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Fulgentius Pastorelli of Jesus (2)[256]

Rome

March 31, 1746

May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
be always in our hearts.

Dear and Beloved Father,

I was deprived of your letters in this post, and that makes me have doubts about your health. All the more because I knew you had returned to Orbetello to hear the confessions of the nuns while your illness was still on you. I made a sweet complaint with you to end with the nuns, for your presence at the Retreat is important to me.[257] I know your great charity and gentleness will have had compassion on my fault, while I am so imperfect, and your charity will make you have compassion on a soul so poor and imperfect as mine. And now with all my heart I beg your pardon.

Thanks to God, on Monday of Passion Week, March 28, when the Gospel reads: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink, " the Vicar of Jesus Christ issued a rescript under his own signature in the form of a brief to confirm our holy Rules with his Placet Prospero.[258] That is the baptismal name of our pope. Now they are preparing the brief, which is rather long and will cost about one hundred and forty scudi. Yesterday, I was again at the feet of His Holiness to thank him, and I asked him for some favors. He told me he had spoken to Cardinal Passionei,[259] the secretary for briefs.

I am saying nothing about my small pains, set backs, and contradictions; I am saying nothing about the mighty Providence of God, which arranged that the brief would not be issued before the first days of the Passion, which has so many mysteries. You will recall that despite all the efforts we used, we could not enter into our Retreat[260] nor celebrate the Divine Sacrifice until the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. The first song we sang in our church was, May I never boast of anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. These are wonderful happenings, along with others, that we must keep in memory. You will hear the rest from my voice when God wishes.

The brief will not be drawn up until the Sunday after Easter, and the cardinal[261] will send it to me. Everything went well for the ordinations[262] and indulgences.

As I busy myself negotiating everything for the good of the Congregation, I am surer all the time it is God's work. And all of Rome, I will say that, religious and prelates, see it the same way. The Constitutions are in good shape and nothing essential has been touched. God knows how I experienced that! The commission was moved by God to have me here. Otherwise, who knows how long – not for months, but for years – nothing would have been done and perhaps all would have passed into a long silence.

I have spent not a little time at the writing desk to send out information and pay courtesy calls in writing, personally taking care of everything, after which the cardinals[263] looked over everything. It would be too long a process to give you even a short, precise report. God helped me, and it is, I can say, a miracle of the

mercy of God that this business was dispatched in this form and so speedily. I will let you know when we should have the solemn thanksgiving to God. Meanwhile, let all not fail to praise and thank God.

Here I have purchased another eighteen measures of good cloth to make twelve habits, and, as I informed you, I had bought twelve measures previously. These habits should remain in good shape, at least for five years. They cost eighteen zecchini, and it will be necessary to send them to Viterbo. I will advise you in good time. I expected to leave tomorrow, but I am not able. I do expect to leave Saturday without fail.[264] So do not write me any more in Rome, but at the Retreat of San Angelo in Vetralla, where I will be engaged until after Easter. Then I will go to Soriano for the building,[265] and then return to San Angelo. If the weather is good, you can send the religious on Easter Monday, along with the servants, but I am thinking it may be better that I should first go to San Angelo to see how ready it is.

It is necessary to send six or seven: Confrater Rosato Maria, Confrater Joseph, and four others whom you judge well. You can send that twenty-two-year old from Lucca, if you know he has turned out well, since he is closest to ordination.[266] I leave everything in your hands and your choice. It would be good to send the habits for summer with them, at least for those who have them. You will take care of everything so that it comes out well. At that time, do me the favor of sending four bathing gowns, two sheets, napkins, towels, six pounds of andaccini,[267] and four of rice because at the baths[268] they do not have these things.

If you wish to have the religious leave on Easter, you may do that. If you think that eight days later is better, do that and send the strongest donkeys.

My head is full of many plans and tasks. You will remember at least the bull which I forgot, and they will forgive me. It is the bull on usury,[269] but it is not important. I will get myself better informed. Tell Father Thomas about this. From the Retreat of San Angelo I will write to you again. I break off in haste and embrace you in the sweet Heart of Jesus, along with all the religious. Let us have a good Holy Week and Easter. Goodbye and let them pray for me.

I greet the Grazi and Caseglias families[270] and all. In haste,

Your affectionate, unworthy servant,

Paul of the ^

This is the seal of the Congregation with palm and olive branches.[271]

256.

Paul writes to announce the good news that Pope Benedict XIV has signed the papal brief. The Passionists are now an official Congregation in the Church with simple vows. When there are more members and more houses, it can be approved as a religious order with solemn vows and exempt from the local bishops, etc.

257.

"I made a sweet complaint with you." We dońt know if this was communicated by voice or by a letter which we do not have. Paul reiterates that it is important for the local rector not to leave the Retreat in order to better guide the community and provide for the needs of the religious (Circular Letter of October 14, 1755).

258.

When it was decided to approve a matter, the pope affixed his signature on the draft of the document, and then it was put into an official form. The document, called a rescript, was a form less solemn and enduring, while a brief was given greater solemnity.

259.

Cardinal Dominic Passionei (1682-1761).

260.
This is the Retreat of the Presentation on Mount Argentario.
261.
This was Cardinal Annibale Albani, a member of the commission that had examined the Rule of the Passionists.
262.
Paul refers to the permission to ordain clerical Passionists to the priesthood, despite the fact that the Congregation was not recognized as a religious order and did not have solemn vows (Giorgini, History, pp. 178-180).
263.
"Cardinals" refers to the cardinals of the commission that was formed to examine the Rules and Constitutions presented by Paul during November 1744. The pope nominated the commission in December 1744, but during 1745 they accomplished nothing. In January 1746, Paul went to Rome and stayed there until the final approval of the Rule.
264.
March 31 was Thursday; therefore, Saturday was April 2.
265.
At San Eutizio the Passionists found a church and rooms for the chaplain, but it was not sufficient for the community. In 1746 construction was begun for a wing of cells with the help of Cardinal Albani (Cioni, Annali, n. 279).
266.
We have no information concerning Confrater Rosato. Confrater Joseph must be Villavecchia, professed in 1744, died in 1751. The man from Lucca that was twenty-two years of age was John Iacomini of Saint Raphael, born in 1724, professed on February 1, 1746, ordained in 1753, and died in 1786 (Bartoli, p. 21).
267.
Probably a folk word, andaccini is some type of food used for medicinal purposes.
268.
For cures of sciatica, arthritis, and other ailments, Paul went many times for treatment at the hot mineral baths.
269.
The Bull Vix pervenit of Pope Benedict XIV, November 1, 1745, can be found in the Bullarium Romanum, Rome, 1746, pp. 578-581.
270.
These were two families of Orbetello who were very devoted to Paul and desired to be of service to the community.
271.
Every institute has its "coat of arms" or particular "symbol." Paul chose as "arms" for his Congregation the "sign" that the religious wear on their habits. This is composed of a heart outlined in white, with a cross above. Inside the heart is written Jesu Christi Passio. Around the "sign" there are branches of palm and of olive beneath. The olive signifies the sweetness of the Name of Jesus and his saving virtue, according to the scripture text about the olive and its fruit. The palm is a reminder of the martyrdom of Christ in his Passion and his victory over sin and death in his resurrection.