ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS

PRIOR TO 1694

(As A Seal Upon Your Heart, Paul Francis Spencer, C.P.)

- Paul Francis Danei was born into a family which had its own story and which helped to make him the person he was
- His was an old family from the town of Castellazzo, on the road from Turin to Genoa, near Alessandria
- In the Middle Ages the Danei family had been involved in local government at Alessandria as notaries and officials
- A good marriage into the Trotti family, the richest people in Castellazzo, had brought them that touch of nobility with which Paul is credited by his early biographers
- His father, Luca Danei, was born on 7 December 1659, the youngest of nine children
- Of the five boys in the family, only two grew to adulthood, the other being Giovanni Christoforo, eleven years older than Luca and destined for the priesthood
- At the time of Luca’s birth the family were still very comfortable in economic terms, but heavy financial losses as a result of war began a process of decline which would continue during Paul’s lifetime
- Some time between 1680 and 1685 Luca left Castellazzo and moved south to Ovada
- There is a tradition that he went there to get married, but the truth is that he ran away to escape imprisonment, hiding in his priest-brother’s house the night before he left town in order to avoid being arrested
- Luca was welcomed to Ovada by his uncle, who was also a priest, and who was Chaplain at the Oratory of the Confraternity of Our Lady of the Annunciation
- After a while Luca opened a little shop in Ovada selling cloth
- It was in Ovada that he met his first wife, Maria Caterina De Grandis
- They were married on 25 February 1685, but after five years of marriage, Maria Caterina died childless, leaving Luca a widow at the age of thirty
- After a year and a half Luca married again
- His new wife, Anna Maria Massari, was just nineteen years old
- They probably met through the Confraternity of the Annunciation
They were married in the Oratory of the Confraternity of the Annunciation by Luca’s uncle, Don Giovanni Andrea Danei, on 6 January 1692.

The first of sixteen children, a girl, was born on 4 January 1693 but lived only three days.

She was called Caterina, perhaps after Luca’s first wife.

Of the sixteen children Anna Maria would bear, only six survived to adulthood.

All except one child, Caterina, lived long lives - Paul Francis 81, John Baptist 70, Teresa 93, Giuseppe 84 and Antonio 82.

1694 – 1700 THE EARLY YEARS

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Roger Mercurio C.P.)

On January 3, 1694 Paul Danei was the firstborn son of a large family in northern Italy.

During his formative years and as a young man, Paul helped his father in his tobacco business.

Education for Paul was at best spotty, studying in a variety of schools as the family moved from place to place.

During his early years, Paul’s mother was a great influence on him, grounding him in a devotion to Jesus Crucified that would never cease growing.

The stories he heard of the sufferings of Jesus caused a deep devotion to the Passion of Jesus from a very early age.

With his younger brother John Baptist, he learned the value of meditation and prayer, which became a lifetime practice for both of them.

(As A Seal Upon Your Heart, Paul Francis Spencer, C.P.)

Almost a year to the day after the death of her first child, Caterina, Anna Maria Danei held in her arms her first son, Paul Francis, born at sunrise on 3 January 1694.

He was baptized three days later, his parents second wedding anniversary.

In April 1695, John Baptist, was born.

Other children would follow in 1696, 1699, 1700, 1701, and 1702 but none of them would live more than a year.

The cycle of birth and death was the background to the early years of the two brothers and would be broken only with the coming of Teresa when Paul was nine years old.

John Baptist, his boyhood companion, would remain close to him throughout his adult life.

During his childhood Paul’s mother was almost continually pregnant or nursing a baby.

She was also in constant poor health.
**1700-1710 HEARING THE CALL**

*(As A Seal Upon Your Heart, Paul Francis Spencer, C.P.)*

- In 1701 when Paul was seven years old the family moved to Cremolino
- In Cremolino he attended the school run by the Carmelite Fathers
- From 1701 until 1709 Paul's family lived at Cremolino
- 1701 Paul joined the Confraternity of the Annunciation when he was thirteen
- Anna Maria’s father had been a tobacconist and Luca carried on the same business at Cremolino
- Unfortunately, Luca got into trouble again and was imprisoned for fraud at the nearby town of Acqui Terme
- When he came out of prison the family moved briefly to Ovada
- Probably in 1709 they then settled in Campo Ligure
- Luca was good hearted and devout but seems at times to have lacked the ability to manage his affairs
- The moves from one place to another were always undertaken with the idea of making a fresh start in life after some period of difficulty
- His lack of judgement resulted in a steady decline in the family fortune
- Shortly after the family moved to Campo Ligure, Paul’s youngest brother, Anthony, was born on 4 February 1720
- The house in which they lived was in the Piazzetta della Tabaccheria
- Luca was still smuggling and seems to have involved his oldest sons in the business, sending them over the mountains with sacks of tobacco
- Paul went to Genoa to take up his studies again
- At first he found lodging with Giuseppe Buffa, a cleric from Ovada
- Later he stayed with Marquis Paolo Girolamo Pallavicini
- It was in Genoa that he met the mystic Maria Antonia Solimani
- On founding a religious order, she changed her name to Giovanna Battista Solimani
- Paul often went to visit her to “discuss spiritual matters with her and to seek her advice”
- This is probably his first contact with the world of mystics and mysticism
- Giovanna Battista Solimani was Paul’s first spiritual director
- Her own spiritual director was a Capuchin, Fr. Columbano da Genova, who would later direct Paul

**1710-1720 DISCERNING THE CALL**

*Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Roger Mercurio C.P.)*

- Paul recounts that in his nineteenth year he experienced his conversion

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• It was occasioned by a quite ordinary homily, but it was accompanied with a powerful grace that turned Paul to an ever deepening life of prayer and an immersion in the sufferings of his Crucified Lord

1713 CONVERSION TO A LIFE OF Penance

(As A Seal Upon Your Heart, Paul Francis Spencer, C.P.)

• It was in 1713, while he was still studying in Genoa and in contact with Giovanna Battista Solomani, that Paul heard the sermon at Campo Ligure which brought about his “conversion to a life of penance”
• After this however he was tormented by doubts about what had happened
• Had God spoken to him or was he simply deceiving himself?
• Was God there at all, or was it all simply imagination?
• When these temptations about faith would come he would go to the church and lay his head on the altar rail because he did not know what to do
• Then on Pentecost Sunday, he was caught up in such an intense state of prayer that his doubts about the experience left him and never bothered him again

1714 - 1716 THE CRUSADE

(As A Seal Upon Your Heart, Paul Francis Spencer, C.P.)

• In May 1715 Pope Clement XI called people to enroll as crusading volunteers against the Ottoman Empire
• Paul decided to join the crusade
• After several months of marching back and forward across the plains of Lombardy, Paul realised that army life was not for him
• According to his sister Teresa, he was praying in a church in Crema during the Forty Hours Devotions when the inspiration came to him to leave the army
• This was on the Thursday before Lent, 20th February 1716

1717 - 1719

(As A Seal Upon Your Heart, Paul Francis Spencer, C.P.)

• Leaving Venetian territory, he went to Lovello, in the Diocese of Alba
• Here he was taken in by a married couple who had no children of their own; he lived with them for about a year
• They wanted to adopt him and make him their son, but this was not what Paul had in mind
• He left Novello and went to the Diocese of Tortona where he stayed for about another year
• What was he doing during these two years after leaving the army?
• Was he ashamed to come home after being a crusader?
• Did he need some time and space away from family and other pressures in order to think about his future?
• During his time in Tortona, he kept in touch with his friends in Genoa
• It was probably on his way back from one of these visits that he had another experience which helped to shape his life
• In an account he wrote in 1720 he described what happened – ‘I was going westwards along the Riviera of Genoa when, on a hill above Sestri, I saw a small church dedicated to Our Lady of Gazzo. As soon as I saw it, my heart longed for that place of solitude, but this longing could never be satisfied – though I carried it always with me – because I was occupied by the work I was doing as a matter of charity to help my relatives. After this (I do not remember for certain either the day or the month) I remained as I was for some time but with a growing inspiration to withdraw into solitude. This inspiration, accompanied by great tenderness of heart, was given me by the good God.”
• Paul’s uncle, the priest Don Christoforo, perhaps thinking that there was no point in leaving the family property to Luca, had decided to make Paul his heir
• He invited Paul to move to his house in Castellazzo, which Paul did in 1718
• Supported by his uncle Paul dedicated himself to a life of prayer, following the inspiration he had received, while waiting for the opportunity to “draw into solitude”
• Paul’s uncle thought that Paul should marry and settle down
• He found him suitable wife
• Paul prayed that some obstacle would arise so that he would be able to follow his inspiration
• Shortly afterwards on 16 November 1718, his uncle Don Christoforo died
• He left all his property and money to Paul on the condition that he would marry
• The inheritance was valued at twelve thousand scudi, the equivalent of three thousand pounds sterling at the time (about two million dollars Australian)
• When the will was read in the sacristy of the Church of St. Charles in Castellazzo, Paul renounced the inheritance in favour of his brothers and sisters, saying he wished to keep for himself only a breviary
• Around the time of his uncle’s death, Paul’s parents and brothers and sisters moved to Castellazzo
• His father was now sixty years old and had retired from business, devoting himself to the care of family property
• Paul described his life at Castellazzo during this period as follows: “Between daytime and night I used to spend at least seven hours in prayer and other religious activities. On feast day mornings I used to rise very early to attend a confraternity of which I was a member. After the confraternity, I would go to the main church where, as was customary, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, and would remain there at last three hours on my knees. After that I would go for something to eat, and then I would go to Vespers. After Vespers I
would take a little fresh air with some devout young men and talk with them about spiritual things. Last, I would visit the church of the Capuchins where I would spend an hour in mental prayer; then I would return home.”

- Paul joined the Confraternity of St. Anthony of the Desert, which met in the Oratory down the street from his home
- After a short time he was elected prior
- It was probably at this time that he discovered the Treatise on the Love of God by St. Francis de Sales
- He would rise early each day and pray with his brother John Baptist
- It was at Castellazzo on 23 April 1719 that Paul and John Baptist received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Bishop Gattinara

1720-1730 SHARING THE CALL

IN SEARCH OF COMPANIONS
1720-1721 CASTELLAZZO
1722-1724 MONTE ARGENTARIO AND CASTELLAZZO
1724-1726 GAETA AND TROIA
1726-1727 ROME AND ORDINATION
1728-1730 MONTE ARGENTARIO SETTLING IN

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Roger Mercurio C.P.)

- By 1720 Bishop Gattinara of Alessandria judged Paul’s inspirations to be sufficient to allow him to be clothed as a hermit
- The Bishop then ordered him to go into retreat and write the Rule of the Institute he hoped to establish
- During the forty days of his retreat, Paul not only put his dream into words, but also gave the Bishop an account of the heights and depths of his prayer
- This document is recognised as one of the finest accounts of mysticism in the 18th century
- Both the Preface to the Rule — his description of events up to the time of the forty-day retreat — and the Diary were written in the form of letters addressed to Bishop Gattinara
- The first version of the Rule, written at this time, has been lost. The original was burnt at the express command of Paul of the Cross
- These initial experiences, written in Paul’s own words, speak of his willingness to serve as a channel of God’s grace in the formation of a new religious family in the Catholic Church
- He speaks of a profound sense of unworthiness of such a call but also of his intention to accept whatever God would ask of him in the future
- The Bishop, following Paul’s retreat, assigned Paul to a small church in the countryside outside Alessandria where he would begin his life as a hermit
- His duties included taking care of the physical upkeep of the church: the altar, the sacristy, cleaning the building, etc.
- His chief occupation, though, was to devote himself to prayer

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• The Bishop discovered further talents in this young layman and encouraged him to teach the fundamentals of the faith to children and adults who gathered in this rustic chapel
• Further, Paul began preaching spiritual conferences to sisters and missions or more formal retreats to lay people, simple labourers, on the estates of wealthy land owners
• After just eight or nine months Paul again found the call to gather companions so compelling that he sought and obtained permission from his Bishop to go to Rome and present his case to the newly elected Pope Innocent XIII, seeking authorization to form a new religious family
• His naivete was rebuffed at the doors of the Quirinal Palace, where he was sent roughly away as a beggar
• Perhaps this date was Paul’s lowest moment humanly speaking. This date is lost to history but occurred sometime in September 1721
• After being rejected at the papal palace, he went on foot to the Basilica of Saint Mary Major, the chief Marian shrine in Rome
• He entered the small side chapel and before an image of the Mother of God professed for the first time the Passion Vow, the determination to spend the rest of his life seeking ways to keep alive the memory of the Passion of Jesus in his own heart and in the hearts of the faithful to whom he ministered
• This distinctive vow is the mark of every Passionist to the present day
• Shortly after this time, his younger brother John Baptist joined Paul on Mount Argentario
• The life of the future Congregation began in these humble circumstances, a life of deep prayer, community life shared by two brothers, and an active apostolate of teaching catechism to the inhabitants of Porto San Stefano and Porto’Ercole, small towns at the base of this mountain
• This relatively tranquil period lasted less than a year
• Bishop Pignatelli invited them to Gaeta in the Kingdom of Naples
• Then Bishop Cavalieri asked them to Troia.
• Bishop Cavalieri studied Paul’s Rule and offered suggestions
• He also arranged that Paul and John Baptist would meet Pope Benedict XIII on 21 May 1725, at which time the brothers received verbal permission to gather companions and live according to Paul’s Rule of life
• Paul’s life and apostolic work with John Baptist south of Rome were not satisfying, and so they accepted yet another invitation from Cardinal Corradini to journey to Rome and take up positions as spiritual directors and aids at the new Hospital of Saints Mary and Gallicano, continuing to live according to the Rule that Paul had written
• Cardinal Corradini suggested that for reasons of the apostolate both Paul and John Baptist be ordained to the Priesthood
• Pope Benedict XIII ordained them on Trinity Sunday, 7 June 1727
• Due to new regulations at the hospital, the two brothers felt that they could no longer live and work in Rome
• With the blessings of the Holy See, Paul and John Baptist returned to Mount Argentario where they settled into the hermitage of Saint Anthony and returned to a more contemplative life of prayer, silence and solitude

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• They continued their limited apostolate among the poor in the villages of this area
• They also began an apostolate of hearing confessions and spiritual direction for individuals who came to the hermitage
• During these days Paul, along with John Baptist, sought further the Lord’s Will for them and the fledgling Congregation

1721-1722 CASTELLAZZO

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Roger Mercurio C.P.)

• Paul’s retreat ended on New Year’s Day of 1721. He presented the Diary and the Rule to Bishop Gattinara, who in turn had Paul go to Genoa to discuss the Rule with Father Columban
• On his return to Castellazzo, the Bishop assigned Paul to the country Church of the Holy Trinity and later to the Church of Saint Stephen, which was closer to town
• There Paul would remain the hermit-custodian of this church
• He prepared for the Masses and services held in this church and kept the floor clean
• In a short time he was more than custodian or sacristan; he began to teach catechism to the children, to lead the people in prayer services, and even to preach
• Paul realised the time had come to seek companions to join him at Saint Stephen’s
• There he wanted to form the first community of “The Poor of Jesus.”
• Bishop Gattinara hesitated
• He would not allow Paul to take this first step without the approval of the Pope

1722-1724 MONTE ARGENTARIO AND CASTELLAZZO

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Roger Mercurio C.P.)

• Paul and John Baptist left Castellazzo on the first Sunday of Lent in 1722. They reached Mount Argentario on Holy Thursday, 2 April 1722
• After Easter they stayed at the hermitage of the Annunciation in solitude and prayer
• On the weekends they would come down to the fishing towns of Portercole (Porto’Ercole) and Porto San Stefano at the foot of the mountain. There they attended Mass and taught catechism
• Bishop Salvi insisted that they must not seek other young men to join them
• When Bishop Pignatelli of Gaeta (south of Rome) offered them a place and ministry in his diocese, they accepted his offer
• It seems, however, that a need arose back in Castellazzo and the brothers returned there
• Because John Baptist got sick, they stayed longer than intended
• There are five letters written by St. Paul of the Cross preserved from 1723-24, all written while delayed at Castellazzo

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• If any letters were written from Mount Argentario at this time, they have not been preserved

1724 – 1726 GAETA AND TROIA

*Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Roger Mercurio C.P.)*

- Paul and John Baptist left Castellazzo in the spring of 1724
- This time they went to Gaeta with the permission of Bishop Salvi
- They resided at the hermitage of Our Lady of the Chain and the shrine of Our Lady of the City near Itri at the invitation of Bishop Pignatelli
- Then, at the invitation of Bishop Emilio Cavalieri, maternal uncle of Saint Alphonsus Liguori, they went to Troia
- Bishop Cavalieri hoped they would form a community in his diocese
- Paul and John Baptist also visited Rome for the Holy Year in 1725 and were presented to Pope Benedict XIII, who orally granted them the permission to gather companions
- Fortified with this Papal Blessing, they returned to Gaeta once again
- They resided with other hermits, taught catechism, and even preached the ordination retreat for several young men
- The letters of St. Paul of the Cross for this period, although few, indicate Paul’s impact upon men and women associates.

1726 – 1727 ROME AND ORDINATION

*Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Roger Mercurio C.P.)*

- Paul and John Baptist have arrived in Rome
- There they will live and work at the new hospital Cardinal Corradini is establishing in Rome
- Their service will continue the ministries Paul had been engaged in, namely teaching catechism, preparing people for the sacraments, and teaching them how to pray by remembering the Passion of Christ
- It seems that the constitutions of the hospital included the possibility of Paul and John Baptist being ordained, something that Bishop Cavalieri had told Paul he should plan for
- The seven letters to Fr. Erasmus Tuccinardi that Paul wrote from Rome help explain Paul’s decisions at this time to be ordained and then later to return to Mount Argentario (Spencer, As a Seal Upon Your Heart, pp. 78ff)
- When Paul and John Baptist, as ordained priests, left Rome to return to Mount Argentario, they faced several important concerns
- There was need to regularize their canonical status. They finally received the title of missionary apostolic
- Paul became involved as spiritual director of many people, including Agnes Grazi, Sister Cherubina Bresciani, Francis Appiani, Thomas Fossi, et. al.
- There were problems from the war and Paul’s role as chaplain and peace-maker
• Paul began his ministry of preaching missions, retreats, etc
• To found the Congregation he sought companions and followers
• He searched for property on which to build his first monastery or “Retreat”
• He was delayed by war and by opposition from Cardinal Altieri
• Paul will enter Presentation Retreat on Monte Argentario on 14 September 1737
• The letters which St. Paul of the Cross wrote during these years reveal many dimensions of Paul’s life, his personality, sufferings, holiness, and zeal
• Above all, we learn how he was on fire with love!

1727 – 1730 SETTLING INTO MONTE ARGENTARIO

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Roger Mercurio C.P.)

• During the first years on Mount Argentario, the correspondence with Father Erasmus Tuccinardi is quite helpful in our understanding of how they “settled into” life as priest-hermits
• They spent a good deal of time studying and praying
• Both Paul and John Baptist read the Scriptures prayerfully
• Eventually they received faculties from the local Bishop to minister to the people at nearby towns on weekends
• The first letter to Agnes Grazi mentions that they were giving missions
• Finally, on February 23, 1731, they requested Pope Clement XII to grant them the canonical title of “the missions”
• Paul used this title in signing a letter on December 16, 1732

1730-1740

SHARING THE CALL
1730 FIRST FORMAL MISSION (TALAMONE)
1731-1732 LEGAL AND SPIRITUAL MATTERS
1733-1735 DELATED BY WAR – GIVING SPIRITUAL DIRECTION
1736-1737 WAITING FOR PRESENTATION RETREAT AND ENTRY
1738-1739 APOSTOLIC MISSIONARY

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Roger Mercurio C.P.)

• The Bishop in the area asked Paul to give a formal mission in 1730 in his diocese
• This is the first recorded mission of Paul as a Passionist priest
• This experience of preaching parish missions, during which there would be a solid emphasis on moral formation and a constant appeal to the sufferings of Christ on the Cross as a remedy for the ills of the age, gradually informed him that this apostolate would be most appropriate for himself and for those who would follow him in this new way of life
• In this simple, humble way Paul and his brother began to offer spiritual strength to the poor and neglected whom they encountered in the villages where they preached and ministered
• The Pope raised Paul to the rank of a papal missionary for all of Italy
• As the years passed, several young men expressed interest in joining Paul and his brother in this way of life and ministry
• Among the first was Paul’s younger brother Anthony
• Many came to experience this way of life, but many also left, feeling that the rigours Paul and his first disciples endured were too much
• By the early 1730’s the need for a new and larger facility became acute
• Experience taught Paul that some modifications of the lifestyle were desirable and even necessary for a healthy community
• He developed a plan to build a large building, or “Retreat” as the residences of the Passionists came to be known, on Mount Argentario and close to the hermitage of Saint Anthony, where he and his first companions lived
• In bringing this plan for expansion to fruition, there were many delays caused by war near the town of Orbetello, opposite Mount Argentario
• There was also some opposition from Cardinal Altieri, the ecclesiastical superior of the area
• In addition, opposition surfaced from other groups of religious Mendicants in the area who felt threatened by another group that would be begging for their necessities in the locality
• But finally the first Retreat, the Presentation of Mary, was built and solemnly blessed on 14 September 1737.

1740-1750

1740-1741 THE NEW POPE ELECTED
1741 FIRST PAPAL APPROVAL OF RULE
1742 SMALL AND WEAK FOUNDATIONS
1743 WHAT JOKES GOD PLAYS ON US
1744 TO GUIDE ME
1746 IT IS A MIRACLE OF GOD
1747 MISSIONS AND FIRST GENERAL CHAPTER
1748 CECCANO, TOSCANELLA AND FRATI
1749 A MIRACLE OF GRACE

1740 THE NEW POPE ELECTED

• Paul had been hoping to seek further approval of the Rule with the help of Cardinal Rezzonico, who had been recommended to Paul by Cardinal Corradini
• Unfortunately, Pope Clement XII died on 6 February, 1740
• The conclave to elect a new Pope lasted six months
• On 17 August 1740 the Archbishop of Bologna, Cardinal Prospero Lamberti, was elected and took the name of Pope Benedict XIV
• In September Cardinal Rezzonico, in an audience with the Pope, told him of Paul’s new Congregation
• Pope Benedict was very favourable
• The Cardinal assured Paul that he should now come to Rome and, while staying in his palace, would be received by the Pope.
• At this news Paul began a campaign of prayer for the success of this project
• Paul went to Rome in November 1740
• He met the Pope, who appointed a Commission to study the Rule, consisting of Cardinals Corradini and Rezzonico, with Bishop Count Peter M. Garagni as secretary
• One of the first and closest companions of the founder was Father Fulgentius Pastorelli. Born 17 June 1710, he was ordained to the Priesthood in the Diocese of Pitigliano on 30 May 1733. He became acquainted with Paul and joined him on Mount Argentario in 1735, being vested in the Passionist Habit in that year. Fulgentius joined the small community in the original hermitage of Saint Anthony. He shared in the blessing of the Retreat on 14 September, 1737. Four years later on 11 June 1741, he took public vows with the other first religious when Pope Benedict XIV approved the Rule
• When Paul lived at San Angelo in Vetralla, he wrote quite frequently to Fulgentius.
• We are fortunate to have these letters, for from them we have Paul’s own account of many of the difficulties of those early years
• Unfortunately, Paul did not keep the letters Fulgentius wrote to him
• Fr. Fulgentius Pastorelli died 16 April 1755, in the Grazi house in Orbetello and is buried in the Presentation Retreat, Monte Argentario

1741 FIRST PAPAL APPROVAL OF RULE

• On 15 May 1741, Pope Benedict XIV signed the Papal Rescript approving the Rule written by Paul and somewhat modified by the Commission of Cardinals
• This approval made it possible for Paul and his companions to take the four public vows called for in the approved Rules
• Paul announces the good news of the Papal approval of the Rules and the profession of the four public vows by himself and his companions
• Paul describes his joy and holy wonder in the presence of God’s gracious bringing to reality his dream of long ago
• He gives a report of the life the community will live as well as the apostolic goal the Pope has assigned the Congregation to fulfill
• Paul finally uses the occasion to invite young men to join the newly approved Congregation
• Paul recognizes that there need to be more members and more Retreats if the Pope is to approve the community as a Congregation. Paul writes: “I will allow Divine Providence to guide me.”
1742 “SMALL AND WEAK FOUNDATIONS”

- Because of “two very serious sicknesses,” Paul could not return to the Retreat of the Presentation until 16 January 1742.
- He writes that he was very near death.
- Two of the priests had vocational problems.
- Father Angelo Di Stefano has returned to Rome and Father Charles Salemmi is determined to stay in Piombino.
- Realising he must have another Retreat and more candidates, Paul also realises if his own health does not improve, the Congregation itself might disappear.
- Yes, his dream rests on very “small and weak foundations”

1743 “WHAT JOKES GOD PLAYS ON US”

- The new year finds Paul anxious for candidates and hoping for a new foundation, especially the one at Vetralla.
- He also has some missions to conduct, if his health holds out.
- For a while he hoped to go north to give missions at Genoa and then at Alessandria.
- This fails to take place.
- But toward the end of the year matters will look better and several very good men will join him.
- Paul is awaiting permission to open two Retreats, one at Vetralla and the other at Toscanella.
- He is at peace, even though he is “walking through thunder, storms, clouds...”
- There are fourteen religious, but only four are priests.
- He needs members, but also there is need of three Houses to enable the Pope to establish his community as a religious institute.
- Paul celebrates the Feast of the Presentation 1743 vesting three candidates, including his brother Father Anthony, who earlier had been dismissed.

1744 “I WILL ALLOW DIVINE PROVIDENCE TO GUIDE ME”

- Paul and John Baptist journeyed to Rome to finalize the establishment of the two Retreats at Vetralla and Toscanella.
- But the two Albani brothers, both cardinals, have offered them a new foundation at the shrine of San Eutizio near Soriano.
- The older was Annibale, also called “of San Clemente” and also “Treasurer,” for he was the “Camerlengo” in charge of papal finances.
- The younger brother, Alexander, became a cardinal in 1721 and at this time was a member of the Congregation of Good Government, which was the papal agency for governing the Papal States.
- Annibale believed his health had been renewed by his prayers to San Eutizio, a martyr.
- As a result he restored the shrine to the saint on the ancestral estate near Soriano.

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A small community of priests were given this shrine by the Albani cardinals.

When the priests abandoned the shrine, Garagni suggested to the younger Cardinal Alexander to offer it to Paul of the Cross.

Both Albani brothers saw in this suggestion a solution to their embarrassment with the empty shrine.

The two cardinals asked Paul to come to Rome, which he did.

Paul was glad to accept this shrine with its small "convento," a home for the priest usually attached to a church.

Pope Benedict XIV approved and Paul decided to take "private" possession until the "Retreat" could be properly restored.

**1745**

Paul finds himself with renewed bodily pains to the extent that he is confined to bed. In a letter dated 8th July 1745, Paul mentions to Sister Cherubina that his sickness has been of a year's duration. He has been to the baths, unable to celebrate Mass in the previous December, and when he could get up, he had to use crutches.

**1746 “IT IS A MIRACLE OF GOD”**

The first letter of 1746 is dated March 31.

It was written from Rome, where Paul spent about two months.

A commission had been formed in Rome to study the Rule and to decide on the approval of the Congregation.

One of the members was Cardinal Annibale Albani, who had just given the shrine of San Eutizio to Paul.

On 8 September 1745, Paul had met him at Soriano, where they discussed the workings of the commission.

Later, on 12 January 1746 Albani wrote to Paul and suggested that he come to Rome.

Before leaving Paul vested several novices, including John Mary Cioni, who would become Paul's confessor, a General Superior, and the first historian of the Congregation.

Paul spent the two months in Rome talking to the cardinals and seeking the advice of others.

This is why there is only one letter written from Rome.

Finally, Pope Benedict XIV signed a draft of the Brief Ad Pastoralis Dignitaten on 27 March 1746.

From now on Paul will know that the Congregation is officially established with the blessing of the Pope.

He is under the special protection of Benedict XIV, even though the Pope held back on the granting of dimissorials because of the opposition of a cardinal.

Paul returns to Vetralla and also pays a visit at Soriano.

He keeps in close contact with Father Fulgentius from each Retreat during the following weeks.
• He is securing breviaries from Rome with the help of Father Felix Sbarra
• He also buys habit-cloth
• He worries about receiving the Brief and how he will pay for it.
• He does not want to be called “General Superior,” even though he will have the duties of such until the Chapter is held in 1747
• He realises the sacrifices Father Fulgentius is making as Novice Director and reminds him of the great service he is giving to the Congregation and to the Church by forming future missionaries
• He also realises that some of the novices will not make it and should be sent home in due time
• Finally, he attempts to provide sufficient religious for each Retreat and also to have religious for one or two new ones
• He intends to return to Rome to secure an Indult for the Ordination of his students preparing for Ordination.
• Amid all this he is ill at times and must take the baths at Vetralla
• The letters to Father Fulgentius reveal many important insights into Paul’s character and holiness as well as details of the Congregation’s history and difficulties

1747 MISSIONS AND FIRST GENERAL CHAPTER

• According to Zoffoli, Paul had not given a mission since October 1744, due to his prolonged illnesses and his work to seek approval of the Rule
• Now in mid-January 1747, he conducts a mission at Orte and preaches to the nuns there
• Later in May 1747 he gives a mission at Vignanello
• This year will see the holding of the first General Chapter in April 1747, and the beginnings of a foundation south of Rome, near Ceccano
• There are new vocations and professions of vows
• 1747 is a good year for Paul and the Congregation
• Paul closed the year at Soriano
• There are several letters to Father Fulgentius in which Paul wrote of professions and of new candidates vested in the Passionist Habit.
• Note the figures of “fire” and “flame” used in the December 1747 letters
• He writes: “Jesus wishes to light a great fire in Rome so that it may spread and be clear to everyone” (1, 9, 16 December)
• On December 19 1747 he prays that we take our hearts and “thrust them in the furnace of the sweet Heart of Jesus... Oh, what a fire burns in the stable of Bethlehem!”
• He wrote to Bishop Borgia and to Father Thomas Mary and others
• Paul made a fast trip to Rome to see the Church of Saint Thomas in Formis
• He celebrated Christmas at Soriano and then prepared for the journey to Ceccano and the foundation at the Abbey of Corniano
1748 CECCANO, TOSCANELLA, FRATI

- The new year finds Paul hastening to Ceccano with the priests, brothers, and students who will form the first community at the Abbey (“Badia”) of Coriano
- The first several letters give us Paul’s own reflections on this experience
- There are several letters in February 1748 which tell of his journey from Ceccano to Rome, his audience with the Pope and his return to Vetralla and Toscanella, and with plans to arrive at the Presentation Retreat early in March 1748
- Interestingly, it is in 1748 that Paul begins using John Tauler, the fourteenth-century German Dominican mystic
- In future letters Paul will make use of Tauler’s writings to explain elements of mystical prayer
- Paul remains at Monte Argentario through March, but then plans to go to Toscanella for the foundation there
- In the meantime he has learned that people in Terracina want a Retreat and he writes to the Council and to the 78-year-old Carmelite, Bishop Joachim Oldo, Bishop of Terracina
- There are twenty-seven letters to Bishop Oldo from 20 March 1748, until 27 August 1749. Bishop Oldo died in November 1749
- The rest of this year Paul spends on the road or in the chambers of cardinals
- He walks with his companions from Viterbo to Ceccano, then to Ferentino and Rome, and back to Viterbo, only to leave again for a mission in Porto
- During this time he writes letters to Father Fulgentius, Bishop Oldo, Bishop Borgia, and others, describing the situation of the battle with the Mendicants
- The final letter, undated but perhaps written earlier, to Father Thomas Mary Struzzieri tells us of the terrible sufferings he endured, even in the earliest years, as he travelled for the Congregation
- Paul knows the baptism he must endure to inflame the world with the fire of love

1749 “A MIRACULOUS GRACE”

- In the early letters of the new year of 1749, Paul tells the story of his illness and his slow recovery
- He had spent Christmas in bed at Oriolo
- He returned to Viterbo and finally got to Rome by 18 January 1749, when he writes from there to Bishop Borgia of the “miraculous grace,” for a Brief will be presented by a select committee of four, newly assigned Bishops
- However, there would be no final decision until the beginning of Lent

https://passionistcharism.wordpress.com
• So Paul returned to San Angelo at Vetralla and then goes to the Presentation at Monte Argentario, where he makes the Visitation of the Community
• Rome moves slowly as Paul will soon learn
• Paul returned to Rome by 19 April 1749 to be at hand as the Cardinals met to decide the problem of Paul's making foundations without the consent of the Mendicants
• Paul had hoped a brief would be issued, but the cardinals decided simply to allow Ceccano, Terracina, and Paliano to be established at the request of the local bishops and Communes
• However, other places were not decided at this time
• Paul sees this as good news, a “miracle,” and writes several letters to Bishops Oldo and Borgia and Father Fulgentius and others
• Paul has the problem of finding sufficient rooms for the religious, and there are difficulties in getting the religious ordained
• For these reasons he decided to limit the number of novices he would accept
• During this year Paul writes several letters of spiritual direction, in which he speaks of interior prayer and contemplation

1750-1760

1750 OUR AFFAIRS ARE ASLEEP IN ROME
1751 MISSIONS
1752 GREAT TRIBULATIONS
1753 THE SECOND GENERAL CHAPTER
1754 MISSIONS AND CONVALESCENCE
1755 IN THE MIDST OF MY STORMS LATE
1756 SCARCELY AFLOAT AMID TEMPESTS ON THE VIOLENT SEA
1757 I HAVE ABANDONED EVERYTHING
1758 DEATH OF PAUL’S GREATEST BENEFACtor
1759 THE POPE WILL BE FAVOURABLE TO US
1759 WAITING

1750 ‘OUR AFFAIRS ARE ASLEEP IN ROME!”

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Paul Francis Spencer C.P.)

• Paul begins the new year in Rome
• Bishop Oldo had died on 3 November 1749
• There had been problems at Ceccano and now at Terracina, where Bishop Callistus M. Palombella was installed
• Paul, early in January 1950, visited both cities and then decided there was little he could do in Rome to hasten a solution to these foundations
• He returned to San Angelo at Vetralla
• While he was at the Presentation Retreat, the Provincial Chapter was held on 10 February 1750, to provide Local Superiors for the five
retreats: Fr. Fulgentius of Jesus at Presentation; Fr. Francis Appiani of the Crucified at San Angelo; Fr. Stephen of Saint Joachim at Soriano; Fr. Anthony of the Passion at Saint Mary of Corniano in Ceccano; Fr. Luke Anthony of Saint Joseph at The Oak in Toscanella

- Mark Aurelius was elected general consultor in place of Fr. Fulgentius, who resigned

**1751 MISSIONS**

- There are several letters to Bishop Borgia during the first six months of 1751
- The letters are written while Paul is in Rome and at San Angelo in Vetralla
- We read of Paul’s plans for the missions the Bishop wants and for the foundation of the Retreat of San Sosio in Falvaterra
- Paul also seeks to ordain several more religious
- He spends most of this time in the southern provinces of the Papal States
- By May 19 Paul has returned to the Retreats of San Angelo and Soriano
- He undergoes blood-letting and the baths as he regains his strength
- Paul becomes ill while giving a mission at Valmontone
- He is unable to stop at Civita Castellana on his way back north to hear confessions of the nuns at San Oreste
- He is back in San Angelo by 9 December 1751 “in very poor shape”
- At the end of the year he plans to return to Terracina for the foundation of that Retreat, at long last
- While Paul continues the struggle to found new Retreats and to give missions, he also continues the direction of earlier followers, such as Fossi, Gandolfi, Bresciani, and starts directing Lucy Burlini, Maria Johanna Ventura Grazi, and others

**1752 GREAT TRIBULATIONS**

*Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Paul Francis Spencer C.P.)*

- Paul evidently spent Christmas at The Oak in Toscananella and then went on to Monte Argentario
- On the way back he ran into rainy weather with flooding
- Before the opening of Terracina Retreat, Paul took part in a “public retreat” there
- After the dedication he gave a mission at Sonnino
- After Easter in early April 1752 he gave a mission at Piperno
- 30 April 1752 to 14 May 1752 he preached a mission in Sezze and a retreat at the convent. The fever returned during this mission
- In the letter dated 1 July 1752, Paul opens with a cry for prayers
- He writes of “great tribulations” and “greater troubles and horrible woes” and that the Congregation is being held together “on a thin thread”

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• He repeats the very same words in the letter of 6 July 1752 to Thomas Fossi
• He is back at San Angelo at Vetralla, where he is involved in “very important affairs”
• At the end of July 1752 he sends a letter to all of his religious, recommending prayers, penances, and fastings in each community in behalf of “this newly born Congregation in great need of the help and graces of His Divine Majesty”

1753 THE SECOND GENERAL CHAPTER

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Paul Francis Spencer C.P.)

• The year 1753 was for Paul the manifestation of God’s Will that he guide the Congregation for another term of office
• In the early months of 1753 he prepares for the General Chapter
• In spite of his efforts he cannot avoid re-election as Superior General
• As he leaves the chapter room and writes to his brethren, he seems more and more committed to have the Institute established in the Church as a religious order with solemn vows
• There are several letters written to benefactors who are helping out on behalf of the Chapter
• One priest has sent some “precious wine … for the comfort of the capitulars”
• He asks Signore James Anguillara to have his father provide two horses in Corneto for Father Fulgentius as he travels to San Angelo for the Chapter
• Father Thomas Struzzieri has begged the Pope to allow him to refuse an election to any office
• The capitulars were: the council, consisting of Paul, John Baptist, Mark Aurelius; the rectors are Fulgentius for Presentation, Francis Anthony for San Angelo, Luke Anthony for Soriano, Stephen for Ceccano, Dominic for Toscanella, Thomas for Falvaterra, and Bernardine for Terracina
• There was the three-day Triduum with a conference on 11 March 1753. The Chapter opened on 12 March 1753 with the Solemn Mass of the Holy Spirit, procession into the Chapter Room, culpa by the General and the election of Paul as General Superior. The consultors were re-elected. The new Rectors elected were: Francis Anthony for Presentation, Luke Anthony for San Angelo, Stephen for San Eutizio, Joseph for Ceccano, Raymond for Toscanella, Dominic for Falvaterra, John Mary for Terracina, and Fulgentius as Novice Master
• A southern province was established with Thomas of the Side of Jesus as the Provincial, and Dominic of the Conception and Joseph of the Conception were his Consultors. Thomas of the Side of Jesus would be in charge of the southern Retreats. Paul, as General Superior, acted as Provincial for the northern Retreats
• The discussions and voting on decrees continued on 12 and 13 March
• The Chapter closed on 14 March 1753, but on 13 March 1753 Paul sent out his circular letter to all the religious
• In it he mentioned his intention to seek solemn vows
• It would appear that this question had been discussed at the Chapter
• There are several letters written in 1753 without complete dates
• One is written to Pope Benedict XIV, requesting permission to ordain several candidates.
• The others are written to the King of the Two Sicilies and Cardinal Colonna
• Both concern the building of a new novitiate on Mount Argentario in proximity to the Presentation Retreat, but situated as to get the sea breezes, thus offering better air than the lagoon near Orbetello provided
• Paul sees this novitiate building consisting of bedrooms and a chapel for the novices, and as “forming one entity with this Retreat”
• This will become the Retreat of Saint Joseph on Monte Argentario, the novitiate house of the Presentation Province for more than two centuries

1754 MISSIONS AND CONVALESCENCE, “IN THE MIDST OF MY STORMS”

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Paul Francis Spencer C.P.)

• Paul began the new year of 1754 by finishing the mission at Civitella Cesi in the Diocese of Viterbo
• Then he opened one at Bieda
• After returning for several days to San Angelo, he opened another at Monte Romano
• He returned to San Angelo only to leave again to give the nuns at Sutri a retreat early in February
• He went to Corneto and then to Toscanella for a retreat to nuns
• On 21 March 1754 he left for Mount Argentario and a retreat in Orbetello
• He began a mission at Sabina, but his health gave way and he had to return to San Angelo to recuperate
• Paul writes several letters of spiritual direction to Sister Cherubina, Thomas Fossi, and especially Sister Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi
• Paul was suffering from illness ever since he tried to start a mission in Sabina (letter to Thomas Fossi, 21 May 1754)
• But he is also suffering from the pain of learning that religious are seeking to be dismissed from the Congregation (letter to Sister Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi, 30 July 1754)
• In spite of this there are beautiful spiritual and mystical messages in these letters
• Perhaps in writing these passages he finds the strength to carry the crosses he is experiencing
• Between 15 December 1754 and 24 December 1754 Paul writes three times to Sister Colomba

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Among other things he begged her to pray “in these calamitous times for holy workers.”

As this year of 1754 ended, Paul looks back upon six religious who had left the Congregation: Fathers Peter Giampolini of the Holy Wounds, Mariano Santini of Saint Lawrence, John Gelli of Saint Aloysius, Constance Bartolotti of Saint Gabriel, John Peter Poli of Saint Charles, and Confrater Henry Milanesi of Saint Stanislaus (1754 or 1755).

The Congregation “was being pruned” and Paul prays

1755 “ALL MY TASKS AND JOURNEYS”

*Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Paul Francis Spencer C.P.)*

Paul began 1755 at the Presentation on canonical Visitation

On his way to Tuscany and the Retreat of The Oak, he has a difficult journey in terribly cold weather

His first letter is to Father John Mary Cioni in Terracina on 8 January

He is happy to hear the news from Lazio

Above all he is happy to learn that three clerics will be ordained during this coming Lent

He mentions that there is a great need for priests, especially to open the Retreat at Paliano

There is the possibility of receiving another Retreat near Grosseto in Tuscany and one is being negotiated in Florence

This would be a year of many tasks and journeys for Paul, ending with the Retreat at Paliano, formally opened on 23 November 1755

He was forced to interrupt the missions and to take the baths and rest up

Interestingly, while he was so weak he continued to write even though he said that writing had become painful for him (letter to Sister Cherubina above and to Fossi on 24 May 1755)

The death of Father Fulgentius Pastorelli on 16 April 1755 called for the assignment of a Novice Master and a Rector at Monte Argentario

Paul needed time to mourn the loss of this holy religious and loyal friend

Paul gave several missions during the fall, together with retreats to sisters in various convents

Writing to Sister Cherubina Bresciani on 4 December 1755, he remarks that he arrived “yesterday at 20 hours after about three months of labours”

The year 1755 ended with Paul celebrating Christmas at San Angelo at Vatralla, then on his way, leaving probably on 27 December 1755 for the mission at Manziana, which closed on 11 January 1756

1756 SCARCELY AFLOAT AMID TEMPESTS ON THE VIOLENT SEA

Paul left before 1756 began because he wanted to start another mission at Manziana
• It seems, however, that the mission was delayed until the middle of January 1756
• This was to become for Paul a difficult, painful time
• Passionist Father Joachim De Sanctis writing a life of St. Paul of the Cross describes 1756 as “Worn-out but Fearless”
• Another Passionist Fr. Zoffoli speaks of this time as “Living Like Gypsies”
• Paul was busy giving missions and conducting retreats for religious sisters
• He was able finally to establish a Retreat near Rome on Monte Cavo
• These were also the final years of the pontificate of Pope Benedict XIV
• In April 1756 he signed a Rescript enabling Paul to ordain his religious without requiring the Dimissorial Letters from the local Bishops
• For eighteen months the Pope was ill, dying on 3 May 1757
• Finally, Paul’s health continues to be a problem
• He suffers again and again from fevers
• Note how his own sufferings teach him how to direct those who have various forms of suffering — always to accept the loving Providence of God

1757 “I HAVE ABANDONED EVERYTHING”

• 1757 becomes a difficult year for Paul
• He is quite busy with missions and retreats but barely has the strength and health to begin or conclude these ministries
• He is trying to make one or two new foundations, but again something seems to get in the way
• At times it seems the convent for the nuns will be built, but again something blocks this effort
• Perhaps he sums up this year in the words he wrote to a religious sister on 9 August 1757: “…I have abandoned everything, whether those looking toward the Congregation or those regarding the convent, to the Divine Good Pleasure…”
• Paul writes letters on profound mystical prayer
• He gives the Novice Master practical advice about the use of tobacco by one of the brothers in the novitiate
• He insists that Dominic Costantini take safeguards to avoid any legal questions if the Bishop should die before the convent for the Passionist Nuns is built
• As the year 1757 ends Paul is looking forward to the early General Chapter in February when he will be free (letter of 8 November 1757, to Fossi)
• He is tired, sick, and too busy
• The affairs of the Congregation way heavy upon him
• He is constantly under pressure to give another mission here or there
• Religious want him to give them their retreats and individuals are seeking his guidance and direction
• Paul feels the need for solitude
• Above all, Paul wanted to see the Congregation more firmly established in the Church.
• It is more and more obvious to all that Pope Benedict XIV was in weak health and also under heavy pressures from the demands of Catholic rulers
• Paul must have felt that it was more prudent to wait for a new Pope to secure solemn vows
• In Paul’s mind a General Chapter with the election of a new General might possibly be God’s way of establishing the Congregation

1758 DEATH OF PAUL’S GREAT BENEFACTOR, POPE BENEDICT XIV – “THE POPE WILL BE FAVOURABLE TO US”, POPE CLEMENT XIV

• The new year began for Paul at San Angelo in Vetralla
• He was confronted by the request from the Bishop to serve the convent at Sutri, but he had already pledged himself to serve the Carmelite convent in Vetralla
• He also wants to be back at San Angelo by 23 January 1758 to prepare for the General Chapter in mid-February
• In his first letter of 1758 to Father Sisti he discusses several choices open to him
• Through March, April, and into May, Paul is concerned with the situation at Monte Cavo
• There is also news from Father Thomas Struzzieri in Rome that the Propagation of the Faith is offering the Passionists a foreign mission in the Caucasus Mountains in Asia Minor
• But at the same time he is struggling to satisfy the Bishop of Acquapendente with a mission at Castro di Ischia in spite of his lack of religious and his own weak health
• While Paul continued to preach, trying to provide for Monte Cavo and the demands of the Propagation of the Faith, he received news that the greatest benefactor to the Passionists has died, Pope Benedict XIV.
• Perhaps no one more than Paul himself realized how much Passionists owed this Pope.
• It is strange then that in the letters Paul wrote at this time he does not add a word of eulogy that rose up all over the Christian world to the praise of Pope Benedict XIV
• Passionist Fr. John Mary Cioni relates that Paul did remark that the one who established the Congregation of the Passion went to eternal glory on the feast of the “Finding of the Holy Cross,” celebrated at that time on 3 May 1758
• Paul concludes his mission work by the beginning of June and remains at San Angelo for the next several months
• He writes many letters of spiritual direction
• He also follows the doctor’s orders, even though he is planning further missions
• In the very first letters after the news of the election of Cardinal Rezzonico as Pope on 7 July 1758, Paul again and again mentions how hopeful he is
• He feels that time has come to establish the Congregation more solidly and to hasten to Rome to greet the Pope and to renew conversations with friendly contacts in the Papal Court.
• He also begins a campaign of prayer as he had done earlier when struggling with the Mendicants.
• On the same 15 July that Paul wrote to Thomas Fossi he also wrote to the Abbess of the Capuchins to request prayers, especially to Saint Bibiana, implying he might receive that church in Rome
• In the letter of July 29 to Fossi he explained why he could not give a mission on the island of Elba
• To the friend of his youth, Paul Sardi (29 July), he explains more clearly his hopes for solemn vows
• He also mentions the possibility of a foreign mission and explains why he cannot give missions in Lombardy
• He also thanks him for his care of his family in Castellazzo
• On 1 August he wrote to a benefactor and mentioned the possibility of constructing “a new building for the novitiate”
• It has been a long time since the novitiate building was mentioned in a letter
• Paul certainly feels that this is a favorable time
• Paul had tried to keep himself free to go to Rome when called
• Finally, in letters to Sister Rose Mary Teresa on 26 October and to Thomas Fossi on 27 October, he writes that he is going to Rome for important business
• He is back at San Angelo on 24 November, when he writes to Father Joseph Sisti, but offers no word about his reception in Rome
• He did give a short mission to assist people preparing for the extraordinary Jubilee
• As the year ends, Paul plans a mission in early January 1759
• He is also trusting that Pope Clement XIII will be “favorable to us,” but Paul realizes that the Pope will act slowly and carefully because of the situation with the Jesuits

1759 WAITING

• Shortly after Paul’s letter to Fr. John Mary Cioni, 7 February 1759, he learns that Father Thomas Struzzieri is being sent by the Pope to accompany Bishop Crescenzio De Angelis of Segni to make the Visitation of the Island of Corsica
• Paul responds to the Bishop in the letters of 11 August 1759 and 13 August 1759
• In the letter to Thomas Fossi on 21 August 1749, he mentions that there is a shortage of religious with some going to “the lands of the infidels and others to another far off place”
• Interestingly, from August to fall Paul is concerned not only with the departure of Father Thomas Struzzieri, but also with the building of a Retreat in Corneto, the sending of several missionaries to Elba for a mission in the spring, knowing how many novices will be entering the novitiate, and caring for a sick religious (letter of August 19, 1759)
• There is also the need of someone to take Father Struzzieri’s place when he leaves
• And always there is the hope for solemn vows as well as concern over Paul’s health
• Paul visited Rome the previous year and had an audience with the Pope. Clement XIII was very kind, but in accordance with his policies he assured Paul that he would form a special commission of cardinals to hear Paul and study his requests
• The Pope unfortunately was very much occupied with the pressure from Portugal, France, and especially Spain in regard to the Jesuits. Ecclesiastical historians give the impression that this was almost all that this Pope did
• Perhaps Pope Clement XIII wanted to work through his officials in order to gain time in coming to a final decision on the Jesuits
• In the letter to Thomas Fossi on 24 December 1759, is the first reference to the tragic deaths of Father John Thomas, rector of San Angelo, Father Francis Anthony Appiani, the General Secretary, and Brother Francis. They died from drinking wine kept in a wooden barrel that had been treated with an unknown poisonous plant. John Thomas died on 14 December 1759, Francis Anthony on 18 December 1759, and Brother Francis on 1 January 1760. Paul was at the Retreat of Our Lady of the Oak near Toscanella. It was a terrible shock to Paul and to the Congregation. The assignment of any missionaries to work in foreign lands was out of the question
• Paul mentioned in the 11 January 1760 letter to Reverend John Anthony Lucattini that three religious have died at San Angelo and one is in great danger
• In the 15 January 1759 letter to Father Luke Anthony Bianchini, rector at Monte Cavo, he informs him that Brother Francis Battaglini, the “Luccan,” has also died. He adds that “the influenza has now stopped, thanks to the Lord”
• The opening paragraph of the 19 February 1760, letter to Thomas Fossi perhaps sums up how Paul accepted this tragedy

1760-1770

1760 NOTHING IS TO BE CHANGED FOR NOW
1761 TO PRAY SUFFER, WORK AND WAIT IN SILENCE AND HOPE
1762-1763 SPENDING MY OLD AGE LIKE A DRY STUMP
1764 SICKNESS AND FAMINES
1765 ON OUR JOURNEY THE SAYING IS NOT ‘REST IN PEACE’
1766 GOD MAINTAINS THE CONGREGATION
1767 HOSPICE OF THE CRUCIFIED IN ROME
1768 TO EXPAND IN MORE THAN ONE KINGDOM – NAPLES
1769 PAUL OF THE CROSS AT AGE OF SEVENTY SIX – SICK, BENT OVER AND DEAF
1769 THE FIFTH GENERAL CHAPTER
1769 THE GREAT BULL – SUPREMI APOSTOLATUS
1770 FOR SUCH A GREAT WORK GOD HAS MADE USE OF ME

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1760 “NOTHING IS TO BE CHANGED FOR NOW”

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Adolfo Lippi C.P.)

- Paul begins 1760 with more missions
- In spite of the missions and continued illness, Paul is always awaiting news from Rome.
- Pope Clement XIII has promised to form a commission of cardinals to look into the possibility of establishing the Congregation as a religious order with solemn vows. When that happy event takes place, he will be able to have his religious ordained to the Priesthood; the convent of Passionist nuns can be built at Corneto; the Propagation of the Faith will send Paul's religious to the “lands of the infidels”; and, above all, this “great Work of God” will be solidly established
- To achieve this goal Paul once again turns to prayer, organising a crusade of prayers in the convents and parishes served by Passionists
- He himself strives to trust more and more in Divine Providence, to find God's Will and plan in whatever decision the cardinals and the Pope finally make
- At the end of 1760 Paul prepares for the future with renewed vigor
- He continues to make necessary decisions and changes
- In the letter of 13 December 1760, to Reverend Cajetan Santacroce, he prepares for a mission in Bracciano
- On the same day he writes to Leonard Falzacappa of Corneto about appealing to the pope for financial aid in building the Retreat there
- Perhaps, Paul felt, if there is a thriving Retreat in Corneto, interest in building the convent might be stirred up again
- Sometime in early December 1760 he reminds the Rectors of the Provincial Chapter, which will begin on 22 February 1761
- He also writes to the King of the Two Sicilies for financial aid for the Retreat on Monte Argentario
- Finally, from Vetralla he sends a letter “to the missionary Fathers of the Congregation”

1761 “TO PRAY, SUFFER, WORK, AND WAIT IN SILENCE AND HOPE”

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Adolfo Lippi C.P.)

- The Provincial Chapter was held on 4 May 1761 at San Angelo
- Father Mark Aurelius was re-elected as Provincial. The Consultors were Father Joseph Hyacinth Ruberi and Father Luke Anthony Bianchini. Father John Mary Cioni replaced Father Thomas Struzzieri as General Consultor
- In a letter to Canon Paul Sardi on 7 May 1761, Paul wrote that the Chapter was celebrated “in great peace and union”
- Paul had just gotten up from his sick bed a few days before
- For some months Paul has been in and out of bed
- He saw himself as “on the cross of my poor bed!”
• All the while he was recovering from the negative response to his request for solemn vows
• Now he was struggling with his fear that the solitude of the Rule will be hindered at San Sosio. He might have to abandon that Retreat!
• In 1761 Paul writes beautiful spiritual letters to Cherubina Bresciani, Thomas Fossi, an unknown gentleman, Teresa Palozzi, Girolama Ercolani, Canon Francis Scarsella. How did he find time to respond to the needs of these various people who asked his counsel?
• Through these letters Paul shares with each correspondent not only from his understanding of mystical theology, but also from the depths of his personal spiritual experiences
• Paul spends the remaining weeks of 1761 at San Angelo, writing to several of his dear friends
• His Christmas greetings this year seem to be much longer, for he is carried away as he reflects on the birth of Christ
• In spite of his illness and sufferings, he seems very much at peace

1762 “SPENDING MY BROKEN OLD AGE LIKE A DRY STUMP”

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Adolfo Lippi C.P.)

• Paul continues to spend a great deal of time in bed, trying to get strength to write and, above all, to give missions
• He finds it difficult even to get to the Carmelite convent at Vetralla to visit Sister Maria Angela
• But he does write, sometimes dictate, letters of profound spiritual depth
• Reading these letters we sense that Paul is inviting us: “Let us help each other carry the cross” (Father Joseph Andrew, 10 July 1762); “To repose like a baby on the bosom of His love” (Maria Angela Cincelli, 11 July 1762); “Living abandoned to the Divine Good Pleasure in that naked, desolate suffering...leaving the care of all happenings to Him, without thinking of what will happen to you” (Mother Mary Crucified Costantini, 7 September 1762)
• Paul ends 1762 with letters to Thomas Fossi and his two sons, Michael and Paulinus. He himself is “full of aches and pains”
• He can no longer go out on missions
• But these three letters reveal a worn-out old man still capable of explaining the duties of married life to Thomas; still young enough to offer a young university student a place to spend the holidays; and, above all, able to open his heart to Paulinus by describing life in the Congregation as the giving of oneself entirely to Jesus, giving him all one’s heart, one’s soul, one’s will, all, all

1763 AT THE OAK

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Adolfo Lippi C.P.)

• The next year, 1763, began for Paul at The Oak
• He received letters from: Mother Mary Crucified; Father Joseph Andrew, rector at Mount Cavo; Father Philip James, professor at Paliano; Thomas Struzziari in Corsica; Brother Aloysius of Saint Mary; Sister Colomba; and Thomas Fossi. Most certainly he heard from other religious
• The letters of 1763 show us how he dealt with various problems and needs
• For example, notice the letters of 6 May 1763 and 9 May 1763, concerning a convict awaiting execution, and letters in the summer about the sickness of his brother Father John Baptist

1764 SICKNESS AND FAMINES

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Adolfo Lippi C.P.)

• 1764 began with letters to both Brother Aloysius Basili and Father Joseph Andrew Ruspantini, dated 3 January 1764 and 13 January 1764. These two letters continued a “dialog” that had begun 10 July 1762, when Paul assured the new rector of Monte Cavo, Father Ruspantini, that he would send him a new lay brother.
• On 15 January 1763, Paul told the Rector to prepare to appeal for funds from the Pope who would be summering at the nearby Castello. Brother Aloysius was ready by 14 May 1763, to begin, but there wasn’t enough money. Father Paul wanted to see the work get started but realised the Rector should make the actual decision. Paul tries to get cooperation between the Brother and the Rector in order to accomplish a needed goal!
• After the Chapter Paul keeps correspondence with quite a few people. What is obvious is that he is no longer a well person. To Sister Colomba Gertrude Gandolfi he wrote that he had been nailed to his sack with his usual pains (28 February 1764); to Thomas Fossi: “I have been keeping to my bed since 2 February until now” (16 March 1764), and “I could not celebrate Mass…even for Easter” (28 April 1764); to Teresa Palozzi: “I have a weak head and I cannot write” (26 May 1764); to Mamelta Orsini: “I am much crippled and decrepit with age, for I am 74 and no longer go on missions, and I cannot do more” (28 August 1764)
• One might wonder how he carried on, and how his companions, and even the Holy See, could keep him in office
• During the past few years, central Italy had suffered from poor harvests. Paul was aware of this, hearing from Thomas Fossi and Dominic Costantini, for example
• 1764 proved to be a much more serious one. To make matters worse, France refused to sell anything to the Papal States. Prices doubled on the Roman markets. The situation was growing worse each day. It was becoming a deadly famine, with people actually starving to death
• On 16 March 1764 Father Mark Aurelius, the Provincial in the south, wrote his first circular letter on the famine to the brethren. The Pope ordered a penitential procession in Rome on 1 April 1764
• Paul arranged for the senior brethren at San Angelo to discuss this matter, offering suggestions on ways the community could help others
• As a result, Paul wrote a letter to all the religious on the great famine of 1764
• We do not have the exact date, but it must have been written toward the end of March or early in April
• There are also several letters to Bishop Crescenzio De Angelis, who returned from Corsica but left Father Thomas there
• These letters of 1764 are dated 30 June, 3 July, 23 September, and 13 October, when Paul learns that Father Thomas will become a Bishop
• Paul was at The Oak as the year ended
• He has been elected again as Superior General
• In the midst of the difficulties caused by the famine and his personal illness, what becomes notable is the amount of time he keeps in touch with his religious
• Many write to him and he at once responds
• Frequently he encourages them to continue growing in the spirit of prayer, to accept their trials and sufferings, to make the effort to develop the missionary spirit
• In other words, Paul of the Cross made the most of his inactivity to give his religious close attention, loving concern, and helpful encouragement
• He is founder not only when he struggles with Papal Commissions or founds new Retreats, but also, and perhaps even more so when he strengthens the courage and spirit of his own religious

1765 “ON OUR JOURNEY, THE SAYING IS NOT, ‘REST IN PEACE’”

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Adolfo Lippi C.P.)

• Perhaps the first two letters of 1765 set the tone for Paul
• In the last letter of 1764 Paul quoted the words of Saint Jerome to Mother Mary Crucified that she is his daughter whether she likes it or not
• In fact Paul had not heard from Mother Mary for the past year
• Now, on New Year’s Day 1765, Paul writes to encourage her in her calling to become a Passionist, even before wearing the habit of the Passion!
• His second letter is to Sister Luisa of the Passion, who has lost her mother and her sister (Sister Maria Angela Magdalene of the Vetralla Carmel)
• He repeats the key words to her: “For us on our journey, the saying is not, ‘Rest in peace.’ This is said only of the dead; for us there is work, for us there are battles, for us the victories and the triumph are in heaven”
1766 “GOD MAINTAINS THE CONGREGATION IN PEACE, CHARITY AND TRUE OBSERVANCE”

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Adolfo Lippi C.P.)

- The hopes that Paul had of receiving greater stability for the Congregation faded with the death of Father John Baptist, his brother
- His own weakness forced him to moderate his activities
- Paul had to appoint a substitute, Father John Baptist of Saint Ignatius Porta
- At the same time Paul hoped to secure a small residence in Rome so he would be ready to work for the solemn approval of the Congregation when the Lord would open the way
- Father John Mary of Saint Ignatius Cioni was sent to Rome for this purpose
- Paul himself mentioned his plans when he wrote at the beginning of the year that he was striving with God’s blessings “to maintain the Congregation in peace, charity, and true observance”
- Paul now planned to visit the Retreats in the south. He even writes to Father Vincent, the Rector at Paliano, giving the day on which he will arrive
- In letters during March 1766 and April 1766 Paul’s health is too weak. He had to put it off
- Already in January 1766 he had sent Father John Mary Cioni to Rome
- Monte Cavo was near and yet not readily accessible, located on top of a mountain overlooking the city
- Paul himself made a short visit to Rome around the end of April
- In October 1766 Paul presided at the Provincial Chapter for the election of the Provincial and the superiors of all the Retreats
- There are also letters of spiritual direction which Paul faithfully writes to older friends and new followers, such as Sister Anna Maria
- Finally there are letters to his own religious. It is in all these ways that he seeks “to maintain the Congregation in peace and charity and holy observance”
- Before leaving San Angelo, he arranges a retreat for the Chapter and clerics of Bracciano. He assigns Father Candido to this task
- He then mentions that he is leaving for the south and will spend the winter at Terracina
- He goes to Rome, sees the Hospice, is received by Pope Clement XIII, and meets Cardinal Ganganelli
- He writes to Bishop Struzzieri, Bishop Garampi, and Cardinal Ganganelli
- He spends Christmas and the winter in Terracina, “the most beautiful and devout Retreat of the Congregation”

1767 HOSPICE OF THE CRUCIFIED, ROME

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Adolfo Lippi C.P.)
• On New Year's Day 1767 Paul writes a joyous letter to Teresa Palozzi, in which he shares with her the nice weather of “springtime and we have flowers and fresh roses for the altar”

• Two weeks later, writing to Father John Mary, he mentions “the rigors of the cold weather that has come, and I do not know when it will be over”

• He does find time to mention a few items for good order in the newly dedicated Hospice of the Crucified in Rome, such as an alarm clock, front door bell, the document showing the authorization to celebrate Mass in the oratory

• He suggests the need for confessional faculties and not inviting even benefactors to share in meals with the small community. Paul continues to give directions on such matters, although he tells John Mary to keep an eye on things and see what is best for the mitigated observance there

• He wants this Hospice to be the seed of a larger “tree” he hopes he will have one day in Rome

• At all times he wants to have a very observant house in the holy city (13 January 1767)

• By 6 May 1767 Paul has finished the Visitations and is at the Hospice in Rome

• He thanks Agapito Rischia Fiumara for the comfort he arranged for his final trip to the Hospice (6 May 1767)

• While staying at the Hospice, he calls upon the pope to thank him and also upon several cardinals, including Cardinal Ganganelli

• On 9 May 1767 he writes officially to Anthony Frattini, thanking him for serving as Syndic of the Hospice of the Crucified and declares him a special, perpetual benefactor of the Congregation

• He also declares Dominic Lucidi to be the servant of the Hospice, who will be provided for during the remaining years of his service and life (13 May 1767)

• Paul stays at the Hospice in Rome for a week

• When he arrives at San Angelo at Vetralla, he is sick again in bed

• In January 1768, Paul writes that this sickness has continued for seven months (10 January 1768)

1768 “TO EXPAND INTO MORE THAN ONE KINGDOM - NAPLES

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Adolfo Lippi C.P.)

• While Paul remained seriously sick, so often unable to celebrate Mass, Brother Joseph Pitruzzello, who had taken his vows on 13 June 1742, continued serving the community at Monte Argentario. He was on the quest at Giuncarico when he got seriously sick and died of a malignant fever on 21 April 1768. Paul writes of his death and his holiness in several letters at this time

• The year 1768 ends with letters and greetings to many friends, religious and benefactors
Thomas Fossi was ordained on 21 December 1768 at Grosseto and celebrated his first Mass at the main altar at the Presentation Retreat, Monte Argentario.

Several times Paul mentions that a new Retreat will be opened in 1769 at Corneto.

There is no word, however, of the convent for the nuns.

He sends greetings to the Pope and also writes to Cardinal Ganganelli.

He does not forget the Bishop of Alessandria, who has been so kind to his brother Anthony Danei.

He has been sick and bedridden throughout the year, but it has been a good year.

1769 “BROKEN-DOWN AGE OF SEVENTY-SIX, SICK, BENT OVER, DEAF”

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Adolfo Lippi C.P.)

Paul begins 1769 with letters to those he had not written to with Christmas greetings.

He was, moreover, looking forward to the foundation of the new Retreat at Corneto in this new year.

He was also conscious of his age and his “broken-down” condition.

This might be the year when he would be relieved of the office of Superior General.

Did he realise this would be the year of the solid foundation of the Congregation?

Did he know that he could not resign, for the final foundation stone had yet to be placed?

In mid-January 1769 he sent the letter of convocation for the Fourth General Chapter to be held on 7 May 1769 in the Retreat of San Angelo in Vetralla.

Pope Clement XIII died on 2 February 1769, the day before he was to meet with the cardinals on the question of the suppression of the Jesuits.

Father John Mary Cioni wrote to Father Paul, who replied: “With sorrow I learn of the death of the Pope, and this morning I celebrated Mass in suffrage for him…”

This is taken from the letter Paul wrote to John Mary, who quoted it in the Processes.

Paul continued: “…and that the Divine Goodness might provide his Church with a holy pastor, I have applied this intention for the Mass, having placed the heart of the cardinals in the wounds of Jesus Christ, especially that of Ganganelli” (quoted in De Sanctis, p. 788).

The Fifth General Chapter was held at San Angelo, 8-10 May 1769.

Paul wrote a letter of resignation, hoping to be relieved of the duties of Superior General.

The capitulars listened kindly but unanimously voted to accept the dispensation Father John Mary Cioni had received from the Holy See and elected Paul to another term as Superior General.
• Paul sent all the brethren his letter of acceptance on 18 May 1769
• The General Chapter had voted to establish the Office of General Procurator with the right to vote in General Chapters
• Father Candido of the Holy Wounds was elected to this office, and Paul sent him a letter on 9 May 1769
• This Chapter also decided to create a new northern province in the Patrimony of Saint Peter with the title of the Presentation. The Provincial would reside at San Angelo, Vetralla.
• The Chapter mitigated the fast on certain days, but did not permit serving meat. It also allowed the students in the houses of studies to be dispensed from night Matins

16 NOVEMBER 1769 – THE GREAT BULL SUPREMI APOSTOLATUS

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Adolfo Lippi C.P.)

• Cardinal Ganganelli was elected Pope Clement XIV on 19 May 1769, the day after Paul requested prayers for the cardinals
• A few days later he mentions to Anna Maria Calcagnini that he plans to go to Rome, and from Rome he writes to the Carmelites at the Ginnasie Convent on 27 May 1769
• In many of the following letters Paul expresses the great kindness of the Pope, the hope Paul has for the Congregation, and his requests for prayers for the Pope and the Church in these troubled times
• In spite of his continuing weakness, he remains hopeful
• Paul hopes to visit and eventually does visit the Basilica of Saint Mary Major on the Feast of the Assumption to remember his visit there in September 1721 when he took the Passion vow before her shrine in the Borghese Chapel
• He also mentions that he has been asked to preach a mission at one of the Roman churches on the occasion of the special Jubilee being called to celebrate the election of the new Pope.

1770 - 1775

1770 FOR SUCH A GREAT WORK GOD HAS MADE USE OF ME
1770 FIRST CONVENT OF PASSIONIST NUNS
1772 PRAY FOR ME AND THE NEEDS OF THE CHUCH
1773 STS. JOHN AND PAUL IN ROME
1774 DEATH OF POPE CLEMENT XIV
1775 PAUL’S FAREWELL

1770 “FOR SUCH GREAT A WORK ... GOD HAS MADE USE OF ME”

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Adolfo Lippi, C.P.)

• “For Such a Great Work...God Has Made Use of Me” - Paul wrote these words in the eighteenth letter to Anna Maria Calcagnini,
November 26, 1770. He was referring to the foundation of the convent for the Passionist nuns, but they apply to the foundation of the entire Congregation

- Paul was always aware of God’s call to him to found this religious Institute of priests, brothers and sisters
- Conscious of his own weakness, he knew the need for prayer
- These words of Paul have a special significance for the year 1770, as he realised how God was using him to obtain the final approval by Pope Clement XIV for the Passionist Nuns and soon for a Retreat in Rome
- He must have recognised why he was re-elected General Superior at the last three Chapters in spite of his long illnesses
- On 19 March 1770 Paul was again received by Pope Clement XIV in a very “long and private audience”
- At that audience Paul presented the petition of the abbess of the Capuchin nuns of Grosseto
- In his letter of 20 March 1770 he wrote to her, describing the Pope’s personal and gracious response
- Paul also requested permission to visit the Retreats in the north, but the Pope wanted him to consult with the Cardinal Vicar of Rome
- He also requested the Pope to approve the Rule for the Passionist Nuns
- Paul left on 27 March 1770, to visit Corneto and Monte Argentario and Vetralla
- He was called back to Rome, so Father John Mary finished the Visitations in the north
- On his return to Rome he had an audience with the Pope and continued work on the nuns’ Rule, which he presented to the Pope, who approved it on 3 September 1770
- Sick as he was, he continued his correspondence, at times from his bed

1771 DEDICATION OF THE FIRST CONVENT OF PASSIONIST NUNS

*Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Adolfo Lippi, C.P.)*

- 1771 is the year in which the first convent of the Passionist Nuns was dedicated in Corneto
- Paul has been writing about the final months of waiting and preparation
- The actual dedication took place on 3 May 1771

1772 ‘PRAY FOR ME, THE NEEDS OF THE CHURCH AND HIS HOLINESS”

*Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Adolfo Lippi, C.P.)*

- On 20 May 1772, the first Passionists Nuns made their profession of vows
- Clement XIV wrote them a letter asking for prayers, etc.
Father Paul was very much aware that the Pope and the Church needed prayers
In the few letters he was able to write during 1772, Paul begged for prayers
Pope Clement XIII had died a few hours before he would have to make a decision on the Society of Jesus
The pressure was now building upon Pope Clement XIV. Early in May he had received the new Spanish ambassador, Jose Monino, who demanded that the Pope suppress the Jesuits. At the next audience with Monino the Pope tried to solve the problem by reducing vocations, etc., for the Jesuits without a condemnation. Spain, Portugal, Naples, and France were all demanding full condemnation. In December the Pope accepted a proposal from Monino and Cardinal Bernis, the French cardinal. He entrusted it to Zelada to work over it with Monino
In the meantime Paul's sickness continued, and he celebrated Christmas 1772 from his bed

1773 SAINTS JOHN AND PAUL, ROME

Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Adolfo Lippi, C.P.)

On 9 April 1773 Pope Clement appointed new cardinals, including Zelada, a friend of Paul's
A week later he added John Braschi, the future Pius VI, to the rank of cardinal
The Pope finally signed the Apostolic Brief Dominus ac Redemptor, dated 21 July 1773, suppressing the Jesuits.
It was officially published on 13 August 1773.
Cardinal Zelada was on the commission to assign the Jesuit houses and churches to different communities.
He was a friend of Father Paul and suggested that the Passionists be given the Basilica and Monastery of Saints John and Paul, while the Vincentians, who had charge of it, would be given the former Jesuit Novitiate
There were difficulties, but on 30 October 1773 Paul wrote a letter of thanks to the Pope for the gift of the Basilica and Monastery of Saints John and Paul
The Passionists took possession of this Basilica and Monastery on the afternoon of 9 December 1773
The community moved from the Hospice to Saints John and Paul on 9 December 1773
It was a private ceremony
Paul sent out a letter of Christmas greetings from the new House on 17 December 1773 This seems to be a generic letter transcribed for various peoples
On Christmas Eve Paul remembered Canon Paul Sardi of his youthful years at the Church of Saint Charles in Castellazzo

https://passionistcharism.wordpress.com
• We are told that Paul sang the Midnight Mass on Christmas, and on 31 December 1773 went to the Papal Palace to greet the Pope for the new year

1774 DEATH OF POPE CLEMENT XIV

*Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Adolfo Lippi, C.P.)*

• At the end of 1773, or very early in 1774, Paul requests two further favors of the Pope, namely, that the superiors of the Retreats can give the Papal Blessing at the moment of dying to any of the religious, and that the Stations of the Cross can be erected there
• These favors were granted at audiences of 22 January 1774 and 23 January 1774
• The request for the erection of the Stations shows that Paul greatly approved of this Franciscan devotion, so strongly fostered by Father Leonard of Port Maurice
• Pope Clement XIV died on 22 September 1774
• Paul mourned him sincerely
• At the end of the year Paul is once again confined to bed and unable to celebrate Mass on Christmas
• He wrote a few letters of Christmas greetings

1775 THE YEAR AND PAUL’S FAREWELL

*Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul of the Cross (Adolfo Lippi, C.P.)*

• His final year 1775 began with Paul still in bed
• He remained in this condition throughout the year
• The conclave had begun on 5 October 1774, and did not end until 15 February 1775, with the election of Cardinal Braschi, who chose the name Pope Pius VI
• A few weeks later on 5 March 1775, while the Forty Hours devotions were being held at Saints John and Paul, the new Pope visited the Basilica and Paul of the Cross
• He received Paul still in bed
• In March Paul wrote a letter, requesting permission to delay the General Chapter until 9 May 1775
• In the meantime still in bed, with the help of Father Joseph Hyacinth, the Rector of the Retreat, Paul began reviewing each paragraph of the Rule
• In the Chapter he wanted the capitulars to discuss the Rule paragraph by paragraph
• He then asked Pope Pius VI to give a final approval of the Rule
• There are two final, undated letters to Pope Pius VI. The first concerns an interpretation of poverty as regards the retention of one’s patrimony with the permission of the Superior General. This could be dated anytime after Pope Pius VI’s election until Paul’s final weeks.
The other should be dated after the General Chapter, which was held in May 1775
  • Paul died 18 October 1775

**BEYOND**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>7th January 1777</td>
<td>PROCESS OF BEATIFICATION BEGAN</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st May 1853</td>
<td>BEATIFICATION OF PAUL OF THE CROSS BY POPE PIUS IX</td>
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<tr>
<td>29th June 1867</td>
<td>CANONISATION OF PAUL OF THE CROSS BY POPE PIUS IX</td>
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**FIRST PERIOD**

  • The first stage of Paulacruician studies was marked by the preserving of the records of Paul of the Cross
  • A few days after the Saint’s death the Vice General, Father John Baptist of St. Vincent Ferrier, sent a circular letter to the Religious of the Congregation, informing them of the details of the Founder’s last days (Published in Bulletino X (1929), p. 105-116)
  • Father John Baptist also initiated action that lead to the Founder’s Beatification
  • As early as 1777 the Ordinary (or Episcopal) Processes were begun at Rome, Corneto and Gaeta. A year later similar hearings were opened at Vetralla and Orbetello
  • This word proceeded so rapidly that in 1784 Pope Pius VI signed the decree for the formal Introduction of the Cause
  • By 1792 with Father Vincent M. Strambi as Postulator the Apostolic Processes were begun in Rome
  • In all one hundred and twenty witnesses testified about the life and virtues of St. Paul
  • Their sworn testimony fills twenty two volumes, preserved in the General Archives in Rome
  • This prompt action on the part of the first superiors and the abundant testimonies of many eye-witnesses have afforded future generations a rich source of valuable information
  • These first Passionists preserved the writing of St. Paul of the Cross – his diary, his sermons, his letters as well as other precious documents, such as the various versions of the Passionist Rule, the Acts of the General Chapters, Papal and Episcopal correspondence etc
  • Moreover, during this first period several religious attempted to write the history of the Passionist Congregation
  • Father John Mary of St. Ignatius (Cioni), confessor to St. Paul of the Cross and third Superior General, will always be remembered as the Congregation’s first historian
  • He composed the history of the foundation (Le Foundazione della Congregazione, ed in Bollettino, 1922-1926)
• He wrote the lives of Fr. John Baptist, Fulgensius, Mark Aurelius, Bishop Thomas Struzzieri and of Mother Mary Crucified
• His most important work was the two volume manuscript entitled: Annali della Congregazione (Critical Edition appearing in Acta Congregationis Nostrae 22 (October 1962) ff.
• St. Vincent Mary Strambi, disciple of St. Paul of the Cross, Postulator of his cause and Bishop, had the privilege of writing his first life of St. Paul of the Cross in 1786
• His work is unique because it is the life of a Saint written by a Saint. In its English translation in 1853 it has a future distinction: the preface was composed by a future Saint, Blessed Dominic Barberi
• St. Vincent Strambi was well qualified to write this first biography
• He had personally known St. Paul of the Cross and his many companions
• As Postulator he was familiar with the testimonies in the Processes
• He possessed the ability to give organisation and form to the abundant material at hand
• His work will ever remain a primary source in Paulacruician studies

SECOND PERIOD

• The second period covers a century from the restoration of the Congregation in 1814 until the end of the First World War
• During this period the emphasis in Paulacruician studies was in the area of popularisation
• It is difficult for us to realise the extent of the upheaval caused by the Napoleonic suppression
• The restoration meant starting anew
• The Passionists who survived the suppression manifested their love anew for St. Paul of the Cross
• No sooner had things settled somewhat than the Superiors began again the work for the Beatification of Paul of the Cross
• As early as 1821 Pope Pius VII issued a decree on the heroicity of Father Paul’s virtues
• The Beatification took place in 1853 during the generalate of Fr. Anthony of St. James (Testa)
• In 1867 Paul of the Cross was canonised
• In 1880 the Chapel in his honour was consecrated in Ss. John and Paul Basilica in Rome
• These events stirred up a deep love for Paul of the Cross and the Passionists
• Many Passionists wrote lives of the Founder
• Father Bernard Mary Silvrestrelli published in his First Companions, several lives of the early Passionists

THIRD PERIOD

• The third period began after the First World War
This was the real renaissance of Paulacrucian studies, for the sources were studied and published in a systematic manner.

The first Passionist international periodical appeared in 1920 (Bolletino, then followed by Acta in 1930).

One of the chief purposes of this periodical was the publication of historical documents on St. Paul and the early days of the Congregation.

Italian Father Amadeo published four volumes of the Founders letters in Italian.

Belgian Father Gaetan dug into the processes to discover new insights into St. Paul of the Cross.

The Spiritual Diary of St. Paul of the Cross was published with a commentary and translations appeared in different languages.

Scholars outside the Congregation recognised the greatness of the Saint.

**FOURTH PERIOD**

- The fourth period started with the General Chapter of 1946.
- The previous work continued but now it was more and more under the direction of scholars.
- At times religious were assigned to Paulacrucian studies by the highest authorities of the Congregation.
- Scholars wrote doctoral dissertations on various aspects of St. Paul of the Cross and his spirituality, his Rule etc.

**FIFTH PERIOD**

- In June 1958, the superiors of the Congregation asked Father Enrico Zoffoli of the Presentation Province (Italy) to prepare a biography of St. Paul of the Cross for the centenary of the Canonisation in 1967.
- Zoffoli had already achieved scholarly renown for his *I Passionisti*, published in 1955.
- He decided it would take six volumes to produce a life of St. Paul of the Cross.
- In fact three volumes have been published in Italian.
- The work is masterful.
- Fifty pages alone are devoted to an outline of the sources and bibliography.
- The appendix includes chronological charts, plans of several of the monasteries erected by St. Paul of the Cross, an index of persons and places.
- Zoffoli possesses the rare gift of combining historical research with literary artistry, intense scholarship with orderly presentation, scientific accuracy and beauty in style.
- His purpose was “to say everything, and to say it well.”