

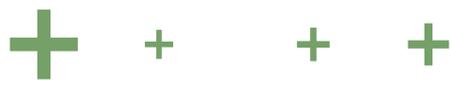
Castellazzo,
Argentario,
Vetralla, Rome*Alessandro Foppoli, C.P.***The cell and
the streets**

Jubilaevum

The cell in Castellazzo, next to the sacristy of the church of San Carlo. A bare room, poor, small and damp. A secret place of dialogue between Paul and his God. The cradle of our Congregation and its Rule. A place of penance, but also of ecstasy. A place where Paul cultivated love for the Crucified Jesus and compassion for the crucified of every age and place.

The streets of Castellazzo, walked by the young Paul in search of clarity for his vocation. The streets of his first missionary steps as a preacher. The streets in which he encountered the poor with whom he shared his bread. The streets where he walked barefoot, in the cold, in the snow. Roads that led him to his mission. The streets of his vocation, where the Virgin Mary revealed to him the mystery of his new calling. The streets of the poor.

The cell of Monte Argentario (you can still visit it in the retreat of St. Joseph) from which he wrote letters of spiritual direction and from which he contemplated the sea, immense, powerful, which offered him the best image for describing the Pas-



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sion-- "a sea of love and pain into which those who dive live, rather than die." The little cell where at night he contemplated the moth that was consumed in the flame of the lantern. And he dreamed of throwing himself into the flames of divine love, consumed, forever united with God.

The roads of Monte Argentario and the Maremma marshes. Tiring and hard roads. The road frequented by bandits, the lowly of the earth, whom he encountered, healed, cured. Preaching to outlaws was his fondest mission. There was no sinner or evildoer who had to flee from him. These were roads built for travel, for going to the periphery of human existence. For descending the mountain and bring the balm of the Gospel to everyone. Dusty roads walked barefoot. The streets of charity, to help everyone, soldiers and the poor, commanders and servants. Roads traveled in time of famine, to distribute everything that was in the monastery, to help those most in need.

The cell at Vetralla, so precious and beautiful; so sober and authentic. Paul lived there for many years. He prayed there for long periods of time. It is the cell in which Paul lay sick next to his dying brother and from where he dragged himself on crutches to the bedside of his lifetime partner, the most precious brother who had supported, guided, accompanied him for so many years-- John Baptist. A cell where Paul lived and contemplated the mysteries of Christ. It was a cell that "in all ways had to breathe poverty", to the point of removing the plaster and letting the bare wall be seen. It was a cell for prayer and for fighting against the forces of evil.

The streets of Vetralla and the neighboring areas. The true beating heart of his preaching and missionary work. Paul walked all these roads mindless of his hardships. He arrived in the neighboring towns as a simple traveler, with a walking staff and an unkempt beard. He talked about Christ to all whom he met. Streets of peace. Paul made it his primary task to achieve reconciliation between divided families. Soften hearts, soothe spirits, restore peace and harmony. The streets where the power of the Crucified and Passion were proclaimed. The roads that led him to realize the foundation of various monasteries. How many times did Paul, elderly and ailing, climb amidst the recesses of Monte Fogliano to access his beloved solitude? How many times did he descend, heedless of inclement weather, to fulfill his mission in the world?

The cell in Rome, the room where he died. The place of final encounters, the place of his last words, of his spiritual Testament. The room in which he offered the Congregation to the Father. The room where he opened his heart to his sons. The room of his fatal illness. The room where his life came to fruition, where everything found an ending, a meaning.

The streets of Rome. How many stories, how many years have gone by since he, young and inexperienced, ventured along these streets for the first time? He dreamed of meeting the Prince of the Apostles, the Vicar of Christ, in that distant 1721, but eventually found a poor man, with whom he shared the only bread received as alms. The streets of disappointment. The paths of hope and the vow to remember Christ's Passion forever. The streets he traveled so many times, seeking ecclesiastical approval, security for his sons, graces, and help for his Congregation. The streets of his priesthood. The streets of his preaching. The streets of his glorification.

Biblical text: Read Mk. 1:29-39-- *The missionary activity of Jesus, amidst secret and hidden prayer, charity and universal proclamation of the Gospel.*

Question: **What are my "cells", the places where I still experience God's closeness? What are my streets and the streets of the Congregation? Where do they take me? And where, on the other hand, do they still not take me?**

