:

Preface

The evening of 8th September 1943, on the feast of the Virgin Birth of Our Lady, after four years of war in Europe and three years in Italy, the news is announced of the closing of the war. But with Germany arose a complication, while they went on fighting against the so called Allied Forces (America, United Kingdom, URSS, France, and now Italy, etc.) The night was calm; at 9.30 a.m. in Verona began the exploitations, Germans captured the Military camps and disarmed the soldiers, and thus in many cities.

[92] See the "Solemn Promise, on 9 September 1943", on p. 110, that is the first nucleus of this letter.

In consideration to the further deterioration of the painful events, especially for the fear of destructions in the city of Verona, and in Italy, the Venerable Father welcoming the worry of the people, promised to Mary, with this testimonies of the house, that If for the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows (15th September) a positive step was taken for Verona and Italy, they would do a special memorial for the great benefit.

No improvement happened for the said date; but for God's grace, everything was proceeding to become normal by a military occupancy very endurable, and there were no grave disorders in Verona.

And we have experienced a special protection of the Providence; the house and the persons were all safe from all types of bombing and occupation, and never ceased the help for the growing needs in an extraordinary way. Hence the Father renewed the promise made to Mary.

During the feast of precious Blood, towards which he held special devotion, and he is convinced it is Providential for the peace of the world, the Father set apart that day, first July, as a day of Eucharistic adoration for the world and national peace.

On that occasion he renewd the previous promise, with some modification, made in October; particularly he promised to celebrate the feast of the Precious Blood in all our communities with great solemnity, to render maximum cult to the Blood of the divine Redeemer as an external gratitude, according to the biblical reading: "This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you" (Ex 12: 2). Thus the will of Father was renewed:

"I under signed as Father and Casante of the Opera and in front of Lord, counting me as representative of the citizens: if the divine Providence will preserve us as so far, from damage of air bombarding, eventual occupation for fight, and so too if our religious will be preserved from al l evils, and if our nation and loved city of Verona will be saved from painful events, I promised and now solemnly renew the following:

1. We shall arrange and conveniently decorate the grotto of the Immaculate Virgin and its vicinities, included a decorous access to the Cross of Redemption.

2. We shall restore as soon our mother house so that it becomes like a monument to the Providence, and will be for the citizens a sign of God and the graces reached in this moment.

3. Every first Saturday of the month shall be dedicated to Immaculate Heart of Mary, and in every house of our Congregation we shall make special devotions in her honour.

4. Every year, to celebrate this day of peace, in memory and thanksgiving for the divine benefits, and seek divine mercy, on the first of July the feast of *Most Precious Blood,* will be a feast day for our Congregation to celebrate in great solemnity. Together with, the Congregation, according to the circumstances, we shall promote this devotion.

5. A wall inscription will be erected to remember the graces received".

***LETTER 38 25 July 1944**

My dear and beloved brothers,

Let the grace and the peace of blessed Jesus be always with us.

Here, as usual, at the feet of the Cross, I feel pushed to tell you my poor words as they come out spontaneously in my heart. This time my words want to be a kind of summary of those I wrote to you during the long years of this war, if this can be called a war. In my opinion; as I have always told you just from the beginning, this is not a war but a continuous persistent call from God to all human beings who so much diverted from the divine law. But it was particularly a call for us religious people and all Christians, because we have more than anything else the obligation to be the light and the salt of the earth.

As you certainly remember I wrote to you about the fact that we need to come back to the holy practical gospel, to the real Christian life. Every religious Family has to be an upheaval of a new life, a lighthouse of divine light but before giving it is necessary to possess something and to practise before teaching. I want to hope that the great mercy of God gives us soon the peace we desire so much, for the intercession of the divine Immaculate Mother.

We hope that the little cloud that was already seen by Elias the Prophet and that brought with it salutary rain and is also a pleasant image of our dear Madonna soon appears on the horizon of this poor unsettled world. But in order to accelerate that lucky moment we have to cooperate with our ardent and perseverant prayer. And more than this we have to practise a serious comeback to God by the generous fulfillment of all our duties.

They think, my dear brothers, to rebuild the churches and the houses that were pulled down. They think to renew civilian life and that is good. But, my dear brothers, it is absolutely necessary that we also repair the disorders of our lives and that we start rebuilding the sanctuary of our heart, the building of our sanctification. Woe to us if we, for the only mercy of God, when this enormous scourge has finished, we came back living as before1 It seemed to me to see the Madonna and all the celestial Court crying. And after this I do not know where we could finish because I am sure that another punishment worse than this got ready.

So, dear and beloved friends, let's start doing all these things first for us and for our sanctification and later for the sanctification of the neighbor.

Let our House really be as Jesus, who founded it, wants it should be. I recommend you to keep and to feed the pure and genuine spirit impressed by the Lord just from the beginning. This is a spirit of humility and dissimulation, far from the human protections, always searching the Kingdom of God , entirely committed to the divine Providence.

Only at that point we shall be able to think to the others too and strive with our words and our examples so that the observance of the divine law is put into practice.

I told you that I always distinguish the pains connected with the human natural frailty and the pains connected with the social system. The Lord has given us the means to free ourselves from the pains that go with our poor life, that is to say the holy Sacraments, his words, the teaching and the guide of the Church. If we take advantage

of these means of good health to become better people we shall be true disciples of Jesus Christ and so we shall irradiate that particular Christian light around us. This light will certainly attire many people to follow our example.

But we hardly have to contrast the pains connected with the system. We have to do what it is possible to take them out of the world in order to avoid the possibility they come back. Today unfortunately they insult the Lord openly, without any reserve, in the customs, in the private and public way of leaving, in the way of thinking and of reasoning against the most elementary laws of the Lord and of the reason.

Sin today is no more sin. It is justified; so there are no repentance, no commitment in order to change our lives. My dear friends this must cease. But I ask to myself: if for the grace of Lord this war ceased, in which manner should I act soon after? Like before? With the same coldness, with that same negligence of my sanctification, with the same indifference about the interests of the Kingdom of God ? With little or no faith in my deeds and in my intentions?

What a great misfortune this could be! Let us try to examine ourselves well and do serious intentions to change life, to live really and seriously like true Christians and true religious.

And then let us do practical and concrete things also because we have to drum the same things into our fellow creatures particularly we who are religious in the practice of our sacred ministry. The House, all our religious family, should be prepared to the hints coming from God every time he likes to use us for the goodness of

the society. In fact as I told you many times I really think that in the plans of the Providence our Congregation has a special link with the present moment of the human kind. In this sense we have to be docile instruments in the hands of God.

Let us practise ourselves and in the most perfect way we can all that we recommend to the others.

To live being in the grace of God! How many Christians keep with them the thought of this charge and of this personal interest? How many of them unfortunately spend weeks, months and, I hope not this, years in deadly sin always in disfavor of the Lord, always in the danger of falling down into the eternal disgrace of the evil! We do not think of the fortune of a soul in the grace of God, we do not think about the words pronounced by Jesus Christ:

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"(Mark 8,36)

Let us try to appreciate first of all this fortune and try to avoid all sins, also the small sins because they chill charity in us and prepare us to fall into the greater sins. And then also because even if our faults can seem light they are all the same a serious scandal for the seculars and throw discredit on our good deeds.

If we want to obtain from the others that revival of a life constantly spent in the grace of God let us try the perfection;

Sanctify the feast, that is a day of the Lord. Now it is usual and widespread to profane the day of the Lord. During that day we work like in the other days, unconstrainedly and unscrupulously for no particular

reasons or perhaps despising the sacred law of God. The greater part of Christians does not even go to the Sunday mass and very few participate to the catechism. How can you think it is possible that the Lord blesses and helps us all while we lack this sacrosanct duty?

And which estimation do we give to the mass, to the word of God, to the sacred functions? It is necessary to insist on this point with the Christian people, but let us first try to proceed with our example.

Public honesty must be put into honor! A provocative fashion for men and women flashes in our quarters and provokes the tremendous punishments of the Lord. They have designs on young people everywhere and the youth receives continuous incitements towards the evil and the vice instead of the virtue. Which levelheaded man passing by our streets should say that we are living in Christian countries? The reason itself condemns this way of living and of dressing that is an insult to the instinctive decency and a school of immorality.

Let's us fight with all our strenght[88] this spirit of evil and let us try to shine because of a truly Christian and religious modesty so that it can be a silent lesson for those who lack it and also an invitation towards seriousness of behavior. Let us be careful about the small infractions of modesty done by us or by our relatives. How many parents, who believe to be Christians and practise the church and the sacraments have, at the same time, a deplorable broad view of things about this point and they dress badly their children taking as an excuse their naivete! They do not understand that they make them lose their modesty and they lead them towards their ruin. Let us persuade these

brothers of ours; let us be faithful to the teachings of the experience and to the prescriptions of the Church.

And let us try to avoid all the things who withdraw the priestly and religious modesty, all these fashionable clothes that show a secular character. A character that, after having renounced to the world and to its vanities, becomes a slave, even in small things of that fashion that brings so much ruin among people in the world.

Sanctity of the family! It is in the family the place where the devil has brought the most serious ruins desecrating the marriage, desiccating the springs of the life, reducing the "great sacrament" a great economic affair or, what is worse, a pure satisfaction of passions. How far we are from the holy disposition of the young Tobiah who, on the eve of his marriage, prayed the Lord in this manner:" You know, my Lord, that I marry this young girl not for passion, but only for the desire of a progeny where your name could be blessed for ever and ever" (Tb 8,7)

On the contrary how our young people prepare themselves to the Marriage? What tremendous levity! How do the parents behave in the holy and admirable conjugal duties?

How many sins, how many crimes made by many, too many people.

The immoral behavior is spreading out more and more widely and in the shadow of the houses the most perverse attacks to the life. And these attacks provoke the rigors of the divine law even if they escape the human law.

It is necessary to work on the sanctification of the family. It is necessary to insist on the spiritual and material

value of human life, on the nobility of the Marriage. Only so we shall do an effective work for the reconstruction.

Faith! It is inert in so many Christians! On the contrary we should say that it is even dead.

How many people act following the rules of the faith? We look at the things with a human eye without ever rise at the vision of God and of his ineffable fatherly Providence. What is the difference between the life of Christians and the life of pagans? What is the difference between their way of reasoning and the way of reasoning of pagans? There is no difference!

They believe in God but then they live completely forgetting Him.

They believe in Jesus Christ but they are not interested in his Gospel and in his teachings.

They look at the Church as if it was whatever society and not the divine society that Jesus Christ has founded for the safety of souls.

They see the Pope only as a great commendable person of charity, wiser than a lot of other people, but nothing else! They do not see in Him the sacred and supernatural character if Vicar of Christ, of Master of believers, the One to whom Christ has given the divine and supreme powers in the Church.

How many Christians can perceive in the Bishops only the human element and forget what the faith shows of them, that is to say the successors of the Apostles put by God to reign and govern the various Churches. And we

even criticize and condemn all that the Pope and the bishops say and teach in the name of Christ!

We even arrive to teach them all that they should say and do turning over the positions established by Christ.

This is a poor, languished, dying or even dead faith! But in our life faith should shine and also in our business and in our work. Faith should be the rule of every operation of ours but, on the contrary, what should we establish? We establish that we do not live according to the faith, that we are subjected to the secular, material things and to our interests.

The capital of the faith stays still or, eventually, is used only in rare occasions, when we go to the church or we assist to a function or murmur some prayers. It is too little!

And we, priests and religious people, don't we have anything to reproach ourselves about this? It is easy that we too follow the way the world goes by, the habits and do not live according to the spirit of faith.

How could we work in order to reawaken this divine light in the Christians?

Let's put our hand on our heart, let's examine ourselves and let's remedy what is lacking.

The curse! The curse is a horrible heritage of our time, a language that dishonors also our simply human side but, more than everything it is a language that provokes the most tremendous punishments by an insulted God. Our hearth should cry on hearing how this horrible vice spreads with a great scandal of the young people who learn, by the

old people, to insult God instead of learning to love and praise him. What tremendous responsibility!

Brothers, let's pray for them so that they can repent and let's us pray for their parents so that they never arrive to ruin their children in this manner.

Let's pray, but also let's work in order to eradicate the vice. We ourselves should use a very poor and modest language. Do not let us use some coarse words, some trivial manners that even if they are not sins, perhaps neither venial nevertheless they open that way to worse things.

"Some stupidities and banalities – St Bernardo says – that remain silly things on the mouth of the seculars become curses on the priestly and religious lips".

The prayer! Cause and effect of the separation from God and his law is the lacking of prayer. The Christian should be the man of the prayer. Today, on the contrary, what should we say? That Christians do not pray. How many people in the morning kneel to pray God with the beautiful prayers taught to us by Jesus Christ, by the Church?

In the evening how many of us kneel to thank God for the graces received?

How many of those few who go to the Mass on Sunday pray during the divine Sacrifice?

We do not pray: it is painful to ascertain this! We do not pray privately and we pray less in public: the society, the nation, the country, the human family has forgotten the prayer.

We expect everything by men and also in the difficult moments we are living now, we rarely can hear an official invitation to recur to God. What a surprise if God postpones his help? Oh if it was possible to pray! If peoples should appeal to the prayer, how many misfortunes would be avoided, how much mercy and useful help we could obtain!

Let's us first, my dear brothers estimate the prayer and use it with intense piety and love towards God. How many times the elected people were spared by the Lord!

Let us show that we have complete trust in the prayer abandoning ourselves to the will of the One who is our Father. Let's pray for us, for everybody, for our loved country, for the world.

The charity! How much this virtue that is a compendium and a characteristic of the religion has got cold during the war! I do not want to spend other words to point out the ruins brought from the discords, from the hate among brothers, from the envies both in our private life and in the civil modern life. How much blood has rushed because of the lack of charity!

The war has brought hate into our lives and hate has become a need and a means to support the struggle. Horrible attacks have been consumed in cold blood against the most elementary teachings of faith and of reason forgetting the peremptory: "Do not kill" (Es 20, 13)

The reconstruction of this poor world can only happen in the spirit of the charity of Christ.

And we must be the heralds of charity. But how could we be so among our brothers if we first are not

clothed with this divine livery, flamed by this sacred fire of love? Oh which responsibility we cast on us with those hostilities and those silly jealousies that many times spoil our relations with our neighbors, our religious and priestly families! … Let's be careful, let's be really careful because we shall find many things to change about this point! The small disagreements among priests and religious people paralyze our assiduous actions and make our efforts sterile.

Where there is the charity here God is, consequently where there is no charity there is not God and what can we do without God?

Good example! It is a special manner of charity. It is more valid than words. What it is important to preach if our life is the contrary to what we are teaching? Bur, more than everything, with tears in my eyes, I recommend and I implore you so that you never, really never give a bad example! My God, which responsibility! Do you remember the great condemnation of the divine Redemptory: "It is impossible that scandals do not happen, but woe to one for whom the scandal happens! " It is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the sea "(Mark 9, 42)

We know that many sons and daughters were born imperfect for their relatives' sins.

This was the recent, disconsolate and motherly recall made by the Madonna herself. I think that we can tell the same about us in the spiritual field. How many souls vacillating in the faith, feeble in resisting and in fighting against the passions are scandalized and live an immoral life. And this happens because of bad examples given by those who should have been their spiritual fathers

and mothers! Let's put our hands on our hearts. Let's look after our spiritual health with fear and tremor. Let's give to everybody a good example that could push them towards the observance of the divine law and to the practice of the Gospel.

So charity! I recommend it to you really very much. Keep charity at the cost of every sacrifice if you want that the Lord uses you for his high designs of mercy.

The Apostles, the first Christians has begun the conquer of the world armed with this holy charity of Christ. At our times the reconquest of the world to the holy gospel cannot be done in a different way. So, act immediately;

Charity! Here is the word that I put at the end of this fatherly exhortation of mine.

And this word is also a summary of all the things I have recommended to you.

I finish by asking you, my dear and loved brothers, the charity of praying so much for me so that I can myself first practise all that, in the name of the Lord I told you in this letter.

Let all of you be united in the charity of Our Lord. Let's all work for the glory of God, for the goodness of souls according to the genuine spirit of our Congregation, to recollect us all united in our true land, in the holy Paradise. Our actual life goes past very quickly, woe to us if we do not save our soul! Let's sanctify ourselves according to the spirit of our holy vocation: In this manner we shall keep sure our soul and we shall be worthy to cooperate to the salvation of our brothers.

With great effusion of fatherly love I bless you all, each of you and I wish you and I pray so that you all receive the grace to be up to our holy vocation. In this manner we can be meritorious instruments in the hands of the Providence for the Christian rebirthing of the world so ruined just because we despised and we did not observe the holy law of God.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 39 29 September 1944.

My dear brothers in Jesus Christ,

May these poor but sure words ~~–~~ that is from the paternal heart I wish to be last testament, my last thoughts I have for you, first of all for your personal holiness and then for this Opera, that is of the Poor Servants, may always live as Jesus its founder wants, carrying across the world light and practice of holy gospel, and doing so, fulfill~~ing ark~~ the divine plans it is destined to and made for. Plans, as I told you other occasions, right of these days, but we would not fulfill them, if we do not live always with the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, that should be of the holy gospel, of the Apostles, and the early Christians.

My dear brothers, the evils of this present hour are without name. The devil is acting through his helpers, all the last reserve of hell, to make if would be possible that man may not be made for God, for future life, refusing Christ, his divine doctrine.

Dear brothers, the evil is great, but we shall remember well it is useless to deplore it, make culpable and accuse this or that source of many ruins, without first of all accepting our fault and see how we live, if the pure and genuine spirit of Opera is in our pulses, that is if our life is exactly that of true religious, true Poor servants, and if for greatest misfortune it would not be like this, let's get down to work at once, and start immediately our personal reform.

It was too much discussed and talked about, but less practised. Books, science, questions, preaching and meetings are beautiful and good things, but if they are not accompanied by good example and by a holy life of true religious, they counts nothing, exactly nothing. In conclusion, let's get down to work, and sanctify first ourselves, modelling our life as per our Lord Jesus Christ, the Apostles and early Christians. It is useless (to search for other solutions); we have changed the route, we must return soon, because between the theory and practice of many there is an abyss.

I have always told, I do not know when and how, but the Providence wants to use The Opera of the Poor Servants – of which I am nothing but a guardian, and which is placed here by Providence to manifest the bounty and mercy of the Lord for the present hour – to fulfill new and great designs. My God, what a grace, and along with it what a judgment at the evening of our life, if for our

greatest misfortune the divine judge will not find us as we should be!

Brothers, we shall live, with the grace of God, the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera of Poor Servants, means to be living gospels, detached from earthly things, convinced of our nothingness, and all that we have is God's gift.

We must live abandoned into the hands of divine Providence with this thought: souls, only souls, all souls; because they may go with us to god.

Our Opera is great when it is small, is rich when is poor, has for certain God's special protection, when we do not seek human protections, and receive only those the divine Providence sends us and these (or them) with great gratitude.

I'm not worried of having many religious, many priests; few, but with the spirit of the Opera; the few become the many.

“Give me”, says St. Philip Neri, “ten holy priests and I shall convert you the whole world”. One religious alone, a priest according to the spirit counts for hundred; and so I'm afraid the quantity may carry along the usual inconveniences to verify when there is the number but lacks sanctity.

Humanity, poor humans, with all its science, its progress, its men from great earthly visions, how poorly reduced! We all see and verify that in full era of civilization had made complete failure; and why? Because it is away from God and his Christ, trusted in itself abandoning the divine law, and mostly, even without

doubt, did not find in many of us priests and religious, that necessary light to be illumined, did not find those wise and holy guides who should lead it on right path, with a holy life and example.

Dear brothers, we shall remember well, we need facts, not words; first of all we should be convinced of what we should teach and want to be practised. But to be so, to have this spirit it is fully necessary ask the Lord for it; and how? First, with prayer, with an interior life, fully observing our holy rules, form the greatest till the least.

Remember the Lord, especially in this his Opera, poured out torrents of grace and gifts, proper for this spirit; it is upon us to co-operate. And now, in this moment, in the secret of our heart, we shall ask: how did I understand this truth for us so fundamental? Do I believe as a Poor Servant in the true sense of the word; does my life correspond and agree to what I say, teach and demand others? Do I practise first of all what I feel and want in others? Am I really convinced that I am on myself zero and misery, but united to the Lord and breathing his spirit I will do true miracle?

Brothers, the Lord wants, demands humble instruments, obedient flexible, to fulfill the sanctification of our souls, first of all and then the great new designs of this hour; plans for total renewal of a truly Christian life. And ~~for~~ this cannot be if we are not truly light and salt. See the world, the evil ones themselves, all look at us, ask and demand us, and for this we must be in the forefront.

The words of an atheist to one of our brothers impressed me much; in his heart he held esteem for us and

the Opera. He said, "But you are really saints!" My God, What a lesson, alas if we do not correspond!

Dear brothers we are in this holy arc that is the Congregation of Poor Servants; not by chance the Lord had placed us on the mount. All good and evil raise their look at us, especially in certain difficult days. For heaven's sake, the Lord, on our mistake does not darken this light, may He not extinguish it, does not change this heavenly divine colour.

Dear brothers once again with a hand on our heart we shall ask: How do I live? Do I have the pure spirit of the Opera? Do I sacrifice all things so that this tree expands its branches "everywhere till the end of the world"? And it will truly expand them, and the Opera will be a light that illuminates the world, like a fountain to which all will come to drink, if we remain firm to our place, in seeking only and always the holy kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Brothers, I come back to repeat you: the Opera of Poor Servants was raised in this time so obscure because the mercy of Lord once again calls us to his love: and as he calls us so too he calls many of our brothers who, for many reasons, not fully culpable to them but more to their fathers, live outside the true Church. And they too are sheep of this fold of Christ, and he the shepherd of souls, calls them in the divine anxiety that his prayer become a reality: *"Ut unum sint"* (see lett. 31, Retreat 1942).

But this, o dear, we shall remember it well, in great portion depends on us; the Lord wants to use us, and he will use us if we are truly as he wants, co-operating with

him so that in the world his true kingdom be established, in justice, in charity, in peace and in sanctity.

My God, what a grace and privilege, but what a responsibility if we, who should be light, salt, life and leaders of souls, ~~if~~ would do the opposite! For God's love we shall do now a practical examination and renew our proposal to live and die with the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera! We shall not look at anything else, at others but us, at the Opera of God to be life and light for us and for the poor humanity.

May the Lord through the intercession of loving Mother, be our source of grace to pursue in these holy dispositions and correspond to our great vocation.

Brothers pray, pray much for me; be Apostles, be contagious in holiness. May your life lived with a style of true poor Servants, speed up the fulfilment of divine designs, and blessed are you in time, and more blessed in eternity!

I bless you paternally.

Fr. J. Calabria

2685 Verona, 22-12-1944

My dear brothers,[93]

This is the word that comes and flows from my heart in this moment: for the sake of God, correspond, let's correspond all to our special and most special vocation. May this Holy Christmas 1944 sign for all an integral renewal of the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, that is an absolute condition in order to accomplish the divine designs of renewal of the world through priests and Christians like those of the early apostolic times.

Dear brothers theology students, let my heartily prayer reach you in this moment. For the sake of God, you who are so near the priesthood, try to be totally surrendered with Jesus our Redeemer, light and salt for the world! I recommend you the inner life: *Sacerdos alter Christus*, the priest is another Christ; remember, let's all remember the we are Poor Servants. What a honour and what a card to enter the Paradise!

Merry Christmas! Pray, pray for me who bless you all. In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***3343 Hospital of Sacred Heart, 15-12-1945**

[93] The letter is addressed to the theology students who because of the war were arranged at Castelcerino of Soave (30 Kms far from Verona).

Dear and beloved brothers,[94]

The grace and peace of the blessed Jesus be with us always. Our and your dear Fr. Carlo,[95] who takes care of you with spiritual, moral and material attentions, brought a lot of consolation and comfort among my tests, telling me as you are animated by a great good will in your answer to religious call of Poor Servants: first for your personal sanctification and secondly in order to collaborate with the Lord to form good and skilled sons that the Providence entrusts to you. God bless you and give you the grace to go on: blessed are you! The joy and peace, in one word God, overwhelms your hearts and [I hope] you will gain a lot of merits for the eternal life.

I recommend you the observance of the rules, the inner life; be always united with Jesus and you shall perform miracles of good. Listen, as to the voice of the Lord, to our dear Fr. Carlo, because he represents the Lord.

I thank you very much for the prayers you are doing for me; continue to do this. I would answer the dear brothers, who wrote to me letters of great consolation, but now I feel tired and Fr. Carlo is leaving. May God bless you all. In C.J.

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[94] On the envelope it is written: To my dear brothers of the Colony of Jesus at Camposilvano (a house on the mountain, 35 Kms far from Verona).

[95] Fr. Carlo Sempreboni, superior of the community of San Zeno in Monte.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 40 Palm Sunday, 25 March 1945

My dear brothers,

Grace and peace of our Lord be always with us.

This very serious and critical time of human history, I feel in my Christian and priestly heart such a ~~very~~ strong impulse to address you my word~~s~~ that I cannot resist. And this word I tell you, I tell also all my dear brothers in Christ Jesus. I wish to God this my word, which not on my merit is a word of God but only for the divine mercy, would be understood and listened to by the whole world!

The hour is increasingly [becoming] serious and critical on poor humanity; and the people who provoked this cannot stop it any more, if there is no a special mediation of God, our Father in heaven. This mediation or miracle will happen surely, I tell you with full trust, if we Christians, and let me say, if we priests and religious, all united with one heart and soul, will do an exact revision of our life to see if it is in harmony with our profession, to our mark as priests and Christians. If we don't see in harmony with the holy rule of God and the holy gospel, soon, in dust and tears, we shall humble ourselves, we shall do penance and form serious resolutions to live from now ~~on~~ according

to our dignity of humans and Christians in accordance with God's law, not only in words but also in facts.

Brothers, God calls us, continuously he calls us. When I see and hear these devices of war, sowing massacres and death, I feel like hearing the voice of God creator shouting us: “Enough, enough, enough the sins! Live truly a Christian life in the full sense of the word!”

My dear brothers, between theory and practice of Christianity there is an abyss.

After twenty centuries of Christianity and gospel, and so numerous graces from the Lord, how many Christians live? As pagans, or worse than pagans; with their unbridled life and behavior against gospel maxims they draw continuously new punishments on the world: punishments that are yet of mercy, for the Lord allowing them wants that it be for our salvation. He punishes us here to save us there.

Brothers, I tell you and repeat again: this is God's hour, in which he wants to do a very special merciful plan, in spite of the wickedness of men...

The war, if we can call it war, this worldly confusion and disorder, remixing of people and things, prepares, in God's eyes, ~~to~~ a new order on solid foundations which are not willed by men. But the Lord, who could do all by himself, is pleased to use secondary causes, we his creatures; it is up to us to collaborate to fulfill the designs of his divine Providence for the goals of humans rebirth.

How will we be instruments of his Providence? With living well, as true and sincere Christians. For the

remedy be ready, begin seriously, each in respective state, live as such.

Christian parents, be at the height of your mission: think that you are co-workers of God in the great work of creation. Through you God draws from nothing new creatures destined to be his children.

May your families be always the field of God, a garden where gracious flowers and healthy fruits grow. Flowers and fruits of marriage are the children. How much care the farmer, the gardener gives for his plants! How much care you must give and yet more, for the little plants Lord entrusts to you! Souls destined to holiness, paradise, sons destined also in their time, to be parents and heads of the family.

They may see in you from the early years the eloquent example of true and sincere Christian life. Remember God's words in the Scripture, "The youth will continue, even in older days the way he learned as small ones". Give your children the treasure of Christian instruction, first of all by your examples, more than your words.

Provide them religious teaching; don't say 'go for catechism', but you yourself lead them for catechism. Show then that you too appreciate religious instructions. And at home in family sanctuary, they may see the open constant practice of what they learn, practice of God's holy rules. They may see God and religion put in a place of honour; enthrone at home the Crucifix and Our Lady's pictures. How many Christian houses appear as pagan, while there is no trace of religious sign in them or left in a secret corner, as if a tolerated things, which they don't want

to manifest, while unfortunately I have seen in Christian houses indecent pictures and Satanic printed matters.

Christian mothers, watch over your daughters, from the first years, for the devil enemy of God and soul, may not contaminate them with his poisonous ways.

Your daughters should be, one day mothers; what mothers they will become if you do not give them the true examples of Christian mothers? Which families can we hope, if today they spoil the good ornament that the purity of morals should bring to them? Be watchful of their companies, keep them away from dangerous places, sinful occasions and entertainments, watch over the books and magazines they read and on the conversations they hold. It is tiresome this work of watchfulness: I understand it; but we deal with interest of very great importance as it is clear. And you will have consolation in life, and great reward in paradise.

Parents, have special care on the engagements of your sons. It should be time of holy preparation for the great sacrament; and instead for how many it is time of sin!

Remember, marriage is a divine sacrament. Do you see it? I'm a priest for the virtue of holy Order; the couples are so by virtue of another sacrament. What a preparation we need to ordain a priest! We deal with forming a minister of God, collaborator of Christ in saving souls. And for Christian couples, is not a very important mission? Give ~~to~~ God, church, nation new members, Christians and citizens.~~?~~ What a seriousness then we should ~~however~~ have to assume this noble mission!

And how we should deeply disapprove and refuse the very light heartedness by which many ~~many~~ sons profane the time of engagement, and do not prepare well to their vocation! What surprises then, if very soon they shed bitter tears, for the unhappiness they have at home? Unhappy and fathers of unhappy ones: but their own mistakes; and may God not, the mistake of parents who did not give them the true sense of life.

The sons, your sons are your crown, your joy, a tangible sign of your love. And they are also your wealth, for God the Father cannot do without blessing those houses where sons are considered so, while he will punish severely where sons are counted as unhappy burdens, which they try to avoid even at the cost of serious crimes.

How many young did not harvest this war: on blood stained fighting field, at houses, schools, bombed out... Perhaps they are right those who tell that parents are responsible; have willed to limit Providence, betrayed their mission: and Lord permits that from their side their sons are snatched away with pain and tormented heart.

My brothers *are we Christians*, are we so seriously, in practice? Do we fulfill our duties faithfully? For example how do we recite the morning and evening prayer? Prayer is a powerful arm, undetectable arm by which supernatural battle is won over. How do we esteem prayer? How many families are praying and do not become shy to pray? How many are the houses perfumed with spirit of prayer? I'm afraid on this regard we should lament a lot; we shall hence take remedy, soon.

If we recite rosary in families, how many blessings we would attract over them from the Blessed Mother!

We are Christians, baptism made us so; but do we live our baptism, are we faithful to those solemn pronouncements we have made? We have renounced to demons, to the world, to the passions: it seems to me to hear demons telling the Lord, “They ought to be yours, for the baptism, confirmation, and many graces you have made to them; but in reality are mine; have renounced me, but at the same time follow me faithfully, continuously; have renounced the world, but live attached to the world and follow its maxims; have renounced passions, but in reality they give way to all..." Brothers, what a pain for the heart of Jesus, in front of such statement! Yet it is the sad reality.

Christians, a serious examination of ourselves, ~~if~~ on our behavior; we have life, as says catechisms, to know, love and serve God; not for sin, devil but for the Lord and his rule.

We shall value this life, this excellent gift of God. War among many disgraces has brought this too: the devaluation of human life. ~~While~~ With what indifference we assist today the death, of thousands and thousands of brothers! With what silliness we deal with human life, as if it is a thing so common to throw away by any minimum excuse.

Living according to God's rule even this evil will be remitted; we will understand the dignity of our body, this dwelling place of immortal soul, meant to be means of soul to do good, and companion of happiness in paradise. Only Christians have the true understanding of the values of human life, God's gift, work of his all powerful creation and saving kindness. We shall not belittle or devalue life

and the same body; reason and faith enlightened us on our responsibility.

Brothers, we are Christians! We shall live in the light of the gospel. But is it true that our streets, cities, are Christian? Do our life and dealing, express fully the religion we profess? We are passing a tragic hour; I will never be tired of repeating it: It is also God's time. People with their disorders have released the flagellation on the whole human family; and scared by the consequences they are frightened, terrified, but nothing they can do to drop the hour they willed.

The evil can do nothing but evil; only God is powerful to draw good out of evil and he wants to do this; he wants to speed up this hour and express his kindness. It is an hour of blood and death, and he wants to do it as an hour of salvation and life: enough to find apt instrument for his Providence. And the instruments are we Christians, if we begin to live well.

After this crash, after a cessation of this war, men, scholars on problems will seek a way out, for salvation and life; we know that only Jesus is way, truth, and life.

The scholars will look at us, the separated brothers, the idol worshippers and the whole world seeking life and light will look for us. What a terrible responsibility would be ours if they, seeing our examples, our way of living against gospel and God's law, would return to their idols, to their own ideas and say, "but this is a comedy; they say are Christians, following Christ and his doctrine, but in practice they live like us, and often worse; better our Buddha, our Mohammed..."

Yet another time, for the sins of Christians God's great call would go frustrated, once again would be struck in vain the hour of God and world's salvation. What a judgment for us! Brothers we shall return in ourselves, and we shall do soon what the conscience tells us.

We are Christians, followers of Christ, we shall follow him sincerely.

We shall be humble! Humility is the foundation of sanctity, and salvation of sinner. Pride instead is the root of every evil, even for this world. The proud is a direct collaborator of Satan, spirit of haughtiness and pride. The proud is worse than the idol worshippers: he worships someone else but the latter worships himself.

Let's lift up our hearts, waiting for the true goods of heaven. Up there is our eternal fatherland, while in this world we are passing, living only for a short time: woe to us if we don't live well!

We are Christians; we shall live in sincere charity, we shall love one another; we are sons of the same Father who is in heaven, we are all brothers in Christ who redeemed us, we are all one sole family, the family of God. Why then so much of hatred? Hatred is Satan's work. He who hates becomes Satan's instrument, who wants the destruction of good; hatred is death, love is life; hatred is torment, love is joy.

How bad to hear that Christians leftists ideas of hatred and revenge. They reflect and think over this occasion to manifest this low instinct the day after the great calamity; no, no, for heaven's sake! We shall nourish generous proposals of forgiveness and peace; all of us have

sinned; all of us need to repeat that sublime prayer taught by Jesus Christ: "Our Father in heaven… forgive our sins as we forgive those who offend us". What is our peace if we want to profane with fratricidal struggle, with personal revenge and reprisals? What Christianity would be ours?

We are in the world to save our soul; this is the great and only matter of our life; there is no greater sacrifice, when we have to places our soul safe. We shall keep in mind well the words of Jesus Christ, "What gain for the man to earn the entire world and then lose his soul?" With this word I conclude my letter, this paternal exhortation that is born in my heart, at the foot of my crucifix, while considering the evil that afflicts us since a long time.

May Lord bless my poor words, his words, and make us suitable to listen to them and practise them for his glory and good of humanity.

With paternal bestowing of love, in these days of Christian Paschal season, I bless you, requesting you the charity of praying for me.

Yours in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***LETTER 41 28-4-1945**

My dear brothers,

The grace and peace of the Lord be always with us, especially in this hour of reconciliation and forgiveness from the part of our Lord, for the sure intercession of the beloved Mother, our dear Madonna, who once again showed herself as Mother of mercy and bounty.

It is now up to us, my loving and dear brothers to make treasure of such a gift, and all "with one heart and soul" (Acts 4:32) shall put ourselves into one sole source of love towards God and neighbor, so that the Opera of Poor Servants becomes what the Lord wants us: a source ~~that~~ nourished from the hidden vein of interior life of each one of us. Then the souls and other works of God's Church shall draw continually the charity and genuine spirit of holy gospel, which are the only means to return all to God, in this valley of tears and exile. Charity and genuine spirit are also, with faith and love of God, beautiful vigil of heavenly fatherland, the Paradise.

This must be the resolution and programme of our whole life for the future. But another duty is necessary that we hurry to fulfil: to thank God for the great gift he has made for us; to this I invite you for a day of Eucharistic adoration, made with maximum possible solemnity that shall conclude with a talk and solemn *Te Deum*.

Don't forget to pray for this poor Father who really loves you in the Lord, who prays and suffers for you, so that you be really as you should be, that is Poor Servants, and one day be fulfilled the daily prayer and vow as you know I do after Holy mass "that I may praise you in heaven with my brothers for ever and ever" Amen, and may God bless you.

Yours in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

7084 8-5-1945

Only for the grace and mercy of God, and through the intercession of dear Madonna, the hostilities have ceased. Germany surrendered without conditions, but the call of God, mainly for us priests, religious and Christians, continues.

For the sake of God, listen to it, and let's return to live like the Apostles and the first Christians.

Poor we are if we start our work with empty hands!

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

7080 11-5-1945

Let's remember well, beloved brothers: the Opera of the Poor Servants is a creature of God; each one of us has to disappear in order to show only the Opera, that will be nurtured "*usque ad finem terrae*", till the end of the

earth, if it shall keep the pure and genuine spirit that God gave it. Pray for me, poor as I am. In C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***LETTER 43** , on the octave of the Feast of the Sacred Heart, 15-6-1945.*[96]

Dear brothers,

Grace and peace of blessed Jesus be always with us.

Here at the foot of my crucifix I write this letter to make you hear once again my poor words which are coming spontaneously in my heart. We are already very close to the great feast of the Precious Blood and I wish you to set you apart of the "solemn promise" your father has done in the name of the whole Congregation the day after the armistice ~~during the war~~ and renewed on 2nd of July last year. For a better awareness ~~of it~~ I add a copy of it to each our religious family and from that you will know some things are directly regarding S. Zeno in Monte, but others are obligating the whole Congregation. As far as I can I recommend you to put in practice especially the pious exercise of the first Saturday in honour of the Immaculate

[96] The Letter 43 precedes the Letter 42 in order to respect the chronologic order. Indeed this letter was written on 15th June 1945, on the octave of S. Heart (see Archives PSDP, Verona). At the time of the first edition (1956) the date was unknown.

Heart of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, and what is about the devotion and feast of the Most Precious Blood.

We must recognize it and profess openly: we of s. Zeno in Monte and all the houses, till the last day have been protected in a very special and extraordinary way. The same disaster of printing press has been a grace, a gift of our supreme Master Jesus, for in such a way we were protected from a danger that would have ~~had~~ led to very serious consequences for the whole Opera, as you will know in my own voice as soon as possible.[97]

It is our duty therefore to maintain the promise made, and raise to God our monument of eternal gratitude, which, while will bear witness to those who will come after us of the divine benefits, will also help us to recognize the divine mercy for us and for all the souls, saved purified and sanctified by the Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, sprout, as from a purest spring, from the Immaculate Heart of his Blessed Mother. Make yourselves ~~Because~~ Apostles of this double devotion and you will experience the healthy effects of it, especially for us Poor Servants.

O how beautiful is this name "Poor Servants", and how much we must thank God for this immense grace he has given us, giving us the grace to be the first to belong to it! But for God's love, that this would not be just a name, a

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[97] In 1944 the German Command in Verona imposed to our Institute to press a pamphlet praising the Nazi-Fascism. While our Father was taking time, the Command gave him an *ultimatum* for 11 October, threatening grave reprisals in case of denial. On the night between 10 and 11 October a bunch of bombs fell on the printing-house and destroyed it. In the morning of 11 October the Fascists accompanied by Germans came and seeing the disaster renounced their request.

title like any, because then it would be our ruin, our judgment.

As far as I know and I can I recommend you to be true Poor Servants and we will be so, living the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, which at the end is that of the Apostles and first Christians; this spirit had converted the whole world in Jesus' time.

My God in what abyss of degradation was fallen the poor humanity, that had all vices clear signs of total ruin!

Twelve Apostles, full of the breath of the holy Spirit, have changed the face of the world and renewed the earth. To pagans and non believers it was enough to see the life, the example and the spirit of the early Christians to detest one's own evil and be converted. "See" they used to say "how much they love one another, how much they help, how much they bear with each other! And this love, this charity is not only for them but also for us; they came to our help and become our good". And by their examples they were converted

We must renew among us the scene of such examples. We live in a t time when all have their eyes towards us; they ask and want to see how we live, how we behave, if we practise what we teach and preach.

It is easy, loving brothers, to write, to speak, but it is difficult to practise; on the other hand, it is not the words but the examples that persuades and functions as an attraction to all, great and small, educated and ignorant.

During this scourge we have learned many things, many barriers are fallen, all are studying the means to give

a peaceful and normal life to the people. We also must move and practise our mission of peace and good, calling to mind the application of the holy gospel, modelling us all, especially we priests and religious, on the divine model Christ Jesus, eternal high Priest, the true and first servant of the heavenly Fathers.

We must persuade us at last that it is no more enough to our times, especially in this time, to confess Jesus in some solemn occasion, in some official ceremony. It is not enough to love and serve the Lord partially, with a life often equal, if not even inferior, to that of the laity.

It is necessary that his love, his will and his service become life of our life and soul of our soul, and we seek with passion the only glory of God and the good of the souls. We don't need words but facts and virtues.

It is absolutely necessary to be good for us and for others, seeking to expiate the wickedness and errors of many of our brothers fallen in the abyss of hatred and revenge, that unfortunately continues to defile and ruin the souls Christ has redeemed and sanctified with his charity, his love, until to give life for them.

I am reaching my end and near the evening of my poor life, and I would like this is my testament for you, dear brothers.

For God's love live the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, if someone does not feel so, I pray and request for the benefit of his soul and for the Opera itself, he may go.

Jesus wants in our religious vein may run the blood with which he redeemed and saved the poor mankind.

The Opera of the Poor Servants should be a model: my God, what a responsibility! The world will be conquered with the folly of the cross; mankind will find its place only near Jesus, in Christ, for Christ and with Christ.

Beloved brothers how many times I have told you that we should be recipients and channels, full of Jesus to give him to the souls! But one cannot give if he hasn't. Why the world is full of competition, hatred, vices, and revenge? Because there are many helpers of Satan, faithful doers of his will, hence they give what Satan gives *[this sentence is omitted – or forgotten – In the Italian book]*. We deplore often the evil in the others but we must examine our heart and ask: whose is also the mistake? We have to make a serious revision of ourselves and our life, and make it soon, until we are in time, before the Lord does it, with another trial, probably more serious than the one just passed.

The hour of God's call is not over. Only a pact stop war was made, mainly by divine bounty and mercy, surely through the intercession of our Lady; for God's love, we shall try to make use of it, starting a reform necessary for all, but especially for us priests and religious! We shall promise to live as rags and clay, humble, convinced of our misery, but abandoned in God and in the loving hands of divine Providence with great and generous heart, seeking only souls, souls, in the form and way Jesus willed and the Apostles have lived, away from creatures, united to Christ with an interior life that on my knees I recommend you, and with a great generous love, seeing in the neighbour, whosoever it be, the image of God, and with the sole desire that all, with one heart and soul, shall do one sheepfold ~~and~~ under one Shepherd.

I told, with an interior life, of which the Apostles exhorts us in those words to Timothy "Take care of yourself" (1Tim 4:16). Outside there is a world to save and convert; yet he teaches: “Take care of yourselves”, and think of yourselves; and so you will save yourselve and those whom you should talk. It would seem a contradiction, but it is so.

There is a fervour work today in the field of good actions, but with what results? Unfortunately, we mistake our tactics, we do not think of our sanctification and only to this is annexed the salvation of souls; so did Jesus and the saints.

It is God who converts the souls and we should become just apt instruments. In the great and divine opera of the salvation of souls it happens like in the photography; to impress the plate we need the lens, and a person who stays before it. The souls are the plate and we are the figure to reproduce.

I f we are another Christ in the souls Christ's figure will be stamped, but if we are something else, what will be printed?

We shall remember that only the Saints make holy and they teach us to co-ordinate this life in vision of the future one, not to loose sight of heaven, for which we are made and the reward that awaits us.

We are flooded with the wonders of God, everything talks to us about Him, everything is his gift: the air we breath, the light that smiles at us, the heat that warms us, the flowers that makes us happy, the fruit, dress, house, all are his gifts. We shall make use of these gifts as many

means to praise and bless God and as many steps to climb unto him.

Souls will follow our examples, listen with more faith our words and among many trials and pains of life, especially in this hour, they will enjoy the sweet comfort of Christian submission, and will direct to God who created us, who has redeemed us for true life.

Finally I recommend you charity that should be the identification mark of Poor Servants. Away all narrow-mindedness, unworthy of a religious and priestly soul; without charity, even if we do miracles, we will not be believed. Instead all disarms in front of charity of Christ; the preaching mostly remembered is that of the charity, and an act of bounty done in silence and concealment in favour of the one who suffers, will be never forgotten by the one who receives it.

True religion, finally, is charity: "Break your bread to the hungry, receive in your house the poor and pilgrims; if you see a naked dress him, and do not despise your flesh". Dear and loving brothers, how nice is to remind of these great thoughts of the holy books! We shall meditate and practise according to the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera.

See and remember well that the Opera of Poor Servants will die for certain if it will not be so. No power and no other enemy can deviate or ruin it; only we if we don't live and practise the pure and genuine spirit.

I recommend you so much, make treasure of these my poor words, practising them soon. Meditate them well, especially on your monthly recollection and the coming

retreat that I recommend you to do, this year, with special commitment. They will help us to make a revision of these things I have told you here; we have to renew ourselves, to make us always more similar to the image of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, a necessary condition for our eternal salvation as says the Apostle.

If these words are said for all, all the more they are for us, who, because of our very special vocation, must more than others follow Christ very closely, like other Christ, in order to generate Christ in our brothers, in all the souls that the divine Providence helps us approach.

And so that you can better prepare, I tell you soon that the turns of retreat, God willing, will start as usual on 1st and 30th of September; the turn of the novices on 24th of the same month. We shall pray to the Holy Spirit and Blessed Mother so that they make our souls available as they made available the Apostles and disciples in the Cenacle and ~~it may~~ prepare us to a new and blessed Pentecost.

I am in your midst dear brothers with the thought, with my blessings, and my sufferings. I bless you all and with you the new plant of External Brothers, plant that God has placed next to the Opera of the Poor Servants and ~~that~~ will do a great good for the families, in the society and in the world.

Pray all for your Father who heartedly blesses you.

In C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

PS. This letter must be read and commented in the church by the superiors to all the brothers as soon as you receive it, while I recommend you to make treasure, all, of these poor words told and felt in my heart for our sanctification and the Opera of Poor Servants.

LETTER 42 24 June 1945

My dear and loving brothers,

The grace and peace of Jesus be always with us.

Many times in this last phase of time I have made you hear my poor words born spontaneously in my heart, always advising you to recognize in the great castigation that was overpowering us, the divine call for all humanity in general and especially for us Christians, religious and priests, who should be salt of the earth, light of the world and unfortunately we are so away from the teaching of the holy gospel and so different is our life from that of the Apostles and early Christians, that there is a growing abyss between theory and practice, faith and work.

For this I feel the need to tell you that God's call with the end of hostilities is not over, but continues more insistently than ever. Alas if we don't correspond changing life and habits, returning to the observance of divine law and a life practically Christian.

We must, yes, thank the kindness and mercy of the Lord, who in wonderful way has protected all our houses, as also our beloved city, which would have become a heap of waste; it is our duty to recognize it was a special grace of our Lady, who against every expectation, beyond all our stubborn will and strong resistance, evidently made prevail in our favour the fruits of divine mercy above all right of divine justice: how should we thank her!

But this is not enough my dear brothers, the Lord demands much more from us. He wants all of us to make effort to improve; the holiness of life is the best form of thanksgiving. Alas after this great castigation if we would be as we were!

No one now has the right to be mediocre.

Only thus we will fulfil the divine plans on us and on the Opera.

How disoriented is the world, everyone seeks a light that guides his way, but this light can come only from Our Lord Jesus Christ, true light that illuminates everyone who comes on earth.

Regarding this I would like to quote few lines of a learned pious writer for your and my meditation and I am sure that it will be of great benefit for you as it did to me.

"Christ" he says "is truly light of the world, but a light that is invisible in itself, and has to become visible through a body; the light that is Christ first of all has to lit in us, so that we can spread it into the world. Christ needs lamps. The more we are ruled by him then stronger and purer will be the light that emanates from us; and the more I will detach from myself and I abandon myself

unconditionally to God then more clearly and vividly I reflect Christ.

Many Christians unfortunately (we can say many priests and religious) reflect the divinity so much deformed to make it no recognizable; others instead (and we Poor Servants with the divine grace should be of this number) transmit it so clearly that ~~that~~ even those who cannot receive it through a device of quality, can however perceive it". And he quotes a famous philosopher who one day said: if the redeemed would live as redeemed, it should be easier to believe in the Redeemer.

How much truth, O my dear in these words and how much they should make us reflect!

But that author goes ahead and deals many other points so important for us if we wish to collaborate the rebuilding of poor society.

"Each of us" he says "can become centre of an invisible spiritual community. What a comfort, joy, and also what a responsibility in this fact. In the hands of each one of us is to save or to lose the souls redeemed by the blood of Christ. He who is light in the Lord, is also light in the world, and takes part in governing the world, as God wants to transmit and continue the work of redemption through humans alone.

The world is not governed by the powerful but by the humble, and what is valid for ruling the world is also for personal holiness. Not the powerful but the humble attract to self the kingdom of heaven.

No one can say, I want nothing, my life is useless, for in the kingdom of Christ count some better principles

than among the sons of the world: 'The last will be the first; the smallest of you all will be the greatest'.

Let no one give himself up to despair: neither sick, weak, drowned, nor uprooted, refused or abandoned. Each one of them can do great things; he can even become 'a pillar of the temple of God…' The non-important who passes away unobserved, without leaving trace of himself in the world, can become father of the whole nation, realizing in himself the whole meaning of the Scripture: 'The least among you become a clan, the smallest a mighty nation' (Is 60:22). The humble in this world are powerful before God. They will rule the world reducing it to Christ".

How much light we get from this teaching, my dear and beloved brothers! How many times I told you and repeated that we will be great if we are small, will be rich if we are poor, will do great things if we remain faithful to the small daily duties!

Don't let ourselves be deceived with the greed of doing great things, with the desire to grow and multiply our houses. No. No. O dear! The number does not count but the quality. I say always: the few will become many.

If we shall be reduced to have only one house and shall become only few priests and brothers, but with full of pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, I tell you in God's name, we shall be able to do great things for the good of souls and for the glory of the Lord.

Hence humility, my dear, and interior life, spirit of faith, observance of rules and holy vows, charity, great charity, above all fraternal love. I recommend you so much

this virtue, which has the foundation in our elevation to supernatural order, in our adoption to sons of God, hence brothers of our Lord Jesus Christ, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

Oh, miracle of God's infinite love towards us, says the Apostle St. John, he wanted that we would be called and become his sons! But adds the same Apostle if God has so loved us, we also must love one another. A divine law is that of fraternal love, my dear, that never like in this hour it is necessary to remind.

Let me repeat once again what I wrote you in one letter: "We are Christians" I told you in that "hence we shall live sincere love, we shall love one another, we are all sons of the same Father who is in heaven, we are all brothers in Christ who has redeemed us, we are all one single family, the family of God.

Why then so much hatred? Hatred is Satan's work; he who hates becomes Satan's instrument, who wants the destruction of good; hatred is death, love is life. Hatred is torment and love is joy.

How bad to hear among Christians sinister proposals of hatred and revenge! They meditate and long for the occasion to vent this bad instinct the day after the great calamity; no, for heaven's sake! We shall instead cultivate generous intentions of forgiveness and peace. We all have sinned, we all have to repeat the sublime prayer taught by Christ: "Our Father in heaven ... forgive us our sins as we forgive those who offend us".

What peace would be ours if we want to profane it with suicidal fight, with private revenge and reprisals? What Christianity would be ours?"

I conclude my dear and loving brothers, requesting you to take into consideration of what this poor and old Father tells you and specially to put into practice; what gain to listen and then forget and don't give any consideration for what is listened? What a responsibility would be ours!

In my poverty I pray that it may not happen to any of you, and you pray a lot for me as I need very much your prayers, so that I can do until the end the holy will of God.

I bless you with paternal love.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 44 20 July 1945

My dear brothers,

Grace and peace of blessed Jesus be always ~~be~~ with us.

Behold here I am in front of my crucifix from where it seems to me begins the inspiration of writing you this poor letter, to tell you all that my heart desires for the good of your souls, for the sanctification of our dear

Congregation, which, as in other times I have told you, is in relation, I do not know how and when, with the present hour. Remember well: the Opera of Poor Servants is meant, in the divine economy of divine Providence, not only for our benefit, but yet of our Verona, our beloved nation, and the whole humanity, but on the condition that we correspond, returning and soon to the pure ~~and~~ source of the spirit and life of the Apostles and early Christians.

For this with divine insistence, the Lord calls us with the powerful voice of serious happenings of this hour, to save us and the beloved fatherland Italy, nation and people elected by God to be light and salt of the whole poor humanity, for it was by the plan of Divine Provide that at the centre of it, in Rome, would be raised the Cathedra of the Vicar of Christ, the Pope, Master of truth, who, proclaiming the way of justice and love, even today as always, leads the world to true peace, prosperity and salvation, so that we may proclaim him again: *salus mundi Pontifex*.

What a grace my dear brothers, but also what a responsibility if in spite of many divine gifts, so great mercy and forgiveness from God, ~~if~~ we would continue as we were or worse! Let's put our finger on ourselves, first of all on myself and then on each one of you: what profit have we drawn from this punishment? Did we become better, more virtuous? Have we corrected our defects? Have we cried and detested our sins? Have we promised to be fully of the Lord, his true servants, faithful to our holy Rules, all aimed at our sanctification?

Because o dear, this is the goal of all of us, to save our souls. It would be true that all of us might make this reflection according to their state and might be convinced

that all the work that is done for earthly life does not count at all if it is not ordained to future life, the salvation of souls, remembering the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ: *"Quid prodest homini si mundum universum lucretur, animae vero suae detrimentum patiatur?"*[98]

And it is rightly this, dear brothers, is our Job: pray, suffer, live according to the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera to intercede from the Lord, besides the graces for us, also abundant blessings for our city, for our nation, that especially in this moment, has a very special need, so that it might be on the level of its mission, then a nation rebuilt in Christ, on the rocky foundation of holy Gospel, the only rule so that justice and charity may reign and triumph in the world, and all become brothers in the just and true sense of the word. Thus we can work for the material rebuilding, but above all moral and spiritual.

So far unfortunately are forgotten, better say expelled, all the supernatural values of the spirit. Man trusted in science, wealth; has affirmed the right of power against the power of right; the new myth of race and blood is established, with unheard pride, hating the noblest adoption to be God's sons in Christ.

And what outcomes did it bring?

Very clear and clamorous is the fall of many ideologies, and yet the terrible experiences of the past still are not sufficient. In the effort of rebuilding after many ruin, many great steps are made, but out of the way, if we forget God, redemption, soul, eternal life. If the rebuilding

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[98] What benefits for a man to gain the whole world if he loses his soul? (Mk 8:36).

of the house and the city is not from the Lord, says the Sacred Scripture, every effort and labour is in vain: *"Nisi Dominus edificaverit domum in vanum laboraverunt qui edificant eam*".[99]

It is also true that many adversities are a punishment of sins, fruit of today's apostasy from God, and of the true paganism all the more prevalent in the families and in the society, through indecent fashions, immoral cinemas, corrupted printed matters and pictures, public scandals, for which we cannot but await all the more serious plagues from God, according to the scriptural warning: *"Propter peccata veniunt adversa!"*[100]

The present life detached from Christ loses all its beauty; lived in Christ, according to the holy Gospel and coordinated with the future life in the heavenly home, becomes the great and beautiful eve of an eternal feast. O if we all would be guided by this thought! If we could serve the Lord not in words but in facts!

Then that divine light would shine from us that Our Lord Jesus Christ came to bring on earth and by which he illumines every person coming to this world.

Then it would be easy the low of charity, would become joyful and happy to live in sincere charity, in reciprocal love to one another, remembering we all are sons of the same Father who is in heaven, brothers in Christ who has redeemed us, forming all the one single family of God.

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[99] If the Lord does not build the house, in vain works the builders (Ps 126:1).

[100] Adversities come from sins.

Thus, would come to an end hatred that is in the world; there would be any more divisions, reprisals and revenges, and all devil's works, God's and our great enemy.

That's why I said to you we need to rebuild in Christ. Oh, if in all the nations and in every State if his gospel would come back! This poor world would really become an anticipation of Paradise.

But for this we must pray and pray. During the fearful oppression just now passed we could not speak of prayer, we did not want. Everything was ~~war~~ founded on human power and pride, and here is the ruin, and see how the world is reduced…

Dear brothers we shall pray, pray! A prayer united with a holy life, obtains miracles, and now we need a miracle so that everything returns to the proper order.

Brothers this is our part, great part, noble, divine. Pray and make others pray, and all whom you approach, rich and poor, wise and ignorant, tell with frankness the need of prayer, especially in this hour.

And see the divine Providence, now comes to my hands a writing of a man I think inspired, that speaks of prayer for our nation, especially in this hour so important for its future; and I would feel remorse if I did not make known to you this writing.

Even this is a grace the Lord gives us; we shall be grateful and thankful to him. For God's love, the Lord may not pass in vain over us.

So that our prayer is more acceptable to God, we shall put it in the hands and lips of our Lady, for whose intercession, as we were miraculously freed from the nightmares and horrors of invasion, so we shall trust to reach that peace of the souls which is a prelude for true peace. And we shall merit it by a fuller observance of holy rules of God and living a life all in harmony to the holy gospel, that as I have told you, will be a life of anticipated experience of paradise, beginning of true and eternal life with God in heaven.

Here is the message of the writing which I mentioned above and which I recommend you to practise and meditate well. Alas if we, after hearing the word and the voice of the Lord, ~~if we~~ do not live it, hardening all the more our heart! That word for us would become condemnation. That this may not be, o dear and loving brothers, for any one of us!

For the salvation of Italy

We believe to be right saying that perhaps there are many Italian Catholics who are not taking into consideration the attribution of what will be the future Constituent.

Many think simply as if to decide if the State should be ruled in by a monarchic or republican form, and forget, or ignore, that it will be the duty of the new Constituent to give ~~to~~ the State a new Statute, because the Constitution instituted on 4th March 1848 by Carlo Alberto, is

considered as the basic Statute for the Italian kingdom, but deformed later on and substantially abrogated by the past regime, would not correspond now, in its old order, to the present political atmospheres of Italy, and to the need of a new social structure which is going to be in our days.

Hence the new Charter which will be given to Italy, will have to face not only the problem of the type of State (republican or monarchic), the question of local autonomies, municipal and regional, and the economic structure (property, its function and limits, private activities and public control, agrarian reform and order of work), but also the religious, family, education issue, and the defences of the rights of person and Italian citizens.

Who does not see in first glance how much the future Constituent concerns the interest of us Catholics as citizens, as believers, as souls, as heirs of a patrimony of moral, religious and historical values, with the rights of the faith, with the glory and traditions of Christian civilization of Italian people?

Who is not going to affirm soon the enormous importance of a Statute from which will depend, if Italy will be or not considered as a catholic nation, if it will be or not ripped from its past of two thousand years as mother of Christian civilization, if our families will not be further ruined with the introduction of divorce, if it will be granted the freedom to teach in the rights of private schools, if the trade union will be strictly fashioned according to the respect of conscience and if the dignity of person will be defended from any snare against freedom and from aggressions caused by sectarian prejudices?

To save values and rights of so supreme importance it is necessary and obligatory to organize ourselves in the political and social field, and not to lose even a minute in the work of training and preparation for electoral competition on which depends the salvation or ruin of our nation.

But is this enough? What do we think to be able to do without God's help? How to rely on him without invoking him? And how can we refrain from invoking him openly, socially in a correct way, when from the same heretics we have the example of the supreme acknowledgement of God in solemn expressions of not doubtful faith?

Add to the above mentioned worries all those derives from the desolate shipwreck of honesty, of decency and the same feeling of human piety, besides the attack we see on faith itself and the painful international economic situation, and then say if this is not the hour of prayer and felt prayer, continuous, general for the salvation of our beloved Italy.

We shall leave to the competent leaders the duty to invite publicly to prayer, in convenient time, as always happens in occasion of common needs. We shall only aim at addressing today to all who have conscience how important it is to keep for our nation its Christian catholic seal, for in an act of private charity we shall find ourselves united in a crusade of prayer to begin without delay.

We shall place our Italy into the adorable heart of Jesus.

What hinders us to repeat for the advantage of the nation the practice of first Fridays of the month? As one day we asked the salvation of our souls in this way we shall now ask for the salvation of a catholic Italy.

Because the hour is not without reasonable fears, and Satan is doing the supreme effort to ruin the humanity that he hates, let's become daring and penetrate the same tabernacle of the Heart of the Saviour, to ask him the charity that he may do from his Heart a transfusion of his divine blood in our exhausted vein.

How many poor souls, weak as they are, came out from the trial of these tragic years, run out of spiritual strength, disoriented, uprooted, in such a condition of religious impoverishment that they cannot save themselves but with a vital transfusion of energy.

Then, if in the Holy Communion of the first Fridays of the month we shall bring to Jesus a heart with the heat of charity for our brothers of Italy, the divine blood which in the sacrament of love comes down really into our heart, cannot but extend, in his beneficent virtues, to all whom we keep in our heart, for it is impossible to imagine the divine infinite Charity cannot consider the fact that we should not be separated, in our trepidation of anguish, from the fate of all the souls of our fatherland.

It will be the duty of our faith to put again in circulation in the exhausted vein of Italy the blood of that Heart who has assigned to it the centre of His supreme spiritual power, so that our nation, not only be saved in its faith, but return also to its privileged mission of primacy as mother of Christian civilization.

According to what is said in this letter, I wish that you recommend to the Lord in your prayer these important intentions, intensifying the devotion and recourse to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, source of all consolation, full of mercy and love for us.

Specially I wish that in all our houses the holy Rosary of every day be oriented to this goal, adding to every decade the beautiful liturgical prayer: *"Ut cuncto populo christiano pacem et unitatem largiri digneris, te rogamus, audi nos"*.[101]

As usual, I recommend you to pray much for me, for I need it very much, first for my poor soul, and second for the Opera of the Lord, while with great heart I paternally bless you.

Lovingly yours. In C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 45 18 August 1945

Dear brothers,

The peace and grace of Jesus be always with us.

[101] That you grant all Christians peace and unity, we pray to you, hear us.

Within a very short distance of time, as a complement to my last letter I write this one to make you hear again my poor words and tell you what I feel profoundly in my paternal heart of a Father, and Guardian and Custody of the very great Opera of the Lord.

For great evils great remedy.

My dear brothers, the evil that is spreading today more and more, seems to be greater than ever. The devil, enemy of the Lord and souls, uses all arts so that this fire may spread all the more, through his even too much faithful followers. They are all who commit iniquity, and through them the devil keeps slave the poor humanity, that God with infinite love has created, redeemed, and to which he gave and still is giving help and divine means, so that it can value the present life, that is, I would say, like a life of a day in comparison with the eternity, coordinating it with the true life of heaven, our fatherland.

Unfortunately, most men close their eyes and do not count these great truths, forget them and live an earthly life, a life of flesh, passions, and as the Psalm says "man, raised to the great honour of being son of God, did not understand, counting himself as the animals without wisdom, and has become equal to them".

My dear and loving brothers, where are we going to, what will happen if we do not put a limit, an efficient remedy to such an evil? In the past, as you remember, we have earnestly prayed, we have made some Eucharistic triduum to expiate our sins and those of the world, to propitiate the divine mercy so that we could avoid the divine punishments.

Satan's weapons: egoism, pride, envy and hatred had the upper hand, and behold how many disasters, misfortunes and ruins happened! And did humanity change? Did the sins cease? How the holy law of God is considered?

My God, after the immense plague the sin is doubled. General apostasy of God, pride, satisfaction of the lowest passions, unbridled thirst for the pleasures, entertainments, films, dances, indecent fashions, idolatry of the flesh, hatred of brothers and war against God, against our Lord Jesus Christ, his Church, his Vicar and all priestly orders, forms a terrifying picture. This in the world.

And we Christians, religious and priests, how do we live? How do we conform in thoughts, judgments and practical life to the maxims and principles of Holy Gospel? Alas, what an abyss between theory and practice, between moral and our Creed, between faith we profess and life we live! And hence once again I ask myself: where is it leading us to end? What other punishment the divine justice is going to give us?

My dear brothers, the Lord has his hour; to us Poor Servants, I have told you many times, it seems to me that the Lord wants to entrust a special mission for the present hour. For this we must once again humble us sincerely in front of the infinite majesty of God, irritated for our sins, to cry and hate first of all our sins, expiate for us and then repairs and raise pleading for all our brothers, for the world, and in a special way, for our beloved nation, that in this moment of so special importance for its future, has a special need of god, of his grace and helps.

For all these reasons in our house of S. Zeno in Monte there will be a solemn Triduum of Adoration in honour of the Sacred heart of Jesus, in which I wish ~~if~~ many souls join, all the souls, to draw from this divine source of all consolation, the grace, helps and comfort which more than even we feel the need of in this hour of general confusion and dispersion. We shall try to lead to the Heart of Jesus all those whom we approach, with words, examples and prayers. Oh, if the Heart of Jesus truly reigned over the world, hence we know that his kingdom "is kingdom of truth and life, of sanctity and grace, justice, love and peace"!

If the Eucharistic Triduum is only for the house of S. Zeno, I wish all the houses to begin, from the next month of September, with special commitment and devotion, the practice of the first Fridays for nine months continuously. To this practice is bound as you know the great promise of the Sacred Heart, with the intention that it is good for our nation, in the serious hour we live, to grant it most special graces and helps from the divine Heart of Jesus.

Therefore, in the immediate days 16, 17 and 18 August, after the feast of Assumption, Jesus in the Sacrament of his love shall be solemnly exposed and we shall take turns to adoration.

Then on the 8th day after the Assumption, when the whole Church, this year for the first time, will celebrate the Immaculate Heart of Mary, will be a Marian day for us, dedicated fully to this Immaculate Heart, and to it on that day we shall publicly renew our Consecration.

Thus our poor prayers, presented through the hands of Our Lady, will be surely more effective and more

pleasing to God; and I believe that a shower of grace will fall upon our Congregation, our nation and the world. But for this we must also promise a sincere change of life, to live as the Lord wants, according to the holy Gospel, and to do our best so that sin, the only cause of so much ruin and evil, be removed so that the holy law of God be observed, and cease hatreds and revenges, so that in all flowers the Christian life in its true sense of the word.

In this intention of renewing us spiritually we must be confirmed by the retreat at hand. I exhort you to join it as if in a cenacle, and if God allows, the retreat of this year will be a new Pentecost for us, to come out like the Apostles, truly transformed in God, to live truly the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera and fulfil thus the mission the divine Providence wants to entrust us!

May Lord bless us with his grace and help.

Pray much for me; as always, I ask you also this time, because I feel so much the need of it, while in my poverty with great heart I bless you.

In C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 46 1-8 September 1945

Beloved brothers,

The grace of the Lord be always with us all, especially in these holy days of retreat. These are days meant to sanctify our souls; days of great mercy, where once again the Lord – think: The Lord! Who one day, perhaps not very far, will call us for the great judgment – the Lord, I say, calls us to tell us words of kindness, to make us know the great grace and honour he has done to us, taking us away from the world to make us his collaborators, with the vocation to this great, very great Opera of the Poor Servants, to do the great plans of good, ~~both~~ in the spiritual order as well as in the moral and social ones, for the benefit of these poor humans.

My brothers I have told you many times, and I repeat you again: The Opera of the Poor Servants is great for its nature, for the good it is meant to do and above all for the spirit Lord has given it.

Also, in human esteem the Opera is great; and all are looking at us with special concern, hearing something special that the Opera is radiating. The same beautiful and glorious location of this house, and our other houses, is a warning to admire the greatness, kindness and bounty of our Lord, who thinks his sons, on the condition that they seek always his kingdom and their own holiness.

The Opera of the Poor Servants has a special mission in this critical and terrible days of our history; in the plans of the Providence it has an intimate connection with this hour for the renewal of Christian spirit in the world, and the Lord will gradually develop these designs for the benefit of humans, if we will be faithful to our programme, and will live the pure and genuine spirit of the

Opera, a spirit we all should know well, and of which we must be pervaded and penetrated in.

And I tell you sincerely, I don't feel remorse for not transmitting this spirit in God's name to all and each of you, with my poor words in public and private, and with my poor writings, through the letters I have send you very often, written out at the feet of my Crucifix, and always praying to the Lord to inspire me what would be for his greater glory and your spiritual benefit. In fact I tell you, re-read sometimes these letters, meditate them seriously to acquire the true spirit of the Poor Servants and make treasures for your growth in the divine service in this Opera.

Dearest brothers, for God's love I recommend you this pure and genuine spirit, for only thus we will be able to do the divine plans the Lord wants to realise through us.

Satan, enemy of God and soul does not want this Opera, and will try every way and art, even on disguise of good and zeal, just to deviate it from its characteristics and if he could even to annihilate it.

My dear, be alert, and see not to be ruled by the spirit of evil; we shall always listen to the voice of the Lord and follow in everything and always the voice of this poor 'Guardian' put by God's mercy to be custodian of the Opera. I am a poor among poor, a miserable among miserable, but until Lord's mercy holds me up here, you must listen to me. It is the Lord who uses the least of his servant and his ministers to tell you what you must do for the good and growth of the Opera. I recommend you a lot to obey my poor words and to treasure it.

The Lord will grant special charisms to the one placed as Guardian of the Opera: listen to him with spirit of faith, follow him generously and with docility.

Beloved brothers, what a great responsibility is upon all and each one of us! The Lord looks at us with eyes of special love, follows us and guides us with more than paternal love and works true miracles for us, we can truly say so; and we have seen and experienced this in our life many times.

This creature the Opera of Poor Servants is entrusted to us; it is up to us to nourish, maintain, develop always better and expand it till the ends of earth.

And how? With a great faith in God and his Providence, a great and deep humility, letting him guide us and use us as rags and clay.

Look at the souls, this is our spirit, look at all the souls, but specially to the poorest and abandoned, which are God's beloved ones. We shall not stop at the cortex, we shall not seek for things of this world, honour, greatness. Souls, souls: this is what we must seek, all the rest is worthless.

You know well the origin of the Opera is abandoned youth. On this foundation the divine Providence has developed the seeds in the past almost forty years. Now, then, is urgent more than ever to seek the poorest youth abandoned by the world, and the neediest. And as in Verona, so will be done in Rome, and in all other places the Divine Providence will entrust us.

With this divine foundation, which is this creature – who, especially in these days, are thousands – I am sure

the Lord will allow other great works, especially the priestly one, that will lead us to the origins of the apostolic life: the only means to heal the world.

For God's love, at our death hour, when we will be there for the great judgment, let there be no souls ruined on our sins, because we have not sought and helped them, we have not assisted them when they were in danger, souls ruined for ever because we did not become the good Samaritan, Jesus Christ, as it was our duty and vocation. Brothers, this would be the beginning of our hell, from the death-bed. That this misfortune may not happen to any of us, such a despair!

Dearest brothers, we shall examine seriously in these days, we all shall do this exam, and if we find us unfaithful to the Spirit of the Opera, soon an act of humility and a firm mind to remedy and live from now on as the Lord wants us.

I said that on us there is a noble and great responsibility; and it is true, for the Opera of Poor Servants has an intimate connection with these days.

I tell you with certainty; I have signs that our Opera is a great light for the whole humanity, that lives in full obscurity; is a source where many and many will come to drink water of eternal life; and on this model many other parallel Opera will be made, for the benefit of the holy Church. They will come here to see, to study, and recopy how God wants to be loved and served. What an honor, and what a responsibility!

Brothers, we shall commit ourselves, therefore; all with one heart and one soul to do the divine plans. We shall

not be afraid of anything; no external power, no obstacle can stop the fulfilment of these plans, and impede the growth of this Opera. Only we can destroy the Opera and put an obstacle to its bright life, if we would not live according to our spirit. That the Lord may save us from such a danger and make us thousands of times die than ruining His Opera.

We shall commit ourselves to renew us in these holy days of bounty and mercy; live according to the pure and genuine spirit, we shall seek Lord with fervent and humble prayer.

Brothers, I recommend you as far as I know and I can your inner life: give the maximum importance to the devout practices that are the support of spiritual life. Without Lord's help we can do nothing, in a special way when it is about the salvation of souls. External works of zeal and apostolate are good things; but, my dear, if the interior life is lacking, if the spirit is lacking, we will be like obsolete machines that make a lot of noise but no fruit.

And once again I recommend you the rules; observe and never give up any of them, however small and secondary they can seem: all are rules given us by the Lord, and they together form our strength and the secret of success in our toilsome work.

I recommend you the fraternal love; love one another with sincere, cordial love. Away from us murmuring and criticism. If we might see something not in its place, we shall be kind to one another, help one another. With charity, compassion and spirit of Christ, the defects disappear, because the Lord himself will take them upon himself to remove.

In your daily labour and manual works which you have to do often, sometimes with slight sacrifice, revive the faith, look up and sanctify everything with right intention, with the good will to do good through them.

Don't despise humble offices; everything is great if done for the Lord, but especially in this house it has special nobility.

While dealing affairs and material things, do not forget at all that we are Servants of Divine Providence, Servants of the Lord; hence even material things must be irradiated by the spirit, dealt in the light of faith, as it is just for persons consecrated to God. The seculars might see a higher way, a supernatural light, in these temporal relations, so that they remain edified and they too may learn to seek always and above all the holy kingdom of God.

Analogously behave in the conversations and discussions; in political and social questions that agitate the world now, war, peace, in a word everything that concerns from close temporal problems, we shall deal with in the light of faith, according to our spirit, away from the worldly and human reasoning, and always in the light of the supernatural, ~~for~~ the interest of the kingdom of God and the religion. The gospel, my dear, the practiced gospel: behold what has to be in our heart.

I conclude my writing recommending you to make treasure of what I have told with all my sincerity. If you live according to the pure and genuine spirit, you will be of great help to me to carry the burden the Lord has entrusted me; alas if it would be otherwise! You will have to account for it to the Lord. But I count for certain that all

of you, with one heart and soul, you will remain faithful in the holy proposals and live in accordance with your holy vocation.

Pray for me dearest brothers; I need it very badly. Pray that I first of all put into practice what I recommend you. We shall help each other in these four days of earthly pilgrimage, for the growth of the Opera, for the good of the souls and glory of God; and we shall be united in the joy of holy paradise, in that special area that the Lord keeps prepared for his faithful servants.

In C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

Note. This letter was read by our Venerable Father in the houses of St Zeno in Monte, Roncà and Nazareth.

LETTER 47 Epiphany 1946

My dear and living brothers,

May the peace that Child Jesus has come to bring on earth, and which the angels in the holy night announced for the first time to persons of good will, reign always in our heart. It seems to me that this is the best greetings I could wish you for the coming year 1946, we already saw

the dawn of this, with joyous spirit of pleasant liturgical celebration of Christmas seasons.

The new year day, as you remember, was a splendid day, and I at table, took initiative to wish the brothers of S. Zeno in Monte that as the sun was shining outside, thus the sun of divine grace would shine in our soul of priest and religious, to attract on us the gifts and helps of the Holy Spirit, in this first year of peace, after the tremendous overturning of people and nations, after the terrifying tragedy of pain, misfortunes, destructions, massacres and death, which cannot be thought of without a heavy heart.

However, all these sad happenings, in the mind and plan of Providence, must be an yeast, a strength, a warning to all men, for a general purification, and for us an insistent, pressing invitation so that the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera of the Poor Servants, placed by the same divine Founder from its beginning, be always in full efficiency. Only this way we can fulfil the great designs of God, apt for the present hour we pass, and that our Opera is called, always with this spirit, to actuate.

Therefore, my dear and loving brothers, as far as I can and know I recommend above all a great faith and spirit of faith. I tell always those whom I have the grace to approach, that this is the hour of faith.

Unfortunately the scene of a world that is always becoming more and more pagan, the diffusion of materialistic and atheist theories, the fight now hidden and now open, always devilishly organized against Christ and his Church, against his Vicar and all that is sacred, the scorn for the divine law, the scandals, the slowing down of

Christian life and apostolic spirit in those who are supposed to be the models and good examples, all this can as a consequence result in weakening of faith even in Christians and good people. "The wickedness increased and diminished charity in many" says the Lord.

It is our duty to revive faith, so that it may shine as sun in the sky of our soul, not only for us, but also for others. Hence ours shall be a practical and living faith; without any contrast between the faith we profess and life we live. Faith should be the constant rule of our actions, thoughts and judgments. In this way it is said that "the just lives by faith".

In the world often, they want to compromise Christ with Satan, devotional exercises with pagan customs and models, but in us the pure light of Christ should shine. He is "the true light which enlightens every man who comes into this world". But his light is not visible, cannot be seen if not reflected by us; as near the sun, where if there is no matter to reflect the shining rays, remains dense darkness. For this it is said: "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not receive it". We shall listen and practise the divine admonition: "Thus let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven".

To faith we shall unite, according to our spirit, an unlimited trust and a tender and filial abandonment in the paternal, always caring and loving divine Providence.

God is Father, he cares us and our dear ones; nothing is unnoticed in his look, nothing is offhand, as of surprise to him; everything is regulated and ordained by

his infinite wisdom, power and bounty, mainly, we could say, by his bounty.

There is no mother who loves so mush her child as God loves all and each one of us. He reaches to all, even more perfectly than the sun rays to the edge of grass, to the atom~~s~~ lost in the space. He has even counted the hair of our head, and without his knowing not even one of them is falling.

The birds of the air, that do not sow nor gather in the barns, are daily nurtured by Him, who together provides a beautiful dress to the lilies of the field: why should we then be afraid of us and our dear ones?

Some of you could say: why then all these mournings and pains, so many trials and misfortunes? And I think am hearing almost the echo of many struggling voices: are mothers, wives, brothers, sisters who cry for their beloved's lost, or fallen in the battle field, or perished for the deseases, privations and mistreatments in the terrible concentration camps, without a friendly good word, probably without a prayer or tear~~s~~. And probably the better ones were those whom the burst carried away. Perhaps those who prayed more were not listened or heard.

What a difference then to be virtuous? What sense then in praying and doing good works? So Anna was saying to her holy husband Tobia, when he met with many misfortunes in spite of all his prayers, alms giving and charity in burying the dead. But Tobia, full of God's spirit, with full trust in the divine Providence, rebuked her saying: "Don't say so, for we are sons of saints and we expect that life which God will give ~~to~~ those who never lose their faith in Him".

Dear brothers, we too shall learn to organize the present life with the future one; we shall not forget that we are in exile here, away from our true Land, and this is time of trial. We shall remember that our near and distant dear ones are, in whatever case or situation, always in God's hand, hence in good hands. If the graces asked for them or for us are not granted, other ones are set aside instead of them, and undoubtedly more precious and important. "My ways are not your ways" says the Lord. Let's trust in Him, humbling us under his powerful hand, for He is always Father to us, and when he punishes he loves us equally as he consoles.

Another essential virtue for our spirit is ~~of~~ love. Never like now it is necessary to multiply the works of charity. This is the time in which we must sacrifice ourselves, depriving us from things counted necessary at other times; in this the Holy Father is giving us a vivid example, who extended his hands and heart to many miseries, reaching even where it seemed impossible. Like the Apostle we too should, in this hour, "became everything to everyone to gain all for Christ".

The statement of one of our religious impressed me; he said: "we make the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience; why don't we also do that of charity?" Certainly charity is the more persuasive argument, and the more effective preaching that could be done, and that would not be forgotten.

I would like to refer you an event. Days back the Providence brought to us a Protestant pastor in military uniform; and I told him few words in general; that we are all brothers, sons of the same heavenly Father, and count this house as his own home, and I welcomed him as if he

is mine. "It is for the first time, he said, that I hear such words; and your words really impress me, I will remember you forever. If this mutual love would exist everywhere, there would not be any other needs, the world would become already Christian".

Do you see what can we do with charity? And this observation I wish if I could address also to my dear External Brothers, who have the duty to draw from its source the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, to radiate out.

Give you first the examples, and in all your matters, in dealings, in your contacts with people guide yourself with these supernatural criteria, showing detachment and disinterest from earthly goods, from the useless superfluity. Do everything to promote what is good, for the triumph of truth, and to make known and loved our Lord Jesus Christ, for only in Him we can hope for salvation, prosperity and peace.

For this it is absolutely necessary, my dear and beloved brothers, to live a life in intimate union with God, seek prayer, not made in some way, with our lips, but from the heart, because then we shall experience the effectiveness. A saint says that prayer is the omnipotence of man and weakness of God.

And in a special way we shall appeal with faith and insistence to the Holy Spirit, only and true master of interior life, who prays in us, as says the Apostle, "with unexplainable cries".

It seems to me and I feel that the Lord this year wants to bless the poor humanity with graces and special

helps, so that all the people may seek our Lord Jesus Christ, and model their life according to his teachings, who came to the world and died on a cross so that all the people, equally redeemed through his precious blood, may come closer to form a fraternity and perfect unity, *"ut sint consummate in unum"* (that they may be one).

But this is the work of the Holy Spirit. I would say there is the need of a new Pentecost.

It was the Holy Spirit who "formed the crowd of people who believed into one heart and soul"; the Holy Spirit who inspired the early Christians to dispose of their wealth and place them in the hands of the Apostles, for the common good. When the brothers of Jerusalem suffered hunger and poverty the Holy Spirit inspired the Christians to help them. It was rightly the Holy Spirit who trained the Apostles and made them able to bear the most wonderful witness of Christ in words, in examples, with miracles, and above all through the sacrifice of their own lives.

Today also, through the tremendous cataclysm that hit the poor humanity, through much pain and mourning, many violated barriers and obstacles, God wants to renew the world. Hence let the Spirit come to enlighten our minds and shine our hearts, and work first in us that transformation we wish to bring into others.

You especially my dear and beloved brothers priests, who are to care the souls, may you be full of the Holy Spirit like the Apostles, like the deacon St. Stephen and you will do miracles.

Make use of all the powers so that in the families Christian life may flower, so that the holy law of God be

observed, respected and adored the family sanctuary, so that the pious habit of personal and community prayer be re-established, so too the participation to the sacraments and the sanctification of the Sunday.

Speak often of our Lord Jesus Christ, make him known alive in the Church, in the gospel, in his Vicar and in the Holy Eucharist.

Try to hinder the offenses against God, and especially the Satanic vice of blasphemy, that attract on us great punishments; tell clearly to those who blasphemy that they are lending their tong to devil, speaking the language of hell, making ugly their soul and offering to themselves and others a true unhappiness, for the one who blasphemies will never have peace and will disturb all those in his home.

But a true Christian does not think only of himself, he pushes his look also on others, in all he sees God's children and brothers in Christ. He prays for all, to fulfil the promise of Jesus, "that all may become one sheepfold under one single shepherd".

It seems to me that this is God's hour for the great returns of the brothers separated since long time. About them the Holy Father Pius Xl said a very meaningful sentence: “They are, he said, as pieces of gold detached from the main block”. Hence, we must not belittle them, but prepare for them the way, especially through prayers, sacrifices, and other good works. We must do this always, but we shall do this with a special commitment, in the approaching Octave of prayer for Unity, from 18 to 25 January, that in this year I wish you celebrate in all the houses with full solemnity, especially at Maguzzano,

where with Episcopal decree we have begun, since many years, the Eucharistic adoration for this purpose.

As far as I know and I can I recommend you all to join, together with all your souls, this crusade of prayer to hasten the return of far brothers. In fact, in my poverty I pray, and also you make all pray, for, if it pleases to God, a special desire can be realized that I have since twenty years, that in a place of silence and prayer all the heads of believing communities may unite, to exchange their point of view, to know each other, without any discussions, and especially to invoke the Holy Spirit as in a cenacle. An apt place seems to me could be Maguzzano, and I will be happy if the Providence allows the realization of this goal.

In any case I feel the Opera is called to realize special designs of God, right for this present time. We shall see not to impede it, we shall keep us ready. Many brothers of ours are without light: and we must take it to them. We are rich in God's graces; as Christians, as religious, and as priests we must share these with others.

Dear brothers, what a grace and what a responsibility! May Lord help us, through the intercession of the Immaculate Virgin, our Mother and Mistress of our Institute, so that we all can always correspond and be, in the full sense of the word, Poor Servants of Divine Providence.

I request you the charity of your prayer. I carry you always in my heart and mind, and for you I offer my daily prayers and sufferings. That the promise and prayer I do every morning after Holy Mass: *Ut cum fratribus meis and pueris tuis laudem Te in saecula saeculorum. Amen* (see lett. 3, 19-3-1933).

I bless you together with my dear External Brothers, and profess myself as your loving Father.

In C. J. *Fr. J. Calabria*

LETTER 48 Lent 1946

To my dear internal and external Brothers of the Poor Servants,

The grace and peace of Jesus be always with us.

In this letter I write you with paternal heart, as always at the foot of my crucifix, I feel that the divine Master wants that I address to you my poor words, and together with you, my dear religious brothers, also to the External Brothers, a first cell of a great Opera, small seed of a great tree. As indicates their name they are not religious like you in the strict sense; and cannot because they have their family and they live in the world, where they should radiate the same light they draw from the source of Opera.

His Excellency our loving Bishop, whom I have considered always the bishop of Providence for us, has kindly blessed this new creature, and thus it was born legitimately, and his blessing is also a pledge of God's blessings.

Thus, the divine Providence in admirable ways, has willed to realize a design since years we thought of,

placing these loving External Brothers at your side, so that they may form all one with you, fulfilling a special mission they have in the present hour, parallel to yours, always through the same spirit the divine Founder has placed from the beginning, and alas if this spirit lacked: The Opera would fall!

This shining light house, lit by the divine Providence for the benefit of poor humanity, now more than ever disoriented, uprooted, immersed in the darkness of passion and errors, would extinguish, with very great ruin, I would say with our eternal ruin, for not having corresponded to Lord's graces.

Dear brothers, I will never stop saying and repeating that this Opera of the Poor Servants in this hour should be light, life and continuous recall to holy gospel, to the life of the Apostles and of the first Christians.

When the way is wrong, and when you become aware of it, soon return back to be on the right one that lead us to the goal. Now the past and the present, with the powerful voice of the tragic events of which we were and are witnesses, tell us that humanity has wronged the route, hence must return back. It is useless to disguise us, the route is to be repeated, changed into the correct way.

And which is this route? Nothing but the observance of the divine law. We must return to God, to Christ, and to his gospel, that we must observe, I would say, literally, for it is God's word, living and eternal, that will never change, and never err.

You see how many people live, think, and do as if everything depends on them, and do not care God and his

rules, look only at the present life, material and physical well-being. Unfortunately, man thinks to do all by himself, to be sufficient to himself. Science, progress and discoveries that wonder us, great gifts of god, that should coordinate everything for the good of all, make man proud and come to a point to convince him that he does no more need God, and he places himself in God's place, repeating in facts, if not in words, the blasphemy of Lucifer, when he said: "I will be similar to the Almighty; I will raise my throne above the stars".

What a folly and what an ingratitude, while these wonderful victories should bring man closer to God, being put in contact with such wise laws, that in visible manner leads to read the seal of divinity. And this happens among the Christians, after twenty centuries of redemption!

For this I think I am listening to the lament of Jesus, addressed specially to us priests, religious and Christians: *"Quae utilitas in sanguine meo?"*[102] My life, my examples and my teachings, that are divine, how are they observed and practised? I came to the world for you, I gave you my rule, I lived in such a poverty, I laboured, unknown artisan, in the small house of Nazareth, in my public life I proclaimed to people the most holy and joyful good news, I multiplied miracles for many unhappy, I had compassion to the hungry crowd, I died for you, remaining all the same your companion and friend in the Tabernacles, renewing on the altars of the whole world the sacrifices on the cross, to apply to you of it the abundant fruits that are precious, to give you my body as food and my blood as drink. But

[102] What benefit in my blood?

what correspondence I found in the humans? *"Quae utilitas?"* (What benefit?)

Unfortunately, my dear brothers, this cry, this divine lament is not understood, humans are purposely deaf and blind, want to follow their own way, the way of pleasure, pride, hatred, egoism, apostasy from God, and they find their ruin. Christ came to reconcile the world to heaven, to tell us that present life is nothing but a short parenthesis, a vigil, a preparation to the true life, that is not of this world; to teach us that nothing is worth possessing even the whole world if one does not reach God, to save his soul. This is the true light meant to enlighten every person who comes to the world; but like the prophets words, people like darkness than light.

Behold the special work of the Poor Servants: to bring back in the world faith in God, that living and practical faith that generates faith in Him and in his paternal Providence. We should be lit lighthouses in the obscure night of the world, from us must irradiate the pure light of Christ and of his gospel, divine code for all people, especially for us.

And this mission is specially yours, my dear External Brothers, who live in contact with the world; your irrepressible and holy life will be the preaching you will make to all. Then say a good word, use great charity with all, according to that golden rule of St. Augustine: hate evil but love and show compassion to those who commit it.

I recommend you a lot the prayer, the frequency of the sacraments; we must fully make use of, let me say, the supernatural mines which we alone have, and we shall remember that for this we should not think us as the

privileged: the Lord has made us rich with his gifts so that we may transmit them to others who are deprived of them.

Unfortunately, the world is becoming pagan, in spite of many invitations, many warnings the Lord has made and continues to make. Perhaps even now we are in time to make prevail and triumph the bounty and mercy of Lord; we shall call God with us: "*Mane nobiscum Domine*"![103]

The wicked and whosoever does evil, thinks he is free, but instead he is slave of the worst tyranny, serving Satan, enemy of God, the genius of evil, who establishes his kingdom in sins and mistakes. For having listened to him, see where the poor humans have fallen! We shall not forget that he is liar and deceiver from the beginning.

Instead if we listen to the Lord, if we render Him a faithful service, we shall enjoy the true liberty, proper of the children of God. He will be with us, we will enjoy his peace. If people want to rebuild without him, they will work in vain: "*Nisi Dominus aedificaverit domum, in vanum laboraverutn qui aedificant eam*".[104] But if we toil with Him, our efforts will be blessed, and we will have the fortune to have the wisdom of God as guide, his omnipotence as help, and to become collaborators with God for our and other's holiness.

I feel the need of telling you another last thing. In these days we have learned from the apostolic heart of the Holy Father the words that has electrified the world. But more than listening, it is necessary to treasure it in the

[103] Lord, abide with us! (Lk 24: 29).

[104] Unless the Lord builds the house, in vain is the fatigue of the workers (Ps 126: 1).

heart, especially we who should be in forefront in cooperating with the Vicar of Christ on earth.

The Lord has used the human wickedness to plough the soil, to destroy so many obstacles, then the Church too can raise and make known her voice unto the ends of the earth, inviting all to her bosom. But how many brothers of ours do not listen to this call and live away from and out of the true Church! And they are our brothers, and it is our duty to use all the means, so that they may return to the fold. The thought of Christian unity should be in the heart of every catholic, and in a special way in us priests and religious. I wish to say that one of our goals, of the Poor Servants, should be also this, to collaborate to the Christian unity.

Also, you dear External Brothers, have a special mission for you: in your families, in the offices, in your jobs, in the work field, how much good you could do! And you have your rules, your Statute. Keep them not only written and printed on the paper, but also in your heart, and practise it, and doing so you will contribute to fulfill the great heart of Christ: "that they may be one".

And the means? I have already mentioned them: the Eucharist, the Holy Mass, prayer, devotion to Blessed Mary, charity and spirit of faith, to see in all the image of God, to give the good example, because we must begin rightly from here. To give we must have, and we must live to make others live. Let's live Christ and his gospel and we shall communicate it to others. I always felt, but today in a very special way, that the Opera of the Poor Servants, the Opera of the External Brothers, should be the small fold that should warn the people and the world to the holy

Gospel. My God, what a grace, what an honor! But together what a responsibility!

I request you and plead: read and study every day few lines of the holy gospel and live its spirit, that is the spirit of Christ and of our Opera; be in efficacy of virtue and holiness, to be first of all salt and light for yourself, and to become that "*genus electum*" (chosen race) of which speaks the Apostle St. Peter.

Lived like this, the present life is a life of peace and grace, of serenity and joy in the Lord, taste and source of eternal beatitude in heaven.

But if it is so important for the External Brothers, how much more for you, who have the fortune of calling you and being Poor Servant of Divine Providence!

For this reason, as much as I know and I can, I recommend you the interior life, the observance of the rules, especially the fidelity to those tiny prescriptions which, unimportant as they are, could be easily ignored. I have these maxims; the great things are made of little things: even the immense ocean is from uncountable drops of water. And nothing is small if it is done for the Lord, and this counts so much for us, who in everything must regulate in the spirit of faith, characteristic of this Opera, which may thus fulfil the designs the Lord has over it, jut of this hour, on condition that we are on the height of our holy vocation.

The Opera, remember, is we. It depends on us then, its stability, diffusion and bearing fruits. Alas if we do not aim with all our strength at our sanctification! For heaven's sake let's try to correspond!

We are in the holy lent: “favorable time and days of health”; these for us. Soon we will have also the retreats: all these are graces of the Lord; we shall make use of them to remedy the past, and renew our good proposals.

We shall live in a way, o dear, that our dealings, our sacrifices and our prayers of these days may be a counterweight on the balance of God to attract his divine mercy; without saying that in this way we will prepare ourselves for the most important Christian solemnity, the Easter of Resurrection.

Pray a lot for me, who need very much your prayers. As poor as I am, always I remember you and pray for you all. I heartedly bless you and your families, dear External Brothers, while I profess myself as most humble,

In C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 49 Retreat 1946

Dear brothers in Christ,

I prayed to the Lord to grant me the grace to be able to address you a word, which, said in this occasion in which the God's grace has come in abundance to mine and

your souls, for more than sure will bring good, first for your individual sanctification and then of this great, very great Opera, to which by special call of divine Providence we belong ~~to~~.

My dear brothers, I don't tell you new things, I repeat you and tell you in God's name what I have told you many a times. Here I'm nothing but a very poor Custodian, placed here by divine Providence to manifest the bounty, and mercy of Lord, but until ~~that~~ the Lord keeps me here, remember it, you must listen to me in everything, because it is one of the characteristics of the Opera: the present and future Custodian and Guardian will have very special graces and helps and inspirations from the Holy Spirit, to guide and lead this divine vessel that is the Opera, the family of the Poor Servants.

Dear brothers, be like rags and clay, available for everything, be recipients and channels and model, with divine grace, your life to that of the Apostles, not holding anything but the glory of God and the benefit of the souls.

This world "souls" must electrify your hearts, thinking that Jesus for the souls gave his life, shed all his blood; and for the souls, for all the souls, especially now, that divine Providence gave rise in this confused world, that is about to collapse, this Opera of the Poor Servants.

Dear brothers, our thought, our lively heart beat shall be for the souls. How many souls crave for light in the midst of dense dankness, how many are thirsting for grace and peace, after the delusion of a world that is falling apart!

But to help and to save these souls, first of all it is necessary that each one of us aim at our personal sanctification. And behold then the importance to live the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera. To give we must have, and to have we all must receive from our Lord Jesus Christ, who should be our divine model.

We will do nothing, only could ruin the Opera, if we do not sanctify ourselves. And hence the importance of interior life and devotions, and the observance of the holy rules. We shall leave everything but shall not leave the practices of prayer, because only thus, together with us, the Opera will be in full efficiency and do the great designs that the Divine Providence wants to do.

Brothers what a joy, but also what a responsibility! The present hour is terrible, we do not know what can derive on each moment; we shall be ready for everything, we shall be united with our Lord Jesus Christ and we shall be sure of victory.

Brothers, I have told you already: "no power from outside can destroy the Opera, only we, if we do not live as the Lord wants".

The Divine Providence, after many graces in the past, bestows us with this holy retreat. From this Cenacle we must go out fully renewed, like the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. Let the retreat of this year 1946 mark a beginning of a renewed life, all lived for the Lord. What a peace we will enjoy even in this life of exile, but all the more, what a reward in heaven! Yes, my dear and beloved brothers! I think often of the paradise for which we all are made. We shall lead God to the souls, all the souls, and we

will have the sweet certainty to have eternal life assured for our soul.

I have you all in my mind and heart; I follow you in every step of your work and offer my suffering, which is not very small, so that your work is fruitful. Please don't forget your Father, pray, pray much for me. I don't tell you for formality, no; I feel the extreme need of it. May the Lord grant us the grace to find ourselves in the Paradise. I give you the holy blessings, that shall be the seal of Lord's blessings in this holy retreat, that shall follow you and be source of light, strength and peace in your apostolate in this terrible hour, and at the same time so great in God's mind, for if we will be in full efficiency, the divine bounty shall shine once again over the poor humans fallen in such an abyss.

I bless you in C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 50 Pentecost 25 May 1947

My dear and loving brothers,

Grace and peace of Jesus be always with you and with all the souls the Divine Providence will bring you near and for whom you should be "salt and light" through the

pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, to which through a special love Lord has called you.

Undoubtedly dear and loving brothers, we live in an epoch that comes out from the ordinary route of things and happenings: which could be easily called, "emergency epoch", so distant and general is the contrast between ideas, so threatening the clash that we fear it is unavoidable between the power of good and evil. Hence we cannot, in fact we should not remain inactive, indifferent: it would be a betraying of that mission of good that to each one of us is entrusted for the brothers.

See how the adversary is working and organizing: unfortunately, often the sons of darkness are more prudent than the sons of light. We must feel powerful the need and our duty of a total renewal of our life, to be as I have told you often, "in full efficiency", so that we can keep ready, for a tomorrow probably not very far, to do all that the Lord is going to ask us to do, if he may see us full of his spirit, "living gospels, another Christ", says the Apostle.

This is for all, especially for ~~us~~ priests, religious, and Christians, but in a special way it is for us, for you know, as I have told you many times, that the Opera has special goals, proper of this hour: what a joy and privilege! But together with this, what a responsibility, if we are not as the Lord truly wants! We shall take soon the responsibility, make a serious examination of conscience and then resolutions to improve. Remember that our life passes soon; one day nearer than what we think, we will find us on the death-bed.

Blessed are we then if we have corresponded to the immense graces the Lord has granted us! What a peace and

consolation will overflow our spirit! Yet on the death-bed, I think, we shall see Jesus coming to console us and to take our soul to eternal reward.

But poor we are if we will be found with empty hands, without making use of the talents we have received!

For this I felt the need of addressing you once again, this could be the last time, my poor words, that are from this poor and miserable channel, zero and misery, but I speak to you in the name of God, who wants you as humble instruments, docile, to fulfill great things with small things, for, as always, God chooses "what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, what is weak to shame the strong, what is low and despised, and things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are" (1Cor 1:27), so that honor and glory may be to God alone.

For this I told you many times: the Opera will be great if it is small, will be rich if it is poor and will have God's protection if it is away from seeking human shelters.

Also from your part do not wish to do great things, instead do great attention to the small things. In God service everything is great and divine. The precious flower of your sanctification is hidden in the field of daily simple commitments. Hence do not ignore anything: the small duties, the unimportant rules contains all and shows you God's will; remember that the fidelity of a servant is expressed above all in his observance of minute orders of his master.

We shall live our faith, not only for us, but also for the souls who approach us; we should be truly as what they esteem and believe us. For God’s sake, they shall not be

cheated, and one day they should not reprove us for the life we have been living was quite different from what they thought! What a confusion it would be for us!

We shall be, instead, as the Apostle exhorts us to be, true "children of light. For the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true, as well as in all that is pleasing to the Lord".

Only in this manner we can say that we are truly Poor Servants in the full sense of the word. What does it mean to have the name and not to have the spirit? In this case it is better to go back to the world, where a brother can hope to save himself and help the same Opera, while reaming here under the pavilion of divine Providence, he could bring trouble and discomfort, and the divine designs couldn't be fulfilled. What a responsibility! We shall think of it well, that if our desire is to remain, on my knee I tell you, look, better saying, let us try to correspond and to aim continuously at our sanctification.

My dear brothers, the humanity seems to be engulfed in thick darkness, and people do not want to have anything to do with our Lord anymore, the evil that spreads is great, but we shall not be afraid. A "*fiat*" (your will be done) can nullify the power of evil, destroy many errors, reverse positions and things, and make it possible to realize "*coeli novi et terrae novae*".[105]

Then the poor humanity can come to know that only in God and through the holy gospel, practically lived, man can find a clear solution to every earthly issue, and in

[105] New heaven and new earth.

the same time he will make sure the gain and possession of eternal happiness. The present life indeed should be coordinated to the future life. “What does man gain, says the Lord, if he earns the whole world, but then loses his own soul?”

There are, it is true, many beauties and wonders also in this world, and we should be grateful to God for them, because they are gifts of his amiable and paternal Providence, but we should not attach our heart on them. Rather we shall think that if he has embellished the reverse of the work how beautiful will be the real? If the Lord has beautified this world of exile with so many fine things, what would be the joy of the fatherland? Not for nothing Jesus has willed to purchase back the paradise at the cost of his precious blood! We shall not forget these thoughts and fundamental principles, and we shall never lose sight of our soul, heaven and eternity.

Beloved brothers, forty years are about to be completed, since the Lord, for a particular trait of his divine mercy, has founded this Opera, here in our Verona and precisely in St. Zeno in Monte, a favorite and blessed land, and not by chance he has willed us on this height. Also the lighthouse is placed on high so that it may enlighten from a distance. Our Opera, from St. Zeno in Monte, must radiate its light *“usque ad finem terrae”* (till the end of the earth).

In these forty years, with the divine grace bit of goodness is done, the Lord has shown many plans and many more he will express for his glory and for the good of the souls, provided that even in the future and always we may be faithful to the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera.

One of these plans the Lord is making clear, seems to me, is a great plan, a divine responsibility that is being entrusted to our Opera. If from one aspect it is a title of predilection, on the other way it must fill us with sacred reverence, conscious of our weakness and frailty. At the same time I am sure and certain that you all will receive it with gratitude and will try to correspond with the greatest commitment and fervour.

Jesus the blessed, our absolute Master, in his divine mercy and kindness, looks towards our Opera, and calls her to a particular action of reparation for the incredible sacrileges committed not only in the distant lands, but in many cities of our dear fatherland, though very much favored by the divine Providence. It makes great horror to think of what Satan puts into effect, in these days more than ever, so that the land is disfigured by sacrilegious contaminations, aiming more at the Most Holy Eucharist. Our Opera must work as a counterweight to such cruel hatred ~~ness~~ against God and the most sacred things of our religion, with reparative prayers and more than that with a holy life.

In this divine light of expiation and reparation, it seems to me we can understand the motive of many of our dear brothers' sufferings, and the Lord may demand even more. We have to be available and ready, thinking of the great gift of the suffering which will make us in conformity with the Lord Jesus Christ, who thru his passion and death paid the debts of every human being.

The same Lord wants us to associate with him and complete what is lacking in his passion. And as he wants us to be companions in passion, much more than that he wants us to participate in his own inner feelings in passion.

Like him we too shall accept all physical and moral sufferance from the loving hands of the heavenly Father, and what we may have to suffer from the humans we shall pray for them, repeating the same prayer of the crucified Jesus: "Forgive them, Father, for they do not know what they are doing". Their conversion, their returning must be in our heart much more than what we have to suffer from them. Oh if our prayer, enriched by our passion, could obtain the conversion at least of one of those rulers of the nations, who can calculate the good out of it?

Look my dear brothers, which horizons the Providence is leading our religious family to reach. We shall be conscious of it and remain grateful to this unique and divine privilege. This is the true richness of the Opera, and we shall remember before God that there is no greater importance to multiply the houses, but intensify the spirit and our interior life. He seeks us alone, and wants ~~us~~ to be honored first of all thru our sacrifice, our self-denial, our immolation for our sanctification and the salvation of the souls.

Look how meaningful is the month of June, my dear and loving brothers, to enter in the wider spirit of the new task the Lord is entrusting us. The devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus aim particularly at the reparation, as Jesus himself revealed to St. Margaret and the Church has solemnly confirmed it. This year the feast of the Sacred Heart, thanks to the holy and provident initiative of a soul guided by the spirit of the Lord, must be a day for the sanctification of the clergy.

All these circumstance must animate us all the more to the spirit and to the practice of reparation, and the loving Madonna, in these days which remain of her good

month and coincide~~s us~~ with the novena and the feast of Pentecost, may grant us as she did to the Apostles a grant infusion of the Holy Spirit, who transform us and lit in our hearts the decisive mind to correspond always more and better to the expectations of the Lord.

Look my dear and loving brothers, here is what I felt like telling you. Pray very much for me. I do not say it as a compliment: I feel the extreme necessity, first for my poor soul, and then for this great Opera of the Lord. Also I carry you in my heart and mind, and pray for all of you, near and far. I follow you everywhere through my prayers and thru my sufferings, and with the paternal blessings. And even now more with my heart, than thru my hands I bless you all.

In C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***8876 8-7-1947**

My dear and beloved brothers,

May the grace and peace of the Lord Jesus be always with us.

After receiving your holy greetings with pleasure, here I am to thank you heartedly, particularly those among you who wrote many beautiful feelings of filial affection.

It's always dear to the heart of a father to read in the eyes and behaviour of his children the goodness of heart and the desire to do all the best in the way of the Lord. Therefore be sure that you gave me a great comfort by your words, even though I cannot answer personally to each one of you. You know how much I love you and that I live for you and pray for you so that you can keep faithful to the pure and genuine spirit of the great Opera, and can be worthy Servants of the Providence of God, accomplishing its designs. I keep you in my mind and heart. I often am thinking the house f Costozza, wishing you to be up to your noble mission and vocation. Pray for me, and I pray for you, while heartedly I bless you all and each one; remember that I keep all of you in my heart.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***290 22-7-1947**

To my dear brethren, and particularly to my brothers Counsellors.

I think I never told what I am feeling now I have to tell, for the good of our religious souls and in confirmation that the Opera, to which we belong for the greatest grace and mercy of God, is an Opera all his own, because it is he who inspired and founded it, through myself, poor and

miserable instrument, zero and misery, in order to make his goodness and mercy shine. In addition, this Opera has a relationship with the present hour, with very particular goals, goals that it matured by most particular signs.

As many times you heard, this Opera was born and grew up always as a consequence of signs that the M. R. Spiritual Director Fr. Natale, whom for the grace of God I obeyed up to his death, (wanted) from the beginning, and these signs always came true, and this was the condition so that the Opera would go on.

Now for the grace of God we are at 40th anniversary of this small and great Opera, and all of us have been witnesses of the good it did and is doing through the pure and genuine spirit that the same God put in it, and that, woe, should be the certain death if it was not maintained for ever; however if we live and keep faithful to this spirit, we shall do works that will amaze the world, mainly in this hour. And it is this that makes Satan quiver; he will attempt everything in different forms, of zeal, holiness and good works, in order to make it turn off.

My dear, a little bit, a millimetre is enough, and the Opera is no more the same.

Dear brothers, this morning while celebrating the Holy Mass and straight after, I felt strength to say by voice and to recommend as my will to defend *usque ad sanguine* (see lett. *10374/A 20-08-1928).

this spirit that all of you know for the great grace of God, and we have to live integrally. At this point I am near the great call and you too, soon or late. And we all, I hope, shall be united in Paradise and from there we shall

see how much this Opera is working for the good of the souls and the glory of God.

But what responsibility, if by our blame this spirit should be missed and we allow it to be transformed. It should be our ruin for all eternity. That's why the devil wants and shall do everything, not by the external enemies, but by ourselves – *gens tua etc*...[106] – They are great words to meditate. No external strength, only we, dear Counsellors...

And now on my knees I pray to and beg you: if you want, if we want one day to gather all together in heaven with Jesus and Mary, live, live till the death the pure and genuine spirit that Jesus himself gave us, thus, growing in goodness, consider yourselves as rag and clay, available for everything; all things are great in the house of God.

In C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

Act of my last will. In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

[106] Your people… (Jn 18: 35).

*6978/A 7-8-1947

On the occasion of the IV centenary of the death of St Gaetano Thiene and on the 40° anniversary of the foundation of the House.

My beloved sons,

This morning, straight after celebrating the Holy Mass, a word I felt in my heart and it came spontaneous on my lips, and it deeply impressed me; I suddenly tell you this word, you

who have the grace to dwell in this palace of God and to live under the wings of the divine Providence.

And the word is this: “Sign my way”.

Today’s hour is very dark; we don’t know what can happen unexpectedly. In this darkness how many people lost their way!

But the divine Providence, that for great evils finds great remedies, calls us too to indicate the way for many our brothers so that they can avoid to go to ruin and to the precipice. We have lost the way because we have gone away from God, from the gospel, from the life of the Apostles and the first Christians. We should put ourselves on the way that alone leads to the eternal salvation and can promise peace, wellbeing and even earthly prosperity.

We have to go back to God and to his holy law, we have to go back to Christ and his gospel, not only in theory but in practice, not only the others have to go but ourselves,

and mainly ourselves priests and religious. We have to live like the first Christians.

Beloved sons, I first put a hand on my heart and wonder: do I know and practice this way that I have to sign for others? I have to know well it, to go before my brothers, near and far, with the lantern of faith, and the flame of charity and good works.

So do this yourselves too. What a grace God gives us through this invitation, but also what a responsibility!

I tell you for a certainty: the Opera of the Poor Servants has a close relation with the present hour. We need to be in peak condition in order to fulfil the new great designs, characteristic of the grave hour we are living.

In these days, consecrated to the thanksgiving for the gifts and innumerable graces that the divine Providence granted the House along forty years of life, under the protection of St Gaetano Thiene, in the IV centenary of his death, we firmly resolve to renew ourselves, living the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, in order to meet our vocations' requirements and to go ahead of others with our ardent torch of faith and charity, and thus signing the road that certainly leads to eternal life.

Pray a lot for me, close as I am to the great call. I am always near you with my prayer and suffering, and now also I fatherly bless you.

Your most beloved in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

7079/B 10-8-1947.

The Father to his beloved sons, on the fiftieth anniversary of his taking clerical habit.[107]

The Poor Servant is always happy of the place that God granted him, whatever it is, and he doesn't suffer from those inner excitements by which some souls are continuously rethinking their vocation and easily changing path, seeking for a more satisfying resolution. There is no a true resolution but an interior one; and it is only the consciousness that it is not so important what place we occupy in the Church of God, but the way we occupy this place.

Even the most humble place can light up by the light of holiness, and that's of great importance, only that.

The one who takes pain to organize, manage and serve a lot of apostolic works, although with good will, he runs a risk to get wrong. On the contrary, the one who is satisfied with his mission – and should rather try to deepen it than overcome it in order to devote to another one – so that in it all things are suitable and well done, to serve God and man, he owns the formula of happiness, perfection and success. *Non multa sed multum*.[108]

Fr. John

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107 This is a thin cardboard printed by types.

108 Do not perform many things, but very well.

LETTER 51 Verona, 18 August 1947.

My beloved brothers,

May the grace and peace of Jesus the Blessed be always with us.

This morning I felt writing to all our religious families, to remind all of you an important argument, and I request every local superior to read and explain my letter commenting on the right attitude and firmness to our dear brothers and priests.

And above all I remind all of them that the Opera of the Poor Servants ~~of divine Providence~~ is the pupil of God's eye, because it is He who has founded it and directs it with special Providence. Now Satan has his assistants and he uses the biting and grumbling tongue to attack it, and unfortunately it is those whom the Providence has blessed with graces and gifts. I put this warning to them: that they may ask forgiveness from the Lord and they may live all the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, and when they talk to the outsiders they weigh their words. It is not sufficient to say to obey Fr. Giovanni (Calabria), but one must do what Fr. Giovanni says.

It is the Lord who wanted me to say this to you, to save the grumblers from punishments.

Our Constitutions are very severe in this regard and I want that all may read and meditate the Rule no. 91 that says thus: "Avoid at all cost the grumbling, suffocation of

charity and peace, spreader of disagreement, mainly if it refers to the dispositions of the superiors. One who, in spite of being warned, does not correct this defect shall be sent out" (cf D 82, l, from the book of Constitutions approved by the Holy See).

Let everyone make a serious examination of conscience and promise to improve, if he does not want to be sent out directly by God.

Pray much for me, and I bless you as usual with my paternal heart.

In C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 52 Annual retreat 1947

My loving and very loving brothers,

May the peace and joy of the Lord Jesus be with us always.

I thank and praise the Lord who allowed me to address to you my poor words during this annual retreat, a time of great grace and mercy. This may be, perhaps, for the last time I address to you in the name of God, the absolute Master of this Opera, destined to do wonderful miracles in these days so dark even to the holy Church, that only the practical return to the life style of the Apostles and the first Christians can brighten, and illuminate.

But what shall I tell you as my last words and my testament?

Not new things, but I will repeat what I told you many times and retold so often.

And first of all remember that the Opera of the Poor Servants is great, very great in God's mind. Born in the sacred Heart of Jesus Crucified, it is destined to fulfill great and new divine plans proper to the actual time, on condition that we live the pure and genuine spirit that the divine Founder has placed from the beginning, on condition that all of us may correspond, living to the dignity of our special vocation.

The devil trembles, and he does not want the Opera, and will attempt with all possible means to destroy it, if it would be possible. But as I told you again, I do not fear the external enemies; instead, the fight and contradiction that are coming from outside, will serve us to solidify us. Only ~~of~~ one thing frightens me: the sin. I am afraid if the devil could seek and find one of us as his assistant. My god what a ruin it would be! But what a lot to the one who profanes the house of God with a sin, and causes common damage to the Opera together with the demon!

When in years back I used more frequently to address to the boys my poor words, ~~and~~ many of you would remember that I used to say that the house was blessing or ruin: blessings for the one who corresponds and ruin to the one who doesn't; blessing or ruin in the time framework, but all the more in the eternity. If this is true for the boys, how much more it is relevant to us, dear brothers!

For this on my knee I plead and implore you: ~~to~~ be attentive to correspond; that the name of the Poor Servants of Divine Providence may not be for us a judgment when we have to appear before the tribune of God, because o

dear brothers, the day for all will come in which we have to account for our life, for the graces we received and did not return. But we have to account as members of this Opera of God that lived for the past forty years, and it could be said that it has brought us up, nourished us, and all that we have at present we have towards and in view of the Opera.

Live the life of faith.

In a world that moves away all the more from God, we shall inflame in us this flame that will enlighten even to others their way. But let our faith be ~~a~~ practical; therefore I recommend you the spirit of faith: to see the Lord in everything and everywhere, even in the painful happenings, even when the Lord allows trials. The saints have conquered everything thru faith, and we too shall be winners according to the greatness of our faith.

See the Lord in the superiors, in the orders they give you. If this thought was familiar to us and we could always repeat: "*Dominus est!* It is the Lord!" how rich in merit should be our life!

And afterwards, full and filial abandonment to God and to his Providence. God cannot take back his word, now he has told: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and everything will be given to you as well".

If the Providence is missing, we shall see if first of all we have failed to it; and if the lord will allow trials, then more faith, more faith and we will see God. And show to everybody this abandonment in approaching the benefactors.

In dealing with the business, you shall not show over concern, you shall not show up yourself but let God, and the Opera be on the limelight. Remember we have to decrease. Who pays attention to the individual stones of this beautiful church? We admire only the church in its totality. We are the living stones that make up another edifice that is the Opera of the Poor Servants. Let all see the Opera, without caring to ourselves, I repeat we must disappear.

I recommend you very much the spiritual life; we shall remain united to Jesus, as the branches to the vine. What can the branches do if it does not remain attached to vine? We shall remember the great words of Jesus: "apart from me you can do nothing".

Therefore the practice of spiritual exercises, give up everything but do not set aside the pious practices. Even though there is plenty of work we find time to dine at table; likewise the spiritual exercises are unavoidable food of our Christian, religious and priestly life.

Ours may be above all a Eucharist centered and Marian devotions.

The Eucharist is the typical devotion to our Opera: living Jesus in our midst, dwelling in our tabernacles, who invites us to himself to console and sanctify us, who guarantees us eternal life. What can we search more and what shall we search as better? Therefore for us priests the Celebration of the Holy Mass and for you brothers the Holy Communion must be the center of our life and our day.

But to Jesus we go thru Mary.

We should be devout of the loving Madonna; we shall venerate in her above all ~~in her~~ the great privilege of Immaculate Conception. In the perpetual offices she is the mistress of our Opera.

Be humble; humility makes every virtue possible and stable.

Love the concealment, *"buseta e taneta"* (see lett. *383, 4-5-1932): the Lord then will come to search and use us.

Be obedient and docile: *like rags and clay, without head*, then the Lord will lend his.

Do not search the human protection; God alone is enough for us.

We shall be living Gospels, to radiate around us the light of Christ, so that people may know and glorify our Father in heaven.

We shall take care to be very faithful to the holy vows; they will be one day our glory; do in such way that none of you may have it as an issue of judgment.

In a very special way I recommend you the holy poverty: do not take anything as your own.

United with poverty there is the simplicity in everything: in the dress, in the rooms, in the dormitories. Oh! What a nice ornament is the simplicity. Even in the hairstyle, no worldly fashion, alas otherwise!

I recommend you very much the vow and virtue of chastity, for which we live the life of the angels already in this world, to which the most beautiful and great promises

of the Lord are attributed. How many precautions are necessary, especially since we have to live in the midst of such a corruptions of the world! Be like the ray of sun, that penetrates everywhere without getting stained, on the other hand purifying the slush of the street.

To you dear brother priests, I recommend you to be cautious in performing your ministries. Care the souls, only the souls, and among them the poorest, the most abandoned and the most rejected in the world.

And also you my dear brothers, cultivate great precaution in dealing with the boys: *maxima debetur puero reverentia*.[109] Do not touch and do not allow yourself to be touched; guard your heart, don't degrade yourself to any gesture or words that are unfit for a consecrated soul to God. Give good example in everything, always; alas if someone gives bad example! My god, better die than give a slight scandal!

I recommend you the charity: Oh charity is divine, it is God himself: "*Deus caritas est!*" (see lett. *32 17-11-1920). I cannot think of a Poor Servant without charity. Re-reading a conference held for you some years ahead during a course of an annual retreat, I found these words written, "If I come to know a religious without charity, on my knee I would plead him to go away; he would be the ruin of the Opera". These words have the same value even now and I confirm it in the name of blessed Jesus, who from his own demands above all they may be one and be consumed in charity: "*Ut unum sint*" (see let. 31, 1942).

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[109] The child should be given most respect.

We have to actualize in us, in our religious families this heart beat of the divine Heart of Jesus. We have to extend it to all the brothers on earth, especially those separated ones or not yet enlightened by the light of the gospel; we have to pray for them, offering sacrifices, doing our best in all the ways so that they also may participate in the gifts of grace we have.

Let our charity be practical, let us help each other, bearing one another, among us let there be only one heart and one soul, and let may never appear in our houses the great evil of grumbling. The grumbler lends his tong to the demon to wound Jesus Christ in the person of his brother. Remember that Judah before becoming the betrayer was a grumbler. For this I am afraid, and the grumbling frightens me.

And finally once again I tell you and repeat you: listen the present and future Custodian. I am poor and fragile, zero and misery, but as long as the merciful God lets me to be here, you have the obligation to listen to me. Be my breath, count me as framed in the Opera. See, sometimes a glance is enough for me, a word and an attention to console my heart, which often swims in the bitterness of pain. Do this charity to your father, who carries you always in heart and mind and love you so much in the Lord.

Here is, loving brothers, what I wanted to tell you. Hold these poor words of mine as my last memorial, as my testament; and above all put them in to practice. Blessed are you then! You will fulfill the divine plans, and you will have the paradise right from this world, in your heart, and one day a great recompense in heaven. That no one is absent and we all may be united together ~~in heaven~~ in

praising Lord forever: *ut cum fratribus meis et pueris tuis laudem Te in saecula saeculorum. Amen* (see lett. 3, 19-3-1933).

LETTER 53 7 October 1947

Loving brothers in Christ,

The grace and peace of blessed Jesus be always with us.

To all of you it is well-known how precious it is to the Holy Father the care and assistance of the youngsters, especially the poorest and abandoned and therefore exposed to greater dangers.

The intentions of prayer in October he has willed to entrust to the 35 millions enrolled in the Apostolate of Prayer is exactly "for the abandoned children"; and recently the Vatican Radio, commenting on such an intention, was narrating how much it has been done and how much ~~more~~ it is left to do in this very important sector, which could have repercussion even very grave in the social set up, especially in this hour.

The invitation of the Holy Father has gone deep into our heart and compels us to do as much as it is possible to realize it in a concrete and practical way, all the more being this the special goal of our Good Children Home, which since 40 years (1907-1947) has proceeded welcoming under the pavilions of divine Providence hundreds of abandoned youngsters. At present there are

more than five hundred Christian families composed of our old students, who project thus in the society the fruits of good schooling they had and the teaching they carry on.

So far our Opera is limited to residential children; but it seems the time has come to widen the rays of Opera and charity, extending also to the external our humble good work.

The Divine Providence came to our aid and gave us the House of ex GIL[110] near Porta Nuova (New Door). We will transform it in a place to gather the youth, and the name "Patronato Buoni Fanciulli" (Patronage for the Good Boys) will indicate the activity and the goals of it.

In fact since last year we are gathering young people during the free time of the school, in order to prevent them from the danger of lazy and to take them from the street. All those who are very poor we give lunch and snacks, providing a lovely assistance during studying and recreation.

At the same time other important activity was born and will continue to grow for all those students coming from the province to the city to continue their studies. We will create the "House for the Students". In this house the students will find assistance during the time after classes, they will receive food, rooms to study and a comfortable place to take their rest.

It is the God's will that during this year we will start contemporaneously another activity, whose importance nobody can ignore: the Professional Schools. It will start, if God will, in the month of November. In these schools

[110] An old fascist structure for the training of youth.

we will receive poor young people, who, finished their elementary school, will like to learn a trade. They will stay from the morning until evening, alternating hours of work, study and rest. They will receive lunch at midday, everything for free, according to the program and charism of the Opera.

For sure the things that will burden us are not easy, the difficulties will be innumerable, but we trust in the help of the Divine Providence. Nevertheless, we solicit many who will have the possibility to become ministers and cooperators in this great, necessary and providential Opera. All the more so because the place was completely destroyed by the war and we need a lot of money to rebuild it and to adapt it according to the activities. The government and others civil authorities will not contribute for this activity.

We need so much money also in order to provide machinery, tools and utensils, benches for work and school and other furniture. Yet it is necessary to face the problem.

Shall we leave the activity because we lack of means? If it happens, we will betray our special mission of good. On the other hand there are still, thanks ~~be~~ to God, very good souls and generous hearts that deserve to understand and do charitable works. I saw in fact that in order to do charitable works we need to be worthy. The charity never let the people to become poor, on the contrary it is a sort of richness for this world but especially for the eternity. We address all these people, in the name of the Lord and on behalf of many poor young who are asking for help and are waiting for it. Alas if among us we will hear the lament of the Prophet: “The children were looking for bread and they did not find somebody to break

it for them". This is the time to do a true "crusade of charity".

May the Lord illumine and move the good souls, his faithful servants to do what is possible. All things that we offer in charity for the Lord's love will be kept in a special bank that never will fail and will reward us hundred per one: the bank of the divine Providence.

I invoke for you all graces and gifts from heaven.

Truly yours

Fr. J. Calabria

This letter is an expression of what Fr. Calabria said many times and wrote it also in official documents: "The Lord will permit moments of great trial in order to test our faith; even should be a moment to go door by door begging something; but the Lord will give the Casante to know it" (Commentary of Fr. Calabria to the Constitutions: see also Letter 43).

Even in this case the exception confirms the rule of total abandonment to the divine Providence, whose essence is not only do not ask, but do not be worry and anxious.

**** 5447/B 9-11-1947***

My dear Fr. Ottorino,[111]

The grace and peace of blessed Jesus be always with us. I am sending together with this letter the information of our beloved Congregation as you requested in your last letter. As you can see it is schematic, in order to help you in your proposal. It is up to you in your talk to clarify ~~it~~ and enlarge it.

We must keep in mind that the Opera exists because of the will of the Lord, He is the one who founded it (it was born from the Sacred Side of the Crucified Jesus); I am no more than a miserable instrument, poor among the poorest and, because of that, placed here by the divine mercy as a guardian and Casante of this Opera, which is small and humble in itself, but great in God's mind, because it is destined to fulfill great and divine designs proper for the grave hour that we face at this very moment in the world. And we will fulfill these designs if we are able to live the pure and genuine spirit that the divine Founder has put in the Opera since the beginning, forty year ago: faith, great faith in God, Father of all mankind; filial trust and abandonment in the divine Providence, trying to put in practice, at much is possible, in our life the great program: *"Quaerite primum regnum Dei et iustitiam eius, et haec omnia adiicientur vobis"*.

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[111] We inserted this personal letter to Fr. Ottorino Foffano, the head of the communities in Rome, because it is very important to understand the "pure and genuine spirit of the Opera".

Dear Fr. Ottorino, all the words of the holy Gospel have, I would say, as a consecratory value, they do what they signify: but we must live them; we can give back when we said a word, but the Lord never gives back. We should experience difficulties and trials, but then we have to exert more and more our faith, in order that the Lord will manifest to our lives.

We will not live only for ourselves this abandonment; we must manifest to others this divine attribute of the Providence that is forgotten and unknown for mankind. We must manifest it through our activities, present and future, that, in order to be legitimated and genuine should bring always the seal of "Do not worry". Never we should stop a good activity, or exclude a person for the only reason that there is lacking of means. These means will come if we receive with faith this person and with faith we continue this activity. We must go where nobody likes to go, where there is nothing to look for reward, to the most poor, to the humble ones. We must search souls, abandoned creatures, rejected, and repudiated: these are and will be the jewels of the Opera and in this way the Providence will be manifested in all its power.

Moreover we must not ask, any kind of propaganda, we must not look for human protections. We should receive as a gift all those things that the Providence sends us. We shall not posses, we must live day by day without accumulate things for tomorrow, the Providence will think about tomorrow as it provides for today.

Regarding the members of the Opera, priests and brothers, I always though them in God's plan as one, united, in full collaboration, equal in everything, worthy to

fulfill any kind of office even of management, even though, ordinarily, the Superior of the houses is better if it is the priest. I consider brothers and priests as body and soul of the same person: this is the genuine spirit of the Opera; this is the will of God for us.

Dear Fr. Ottorino, I like to say to you many and many things, but you know very well our spirit; do and say what the Lord inspires you. Please pray for me because I really need it, because the souls and activities of God cost a lot of sacrifices. Please say to everyone to pray for me, I bring all of them in my heart and in my mind, they are very close to me. I bless all of them and you particularly.

Truly yours in C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

P.S. As many times I told you, the entire world belongs to God. The characteristic of the Opera is this: our students, after plus two, are free to go wherever the Lord calls them. More than 40 priests are in other dioceses or religious congregations. Those who desire to consecrate themselves to our Opera go out, look, pray and afterwards, if they feel the desire to be consecrated to the Opera, ask to enter, in this way they are chosen. This is our fundamental point.

*6978/B Christmas 1947

My Dear,

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you always.

I send my warm wishes for this festivity of Christmas and for the New Year 1948 that, I hope, we will have the grace to start soon.

My desire is that you can be always faithful to the pure and genuine spirit, which you know already in many years of experience. If you are faithful to this spirit, you will contribute to the development of this great Opera, in which because the mercy and grace of God, we are members.

I am always near you with my mind and my heart, near also with my sufferings, that some days are very great. I hope these sufferings will help me and you all to receive the blessings from the Lord in order that your ministry will be worthier for God's glory, and for the good of the souls of that Hamlet.

Please pray for me, I really need it. I bless you with paternal blessing, given more with my heart than with the hand. A great blessing to all of you my dear brothers,

in C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 54 Christmas 1947

My dear and beloved brothers,

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you always and accompany you in the way of perfection to the service of God.

We are in the festivity of Christmas and my heart is thinking especially in you, whom the divine will called, indeed it called all of us to be members of this great Opera, fit for to the current time, so difficult, but very important for the Church and for the entire world.

As I know and can, I recommend you to correspond more and more to your holy vocation, living according to the spirit pure and genuine of the Opera.

"Which is this spirit?" asked me one of the Poor Servants. You know it already. It is the one the divine Founder has inspired since the beginning and has developed during these forty years of the Opera: spirit of humility, detachment from the things of the world, search of the kingdom of God, filial abandonment in the holy Providence, and not to look for human protections. They will come, provided we will not look for them. Souls, souls! This is our program. The souls of the poorest, of the humble, of the rejected ones: these are the precious jewels through which the Opera of the Poor Servants will become rich.

Therefore my wish in this Christmas is that we must live according to the dignity of our vocation, and

conscious about the great grace that the Lord gave us calling us to be part of this Opera.

The great things are made by small ones; then let me to call your attention, our attention in some small things that in other time I recommended you: small great things that, if we are able to put it in practice with docility of sons, will help us to live our pure and genuine spirit.

1 - Avoid any kind of pretentiousness, comfort and superficiality. Keep all those things that are necessary, because it is easy that little by little we exaggerate in store wealth that is not proper for a Poor Servant. You must always depend from the one who has the moral responsibility of the House and you will not mistake. Let our vow of poverty never risk becoming ridicule. We must observe it cheerfully and generously. If there is something lacking we must be happy because we are poor. Remember our dear brother Francisco Perez: he was dependent in everything even the smallest ones.

2 - Regard to the person, we must avoid any singularity especially in our hair: of course we must be clean, well presentable, but never extravagant elegance. Our modesty will be a constant and eloquent preaching to others.

I saw, in my experience, many desertions from persons that I never have doubted or expected. And yet, the first signals came from these small things or particularities.

3 - You must be docile, obedient. Depend with spirit of faith from the superiors even in small things, in expenses for things that you believe are necessary for you and for the House. The obedience will save you from

abuses and will make precious your life, because it will make precious your deeds and the vow of obedience will be a happy reality that will prevent us from mistakes and will make us like Jesus, who for our sake was made obedient until the death.

4 - One thing that I feel in my heart is the use of the bicycle, especially for the priests. I fear that the use will become abuse. This will be a great bad for the Opera. Therefore I recommend you:

a) - The bicycle should be used only in extreme necessity, especially for our ministry in order to go to farther places to help our co-brother, to search souls, etc.

b) - In the city, especially in the principal streets, it is not good to see the priests using the bike and it can be dangerous. You must avoid passing some of the streets. Choose the streets less frequented by people, if it is in the periphery is better. When there is no other option and you will pass in the center of the city, it is not bad idea to come down of the bike and to bring it in your hands: this will help your personal dignity.

c) - Particularly I recommend you: we must remember that we are religious and special religious. We must keep ourselves in our proper dignity and external moderation. Using the bicycle, according to the orientations of the local superiors, do it in good spirit. It is the spirit by which we do the things, that gives soul to them. If the spirit is lacking, all recommendations and limitations are useless. If you use the bike, please keeps a good comportment, dignity, avoiding any kind of exhibitionism, competition and curiosity. I know well that now the bike is not a means of pleasure even for the people

in the world. We must be careful that will not become a means of pleasure for us religious and priests. We must use it prudently in order to serve our brothers, to do charity and to search souls.

The last important thing that I would like to tell you: you have heard already that the Holy Father has written an encyclical letter about the modern evils, and he gave an alarm about the gravity of the current time. It is a terrible time, we do not know what kind of things we will face, and unfortunately many of us are not aware about it.

The Pope exhorts us to pray in order to propitiate the divine mercy to the world. We must be among the first to support the great desires of the Supreme Pontiff. In these intentions we are having special prayers in front of blessed Sacrament here in San Zeno in Monte. In the other houses I leave the freedom of the local superiors to establish what they believe opportune to do in this matter.

I finish this letter exhorting you once again about our spirituality. I am not afraid, my dear brother, about external enemies: they never will destroy the Opera. We are those who can destroy it if we are not faithful to our pure and genuine spirit. May the Lord preserve us from such a disgrace.

Please pray for me that always I keep you in my mind and in my heart. Be my life and my breath. Let's work all together for the diffusion of the Kingdom of God and the salvations of souls, waiting one day to be united with the Lord in the eternal happiness.

In C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 55 Epiphany of the Lord 1948

My dear and beloved brothers,

The grace and peace of Jesus the Lord be always with us.

To my precedent letter, I send to you this one in a very few days of distance in order to give you other important recommendations. First of all, you must keep, we must keep this is a very particular Opera, which has a very narrow connection with this particular and grave hour that affects the entire humanity more and more. But we, the Poor Servants are the Opera, as I told you several times. This name is not only a simple label, but a practical way of life. We must be what the name signifies.

We are servants; we cannot pretend to be owners. The servant depends always from the owner, he do everything in order to please him. We have an owner who is Father and will give us an eternal reward for a brief and almost momentary service.

We are not only servants, we are also poor. We must be happy and satisfied with what the Providence is giving us; we must love the holy poverty, ready to accept with generous abandonment in God all sufferings, sacrifices, privations that are the inseparable companions of the true poverty and our true richness.

The Opera is like a scale in perfect equilibrium: a small piece of any particular thing is enough to move it to the other part. Likewise a very simple and small

transgression can bring the Opera to a great disconcertment.

We must keep ourselves in this attitude of Poor Servants, that is to be faithful and vigilant servants, always ready and attentive to the signs of blessed Lord, absolute Owner, as it is written in the perennial offices, and on whom we must depend in everything, putting out from the House and from ourselves all those things that are not according to His will. We will be the "cleaners of God", who always maintain clean his palace and especially our heart, our soul, where He dwells with his holy grace, making us sanctuaries of his divinity.

Be attentive in order to maintain the pure and genuine spirit. Observe the radio: the small movement of the tuner is enough in order to lose the frequency of the transmission.

I say and I repeat you: follow the Casante, be obedient to him in everything, be attentive even to a particular sign, to a small desire of him, and a movement of his eyebrow. I say to you: do not look at the exteriority of the person, always see him in the context of the Opera. Do not consider the person, look at him three fingers above his head and you will see God in him, in his orders, in his advices, in his words and you will see certainly the will of God. For example, if he will tell you put there this nail, you must do it, even if it seems to you useless or wrong.

With this supernatural spirit, I tell and repeat you, obey the present and future Casante, on the contrary the Opera will lose its particular characteristic and its special physiognomy.

Remember well that in our duty and activities always should appear the Opera, we must decrease and disappear.

The great things are made by small ones; as I told you last time, keep as treasure the following practical recommendations, observing them punctually:

1 - Be faithful to the visit of blessed Sacrament before to leave the house as well as when you come back.

2 - Receive first the blessing of the superior or the priest who substitutes him, saying where are you going and what are the reasons of your going out. When you come back tell him what you did.

3 - Do not go to the house of relatives or friends without permission even if somebody is sick. This permission must be given rarely and with caution.

4 - If you meet estrange people, please don't speak with them of our intimacy and don't show things and events of our family. Be reserved and prudent. Mortify the curiosity to know everything; do not stop to read banners on the street, titles of magazines and newspapers, cinematographic advertisement, etc. The Poor Servant must be exemplar in everything, edifying the people with his modesty.

5 - One word about the correspondence: please do not write letters if it is not necessary, because we are poor. Give all the letters open to the superior. It is a great sin to send it without permission; as well as the correspondence that you receive must be seen by the superior. Read please, in this matter, what is written in our holy Constitutions and observe it in the letter and spirit. Never give exceptions,

only the ones are contemplated in the Constitutions.

If you will write a letter to a person of other sex, be attentive and avoid expressions not opportune even if it is written without bad intension. Our delicacy in this matter must be absolute.

Few days ago we received the news about the death of our King Vittorio Emanuele III. I read with pleasure all the kind telegrams and especially the one sent by the Holy Father, the respectful comments of the newspapers and about the solemn funeral. I gave ~~the~~ order to the superiors of the neighbor Houses to announce the news with deference and to invite all the members to pray for his blessed soul considering the caducity of human things and earthly greatness. It is not up to us to judge and condemn. *De mortuis nihil, nisi bene*:[112] it is human and Christian; in these things we must give good example.

Please pray for me, I really need it. I bless all of you.

In C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

[112] About the deads say nothing but good things.

LETTER 56 Holy Thursday 24-3-1948

My dear and beloved brothers,

The grace and peace of blessed Jesus Christ be always with us. Here we are also this year, because of the mercy and goodness of the Lord, very close to the Easter celebration that is and must be always for all of us a true passage from the life perhaps of sins to the life of the grace, from a tepid and lax life to a life more observant and enthusiastic. This is the invitation from the Church through the touching expressions of the liturgy, exhorting us to take off the old man in order to put on the new man. "If you really have been raised with Jesus Christ – it says to us – seek the things that are above, do not taste and desire other things than the ones from heaven: '*quae sursum sunt, quaerite, quae sursum sunt sapite*' ".

The Easter of this year is a new and strong calling to holiness, especially for us Poor Servants. Never as now must we feel the need that God remains with us, we need that God will not leave and abandon us in this obscure and grave hour. It is not God who needs of us, but we have a great and absolute need of Him. Therefore we should call him with tears and groan. We must pray frequently and with fervor.

The best prayer, remember well my dear brothers, is the holiness of our life. If this is an invitation for everybody, most particularly it is for us Poor Servants, who with God's grace and for our mission as religious, ~~we~~ should be light and life for the entire world.

My dear and beloved brothers, how many times did I tell and repeat you that we must be efficient, living in plenitude the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera; that God has news and greats designs; that our Opera is for the current time; that many look at San Zeno in Monte a "truly blessed land", as a citadel placed on the mountain, and they feel new vigor in their faith, comfort in their suffering, looking at us and considering us holy? What responsibility if we are not holy! We will betray them.

I hope you remember well what I told you last year, that the Lord, because of a particular pact of goodness and mercy, calls our Opera and trusts to it a special mission and reparative action. You understand that the best reparation consists in a continue effort to acquire perfection and holiness.

Only through our personal holiness we can sanctify the Opera and the world and "indicate the way" to others, that way, that narrow and one way, that brings to the true life as well as to the temporal prosperity, which consists in the observance of the divine law.

Believe me, my dear and beloved brothers, the best preaching is through the good example of our life. The people are tired already to hear beautiful words, arguments, etc. They like actions and deeds. Our good deeds are the ones glorify the heavenly Father. What do we profit to preach, to teach perfection and do not put it in practice? Could we say then as the Apostle says: Imitate me as I imitate Christ Jesus"?

In order to be holy do not think that we need to do extraordinary things, no! It is enough that our dispositions must be holy and perfect in which we do our daily

activities. Remember that even our task is very humble, we can enlighten it with the light of holiness; it is the most important, only this.

At this point, my dear and beloved brothers, we must put a hand on our heart and ~~to~~ do a serious examination of our conscience: how are we living? We are called Poor Servants, are we so in practice? For God's love, this great and honorable name should not be one day our condemnation.

Therefore, as I know and can, I recommend you the inner life and the practices of piety, of which they are the nourishment. We must live with faith. Always we should see and judge the people with spirit of faith, with supernatural criteria. Let's give importance to the holy Rules. We must be humble; *"buseta e taneta*" (see lett. *383, 4-5-1932), then the Lord will come to our aid and will bring us, if it is His will, on the ~~top of the~~ lamp stand, but on our part we must keep always ourselves hidden and disappear, we must be only Poor Servants.

Please do not try to do great things according to the world. Jesus has remained in Nazareth house for 30 years, doing the most simple and humble services.

When will his examples be the norm of our life? When will we be, as several times I am repeating, "Christ like and living gospels"? Only at this point we can do miracles and ~~to~~ fulfill the great designs that God has for us and for this Opera.

I repeat here something I said few days ago during lunch to my brothers in San Zeno in Monte. I think that time to time the Lord sends his Angel to see if we are

efficient, and if he finds us as he wills, i.e. attentive to live the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, He not only is happy, but also, because of our faithfulness, I think he wants to send many graces to the entire humanity, on the brink of the abyss.

What a privilege, what a grace, my dear beloved brothers, but at the same time what a great responsibility!

Who can say to me that with the holiness of our life, the true spirit of the Poor Servants lived in plenitude, will not be united the salvation of the poor humanity? I say these things to you to ease my conscience. Alas of me if I will not say what I feel in the deep of my poor heart! Please I ask you to listen to my poor words even they are always the same or the same bell that rings.

No, no my dear brother, do not think in this way. One day you must, we must give account to the Lord, each one in his state or according to the graces ~~that~~ he received. And we Poor Servant what a multitude of graces have received! For God's love please correspond to it!

Saying these things to you, I say it with due distinction also to the External Brothers, because they are also part of this Opera and ~~they~~ receive also graces, merits and responsibilities of the Poor Servants. If they also live in the love and fear of God, spreading the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, first in their houses fulfilling all things according to their status and also outside of the house, in the office, in their job or wherever they may be, oh, what a good they can do, especially in this terrible and decisive hour for our country, preferred by God, because it is the place of Christ's Vicar and from where should start the light and the word to defeat error.

To you, my dear External Brothers, especially in this grave and decisive time I recommend charity. Be firm to combat what is wrong, but always great charity with all those who commit mistakes: "*interficite errores, diligite homines!*"[113] this is the great rule of St. Augustine. Oh, if instead to confront the adversaries (I do not call them enemies, because they are also our brothers), if instead to inveigh against them, we try to illumine them directly or indirectly, praying for them! In these days ago I felt to celebrated the Mass for all of them, so that the Lord illumine them in order that they can see the abyss on whose brink they are walking without being conscious of this. It is my desire that in all the Houses we do, after Easter, a day of prayer *"pro Russia",* and for all those who fight against God and the Church.

Let us unite our prayer together with the prayer of Jesus on the Cross: "Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing".

Let us offer our prayer in order that conversion of many brothers and the hour of God's victory over the world and his peace for the poor humanity will hasten.

May the Lord give us this grace.

These are the things, my dear and beloved brothers, that I felt to say to you. They are words coming spontaneous from my heart. You must receive them with true spirit of faith and pray so much and always for me, that I can live first all these things that I have said to you

[113] Love people and combat with the errors.

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and I can find great mercy at my very great approaching calling.

I wish you a happy and holy Easter! I pray for all of you in my poverty and I bless you and your dearest ones.

Truly your most loving Father, in C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

8766 28-3-1948

To the Poor Servants religious:

To all my beloved brothers, to all the members of San Zeno in Monte's House, to al the integrants of this great Opera of the Lord, in this moment rises spontaneously from my heart a wish of Happy Easter.

Yes, yes, Happy Easter, my dearest! May this holy day mark for everyone the beginning of a most holy life, as the Lord wants from us who have the great fortune to live in this divine "ship", that live in the mid of the sea, but never the water will enter in this our "ship" if we will not allow it.

Good and Happy Easter! I bring all of you in my mind and in my heart and I hope that my trials and sufferings bring to my poor soul and for all of you a patrimony of holiness.

Once again Happy Easter! I bless all of you more with my heart than with my hand,

in C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 57 Vorona, 23 April 1948

Letter addressed to the Religious Family of Rome. It was brought by the novice master Fr. Pietro Murari during his first trip to Rome, from April 23 to May 3, 1948.

My dear and beloved brothers,[114]

The peace and grace of Jesus be with us always. I feel inspired by the Lord to send, through Fr. Murari, my blessing, my greetings and my poor word, to which you will pay attention as word of God.

Always, but especially now, it is necessary to live the pure and genuine spirit of our very great Opera, the

[114] In order to understand this letter we have to consider that Abbot Caronti did not yet conclude the Apostolic Visit, because he said that the attitude of the religious in Rome was still like at the beginning of the visit.

spirit of the Gospel *"Quaerite primum,* that we can find in our Constitutions, in our Rules and in our daily life.

Let us do a serious exam, remembering that the secret and efficiency of our work depends upon our personal sanctification: *"sine me nihil potestis facere"* (see lett. *6960, 26-3-1935). Nobody can give what he does not have. We must live from Christ; inner life. We must be living Gospels in this world that has forgotten it.

There is still a great part of the gospel that we need to put it in practice!

And in order to put it in practice, I recommend you as I know and can do it, to live our holy Rules. They are the practical expression, time by time, of the will of God. Read them and meditate them constantly.

Living voice of God's will is your Father, the Casante of this great Opera, to whom you must listen as the spokesman of God. You do not observe my misery; see God, who has called me to this great task. I speak to you as in my death-bed. I feel to betray my vocation if I will not tell you these things: listen to me, listen to the present and the future Casante of the Opera, if you like to work and obtain fruits in the Opera of the Poor Servants; he will have always particular lights and graces.

We are passing by, but the Opera will remain. As the world looks at the Church in this particular moment, the Church looks at us. That is why we must be always in full efficiency. The Opera has a most close relationship with the current time. Several years ago I was not aware about it, but now it is a very clear will of God: our Opera is Opera for the current time. Please do not forget it.

As the Lord has willed to spread the Christianity through the Apostles, now it is the divine will that the world come back to Christ through the Opera of the Poor Servants. It is a sublime vocation but full of commitment and responsibility.

I tell you: look more the quality rather than the quantity. The few will become many, if they are filled with the pure and genuine spirit. Look for your personal sanctification, be filled with Christ; *non multa, sed multum* (see lett. *7079/B, 10-8-1947).

. Our person must be hidden. Remember well and always our motto: *"Buseta e taneta"* (see lett. *383, 4-5-1932). We on our part must love the spirit of littleness, do not put ourselves in evidence. If the Lord would like, he will place us on the candle stand, from our side we must desire to remain ignored and unknown. Indeed, the only way to be bright is giving good example and living with radicalism the ~~Holy~~ Gospel.

Let us live in the total and filial abandonment to the Divine Providence, without any material preoccupation: the Lord will send always what we need. Let us live separated from the earthly things and never put our trust in human means.

The Opera is God's garden. Perhaps will arise in it some special and particular tree, arouse by God which will require fix means. In these particular cases the Casante will give particular dispositions, but the spirit who inspires us should be the spirit of *Quaerite Primum.*

I recommend you to pay attention to the small things: Nothing is small in God's House and the great things are made from small ones.

I recommend you especially obedience, dependence, fraternal agreement in your initiatives.

The Lord needs you in order to enter ~~in~~ the souls. All of us are instruments in God's hands, also I, poor, zero and misery. In the Opera everybody is necessary in order to fulfill God's designs.

Let us work in the place where the obedience has sent us, let us work with passion and zeal, at the same time we should remember that our activity must be insert in the Opera as the branch in the trunk. The same sap will reach all the branches. Our heart must beat for the entire Opera, please do not isolate ourselves. Let's try that our Houses ~~must~~ be united as much as it is possible, taking part of the joys and sufferings of everyone: many rays but only one sun, many branches but only one trunk, many canals but only one source.

This is the time of God, the time of the great calls and mercies, the time of the translation of the Gospel into practice. Jesus Christ and the Church have strong and hardened opponents, but we must see in them more than adversaries to fight, brothers to save, souls to gain for Christ, to convert and love.

The world looks at the Church, but we are the Church. God looks at the Opera and we are the Opera. The world asks light, truth, love and salvation. We are the ones to maintain alive this ardent desire and to give ~~to~~ the world the divine gift of grace.

My dear and loving brothers, we must live our vocation and feel our responsibility. You are my life, my breath. I need you in order to live. I hope and I am sure that my dear Fr. Murari will bring me comforting news from you. You will see in Paradise what grace and merit you will receive because you sustained and listen to your Father, placed here for the good and mercy of the Lord.

My dear and beloved sons, I bless you with all the effusion of my heart, while I stay near, most near you through my prayers and appreciation. Please pray, pray for me. My wish is that everybody when finish our journey on earth, will meet, for God's grace, in the heavenly Jerusalem: *"ut cum fratribus meis et pueris tuis laudem Te in seacula seaculorum"* (see lett. 3, 19-3-1933).

In C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

8032 21-5-1948

To the Poor Servants Religious, Pineta Sacchetti – Rome

My beloved brothers,

The grace and peace of blessed Jesus be always with us.

I am here in front of my crucifix that should be yours also. These are the words that spontaneously come from my heart at this very moment that Fr. Ottorino comes back to your community. He is coming to help you, with great spirit of faith in God and abandonment in the divine Providence, in your daily apostolate, all meaningful,[115] especially in this hour of ~~great~~ grace, I say hour of miracle for our beloved country and for Rome, centre of great love, of the Holy Spirit who dwells continually in Christ's Vicar, the Supreme Pontiff, the reigning and glorious Pius XII.

Beloved brothers, on my knee I tell you, I beseech you, for God's love let this hour not pass away in vain without looking first of all at our personal holiness, with the spirit pure and genuine of the Opera.

If we will sanctify ourselves, we will sanctify all the members of the Opera. With our holiness we will fulfill all the great and new designs proper of this current time, that Jesus wants to fulfill through our Opera. What great grace but at the same time what responsibility! It seems to me to see in you a first ring of a mystic chain, with which the Lord likes to unite others and the last will be a great prize that we will experience as a gift in the midst of many sufferings and difficulties, the joy and peace of the soul, prelude of the great award that you will have at the end of your earthly life.

Beloved brothers, all together, one with all, under the guidance of the one in the name of the Lord is placed as responsible of the community in Rome, community at

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[115] The thought of Fr. Calabria in this autograph letter is not very clear; and indeed Fr. Ottorino considered it opportune to add some words to make it clearer; but in spite of that this period keeps incomplete.

which Jesus looks and helps and will help even with miracles, if they are necessary, always if it will be God's patrimony, living according to the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera.

Beloved brothers, please pray a lot for me and ask great mercy from the Lord for me. I keep all of you in my heart and one by one I bless you.

In C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***9011 Verona, 2-7-1948**

Dear and loving brothers:

The grace of blessed Jesus accompany you always in the path of your life, in order you can do a lot of good to many youth that the Divine Providence entrusts to you to help them through the way of good.

I have received joyfully your filial congratulations for my name-day. A little late I answer you and I am thankful for the expressions of gratitude and your prayers, because I really need it.

I think of you in these mountains contemplating the magnificence of the nature. It sings the glory of God and invites to think about heaven. I am sure that you will take

this time of repose of the body in order to strengthen your spirit and to render it more eager in the service of God. I ask the grace for you to go farther in your virtue, according to the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, in order to wider the field of our work and embrace many souls, shinning among them the grace, light and charity of Jesus.

Tell the young people that from far I follow them with paternal affection. The Divine Providence has brought them under its wings not only to relief of the body but especially in order to put in their spirit the strength and will to love Jesus and to walk according to his holy examples on the road of goodness, obedience, prayer and, in one word, in holiness. Let them be grateful to the Lord for his abundant graces and try to store virtue during these days, in order to come back to their houses renovated in their body and in their spirit, being the consolation of their parents and example for their friends.

Tell them that I am thankful for their compliments and prayer for me. I bless all of them together with their families.

To you, dear brothers, a especial blessing from the deep of my heart; and I wish you to be light that illumines, heat that warms from God's love, in C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

8983V Verona, 22-7-1948

To all my dear and beloved brothers, great and small, my greetings and holy blessings from the Lord, that bring graces for your souls and body. My wishes are for all of you: those who have the fortune to live here forever, for their commitment to the Lord, and those who are here part time, in order to receive from the Lord gifts and graces through His Opera, the Opera of the Poor Servants. They will be one day outside of the House but living as good and faithful Christians, all very influential for the good and sanctification of themselves and the society.

Your Don Giovanni is always near you; he is praying and suffering for you, so that you may be always good. Pray for me, and with your superiors I tell you and teach you that the most important thing in our life is to reach God through the ways the Lord shows you.

In C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

7042 August 1948

To the religious Poor Servants.

My dear *in Domino,*

As the air penetrates your lungs healing you and giving you strength, likewise may the thought of God, his Divine Providence, the greatness of this Opera, of your most especial vocation, penetrate and fill you as Christians and Religious, and strengthen you in order to fight "*usque ad sanguinem*" (see lett. *10374/A, 20-8-1928) for the holy Kingdom of God and the souls.

Pray for me. I bless you. In C. J.

LETTER 58 Verona, 5 August 1948

Dear and loving brothers,

The peace and grace of Jesus be always with us.

At the feet of my crucifix, I write ~~you~~ this poor letter, addressing it just to you who are guide and shepherds of souls in the parishes given to you by the divine Providence. As you know, at the beginning of the Opera, I was convinced that the apostolate and parochial ministry in the strict sense was excluded from the program of our Opera. Instead if this is already a fact, I think it is not a chance happening; it is in order to fulfill a particular divine design proper of this current time. It is a continue recall from the Lord for all, especially for us religious and priests, to live the lifestyle of the Apostles and the first Christians, in order to be "salt and light of the world".

At this present moment I would like to say that the time came to put in practice on our part the divine program:

"Gratis accepistis, gratis date" (see lett. 8, Lent 1934). These words always kept my attention since the first years of my priesthood, also the other words: "When I sent you without purse or bag or sandals, were you short of anything?" "No", the Apostles answered.

My dear and loving brothers, the word of God is not like the word of man, that changes when the time pass. The word of God conserves always the first value and meaning; we need only to put it in practice. I feel that this is a special task given by the Lord to our Opera, to go ahead with our example.

Therefore I would like to give you some rules that I communicate to you through this letter regarding the administration of some Sacraments. This instructions I matured it in prayer and with my sufferings, and also I heard first the opinion of some competent and reliable people in this matter. Even I have received from these people agreement and encouragement; I submitted everything to H. E. our beloved Bishop, because for me he is the authentic interpreter of God's will, as well as his legitimate representative. He praised and approved everything except the article regarding one category of funerals. The Bishop has talked, it is like if the Lord has spoke; that is why we must follow ~~it~~ with filial abandonment ~~to~~ his decision. But now I entrust to you the duty to observe the present rules in the letter and spirit and I will wait the feedback from you regarding the results of this.

As I know and can do it I recommend myself to the charity of your prayers for me, because I feel extreme necessity in order to fulfill the will of the Lord until the end. I bring you in my mind and in my heart; I am united

with you in your tormenting apostolate, that is why I recommend you not to abandon the inner life and the practices of piety. Remember well, the souls are saved first of all with our knees, because, don't forget this, it is not we, it is not our activity but God's grace that converts the souls.

I recommend you not to be worry to do many things, only do well everything that you are doing: *non multa, sed multum.* I bless you, your souls, or better our souls, as well as all the co-brothers and brothers who work with you.

I- FOR THE BAPTISM

1) Give ~~to~~ this Sacrament all the importance, because it makes us children of God and grants us the grace and supernatural life. Please instruct the people, explaining very well the deep meaning of each ceremony.

2) Celebrate the collective Baptism and especially during Sundays.

3) Celebrate it with solemnity: (take care about the assistance of the altar boys instructing and educating them, they may bring everything for the celebration and answer the questions of the priest).

4) A different ring of the bell will remind the people about what we are celebrating.

5) Celebrate it for free, without distinction among the rich and the poor.

II- FOR THE MARRIAGE

(When it is regularly celebrated)

1) The marriage must be celebrated solemnly for everybody.

a) Celebrate the votive Mass *Pro Sponsis*, if the rite will allow it.

b) The altar should be well decorated.

c) Provide a liturgical service~~s~~: altar boys, organ or harmonium, the songs must be according to the celebration.

d) Avoid everything that is not according to the sanctity of the ritual and the season: play the violin, sing solo, take photography of the couple in the church…

e) To ring the bell in the church announcing to the people the beginning of a new Christian family.

2) The Parish Priest gives a brief exhortation to the couple, but never will exalt one or other of the couple.

3) The celebration must be free. But the people must be educated to give a free donation as their own will.

III- FOR THE FUNERALS

1) If, according to the Diocesan dispositions it is not approved, as it would be *in votis* (our desire), the only class of funerals, you try however to elevate the class of the poor. Also for them you must chant the Mass and observe the norms like the others funerals, thinking that all are our brothers and we are all the same in God's presence. He indeed honors preferably the poor because in his person the Lord declares His special presence. Therefore:

a) Prepare a convenient and good liturgical service, providing altar boys to sing the psalms and the Mass.

b) On the way from the house to the church and from the church to the cemetery, recite psalms and prayers from the liturgy of the Dead. Observe a serious behavior and give the example on this.

c) There should be the sung Mass celebrated in three. When in the Parish there is not enough number of ministers, invite the neighboring priests, but only the sufficient number in order to have a decorous liturgy. This service must be for all, rich and poor.

d) If the funeral has place in the afternoon, the Office and the Mass should be sung in the morning, "*cadavere moraliter praesente*".[116]

e) The ringing of the bells must be the same for all.

f) I recommend the correct intonation of the songs of the Mass and the funeral. It will edify the people,

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116 The corpse being morally present.

especially all those who are going to the church only during these occasions.

2) The Parish Priest must be the one who rules the funeral, not the funerary enterprise.

3) The Parish Priest must be discrete at the moment to receive the payment established from the Diocesan Authority for the funeral services. He must be easy to renounce it when he considers opportune and do not ask for payment from the poor.

NB. The Baptismal, Confirmation, Marriage and Death certificates should be given to the people for free.

PS. I gave this letter to the Bishop before to send it to you for his approval and blessing.

He read and approved it with paternal affection. He wished that the good example coming from the House will influence positively to others, and little by little will spread and reach other places.

This is for me a great consolation and I consider it as a wish and blessing from heaven.

LETTER 59 Holy Retreat 1948

Dear and loving brothers,

I'm here in front of my crucifix and I feel that from His divine Heart are coming these poor words that even

this year I say to you in occasion of this holy retreat. I think this retreat has a particular character according to God's plan. He spoke and speaks to our heart stronger than other times through Jesus' messenger. I consider him as the Angel sent by God in order to recall us to consider seriously the greatness of this Opera and to live not only with words but especially with deeds our pure and genuine spirit.

As I said to you in other times, God wants to accomplish great things through our humble Opera, in order to bring back the poor humanity, that, immerse in the darkness of error and in the mud of the vices has lost the sense of supernatural and divine, on the ways of salvation and temporal and eternal prosperity. It looks a paradox, and yet it is true.

When God wants to accomplish great designs, always he uses the most humble instruments, as he used the foolishness of the Cross in order to convert the pagan world, and as it was in the dark grotto of Bethlehem where the angels sung: "Glory to God ~~in the highest~~ and peace to the people loved by God". "*Quid boni a Nazareth?*"[117] it was the common saying. And yet in Nazareth the Word lived and talked with men.

I said to you many times that our Opera is the trumpet, the loud-speaker of God. It is necessary that the trumpet be in efficiency and the speaker works properly in order that the voice will be heard from the one who speaks. Concluding: in order to accomplish these new and great divine designs it is absolutely necessary that the Opera is in efficiency through the pure and genuine spirit that

[117] Can anything good come from Nazareth?

blessed Jesus, the absolute master, inspired since the beginning.

But the Opera, remember well, it is not something in abstract, as it is not built by the structures and lands: we are the Opera; therefore, we must be in full efficiency.

My dear and beloved brothers, put a hand in our heart, and let us make a serious examination of ourselves: how do we live? Are we in practice what we are saying that we are, true Poor Servants of Divine Providence?

In the superabundant light of this holy retreat, the Lord has been noticing clearly the bad that we should cut off and the good that we should do. Put the hands at work, with firm and generous proposals in order to correspond and to walk according to the dignity of our holy vocation, in order to accomplish the divine designs and to be, as I said, God's trumpet and loud-speaker.

In my part, what I know and can, I recommend you the inner life. Remember well: branches and vine, recipients and channels; "apart from me you can do nothing; it is no longer I who live, but it is Jesus who lives in me".

My dear brothers, it is necessary that of every Poor Servant, brother or priest, we can truly say: he is Jesus.

We priests must be Jesus at the altar, in the confessionary, during the preaching of the word ~~of God~~, in the visit to the sick, in the administration of the Sacraments, in the prayer of the Divine Office.

You brothers, in the daily duty and activities, serving the children, in the necessary relationship with

secular works, saying always a good word of vivid evangelical taste, and above all giving an example of a practical life lived according to the principles of the holy Gospel.

Now the world is tire of many words, it wants to see deeds. If we are other Jesus, how much good we can do; we would be truly salt of the earth and light of the world.

But the nourishment of the inner life are the practice of piety: meditation, spiritual reading, holy Mass, holy Communion, visit to the Blessed Sacrament, the holy Rosary, other private prayers, according to our fervor and our devotion.

My dear and beloved brothers, on my knees I recommend you to follow all these practices and to give them the maximum importance. Be punctual on them and do them in community. Do them with fervor, fruit of continue and well done prayer. Remember that from the piety, therefore from your love and fidelity to the practice of piety, we can surly judge if you are or not good religious, if you are or not truly Poor Servants.

I recommend to you the observance of the holy Rules; love them, be not only faithful but most faithful to follow them. Never say: they are not important; no, my dear. The great things are made up of the very small ones and the small negligence is lake many holes from where the spirit of the Lord is going out and penetrates the spirit of the world. Be faithful particularly to the small prescriptions of our holy Rules, as to receive the blessing of the superior and the visit to the church before leaving

the House and when you come back; punctuality to the common schedule, etc.

I recommend to you the spirit of faith: to see God in all and all in God. To see God in the poor whom you find on the way, in the person with whom you deal, in the children you should educate, in the souls ~~that~~ the Divine Providence makes you approach, in our brothers, in this your Father.

How many times I say to you and repeat that you should not look at my poor person, but at the God's representative, framed in His great Opera! Remember well that until God's mercy keeps me here, you have the sacred responsibility to help me, to hear me: I think that it is Jesus himself who wants it.

You should adhere to the Casante as the ivy to the wall, as the light to the sun. How many graces are attached to this spirit of faith, to these criteria and supernatural principles! Look that frequently it is enough for me a word, a smile, an attention in order to console my heart. I am, as many times I said to you, a sensitive tree: In this it is all. I think it is Jesus who wants it for your good and the good of the Opera, and therefore in order to accomplish the divine designs.

My dear and beloved brothers, I conclude saying that we should leave from this holy retreat as the Apostles left the Cenacle, renewed and transformed. The devil trembles, he does not like it. Who knows what he will do, but I assure you that Jesus is with you, and with Him you cannot fear. "I have won the world", says the Lord, and with the help of his grace we will win too, overtaking difficulties, obstacles, temptations, etc.

Do not forget that over all our thoughts we must put the thought of our sanctification: everything is means. The end, our ideal, the goal at which we should aim is this: to be holy whatever it costs. And in moment of trials, in the contingency of the life, in the unavoidable sufferings, let's look at Jesus on the Cross saying: what is good for Jesus is also good for me.

Brothers, be holy and you will be holy living the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, which is faith, abandonment in the hands of the divine Providence. We must disappear: the Opera, only the Opera!

The dear Mother, in whose feast we end this holy retreat, may help us and sustain us in this great task, assist us during our life and on our death.

Oh, on the death-bed, a true Poor Servant who had lived according to the pure and genuine spirit will taste, I think, the glory of the holy Paradise. All our life should be a preparation to the great moment that will arrive for all, as had arrived almost suddenly to our dear Fr. Albano. At that time we will not fear the death, it will be a happy change.

We will leave the exile for the Fatherland, the earth for heaven, the fight for the victory, the tribulation for the happiness and the joy of the Saints.

Pray for me and I bring you in my mind and in my heart. I follow all of you and I bless all.

In C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

RECALLS

I think opportune to repeat you some announcements and recalls, some of them I said already in the past.

1) Modesty in your dressing. It is not good to be without jacket and waistcoat, even though during the work: put at least a very light polo; it is not good to turn up the sleeves or to put t-shirt without sleeves. It is not according with the religious modesty.

2) The brothers do not leave the house without hat or cap. I recommend to the priests to use the clerical hat even inside the house.

3) I recommend to the priest to use discretely the bicycle, avoiding passing through the public ways of the city.

4) No refinement to your hair, no forelock, no parting, no back style.

5) Do not play cards for any reason.

6) Great discretion in using the camera; do not take photos without the permission of the local superior.

7) Radio: use it with great discretion; the local superior will take care of it.

8) I recall to the exact observance of the great silence.

LETTER 60 Holy Christmas 1948

My dear and beloved brothers,

The grace and peace of blessed Jesus be with you always.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to each and every one of you, my dear and beloved sons. This is the word that comes spontaneously from my heart and I send to you in these holy days. It is a brief word, I would like it is much meditated and it is the complement of the one you received in the booklet.[118] I never thought about a booklet like that, and when they presented it to me, I was surprised and thought very well before I accepted it. Later I have seen that it could be a good instrument for every one and a new grace because it offers the opportunity to meditate the words that I said to you in many other occasions.

Meditate, therefore, the words of your Father, that so much loves you; words that are not mine, but Jesus', because it is Hi the Founder of this Opera, it is Hi who wanted it and it is Hi who had taught this poor and miserable his Casante what should maintain it alive in order to accomplish the great divine designs according to its goal.

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[118] Fr. Calabria refers to the booklet "La parola del Padre" (*Don Calabria Speaks*), a synthesis of his thought that Fr. Pietro Murari ordered from the novice Fr. Leone Zinaghi. Fr. Calabria himself not only approved it but ordered also that it should be sent to each religious.

Please meditate those words. You will find in them the synthesis of our spirit; nourish your lives from it. Like rags, like soft clay, always available to all and to everything, even to a small sign from the one who represents the Lord! The most important is our personal sanctification. Only thus we can help and do the good of the souls, if we are able to live integrally our spirit, that it is the spirit of the holy gospel.

How many graces the Lord has done through this Opera! And the greatest one is to have called us to belong to this family of the Poor Servant of Divine Providence.

Remember that the Opera belongs to God, it is not mine, it is Hi who has founded and sustains it. The Opera is salvation or ruin: salvation for ~~all~~ those who correspond, ruin for ~~all~~ those who do not correspond. In the long experience of these forty years I have seen that if somebody does not correspond, the Lord will think about to remove him: but alas to this poor!

Never argue. If somebody does not feel to live this spirit, on my knees, I ask and implore him: it is better if he goes instead that the Lord, divine Founder of the Opera, will be the one to send him out.

Take these words as my testament. Take them as a treasure for your souls and Jesus himself, at the end of your days, will come to our aid with loving face to receive us with Him in the blessed eternity.

I am sure that the Lord Jesus – whom we adore humbled in the manger during these days – will grant ~~us~~ the prayer that every day I say after the holy Mass: *"Ut*

cum fratribus meis et pueris tuis laudem Te in saecula saeculorum" (see lett. 3, 19-3-1033).

Pray, pray very much for me: the Lord knows how I need it.

More with the heart than with the hand I bless you all.

Fr. J. Calabria.

LETTER 61 Lent 1949

My dear and beloved brothers,

The grace and peace of Jesus be with us always.

Near to the holy Lent, a particular force pushes me to say to you my poor word as spontaneously comes out from my heart, in connection with the grave situation of the current time that is falling down, and that if it is the hour of Satan, it is more the hour of God.

My dear and beloved brothers, I received in the deep of my priestly heart the distressed call of Jesus' Vicar that during these days has been said to the entire world.

He is overpowered from the sadness and anguish to see the badness of the evildoers has came to a limit of unbelievable impiousness, at that point, the Holy Father said, that it is impossible not to discern the insidious and iniquitous plots of the infernal enemy, whose program is

“to hate God and to ruin the human being”. In fact the human’s soul is naturally Christian, the human being tends instinctively to the good, justice and truth.

Therefore, how, without the intervention of Satan, we could explain all this waves of irreligion and impiety, this great tide of corruption that all threat to sink, this paganism in the life and in the habits so that triumph in the world idolatry of the flesh and the uncontrolled love for pleasure?

How to explain the fraternal bloodshed, the open persecution to the Church in the best of its children and in its most worthy and unconquered Pastors, and in its Head, Christ’s Vicar?

How to explain such a havoc of the human person that without pity, without the minimum respect, is put down, enslave, many times tortured and extinguished in the blood with incredible cruelty?

It cannot be other than the devil, the sworn enemy of humankind, because it is the living image of God and destined to occupy in heaven the places lost by Satan because of his opened rebellion against God.

But the devil, my dear and beloved brothers, could do nothing or quite less alone. In order to reach his perfidious goals, or to establish his tyrannical empire, he needs and searches his helpers among the same humankind, becoming allied with their passions. These helpers of Satan, St. Paul has mentioned since his time.

“You must understand this”, he said, “that in the last days distressing times will come, for people will be lover of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, arrogant,

abusive, disobedient, unholy, haters of good, implacable, slanderers, profligates, brutes, inhuman, treacherous, reckless, lovers of pleasure than lovers of God" (2Tim 3:1-4).

What massacre are doing these people also among the Christian people that is the people of God, meanwhile, as the Holy Father says, "these enemies of God's name, by their own supreme audacity, are appropriating of any means and instruments: books, brochures, newspaper, radio, private conversations, sciences and arts, all are under their power in order to spread the disdain of sacred things".

At this point I feel the need to ask me two questions:

1) First of all, if the modern society could be more Christian, if all, but especially we priests and religious, were truly salt of the earth and light of the world through the holiness of our lives, would it be possible this great progress of evil, the less reaction of the good people, if they themselves are not abandoning their proper faith and the practice of the religion, in order to pass to the field of God's enemies and of the Church?

Unfortunately, we should confess that we are very, but very far from the principles and teachings, of the maxims of the holy Gospel! What difference frequently between what we believe and what we practise! "Though the light has come into the world, the men preferred darkness instead of the light" (Jo 3:19). Otherwise how to explain that there is so little practice of Christianity after twenty centuries of light and grace?

The gift of faith, the possession of truth and divine grace are a great privilege for us, but it is not something to keep for ourselves, on the contrary, to be spread among many brothers ~~and sisters~~. The Divine Master has given his command: "Go and make disciples from all nations" (Mt 28: 18). How this command was followed along many centuries?

Yet for us it is nice to do another reflection. Everybody in Italy recognizes that we have received a true miracle from the Lord on April 18; but how did we demonstrate practically our gratitude? What change ~~or conversion~~ did come in our life? Did the people go more to the Church; are Sunday celebrations more participated, the lifestyle less pagan and more Christian? Is there more respect to the family, stronger the opposition of the good against immorality campaign spread especially through the printing, cinema, beach, etc?

And yet, that divine gift, instead to offer an excuse to abandon ourselves to a lax life style, should constitute a new commitment for everybody and to be considered not an ending point but a starting one for new conquests in every field.

Unfortunately, it was not like that. Therefore, what marvel if the enemies of the religion and humanity are all the more strong, if they find the doors opened and the field ready in order to spread their bad weed; if the help and the intervention of the Lord delays in order to control the adverse strengths of the evil?

I think it is opportune to do other consideration. Without doubt the actual hour is grave and dark; we do not know what will happen in the future. I think we are still on

time in order to avoid new disasters and plagues, if truly we come back to the practice of the holy Gospel, the entire Gospel, without mutilations, *"sine glossa*", that is without arbitrary interpretations, looking to penetrate the meaning and the pure and genuine spirit, in order to conform to it our judging and our life.

The Gospel speaks, for example, about God the Father, who cares of us more than the birds in the sky and the flowers in the field, so that He will never allows we lack the necessary means for our food and cloths, provided we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. How is our faith in God's Paternity, therefore our trust in his holy and lovely Providence?

The Gospel preaches about the detachment from earthly things, it exhorts us "not to store up richness where moth and rust consume it, and where thieves disinter and steal; but to store up treasures in heaven", for what only we are made.

The Gospel teaches us, therefore, that the present life is only a preparation to the future life, the vigil of a great feast, which will last forever.

The Gospel comforts us in our pains and in the unavoidable sufferings, giving assurance that "our sadness will become joy".

It sustains our faith and hope, showing us the absolute efficiency of the prayer.

It wants that we love each other, as Jesus has loved us that is until the sacrifice of ourselves and of our things, and teaches us that substance of the Religion consists in charity, not only by words, but in deeds.

And as confirmation of this new and great command, it speaks continuously, giving the greatest emphasis, about the ineffable mystery of God's charity towards man, by which, first, man is elevated to the supernatural order, destined therefore to see and posses God forever; secondly, after the falling of Adam, it is not abandoned to him alone, but purchased and redeemed by the Blood of Jesus, Son of God made man, immolated on the altar of the Cross for our sins. And if it is not enough, that sacrifice is renovated everyday on our altars and the Body and Blood of Jesus, under the humble appearance of bread and wine, are given ~~to~~ us as food and drink, medicine and nourishment of our souls, pledge of everlasting life and blessed resurrection.

Behold the greatest, consoling and immutable truth to which we all should conform, especially we religious and priests. We can say that the entire world is looking at us, at Italy, at Rome, chair of the truth and centre of Christianity; that is why we have an obligation, in certain sense greater than somewhere else. What example we should give in this coming Holy Year to the pilgrims from different parts of the world, if we are able to live according to our commitment, if we make an effort to be living Gospels!

Oh, how I would like that these my poor words should be heard by all Christians, as a stimulation to change their life, in order to show to the world the spectacle of a Christianity that is renewing, reproducing the life of the Apostles and the first Christians.

2) Other question that we should do is this. Many are God's enemies, persecutors of the Church and all those who are declared in their side: what are we doing for their

repentance? They also are our brothers, also their souls cost the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and they also will present themselves to the divine judgment to give account of their lives. What will be of them, if they do not reform and convert themselves on time?

In order to heal the variety of diseases and to heal the bodies hospitals and clinics are opened, it is done everything that is possible. And in order to heal the souls, to save these our brothers, will we not think about, especially when we have in our hands efficient means?

The most efficient means is the prayer, to which the Holy Father is inviting us. It can awake us and render more alive the zeal for the cause of good and the religion, in order to defend ourselves from dangers, in order to convert all those who are victims of ignorance and prejudices, because they are grown in corrupt and hostile ambient. Once I approached to one of this poor our brothers, and after knowing the truth, touched by the grace, he did not finish to thank the Lord, and he was very happy.

Often they are more disgraced people rather than bad ones. On the other part, we should care not to combat them, but to conquer them, bringing them to Jesus, the friend of sinners, the good Shepherd who searches for the lost sheep. Oh, how much good these brothers, enlightened and returned to God, can do for other ones.

The prayer, as the Pope says, must be sustained by firm trust and accompanied by many good deeds.

Good and holy thing are those solemn religious manifestations, the protest for the sins against innocents, but all these things must be accompanied by a profound

change in our lives, by the faithful practice of the Christian and religious virtues, otherwise all these manifestations could be ridiculed, fit only for a moment or could bring new punishments from the Lord.

With the holiness of the life we can merit that the Lord will put an end many evil and grant us finally to enjoy the effects of his infinite mercy, his pardon and the true peace, of which all of us feel so much need.

Frequently also the good ones asked themselves: why the Lord does not stop the persecutions and does not assist the victims of it? We should reflect that are our sins that tie, using an image, the hands of the Lord.

We are the Mystical Body of Christ. The communion of saints is a supernatural reality and every member feels the good and the evil of others members. We are like interconnected glasses: we can communicate the effects of the divine justice and the gifts of mercy as well. Therefore, if we truly convert ourselves, we can hope certainly that the Lord will come to our aid to help us.

Finally we should offer to God the homage of reparation of sins that should increase during the Sunday April 3, that falls in the same day of the 50th priestly ordination of the Holy Father, and in which he has given faculty to the priest to celebrate a second Mass for the remission of grave sins committed at this very hour. "The eternal and divine Father", said the Vicar of Christ, "will be propitiated and placated by the precious Blood of the immaculate Lamb, the voice of which is more efficient than the blood of the innocent Abel and of all just people. And if the atheism and hate against God is a grave fault, we can wash this horrible crime with the washing Blood of

Jesus, to destroy the consequences of it, imploring sinners' pardon and preparing for the Church a splendid triumph".

In homage of the august desires of the Holy Father, I want and command that in all the churches of our Houses and the parishes, entrusted to our Opera, must be celebrated with solemnity this Mass of reparation and added, in the afternoon celebrations, an hour of solemn Eucharistic adoration, during which we will say prayers specially for the conversion of our blind brothers who attach the Church and its ministers and are in grave danger to be damned.

We must feel this invitation for the reparation of sins as addressed particularly to us, because, as I told you already, among the tasks that the divine Providence entrusts to our humble Opera, one of this is the atonement, in this way we think the poor prayers, the small sacrifices offered by us, are particularly accepted to God and have a particular efficacy, not because of our worthiness, but because of the special care and predilection from the Lord, who have wanted this Opera just in the current time.

The Immaculate Mother, that many times has visited our poor land, especially in Lourdes and Fatima, inviting the people to pray and making sacrifices, unfortunately was not heard and also at the present moment is not heard, that is why we should consider ourselves unworthy of her maternal protection. Nevertheless, let us pray to her in order that may She assist us spiritually, cover our deficiencies and accompany us with her maternal intercession the atonement that we desire to offer to God, united with many other brothers, according to the will and the intentions of Christ's Vicar.

My dear and beloved brothers, we should live well, observing our holy Rules, we must accomplish always and everywhere our daily duty, loving God, seeking first his kingdom. Doing this we can hope to accomplish the divine designs and cooperate with the indubitable triumph of Jesus and the Church.

As I know and can, I entrust myself to the charity of your prayers: more and more I feel the need of it in order to do until the end the holy will of God.

In my poverty also I pray and remember you, together with your dear ones, while in this moment more by my heart than by my hand I bless you, and I wish we to meet one day all together in heaven, our Fatherland.

Fr. J. Calabria

**** 213 11-2-1949***

Loving brothers,

Be holy, live the spirit pure and genuine of the Opera of which you are members and pray for your Father, who, never as in this moment, feels the need of God's help. You can, if you want, to do much. I bless you, *in C. J.*

Fr. J. Calabria

**** 8465 27-2-1949***

My dear co brother,

The grace of blessed Jesus be always with us. In this holy Sunday, first week of Lenten Season, I feel in my heart to say my word to you, as it comes spontaneously from my heart of a Father who feels all the wishes and desires of his children.

The Providence has entrusted to you a portion of the mystical flock to shepherd, souls to conduce to eternal salvation, educating them to the true and practical Christian life. And you are a Poor Servant. As such, you must spread around you the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera; you must develop your noble ministry according to this spirit that the Lord Jesus has put in his House.

And, oh, how it is urgent in our time to revive the Christian spirit of the holy Gospel. Few days ago we received the invitation from the Holy Father, Vicar of Christ, for a spiritual renewal of the Christians in the current time so pregnant of threat, but so much important for the growth of the Church and the world.

If everybody should correspond to the invitation and expectation of the Pope, Jesus' Vicar; how much should do it the Poor Servant who is assigned by the Lord to lead a parish. Therefore, go on! I would like to add my warm exhortation to the one coming from the Pope and I say to you: take care of your flock, give your generous contribution for the good of the souls. All, all the souls should be the object of your dedication and love.

It seems to me I should repeat the expression of St. Paul: “Does not waste the grace of the Lord, because in the favorable time I will instruct you”. And this is the favorable time, the Lenten Season in preparation for Easter, preparation for our resurrection together with Christ. “In everything we should show ourselves worthy ministers of God with patience, suffering, trials” and zeal for the souls.

Particularly I recommend you all those sheep from the flock that, are out because of wrong theories, and fighting against the Lord and his holy Church. Poorest: they are scattered, out of the way, sick! For all these people you need special care, because they are God’s sheep, redeemed by the precious Blood of Jesus Christ, called to holiness like everybody.

Sure, we cannot settle with wrong, but we must separate the wrong from the person who commit such a mistake: the mistake is one thing and the person who commits it is another. Never should the Poor Servant neglect these souls that the Lord likes to save, they are our brothers. Our Opera should look for the poorest. And, is it not a great poverty the poverty of the spirit, more than the corporal and material one? Therefore, have a particular care and attention for these souls. Try to approach them with Christ’s charity, with the affection and love of the father, following the example of Jesus, who went to search the sinners, even more scattered. He received, comforted and converted them.

At the end, remember that we are one body, the Mystical Body of Christ. Therefore, every good action made by one of the member helps others members and, like in the physical body the work of life is more intense where

it is needed because of the sickness or infection. Likewise, you Poor Servant, in the spirit of the Opera, will try to bring life and strength to all those who are far. A prayer, a good action, a suffering, and a word of love to Jesus… all are efficient means of the grace in order to help the souls.

I myself, united with you, will offer a whole day for the good of the souls entrusted to you: prayers, sufferings and other thing will be an invocation to Jesus in order to save all, especially ~~all~~ those who are more in need.

Please, tell to your faithful ones that I am close to them, very close with my heart, because I desire they all are as the Lord wants. If everybody in fact will commit himself to live a true Christian life, oh, the world will change face and the time will be better! With God's grace even the material things will be better and we will see peace. But far from God, in sins, everything will go badly and in disorder.

I opened my heart, in order to give you strength in your spiritual work for the faithful. I bring you in my mind and heart, taking in myself your care and solicitude for the Kingdom of God in the souls.

Pray for me, ask prayers for me: I really need it so much.

My desire is that everybody will meet one day united in Paradise to sing the divine mercy and enjoy the fruit of our poor life shed for our dear brothers. In C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 62 Verona, 7 June 1949

My dear and beloved brothers,

The grace, the peace of Jesus be always with us. While I am near to the great call ~~from the Lord~~, I feel the great responsibility that comes upon me and you also, when we will appear before the divine tribunal, in our last and decisive moment. Think about it, for all the eternity: either forever with God in heaven, in Paradise, or forever in the hell. What torture for that religious of the Poor Servants who was careless or did not live according to his great and particular vocation!

I have no remorse, sure, for not having told and written to you about the greatness of the Opera of the Poor Servants, how special is our vocation, that consist in these words: rugs, clay, available to all, search souls, all the souls, especially the poorest ones, the abandoned ones, in one word to live and die with the pure and genuine spirit that Jesus himself, has put, as Divine Founder, in this Opera, that culminates in this word *"buseta e taneta"* (see lett. *383, 4-5-1932).

Dear brother, I fell as never felt the need to recommend myself to your prayers for me and for the Opera. I feel the need to silent myself in order to see what Jesus wants from me and from you. In the name of Jesus I tell you to pray particularly for me. Stay for some days more close to your Father who loves you so much, for how many graces you have received and you will receive from

the Lord, if everybody is one with the Father, hiding ourselves in order that the Opera will appear, which is all from Jesus, for the current time particularly!

Therefore, I wish that in every house will do special prayers in order to have everybody the help in spiritual and material things that the Opera needs at this very moment, that for sure will not lack, if everyone with the divine grace seeks the holy kingdom of God and his righteousness… *et haec omnia* (and all these things)…

Dear brothers, be holy in order to sanctify the Opera and accomplish the great designs of God proper of the current time. What grace, what peace, what reward at the end of our life!

P.S. *For three days I recommend you the prayer to the Divine Providence.*

*2286 19-6-1949[119]

To my beloved brothers and priests.

The grace, the peace of Jesus be always in our hearts.

I have received with joy the news that Rev. Fr. Venturini has had the inspiration to institute the Priestly Day, suggested by the Holy Father!

[119] We found only the proof of this letter; and so this is also the letter.

The more I am getting near the great calling ~~of the Lord~~ the more I am feeling the gravity of the current time.

Folly of the Cross! The Priestly Day was as a light in order to say what we priest should do. We are optimistic too. To go back to the Gospel in practice, (as) the Holy Father (reminds)… How can we start? How was the world saved?

Madness of the Cross. To put in practice the Gospel like the Apostles. To be people of faith, detached from the earthly things, not to be closed.

Charity for the poorest. It seems difficult, but we have the eternal word; it is the end of much speech. We need brothers. Great settlement of inner life, great piety practices, obedience and huge horizons; I recommend it.

The world is looking at us, we are privileged. To love them with charity, do not keep yourself far, let's try to convert them. Example of Christ, theory of communicant glasses. Charity, suffering. The Church is founded on the Apostles and us.

2550 Verona, 23-6-1949

To the Poor Servants Clergies who will receive the ordination, Deac. Dellai, Deac. Vicentini and Deac. Favarin.

My Dear,

The grace, the blessing and peace from the Lord be always in our hearts. I am here in the House of Sacred Heart of Negrar. I think of you in a particular way and pray for you.

You have left San Zeno in Monte with the blessing and words that I have said, words that I said from the deep of my heart and blessing flowing from the heart.

You have a sign of a particular blessing: to do the Retreat for your preparation of the Ordination in the Novitiate House, the Cenacle of the Congregation, holy place and blessed by the prayers and a life devoted to study and practice of sanctity.

Be grateful to the Lord and remember well that the present days are for you very much important in your lives. Jesus is talking to you, Jesus will make you his ministers in order to continue his mission, the salvation of souls for whom he had died and will die also for your souls.

As you saw when I talked to you, I am trembling and this year worse than the previous ones. You will be priests… what an honor and what a dignity and what a responsibility… priests of the Poor Servants in this year, year of our Pentecost!

The current hour for the Church and for the world, and we can say that the world is in close relation with the Poor Servants. The Lord has great and particular designs to accomplish and he wants to accomplish them through us, with our collaboration. I am trembling but I am sure, if you want to life the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera. Blessed are you in this world and more blessed in the eternity! Your lives will be shed for the Lord and for the

souls and the Lord never will lose in generosity, be sure of it. Everything goes away, the good remain and this is the gift that the Lord will give you.

Pray for me, for your Father who brings you in the heart, pray for the Casante of the Opera, that will not be like the signs in the street that indicate the way to go but they stay always in the same place consumed by the rust and weather, but on the contrary he can be a moving sign in order to reach the goal together. May the Lord fulfill the prayer that I say every day after Mass: *Ut cum fratribus meis et pueris tuis laudem Te in seacula saeculorum"* (see lett. 3, 19-3-1933).

I wish to see you soon and to give you the holy blessing in order to receive it also from you later.

May the Heart of Jesus fill you with his love for God and for the souls and make you for him in the time and in the eternity. Remember well that no any human power can ruin, destroy this God's Opera: only we can do it if we are not living the spirit pure and genuine that Jesus has put in it. I bless all of you. In C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 63, Feast of the Precious Blood 1949

My dear and beloved brothers,

The grace and peace of Jesus the blessed be with us always.

Here in front of my crucifix I write this poor letter in the name of God to tell you that Jesus, absolute master of this Opera, has given his divine endorsement thru his holy Sea, aligning our humble Congregation the "*Decretum laudis*" (Decree of praise).

Brothers, we shall thank our God from our hearts. With this holy seal we can go ahead for sure to fulfill those new and great plans, all proper to the present hour, the Divine Providence has over us, always according to the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera which is of God and which no other power, as I told you many times and I repeat at this solemn circumstance, as though I am on my death bead, can destroy it, but we, if we do not live as he wants and demands our special vocation. Brothers think, let us think of this grave words: only we do, if we don't live according to the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera.

As soon as the divine providence placed in my hand the "Decree of praise", I couldn't but to admonish: "great grace, but along with it great responsibility; great gift, but equally great must be our commitment to renewal, to sanctify, observing *ad litteram* (to the letter), *ad litteram* the holy Constitutions, imbibing and insightful individuals of the spirit, until our last breath, that will be the door to holy paradise".

For this the primary thing I wish to put forward you is to live, better say let us live our holy Constitutions, which is based on and permeated with a life of living faith in God and filial trust in his Divine Providence. Unfortunately we live in a pagan world than Christian.

People live for nothing other than the earthly, satisfactions of the senses and passions, with the delusion of finding joy in them, for which we thirst and for which we are made but fail to see they remain unhappy because only in god says St. Augustine is our peace, and joy: "Lord you have made us for you and unrest is our heart until we find you".

It seems the time of hardships foreseen by Apostle Paul has come, in which he tells, people will be egoists, greedy, proud, in vain, blasphemers, disobedient, foolish, without love, without peace, slanderers unsatisfied, cruel, without humanity, betrayers, perverse, lovers of passion that God.

Among so many evils even the good ones are losing sight, and hope. Their faith, if not extinguished fully, is fickle: "*Abundabit iniquitas, refrigescet caritas multorum*".[120]

And here is the task the divine providence entrusts to our Opera: revive in this poor world faith with words and above all with examples. God, soul, eternity, and the like are empty words for many. We instead live with this faith safe and unshaken which does not diminish in trials, perhaps even persecution and death itself. God does not need to be show, but carried with us. Examples count more than any explanation.

O if we would live indeed the great truths of our faith: the ineffable mystery of incarnation, Crib, Calvary and the Eucharist. God in our midst, with us and in us! These are mysteries that rapture us in ecstasy of rapport

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[120] Because of the increase of lawlessness the love of God will grow cold (Mt 24: 12).

and love. No one go to listen preaching, but if people could see these truth really lived, what a fantastic and holy sense they would receive!

But where, my dear and beloved brothers, we can draw this living faith if not thru the pure source of the holy Gospels? For this many a times I told you and repeated that we have to be another Christ and living Gospels, to be lighthouse to the poor humanity drifting in the thick darkness of many errors, and in the slur of many vices. It is like the echo of the command of Jesus: "let your light shine in front of people so that they may see your good work and glorify your Father in heaven". In these words looks what Jesus urging the thought of God, he calls him *Father*, all the more *our Father*.

I wish to tell you, my dear brothers, true and genuine faith counts God not only as creator and Lord but above all as Father.

Faith therefore in the Paternity of God and therefore enlightened faith, filial abandonment in the divine Providence, which is the totally special mark of our Opera, one of the teaching God wants to give the world thru her.

Let us remember that divine Providence is a tender mother who arranges everything for our good. *We must feel carried by his maternal hands*.

It is true that many a times we have to suffer and by nature we could experience it at times almost a breath taking dismay: we shall not be surprised. Even Jesus knew sadness, panic and fear, adding up to pray to the Father to

take away the bitter chalice, submitting finally to the Paternal will.

Now we see the upside down of the needle work. It can appear that everything is confusion, but when we will be able to see the finished work and the right side of interlace, and then they will appear in all their magnificent and wonderful exertion.

But if the divine Providence has car of all, note well, dear brothers, she will guard over us with a particular care, provided that we will be in the great and divine project.

We have had such a great faith, such a complete and total abandonment in the divine Providence? I wish to hope yes, but if by chance had deviations and misfortunes it was not, in this moment, in this solemn circumstance let us revive our faith and promise to live in conformity with it.

For us in a special way those words are in my heart because they made an imprint in me from the beginning of my priesthood: "when I send you: thus Jesus to his apostles – without bags, without purse, and without stick, did you run short of anything?" "Nothing", they replied.

Look there should be no anxiety and worry, we shall not try to be in the limelight, we shall not make propaganda: this will displease a lot the Lord and doing so we will show the world our little faith and rightly the world would tell us: yes, you have the Providence but only words; and in reality look your worries, look how you seeks means, look in trials you lose heart.

Brothers how many times I have told you and again I repeat: when in this Opera lacks Providence, in an ordinary way, because we fail in our program, our life is not as religious, sons of Providence. Look if we live as our vocation wants, we can be sure that our life will be a constant shower of Providence! May be the Lord is allowing some grave trials to rectify and embellish our faith, could even happen to beg from door to door, the Lord will reveal this to the Casante. Then we shall not get annoyed, but rather enjoy and feel us, I would say, in the "perfect joy". We shall be sure that if the conscience tells that we are faithful to our holy vocation after the trail the Providence will come with "measure overflowing, pressed and shaken down".

But alas o dear ones, by our mistake if this divine attribute of Providence is not honored and loved, which rightly in the plan of God should be reminded thru us in these days of dearth of faith and solicitude for the passing things, while everything is founded on human calculation, on the progress of science, of the civilization, and to God and his Providence dos not attribute at all!

There are so many the "exiles of Providence" as it is called by the Holy Spirit, who instead of abandoning to the power, wisdom and love of this tender mother, confide in themselves, in their strength and resources, calculate on the money they posses and steal what belongs to God. We who belong to this Opera should show by words and with practical life this divine attribute. O how much good we can then do!

Apostolic priests, apostolic brothers, full of faith and filial abandonment in God, will be without fail generators of many activities as is needed in the present

society, thus committed to the Providence to do and establish the world. Excuse me of the expression, but it came spontaneously from my heart. God is and will be with us, the Opera is fully His.

But for this we have to be holy, there is great need of saints. And therefore I recommend you to observe the holy Rules and the holy vows. Nobody should fail to the commitment assumed. Let us remember that all the eternal qualities, every gift, all natural qualities, without our sanctification counts less than zero. What is important is the sanctity, to be true and holy religious.

Priests and brothers, both sons of the same mother, the Congregation, let there be among them "*cor unum et anima una*" (see lett. 7, Christmas 1933) all with clear understanding of one thing, to seek the holy Kingdom of God, united in the bond of reciprocal love, helping thus and bearing with one another.

In our dear Congregation, let the priest consider himself as the last of the brothers and let the brother counts himself adorned with special priestly charism, not only thru baptism, which as says the Apostle St. Peter, makes us participants of the royal priesthood, but all the more because of the special vocation to this Opera. Therefore one and the other must remember their influence on the souls depends not as much on the apostolate and exterior activities, as from the grade of their sanctity. For this it is very familiar to me the reflection I read on Graf: "all the priests are not saints, but all the saints are priests".

Love humility and concealment, let the Opera appear, we must disappear; be like rags and clay, without head; headless; carry along the name Poor Servants, and

see that it is so in practice. Therefore sacrifice every superfluity, every trifle things, love poverty: blessed are you if you find some moments to tell me the effects of this. You are, better, we are, servants, therefore take care not to do our will, listen in everything and for everything your superiors and in a special way be obedient to the Casante of the Opera, both the present and future. I feel the Lord will give him special enlightenment and special grace for the good of the Opera in general and each one of you in particular. Do not stop to look at the person, look three fingers above the head and you will find the Lord.

It happens at times there are some problems to solve and different viewpoints, opinions are different. In such cases discuss among you with holy charity, but for the decision always commit with trust to the Casante. In this way you can be sure that you are doing the will of God, you will save easily the holy humility and charity and obtain divine blessings on you and on your work.

You know how poor and miserable, end it is because of this the Lord has chosen me in this Opera, because thus He will be seen, nevertheless I feel that you have the duty to help me. I tell you so often that you are my breath, my life, and I feel like repeating it once again. See I need only a glance, a word, an attention, to feel reassured. To avoid displeasure, support a desire, see you near me, these and other similar actions vibrate my fatherly heart; always very sensible as you know gives me comfort. Above all do what I tell you, not forcing me to keep silent, to close me into silence: the Lord will not be happy and the divine plans will not be fulfilled.

Furthermore what I know and I can, I urge your inner life: be recipient and channels, conch for you and

channels for others. Be like branches intimately united to the true vine Jesus, as He told “he who remains in me and I in him, will make much fruits, because without me you can do nothing”

Overlook nothing, since everything is great when is done for the Lord, and the small rules, small compliance does not miss the glance of the celestial Father, who watches with a special kindness what is in secret out of his love, in the concealment and he will one day give a great reward. But since then, be sure, he will bless and fructify your work and you will enjoy peace and joy proper to God’s children, and what a consolation you will experience on your death bed, what a certainty to pass the last pains to the immense joy of heaven for the blessed eternity!

This is what I felt to tell you, my dear and beloved brothers. Look ahead to think and reflect the solemn moment in which we will see. In the coming retreats, pronouncing the holy vows, we will have to revive our beloved Congregation so renew ourselves. What a responsibility would assume such a great commitment and later on break them!

Because of this I say: if someone of you does not feel, please withdraw for the sake of his soul and the Opera, which does not need anyone or rather, is in need of those with faith and love abandon to God and his Divine Providence. But the manifold proofs you have given me so far of your spirit of faith and sacrifice gives me reason to think positively also for future.

Brothers, we will elapse but the Opera will go on. It must live, walk, and go till the ends of the earth, till the

end of the world. But it is up to us, bound to our personal sanctification.

Pray for this your Father, who loves you so much in the Lord and who, even though poor and miserable, leave you a very great heredity, the heredity of an Opera which will sanctify in a special way your soul on earth and then will obtain you a special place in heaven. That all, no one excluded, may one day find again up to praise, bless, and thank God for having called us to become part of this our humble Congregation.

The immaculate Virgin, mistress of this Opera, may obtain for us those spiritual and material helps for which we are in need of and accept our vows, protect our intentions, defend us from our spiritual enemies, protect us from dangers, assist us in our needs, consoles us on the point of our death, and lead us to the holy Paradise.

Pledge of this grace is the paternal benediction which to each all and, more with my heart than hands I wish to impart.

Your beloved. In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

7024 Negrar, 18-7-1949

To the Poor Servants Religious on the occasion of the Decree of Praise (*Decretum Laudis*).

In this moment I feel in my heart as father of this small but great Opera of the Poor Servants, all my gratitude and the lively gratitude for the gift the Lord has made for me by giving the seal and his means of approval of this Opera, thru the *Decretum Laudis*. This gift and approval do you know when it happened? Almost like a confirmation of my poor words you have listened many a times, it happened on the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

Therefore I recommend you to esteem and love this Opera which is not mine, but of Jesus, Opera born in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Beloved and venerable brothers, on this occasion, join with me with one heart and soul to thank the Lord from the depth of our heart for the immense gift he gave us thru his spouse the Church, and soon after thanking first of I place on my knee and you join me to ask forgiveness for the many shortcomings, many desertion and sins we have committed here in his house, under the constant and great advantages, first of for our soul, hampering who knows which plans of goodness the Providence would have showered, and we make a great and solemn promise to begin seriously to live the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, which the Lord has placed and today confirmed through the Holy church through the holy Constitutions especially as told the message of the bishop, modified according to the needs and goals of the Opera which God has willed.

Beloved brothers, the grace, the gift we have received is a great one, and if it is great gift, very great is the responsibility counting on all of us and for God's sake, I recommend to correspond to the many graces, great word, mine and your eternal salvation.

And for this once again I repeat, I say what I read in the letter that announced me the approval: if someone doesn't feel to live this spirit, for heaven's sake, for the good of his soul and the Opera, let his withdraw!

The Opera to fulfill the divine and special plans doesn't need anybody, rather needs, as I said so often, needs rags and clays, without head, available to everything, because everything is great in this House, and God dwells in his Opera and only in this way will fulfill the miracles typical for this Hour.

Brothers, our foundation is reverse, it is not on the earth, but on Heaven. But I don't doubt anyone, also because the majority of you have the grace to belong to this Opera, even before they are accepted in the bosom of this Opera from the first years of their schooling and trained, nourished, and followed up to be a way.

The very fact of being called to be part is for me a sign of special predilection from the Lord.

Beloved brothers, I am approaching the great call, and only the Lord knows how much I love you!

Keep these words of mine as my testament: the Opera is great; the Opera is Lord's work, and no force can ruin it. Only the members, we, if we fail to live as Jesus wants. For God's sake let him spare us from such a misfortune; let us live the pure and genuine spirit.

Blessed are you … that one day we all can find us united in Paradise.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 64 Verona, 25 August 1949

To the superiors of houses.

My dear and beloved…[121]

The grace and peace of Blessed Jesus be with us.

As we approach the holy season of annual retreats I feel the need to address you all thru you my poor words, which sprouts spontaneously from my heart, to the beloved brothers, advising all to prepare with a very special preparation to do it indeed well to draw an abundant fruit more than ever. This year in fact for us, for our dear Congregation, is a year of very special blessings. We had the great gift, the divine seal of the Pontifical approval, which demand from us a great responsibility and a new commitment to be true Poor Servants, not only in words but also in deeds.

My dear …. , the hour we pass by is very grave. The revolt between good and evil, between light and darkness was never so open, never so terrible. It is the hour of Satan and at the same time it is the hour of God, who prepares the hour of triumph of Christ and his Church. But for this our participation is required. Therefore there is an urge to return to the practice of the Gospels and its pure

[121] Followed the names of the superiors of Houses.

source. And if, as it seems to me, and as I feel in my heart, the divine Providence wants to make use of the humble Opera to fulfill these great plans, and you will understand the need to renewal and walk in a worthy way of our special, better say very special vocation.

And behold how opportune, for this, the holy retreats. In the silence and contemplative listening the Lord will speak. We say with the prophet: "speak O Lord that your servant may listen" rather with St. Paul: "Lord what you want me to do"?

And we begin to beat our chest to ask pardon for the absence and sins we have committed, especially in the house of the Lord, as members of this Opera, and then a firm decision to proceed thru the way to the Holy Mountain of Christian, religious, priestly perfection. It will be a difficult road, a way of renouncement and sacrifice, but how much peace we can experience in our hearts from this earth, and what a reward in heaven!

My dear and beloved …, how many more things I wish to tell! But you read my heart. Tell everyone that they should give due importance to my poor words, must listen me, be my breath and life, living the pure and genuine spirit of this very great Opera, which the Lord looks as he once looked at Bethlehem and Nazareth.

Is we are filled with this spirit and this sentiments, I assure you, we will do miracles, I wish to tell you, we will be able to establish in the world so that the Lord may use those humble and hidden things to fulfill his greatest plans.

In these holy and blessed days I will be more than ever near with my prayers and sufferance and you too pray much for me your father who remembers you in his mind and heart, and in this moment more with my heart than hands I bless you. And let us remember that the Poor Servant who day by day in the mansions entrusted to him by obedience lives the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, has assured his eternal salvation and has in his hands the smart card for the holy paradise. What a gift, and what a grace!

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 65 Verona, 8 September 1949

Words of Venerable Fr John Calabria at the end of the Retreat and after the first and triennial profession made at S. Zeno in Monte on 8th September 1949.

Beloved brothers,

I was not intending to talk to you but at last I felt like a shock and I felt as Jesus telling me: "I am and will be always with you, because this Opera is my Opera. Go and tell them these words".

First of all the attitude of thankfulness for the very great gift of these holy retreat, directed rightly by the Holy Spirit, rightly as per our spiritual need.

It is a great Opera Jesus personally has established and it is a great grace to belong to it. Let us try to come out of this spiritual exercise as the apostles from the Cenacle to reach light and life to the souls and world.

Jesus will be with us!

Our first concern is our sanctification. Alas for us if we do not become saints! Remember that to sanctify we have to become saints. We will become saints by living the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera. No external trials, no enemy can ruin this Opera. If someone tries to destroy it the angels of God will defend this Opera. I alone can ruin the Opera. What a responsibility!

The present time is sad, but the Lord accomplished in his Opera those plans which I ten years back had not even thought of. It is Jesus who functions, o my dear ones, with the pure and genuine spirit. If we will live with the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera I am sure the Lord will do miracles of the early days of Christianity. The Lord is in need of none of us, and very often I have told you that I don't worry to send away a boy: the Lord will think of sending away he who doesn't correspond.

But let us take care not to have the misfortune to be excluded! Let us see to correspond thru pain and sufferings which are the mark of God's work.

I carry you in my heart and mind and am near you with my prayer and sufferance pertaining to the office of the Casante.

The entire world looks at us. Great plans Jesus wants to fulfill, but he wants to fulfill it with us.

*LETTER 66 Verona 4 October 1949

To the superiors of the houses.

My dearest,

The grace of blessed Jesus be always with us.

L read again the Decree of approval printed in the Ecclesiastical Bulletin of Verona and the nice comment that followed it. While reading it I feel in me more than ever a responsibility the Lord, in his special infinite goodness was pleased to entrust us. The Poor Servant has in his hands own destiny and that of many souls.

The Paradise is in his hands, if he faithfully corresponds to his vocation, living it according to its pure and genuine spirit of the Opera. It would be the hell if he fails to correspond and if his mistake causes to remain incomplete the divine plans of Providence. I wish none of us face such a misfortune.

Pontifical approval is the seal from God upon this Opera. The Lord has once again given us a attestation of his special predilection for us. Blessed are we if we take new figure to correspond to it.

We live, however in humility, charity, spirit of sacrifice, *buseta e taneta* (see lett. *383, 4-5-1932), away from human protection, supported by Providence. Souls, souls, this is what we have to seek, and ask for. We are "living Gospels" as the dear Jesus wants us, to save souls. Our examples, our religious life itself should be an eloquent preaching which gives value to what we say in words, especially preaching. And then we will fulfill the

plan of God and assure our eternal destiny and that of many of our brothers.

On this occasion you would tell this assurance to others. Live well, let us become saints and our Opera will proceed to new developments, to the salvation of many souls.

Pray much for me; you know I am in great need of it. Pray that I may remain to height of our vocation I call back to your attention.

And I with great heart bless you, wishing you that the Lord Jesus may find in you and the brothers Poor Servants his divine his pleasure and at the end your days you may be able to say: "*Euge serve bone et fidelis, intra in gaudium Dominii tui*"[122]

*LETTER 67 Holy Christmas 1949

My dear and beloved brothers both internal and external

The grace and peace of Jesus the Blessed be always with us.

Good and Holy Christmas! Rightly from the depth of my heart spurt these words of wishes for you. Simple words but filled with great meanings. Let Child Jesus

[122] Good, faithful servant, take part of the joy of your Lord (Mt 25: 23).

reborn in our hearts, in every hearts, and reviving let him communicate his own sentiments and let him enable us to love what he loved and embrace what he embraced, so that his life be manifested in us: "*ut et vita Jesu manifestetur*…" so that each one of us reach to say in every trial of this life of exile: "What is good for Jesus, is good for me too"!

O, how I pray and beseech the Holy Spirit, He may give to my poor words so much effectiveness to produce in all of you abundant fruits of grace and holiness!

My dear and beloved brothers, holiness, our personal sanctification: here is the great need and the great imperative of the present hour, which is an hour of constant appeal of the Lord to the entire poor humanity, but in a particular way to us priests, religious and Christians, so that they may be truly people of God and we may live the life of the Apostles and the first Christians.

Never like now has the world gone on stray away from God, embracing in the darkness of many errors and vices. Now it has only the light of sanctity which radiates from us can illuminate the route and show the way of great return to Christ and his Church. From here our responsibility, the very grave duty of those who have received the divine mandate of teaching: "*Euntes docete omnes gentes*"[123] by words, and above all with examples of a life fully in conformity with the principles and maxims of the holy gospel, lived and practiced as it is, *sine glossa*, that is without arbitrary defacement and futile comments, to be really another Christ and living gospels.

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[123] Go and instruct all the nations.

In my opinion only sanctity can solve the grave social problems that upset this hour.

O, if it is alive in us, as it was active in the apostles and early Christians, the thought of the Paternity of God, that is: god is Father and infinitely good and provident, and we are all brothers in Christ, that we must do to others what we wish them done to us! There would be no egoisms, class fights, hatred, vengeance, which has frequently their sad epilogue in the fraternal bloodshed.

In front of the Crib we all have to reflect and meditate the incomprehensible mystery of reducing of the Son of God made man, of which the apostle says, that being infinitely rich, he made himself poor, so that thru his self abasement we may become rich of his gifts and his grace: "*Propter vos egenus factus est cum esset dives, ut illius inopia vos divites essestis*"[124]

Where else if not here, in front of the Christmas Crib, the saints came closer to that heavenly doctrine which, is for all the times, seems all the more written for our epoch?

"You rich, used to say St. John Chrysostom, remember that you are distributers, not owner of your wealth and when you give to poor, such an act of mercy is also justice". St Augustine in his instructions to the people used to say: "you make the sign of the cross, come to the church, listen the preaching, knew to participate in the sacred liturgical songs, approach the sacraments, but all these cannot tell me that you are Christians. What will

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[124] Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich (2Cor 8: 9).

show you so is by charity alone, is the love towards brothers."

All these teachings, finally is nothing other than a magnificent comment to the letter inspired by the Apostle St. James, who literally tells thus: "what merit one has by saying that I have faith, if does not exercise it? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked, or is hungry and one of you tell them: go in peace, warm up yourselves, without giving them the necessary things for their body what merits he gains? Thus the faith without action is dead in itself" (Jm. 2:14)

This, my dear and beloved brothers, is the pure and genuine spirit of the gospel, that new spirit Jesus came to establish on earth, id the fire of charity towards God and love towards brothers, for which he is the lively icon. True sanctity consists in charity and love.

To this another reason that obligate us, is in knowing that our sanctification and the sanctification of the souls thru prayer and penitence is the primary and principal goal proposed by the Holy Father in declaring the Holy Year which will commence on the solemnity of Christmas. It is a dispatch for all the faithful, but doubtless in a special way addressed to the religious, hence also to us Poor Servants of Divine Providence.

It is the name of the internal brothers, but also you, beloved external brothers, as members of the Opera; you must possess the spirit, so well summed up in our name. Remember it is a great grace Jesus is extending to us to associate to the Opera of the Poor Servants.

Let us analyze in fact our name.

We say *Poor*. Therefore we must love the holy poverty, and suffer the disadvantages, privations, sacrifices, which are natural consequences of it. He who loves to operate so is attached to own comforts, is poor by name but in fact is not, and what reward can he expect promises from his professions of poverty? Love for holy poverty will give us the possibility to share with other brothers the goods and we are allocated by the divine Providence.

We are *Servants*. As per the example of Jesus who from the very moment of birth declared a perfect servant of the Father, we have to conform always to the holy will of god, which is manifested thru the holy rules and the orders of the superiors: "*quae placita sunt Ei facio semper*"[125] how many times I told you that we have to be without head, as clay, as rags, available to everything! Alas these words shall not be for our condemnation!

Also you beloved external brothers, you have to obey, that is observe the holy rules of the Lord, in the fulfillment of your duties in the family, in the offices, in your profession, in everything and always. Remember in special the duty of good example. What a judgment the Opera will face due to the bad example of some External Brother!

Finally we are *Servants of Divine Providence*. We must live and witness in life the "do not worry …" of the holy Gospel. Away from human protection, use and safeguard religiously what the Lord sends us.

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[125] I do what is pleasing to my Father (Jn. 8: 29).

From our side let us live silence and concealment, let us be satisfied of the glimpse and approval of God. Sometimes the Providence will want the Opera to make known even externally, but immediately after completing the command, let us return into our silence and self-effacement: "*buseta e taneta*" (see lett. *383, 4-5-1932).

And you too my dear and beloved External Brothers, live in this atmosphere of silence, in the complete trust and filial abandonment in God and his Divine Providence. Seek first the things of the souls, your sanctification, keeping you all away from sin, reorder your present life with the future life, and bear with generosity the unavoidable trials of life, and the rest of the matter, be sure, the Lord will not abandon you, since he has committed with his word: "*Seek first the Kingdom of God, … and all these things will be given to you*"

This is what urging me to tell you, but since it isn't very far "the unity octave" as usual from 18th to 25th of January, and I felt the need to exhort you to do it with special commitment.

As you know at Maguzzano, from the beginning, it is authorized, with the decree of the bishop, the daily adoration with the precise goal for the rejoining of the separated brothers, and I have placed at the disposal at Maguzzano this Octave be done with high solemnity. But also in other houses there should be the maximum solemnity and to all I recommend to offer prayers and sacrifices to implore the Lord graces and light of Christian strength, undertake the means to return, overcoming the most evident difficulties and barriers, so that of all faithful and believers there be only one sheepfold and one shepherd.

Oh if this movement toward the House of the common Father, gradually to the sheepfold of Peter, if there would be a grand steps, how much goodness it would be for the souls and how much advantage and prestige to the Church, what a glory to God! Even humanly speaking it is a matter of great difficulty, nothing is impossible to God. And we shall not forget that every grace is bound to our continuous and ardent intercession.

In front of the Child Jesus let us pray for all these intentions.

Pray also for this father, who carries you all in his heart, and on every day pray and offer his sufferings for you and for you dear ones, and who with you more that by hands bless with my heart. One day hope to meet all at the end of our terrain dwelling, without missing none, in the holy paradise, this being at the end of our life of trials and exile, but together keep watch to the true life, which consist in the full and eternal possession of God.

Your affectionately,

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

PS

As far as I can, I recommend you to read and meditate frequently what I tell you by words or by writings because these are words born in me spontaneously and I tell you always in the name of Jesus the Blessed. Thus you

will nourish in you the pure and genuine spirit which he from the beginning has places in the Opera.

*1357/A (dateless)[126]

I am in front of my crucifix while I write these poor words while I write these poor words which are spontaneous in my heart, and it seems to me that from the bleeding and open heart of Jesus Christ the divine Redeemer comes out lively and very penetrating than ever because the voice of blood, a cry, a supreme imploring: "*Ut omnes unum sin*"![127]

In his eminent priestly prayer after the last supper, Jesus had addressed this to the Father and was certainly one of the scorching throb of his heart, becoming comprehensible as a burning furnace of charity. But now it seems he address it specially to us, it is true, because if the return of the separated brothers will be a gift of the Father to the mystic spouse of her divine Son Jesus, the church, stay rightly with us to make this gift with us and be done soon..

Look, this is the opportune time to stir this great problem, approaching as we are to the unity octave of prayer, as noted from 18th to 25th of January that is from

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126 We have placed it here, towards the end of 1949, because the third last paragraph the Father says: "We are at the vigil of the holy year…." Besides, mentioning the Pope Pius XII he refers to the holy year of 1950.

127 That all may be one.

the feast of the Chair of St. Peter to the feast of the conversion of St. Paul the apostle.

I acknowledge the special grace from the Lord, if I poor as I am, have learned always from the early days of my priesthood, the importance and almost the yearning for the return of the separated brothers.

For this reason about a thirty years back when I say by chance, in the "L'Osservatore Romano" a small description where for the first time spoke of the unity octave. To his Excellency Monsignor Caron, I wrote, to recommend this to the Holy Father requesting to use this means so that such an appropriate practice by the urge of the Apostolic See be extended to the entire Church.

He with humble promise replied that it was so insignificant to do so, but promised to bring to the attention of the Holy Father in one of the personal meetings he gets. What has happened, I do not know. And it is very encouraging one that we all notice happily.

We can say there is no seminary or religious institute where it is not practiced and above all in great cities this octave is better organized so that more people could actively participate. And this holy infection is intensified more and more and be extended till the small churches of the villages, I wish to rejoice on my poor but pressing request.

Let us invite the faithful to pray for the return of the separated brothers. Prayer is the means to obtain all the graces for which the church is in need of and the Lord himself want to give, enough that we pray with that ardent

charity and deep faith as per the teaching of Jesus: "seek first the Kingdom of God and his Justice".

Prayer in fact is that sweet incense which goes up to the throne of God and comedowns in many blessings but in itself it is a help and deed to train and form the feelings of faith, to understand the problems of humanity which is also the issue of justice and charity.

Of justice, because if we feel as those privileged as we possess the genuine and entire patrimony of truth, we shall not become egoists: the integrity spreads by itself. We have to share it with others this supernatural patrimony, mindful of what the Lords tells: "*Unicuique mandavit de proximo suo*".[128]

It is also the task of charity. These separated brothers must be counted by us with love and tenderness all special, as a mother thinks of fixed affection and with insistent homesickness of the sons who keep distance from the paternal roof and which in everyday are absent from the family table. It is like an unlucky family the best sons seek their mother not only thru exemplary behavior but doing their best with all their efforts to communicate the separated brothers the nostalgia of paternal hearth and lead them back with the good will and all the means at our disposal approach these brothers and facilitate their coming back.

They are always our brothers, although dissident and separated from us. They are rocks of gold as per the words of Supreme Pontiff Pius XI, detached from the great edifice of the Church of Peter, but do not cease to be gold.

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[128] He gave to everyone precepts towards the neighbor (Sir 17: 12).

We have to recover them and bring them back to the perfect communion with the church, to remain formally part of the mystical body of the Church, to enjoy the abundance of the charism which Christ spread abundantly amidst us.

The Divine master has repeated us often, thru his Vicar, the invitation to work for the return of the separated brothers, and echoes in our ears the anchored words pronounced by Pious XII in the last Christmas message. We gather with all our commitment of our good will this solemn invitation of the Lord. In a particular way during this Unity Octave of prayer, let our voice be lifted up insistently, lovingly and more hopeful at the throne of God and ask an intense and lasting ardor to continue beyond the Octave during the entire year, in this pant, in this passion for the unity of the Christian brothers.

It seems to me that Jesus reserves special blessings to all those dioceses, parishes, and religious houses where this unity Octave is done with greater solemnity and zeal. And the first blessing will be a greater sanctity of life, because we cannot desire ardently the return of the separated brothers without understanding and listening of the best way is to appease the mercy of God and convince the return of the dissidents is the sacrifice and example of a holy life.

The spirit of poverty and simplicity, the modesty of life, perfect charity in our rapports the ownership and splendor of our liturgical functions are all very effective means to convince thru the facts the brothers, more than thru words. And the sanctity irradiates often far away even though not noisy, without sensational and grand activities.

We are at the vigil of the Holy Year, which the paternal goodness of the Holy Father has pronounced and let us hope by the Lord's grace to celebrate. If we prepare to this celebration with holy intentions to live Christian life according to the gospel on the examples of the apostles and the early Christians we can also hasten the hour of the return of the separated brothers.

It seems rightly this is the hour, the time looks mature. In my small experience I too experience visible signs from the Lord towards Rome and the gaze of many souls materially away, but who are much nearer than we think. For this my poor words can cross the boarders of our land and be heard and gathered beyond the mountains and seas of our brothers because they know that we desire only one thing: the heart beat of the Heart of Jesus be fulfilled: *"Ut omnes unum sint*".

O what glory would be to God, what a prestige to the Church, what an advantage to the souls who will feel reassured in faith and in the resolution of a life really Christian! And how the conversion itself will be eased to the conversion of the pagans, for whom these numerous divisions among the Christians form a grave obstacle to their great number of conversion.

O how satisfied I would die, with what a joy I would sing the "nunc dimittis" if I get the fortune to see these holy ideals, this great return take place!

Satan trembles, puts in action all the means in his disposition and all others to have the upper hand, but, these, I believe, are his last efforts, after which we will see the full triumph of Christ and his Church and a new era of prosperity and peace.

This grace finally the Lord will give us thru the intercession of the one whose praise we sing in the liturgy: "*Cunctas haereses sola interemisti in universo mundo*".[129]

LETTER 68 Verona, 30 January 1950

My dear and beloved sons in Rome,

The grace and peace of Jesus the blessed be with us.

Here I am in front of my crucifix and think and meditate on the infinite love Jesus has for our souls, he loved till his total immolation on the cross redeeming at the cost of his precious blood.

My God, how precious are the souls, how we have to work hard suffer to save them!

With this vision in front of the eyes and mind, with this deep conviction in the depth of your heart I request to read and meditate my poor words I write you in the name and will of Jesus, both to exhort you to live always and more intensely that pure and genuine spirit the divine Master has placed from the beginning in this Opera, which is fully his and we have the grace to belong to, and to give you those norms and availability which seems to me necessary and timely so that the entire community of Rome may be in essence only one family, in full conformity with

[129] You alone have defeated on earth all the heresy.

its direction, in perfect fusion of heart and spirit, as it is fitting to the bothers, children of the same mother, which is our beloved Congregation.

And in the first place as I know and can, I recommend you the interior life: recipients and channels, look this is how the Poor Servants of Divine Providence should be. Therefore give the highest importance to the pious practices, which nourishes in us the life of intimacy with Jesus. Alas to those who ignores it or fulfill for names sake! Gradually the spirit weakens, enters the tepidity and then does everything without zeal and energy, and very rare will be the fruit we receive from the exercise of the sacred ministry and every form of apostolate. If you sometimes feel faint, cold, distracted, without enthusiasm in the search of the holy kingdom of God, resort to the Holy Spirit, who is light, warmth, and force, and comfort: *Adsit nobis, quaesumus, Domine, virtus Spiritus sancti…*[130]

In the second place, I recommend you so much to live the spirit of faith and filial trust and abandonment to God and to his paternal providence. Be away from the human concerns, but welcoming whatever the providence sends; do not depend on the people and do not count on the material or moral advantages that could come from them, having always in mind the words of the Lord: "*Maledictus homo qui confidit in homine... benedictus vir qui confideit in Domono, et erit Dominus fiducia eius*".[131]

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130 We pray to you Lord, support us with the force of the Holy Spirit.

131 Cursed be the man who trusts in man… Blessed be the man who trusts in the Lord and the Lord is his trust.(Jer 17: 5-7).

Moreover do not worry to do many things: *non molta sed moltum*! Who does well does much, and he who attends to his sanctification does a lot, but he who attempts to thousands of other things, even if good in itself, and done with attention on the manifold sides of his external work that the interior life and sanctification, may fall in that is called heresy of action. Apart from this excess action, remember that when you commit to many, too many things, it is easy to creep in the self and exclude God.

It shall not be so with each one of us, and let us do our best to be, as I in many a time told, to be another Christ and living gospel, salt of the earth and light of the world! If the world is going perverse, to a great extend the fault is also ours. Let us begin our life reform and place on the peak of or thoughts the great concern of our personal sanctification, to achieve this we have to be attentive not to miss track from the holy will of God.

What profit to do great steps, but out of track? Therefore, when you have in mind to do something which seem to you is for the glory of God and the good of the souls, first of all humbly submit your projects and initiatives for the approval of your respective superiors. He who does in this way is sure of doing the will of the Father, God will work with him and make fruitful and useful his actions; but he who des according to his head, only one thing is sure, to be wrong. Even if he does miracles, gains applause and approvals of the world, it is worth nothing, if it is not for our ruin and condemnation.

Another recommendation I am urged to give you, is this: of what you do you should not propose to do for the good name or your personal prestige, but the goodness and advantage should be of the Opera. We have to disappear,

what has to remain is the Opera, only the Opera. He, who seeks self, own interest, would commit a robbery in the holocaust, reserving for self what was once solemnly donated to the Lord.

It is true as Parish priests, of assistant you receive the mission and investiture of competent ecclesiastical authority, to him you have to account and depend on. But you are not private person, instead, representative and promoter of the Congregation. Precisely speaking, it is not you but the congregation thru you receive the official hand over of souls, in their midst you cannot exercise the sacred ministry on your own judgment, but as Poor Servants, that is according to the spirit, indications, criteria, typical of Poor Servants.

If someone does differently, it is not only a serious prejudice of the Opera, it would deprive those helps and graces that would make fruitful and valuable his ministry, according to the words of Jesus: “he who remains in me and I in him, will produce much fruit, because without me you can do nothing”.

Therefore let live the spirit of our Opera, as rags, clay, headless, *buseta e taneta* (see lett. *383, 4-5-1932), in concealment, in humility. Then the Lord will uses us, can even place us on the lamp stand and fulfill new and great plans, all typical to the present times.

And finally I recommend you so much more to live united, *cor unum et anima una* (see lett. 7, Christmas 1933). Even though you are entrusted with pastoral care in distant places away from one another, but you have to live the same spirit, maintain unity in orientation. For this even in the past, I have always recommended that you remain

united with St. Philip community for occasional exchange of views, for a fraternal understanding and co-operation. Nevertheless never like our times I felt the need, necessity, urgency, that the different suburbs may form one single family, in the full sense of the word.

In prayer and suffering underlined and matures a project, which seems to me will offer great glory to God and be of great advantage to our beloved Congregation. The project is this: that the dear Fr. Ottorino, in his quality as Parish priest of St Philip, hold the position of superior, who is my representative. You understand the reason: I have to come or send someone to visit you occasionally. These visits, however, cannot be frequent as it seems necessary, also necessary, apart from this; I find it necessary that one of my representatives be there in your midst.

Therefore, from now on, to beloved Fr. Ottorino new responsibilities are given. He has to visit our religious families in Rome, give account of the various activities that emerge in each one, watch over the observance of the discipline of religious life, ensure that everything proceed according to the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, etc.

Besides if the individual religious, in charge of the various sectors of the city, may remain free to exercise the ordinary exercise of the sacred ministries, and regarding new activities and initiatives, before implementing them, must place for the approval of the new superior, who for a good end must keep in frequent touch with the major superiors.

My dear and beloved children, this is what triggered me to tell you. Receive my poor words, as Jesus'

words; He is the absolute master on whom we have to depend on everything. Blessed are then! You will fulfill great things, not according to men, but according to God, you will take advantage for your souls and all the souls, especially those the providence wants to entrust us, and with this trust concluding your earthly days of work, you will look at the face of death to listen repeating the consoling words: "good and faithful servant, enter the joy of your Lord".

As far I can and I know I entrust on the charity of your prayers, I am badly in need of it, to do till the end the holy will of the Lord. And one day we may find together united for ever in the paradise. More with my heart than the hand I bless you all,

Yours in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***9694 Verona, 10-2-1950**

Dear Fr. Gino and brother Giovanni[132],

The grace and peace of the Lord be always within your hearts.

I am very close to you in mind and heart and on every day with my increasing suffering, and confide you that you would pray for me. Be always united with your

[132] Fr. Gino Grigolato and Bro. Giovanni Corradin, sent to Milan to open a House.

Father, Custodian of this opera of the Lord, help constantly, not for me, but because I am the Custodian, and help the Opera.

You are the pioneers in the house of Milan. Be faithful to the pure and genuine program of the House. Remember that we are the Opera.

Be like the seed under soil; be generous. In the beginning there are greater sacrifices, but the merit too is greater.

Remember that from your way of speech, behavior, action, people will form an idea of the house and everything.

Pray and make others pray for me: it is a charity which Jesus will reward with generosity.

Remember the spirit of "being invisible", at Bethlehem and Nazareth ….. What a great mystery and activity in the apparent inaction! One who does is the Lord and we just help him when we are intimately united, as the branches to the vine.

Tomorrow is the feast of the Immaculate of Lourdes. Our heavenly Mother, our mistress, may she get us the grace to comply with the desires of Jesus and then disappear so that in fullness the victory of Jesus in the souls.

I bless you and carry you in my heart, I will be very near you, as I wish to be there present in person when and if the Lord permits me.

Give my regards to Fr. Joseph and Fr. Carlo and a special blessing for you all and other future inmates of the House in Milan.

Dear brothers, souls and God's work will cost a lot and at times will demand blood.

I am in Negrar. I am extremely in need of prayers. How great the Opera is in the mind of Jesus!

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***7039 1950**

A Letter to the Poor Servants Religious.

My dear brothers,

May the grace and peace of Jesus be with us always!

Here in front of my Crucifix I write this letter to you and I write it in the name of God to tell you matters that Jesus the absolute Master of this Opera, which He has found, has given his divine approval thru his holy Church.

Brothers, let us thank the Lord who, with this divine seal, we can go ahead for certain to fulfill those divine plans that the Divine Providence wants, always living the pure and genuine spirit of this Opera which is God's and no force can destroy it: only me, only we, if we do not live the pure and genuine spirit.

Brothers, let each one think and see if he feels comfortable to continue to live the spirit which is today declared by the Holy Church and if do not feel ready to make his promise, let his withdraw for the sake of his soul

and the Opera, who is not in need of anyone, on the other hand is in need of those, with faith, with love, abandons to God and to his divine providence.

Brothers, we will pass away, but the Opera must live on, walk ahead, go till the end of the world, but this depends on us.

Brothers, set us sanctify! Brothers, let the holy year mark on us a beginning of a personal sanctity!

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 69 Verona, 1 July 1951

On the 50th year of the ordination of the Venerable Father.

My dear and loving brothers,

The grace and peace of Jesus the blessed be always with us.

Here, at the feet of my crucifix, in the full soothing silence of the creatures and things, this gave me to taste in this magnificent place offered me by Divine Providence for a short term of convalescence, I think of you all and, with my heart in my hand, I thank you for the supplications and prayers you made for me during the painful trial the

Lord allowed for his purpose, but above all for my personal sanctification.

For me the greatest charity one can do for me is prayer, breath of God is the source of all goodness. If I can address you my poor words today, and it flows spontaneously from my heart, is rightly because the Lord has listened and granted your prayers. With this you have helped me and I desire to help you with the present letter that, if I don't tell you new things, nevertheless I wish that it be like my testament and the best record of the 50th anniversary of my priesthood.

I don't know if I will have the grace to reach it and celebrate, but from now on I praise and thank the Lord of the very great gift of priesthood, granted also to me, so poor and miserable. And together, oh how I feel the need, in this extraordinary anniversary, to ask God forgiveness for all the inadequacy and misery of this not short period of priestly life and offer in a spirit of humility and with a truly contrite soul of divine sacrifice "*pro innumerabilibus peccatis et offensionibus et negligentiis meis*".[133]

In the meantime I entreat and request you to join with me in prayer, to obtain from the Lord forgiveness of the evils done till now, so that I may find mercy and compassion in my, by this time not very far, call to the divine tribunal.

Pray, as well, so that this great day sign for me a new phase for my personal sanctification and for the sanctification of the Opera.

My God, as I feel all the responsibility of Poor Servant, and all the more as the Casante and Guardian of this very great Opera! For this, as far as I know and I can,

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[133] For my many sins, offenses and negligence.

I tell you and repeat: See to pray much for me, who in this last glimpse of my life I may be what Jesus wants.

In my poverty I too carry you in my mind and heart and in this 50th I will repeat with intense fervor the prayer I recite since many years after the Holy Mass: "*Ut cum fratribus meis et pueris tuis, laudem te, in saecula saeculorum*"! (see lett. 3, 19-3-1933). O yeas my dear and beloved brothers, that, after completing our earthly days we may find again all together in the holy paradise, as the Lord has united us on earth, calling us to be part of this Opera which is all his, thru which he wants to carry out new and great plans all just for this present hour and he will fulfill the for certain, on condition that we are always faithful to our divine program: *Quaerite primum* …!

My dear and beloved brothers, the present instant is doubtlessly a great hour. As I were on my death bed, I feel like telling you that the decisive for the triumph of the church and our holy religion, for the realization of the era[134] of Jesus.

We have clear signs and charism and unique graces which the Holy spirit gives certain souls (among these Fr. Lombardi, I would call the messiah of God), who actualizing the teaching and maxim of the Gospel, announces this triumph of Jesus in the tremendous fight which in this last times is engaged between the powers of good and evil.

We Poor Servants have to contribute to it with the sanctity of life, irradiating the pure light of the holy gospel, becoming living gospels, seeking souls, only souls, especially the most needy, old, poor, sick, are our wealth, the gem of the Opera.

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134 The original is "age".

This, o my dear brothers, is the pure and genuine spirit that Jesus has placed from the beginning, which is already consecrated by our holy Constitutions, which "*in visceribus*" (heartedly) I recommend to read often and meditate to observe even the minute instructions, so that you should not forget that the great things are composed of tiny things, like the vast ocean is created by infinite drops of water. Of the rest, the greatness of the actions depends exclusively by the measure of love with which it is done.

To these small things I turn my attention to and it seems to me that it is Jesus himself who wants that I may remind, briefly, in this solemn circumstances, first to myself and thus to all of you.

Let us remember that it is never thought sufficiently with the "*porro unum est necessarium*",[135] the rest is nothing, is smoke and vanity. Co-ordinate the present days with the future life. Think and speak often of the soul, of eternity, of paradise, hell; judge the things and happenings in the light and supernatural principles, see everything in God and God in everything, in the blade of a grass, in a flower, in a future, in every small and great creature, recognizing the infinite power, God's wisdom and goodness, who is great in great things and extremely great in especially great things.

My dear, this is the practical gospel spirit, this is true Christian wisdom. And how necessary it is to have souls who incarnate into this spirit, who irradiate this light in the midst of such darkness of the world, obscurity of ignorance of the world, darkness of ignorance, errors and corruption! This is what Jesus wants from all the Christians, but specially from us priests and religious, to us, addressing in a special way the warning of Jesus: "so

[135] Only one thing is necessary.

that your light may shine, so that seeing your works and glorify your heavenly Father"

If we posses this spirit, it will not be difficult to see in the poor, it will not be difficult to see in the poor, in the old, in the sick, the living icons of Jesus, His pets; esteem as deserves many simple acts of charity: to say a good word, have a gesture, a smile, do a service; many tiny sacrifices, renunciation, detachments, small mortifications, which appear insignificant but instead are very effective in preserving us from the infectious corruption of the world, to preserve and multiply in us the holy fervor. You will see here such a vast horizon. Blessed are you if you can come down to carrying this out in life, according to your character, your office, and your liking!

We are humble: "*buseta e taneta*" (see lett. *383, 4-5-1932), let us love the last place: *ama nesciri et nihilo reputari*,[136] not only in words, it counts nothing, but in facts. Therefore let us mortify generously the tickling of self love, which attempt to do great and remarkable things.

My dear brothers, what benefits the applause of the world? Isn't enough to have the approval of God? "One who has to judge – says the apostle – is the Lord". I told you many times: we have to disappear. That which has to shine is the Opera. If the Lord likes to set us in high, on our side we must desire for the last place, saying in the meantime with genuine sentiments of heart: "*Non nobis domine, non nobis, sed, nimini tuo da gloriam*".[137]

Observe the small rules: punctuality to common exercises, to the pious actions, to the meals. How much cheerfulness one can receive thru this observance of

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136 Love to be neglected and not counted as worthwhile.

137 Not to us, not to us Lord, but to your name give glory.

community life! "*Ecce quam bonum et quam iucundum habitare fraters in unum*"![138]

I recommend you the silence, especially the great silence. When that moment comes in the evening, leave everything. Let silence reign at every corners of the house. Remember thru silence we can measure the score of zeal of a community living.

I recommend you the interior life, a life with intimate union with God. Do not forget that on this alone consists the richness of our activity and the very sanctification: "he who remains in me and I in him, they will give much fruits, for without me you can do nothing". Remember therefore what I told you many a times: vine and branches, basins and channels. In the exercise of the sacred ministry, believe me, it is not the preaching that converts, but the divine grace, which is given to humble and refused to the proud: "*Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam*".[139]

Among the indications of our holy rules there is also that of not smoking. I remind you here not because there is a need, but only to refer to the theme I always had. And also for the future remember that, if one does not or feels not observing it, whosoever it is, even if gifted with many knowledge and extraordinary talents, could do much good elsewhere, but the Opera wouldn't be for him.

The Lord, be sure, will not fail to stir up people worthy to understand and help the Opera. To be guided by them, away from those contrary to the spirit, on the other hand is a support to the plan of Divine Providence. But on your own don't seek support and human protections because the Lord is jealous. Our trust in him must be

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138 How nice and wonderful when the brothers live together.

139 God resists the proud, and to the humble, he gives his grace.

complete, constant, should not decrease even in very difficult and critical moments that will surely occur. In these trials we must we must do a serious examination of conscience, remove the obstacles that are; the little faith, a faulty correspondence, some attack against the creatures and us and look above all that there be no sin.

Oh, sin! I told you many times that no external force can destroy this Opera, as no power, allow me to say, can destroy the Church and the Gospel. If we are faithful to our program, if the "*Quaerite…",* more than keeping it written on the paper, will be engraved in our hearts, I assure you: the fights and persecutions will serve rather to consolidate and strengthen the Opera. The only thing I am frightened and can destroy the Opera is sin. For heaven's sake, that none of us may reach, I repeat, to commit this offence, to betray the Lord's Opera! My God, what a responsibility would load on him!

I urge you also charity and fraternal union: united among you and with your father, with the Casante, present and future, who will have enlightenments and special graces to guide the Opera in general and each member in a special way, according to the will of the Divine Master, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you are united in charity in mutual help and forbearance, in the generous sacrifice of yourselves for fraternal love, I tell you that you will be invincible. Satan will be afraid of you because he is not frightened of the neither preaching nor external organizations, but is afraid solely of sanctity.

With regard to demon, remember that he will work on the natural and cannot harm unless it is consented, the one who extends him few threads. To succeed he will use

our temperament, our limitation, our judging, our sympathy, some attachment to things, offices, work, etc.

My dear brothers, let us seek only God. What we can do, much or less let it be, let us do everything for him alone, and by him we will receive a great reward let us do everything and only for Him, and from Him we will receive a quite grand reward.

Let charity be our real identity, not only in the house among us, but towards all. Let us remember well, we do not have enemies to combat, but only brothers to love, to enlighten, to correct, to edify as per the sayings of St. Augustine: "*diligite homines, interficite errores*" (see lett. 56, 24-3-1948)

We offer according to our possibilities, but with an open heart. Many unfortunately posses which becomes their chastisement, they have their purse full, but their hearts empty. Oh if they remember the great warning of Jesus: "How difficult for a rich man to be saved"! See the poor have many ways for salvation, but the rich has only one, that is of charity. In this context I say often that the poor are there to save the rich, as our divine master has shown us clearly the words the divine judge will pronounce in the irrevocable final judgment: "I was hungry and you gave me food, etc…"

Yet we shall not forget that our nature is fallen, therefore never presume at all on yourself, on your energy. Flee away from the occasions, do as the doctors who, curing the sick, precautions themselves against every infections of evil.

Take care of the discouragement, the worst advisor and ally of Satan to your ruin: yes humble yourselves, but never get into discouragements. If there are weakness, temptations etc. use means to overcome them: vigilance,

prayer, mortifications, trust in the one while will not allow us to be tempted above our strength, will give us the necessary help and grace to overcome and will know also to bring out many benefits from the temptations itself.

Be on your guard from the false mysticism and sentimentalism, especially you, beloved priests and brothers, in the guidance of the souls, so that, beginning with the spirit, may not end up in the senses and flesh. Maximum seriousness and cautions from certain pious souls. If you have the inkling of some danger, chop off, at least for the time being, for not to cry of make others cry when it would be very late.

I recommend you much and very much not to speak of politics, worse, to become fond of it. We must not know other politics than that of the gospel: souls, eternal life, kingdom of God etc.

We shall praise and approve the good done either by others or by us. It should offer glory to god, and not our prestige.

Be like crystal water with your superiors, with your father Fr. John, as you know how much he loves all of you: show him your afflictions, your anxiety, your fear, and desires. And since we are in the topic, remember what I said already: it is better to do nothing with the father than do great things without him.

Be fully proud of your vocation, love it, try to correspond to it, because to this correspondence it bound your eternal salvation. Who lives and dies holy in the religious life, has the good passport signed for the Paradise: what a great grace is this, for us, my dear brothers!

Love also your house, where you are where the obedience has send you. Every house is like a creature of

God, and I say always that this issue must be well dressed up: dressed of the house is the ownership, order, and cleanliness, etc…

I recommend you not to place before the strangers what is happening in the house. Do not introduce anybody to the intimacy of community life, which is reserved only to the religious. It should be done in charity, but everyone must be in his or her place.

My dear and beloved brothers, I wish I could tell you many other things, but I this it is enough now. Now on my knee I request and plead you: place yourself, I would say better, let us begin to examine seriously how we are and how we behaved until today, to remedy wherever we see necessary.

To do this it seems to me, how opportune this time already not far away is our retreats. Prepare to do it with all commitments. They are days of health, during which the Lord will place at our availability, if necessary, even supernatural graces, especially in this year which is a Holy Year for the entire Church.

Everything must stimulate us to an intense work for our sanctification: the most effective remedy for many evils, the only practical solution for the difficult problems of the present hour.

But another thing I feel like telling you on this occasion. You know that, beyond the novitiate our Constitutions prescribe another second trial for another three months at least. To the brothers and especially to the priests who desires it may contact me and ask for it, I felt like offering it, almost like a gift of my Golden year, the possibility to benefit the very great grace of the Lord, although not foreseen by the rules itself.

This I say because your inner renewal, in the spirit of your holy vocation, is in my heart, so that you can re-start with greater enthusiasm and strength and with greater benefit, the work, apostolate and your sacred ministry.

As far as I can and I know, I request the charity of your prayer, I am extremely in need of it, to live until the end the holy will of God, so that my dear brothers, you know how much the souls and God's work are precious.

Before I wind up, I feel like thanking all those who were near me during my long days of trials, and for all that they have done to me. In a special way I thank my dear Fr. Luigi, for his role in holding the governance of our beloved Congregation, having functioned as my deputy. On them I invoke the grant reward of the Lord, while, in this moment more with my heart than hands, I bless all of you.

Your beloved father, in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

P.S.

This letter as it comes let the superiors of the community read and comment in every house, and let them distribute a copy to each religious.

I also avail this opportunity to read on every Friday the "Parola del Padre (*Don Calabria Speaks*)", of which I feel to urge the point where it is recommended to the good examples, specially with the children. Remember that wise saying: "*Maxima debetur puero reverentia*"! (See lett. 52, Retreat 1947). Approach them as to Jesus: love their souls, not the external graces; don't fondle them nor punish them

in any way, otherwise you will miss the privilege and growth of a ture teacher and apostle.

9012 Verona, 10-7-1951

My dear brothers,

The grace of our Lord be always with us always and help us to correspond faithfully to our great vocation.

I received your greetings and wishes. Imagine with what consolation I read those beautiful sentiments of filial love and above all your attachment to the Opera of the Lord.

It would be my desire to reply personally, one by one, but I don't have the strength. On the other hand I am sure that you will understand the repercussion of my paternal love towards each one of you. Therefore, I thank you in this manner, collectively, for the consolation you gave me thru your written words, and pray the lord to enkindle you more and more in his service. In addition, you in a special way from the capital of Christian world are called to radiate the light of faith, flame of love, zeal for the souls, for the poorest creatures.

It seems to me that the Lord wants a special thing in Rome, an Opera of goodness for the Church, for the world. Pray that the Lord may enlighten me better and if it is his will, help us to put in practice the project for his glory.

In a short while, you too will receive a circular from me: written at the foot of the Crucifix, almost my testament, patrimony that has to fructify for the good of the

Opera, to maintain in the pure and genuine spirit, guaranty of development and effectiveness in our spiritual work.

Read it with attention, meditate it, as you always did, these are words coming from my heart, after intense prayer to the Lord, the master of the Opera. I wish the Lord may bless the word of his Poor Servant Casante and grant all to co-operate to its faithful and generous application.

Pray for me always, and I carry you in my heart and mind.

Beloved Fr. Ottorino, you do on my behalf for the brothers.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***5825 30-9-1951**

Beloved brothers,

Heart, mind and everything of me is for you. I pray that Jesus be in each every one of you, giving you those all special enlightenment and grace for your, our special vocation. As I told you the day of tomorrow is all for you. I request you to pray much for me, for my poor soul. That all of us may find together in Paradise.

I give you this picture of the Blessed Mother, and I wish you to recite the attached prayer.

I bless you, in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 70 Verona, 18-11-1951.

My dearest brothers, the blessings and peace of Jesus the Blessed be always in our hearts.

As the Custodian of this Opera of the Lord I feel like telling you a word and I tell it as it spontaneously comes in my heart.

A very grave disaster has touched our motherland:[140] and many of our brothers are without roof, the saw washing away their belongingness in the furious current of water, their houses, even their beloved relatives. Who can measure the heap of pain and deprival that in such short time attached with so many families?

My dear brothers how much my heart bleeds at the very thought of tragedy, to go and meet those many needy ones! Only the Lord knows, to him I pray incessantly so that he may grant relief and consolation to the afflicted and grant those who can the great grace to understand the providential opportunity with which they offer every opportunity to help the suffering brothers.

You too pray, dear brothers, let us pray together, and make others pray: for the living who are in many needs and for those who are torn away from this life by the fury of nature and taken to judgment of God. Moreover, we all shall do whatever is possible to soothe so many sufferings, remembering them as our brothers those in pain.

We are poor, but in our house, there shall not be empty places. Above all let our never remain empty, closing to others pain. We shall do to others as much as we wish them do to us, when we happen to be in similar situation.

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[140] Flood of river Po.

However, the urgency of the works of corporal mercy with our brothers shall not divert us from an attentive examination of our spiritual situation, first ours, and then of Italy and the entire world.

First of all, ours. We must feel responsible of the present misery and recognize that we should sanctify ourselves seriously if we want to keep aloof other calamity.

Let us examine well, each one in his proper state: do we correspond fully to the infinite graces the Lord continuously bestows us? We are moved with many material tragedies must feel the many spiritual storm in our vicinity?

You know how dear to me is the diagnosis of so many evil that afflict humanity and in a special way our dear motherland. Italy which I would call the earthly paradise of the Church of God; Italy the seat of the Vicar of Christ, and in some way the center of command of Christ on earth; Italy which God has filled with extraordinary graces, miracles and countless benefits !

Besides, how can we return such a predilection so clear and tangible? How do many live even though they call themselves Christians? How, for example, the feast, day of the Lord is hallowed? How many are just satisfied with just participation, for fashion, and sport, without caring to understanding the divine sacrifice, ignoring the religious institution, the holy gospel, and frequency to the holy sacraments!

Moreover, how people live the holy matrimony? One must prepare like that of priestly formation, and instead tends only to the search of joy, to be well off, if they could think bit more to live like true Christians and become better, would end up also to be more well off!

Likewise, if it is true that true happiness one finds only in heaven, and it is true that true happiness on earth is what comes from the true conscience, as says the Sacred Scripture: *Pax multa diligentibus Deum.*[141]

How many sins rise up to heaven! I often remember a saying of an old woman, which I heard when I was a little boy: "rises up sins and comes down affliction"

And all the more in this public calamity we shall not see as a castigation for the poor people who are victims, when a voice of compassion of the Lord which call us to the right way of virtue and goodness, so that we can remember specially that we are not made for the terrain but for heaven.

So we shall do, and rightly we, a serious examination of conscience, and if we see that we have deviated from the right way, we shall return to the track of virtue, towards perfection of our state.

Many of our brothers are in error due to ignorance, or for other reason only the Lord knows to judge. I saw in many times getting in contact with our brothers who alas, fight with our religion. Many a times I have confirmed that they are lead to it by their situations where they were trained, their family traditions, a twisted or bad example and of them the Lord could say: *nesciunt quid faciunt.*[142]

These ill-fated brothers can however bring apology, but for us we have no excuses. Let us make a serious examination and pass soon to a practice of life fully Christian, according to his gospel, *sine glossa*, without defacement and adjustments. Only in this manner, we can participate to shorten the days of trials and give relief for many innocents and sufferings.

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141 Great peace to the one who loves God.

142 They do not know what they do.

Let us tell the Lord with conviction and ardor of charity: *Hic ure, hic seca, hic non parkas, ut in aeternum parcas.*[143] O lord make us feel here on earth the severity of your justice, so that you do not set it aside for eternity!

Nevertheless, we have to become above all ourselves to mortify, anticipating the mortification beyond. War, war with sin.

In a special way war with sin, to say so, as a system, to sin that enters in the pacific habits, the sin that tolerate, that excuse, and which loves in ones heart.

The world is in great need of light to redeem itself, and you know it well. Faith is poor, and even those who have faith seem to know only the Creed, but they are ignorant of the Decalogue and the precepts. Moreover, as if it is not sufficient, not only among the godless, even among us there are people who participate with diabolic malice, willingly to the same innocence of children; things that horrifies and trembles the holy indignation. Thus, we learn why the calamity happens on our head. He who is Christian, knows well that sin makes unhappy the people and nation, and he who hold the virtue with self has also the reward, while sin carries with itself necessarily a rebuke.

For this poor world, in unbridled search of enjoyment and is constantly without peace and joy, we have to be the messengers of light, serenity, and true peace.

In what way?

I repeat once again: with the fire of live truly functional towards God and people; with the light of example for the world which guards and expects from us the proof of the validity of our faith; above all by a charity

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[143] Here burn, trim, have no mercy, so that in eternity you may find mercy.

done with an open and generous heart and always enlightened by supernatural motives of our holy religion.

The disaster that hit recently on many of our brothers is an soothing opportunity for all these things together.

Dear brothers, in the meditations of our personal responsibility and in the application of the virtue of charity we have the grace to approach frequently to Jesus and our dearest heavenly Mother, example of every virtue and channel of every grace. Jesus and Mary may help us to sanctify ourselves and to sanctify the poor humanity. This is the main goal of our Opera and let this be the major concern of our activity and of our entire life.

During these days of pain for all, I am close to you more than ever. Let us be more united in prayer. I need it very much, really much.

More than with the hand, I bless you with my heart tormented with pain but much full of love for you and for all our brothers.

Yours in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 71: 44th anniversary of the House: 1907-1951**.**

To my dear brothers; ex-students and children.
My dear brothers, children and ex students,

May the grace of Blessed Jesus be always with you and may his peace fill your hearts.

Here at the foot of my crucifix, today, 44th anniversary of the House the Lord has founded in 1907, I think of the graces the Lord has lavished in these 44 years of life to you and me. How did we correspond to it? How do we keep in touch with it now?

In my memory comes an image on the clerical vestition of many years back, which I read as soon as I am given on 1896. It was written: "*unam petii a Domino, hanc requiram: ut inhabitem in domo Domini omnibus diebus vitae meae*".[144] This grace I asked the Lord to live in his house all the days of my life.

It seems to me that this request must be the ardent desire of our heart, as thanks giving for the great grace we have receives in this House and as song of praise to the Providence, which has favored us in thousand ways.

Now the House the Lord has given rise to for the good of many souls and in which today you are, my children, dwell, remind our thought to three houses that the celestial Father has provided to humanity his privileged creature.

The first house is the Eden, the terrestrial paradise: and how beautiful and rich Lord had esteemed for men, his adopted son! There were abundance of terrain goodness, there were all the more the sanctifying grace, friendship of God.

This was supposed to be the house of man. In this existed, an ineffable peace, serenity without clouds, a life without sadness.

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[144] One thing I asked the Lord, and I seek this alone: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

What a generosity in the celestial Father towards people, what a wealth of love, which was supposed to hand over intact to the descendents until the end of times! Instead, sin has entered to overturn Lord's project and caused to lose the divine patrimony, expulsion of the beautiful and rich house of Eden.

Where to escape from the "House of the Father", from the proper house: what a misfortune! We see it in these days, in which many thousands of our brothers are forced by the fury of the waters to leave their own houses, household things, utensils, everything, and the whole lot! Leave the house: is one of the terrible adventures that can happen.

It happened to Adam. Moreover, it is good for him and us his descendents, which the celestial Father, in his infinite mercy, has provided immediately another house suitable to the new conditions of the fallen man. He has readapted the soil, as we have it today, so that it may become the dwelling place of the wandering man and gave way to us sinners to expiate the infidelity and gain once more the right to the house miserably lost.

To the prodigal son, who voluntarily abandoned the entry to the paternal house, the heavenly Father has provided a house where the punishment and contradictory may follow with the joy and sweetness of life, to appeal human being to the nostalgia of the lost house, to the reparation of sin, to the love of God.

To the prodigal son the heavenly Father allotted a wise law and of great mercy, all adapted to human life, to the good order and prosperity of the world.

The Jews who are consignee of God's law, how often have experienced the bounty and efficacy in his story! According to the promise and thread of God thru the

mouth of Moses and other Prophets, people had blessings when they observed the law, and had punishments, sometimes very severe, when they had failed. They lived in liberty and prosperity in fidelity; slavery and misery during infidelity. Moreover, the history repeats along the centuries, and now, and will be repeated always. Adversity happens in sin, says the Holy Spirit.

However what shouldn't be our commitment so that in this house, marked by the merciful Father, be always in force the divine law! We have to be faithful and procure that all our brothers be faithful. With words and examples of a honest life we can and have to provide all these to our house. We do this? How do we live? All the more in the fullness of times, the Son of the heavenly Father himself, Jesus Christ, has come to prepare us to a truly new home, the holy Church, a divine house, in which we can find the wealth of spiritual goods.

What a fortune for us Christians to belong to this dwelling place which knows fully from heaven.

Here the head is Jesus, made himself elder brother, Master and Savior. Rule and regulations of this is the *Gospel,* who has come to bring to perfection the old Law of God and to translate into a law of love. Here is the divine reformation of grace: of the holy *Sacraments*, here is the refulgent example of the saints that spurs us to the goodness, the many actions that put into action practical charity in every need and wants of life.

How do we value this house? Do we give honor to the Church, living as good Christians?

The wealth of this third house are so great, that the Church goes on saying: "*o felix culpa*! Oh fortunate sin of Adam it has fascinated the redeemer from God".

As in the family wealth of replenishment is not enough, but there is need to attract to these assets, so too in the Church we have to esteem her. Hence my dearest, let us live by our faith.

Baptism has made us Christians, living members of the Church. How do we live our Baptism? Do we practice all the rules, especially of charity?

Confirmation, which has given us maturity of Christians, has made us soldiers of Christ how do we live it? Are we true and brave soldiers?

The *Eucharist* endows spiritual food for our soul. How do we receive this divine banquet? And with what frequency? May be, just once in a year? Oh, let us go frequently to receive from Jesus the strength to walk thru the road of benignity and have spiritual joy!

Confession enables us to God's grace, into the adoptive filiality. How good is the Lord! If we fall into sin, look, he offers us immediately a remedy. Well then, let us remember soon of the confession as soon as we fall into the misfortune of falling, we shall not waste one hour that could be fatal and irreproachable. And so runs with other sacraments.

Eucharist is not only a sacrament, but is a sacrifice of the new commandment. How do I celebrate it? Do I participate it with faith, non with indifference of many Christians for whom festive Mass, instead of becoming an moment of intimate joy with the brothers and with God, is

a torment, a burden to which one adapt by force, to avoid the worst.

Moreover, the *Sunday*, day of the Lord for excellence, do I sanctify it? To be sanctified with the holy Mass is very less. One must attend the catechism. Alas, for those who ignore to be instructed, especially in our times! It will be easy to be lost in the error, will lose the little one has learned earlier and walk towards eternal ruin. How does the Sunday rest is observed? My dear, remember a very wise and true proverb: the achievement of feast goes thru the window. God is forced to punish those who profane his day. The Curate of Ars used to say: "I know two ways to lead to collapse ones business: steal or work on Solemnity days".

For Heaven's sake, I recommend much: respect the day of the Lord! And if it is true one who can take an honest rest, is true also that he exaggerate. Some long trip, some sports, and the like, are not at all in the Christian spirit. Instead of refreshing, exhausts and keeps people away from the Church and from the family.

Another point of capital importance for the good functioning of the house is *Matrimony*. Look, my dear, is a great thing: Jesus has lifted it to the dignity of a sacrament! As the sacred Order forms a priest, fathers of the souls, matrimony creates parents, direct participants of God the creator. With what a "devotion" however one should consider and use the matrimony! With what a care one must prepare, under the care of the Lord, to have later on full blessings! The world has fully different ideas from the moment teaches the reason of religion, the world will do all possible to defile the matrimony. Be alert, respect

the matrimony almost I would say as the Holy Eucharist: because it is also a sacrament indeed a great sacrament.

Finally remember in the house one finds well if there is the *harmony of hearts*, the mutual love. In the terrain house, in the Holy Church, even more, we have to preserve this secret of happiness, the practical charity that loves all out of God's love. This supports as per the strength, which sacrifices own to provide the brothers… look this is the distinctive of a Christian, of the fortunate arbiter of the great house which is the Church. "Oh how nice and good thing is that the brothers live together in mutual harmony!" exclaims the Holy Spirit. We all are brothers, all children of the same Father who is in Heaven, redeemed by the same Blood of Christ, destined to reach Paradise.

When in a family one brother doesn't behave well, is away for bad company, there is the good brother who advises him and invites him to return. We must do so with our brothers who went astray, who follow evil, to evil course, we have to invite them, exhort them. They are not enemies to fight with, but brothers to take back home.

The *Paradise*: look final and definite dwelling place which the celestial father has prepared for us, if we have remained faithful inhabitants of this terrain house, if we have remained as correct people, fervent Christians. Let us aim at up there, our final house, let us point to that our ideals, our desires, where the Father awaits us, to crown us of glory and dip us in his joy.

Do we think often of the Paradise? Oh if we could think seriously, how voluntarily we will fulfill our daily duties, as citizens and Christians.

These things I meditated on the anniversary day of the house, which the Providence has, establishes on 26 November 1907. In this house you have found everything for a life as human being and Christians. “How could I accredit to the house all that I received in the house?” one of the beloved ex-student wrote me and he concluded with a resolution to “live the spirit of family” which is spirit of the pure and genuine gospel.

What have I done, as other sought to do everything.

Thus honoring the house the celestial Father has given you will be, better we will all become events worthy to be introduce in the final house of the Father, the holy paradise, where we will forever happy and blessed, because life is in this manner: we are made for heaven. We shall never forget it at all.

May the Lord hear our prayer I make on every morning: “*ut com fratribus meis et pueris tuis laudem te in saecula saeculorum*: united with my brothers and all your youngsters I praise you for ever, o Lord”. With this prayer, and this wish, with great heart I bless you, and wih you I also bless all your dear ones. Pray for me.

Your affectionately. In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 72 28 December 1951

My dear and beloved brothers,

May the grace and peace that radiate from the holy Crib overflow our hearts and reign in all our religious families.

Here, at the feet of my crucifix, while concluding the year and at the dawn of the new year I think in a very special way of all of you and I feel to address you this time really to you my poor words, because on your turn you may comment to others brothers and all to treasure it first of all for the good and sanctification of our souls, and then for the good and sanctification of this great, very great Opera. As I told you many times and will not stop repeating you it is fully and exclusively the Opera of Jesus for our times, with a special project for the grave, in fact very grave hour we walk across and encounter more threats on the poor humans. It is the hour of Satan and at the same time hour of God.

But I recommend you so much, are not the houses, the workshops, the schools, the hospitals: we are the Opera! If we do not live the pure and genuine spirit which Jesus has placed in the beginning, it will not be anything other than an empty word and deprived of effectiveness. For heaven's sake, this may not happen because of us. We, who are called to become part of this Opera, we have the high privilege of being the helpers of the Good God in fulfilling his new and grand projects: what an honor, but at the same time what a responsibility!

Also Satan has his helpers, without this practically he can't harm, but, helped by them, how many evils, how many ruins he can implant in the world! Now watch out how Satan uses his, at the cost of times, of money, of rest, at times of life itself. And what does he gives in exchange? Alas! What an inner resentment, remorse, what a melancholy it generates. "There is no peace for example" tells the Holy Spirit.

Instead what peace the Lord gives the one who loves and serves him faithfully, for the one who works and labors for the coming of his holy kingdom! St. Paul was beset with joy in the midst of great troubles; and St. Stephen, in his martyrdom, fixed his glance ahead, with full confidence said: "I see the heavens and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God", ready to come in help of his support for his faithful ministry.

Who can describe the greatness of the reward the Lord has prepared in the blessed eternity for those who have persevered till the end in His divine service? In fact says the Apostle, "Our passing and light privation produces for us an eternal and above all sublime peace of glory… which neither the eye has seen, nor the ears perceived, nor the heart of man knows to desire for which the Lord has prepared for the one he loves".

But how, my dear and beloved brothers, can we support the Lord to fulfill his projects and be indeed his associates, his co-workers?

Watch what would happen to our times in this poor world without peace. New types of ammunitions are discovered, all aim at improving it, to do new inventions, and is a tremendous league to the one possessing the

weapons that are terrible and killing, because they trust thus to succeed and gain victory in case of a war.

Meanwhile we must do all the more in the spiritual field assuming the exhortation of the Apostle: “We shall cast off the works of darkness and put on the arms of light… Once you were in the darkness, but now you are in the light of the Lord. Live however like sons of light… Now the fruit of the light is all that is good, just and holy”.

Here are our weapons, surely unconquerable: war to sin, continuous effort to gain Christian and religious virtues.

Satan does not have fear to use his arms against those who ignore it; in no way he is afraid to use the mediocrity, but can do nothing against souls who are truly generous and faithful in divine service. The Poor Servants of Divine Providence should of such brand.

Therefore as far as I know and I can I urge you to be on the guard, to pray, to act, and in a word do all possible so that sin does not reign at all among us.

We love to indicate our activities with the loveliest appellative “Houses of the Lord”. How could it become so if sin reigns in it? For heaven’s sake look, we all take care to wage a continuous war against sin. Even to the little one renews often the advice that they may not profane Lord’s house with sin. If unfortunately one happens to commit it, immediately let them remove it from their heart with contrition and confession; and all and each one say to sin: don’t pass thru this route.

And for this purpose I request you on my knee and promise you: see that there is the supervision; try to

remove, as far as humanly possible, all the occasions, so that, alas if sin committed becomes blame because of us!

And now, among the many things that I wish to tell you, I recommend first of all the pious exercises: let everyone be faithful to it, and do not tolerate misuses, rebuke in public and in person. Do not give them peace if you have not provided as it is convenient on this point of great importance.

Therefore see that the take turn of meditation and spiritual reading to be sufficiently distributed, so that both of them are given sufficient importance and the meditation is prepared from the previous evening.

I recommend you fix the confessors for every house and the religious approach confession regularly.

Do not ignore the fortnight conference, and on this I repeat my desire, that even the brothers get used to offer such conferences to the same brothers.

Let everyone give great importance to the monthly recollections. Let it be done with regularity and in the best way, caring the observance of silence. If one is unable to participate it do not take it for granted and discard it but alternate it personally.

I recommend that all of you observe the Holy vows. In a special way try to remove the abuses in matters of poverty, as it would be holding back to oneself valuable and luxurious objects, superfluity, such as camera, and on this matter I recommend you to use it moderately.

Take care with attention so that none of you is exposed to the good virtue. In a special way do not allow

the religious go to private house, without just reasons and in rare cases and even on such occasion inform the not to receive gifts of any kind, such as dress, sweets, liquor etc.

In general all of you observe with great delicateness in dealing with people of the other sex even if they are allowed to visit the house.

I recommend with scrupulosity the observance of cloister with the Sisters. Deal with them with every respect and reserve, not entertaining to talk with them beyond the actual and required.

In the house and outside all must take not of us by our behavior because we are religious and special religious.

Take care with attention the good functioning of your House, without forgetting the Mother house and the entire Opera. Let your thought do not close in the small circle of your House and if possible, try even to help materially and all the more spiritually.

Also since a long time I think of the great need we have for vocations, especially of brothers, who have an important role in our Congregation.

In the past days many mature and excellent vocations have developed in our Houses, but since few years this providential flow is almost ended. How is it? Who knows how often such a question is arisen in you too, to which it is not easy to respond properly, because the reasons could be different.

What we have to do for certain *first of all* is to examine if we, even in part, the cause is not on our side.

Are we, for example, doing all the possible to edify the youngsters the Lord is entrusting us? Do we have the zeal that they may grow good? Do we witness happiness of our vocation and share with holy enthusiasm? Are we generous, lovers, of the hardships and sacrifices? Do we know to lead the young souls only to the Lord, or do we make worse their affection? See that anyone who ties a heart to self is stealing it from Jesus.

If we find ourselves lacking in something, let us ask sincerely forgiveness from the Lord, promising to behave well in future, trying to lead the souls of the youngsters to those beautiful and holy things. This will be also an excellent means to favor the formation and growth of some good vocation.

Secondly we have to do another very important thing, and it is: pray! Jesus has taught us this, telling us: "Pray to the Lord of harvest to send works in his vineyard". Pray often, even all the days, for this purpose, and it will be an excellent thing, but it seems to me that it would be still better to dedicate an entire day per year in every House. This suggestion is put foreword to me by one of the dear brothers during the last retreat and I tell you it was very pleasing to me. Now on I recommend you to actualize it according to attached scheme. On such a day let every religious do one hour of private adoration, according to an organized turn, even if it is not continuous.

It won't be a bad idea if the children know this special day to pray, but we shall not ask them anything exceptional that the usual days.

On the other hand it would be nice if the superior or another brother speak, occasionally, on the possibility

to direct to religious life, indicating them the great merit of the one who is fully consecrated to the Lord proposing the examples of saintly youngsters and even some of our departed brothers.

I think that, if all of us take the commitment to merit in this holy practice, the Lord will bless our humble prayers, crowing it with copious and strong fruits.

Before I conclude I feel to extend you the holy greetings of the conclusion and beginning of the year.

The time that pass and escapes be an admonition and stimulus to esteem it as far as possible more perfectly, remembering that they value as much value God. The best way to transact this precious gift is to spend it completely for the Lord. Our activity serve nothing if we place out of the supernatural field, if we do not conform to the holy will of God. "Blessed are those servants, said Jesus, who at the coming of the master will find watchful!" The Poor Servant is vigilant, if lives by faith, if aims steadily to the supernatural values, if solely seek the holy Kingdom of God and its justice, convinced that even the most humble duty can enshrine in the light of sanctity.

As far as I know and I can, I request to the charity of your prayers: I need it very much to do the holy will of God till the end. More with my hearts than my hands I bless you, along with other brothers and children.

Let everyone verify the beautiful prayer which we pray every morning after the Holy Mass: "*Ut cum fratribus meis et pueris tuis laudem Te in saecula saeculorum*" (see lett. 3, 19-3-1933).

Yours in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

A day of prayer for the vocations – Turns for various Houses.

I thought to propose you the first Fridays of every month as a day of prayer for vocations, in this order:

January: San Zeno in Monte – St. Benedetto – St. Giacomo.

February : Nazareth (1st Thursday).

March: Milan and Patronato of Verona.

April : Madonna di Campagna – Villaggio dall'Oca.

May: Costozza.

June: Ferrara.

July: Ronca'.

August: Negrar – St. Pancrazio.

September: Hamlets of Rome.

October: Hostel Primavalle.

November: Ronco all'Adige.

December: Maguzzano.

The Holy Spirit has told it.

Yours in the Lord.

Fr. John Calabria

7029/C 1951

My dear and beloved brother,[145]

I felt to write a word especially to you. We Poor servants will pass. One by one we have to leave this poor land of exile, but the Opera must remain and develop.

Now from what depends that it may remain perennial? From the habit of taking the vacant position of the one who is missing because he left for heaven.

The vocation depends firstly from God and He will never fail to develop abundantly, according to the designs of his providence. But we know that God wants to use even the humans as his instruments and helpers. "Without you He made you, but without you will not save you", is also words worth applying to our vocations.

Now to attract souls prepared by the Providence, life is very useful, examples, words of the one consecrated to God. With your serenity, with your spirit of sacrifice, the countenance of the soul, complete dedication for others, and the like, he shows how beautiful is the vocation

[145] It is a letter that the Father sent personally to some Poor Servant.

to the apostolate and how joyful is the service to the Lord even in this life.

You my dear brother, be attentive to every opportunity the providence offers you to make known the Opera, the spirit, and the activity, the sacrifices, the satisfactions and the merit of the one consecrated. You will have double reward, in heaven first because you have served well the Lord, and then you have involved others to take your place, having assured from your side the paternity of the Opera.

Thus you will cast a seed, surely the Lord will bless. Have in the heart the Opera and the souls that approaches and you will not miss opportunities to attract some people. This is what I felt to tell you, rightly to you, in a special way in my sacerdotal jubilee. I am sure that you will treasure it.

If you see someone who shows signs of vocation, cultivate it in our spirit and pray that the Lord may bless your work. I in the meantime will pray to the Holy Spirit so that He may enlighten you to guide your steps, thus you may do something on this regard.

Pray much for me and I bless you from my heart,

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 73 12 February 1952.

My dear and beloved brothers,

May the grace and peace of blessed Jesus be with us!

We have listened on last Sunday on 10th of February, the vigil of the Immaculate of Lourdes, the vital and salient appeal of the Holy Father, in fact inspired by the Holy Spirit, and I would say an S.O.S. He launched it not only to the city of Rome, but to the entire world, so that all, considering the vast life of these days, vibrate the fatal spiritual laziness, may get up from sleep and, let go the useless discussions, may begin to do, act and treasure it, because he does not deal with material interest, but spiritual of infinite value, to which is bound our eternal salvation.

If you can the strong words of the Vicar of Christ pronounced with such paternal warmth and trepid apostolic concern is addressed to the entire Christian world instead to all people of good will. And how we have to value it as if addressed to us Poor Servants, in this obscure hour, in which we do not know what would happen from one moment to another, we have the obligation to live above all and exclusively the holy Gospel. It is the unique means to recall on the track of justice and true peace the poor humanity, which rise and fall in the darkness and walk instinctively on the edge of abyss because has renounced God, and the Church, and the holy Gospel.

Don't we be sorry if we do some sacrifice. Look what people of the government are doing since years to

give to the world a better economic and social asset: how many conflicts and how much sacrifice they have to sustain, how many difficulties to overcome and with what patience they proceed in their goal, with what a firmness they are guided to reach their prefixed goal.

It is not fair therefore we remain with inertia and indifference, while the Holy Father urges all to their awareness of their responsibilities.

Therefore let us place ourselves, my dear and beloved brothers a hand on the heart, and let us do a serious examination of our own self and ask sincerely: do I live the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera? Am I a true Poor Servant? It is true that we have made our profession, and our names appears in the register of the professed, but is this sufficient to be true Poor Servants? You live together but it is necessary to live the spirit.

So let us consider above all the grace Lord has granted us, calling us to be part of this Opera, which is entirely His, and to clarify my thought I take an example.

When Jesus called his disciples, they already had an ordinary grace and common to all, with which they could find salvation remaining as fishermen and practicing the divine law. But when Jesus told them: “come and follow me, I will make you fishes for men” they received a new and extraordinary grace, a grace of privilege, which constituted them disciples and Apostles of the Lord. Such a grace gave them a new character, a new imprint. They do not think any more of the boat, of the net, of the family, but only to be the Apostles of Jesus. And as they remain faithful to this special vocation! In fact, if they encounter difficulties, they do not withdraw their steps. And really

they affirm ardently: “it is necessary to obey God than men”. Imprisoned, beaten: “they went on content to be chosen worthy to suffer something in the name of the Lord”. At the end they crowned their life with the glorious martyrdom. All these functioned in them the grate and extraordinary grace of their vocation.

A similar grace we have received and if we correspond faithfully, it will operate within our soul a deep transformation, by which the Poor Servant will identify from others to thin, to hear, to judge, to entertain. In every circumstance he will follow the impulse and the spirit of his special vocation.

To be and to demonstrate in everything, always and in every occasion, Poor Servants: behold is our grace, our characteristic. Therefore perceive this is also our commitment and the core to which we have to direct all our efforts, to reach our personal sanctification which is at the same time an unavoidable condition to be in full efficiency and be able to donate even to others.

But practically what a Poor Servant must search for? How to think, judge of the persons, things, and undertakings? How to function alone, in the presence of others, in the exercise of the ministries, and how to deal with the material issues?

What a vast field of demanding and important reflection is opened here to our vision, my dear and beloved brothers!

A Poor Servant first of all must carry engraved in his mind and heart our great program: “do not worry ... See first the kingdom of God ...” Seek God and his glory,

our own sanctification, souls, only souls, and among these the poorest, most forsaken, true pearls of the Opera. And all these in the exercise of a generous and disinterested charity, which never says enough, which sees in the brothers the true image of Jesus: look this is the prerogative of a Poor Servant.

Besides he must live of faith and spirit of faith, faith lived and felt in the paternity of God, who transforms everything, even the pain and trials of life of exile, for our true goodness. Feel and live a life of faithful and filial abandonment in God and his Providence without any worry in trouble.

Like Jesus, do not put forward other intention in life other than please our Heavenly Father: "*Quae placita sunt ei facio semper*"; have the divine will as our aim: "*Cibus meus est ut faciam voluntatem eius qui misit me*";[146] to live a life in union with God, as branches with vine, as canals and receivers.

Besides this, the Poor Servant is well convinced that which is important is not to do many things, but do well: "*non multa sed multum*!" He who does well, does a lot, he who lives in obedience does a lot, in the dependence of the superiors and especially in the present and future Casante, to whom, I repeat, the Lord will give light and special grace to guide the Opera in general and each one in particular.

And here it seems to me very opportune to express a word to those among you the Lord has called to direct a

[146] I do always what pleases him… My food is to do the will of the one who sent me.

religious family. Remember well that every activity must enter in the category of which willed by Jesus for the Opera. Remain very attentive to this point, and not to go wrong tell everything to your Father, with simplicity and sincerity. If he approves and blesses, go ahead, sure and certain to have with you the blessings from God as well.

Do not trust on your enlightenment; let me repeat what I have already told you and it must be a characteristic mark of our Opera: "Better to do nothing with your Father than miracles of goodness without the Father".

The Poor Servant shall not seek praises, must love concealment, and shall not despise humble offices. I told you often that for me the brother with a broom in his hand is like the priest at the altar. We shall not look at the sanctity of the action but the sanctity in the action.

On this issue I wish to narrate you a gracious episode. The emperor Ottone had asked a boy: "What is your name"? And he replied "Jacob". "What is your job?" "Shepherd and I lead the sheep every day to graze". And "what do you earn?" "Majesty whatever you too will gain: either heaven or hell".

Wise and speechless! And how nicely it expresses what I want to tell you! O, yes, my dear and beloved brothers, everything is great, and nothing is small in the service of the Lord, enough that we do everything with great love and with sole target that is to please God.

Live this great truth, feel its beauty, and it should be in us as an yeast, to ferment to prove it and then above all, to irradiate to others too, so that a Poor Servant must be so in every field.

Radiate the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera. This is the recommendation, the warning that is made to our priests and ex students and in their specific commitment. Otherwise why the Providence did care them lovingly in his House? But if this is valid for them, how much more for us!

And on this topic, believe that is it not by chance that the Providence has determined to the Opera 6 parish priests, three in Rome and three in Verona?

How much good thing they can do, taking everywhere and always the Spirit of the Opera, in the parishes, especially in the proclamation, and in the training, in the discussions … To say when it is necessary, with holy frankness, on this and that arguments, our spirit would demand to do this or that way.

But to all of you priests and brothers, here I recommend, all I pray and entreat: to live the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera.

The Opera is like a tower: we have to defend it. Enemy of God will do all possible so that it may not remain as Jesus wanted it, will try to deviate from the spirit, using neither the outsiders nor the adversaries, but using us; my God what a responsibility! I wish none of us lent to this game of God's enemy. You be in solidarity, cultivate the spirit of the body, live this reciprocally, allowing everyone to benefit the goodness others are doing, as if it is so sound, help one another. Let no one demolish with criticism or grumbling, especially with the outsiders, the action of one's own brothers, but let charity reign above all, because where there is charity there is God.

And let me repeat one of the reflections I mentioned in the retreats of September, which had made great impression in me. From our personal sanctification from our being in full efficiency thru the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, would depend the life and death of the Opera and I plead for distancing new calamities of the world, my God what a responsibility!

My dear and beloved brothers, I wind up with this final reflection. People plan to build up and improve the surroundings of the atmosphere according to the demands of our time, and it is good. But how much more we must worry to leave those who come after us a patrimony of virtue and examples, by which they are inspired to be together to carry on the Opera and the pure and genuine spirit, which is its distinctive. O how much we will rejoice to see from heaven the future developments of the Opera and the glory it will offer God, the goodness it reaches to souls by the spirit we are handing over as heritage!

With our humble and fervent heart we pray for this grace, seeking the mediation of our very much dear heavenly Mother the Immaculate Virgin. Oh let us pray for us, for the Opera, and for the world.

It is well spreading in an indirect way even among good people a feeling of discouragement. Many are confused, but do you know why? Unfortunately they look downward and forget to look up. Let us offer the example of trust in the invocation of the one who while in the sacred Scripture is told strong and powerful as a militia in battle, and together the salvation of the Christians, mystic star that directs us to the port on the troubled sea of life, our sure hope for the time and for eternity.

Pray much, but a lot for me, and I extremely need it, so that I can do till the end the holy will of God, at all cost. On this occasion more with my heart than with the hands I bless you all.

Your affectionate in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 74 2 March 1952

To the religious in pastoral care.

Dear brother,

May the grace of blessed Jesus be with us all.

On this holy day, the first Sunday of lent, I feel a strong impulse to address you my words, born spontaneously in my Paternal heart, who listens all the concerns and desires of every beloved son.

The providence has entrusted you a portion of the sheep of Christ to look after, souls to be introduced to eternal salvation, training them in practical Christian life. And you are Poor Servant. As such you must radiate around you the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, you must perform your noble ministry according to this spirit the Lord Jesus himself has entrusted the Opera.

And look how urgent is in our times to revive the Christian spirit of the holy gospel. And few days back there was the strong appeal of the Holy Father, the Vicar of Christ, for a spiritual renewal of the Christians in the present hour so grave of threats, but also so important for the future of the holy Church and the world. If all are bound to correspond to the appeal of the Vicar of Christ, how much more the Poor Servant the Lord has placed to look after a parish. Souls nevertheless! Permit me to add my warm words to that of the Holy Father: have care of your sheepfold and spend generously for the benefit of the souls. All, all the souls must be object of your love.

It seems my duty to repeat you together with St. Paul: "Do not let the grace of our Lord go in vain, so that in acceptable moment – says the Lord – I will listen to you". And it is our acceptable time, the holy lent, preparation to Easter and preparation to our spiritual resurrection in Christ. "In everything let us witness as worthy ministers of God, with endurance, sufferance, privation, and generous zeal for souls".

In a special way I feel the need to recommend you those sheep who are deviated by false doctrines, fight against the Lord and his Holy Church. Alas they are the strayed, lost and sick ones. Therefore for them special care is recommended, because they too are of the Lord, redeemed by the blood of Christ Jesus, called to sanctity like everyone else. Surely, we should not ignore the errors but lead back the mistaken from the mistake: error is one thing, and the swayed is totally another matter. The Poor Servant shall not ignore such souls; they are our brothers, souls the Lord wants to save.

Our Opera make a commitment to seek the poorest and is not a serious issue the spiritual poverty, even more that material? Therefore have a special care for such. Try to approach them with the charity of Christ, with an affection of a father, on the example of Jesus who used to go in search of sinners and those went astray, and willingly he accepted them, he comforted and confided, and thus they were transformed.

On such a purpose remember we are one body: the mystical body of Christ. Therefore every good action made by one member influences positively on the other members, as it is on human body the work of building up life is mainly focused where there is greater need thru a sickness, infection, or others as such you Poor Servant, in the spirit of the Opera, procure to reach benefit to all those who are far off. A prayer, good action, sacrifice, sufferance, breath of love for Jesus …. are all effective means of grace to do good to souls.

Instead I myself am feeling more united with you, and will offer an entire day – on Sunday 16th March – for the good of the souls of that parish. Prayer and sufferance and every actions of that day, will be pleading to Jesus so that he may save and sanctify all the souls especially those who are in most needy state. Let all learn to live the grace of God and thus make precious the earthly existence with great merit for the future life. Tell your parishioners that I am very near them, very near with my heart, because I wish and desire as the Lord, nearest with my heart, and I wish all of you to become as the Lord wants: good Christians, faithful servants of God.

If all of us really put our hearts to live as Christians, o then yes, the world will change its face and the time will

improve! By the grace of God even material things of the world will be settled and there will be peace, while in the disgrace of God and sin, everything would move to worse and disperse.

I opened my soul to enkindle you all the more in your spiritual work of the souls. I will remember you in my thought s and heart, assuming your care and solicitudes.

Pray much for me and make other to do so for I am in great need of it.

That we all may find us united in heaven, to sing the divine mercy and the fruit of our poor life spent entirely for our brothers, in love for Jesus.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

9691 Negrar, House of Our Lady of Peace, 26-3-1952.

To my dear brothers Poor Servants who by God's grace are part and parcel of the Council of the Opera of Poor Servants.

May the grace and peace of blessed Jesus be with us all.

O my beloved brothers, I feel to write this poor letter at the foot of my crucifix, to request your prayers and above all thank with me the Divine bounty and mercy, after

a painful trial of health both physical and spiritual, gave me, almost reproach my office as Casante of this Opera, which is all, completely of Jesus.

You know, my dear brothers, and are familiar with all painful accounts I underwent and especially what happened from December 1949 to May 1951, by this special grace, I have new strength and new enlightenment for the Opera of Poor Servants.

It was exactly after 1949 that I, not finding appropriate to be the Casante, gave in writing and commissioned to my Dr. Luigi the responsibility of the Opera.

It was in those days legitimately thru the Council took the decisions. And after regaining health and coming back to the place of Casante, I had the grace to correct for the betterment of the Congregation, such as to revise the Constitutions of the Sisters and make certain corrections of the Religious and now they are according to the divine will.

In these days I came to know of a decision made in my sickness, regarding the late vocations, decisions that marked in me lots of pain[147], but had to leave to the

[147] In Rome Fr. Isaiah Filippi was cultivating few late vocations ("late" it was said in those days), but not as Poor Servant and with a commission of the Congregation, but as he used to say – Opera of the Holy Father (as his "House Jesus the Worker" and his "House of Holy Virgin Mary") and it was under the responsibility of the Bishop of Sarsina. This has pained the father as he mentions in the P.S. of this letter, who considered the Opera of late vocations as an Opera wanted by our Constitutions. In those days Fr. Calabria could do nothing other than "leave to

Providence to remedy, because humanly it was impossible, and the Opera is finally His, and God will take care of it.

And now it is about me. I feel tired, and old and suffering; I must renounce the office of the Casante, but right now it seems to me is not god's will therefore "*ego non recuso laborem,*"[148] but await the faithful cooperation of my dear brothers Poor Servants.

That under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit those great plans the providence wants will be fulfilled, until the divine Providence would think of placing this Father into eternal rest, the one who loved you so much, (with all), and another Casante will come to continue the Opera. May god bless you, and pray for divine mercy for me who is so poor and forgive me,

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

P.S. The Opera of late vocations is inserted in our Constitutions and only in such a way we can fulfill divine plans, which now cannot do, but Jesus will think of it.

The Opera of the Poor Servants is an Opera fully of Jesus. With God we should not take lightly.

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the Providence to remedy it, because, humanly it was impossible, but God will take care of it; the Opera is his", because it was clear that Fr. Isaiah was supported by Roman Curia, that prompted him that it should leave things as they were.

148 I do not refuse to hardships.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*L 75 10 April 1952 – Holy Thursday

My dear and beloved brothers,

The grace of blessed Jesus be with us and sustain us on our poor life journey to heavenly fatherland.

It is Holy Thursday. It is one of the very solemn and dear to every Christian and every religious, and this year it has a special feature in this solemnity. This Holy Thursday of 1952, it seems to me God has something special. For this reason this morning I offered the holy Mass for my soul and yours, dear brothers, and in a special way for the entire world, which is in great need of light and spiritual nutrition , which can come only from Jesus.

Here at the foot of my crucifix, while I thank Jesus for the wonderful gift he gave us thru the Eucharist, I think and contemplate on our duty as Poor Servants in this hour so decisive of the history.

The Opera is of Jesus; so many times I told you and repeated. It is he on the steering of the boat, it is he the soul which gives and conserves life of the Opera.

Certainly there the human participation: we are, poor humans, with our miseries and imperfection. We are like the corporal body of the Opera. The body can get sick, defects, but the soul surely does not. It will remain in full efficiency. What I want to say, as you understand this well, in the Opera there could be certain defects both material and moral, but, as long as we hold on faithful to the pure and genuine spirit that Jesus has engraved, the Opera will progress, will develop all the more and better, expands and improve, like the external life of the body, and extend the good area, to the glory of God, and benefit of people.

Encountering some deficiency, therefore, the Poor Servant should not stop over to criticize and brood over: we need this… and we lack that… Would be time wasted.

On the other hand the Poor Servant enters in himself and thinks: how do I live the spirit of the Opera? How do I keep the rules? Do I support the growth of the Opera thru my behavior and sanctification? Or do I create obstacles with my negligees, sins, and tepid life, without enthusiasm and love for Jesus?

Oh if all of us would do so, the Opera is secure! Trials will come, even great; serious difficulties will rise, oppositions which seem insurmountable, but Jesus who is the soul of the Opera, finding in us appropriate device, knows to overcome in everything and of all, all the more he will strengthen the Opera, as it happens to human body surpassing a difficulty: acquires energy to react victoriously.

The Opera, as I over and over again told you, has a special mission in this hour. Jesus looks at us and asks effective contribution of our life to fulfill his designs of

mercy for the present times. The world is full of evil, the evil triumphs over length and breadth, but oh my dear ones, Jesus wants to exercise his immense mercy and give the world his peace, his grace, pledge of prosperity even material.

Alas we, if on our mistake fails to actualize his plans or if due to our faults cause collapse, how will people merit it! O no, none of us should withdraw. All must correspond to the invitation of Jesus and run along to salvation of the souls and the entire world. What a grand grace! What a noble venture is this, should enthuse the heart of the Poor Servant!

Take heart, then! This Holy Thursday let us place mark forward in our life of Poor Servants, all disposed to personal sanctification and actualization of divine plans. Together with the Apostles sat around Jesus in the Cenacle, let us also say: "We are ready; we are available to everything, dear Master. We are ready to follow you wherever you, even to the prison and even death. We can count on us as highly honored to work, under you, to the salvation of the souls, to the diffusion of the kingdom! *Domine, non sum dingus*!"[149]

Pray much for me, that I may practice first of all these words that are spontaneously flowing from my heart this morning.

All united, one heart and soul, let us live in our spirit, we are living gospels, transmitters of Christ to the poor world that goes to the ruin. Blessed are we, happy are we in time, and in eternity!

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[149] Lord, I am not worthy.

With great heart I bless you all, wishing you a good and holy Easter.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***8833 25-4-1952**

My beloved in the Lord,

The grace and peace of Jesus, eternal priest, abound in you, always.

You are celebrating the 25th anniversary of your priestly ordination: with you rejoice the entire Congregation of the Poor Servants and in a special way this Father.

Thank God for the many graces in 25 years of apostolate showered on you in abundance. Praise God for having called you to work as Poor Servants of divine Providence, at the service of the neediest souls for the glory and growth of his holy kingdom.

I look back the years of your work: you Fr. Stanislavo, down there in Rome, where you went *sine sacco, sine pera* (see lett. 8, Lent 1934), to begin what is now the flourishing parish of St. Philip; you Fr. Franchini,

first of all at Costozza, then in the Novitiate, at Nazareth and Ronca'.

Everything is written in the great book of eternal life and for everything you will have eternal reward from the one who reward even the simple glass of water given in his name: how much more the grace extended to the souls!

I am consoled for you and thank the Lord for all the good he has pleased to do thru you. What a grant gift to work in the mystic vineyard and what a grand gift to work in this great Opera, which is entirely of the Lord, meant to do so much good in this difficult and decisive time!

You blessed, who have spent your entire energy and always for the Lord and now you will spent in silence and contemplation in your retreat, having left the places for others who will follow your footsteps. Even now you can do much, even though it appears nothing, and you do it with prayer, with humility, and concealment.

Let the Lord fruity your silent apostolate for his glory and the growth of the Opera.

Keep up the pure and genuine spirit in you. With your examples transmit it fully to those approaching you from our brothers. Fortunate are you! You will have a new merit before the Lord for the good you do for his Opera.

And pray for me always. I with great heart invoke Jesus for you for the most beautiful grace and divine consolations in these solemn days. Let them be great consolations, intimate, heavenly, pledge of eternal reward for you prepared, for the good and faithful servants in heaven.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

Handwritten: I always remember you in my heart and pray more than usual for me.

*8833/A Feast of the Sacred Heart (20-6-1952)

Beloved brothers,

Grace and peace of Jesus be always with us.

Today, great feast of the of Sacred Heart house, I wish to be with you even to share the blessed bred by Providence on this great and holy day, as I used to be with you for many years, but I can't. you what impedes me, it is the weak health. Yet I don't want to pass this day without addressing you a word, as it springs spontaneously from my heart.

With my heart and thought I am present there and accompany each of you with my prayers and affliction. You will have a special place in the chalice I raise in every Holy Mass. This morning you had the entire place, and with you I entrusted all the collaborators and the sick and all my age groups, each and all.

Beloved brothers, be sure that Jesus is always in your midst and when he is there you gain victory over all difficulties, and everything is possible and light.

Beloved brothers, I request and beg you: live the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera to which you have, we have the grace to belong to. Yesterday I gave you a short note: keep it with you, meditate it, and practice because in the name of the Lord I spoke to you.

If you how much I pray so that you may correspond and become saints! Only in this way you will understand the divine designs of your sanctification and the salvation of many souls.

Remember always that to belong to this Opera is the pledge of eternal life.

How much light is needed in this hour so murky! And you have to enlighten all the souls the lord bring closer to you and each one of you must be a flame and all the flames united become a great flame: flame of the Sacred Heart.

I bless you all more with my heart than hands, and your collaborators, sick people, my companions, all and each, after these short days of life we may come together in heaven to bless and thank Lord for the entire eternity.

I place in the Holy chalice your desires and I recommend you the charity of your prayer,

I bless you,

Fr. John Calabria

Hand written: I think I must give you a special blessing to you, dear Bro. Antonio and Bro. Clemente and all the dear doctors who collaborate in the great Opera of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I bless the dear doctors of the hospital.

In Christ Jesus

Fr. J. Calabria

And here is the note mentioned in the letter:

My dear and beloved brother ….[150]

For your personal sanctification in conformity with the vocation as Poor Servant, I recommend you so much to live the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera. Be always and everywhere Poor Servant: in the church, in the house, in school and in the refectory, in the room and on the road, in the ministry and in your dealing, in the work and in journey…

Thus and only thus, you will fulfill the plans of goodness proper to this house in the hour of mediocrity and thus irradiate the spirit of the Opera.

Pray for me, *Fr. Calabria*

[150] Followed the names of the religious.

*8661 Verona, 29-6-1952

To the Poor Servants: candidates to ordination.

My dearest,

The grace of blessed Jesus, eternal high priest is with you always.

You are in the Holy cenacle recollected in the retreats to prepare you for the great gift of your ordination and I feel very close to you, almost in your midst. It is probably for the first time I console me only by addressing you thru this letter. I am sure you will welcome it as my living voice told in person.

Jesus will speak to you in these days thru his ministers, the dear Fr. Venanzio; you give your ear to him with full attentiveness and what Jesus will tell you.

Treasure it in your heart for your benefit and for the good of the entire Opera. Remember, o my dear ones, you who are the Poor Servants of Divine Providence. You must imbibe the pure and genuine spirit, thus to become light to others to work for the glory of God, for the diffusion of his holy Kingdom.

You will be priests! You will become this in a special time of the history, a critical, decisive hour. So many evils afflict the earth, the humanity, but the remedy, o my dear ones, are we, above all priests, if we are up to the height of our vocation.

How many graces you have received until now! Think of the providential way the Lord has escorted you

till today to prepare you to the great grace of priesthood. Correspond to it as much as you can. You are priests forever. On the day of your ordination you receive wings on your feet and you will fly with much joy. It is a state of spiritual euphoria, a great gift and this is also from the Lord, but this jubilation will pass away, and ordinary days will come, days of sacrifice, of renouncement. But if the substance is in you, the decisive will to do well is in you, you will let squash down, you will be always in efficiency to fulfill the divine designs.

Remember ordination does not change the nature, whatever you have built up, that will form you, *"gratia perficit natura"*.[151] The grace of God helps you to correspond, gives you sublime power, but always on the natural foundations you have. Have courage; however, work on this nature to make it worthy of the great grace.

Never forget that you are Lord's tools and minister. He will do everything; let Jesus always find you docile, obedient, humble, and ardent in charity.

These holy days will transform you like the apostles. Like them. You must, exit from the Cenacle all full of enthusiasm, zeal and love for Christ and souls. Available always to whatever Jesus wants in the various offices of the houses. Pray for me, more than ever. I am near you, very near in spirit, with my prayer and sufferings. I count a lot on you.

I bless you with much love. I bless you Becherini, bless you Momi, you Piovan: one by one, together with you all your dear ones on earth. Anticipate with my desire

[151] Grace makes nature perfect.

that moment to kiss your consecrated hand and receive your blessings.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 76 July 1952

Dear and beloved brothers,

Let the grace and peace of Jesus be always with you.

I am forced to tell you once again my words, which is born spontaneously in my heart, for your good and the Opera. For heaven's sake, treasure these words, welcome it as my testament! I am sure that you would listen to me.

Many a times you have heard me recommending of *the pure and genuine spirit* of the Opera: in person and in writing I urge you continuously and you surely are attempting to recognize the craving of your Father, which is precisely the will of Jesus.

But it seems to me that someone asking: in what consists this pure and genuine spirit? The answer is very easy and important: the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera is signed very clearly in our holy Rules. In them we have the sure indication of what the Lord wants from us

Poor Servants. Many of you, I would say the majority, have lived many years in the House, hence you are bought up in a totally special climate of the Opera, and you have touched with your hand the humility that has to countersign a Poor Servant and the Opera itself, "*buseta e taneta*" (see lett. *383, 4-5-1932), never seek human protection, but receive what the Lord sends; trust first of all in the Lord.

You have heard many times inculcating the word of Jesus: "see first the kingdom of God – that is your sanctification – and all the rest you will have in addition"; you have experienced how the house is founded on total trust in the divine Providence; souls, souls! No worry for material means: these will come if we do our side well.

These and other things you have seen in the practice of the Opera. Well: this is the pure and genuine spirit. This spirit is like the special physiognomy of the Opera and is the right *track* on which we have to walk. Every train should travel on its own track to reach the proposed goal. Alas if it enters the track of others! It will be a catastrophic event. Now every Opera has its track proposed by the Lord. Change the spirit of an Opera means take away from the allocated track, and condemn it to ruin.

This spirit of providence, beloved brothers, you have to spread out in the midst of the world. You in a special way, priests in care of souls. Remember you are always Poor Servants and therefore you have to regulate everything according to the spirit of the Opera. *Gratis accepistis, gratis date* (see lett. 8, Lent 1934), with maximum disinterest, humility, and concealment.

Souls, souls! This is our spirit; this is condition why Opera accepts care of souls.

There are many ways to fulfill goodness, to care souls, but each one of us must do the good Lord wants to do, and not any good works. Do not let yourself guided by the ambition of doing good things: be always in the right track.

Keep up the *unity of significance and work*. In everything let the Opera shine and never the individual. We shall not build shines, niche, of personal activities. We must be ready to sacrifice our self so that god may reign, and his Opera is made known. We poor people must disappear, and the Opera must carry on.

Charity in unity: this is the ideal we have to put forward in our life as Poor Servants. One can do even good in appearance but if we are not united according to our spirit, the Lord will go aloof. Therefore I urge you in every House to be united and allied to the Mother House: from here one receives the tune, looks up here as the lighthouse that escort to the right way.

Be attentive in everything, even the minimum swing over can aloof us from our spirit and falsify the physiognomy of the Opera. What a great responsibility a Poor Servant assumes to concord to this.

See that we are in full efficiency, always faithful to our spirit to fulfill the divine project.

We are in a difficult hour, a decisive one in the history. The holy Church is attacked from every part so cynically with all means. We can say, never before like today “the doors of hell” are united in a coalition so

strongly against Christ and the Church. However this is the hour of God, hour of victory, once again Christ must triumph. But who determines this triumph? Those, by the grace of God, will become worthy instruments.

All the good works caused by the Lord to exist are instruments for the triumph of goodness and ours has a relation really special with the present hour, therefore is meant to assume a duty all her own in this holy battle against evil. It is up to us to work lively in the place assigned us and in the way established by the Providence. Blessed are we, we will have particular blessings from God!

Let us place completely with commitment, therefore, to correspond to the project of the Lord. We shall be united to him, faithful to the pious exercises, cultivating the interior life. United with Jesus we will do many things, without him, we can do nothing. Neither will we succeed to sacrifice our views, all our life in the service of the Lord.

We look at Jesus: what a generosity and dedication for us, what mortification to every trial. Let us entrust with full enthusiasm to the Opera, fully content to serve, to sacrifice, to consume to the glory of God and to the good of the soul.

As I said, it is a grave hour in a special way. Enough to look around and you will be convinced of it immediately.

Let us observe the segment of *youngsters*. What all things are done in our times to ruin the innocence of the youth and to damage them? It is almost impossible to think of people, who dedicate fully their studies to ruin the

innocence with programs, entertainments, fashions, sports …. Everything is operated to the objective of ruining them. It is hideous, that inflame the most terrific punishments of the Lord on a society that allows so many impediments.

Our Opera has from the Providence as its special and primary goal to care the youth. Especially we have to engage in the poorest youngsters, abandoned and therefore more exposed to moral and material dangers. Let us appreciate o my dear ones, this noble task the Lord has entrusted us and we shall work with generosity and spirit of faith to assist, instruct, and cultivate the dear youngsters. Let us give them the sacred patrimony of a good education explicitly Christian. With the world and examples let us do our best to make them grow in "age, wisdom and grace, before God and people".

Alas, if we look at the middle class or the well off. Worse if we let us guided by the mania of comfortable, so contrary to our spirit and our rules. A poor, suffering, abandoned, brings with himself the care and protection of Jesus.

Other sector in which things go bad: *the family*. God's Opera, nursery of humanity, it must be a sanctuary where one raises to God acceptable sacrifices and where the new generations learn to fulfill the will of God. Instead how often family is tainted by vices, sin, certain hideous transgressions that cry for vengeance in the presence of the Lord. What would be the society of tomorrow if it's nursery is corrupted?

Let work with our full force to save families, cell of humanity, so that it may return to its nobility and sanctity. We shall not save our effort to rebuild on

Christian foundations families that are on formation to lead them back to their nobility from where they had gone aloof.

Today o my dear, a ferocious war is on the move against all that is good. The gigantic progress of humanity in our times would lead people much ahead in spirit to correspond with great virtue for the manifold gifts from the Lord. And we see on the contrary: many use this goodness to wage war against the Lord.

How to explain so much evil? It is a mystery of iniquity. We can say that Satan has come out of the Hell and invaded the world. Not able to vent against the Lord it becomes furious against people who are Lord's creatures, against people who are Lord's image. But Satan needs help. He does not have tong to speak, has no body, nor hand to function. Therefore he seeks instruments, and finds people who lend him hands, tongs, brain, strength to do what he wants, the evil, and the worst of them to the souls.

How many of such people he finds! Miserable people! I feel a deep compassion and you too must feel so, because they are our brothers, children of the same Father, redeemed by the same Jesus and meant for the same paradise. Especially in the present hour, we can say that they are a band marching under the banner and direction of Satan and sacrifice fully for him.

What a horrible matter, to be hands and tongs of Satan….

In what all forms then, devil leads this war against the holy Religion. Under ever pretext it is nice to understand his plans: now to improve the economic

conditions of people, at times to lift the tone of their life, at times to seek the hardships and daily labor, at times to instruct … The objective is always one: religion, holy Church. He aims at, and there he wants to reach: to distinguish once and for all.

What strikes me very profoundly is, then, that this spirit of the world knows to inject slowly even in Christians, knows to infiltrate even in the best and holy works, even in the religious houses, if we do not know to take care of. Under the pretext of goodness, to penetrate in some of the hearts, to near certain people, they admit gradually concessions and compromises, that ends up in ruining the good work and falsify the spirit of the gospel the he must do.

Take care however, o my dear and beloved brothers, that it may not penetrate in us the spirit of the world, which is the spirit of Satan, spirit of Satan!

We religious hold our hands very tight to Jesus; let us live fully his gospel, without compromise, and we shall not be afraid. Under the blessing of Christ nothing can gain victory on us, because where there is Christ there is the victory. The time for half measure is over, we shall be in the reality, let us trust the gospel hold its laws, and perform a decisive and ordered action, as he has taught us.

Take care not to compromise or do concessions. To extend the field of goodness, we shall not do the danger and condemn the wreckage the mystic maritime of the Lord. We shall not remain satisfied with the function of channels, but we shall try to become both *recipients and channels*, filled in us with Christ and his spirit, to share it out then to others.

This is the decisive hour, o my dear brothers. *Either for Christ or for Satan*.

Blessed are we, who are called to fight for Christ and his Church! The victory will surely be of the Lord, but the merit will come back to those who fought under the banner of Christ. And if we will be faithful to our vocation, will carry Christ to the world, especially to those who don't know him or intend to recognize him.

Atheism! It is a plague of our times. Even then o my dear ones, believe me, however man tries he can't rescind from within him the sun God had implanted. God has carved in us a deep mark which cannot be cancelled. The atheism is born out of passion. Experience shows it obviously. "*Dixit insipiens in corde suo: non est Deus; the fool repeats in his heart: there is no God*".

But why? "*Corrupti sunt*… they are corrupt". The corruption has lead them to this and "*animalis homo non percipit ea quae sunt spiritus; animal humans cannot perceive the issues of the spirit*".

I have often seen that only two types of people do not believe in God: the children who haven't reached the age of reasoning and those poor ones who have lost it. You might have seen many times that wherever one fails to admit God there rules sin, immorality and disorders. People are degraded to a life of senses. This heart and mind made for higher things are corrupted to a totally earthly life, animal like. And this is the agnosticism not so much out of conviction, but so forth out of a want that there exists no just God who punishes sin. In my experience I have often seen in a deteriorated heart generates a corrupted mind; rectifying the heart certainly set right the mind.

One wants or not, all of us have a soul to redeem. Christ has died to save the soul. We have to fight against the evil to redeem our souls. Humanity has fallen and many evils are inflicting here below. But in my experience, I have proved that many times the evil and sufferance are projected by man with his sins. Returning to the Lord, living well, look how many evils will be absent from the world, how much peace and serenity in the unavoidable punishments of the poor life.

We have sympathy for those poor ones who assist Satan. They are our brothers redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. It is true they have gone astray but we have to seek and save them. "*Diligite homines, interficite errores*", we should say with St. Augustine: war with the errors, without compromise, but great love for the erred ones!

We have the example of Jesus, our Master, who in the parables he has given his trace: now he is the shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine and sheep to seek the one lost; at times it is the father who welcomes the repented son…

We must do all possible things so that our brothers are converted and return to the true sheepfold. How many of them have probable never heard a good word! How many are persuaded by perverse company, thru sick ambient, corrupt readings, and scandals… O how much sympathy we should have for them! Let us go to encounter them with greater and sincere love. Let them see that we Christians love them, understand them, and desire them as true brothers.

On the contrary on this matter I feel inspirited to set up authoritatively for the entire Opera a penitential day for

the return of those who combat against the Holy Church and run on the way of ruin. It seems it is opportune that on 1st of August, first Friday is the day of the Sacred Heart a day to amend; therefore it is very appropriate to this intention. In that day we shall lift to our Lord our prayers, offer expiations, sacrifices for the good of the brothers. We shall sing the litany of the saints, as our ancient times Christians did invoked the saints on moments of great spiritual need.

And you priests who work in the parishes, make known this initiatives to the people and invite them to unite in penitential prayer for the conversion of our brothers, especially for the change of those who combat against our holy Religion.

All united, *cor unum et anima una*, (see lett. 7, Christmas 1933) we shall do sweet violence to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so that his spirit is spread out into all and light up his holy love in us.

I opened my heart to you, beloved brothers, so that you may love to preserve and revive all the more the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera. It is responsibility for me, if I do not speak in the name of the Lord and it becomes a duty for you if you do not pay heed to me. But I am sure and certain that you will treasure my words and try your best to correspond to our special vocation.

Thus we will accomplish the divine plans and attract the copious blessings upon the Opera so it may contribute successfully to the coming of the kingdom of God in the present hour.

Pray for me. I treasure you in my mind and heart more than ever and pray for you so that the grace of your vocation *magis ac magis abundet.*[152]

More with my heart than my hands I bless all of you, one by one, with all that you have very dear on earth with the wishes and prayers I do since many years: *ut cum fratribus meis et pueris tuis laudem Te in saecula saeculorum* (see lett. 3, 19-3-1933).

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

The Directors of the Community will take a commitment to read and expound this letter to the members of their religious family.

***9279 Verona, 4-7-1952.**

My beloved brothers responsible to the summer camps.

The grace and peace of Jesus be always with us.

This poor letter of mine, written as usual at the foot of the crucifix and bring to you my dear Fr. Luigi, but since

[152] Increase more and more.

he cannot come as immediately, I send you as express post, so that it may reach you before you go for the summer camps.

The camps have by now become a necessity. Think that, thru your superiors, it is Jesus who sends you, as visible angels for many youngsters. You must do your best while care goes to the body, no harm must reach the soul. The devil will try to penetrate and inject in the youngsters as his means: have your eyes wide open, keep watch, and engage the youngsters in every way busy so that they are not in idleness which is the father of every vice, and especially in certain situations like this.

First of all, precede them with good example. Even in the camps be truly Poor Servants, faithful, instead, very faithful to your pious exercises, absolutely necessary to form in you an interior life, a life of communion with Jesus. Saw the good word which will give fruit in its time. Speak of Jesus, the great friend of the youth. If the love of Jesus enters in their heart hardly ever they are mislaid. Transform your camp as an oasis of rest and peace, school and gymnasium of virtue.

Think also of the responsibility you hold on to take care of the youngsters from every type of disgrace. Take care not to expose them to dangers and every day you recommend them to the Guardian Angel to obtain his help and protection.

And wherever you move may the paternal blessings of your father who loves, pray and suffer for you follow you.

Pray and make them pray for me too. You know how much I need it so that till the end I may do the will of God.

More with my heart than with hands I bless each one of you, together with the youngsters and all their dear ones.

Yours in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***8986/A 9-10-1952.**

Dearest,

The grace of Jesus the blessed be always with you my dear brothers Poor Servants parish priests and collaborators in Rome. You are cultivating the nursery of Providence in Rome.

As I have told you my dear Fr. Foffano, I desire warmly that you meet together, if possible all of you, in a day more convenient to you at the altar of the Blessed Pious X in St. Peters to pray and celebrate a Holy Mass. Thus may the Lord find you worthy to execute well the mission entrusted you precisely to actualize the inspired program which was prefixed by Pius X: *Instaurare omnia in christo.*[153]

[153] Bring back everything in Jesus Christ (Eph 1: 10).

I do not use words to tell you how urgent and necessary to work in this sense, particularly you in the said center of the Church of Christ. It is surely our pure and genuine spirit which welcomes this motto and program. It is a great, noble, and sublime endeavor. The blessed Pious X at whose tomb you prayed fervidly may grant you necessary enlightenment and strength to work according to this spirit.

It will be very kind of you if you communicate me the date you would choose so that I too may join you spiritually, as you know well that I am always with you and follow you day by day, better hour by hour.

May the Lord keep you in fervor of the holy retreat and in the generous resolutions that instilled in you in those blessed days, for your sanctification and for the fulfilment of the divine plans of the Providence in this Opera.

Pray, pray a lot! If you know how much I need it! I treasure you in my mind and heart more than ever, because I feel that you have a special mission to fulfill in our times. Be always in full efficiency.

I bless all of you, all of you pray for me,

In Christ Jesus

Fr. John Calabria

* LETTER 77 Verona, 11 October 1952, Motherhood of Blessed Virgin Mary

My dear and beloved brothers,

May the grace and peace of blessed Jesus be always within our hearts.

With you I thank and praise the mercy and goodness of the Lord who has granted us also this year a holy spiritual retreat for the great advantage for our priestly and religious life. But there is always the necessity to review often the exercises of our souls. In an hour like now in which the spirit of the world tries to force the doors of the sanctuary of the same religious Houses, to penetrate deceptively also into the hearts consecrated to God.

For this reason I thought of making certain observations and recommendations. I know you would treasure it in your heart for the benefit of your personal sanctification and that of the Opera which is fully of Jesus therefore it should be as he wants. Only in this manner o my dear and beloved brothers, we will be able to fulfill the new and great plans the Lord has on the Opera in general and over everyone in particular.

1) – As far as I know and I can, take care to fill you all of the *pure and genuine spirit of the Opera,* which is the spirit of Jesus, the spirit of the holy gospel, lived and implemented entirely and without compromise and arbitrary interpretations "*sine golossa*", as I have repeated so many times.

Revive in the world faith in the paternity of God, trust and filial abandonment into his divine providence: look this is the goal of our Opera, and our main duty. Providence, it is the project of our Opera, the foremost of our duty. But we cannot revive in the world this flame, if not ardent in us. Remember that all our activity must manifest this trust and abandonment in the divine Providence. And none of the Poor Servant should place his greater trust in any material means than the Providence. Remember that Jesus did not say: "Without means you can do nothing", but on the other hand: "Without me you can do nothing!" Therefore, have faith that if we will be faithful to our program: "*Quaerite Primum regnum Dei*", the balance will come as a consequence.

2) – I recommend you much our *interior life*. He who does not possess it, resemble as one body without soul. Inner life, so the pious exercises. For heaven's sake never don't ignore it. Be punctual. If you could not do it or arrived late, accuse yourselves in the community. Let it be the object of your accountability the fidelity or less in the practice of piety.

For this reason take care of the too high occupation which gradually take you away from attending seriously your soul. The admonition of Jesus is equally valid for us: "what merit one had if he gains the entire world and then loses his soul".

3) – I have mentioned of the *accountability* of the conscience. Even that is so essential to eradicate many inconveniences which derive from not doing it regularly. The members must acknowledge it to their own superiors and the local superiors must do it to your Father, at least once in three months, taking into account of all the

brothers. Be free and open to your superiors, do have fear to expose to them because in them you will find brothers, friends, advisers who love you in the Lord.

4) – Another important point is the *observance of silence*, because in such observance one can add the good or bad progress of a religious House.

I recommend you above all *the major silence*. Arrived the established time, everyone must withdraw to his place and let there be an absolute silence of people and things. The superiors of the individual houses should be enviously eager and shall never fail inculcate it and remind of it every now and then it is necessary.

Remember in silence the Lord speaks. He, who does too much noise, cannot listen to his voice. "I will lead the soul into solitude and speak to its hearts"

5) – Another very delicate point is the *observance of the cloistered area*. Local superiors should not permit or accept abuses on this point. As our holy Constitutions wisely describe, you communicate with our Sisters thru the channel and counter. No one should enter the reserved spaces of the Sisters without explicit permission, even if one has to go there for some work.

Only for official reasons one should talk with Sisters, restricting only to the necessary. With them speak with maximum respect, with all charity, but without any affected manners. No one should stop to eat in the kitchen, no one enter the laundry to receive or collect. For heaven's sake hold in maximum attention to these very important recommendations and see that even in the minimum intuition, from the least emergence of evil.

6) - I recommend not reading news papers and magazines of inferior standard to a religious. In a special way do not amuse thru medical booklets, magazines and news papers kept in the reception of clients in the waiting room.

7) – I wish that all of you take care of the following norms regarding the care of vestments and person. Personal indumenta must be made with maximum attention to modesty, both for the religious and boys. Do not allow the boys to put on very short and exaggerated undergarments and very short trousers.

To the religious I recommend not to appear before others with shirts of short sleeves or too loose to the shoulders; let them use rather a light shirt.

For the dress of our religious do not use very costly materials, since it is not in conformity with the poverty we profess.

All of you religious it is prohibited to cultivate worldly hairstyle. Without a special permission none of you keep the tuft of hair so to no one use perfumed materials for the hair, nor perfumed soaps, and keep a watch on the wrist. The Poor Servant it is fitting to be a clean person. I also recommend you of the property of your cloths and the maximum simplicity in everything.

Analogically also the boys should not be permitted to certain worldly style of superfluous to witness the poverty of the house they belong to and receive everything. Such as the use of perfumes, sun glasses when it is not necessary, specs with expensive frames, too elegant shoes and dress etc.

How much to you my dear and beloved brothers, these and other superfluity, certain chains and objects of luxury, remember are all fully contrary to the holy poverty. Make therefore a diligent revision, and if you find in possession of things take them to your superiors, thus make a beautiful sacrifice to the Lord.

8) – to the local superiors I urge not to admit unfamiliar person to the confidence of the religious house such as in the refectory, also not to grant the brothers any permission such as make a picnic, or a distant pilgrimage, pay a visit to relatives, other than a fast visit to people so intimately related in a situations of their grave sickness.

Even during the summer holidays, we shall not permit outings and picnics that oblige to stay out of the house.

9) – to all especially the priests, I recommend discretion in the use of bicycle.

Without a special permission none you must use the use and purchase of motorcycle. Remember it is not fitting to see a religious in particular a priest with such means of transport which the poor cannot have.

10) – I recommend the priests in pastoral care not to go to visit families without just pastoral reasons. They should not accept invitations for dinner nor gifts that bind the hands and often the hearts. It is necessary today more than ever the priest should not come down from the height the Lord has lifted him, because the eyes of many are planted on him and all demand that he remains different from other people.

11) – I think it is not by chance the Providence has entrusted seven Parishes to the Opera. It means the Lord thru this means wants to fulfill some special plans. You how is in my heart to abolish all the fees: "(see lett. 8, Lent 1934). *Gratis accepistis, gratis date"* (see lett. 8, Lent 1934). There shall not be distinction of class between rich and poor, neither in the funerals, nor baptisms and marriages.

My dear and beloved sons, you begin to give examples and if there are difficulties, do your best to solve them. In the meetings of priests then tell frankly what the spirit of the Opera is, and what your feelings, on this point is. Thus every parish of the Poor Servant will become a light house of gospel values and you, with the divine help, will communicate the holy chastisement that provokes this examples, in spite of the criticism and contradiction, usually will come from those least expected.

On this point I hope to send you practical and precise norms on how you should handle: pray for this.

12) – Bbut addressing you parish priests, I wish to tell you another proposal on the so called *parish theater.* When I think of the serious urge of the Supreme Pontiff Pius XII, when he hinted of the great "devastation of young souls (caused by cinema), of many innocence that are lost exactly in the theater", I experience as a apprehension in heart. And with tears in my eyes I request you and urge you not to take lightly this grave problem of cinema.

Remember that every film presented you assume the responsibility. For love of God, that the souls are not offered a homicidal poison exactly those who are called to extend healing medicines. Do not come to a compromise

that neither the conscience nor the gospel could justify. Be intransigent persons and do not allow yourselves to be lured by interest.

To every religious I recommend not to go to help to theater representation even in the parish halls.

13) – To everyone I recommend to remain faithful to the traditions and customs of the Opera in general and in each house in particular. It is not the superior of the community to change this with right reason and seeking my advice. Dealing with important renewal, remember you have to ask and get consent and blessings from your Father.

14) – Finally I urge you to love and help San Zeno in Monte, blessed and holy land, as I said in the last evening of the retreat. Do not look only to the branches, but to the trunk. Do not build those shrines; look at the center, which is the mother house, which the more she receives the more gives.

Look this is what I felt to tell you in this situation, my dear and beloved brothers. Treasure it, read it again these poor words of mine and try to conform to it your behavior. This could be a good means to continue the spirit of the holy retreat, which in this year, it seems me, had a special note.

Become saints, I would say let us become saints to save and sanctify souls, who will be in heaven our joy and our crown.

As far as I know and I can I urge you the great charity of your prayer, I need it very badly for my poor soul, so near already to the great call. More with heart than

with hands I bless you. I need it very urgently for my poor soul, so close already for the great call.

More with my heart than my hands I bless you.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

P.S. – "*I wish these norms to be read in every monthly recollection. Inspired by the Holy Spirit. Great things are done with small things.- Beloved Fr. Luigi, pray much for me*".[154]

* LETTER 78 18th November 1952

My dear and beloved brothers,

Here, at the feet of my crucifix, I go on thinking how much the Lord loves human beings and how much he does to draw all to his love.

Every time has its characteristics, its typical countersigns, that signs achieved progress by man in the course of time.

We think how man worked on earth in ancient times and how he works today: what a progress! Today the

[154] Fr. Calabria added this note by his hand.

machines makes effortless the work, takes away almost the entire annoyance. Today one man does what once would require twenty.

How much material progress in every human activity: from the old cart to gigantic train, from haul to auto vehicles, from boat aero plane…

Everything is an admirable progress which man has achieved utilizing the intelligence God gave him. Everything is God's gift, enough to appreciate the goodness of the Lord and go in harmony with his divine plans.

Humanity in the singular times and periods, uses those means Providence furnishes: and have to esteem the primitive and modern ones, and we must appreciate those varieties of machines of our times. Each one has to live his time, each one has to account for what is available.

This is in the material order: great and gigantic progress marks our time. What great gifts! And they are for the actual times, though it is a life of exile and of the fallen beings due to sin.

These are happenings of the material realm, and how much more we have to realize in the supernatural realm!

And it is at this juncture, o my dear brothers; I wish to call the attention of the Poor Servants. The moral order which interests us much more that the material. Now even in this moral order, the Providence has furnished us towards these days many means suited always to our times. Thus in our past days, at equal steps with the material progress, are initiated many charitable works, wonderful

machines, fulfilling various plans of charity God is doing for humans.

Our times have reached, we can say, the apex to help the souls orienting it to a supernatural life.

And among the many activities, in our times the Lord has caused to begin the activity of the Poor Servants with a goal suitable to the modern needs and demands in a special the full and simple practice of the gospel.

Many a time I told you and you are persuaded for a long experience: the Opera has an intimate relation to the actual times, has very special programs to fulfill. The Lord has entrusted us his Opera, which I would say a powerful spiritual machine for the moral progress of the brothers. All the Operas are good and wonderful, but each one a special mission to fulfill. The Opera of the Poor Servants has his characteristics, we have to correspond and make us saints, to fulfill the plans and particular goal of the Opera: let us remember well.

The Lord has his times and his hours. He could at any instant come to do the "collude" of his machine. With what meticulousness the earthly machines are made for its colluded! Attention here, pay attention there to make each peace in its right place, each combination may work well, each wheal may rotate perfectly.

So much must be with us who are called by the divine Providence to be his ingredient, of this spiritual machine which is the Opera of the Poor Servants. For heavens' sake let us try to be well placed, so that the divine master is satisfied of us and use us for his plans!

If a machine is not functioning while is tested, it is rejected and substitutes with another. Alas for us if the Lord, not finding worthy of what he wants us to be has to reject us! He certainly will do his designs, but without us! What a great responsibility for the Poor Servant! And what a wonderful reward if we are found worthy and in our place to actualize some good things designed by Providence for the present time! What a fortune will be ours! Let us try to merit it my dearest.

Apparently our program has certain point in clear contrast to that of the human common prudence. Some time, I tell you, The Opera is the reverse to the world, has its foundations not on earth, but in heaven. And it is true. But it is true that the Lord willed in such a way and he doesn't mislead.

Have faith in God our Father, o my dear. If we will be faithful to our program, God's promise will be realized for us and we will do much good, especially in this hour.

How much importance we give to people of this world? And it is correct. But how much more we should give to that of the Lord? Let us believe him, and entrust us to his word.

Every word of God is, let me put it in such an expression, and is consecratory, sacramental: does what it says.

Certainly the Lord is not in a hurry; has in front of him the eternity. Therefore his plans mature gradually, little at a time: and it is the mark of God's work.

Let us believe therefore, in every word of the holy gospel and we can honor God with this holy complete and

generous faith. The sob of the Lord shall not be for us: "these people honor me with their lips, and their hearts is away from me."

Therefore we live our times, my dear ones, we work in our Opera, esteeming our holy vocation as Poor Servants. "*Non multa sed moltum*" (see lett. *7079/B, 10-8-1947) is a motto made for us. We shall not rejoice at the many activities, at the cost of an interior life. What I know and can, I recommend you very much this interior life, union with God: it is the unavoidable base of every apostolate. *"Sine me,* tells Jesus, *nihil potestis facere*: without me you can do nothing". If we do alone, without the Lord, will be things that vanish very soon.

We shall do with full heart that much the Providence entrusts us and we will collaborate with all others in the divine work for the growth of humanity in the life of God.

Always in particular now the humanity is like a family, attempt to unite as one family, and even tries to unite all the more and maintain fully consistent.

The theory of communicating yacht is applied also the moral and spiritual life. Doing our part, however small it seem to be, we are in communication with those who work in God's church and cooperate with the divine plans.

Everything is great in the Opera of God, and nothing is small, when it is done to glorify the majesty of God. Enough to do well, enough to do with the spirit of the Lord, sustained and directed by his grace.

The examples of Jesus Christ are always in front of our eyes. He did not hesitate to be a poor worker, he who was the Son of God!

And here let me once again say dear brothers, to recommend you the primary place of an interior life. “Without me, Jesus tells, you can do nothing”. Let us consider well the words of Jesus and take them as our program. The saints, o my dear brothers, how grew in the great plans of immortal works. Where and how? It is at the feet of the crucified, in front of the tabernacle, in the prolonged prayer, in fasting and austerity. Look, the secret of their success. The Lord is always the same; he wants to be served today as yesterday. Let us imitate, however, the saints and we will do great things.

Let us trust in the Lord. I repeat. Let us believe in the Lord with deep, unshakable, and simple faith. I remember a pleasant episode I read years back. A ship was quarrying in the tempest. All the passengers were in anxiety and apprehension for the impending danger of shipwreck. Yet among the terrorized, there is a child playing in an angle of the ship fearlessly. “What! Are you playing? Are you not afraid?” “My father is the captain of the ship and I am more than secure”.

Dear and beloved brothers, at the helm of the ship there is our celestial Father. Why are you afraid? There will be tempest, difficulty. Do not be afraid! He will not fail his duty and we will reach safely the bank if eternal health.

We journey towards heaven, my dear ones; our life is oriented towards up there. Know, love, serve God on earth posses him eternally in heaven, this is the most

important thing that gives value to our life. All the rest counts nothing. We hold firm our look towards paradise and thus we will work better on earth, living our time actualizing the divine devises of spiritual good for the actual time.

We shall also remember the main goal as in the constitutions: manifest to the world that God is Father and he governs our Opera with his providence. Thus we begin to hold him as our father, entrust us to him with filial trust.

The sphere of God, in which we have to work, is of faith, grace, and prayer. We shall not let us slip into such a spirit that counts on rationality, activism, and adaptation to the world.

We must turn our eyes to the abandoned creatures the Lord entrusts us. We have to work with them to form them good fathers of the families, good and honest workers. With Lords grace we see and are seeing satisfying fruits in many ex-students, who after leaving the house, have made honor to the training they received. From our side we shall try to offer our best so that all may become like them. This is one of the works entrusted to us be Providence. O how noble is this work!

We shall work with generous heart: everything is great in the Opera: broom, school, economic, priesthood… Nothing is small in the house of God, if we are illumined in faith.

We are "*pusillus grex,*"[155] humble, poor servant, who do what the Lord wants. I will be for us those consoling words of Jesus: "Fear not small sheepfold; it is

[155] Small sheepfold.

pleasing to your Father to hand over to you his kingdom": Kingdom of God here on earth, for the good we will do and the souls we would save, kingdom of God in heaven, will be the reward and recompense we will receive there, for that simple service we have performed faithfully and generously on our earth life of these four days.

We shall keep in our vision the Paradise. Walking on earth, we shall look forward on heaven: this is the foundation for us to live well and make us saints. "What else we can earn, even the entire world, at the risk of our soul?"

We shall be generous with the Lord! We shall sanctify everything for Him, for the souls, for his kingdom.

What matters if we lose the entire world, and save our soul? Every human should have this thought, because all of us have the present life to know, love, and serve the Lord and thus save our soul. We shall remember the words of Jesus: "What gains a man, even if he gains the entire world, and then lose his soul?"

I write these words from my heart. Pray always for me, from the depth of my heart I bless you.

Dear and beloved brothers, I come back to the thought where I began: we shall live our time. We shall thank the Lord who has called us to live and work for the eternal bliss.

Everyone should esteem the grace he receive in his time, and how much more the Poor Servant, called for a vocation so special and holy! We shall look ahead o dear ones, to do well, so that the machine, that is our Opera, may be found always in full efficiency.

Pray for me when I bless you from my heart.

Fr. John Calabria.

LETTER 85 Verona, 5.2.1953[156]

My dear and beloved brothers,

May the grace and peace of the most holy Jesus be always in our hearts.

I am here at the foot of my Crucifix and I have in front of my eyes more than ever alive the great catastrophe which hit the vast territory of the Eastern Europe.[157]

My heart is burning, and thought is bleeding for the tens and tens thousands of brothers in an instant deprived of everything, because everything is overturned by the rage of waters! And I think very specially those sick people, the old and the women, the crying children, lost and dispersed, in the anxious search for their lost beloved, whom probably they will never meet.

I think of those who might have been entrapped under the fallen houses, and washed away and swallowed

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156 This letter has a different chronologic order than the first edition of 1956, because now we know exactly its date.

157 Disastrous flood of the Netherlands, where the dams were broken and the ocean invaded the earth.

by the frightening waves of the waters, and many others victims of the terror in the impending danger of involved, who from hour to hour launches the S.O.S. and from their frightened hearts raises supplications of humble prayers: "Lord save them and save, sustain and protect those who are in noble fraternal chain of support and help from every angle of the world".

Dear and beloved brothers, unite with me in the same prayer. Let us celebrate in every house a Holy Mass and an entire day of prayer for our brothers, such a hard way shattered. Also see in our houses if you can set aside places, even at the cost of sacrifices, to welcome the youngsters especially needy from that region. If the Lord inspires you to do some other thing tell me soon your idea and I will be glad to bless any providential initiatives provided they are according to our spirit.

But besides these my dear and beloved brothers, let us reflect seriously on our administration asking us: "Why the Lord allowed such calamity?" It is not with a pretense to get into the occult judgments of God but rather in humble adoration of what is for us always a mystery, but always a mystery of love. In these very painful events we must see in the light of the paternity of God.

God is always Father, even when he visits us with tribulations. He does not punish only to punish us. His punishments are nothing but invitations and reminders of greater love. He corrects us to save us; he sends us such sufferings to free us from sins, mistakes, which are the real evil, the only true ignominy. That if the sins provoke the just anger of the Lord, and especially certain sins: the organized fight against God, the profanation of the feast days, the divulging the corruption that is always on the

increase, the scandal held to innocence, the desecration of the family and the holy matrimony, and we should also confess, from our side the consecrated people, the desertion of one's own vocation, not living up to it, and these sins I repeat, provoke the just wrath of God, all the more the cry of many pains and sufferance without name and number, o how do they implore and make us propitiate the divine mercy!

But besides these, with the impressing cry of these events, God wants to remind strongly on the right path the poor humanity, which has moved away from the principles of honesty, and justice, of the religion and gospel morals, so that there could not be a hope of salvation outside Christ and his holy gospel.

Return to Christ and practice the gospel with absolute coherence, look for us and for all the pressing and urgent reminder of these happenings.

But here is the gospel lived, practical Christianity is also this consoling chain of helps that is offered in an intensive flow of human and Christian fraternity and solidarity. The pain speeds up people to fraternity, in pain falls many barriers, ceases the divisions, rancor, and hatred. In love yet triumph's Christ. And behold a third motive why the Lord permits these perplexities which saddens us so much.

My dear and beloved brothers, with prayer, with the sanctity of life, especially we, Poor Servants of Divine Providence, seek to contribute so that the divine balance equilibrates on the side of mercy. Also for us it is a reminder in these days so that we may live worthy, so that we may respond our holy vocation.

Never like these days have we needed saints, who could be channels of divine grace. “We have to respond – yesterday one important person wrote me – not only against the materialism, but against a Christianity that is becoming naturalized”. Unfortunately it is thus. From many, many Christians live only for the earth and not for heaven. They do not think other than satiating their likes and entertainments, without regard to the holy rules of God, as on a day we have no accountability to God of our functioning.

We shall treasure in the meantime these teachings and shall make holy proposals that will help us to sanctify the holy Lent, a time more than ever acceptable, days of health for us and for many other brothers.

How much I need prayers to do till the end the holy will of God, at any cost! In my poverty always I remember you and pray and in this moment more with my heart than with my hands I bless you.

LETTER 79 16 March 1953

My dear and beloved brothers,

May the grace and peace of the most holy Jesus be always in our hearts.

At the foot of my crucifix I read one of the letters a dear religious wrote me from Rome. I found great consolation and joy to listen how our distant children live

the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, receiving in return special graces of light and force, much necessary for the difficult field of their apostolate. Ed it is always the light of the Opera, bright light placed by God on the mount, which is diffused in this difficult hour, and gradually, goes fulfilling the special plans which the divine founder already entrusted it.

I feel the need to inform you too so that you may make this as object of meditation, what is written to me, because I hear this within my heart as inspired word and guided by the Holy Spirit. For heaven's sake I promise, *in visceribus Christi* (see letter 10, St. John Baptist 1934), make it a treasure, translate it into practical life: it is the Lord who speaks and he uses everyone for reminding us. They are thoughts that I, humble Casante of the Opera of God, have sought always to instill in your hearts, in many times I speak, that I exhort, and promise, *opportune et importune, ego vinctus in Domino*,[158] in the midst of my continuous sufferance, so that my sons, the Poor Servants may live the spirit of the Opera, *sine glossa, ad litteram!* (literally).

Look what he writes me:

«Beloved Father … it is a long time since I have written you. I do not excuse myself, because I know how much you, father, understand our situations and the many work, also due to the scarcity of people, in which we are involved.

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158 In an opportune and inopportune time I prisoner of the Lord (Eph 4: 1).

Since I have a tranquil time, I would like to, venerable Father, express some of my thoughts which often occupy my mind, even in the midst of various, and sometimes coercing involvements.

I live together with many poor people: in very miserable dwellings, in the meetings, in the parish offices and I share thus joy and anguish and more anguish than joy.

Now I have returned from a family visit to a poor woman, mother of a family, sick with TBC, and a daughter in a young offenders' institution and husband in prison, having no booklet of free medical treatment has to pay for medicine … It was the last of many cases I meet every day.

Whatever I leave the presbytery and visit the outskirts square and gather voices, the anguish, and the martyrdom of those brothers, I return home with a heavy heart and their martyrdom becomes mine.

And the most painful thing is that when I am not able to give relief to them. In such situations I throw myself at the feet of the tabernacle and tell everything to Jesus and I have many examples that the prayer is not useless.

How many families condemned to misery, to hunger, to sickness, to afflictions!

What a contrast one feels when one enters Rome! There the lightheartedness, worldliness, selfishness, pride, satisfactions, petty needs, and every comforts and every type of refuge to make life more light and splendid; and here we fight to live.

Then I ask: where is the Christianity?

The feelings of our people are of being abandoned by all: by the authority, and those who can assist them. There is the P.C.A, the Ladies of St. Vincent De Paul are working, but it is merely a drop, on the contrary sometimes these forms of helps make closed the eyes of those who should see. It happened to me these days to overhear: "What they want more? They do not have the E.C.A, and there is no the Pontifical"?[159]

Unfortunately I must confess: here we feel (I say we feel, because our life is intimately united tour brothers) we feel abandoned, misunderstood, and not counted by a society of Christians that has nothing other than painting us. Oh if I could shout at all that we need to be loved, esteemed, listened, and understood because we too are human beings, and children of the same Father who is in heaven.

It is this we are in need of. These people are not bad, they are our brothers. It is the injustices, egoism, and wickedness that make them criminals, but the Lord will forgive them.

The communism works and conquers them, this the fact, and why? Because the communism understands them, esteem their legal aspirations, associate with their cry, keep into account of their miserable state…. and it seems impossible but it is so, is closer to the miserable, at least apparently, Satan than Christ, that Christ who told "I am with the poor".

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[159] P.C.A and E.C.A. are civil agencies of welfare service, while the Pontifical (Care Agency) is an ecclesiastical welfare service.

… But the mistake is fully ours, because we do not know to see Christ in the miserable and needy; the blame is fully on us because in the suffering person we forgot to see the perpetuation of the passion of Christ and, we lost this supernatural vision, and we have gone away and we have left free the field of Satan for his easy capture.

We Christians have a doctrine so high, principles so human, so much closer to people, with which we could fight against any doctrine, work of Satan. Christ in the brother! We cannot count any more as a being unidentified, but of a man that carries in his body the effigy of a divine personality: Christ! Who belongs to my same family, flesh of my flesh.

It is useless to say we want to defeat communism on our tables or seeking the apologetics. It would like a general who makes the plan of defense on his paper without giving order to the soldiers to attack. We have to confront the communism and meet is in the battle field, so that the Christians do not do which the communists promising, the battle will be at a loss.

From our side we should maintain with the poor a constant compassion, understanding, which is fruit of faith – to see Christ in the poor: and it is fruit of an enlightened love – virtue which will enable us to love even if there is nothing loveable in the appearance. Oh if we knew there are hearts that loves us much!

It seems to that this revolution is fully on us Poor Servants to fulfill. Our spirit is sprouted from the genuine side of the gospel. The Opera of the Poor Servants must be a living replica of the gospel. There is great of this yeast in the world and of this you, beloved Father, speak often in

your letter. But there is a need that we should not go aloof from this spirit! I understand you in these days better than ever and understand your constant concern to hold us bound to these holy principles. Alas for us!

We can transmit this spirit to the world in that proportion we posses it. The Opera that has started opting as its preferred field the "refused of all" must remain here. The Poor servant should be full of understanding, spiritually and physically very near the one who suffer, should gather the anxieties, make it his, place perfectly on the same level of the refused and share the concerns and pains, live like poor with the poorest.

I understand more than ever that if a priest does not become more of the poorest of his parishioners cannot pretend to be a captain, a leader of souls.

The Opera posses all characteristics: Paternity of God, perfect equality among the members of the same family, preference for the most unfortunate who become their masters, love without counting, "*stofegarli de carita*", suffocate them with charity. How sublime is this spirit! I believe in the omnipotence of the spirit of the Opera, which is neither more nor less to the spirit of Christianity.

It is worth sanctifying us and in living thus when we think of the benefits as consequences will work at this living force.

Excuse me beloved Father, if I permit to say one of my thoughts. According to me, the Opera will conserve its freshness and vitality only if it would remain always among the most miserable, among the refused ones, in the

situations refused by others. If instead, before accepting a place of apostolate (mission) we make our human calculations, the Opera will become worldly and will end up its fantastic shape.

I request you to excuse me of my long writing. For me it was necessary: finally a child has to say the deepest thought to its father, and excuse me, I wish only to be remembered in your prayers, to live as Poor Servant…»

Yes, it is true; we should not go ahead with human calculations, but in the divine light of "seek first".

Remember the Church is of Christ, and Christ is the Opera, and so the Church is the Opera.

Satan trembles. What is his concern of communism, of the war, of the world! The only fear is the Church, and so the Opera that he would like to see not as the Lord has made it.

Be attentive not to reverse the plan of god. No modernizing out of the gospel. Our aim must indeed be the poor, the poorest, and the most abandoned, the ones without any means. If we have a choice we must give the preference to those without human support. Where people are absent, surely the Providence of the Celestial Father intervenes. The "*Quaerite Primum"* demands even today!

The Opera born from the pierced side of Jesus has to live its heartbeats of that divine heart that was throbbing

for the unhappy, poor… "*Evangelizare pauperibus misit me*"![160]

If our brothers fee abandoned by men, let them feel that at least are united with prayer, help and above all charity. We must feel desire of deep union and understanding among us. We have to form a communion, a single body, as a single mystical body of Christ. For charity, Satan may not find cracks, fractures to creep into and ruin the Opera of God!

It was always my concern and prickle of anguish if among us there is no harmony, and understanding between superiors and brothers, which is absolutely unavoidable to fulfill the plan of God in the present time.

Be united in the perfect observance of the holy vows, openness with your father, in the continuous effort and nonstop desire to perfection, faithful always to our vocation.

It is many years I have the grace to serve the Lord, yet I tell you sincerely, every day, when I put on my clerical habit ever since I put it on the first time, I kiss it with new joy and every evening I recite a Hail Mary for my perseverance.

And you pray for me, so that the lord may judge *totaliter aliter*[161] than men. That I may not be like one of the wall street posters that show the way, but never moves and never arrive where they point out.

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160 The Lord has sent me to evangelize the poor.

161 In a completely different way.

Again I repeat you: be faithful and generous. Alas if one of you betrays your mission God, the absolute master has entrusted the Opera. My God, what a responsibility!

I speak you in the light of eternity. Be saints, be efficient. The lord Jesus is passing to check the machine piece by piece. He who is not in the right place will be left out and substituted. Don't give such a displeasure and pain to the Lord, don't give such a hurt to your father, who thinks of you, and carry you in heart, one by one, follow you with concern.

May the blessed Mother help us to be faithful, as she was, to our sublime vocation?

I embrace you in my heart, with a great paternal blessing.

In C.J. *Fr. J. Calabria*

LETTER 80 Verona, Feast of St. John 1953

My loving and beloved brothers,

May the grace and peace of Jesus be with us and inflame our hearts with divine love.

I keep you in my mind and heart, and thank the divine Providence who has united us in this Opera, which is fully of the Lord in the true sense of its expression, because He has founded it, directs, and sustains it both

materially and spiritually giving it grace to do good to many souls near and far. What a gift, my dear brothers, and how should we remain grateful and ask the Lord help and strength to live the pure and genuine spirit, spirit Jesus has placed from the beginning and which is an unavoidable condition to do new designs, all fit for the present hour we are going thru.

As you know, my health leaves solely to desire. For me it is continuous reminder and warning to keep me ready for the great call, for you an invitation to pray much, really much, for me because I really need first of for my poor soul, so that the Lord may give me the strength to fulfill in everything his will, accepting generously what Jesus wants from me in this last phase of my poor life.

Beloved brothers, let us remain ready and prepared, so that each one of us will ring the solemn hour of our divine calling, and we may respond our "*adsum*: here I am!" with a pure and genuine spirit entirely lived.

I wish to tell you many things, my dear and loving brothers, but I will sum up everything in few words. It seems to me that we will face great trials, which essentially will serve the divine plan, all the more if we imprint it with our generous acceptance of the divine will. It will be sure victory for us, or better say of the Lord himself in us.

All the priests and religious especially we Poor Servants, must hold fixed in our mind that always, particularly in this hour what assures us victory is the gospel put in practice, *sine golossa* (without interpretations) and without compromise.

Regarding the Opera, however, to make us saints and correspond to our vocation. Only in this manner we can offer salvation to many souls fulfilling the divine plans and find security for our souls, and our eternity. We shall not forget that our present life has meaning only in relation to the future life. All of us have a soul to save. "What a man gains if he earns the entire world and loses his soul?" These truths, let us remember well, are for others, and also for us, priests and religious, and also for us Poor Servants!

I write these words as my spiritual testament. Take it as a treasure, o my dear ones, so that one day we can find ourselves together united in the holy paradise. How satisfied we will be for having worked for this Opera, how much we will enjoy the eternal and infinite reward Jesus has prepared for us. Take heart my dear and beloved brothers; let us make saints, but seriously.

Paternally I thank you for the prayers for which I m certain and sure you would be doing for me on the lovely remembrance of the feast of St. John, while I bless you more with heart than hands.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***8986/B Feast of St. Jerome, 20-7-1953**

Phonographic message:

My dear and beloved brothers,

I am in your midst and I see you and experience you inspired by the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera of the Poor Servants.

That the feast of today, St. Jerome, may sign a new phase in the way of our personal sanctification, the infallible secret to obtain fulfilling the great designs He has on the Opera.

Pray for me and I bless you all. I extend a special blessing to the new priests and to our and your Fr. Pedrollo.

Your father, in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 81 Verona, 21 July, 1953

My dear and beloved brothers,

The grace of Jesus be always with us all and inspire us to be generous in our intentions to be always better at the service of God and the souls.

Here in front of my crucifix I think of you all. I see you in your mansions, animated by the zeal for the brothers, for the sanctification of the souls. O how great is the vocation of the Poor Servant! As I proceed ahead I am all the lore convinced that the Lord had given us a great grace, very special of his fondness by calling us in his Opera. But what a responsibility so noble upon us all, o my dear brothers, to correspond to the pure and genuine spirit

engraved by the Lord! Blessed are we if we try to be at the level of our vocation to be worthy of the trust the Lord has placed in us for the future of the Opera itself!

Provide, however, to do well, to walk in the way of religious sanctify. It is all for our good and that of the souls the Lord has entrusted us.

Two things in a special way I recommend you. The *interior life* and *study of our holy Rules*. They are the supreme means to correspond to our holy vocation, and to do so much good, as out vocation demands us of.

The interior life: it will never be sufficiently highlighted. If Jesus has told for all the Christians: "without me you can do nothing", how much more for us religious, called to work for the souls! We can work hard and get tired, study, consume our energy in thousands of activities, but if we miss the interior life, we reach nowhere, because we miss our contact with the divine and the Lord can't use us as his instruments.

Therefore let us give our primary priority to interior life, let us tightly and intimately united to Jesus Christ with the spirit of prayer, with fervid love, which makes us constantly think of Him and seek his help, unavoidable because our apostolate may become fruitful.

The holy Rules: thus is the sure guide in our functioning. They are like the wheels, the tracks, on which must run the train of our Opera. Cultivate a sacred respect for the Holy Rules. See in them the words uttered by God. In a certain level you have to venerate it as if it is the pages of the divine Book. Read them, study them with a special

love, with a desire to the spirit and thus become day by day true Poor Servants.

My dear and beloved brothers, please treasure my poor words, which I write as it is coming in my heart, for the singular goal, your personal sanctification and the development of Lord's Opera. God has his special plans to realize in this crucial hour for the good of the souls. You know that out of the church there are two million people who are our brothers and also of the Lord to be saved. But, also look what a mystery of bounty: He looks at his chosen one as if these were his only means in the world and no other. Because the Lord wants to be served by his chosen one by a special vocation to reach salvation in the rest of the world, to conquer all that crowd his children and our brothers still away from the light of the gospel.

Let us correspond faithfully, generously to the divine predilection, to the infinite love of God. Let us try to return with our whole heart, without exceptions, without reserve. O how blessed are we! We will have his peace and blessings here, assurance and security of that happiness which we all expect there, from this life that is passing.

Before I conclude let me urge you one thing very important. I recommend you always the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera. Now we are in the summer days, we should be cautious not be in the common way regarding the holidays and days of rest. I wish that the mania of the world: beach, mountains, and picnic etc. Indeed the body is in need of rest and relaxation, but careful not to miss the spirit of the Opera. It won't be nice if a Poor Servant follow the pretence of vacation, choosing his time, place, and

duration etc., thus compelling the superior to grant you permission the Lord doesn't want.

If there is a true need, present with humility and without insistence, abandoning peacefully to the providence for every decision. The Poor Servant should remember that he is not a "master", all the more not in the house of the Lord, where the only master is Jesus Christ.

To go to the mountain or beach as well as own house the Poor Servant presents to the superiors, ready and available to renounce his own views and comforts, certainly and surely the Lord will not refrain to provide to his bodily betterment even thru a miracle, if necessary.

We are "servants"; we are "Poor Servants". What merit this fantastic name if we do not correspond to it? If we wish to function as masters, as men who wants to have all the freedom, all the entertainment? You know we will be completely out of track. The spirit will be changed, ruined, the entire Opera has compromised and our personal sanctification to is compromised.

Therefore after prayed and reflected it seems to me as my duty to remind you in the Lord some of the norms and rules on this issue:

1) - When we intend the camping for our youngsters, the local superior decides who has to go to assist them and how long he has to stay there, also to create a certain turn without compromising the functioning of the house.

2) - If there is no camping, the superior will establish, with utmost prudence, the time, place and

duration of the vacation, as he counts necessary for the health of the individual.

3) - As an ordinary rule, do not ask permission to go home for vacation, you may miss thus the spirit and even your vocation, as a long experience tells us. And the rest, believe, your visit in your families are gracious when they are not very frequent, and not long. Very prolonged stay embarrasses the same family.

4) - Reaching in one place in the indicated way, stay with ordinary conditions, without seeking satisfaction and exceptional entertainments. The Poor Servant, for the very fact of permission, to do to up and down, go left or right, here and there, even away from the place stay... It is quite uneasy to see that mania of touring. The Poor servant remains content of the ordinary things, without desiring to do as others, as the rich, we who are poor.

In a special way, then, I recommend you not to go away from the place of your stay thus forced to book out of house, in the hotels, or disturbing private hoses, or presbyteries etc.

5) - It will be a wonderful and holy thing, much pleasing to the Lord, that before going to camps or for holidays, please communicate the major superiors, with your Father, to have the blessings and approval, especially if they are of traveling out of the ordinary, long pilgrimages etc. it is very important, you know, to depend in this and not to do ones' own plan. It is equally valid even if there is an invitation, if the expenses are paid etc. I don't intend the expenses, but the soul and the religious spirit, practical humility, and filial dependence, which is much more important that money.

6) - Guest in some houses, the Poor servant must remember well to keep an edifying appearance, reserved, modest: this demands the duty of hospitality, and all the more a state of perfection we profess.

This is applicable to all, and in special way to the priests in the presbytery and wherever they go for ministry and other purposes.

In one word you understand my mind and my concern: as Poor Servants we declare, we should not do like all others, who, completing the academic year speak of holidays, of beach, mountains, as of ordinary managements, as a must or a right. If holidays come the Poor Servant make use of it as a gift from God, always convinced, for the others, non having any right, therefore always ready to stay at ones place if the superiors do not send them for holidays and without comparing with the brothers of this or that house.

This in my view is the pure and genuine sprit which we have to conserve intact and transmit the one who comes after us.

The superiors on their side cultivate concern for the health of their religious and provide the best they can, but always according to the spirit of the Opera, because what is useful they shall not neglect.

It is time that I opened the mind on this very important matters, I recommend you to pray for me, which I really am in need of.

I always pray for you and all your dear ones as far as I am on this world.

From the depth of my heart I bless you in the name of the Lord, wishing you to be true Poor Servants, worthy of the reward the Lord has prepared up there.

***10676 Verona, August 1953**

My dear and beloved brothers,

The grace and peace of Jesus be with us always.

My frequent addressing you thru letters and suggestions tells you dear brothers how much I feel in spirit to be in your midst, nevertheless the circumstances does not permit me to be physically present.

The approaching annual retreat, on which depends all our orientation of our life, suggests m to present you a consideration which has to find a place in our conscience as Poor Servants of Divine Providence.

The Lord has permitted that our Opera, remains in tune with his spirit to maintain its evidence, yet has to face now, thru the press, some problems of religious interest and actuality.

We have to be fully grateful to God that our poor efforts had earned approval also from the supreme religious authority. This commits us Poor Servants to conform the thought and life to those gospel orientations which are vindicated in writing.

For this in the coming retreats, call the attention, dear brothers, on this commitment of our conscience, which is the object of your contemplation and proposals during the holy days of reflection.

It is thru the writings of His Eminence Mons. Montini, Secretary of the State of His Sanctity, I received the letter addressed to me, the great warning: "The reform, *incipiat a domo Dei*".[162] Look we are placed with a tremendous affirmation by the Holy Father: "There is a world to reform from the foundations, and to be transformed from wild to human and from human to divine, which is according to the Heart of God". And it is from the same source comes the warning that the reform must begin from the house of the Lord, that is from the clerics and religious so that finally it reaches the people.

And who now, more than we the Poor Servants, must commit to realize this indication so official?

If we have invoked the re-vindication of the spirit against the threatening invasion of the flesh in the shame of every compromise with the world, our fidelity to the commitment must be exemplary, at every cost.

If it is said the worry of action should not suppress the main force of prayer and of the supernatural, our Opera, which is born to remind the world faith in Divine Providence, has to repudiate always the calculation on those human interests which gradually is the faith in the Paternity of God. The reason to say so is that our Opera has proclaims an absolute fidelity to his genuine spirit.

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[162] Begin from the house of the Lord.

If we are made as an admonishment to the supreme gospel precept “love” it is important that it may have the maximum development in the relationship among us religious, so that the souls Providence entrusted us, we may see the person of Jesus needy and suffering.

Our pedagogy must be the Paternity.

The revolution that has to save the world, will be the one inspired by the gospel love.

If we have silenced the voice that demands for certain, of the moral and intellectual aimlessness, there is an urgent need to remind the familiarity of faith, which alone gives us the guarantee of those supreme realities. This is the source of life, so it is meaningful to commit more than ever to form in the souls entrusted to us of the deepest conviction and as such the religious ideal that represents in reality a purpose, and joy of life.

A Eucharistic conscience that enables us to live with Jesus, not away, but so near, instead in us, gives divine touch to our life.

Our Opera, dear brothers, must represent the continuous effort of updating to the gospel on which alone there is the guarantee of truth and life. Believe to survive in the source of the equilibrium that forgo the genuine gospel is an error which will be paid in decadence. “Everything is possible for the one who believes”. The trials of conflict could be intense, but the victory is without fail.

I do not want to silence when I hear within me the situation of those of you, dear brothers, who, burdened with commitments and work, have to do with great effort to be faithful to the pious exercises. I exhort with a touching heart to give a supernatural goal to your tiresome work, where to guarantee the inner life even in the arid commitment.

Then let us all commit to invoke "the lord of the harvest" abundance of vocation for our Opera, with which we commit to place our service of the true gospel, repudiating one again all that can burden our thought, in life and in the external form our fidelity to Jesus, Poor, sacrificed, at the service of he Father and of the brothers in the joy and divine charity.

One understands, from what is said here, how to suppose that each one of you have taken into account of that publication of our house, which represents this thought.

Pray for the Opera and for me who will never stop remembering you in my heart, al the altar of the Lord.

With all my heart I bless you in God's name, wishing you to be true Poor Servants worthy of the reward the Lord keeps for you up there.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 82 10th August 1953.

My dear and beloved brothers,

The grace and peace of Jesus be with us.

You know how I esteem in my heart the communion and reciprocal charity of the different religious families among them and with the motherhouse, this being one of the indispensable conditions to maintain the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera. *Ut omnes unum sint!* (se lett. 31, Retreat 1942). We Poor servants have to give witness to this union and fusion of hearts, which would glorify mush our God, and such a edifying example to those who see us.

To help this communion, much important is the canonical visits of the superiors, done personally or thru their vice.

It is on this purpose and this mission now comes to you our dear Fr. Carlo Semprebuoni, whom you would receive as I personally am there and with the authority that invests in a Visitor, in the competence of our holy Constitutions (art.266 ff).

I often remember and pray for each one of you.

I recommend you to open your hearts to do well the coming retreat, so that they may bring forth a renewal of spirit in each one and in the entire beloved Congregation, which is fully of Jesus.

As far I know and I can and I recommend your charity in prayers. More than my hands, with my heart I bless you.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 83 Verona, 31 August, 1953.

My dear and beloved brothers,

May the grace of Jesus be always in our hearts and enlighten us on what we have to do to correspond ever better our vocation.

Yesterday evening the Lord has allowed me to tell you a word, which was born spontaneous in heart, as an introduction to the holy retreat. Now, even though I am not present physically among you for my various uneasiness of health, especially thru this writings, I wish to address you in this time.

As I told you the retreat of 1953 has a special importance for us, as the Opera is special to which we belong to for a grace of predilection. Let us however try to enrich by this, and commit the maximum.

The point of principal importance, remember it well, is our personal sanctification, according to the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera. To this is directed the

retreat, to this our spiritual efforts must be tuned to during this holy days.

My dear and beloved brothers, every congregation, the Lord has caused to sprout is flowered in the church, and has its own objective. Our congregation of the Poor Servants, as you already know well, because I have repeated so often, has its spirit, imprinted by Jesus himself. It is up to us to safeguard it pure and genuine, to transmit it to others who will come. What a responsibility for us, but also what a merit if we match up! We will fulfill the divine plans in this grave and difficult hour of human history, and we will collaborate to the reform of the world, the rebirth of the world to a life truly Christian.

But how can we do this, if we do not sanctify us primarily? This is the point I recommend you a lot and hold in sight in these holy days: sanctify ourselves to sanctify others.

I recommend you, o my dear brothers, the interior life of communion with God. Renew your fervor in the practice of piety, to do it with better fruits and enrich from it new fire of love of God, to warm up the brothers of the world as well.

Have the maximum trust in the Casante of the Opera, present and future. It is very important these things for our spiritual progress and for the development of the Opera itself. The Casante represent you the God and the authentic interpreter of the divine will and the pure and genuine spirit which has to animate the Opera. Stay always in what he tells you and you will not be miss the route, instead you will co-operate so that the Opera may remain in the just track.

Love our Lord Jesus Christ; cultivate a practical faith of his active presence in our midst. He is not far, but near, indeed in us. Let us consent him guide us and try to imitate his examples, imbibe his doctrine and his divine maxim.

O my dear have faith in God. How often I told you and recommended! Practical faith in God, in his providence, he cares everybody, but for us a special care. The Lord never lies nor trims down his promises. Let us try to above all and always his kingdom and all that is necessary for the material life will come to us in addition.

No external force will cause to collapse the Opera of the Poor Servants, if we will be efficient as the Lord wants us to be. Only we can ruin the Opera if we do not correspond, if we deviate from the pure and genuine spirit, if, in a word, we do not become saints. Let us care therefore, in silence, our personal sanctity in the filial abandonment in God. A chosen brand of saints will be more valid than man conferences of this world. Let us prepare to the Lord the saints, we ourselves, and the Lord will use us when and how he thinks opportune.

Days back a renowned person[163] and spiritually very much united to this humble Opera of the Lord wrote me: "The poor Servants represent in the Church of God a handful of gospel yeast. It is up to the Lord to mix it with three measures of meal. He has his time and ways". I confess these words made in me great impression. See my dear ones, what is told us and spoken of us, what a gift, but what a responsibility!

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[163] Cardinal Ilderfonso Schuster, Archbishop of Milan.

Here I make another emphasize of great importance. Our Congregation is used by the Lord for his particular purposes, and by his grace, can do great works, as you see, every such stoke, with its special spirit as well as writings the Lord pleases to diffuse. Then, there is nothing that merits us this preference than others and if we pretend to be, as if something will become worse than the reformers. For heaven's sake let us reform ourselves and say always that we are the Poor Servants, which enforces us to sanctify ourselves, according to our spirit: spirit of humility and hiddenness, and abandonment in God!

I feel the Lord has a special plan to accomplish. Which? I don't know to say, but I know for certain that, only if we remain in the pure and genuine spirit, this project will be fulfilled, otherwise no. what a great responsibility, but from our side if this design of divine Providence fails to mature!

The Lord speaks and will speak in these days with all of us and each one. Let us remain attentive to the voice of the Lord and let us do everything to follow him attentively.

Let us never fail to keep in our sight our Lord Jesus who has called us here and gathered in his name. He will be always with us, "*usque as consummationem saeculi*",[164] as he has promised, on condition that we Poor Servants try to remain united with him in our heart and spirit.

I conclude o my dear brothers, warmly to the kind help of your prayer, because I am very much in need of it.

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[164] Forever, till the end of the ages.

I pray for you, and you are in my heart, that you be "*cor unum et anima una*" (see lett. 7, Christmas 1933) in the divine service in the world, so that we can find everyone of us united there up, in the eternal joy prepared for the "good and faithful servants".

Fr. J. Calabria

*LETTER 84 Verona, 3 October 1953

My dear and beloved brothers,

The grace and peace of blessed Jesus be always in your hearts.

Never, I can say, I thought of you all as in these retreat days you are to conclude. I think of at your vicinity, I would say. In your midst, however if my health permitted me I would have come personally as I ardently desire it.

Certainly these days of grace you have heard powerfully and distinctly the voice of the Lord and seen his holy will for your personal sanctification and that of the entire Opera, to which we belong to without any of our merit.

I pray the Lord that he may confirm you on your holy resolutions he has inspired you, especially thru the word of the preacher and the good inspiration which certainly he did not run short of showering you. That you all may come of this retreat renewed in that spirit of your

sanctification, in the ardent desire of seeking always, above all, the holy kingdom of God and in the effort to make you saints, truly saints, to sanctify the souls.

Here at the foot of my crucifix, I think very much in your midst, whom I wish to see not only in general but each one. I see in his soul, in his desires, in the special needs, in the vows that prepare his life ahead as Poor Servant, strongly taken up by his holy vocation.

Yes, I see all of you, one by one, with paternal tenderness for all, as to each one, I raise my prayer to the Lord so that these retreats may mark an eventful date in your life and the life of the entire congregation. The retreats of 1953 seemed to me this light of a deep spiritual renewal for us, for our souls, and for the entire Opera of the Lord.

Let it be for each one of you a holy pledge: "*Ego dixi: nunc coepi*".[165] Now I begin with seriousness to love and serve the Lord with a maximum generosity which I can. O what a advantage for the entire Opera! How Jesus will glance us to use us to fulfillment of his divine projects for the present time so grave and crucial! Let us remain ready, to fulfill when the Lord will demand from us.

Let us all try to maintain faithful to the pure and genuine spirit which Jesus has placed in his Opera. How many times I suggested! Now I repeat with all my heart, because on this depends not only the future of the Opera, but also the spiritual and eternal future of our souls. Nothing can do harm, ruin the Opera, as we can by letting go this most important point. But if all of us, with one heart

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[165] I told: now I begin.

and soul, maintain in the right track traced by the Lord, o then we will full the divine projects and assure the Opera for ever new developments for the glory of God, and benefit of the souls.

Pray much for me, who am so near the reaching point of my poor life. Pray that I may understand the value and preciousness of sufferings first for my soul and to obtain the divine mercy, and then for the Opera itself. Help me with your prayers, with your correspondence to the grace of your vocation, with your sanctity, and your fervor in divine service. You "are my breath", and you thus give me the oxygen this poor man, already at the door step of eternity. Pray for me: this is a great and esteemed charity, which I acknowledge and am grateful to, and for which the Lord will not fail to reward you in a special way.

You dear and beloved brothers, you are the preferred crew chosen by Jesus for his special purpose. Some of you are priests, marked thus with a sacred imprint that lifts you above the faithful, and others are brothers, called to collaborate fully with the priests: all in one family, all with one heart beat, with one living spirit for the Opera of the Lord. Love one another, help one another, according to the spirit of Jesus, and you will do great things, and will do miracles in the mystical vineyard of the Lord. And it is the will of God, manifested in many ways clear and evident ways: priests and brothers united in the love of Christ, in a condition of equality, all intent on the deep sigh of Jesus: save souls.

I conclude this letter, which is equal to my personal visit in your midst, which is impossible because of my precarious health conditions. I extend you the most fervid wishes of sanctity, love of God, under the protection of the

celestial mother, who in this month we honor in a solemn way.

If God allows I will celebrate a Holy Mass for the Reverend Fr. Preacher on 3rd Saturday, who with zeal and charism broken the divine word and shown you the just way to make you saints and correspond to your vocation. May the Lord reward him with much spiritual benefits and bless all that he does for the glory of God, in the exercise of his ministry.

So that one we all can encounter in heaven, in the holy paradise, after working together here on earth in the Opera of the Lord. How content we will become for spending our poor life for the Lord! What good reward the divine master will give his faithful and good servants!

I bless you all more with my heart than with my hands, with the desires of your heart.

Fr. J. Calabria

LETTER 86 Verona, 26 November 1953.

My dear and beloved brothers,

The grace of Jesus the blessed and the protection of the dear Madonna are always with us.

We have begun the novena of the Immaculate and my heart exults with you to celebrate the grand feast of Immaculate Conception given by the Lord to our heavenly Mother.

Already hundred years since the Church has defined this Dogma this truth always believed and celebrated in the course of time. The feast of the Immaculate, for us of the members of the Opera is the most grand and solemn in honor of the Most Holy Mother, introduces us in the great *Marian Year*. How should a Poor Servant Celebrate? And with what spirit should celebrate this blessed year? If all the Christians as per the paternal exhortation of the Vicar of Christ, must celebrate with great fervor, the Poor Servant must feel as duty to go ahead of all others, in case it is not possible, at least should not the behind in honoring the Madonna in her glorious title: Immaculate.

Your might have certainly read the encyclical of the Holy Father on this topic. Re-read it often to love all the more the heavenly Mother and fervent to procure her glory in this great year.

In every house, especially, I wish we organize solemn celebrations, as the local circumstance allows it, and especially participate in all that the church authority will introduce. Every celebration of the Madonna will be for the Poor Servant a nice opportunity to show his love for the Immaculate Mother of God and ours.

But remember o my dear ones, the first and great honor to offer is the sanctity of our life. The solemn functions, the songs, talks, the classes, and the like are wonderful things and pleasing to the Madonna if they are

from our hearts, if they have as basis our good will to live according to our holy vocation; otherwise they are vain sounds of the trumpets, not at all in conformity with the goal of such celebrations as desired by the Holy Father.

Let us listen to his words: “These celebrations not only rekindle in the souls an ardent devotion towards the holy Virgin, but of stimulus to conform the maximum the attitudes on the examples of the Virgin Mother. Like every mother experience sweet sentiments when sprouts on the faces of the children some typical similarity in them, so too Mary our sweetest Mother cannot have greater desire nor greater joy of seeing reproduced in the thoughts, in the words, and actions, of those she has accepted as her children, the outlines and virtue of her soul”.

And a first grace to ask, a primary effort to do is to acquire “that innocence of the way of life, which abhors and gives up the minutes sins and its stain”, because we commemorate the mystery of the most Holy Virgin, her Conception was Immaculate.

Then the acquiring those virtues typical of our state of life is that religious perfection that forms a true Poor Servant. The most Blessed Virgin, who in the entire course of life, both in the joy as in tribulation, and in the atrocious pains, never went away from the precepts and from the examples of the divine Son, seems repeating to all of us, as during the nuptial at Cana, “Do whatever he tells you”.

The Virgin Mother teaches us these, and she advises us to these, our sweet Mother, who loves us with true love, more than other earthly mothers.

And it is her prayer for us and our brothers in the entire world. The Madonna in her year wants certainly to shower lavishly her graces and gifts. And it is our duty to implore humbly and with trust her maternal and merciful protection. Also here the Holy Father has enlisted some graces to ask and I use his words and exhort you to pray much but so much, for the flowering of Christian life, the purity of the youth, for a sanctity and open faith for people, for the Christian family joy in the domestic shell.

We pray much for all the needy, the hungry, the oppressed of injustice, the return of deported to their home land, the homeless, and for the exiled persecuted.

Let us pray for so many blind in spirit so that in all charity and harmony may reign.

Let us pray for the holy Church, that she may enjoy the necessary peace to perform her action for the benefit of the entire humanity now waving in the thick darkness of error and in danger of falling in the deep abyss and ruin. The church may always in the peak of our ideals.

All that we do, suffer, desire, is directed to the coming of the kingdom of God and the glory of the Church, the true arc of salvation in the midst of tempested sea and life.

O if we do this way, if we enter with these sentiments in the Marian year and try to grow in the effort to sanctify, we can contribute to the fulfillment of the divine plans the Lord has on our humble Opera in general and over each one of us in particular.

My dear brothers, treasure my poor words. Seek to develop in every house, in every garden of divine

Providence may flower, with the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, an attentive and tender devotion to Mary. Our devotion shall not be in the basis of a sterile sentimentalism, but keep a deep root in the dogma. Therefore try to know better the ineffable relation of this "humble and sublime" Creature with the Most Holy Trinity, her privileges, inseparable participation with her Divine Son to the great work of Redemption.

From this sprouts our admiration and veneration, our filial attachment to the One, being the Mother of Jesus, is also our Mother. We shall not get tired to multiply our humble homage to show her our devotion, our love, as good children towards the best among all the mothers.

For this I will not exhaust to advocate you, especially in this Marian year, some special devotions towards Mary: the daily reciting of the entire Rosary, make a difference of the Saturdays with some special bouquet, celebrate with special commitment all the feasts of Mary, the frequent recitation of the Small Office of the Virgin Mary (all or in part)[166] and the like.

For the individual houses: beautify, if possible, the altar or chapel of Madonna. Here at St. Zeno, I see the accurate display of the Grotto, which was my deep desire on my 80th birthday, and on the vigil we may say, of the Marian Year. That our lived examples be followed.

I leave to you other initiatives, of which, if you keep me informed, will be of great joy and consolation in

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166 Bifore the liturgical reform after the Vatican Council II, the laity normally did not recite the Breviary, they had the possibility to recite a shorter Office, with hymns, antiphons, psalms, canticles, readings and prayers, called "Small Office of the Virgin Mary".

the midst of my great and continuous sufferings. So I request your generous prayers, as I will offer them for you and the Opera, so that it may be always as Jesus expected and all of us are filled with that pure and genuine spirit I recommended so often.

More with my heart than with my hands, thru the intercession of the beloved heavenly Mother, the Immaculate Conception, I bless you. Your beloved Father.

LETTER 87

Verona, 11th February 1954 – Marian Year.

My dear and beloved brothers,

The grace and peace of Jesus the blessed be in our hearts.

From the Paternal heart, of brother and friend, springs up these words which are to be addressed before every solemn occasion of Christmas and New Year. This year it did not happen so, because the Lord has visited me with his grace and mercy, allowing sufferance which, though still persists, I thank the Lord God, for the mitigation.

For this reason I wish now to communicate you my words. And I know that all of you will benefit this for the spiritual advantage of your souls.

I know that all of you have prayed for me and are praying; for this I thank you from my heart! It is a spiritual charity of great value and I feel the benefits. O the prayer! Grand help that sustains our weakness, and it comforts us in trials, binds us with sweet bonds with the Father who is in Heaven. Continue this great charity for me: I need it very much to fulfill, till the end the holy will of God. I exchange you with my prayers for all of you, especially in these months in which the Lord prevented me to meet you. O how often I see you in front of me, almost, I would say, one by one, with your physiognomy and desires, your affection for me! And in my poverty I prayed for you that the Lord may fill you with graces and blessings, make you all his, indeed his own.

Willingly I welcome the Marian year we are living with many solemnity, heavenly call from the Lord, like other times thru the Church in these grave and difficult days. For the great evils great remedies, and the Lord in these days calls us around his and our Mother, the Immaculate Madonna, so that we learn to follow her vivid examples, live her spirit of humility, love, obedience to the divine will which the Madonna gave us during her life. The Lord calls us to reflect in us the model of simplicity which is our celestial Mother, and under her protection, we have to wage war with sin, with all sins, to maintain our souls beautiful and shining as it is fitting to the true sons of the Immaculate.

The Madonna in this solemn year wants to shower us special graces and gifts; on condition we place ourselves

committed to live our Christian vocation, of priests and religious. Who among us would hesitate to benefit this favorable opportunity of this centenary the Providence has granted us?

I recommend you in a special way, dear brothers, to live the spirit of our vocation to fulfill the great projects the Lord has on the Opera.

I encourage therefore, each one in our state, has received a call to Christianity, to the sequel of Christ. Let us live as real Christians, remembering that the present life is in the function of the future one; the one of the present will pass away soon, and the other will last forever. Therefore let us live as pilgrims on earth, holding in vision the motherland which is in the making for us in Paradise.

Let us remain closely united with Jesus with prayer, with the practical devotion to the Holy virgin, with an interior life: giving the primary place to the Lord: “let us seek above all the holy kingdom of God”.

The demon aims in a special way at the Christians, because, if we want, we have the secret for the rebirth of the world. O if everybody could be living gospels! Let us try to so especially in this Marian year.

This is in brief what I feel to tell you. I cannot prolong it because my physical conditions do not permit it, but you read in my soul what I desire and expect from all.

May the Immaculate Mother, heavenly patroness of the House, obtain for us the grace to correspond to the divine call and of “do what he tell you” as the Holy Father exhorts us, remembering the episode of the servants at the

nuptial meal at Cana. Blessed are we, blessed are we, in time and in eternity.

Pray much for me, with great heart I bless you all, with your families and everything you have in your heart.

Yours in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***LETTER 88 Verona, Saturday 23 October 1954.**

My dear and beloved brothers,

The grace and peace of blessed Jesus be always with you and all the souls the divine Providence allows you to approach thru your holy ministry and apostolate of good works.

In the midst of my sufferings, always new and always acute, how much I think of you and follow you, my beloved and loving brothers, and not able to do other things I offer God for you and for your and our souls, my poor prayers, my trials and daily sufferance. Also you pray, pray much for your old father, so close to the final call, so that I may understand the great gift of sufferance, and make a treasure for my poor soul and then for this humble and

great Opera, initiated fully by the Lord in these days of little faith and much egoism and materialism, to show the world faith in the Paternity of God, trust in his Divine Providence.

Look, my beloved and loving brothers, as if I am on the death bed entreat and plead: see that she is always as the Lord wants, living it all of you and always the pure and genuine spirit, you know it, because for many a times I have told and repeated, it is the spirit of Jesus, his program of life, his own mission. How Jesus did live it at Nazareth? How he gave himself to the work in his public life? Whom mainly he addressed his mission he had from the Father?

We too live like this. "*Buseta e taneta*" (see lett. *383, 4-5-1932), "*ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari*".[167] We must disappear, love the silence, mortify the desire to do great things, escape the applauses and approvals of the world, and seek for oneself the last place. Then the Lord certainly will come to search for us and will use us to fulfill new and great plans, all just for the great and grave hour of today.

In the exercise and in our apostolate we shall do as Jesus did: first of all and above all we shall attend to our prayer and a life of communion with God. How many hours and nights Jesus spent in oration, in intimate communication with his celestial Father! The exterior activities are sterile if not rooted in depth in the sacred and fertile soil of interior life. Be recipients, as I said many a

[167] Love to be not known and be famous for nothing.

times, and not only channels, that nothing entertains for oneself and ends up with exhaustion.

To the prayer unite a continuous vigilance over yourself and a continuous spirit of mortification, especially necessary to our days, in which there are countless attractions and seductions of the world.

Finally the mission of Jesus is and must be our mission: *evangelizare pauperibus misit me* (see lett. 79, 16 March 1953). The abandoned creatures, the poor, the old, the sick, these are our treasures, the treasures of the Opera. Souls, souls, my dear! And all the rest is nothing.

In these thoughts and sentiments, in these holy resolutions and suggestions I am sure and certain you will be confirmed in the holy retreat, that all of you had the grace to do this year. Keep up the fruit, live and radiate around you that truth that you meditated and deepened under the maternal protection of the heavenly Mother, lead almost by hand and instructed by her thru the zealous preachers. Thus you have heard of the need to deepen our Marian devotions, living in fullness your consecration to Her.

Oh, how opportune it is, in this last part of Marian year, the recommendation to intensify your filial piety towards the beloved Immaculate Mother, from the initial times of the Opera constituted as its Patroness. And don't forget that the true and perfect devotion to Mary is the imitation of Jesus. "Do everything that he will tell you", constantly our good Mother repeats us.

Replicate in us the lineaments of Jesus to become another petite Jesus in humility and poverty, in the

complete conformity of our will with that of God, our Father who is in heaven, in the generous and constant obedience, until the maximum sacrifice, until the total immolation of self. Oh what a joy our Mother Mary will experience, seeing us resembling thus to his divine Son! How she would love us, what graces and gifts she will enrich our poor soul!

We shall refuge in her in every situation, but especially in the times of trial and discouragement, when we see reverse our plan, our initiatives even the very holy ones, and even when we are asked for some forfeit and renouncement. I say this also considering the coming transfers of persons, after much time became necessary and appropriate. I understand, my dear and loving brothers, what would demand some orders of obedience, but don't look at the present sacrifice alone, but let the thought of its goodness that will come to you and your soul, who, believe me, cannot be saved without sacrifice: *sine sangunis effusione non fit redemtio*.[168]

Remember the Lord to fulfill his plans, does not need the intelligent, but on the contrary true obedient people, available to everything, ready for any sign of obedience. It is to say that obedience gives value to our actions. Your father thinks of all these things and is especially near all of you who got the precious gift of a letter of obedience.

And here I have good news for you. Since forty years I was desirous of placing a bell on our empty bell tower of S. Zeno in Monte and rejoiced of the presence of a big bell. The divine providence, using always the worthy

[168] There is no redemption without shedding blood.

ministers to understand and do charity, has paid my long cherished desire. The bell has arrived and will be inaugurated, if god allows, the 1st of next November, precisely on the day when the Holy Father will add one more germ to the crown already rich of the Virgin Immaculate, who will be proclaimed as queen of heaven and earth, of the angels and men.

The bell will be called *Queen of peace*, in honor of the heavenly Queen and almost a perennial invocation of peace for the people of the world: peace among them, peace within themselves, and peace with God.

That day, you know, is also my baptism anniversary. As far as I can and I know I urge your kind prayers, I really need it to commit to do the holy will of God, at any cost, and that I may, as I told you, understand in practice the great gift of sufferance.

I conclude blessing you paternally more with my heart than my hands, in the name of and thru the intercession of Mary, Immaculate and Queen of Peace.

Your beloved in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

PS. As I just printed this letter we are rejoicing with the publishing of the touching Encyclical of the Holy Father on the Regality of Mary.

In front of the sea of corruption that increasingly exceeds and threatening, in front of the dreadful inclination

the humanity is moving towards, in front of the apocalyptic vision of the new conflicts and disastrous, there isn't, my dear and beloved brothers, there is no other hope other than the filial and fervent recourse to our common Celestial Mother and Queen. Thus it happened in the most crucial moments of our history, and thus will happen even now. And I wish that you may not forget with the publication of the Encyclical which carries the date of 11th October feast of Divine Maternity of Mary, coincide the important political happenings, that generates a feeling of relaxation and trust for all.

I pray that the beloved Mother Mary may protect the desires of the church, of Italy, and of the world. Watches in a special way many of our brothers who are suffering inhuman persecution for faith, may grant us a sincere returning to Christian life, so that ultimately arise a new era of peace and true Christian life. Amen

7029/B [dateless]

Dear and beloved brother,[169]

For your personal sanctification in conformity to the vocation of Poor Servant, I recommend you very much to live always the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera. Be always and everywhere Poor Servant: in the church and in the house, in the school and in the refectory, in the room

[169] It is a letter the Father has sent personally to some Poor Servant.

and on the road, in the ministry and in all transactions, in the work and on your journey…

Thus and only thus, you can fulfill the designs of goodness proper to this house in this hour and thus radiate the spirit of the Opera. Pray for me.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

9828 [dateless]

Venerable community of the house of Sacred Heart,

With my heart, mind and prayer, and with my anguishes I am always near, so that the Lord does not find in any one of us as an obstacle and fulfill his divine plans for the glory of the Father and for the good and health of the souls, plans proper to this present hour, nor in which all of us are called to a total revision, especially we priests and religious.

I urge you very much to your charity of prayers. God alone knows how much I need it. I bless all in C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

*7077 [dateless][170]

The time is tensed and we do not know what would happen in one instant to another, the enemy should not surprise us unprepared. It's necessary and urgent to move to action, with poverty and self denial, in prayer and inner life, in the practical imitation of Christ, the apostles and the early Christians, in the total overlooking of our material interests, all ardent in faith, charity, united among us as branches of the same tree, as members of the same body.

The hour is all the more terrible and obscure. It is the hour of Satan, but at the same time it is the hour of God. If Christ lives in us, not only we have nothing to be afraid of, but we will hasten his hour of triumph.

The world is thirsting for charity, love, peace, truth, faith and love for their neighbor. It is tired and lost trust. It looks at us and awaits a word from us, a direction, and example. What a responsibility if we are not in full efficiency. "If salt becomes insipid, with what it will be salted?"

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

[170] It is taken from a notebook.

I am a poor priest, near the great calling and I wish what I say is first of all engraved in my priestly heart so that I can speak with confidence to the divine Master, and as testament especially for my brothers …. (illegible).

*5441 [dateless]

Beloved brothers of Costozza,

May the Lord bless you and grant you all the graces, especially the most important to correspond to the special vocation of brothers of this Opera entirely the Lord's, because it is He who founded it and directs it with unique Providence.

As far I know and I can, please live fully for Jesus, for his glory, for your souls, and for other souls.

Be humble and with humility you will all other virtues of your state.

Remember our patrimony, our source of the house, are we with the spirit of the Opera: *Quaerite*… No worry for earthly things, faith, abandonment in God, especially in difficult times, virtue, virtues, observance of the Rules, as rags and clay: look this is what the Lord asks of us to fulfill his great plans.

Always I'm near you, always pray, and you too be near me, and pray much for me, I really need it.

From the depth of my heart I bless you all, beginning from Fr. Franchini and concluding with the wonderful Bro. Ettore.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

***5439 [dateless]**

Beloved brothers of Costozza,

Always I'm very close to you in my heart, mind, and prayers. From the depth of my heart I wish you all the best and every heavenly consolation. I urge you of your special vocation. Live as the Providence wants you.

Let your sole concern be God, his glory, the souls. Let the externals do not worry you at all, this will disappear, even with a miracle, if you seek God only for God.

Our Opera is great, very great. In eternity we will understand it and fortunate are we if we have understood it and lived as per it. I greet you one by one and I bless you. Pray for me. God alone knows how much I need it. That Jesus shows me mercy and all of us may meet in paradise.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

2295 [dateless]

I feel the strong and powerful need to write you, it seems to me that it is Jesus right now, the final one; he wants to communicate thru this channel, a poor and old Casante.

Beloved in the Lord, keep well in mind that the greatness of the Opera is in its littleness, in its stay behind hidden in God, as Jesus lived at Nazareth for 30 years, and to pray in silence, in an intimate union with God, exercising his holy mission on the field the Providence has entrusted us, without any worry, without any desire for honor, dear brothers, but solely under the protection of Jesus, without seeking appreciations at all.

If we are hidden, God will seek us and with God we will do great things. If we expose ourselves God will flee, and then alas we!

Be alert with Satan, he will do offensive steps, but your will win if you act in everything with the spirit of our Congregation, which you have love like your father and mother, and even more.

If you have certain preferences those must be for the poorest, the abandoned, because they are the most beloved of Jesus.

I hope you will all be well and you will not swerve to false light. Jesus and his holy gospel, our rules, our spirit, here are the secrets to fulfill the divine plan.

I am always on the Calvary and on it I think of you. I pray and bless you. Also you pray for me. God alone know how much I need them. I wish to see you all, it depends on you to come, I would have many things to tell you, but I believe that some of them Jesus will tell you.

United *in Domino.*

I greet very specially the brothers and I tell them that the most important is to do the will of God. Only this will open us the door to Paradise.

In C.J.

Fr. J. Calabria

APENDIX

We report here four important documents to understand the thought of Fr. John Calabria about the "pure and genuine spirit of the Opera":

- *The Great Programme* (Fr. J. Calabria, 23 April 1934)

- *Petition to the Vatican Secretary of State* (Fr. J. Calabria, 9 November 1947)

- *Information* (Ab. Emanuele Caronti, 13 December 1947)

- *Memorandum* (Fr. J. Calabria, 17 December 1947)

The Great Program

It is a handwritten notebook of Fr. J. Calabria. On the cover it is written: "Notebook of Fr. J. Calabria which contains the great programme in order to keep *usque ad finem mundi* (till the end of the world) this great Opera of the Poor Servants of Divine Providence". Because in this period (1934-35), after the Diocesan approval there are some disagreements about the figure of Priests and Brothers in the new Congregation of the Poor Servants of Divine Providence, and these disagreements will bring to the Apostolic Visit in 1935, Fr. Calabria feels the need to

write his authentic thinking about the spirit of the Opera and the figure of Priests and Brothers. This is a good synthesis of our charism.

PETITION TO THE VATICAN SECRETARIAT OF STATE

INFORMATION

Memorandum

In 1947 Fr. Isaia Filippi is trying to build a new Hostel for poor children in Rome-Primavalle. Also Pope Pius XII seems to appreciate this initiative. But Fr. Calabria does not agree to start such activity because the Apostolic Visit is still in progress and the Congregation is not yet approved by the Holy See.

Then Fr. Calabria is requested from H. E. Mons. Montini to send a "*Petition*" to the Secretariat of State, in order to explain the situation of the Opera. After explaining the situation, Fr. Calabria humbly hopes for the moment in which "the Apostolic Visit will be concluded also legally, and we shall have – according to the very expressive sentence of the Most. Rev. Visitor – the Confirmation (the pontifical approval) of the Opera".

The Secretary of State Mons. Montini takes contact with the Apostolic Visitor Ab. Emanuele Caronti and the Congregation for Religious in order to conclude the Apostolic Visit.

On 13 December 1947 Ab. Caronti sends an "*Information*" to the Congregation for Religious in order to explain the situation of the Congregation of the Poor Servants, after the measures taken during the Apostolic Visit.

On 17 December 1947 Fr. Calabria sends a *Memorandum* to the Secretariat of State in order to point some observations about the *Information* of Ab. Caronti and to "focus the spirit of the Opera". This *Memorandum* is very precious in order to understand our charism.

THE GREAT PROGRAMME

**** 5473 Verona, 23-4-1934***

As on my deathbed, I feel I have a duty to write these my poor words; they are like my will about this most great Opera of the Lord, born from his Holy Side, whose name is Congregation of the Poor Servants of Divine Providence.

In order to fulfil the great designs which the Providence indicated and still will indicate, this Opera has to be fully faithful to the goal for which the same divine Providence aroused it through this poor among the poorest, appointed because of that as a guardian, keeper, "casante" and sentry, so that never at all the Opera can deviate under any pretext, though specious, and thus to

prevent the plan, which Jesus the absolute Owner wants to realize since the eternity, from being fulfilled.

I felt the Opera since I was a theology student; and since then, I was feeling in me what I'm now seeing as already signed, for the grace of God.

The Opera must be formed of Priests and Brothers, with a very special and particular spirit of faith in God and abandonment to the divine Providence, living a deepest humility, with a conviction and greatest conviction by all the members, that in this Opera it is always the divine Providence that performs and will perform everything; and we, as its poor servants, shall procure that this glorious name by which it is named, shall not be only a name; it should be our ruin and our condemnation. Let's remind well that we, Priests and Brothers, by the will of God, have to form one body and one family, according to the aims either of the one class or the other, which the Providence shall manifest.

I tell you and repeat what many times I said: the Priests are the heart, the Brothers are the arms, the Priests the soul and the Brothers the body; but they should be united, very united with one another by the closest bonds of charity so that they should form only one person; the Brothers without the Priests and the Priests without the Brothers cannot live. The Opera, the creature of God, should die.

There are many other holy Operas of God in the Church, but one it is not there with this characteristic and special physiognomy, which the Providence impressed mainly in these times, while there is a great need to remind

the truth and reality of this attribute of the Providence of God.

Special Priests and special Brothers, both true religious; however we have to focus that according to the will of the Lord and the particular goals (of the Opera), the Brothers whom the divine Providence wants to employ, will not follow the same goals of the other lay Brothers in the convents – they sanctify themselves serving their convent or Institute –; but (our Brothers) shall be equal (to the other members, the Priests), with their specific aim, because they are destined to be at disposal and at the service not only of the House, but for all the branches of good and apostolate that the House is doing now and will do in the future, for instance, to work among abandoned creatures, poor, sick, to offer assistance in the after-school activities, help in the parishes, patronages and prisons, to accept the management of youth Institutes and labourers organizations, etc. In short, everywhere there is a possibility to benefit the most needy and abandoned. This is a mission which sometime cannot be performed by a Priest, even though he shall be always the one who gives impulse to all the initiatives (the Priest, or, to say better, the one to whom the Congregation will entrust this task).

Therefore the Brothers, in some manner have to be the soul of the Catholic Action, in any case always with obedience, humility and submission to whom the Providence put in charge of the whole Opera.

Let's remember that the main goal of the Opera is always and above all our personal sanctification; and we shall conform our life and all our activity to the life and the examples of the Blessed Jesus. Then the other main

goal is to manifest to the world the great attribute of the divine Providence, an attribute very less known, and I would say, almost forgotten even from good people. Afterwards let's remember the specific and characteristic goal of the Congregation: to do good to the poor and abandoned creatures, mainly to those who have just nobody, and risk going through wrong ways because of the lack of a paternal and friendly hand that guides and saves them; for these little poor we must become fathers and mothers, and form and train them to a Christian life, teaching a profession and making them good fathers of family.

From that we shall draw a reflection on the great need to found Hostels and specific houses with professional courses, in order to grant them not only food and work, but what more matters, a Christian and civil formation. This is very important; and this should be remembered by Priests, Brothers, theology students, candidates and aspirants; this (the formation of children – *n.o.t.*) must be the special motive of their vocation: therefore all, nobody excepted, have to feel this vocation, this love for the abandoned creatures, and to get used, since they are pupils, theology students and aspirants, to be in touch with these poor souls, and love them, contact and assist them in the school, the dormitory, the recreation, the work, the walking and in all other occasions.

There will be other tasks and other works to do, because I said, the designs of God are many and great, but this is of primary importance, it is essential; and as for my, an aspirant, a candidate, a theology student and a Priest

who should not feel this most special sign, he is not call to this Opera and it should be better if he went out.

And let everyone remember that if he will work at this noble and first end, the Lord will use him for other great works, for his glory and the good of many souls.

Let's be attentive, very attentive to assume some parish, this is not our field. We'll assume them only by exception, when particular and evident signs of divine will shall intervene, as it happened for Rome.

Rather than to assist the parishes, let's keep the more it is possible as a flying squad, always ready to rush where the Lord will deign to call us to do good, but always for a limited span, returning as soon as possible to the one's own House, in order to live its spirit.

By the help of the Lord, we shall multiply vocations, both for priests and brothers, and we shall infuse in them this our so particular spirit and give them a culture fit for their attitudes.

The Opera needs, as I said, Brothers ready for everything, prepared for the most various technical offices, professionals, nurses, prison officers, Brothers for Institutes and professional schools, in our House and outside, so that, if possible, they could permeate all the society.

All this however should be done in humility and obedience, being free from any particular place and exigency, but being in the hands of the superiors as rags and clay, available always for everything, also for the most humble and vile offices, for the most abandoned creatures'

advantage, who are the gems, the elected portion of the Blessed Jesus. In this connection they have to reflect that all things are great and sublime in the House of God, and the true apostolate consists in keeping oneself completely united with Jesus, living according to his divine example.

As per the material means, don't be worry and anxious, the means most certainly will come in proportion of our faith, whether we will live according to our spirit written in our holy Rules: our care, our continuous interest should be to do good, to seek souls, mainly the most abandoned, to live by faith, far away from human protections in order to have that of God.

If the divine Providence will deign to send Missions to be evangelized, even there let's seek the poorest, the most despised, this is our specific field.

I warn you not to grow attached to places and persons, with prejudice of our spirit of abandonment: the entire world belongs to God and we shall be ready to any call.

This is the characteristic of the Opera, and if only once the Congregation of the Poor Servants should become the Congregation of the Pope and of the Bishops, in order to go everywhere our Opera could be useful, as a flying squad, always ready to any small sign; and after fulfilling its task, it should go back to its nest which is our dear and blessed Congregation.

Another condition so that this Opera can live and develop it is to listen always and in all with spirit of faith its Casante, the present one as well as its successor in the future; the Lord gave and will give particular

enlightenments and graces, in order to maintain whole the all particular physiognomy that the Lord bestowed on his Opera. And these graces will be the more abundant the more the Casante will be a docile and humble instrument, aware of his nothingness and to have been put in this Opera only by a free grace.

All the Religious have to cultivate a filial deference towards Him and try to collaborate by fulfilling even his desires: God who could perform great things with a simple gesture, deigns instead to develop gradually his designs, with the humble, docile and respectful collaboration of the Priests, Brothers and the Father superior.

The Opera will walk fluently towards the goal signed by the Lord; therefore may all be attentive not to allow the words and the directives of the Father fall in vain, not only while they are a command but also a simple desire, to avoid to make impossible the fulfilment of the divine designs and we shall deviate from them.

Then we, the Priests, who by our dignity, all free, and by our office and holy ministry are very exposed to be made raised, incensed, to receive deference, and to manage and command, have to keep ourselves lower and more humble than others. "The more you are raised..." (Kempis), always grateful and thankful to the Lord for his great gift; because we have to imbue our Brothers with this spirit of humility and apostolic zeal.

The Priests and Brothers who are in authority let remember the Benedictine motto: "prodesse magis quam preesse";[171] the task of the Superior consists in spreading

[171] To help is better than to lead.

joy around him and leaving hearts in happiness and goodness and doing everything to avoid complaints and dissatisfactions by his rigidness, strictness and roughness.

The Priests as well as the Brothers of this Opera of God, besides the particular goals of the same Opera, have other designs to perform and develop, provided they are humble and docile instruments. *The Priests*, through the Apostolic Institutes, besides the formation of Priests for the Opera with the pure and genuine spirit, will provide to form and prepare Priests for the dioceses, for those which are most poor, cultivating vocations among poorest and good boys, and adult vocations too, who ordinarily correspond very much.

In the future, besides the formation of the Priests for the Opera, (the formators of the Apostolic Institutes) shall widen their sphere of action and spread their spirit among secular Priests, aggregating them in some manner around the Opera, like a Third Order, with a rule which establishes a minimum to be observed; for instance, to take a commitment to do the meditation and some other exercise of prayer, to meet for common talks and recollections, to cooperate as far as possible with the initiatives and activities of the House, etc. living however each one in his residence.

The Brothers similarly will cultivate young aspirants who shall be Brothers for the Opera; through them the Opera shall permeate every source of good, always according to its own spirit. Then they have to infuse the society with this spirit, first of all our old students, secondly many secular men and people of the world who would feel to accept a proper rule, committing

themselves to live according to it, with the mission to do good and to bring the pure Christian spirit to whom they can approach.

As I always said and it is established in the Constitutions, the Brothers shall not have a particular uniform, but because of the lack of this, more spirit of great virtues must be present in them, this is the true cloth and uniform for them.

I conclude thanking the Providence which allowed me to write this words, that seem to me the holy will of God; and repeating what many times I told and retold you, how great and special is this Opera; what a responsibility for us who belong to it; but what a great reward will be due to us, if we live well, corresponding to our holy and particular vocation.

And what a glory will follow for God, and what a good for the souls, whom we'll bring to Paradise.

Deo gratias, Deo gratias, Deo gratias (thanks be to God)

Poor among the poorest, in C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

PETITION OF FR. CALABRIA TO THE VATICAN SECRETARIAT OF STATE

Verona, 9 November 1947

Memorandum requested by the Holy Father through Mons. Montini[172]

THE CONGREGATION OF THE POOR SERVANTS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE. VERONA

1 – ORIGIN. The Opera arose in 1907 in order to offer a material and moral support to the abandoned boys. This is the first activity of the Opera, however not the only one, because since the beginning the Providence made known that the program would have included gradually other activities, always in favour of the most poor and needy.

2 – SPIRIT. The Opera is living completely abandoned to the Divine Providence, without searching for human protections. It doesn't claim any help or fee, and doesn't make advertising neither accumulates yielding capitals. It is founded totally on the

[172] This is the document which Ab. E. Caronti in his *Information* calls "*the Petition*" of Fr. Calabria to the Secretariat of State (see below, *Information*).

word of the Lord JESUS: “Quaerite primum regnum Dei et justitiam eius et haec omnia adjicientur vobis".

3 – ACTIVITIES – The activities we did so far concern:

a) Poor children, orphans and those who are destitute of any support. Our House maintains them quite freely till they reach a complete professional, civil and religious formation.

b) Poor and good students, with possible priestly vocation: the Providence will maintain them along the course of study in order to help them reach the tenth standard and plus two, then allowing them to go back to their dioceses to study theology. – Those who don’t feel following the ecclesiastical career are helped to reach a suitable title of study for a profession.

c) A particular activity is dedicated to the re-education of the minors, by criteria of charity according to our spirit.

d) In these last years the Providence made possible to start an activity of assistance for external boys, with after-school activity, Student Home, vocational school and Patronage. They too are given lunch, a sound recreation along with the spiritual bread of Christian education.

e) Sick: the Providence welcomes in the Hospital of the Opera poor sick and those of low condition; the Opera accepts them freely or half-freely in order to exert Christian charity. Near the Hospital and somewhere else we have houses for aged and chronic invalids, always with the same spirit of charity.

f) Parish apostolate: the Opera makes available its priests and brothers for pastoral activity in the most poor zones, with the spirit of the Gospel: gratis accepistis, gratis date (you received freely, give freely), trusting in the Providence for material needs.

Thus we have two Parishes in Verona, and in Rome the Parish of St Philip, and besides, the working-class suburbs of Gordiani, Prenestina e Tormarancio.

g) It is part of our spirit to aspire to other activities, like Missions, Prisons, maladjusted children, etc.

4 – MEMBERS of the Institute are priests and brothers, without any particular uniform. The brothers are constituted in full collaboration with the priests: then according to their capacities, a suitable formation is given them, with cultural preparation and academic qualification. This equality of condition is one of the essential points since the beginning of the Opera.

5- The Opera was instituted as a clerical Congregation by a Bishop's Decree on 11 February 1932. The Constitutions however were approved on next 4 March.

NB. As per this approval, I shall note the followings: The writing out of the Constitutions, presented to the Bishop since quite a long time before, was reflecting completely and faithfully the spirit of the Opera, mainly about the juridical aspects of the Religious: Priests and Brothers.

Because an invitation came to go to Rome in order to take on the parish of St Philip Neri, the urgency occurred of the definitive approval. Then in the span of time between the approval of the Institute and the Constitutions, some divergences arose about the equality of the religious, and these determined substantial modifications; these were codified in the definitive version of the Constitutions. In deference to the Authority, this new

situation was accepted, in the trust that the Divine Providence should give the Opera the genuine features in due time.

6 – APOSTOLIC VIST – The approval occurred in such a manner, determined soon a serious disease, not from the brothers but from some priests who were occupying positions of trust, and they were followed in this by professed theology students: they were afraid that the Constitutions could be modified and brought again to the primitive thought.

Although these worries were unfounded, the things went so far as to persuade the same opponents to appeal formally to the Sacred Congregation for Religious, in autumn 1934.

The Congregation for Religious called an Apostolic Visit, giving the task to Most. Rev. Abbot Emanuele Caronti. The Visit started in March 1935. In the choice of the Apostolic Visitor we knew soon a way of a singular protection of the Providence, because after the first inquiries, he soon understood the true spirit of the Opera, identifying the cause of disease. After taking the opportune measures, he brought again serenity and reconciliation among the members. At the same time, however, he recognized the need to adjust the Constitutions, in order to remove at the root the source of divergences and to perfect them according to the first thought. Of this retouching the Visitor got authorization from the Sacred Congregation.

Some difficulties arrived because of the war, prevented the work already well started to reach a definitive conclusion.

7 – The Congregation is going on in a most perfect harmony and fusion[173] of the souls of all Religious, leaving to the Providence to establish the desirable hour in which the Apostolic Visit will be concluded also legally, and we shall have – according to the very expressive sentence of the Most Rev. Visitor – the Confirmation of the Opera.

Verona, 9 November 1947

(Fr. John Calabria)

[173] In the original, the word *effusion* (effusione) is used; perhaps the secretary of Fr. Calabria understood *effusione* instead of *e / fusione*. (and fusion).

INFORMATION OF ABBOT EMANUELE CARONTI

TO THE CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS

Rome, 13 December 1947

POOR SERVANTS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE (*Verona*)

Your Excellence,

I hasten to send you the requested information.

The Apostolic Visit to the Congregation of the Poor Servants was already closed since last five years, if not *de jure* certainly in fact. After the fit measures were taken, now order and peace are established and the Institute restarted his providential activity with new fervour. Then my task was over. If in these last five years I made some very rare visit to a House of the Institute or to another, it is only for friendship or because requested of some advises. Therefore I think it is correct that this S. Congregation should declare the Visit officially closed.

I attach a copy of a petition submitted by Most Rev. Fr. John Calabria to the Secretary of State, in which he is asking with great humility, as the good souls are

usually doing, that the Visit should be legally closed and the Institut should be granted the *Decretum laudis*.

In order to clarify some points, I dare to communicate the following:

a) The Institute was born in a canonical form not well defined: on some aspects it was clerical, on some other aspects it was a mixed one. But it became simply clerical according to the Constitutions approved by the Bishop of Verona.

b) From this fact many difficulties arose which led to a deep crisis. The Apostolic Visit tried to put it right: first by moving away the disturbers; then bringing back the souls to an environment of trust and serenity. And I have to say that among many Institutes in which I was being interested, that of the Poor Servants of Divine Providence is one in which always I found a lot of good will and correspondence.

c) Among the measures taken, by the approval of this S. Congregation, I introduced some changes in the juridical structure, *ad experimentum*, in order to bring the Brothers to the initial situation, as they were before the Constitutions. Not all liked these changes: nevertheless serious difficulties did not emerge, so that in fact they went back to the primitive kind of mixed Institute.

d) All this however is not codified. Being requested to be active in order to get the *Decretum laudis*, I wrote a series of articles of the Constitutions which according to the idea of the Founder should bring the Institute to the original form. I asked a reserved opinion

from the most representative members, and some of them did not show themselves satisfied, instead they expressed their serious objections. I considered it was prudent: *quieta non movere*.[174]

Finally I dare to recommend heartily the above Institute to this Sacred Congregation, because by experience and inner conviction I can witness that a best religious spirit is in it, and a charitable and truly evangelical activity is done in it.

Prostrate to kiss the S. Ring, I ask the holy blessing, professing myself

Of Your Most Ill. and Rev. Eccellence

Most Dev. Servant in the Lord

D. Emanuele Caronti O. S. B.
Roma, 13 dicembre 1947

[174] Don't move things while they are tranquil.

* 4962/A MEMORANDUM

Verona, 17 December, 1947

Regarding the "information" which the Most Rev. Father Abbot Caronti our Apostolic Visitor, sent to the Sacred Congregation of Religious, of which the copy is attached, after reading and meditating it before my Crucifix, it seems to me, as if I am on my deathbed, I have the duty to do the following declarations. For the Truth that is one, like God is one, like for us the sun is one.

The petition to the Secretariat of State of Your Holiness, came in consequence of a proposal by the same Secretary, to entrust us with a new activity in the ambit of our parish of St. Philip Neri in Rome, and precisely in Primavalle.

After having the answer, we hinted to His Excellency Mons. Montini if it was convenient that we started a new activity while the Institute was not still approved. His Excellency took care of the question and asked us to present a memorandum to the Holy Father so that He could have a clear idea of our situation.

The petition, therefore, is nothing but a simple memorandum to the private use of the Holy Father, and not a formal application for the Decretum Laudis.

For honesty, after informing the Secretariat of State, we sent a copy of the petition, for a look, also to the Father Visitor.

At the letter a) of "information" it is said that the Institute was born in a canonical form not well defined. To clear this aspect I dare to declare the following:

We have to keep fix in our mind that it was the Lord Who wanted the Opera, He Founded it, it was born from the Sacred Side of the Crucified Jesus. I am noting but a miserable instrument, poor among the poorest, and indeed because like so, put here by the divine Mercy as a house keeper and Casante of this Opera, small and humble in itself, but great in the mind of God, doomed to accomplish great and new designs, all characteristic of the grave hour that we are crossing.

The pure and genuine spirit that the Divine Founder put into the Opera since the beginning, it was forty years ago, is this: Faith, great Faith in God, Father of all mankind: trust, full and filial abandonment in his Providence, trying to actualize in ourselves as much perfectly as possible our great programme: "Quaerite primum Regnum Dei et justitiam eius et haec omnia adjicientur vobis".

But we have not only to live this abandonment, but we have also to show others the divine attribute of the divine Providence, so forgotten and so ignored by men, and show it by our present and future activities, that, to be legitimate and genuine, have to bear the footstep and the seal of the "Do not be worried".

No activity of good and not any soul will be excluded for the only reason that the means are lacking; these will come, provided that we receive this soul with faith, and with faith we are available for this opera. And always we have to go were humanly there is nothing to expect in return, to the poorest and humble; we have to seek souls, abandoned creatures, rejected, despised, these are and will ever be the gems of the Opera, and so the Providence will be better shown.

Moreover let us demand nothing, avoid any form of publicity, not to seek human protections, take care of those the Providence sends us, possess nothing, live day by day without saving for tomorrow, of which the Providence will think, like she thinks for today.

About the possessions, I want to specify that the Opera must neither possess real estates, except those that are necessary for the course and the future developments of our activities; nor it will keep permanent capitals with the aim to get the fruits and interests, but all that will be lavished by the divine Providence, will be spent on the needs and the goals of the Opera.

Another characteristic of the Opera is this: to offer freely, to the poor young but truly good, who aspire to the ecclesiastic status, all the necessary and opportune means, regarding the education and study, the food and clothes; allowing them, after the "plus two", to go where they want, with the possibility to aggregate to the secular Clergy, returning to the respective Dioceses, or to consecrate themselves to the religious life in our Institute as in any other. However, those who want to consecrate themselves to the Opera, for more freedom, first will go out, will think, pray and after, if they truly confirm their

will to consecrate themselves, will present their application.

Also this particular characteristic of the Opera was blessed by the Lord and bore its fruits: almost eighty Priests and Religious live in various Dioceses and Religious Institutes.

Regarding the members of the Opera, Priests and Brothers, I always thought that they are one body, at the same level, in full collaboration, equal in everything, both worthy to carry out every office, even of direction, although ordinarily it is convenient that the superior of the houses be a Priest. I consider Brothers and Priests like the body and soul of the same person: here is the genuine spirit of the Opera, here is the precise will of God for us.

The Opera of the Poor Servants, made by Priests and Brothers, has to be an eminently priestly Opera, therefore under the juridical aspect it will be Clerical, because I feel that the Lord will do great things to the sanctification of these [the Priests] and great good to the mankind in the present hour, [and I feel] that it will be the reserve of the good God, by the spirit of faith and abandonment.

The Brothers form only one person with the Priest, and he will always preside as a local superior, in general; but in some activity that the Lord will make arise according to the needs of the present times, also a Brother can be a local superior, helped in this case by the Priest for the spiritual aspect.

That is why our Brothers can and must be distinguished also for their culture, necessary to carry out

the functions above mentioned, like engineer, doctor, teacher…, all *in humilitate Christi* (all things according to the humility of Christ): for this motive at present many of our Brothers have reached degrees and diplomas.

Let the Brothers take part also to the General Council.

And so never I thought to give birth to a lay or even simply mixed Institute, but as the Lord gave me to understand, to a Clerical Congregation or Religious Family, with complete parity within its members, Priests and Brothers. Since the beginning I had clear signs that the Opera was Lord's. Some letters, written by my spiritual Father, whom I always held as the interpreter of the will of God, prove that He also considered it in this light.

And I started trusting in the Providence, certain that the Lord would have intervened at the opportune moment to show His creature. Indeed near 1922 Fr. Adeodato Piazza, now Cardinal Patriarch of Venice, in charge of the Sacred Congregation of Religious, knowing the Opera, counseled me to talk with His Eminence the Cardinal Bacilieri, Bishop of Verona, to erect it as religious Congregation. On 24 August 1922 in occasion of his saint's day, I wrote to His Eminence the Cardinal to make my greetings and also to hint at the approval of the Opera. On 1st September of the same year His Eminence sending me his blessing told me He wanted to know our plan.

Unfortunately, the death came to interrupt everything, and the same programme that I sent Him was lost.

If the first Constitutions was approved by His Excellency the Bishop of Verona in the form we have, it was determined by some circumstances that we have not to forget.

The Most Reverend Fr. Giulio Bevilacqua, member of the Pontifical Opera for the Preservation of the Faith, came to pray and to press us to take care of an important abandoned area at the outskirt of Rome, and precisely the zone of Primavalle and Pineta Sacchetti. Due to the fact that then we were not yet born in the juridical sense, it was necessary to approve in a hurry a text of Constitutions that did not correspond to the genuine thinking and way willed by the Lord.

By deference to the Ecclesiastic Authority and seeing in it, as it is my usual habit, the interpreter of the will of God, I accepted; I have to say, however, like on my death bed, that in my heart I felt that in a short time the same Lord would intervene to change it; and always I said this to all I spoke with, both the members of the Opera and the same Bishop of Verona; but that till a clear sign of the Lord did not intervene, I would have held as a will of God what was approved.

The sign came in the sorrowful facts that the Providence allowed and that determined, certainly not for my will, the Sacred Apostolic Visit.

At the letter c) it is spoken about some juridical changes “ad experimentum” that were not liked by all religious, but because any serious difficulty did not emerge, a style of life was restored according to “the primitive way of mixed Institute”.

It was necessary, if we wanted to bring the Institute to the genuine conceit willed by the divine Founder, to make some change, indeed not to lead the Institute to live according to the character of mixed Congregation, but Clerical, with juridical parity among its members, like in fact it is living.

And that this is "codified", as it is hinted at the letter d), it is according to the will of the Lord so that the Opera receive also on earth the seal of His Vicar.

At the same letter d) the Most Rev. Father Visitor is speaking about the redaction of a series of articles of Constitutions that had to report the Institute to the primitive way; and he returns to the fact that some people, called "more representative members", did not seem to be satisfied and in fact they made their serious objections. The Most Rev. Father Abbot Caronti, in a letter of 19 August 1937, is telling me that he was given an official task for the revision. On 20 June 1943 he expressed to me by mail that he had intention to come soon to Verona in order to show me the text of the Constitutions so that I could examine, correct and retouch it according to the plan of the Lord. And so He did. Therefore I could make my observations and send them to Him in July of the same year. Some months after, and precisely on 25 September 1943, He said to me that He would profit of a short stop in His troublesome job to give the final revision to the Constitutions, having received the observations also from the Priests of Rome. What their objections were, and about what they did not seem satisfied, I never knew, and only now I have had an indirect knowledge from the copy of "information", sent by the Most Rev. Father Visitor to the S. Congregation of Religious.

If somebody, but I do not think this, would not feel to stay here, living according to the pure and genuine spirit of the Opera, I always said and repeated, he can go out, because all the world is the field of God and there is room in it for all in order to do something good. But let the Opera be like the Divine Founder wants it.

However a third letter of the Most. Rev. Father Visitor, on 11 December 1943, announced to me that the work of the Constitutions was over, that He tried to introduce in it what I communicated in my observations, and that He wanted to show it to me, before presenting.

Unfortunately the war events did not allow him to realize his plan. And so, of the definitive text of the Constitutions, till now, I could not have a look.

Now, as in the beginning of this petition I hinted, the Lord with His infinite goodness and mercy wanted to illumine again our situation, and certainly I think He wishes – like the same Holy Father, through the Secretary of State, kindly expressed – that our situation be revised, deeply treated and brought to conclusion.

I repeat, the Opera is exactly for the present times, doomed to accomplish, in its smallness and poverty, but great in the mind of God, new and great designs, all characteristic of the hour we are crossing; but so that it can truly reach these divine designs and be light and salt with the pure and genuine spirit, it is necessary that it receive its "Confirmation", as many times the Most Rev. Visitor said to me in the last times, as definitive seal of the Lord through his Holy Mother Church.

In C. J.

Fr. J. Calabria

[Hand written]

Verona, 17-12-1947

Sac. J. Calabria