LUIGI LIBERA

LETTERS OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION
addressed to MARCHIONESS MAGDALEN GABRIELLA OF CANOSSA (1792-1799)

introduction and footnotes by ADELE CATTARI

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PREFACE

The present publication follows the book: Magdalen of Canossa — the decisive years of a spiritual itinerary, Milano 1980, and is its necessary complement.

I based that book chiefly on the analysis of the Letters of spiritual direction addressed by the priest Don Luigi Libera to the Marchioness Magdalen Gabriella of Canossa. Ample extracts sufficient to document the growing spirituality of the young Marchioness can be found in it; but they are insufficient to satisfy the need for a greater and deeper knowledge of their author. In reality those excerpts awaken in the reader the desire to know more of the interior riches possessed and shared by that master of the spirit who cannot hide the work and unction of the Spirit dwelling within him.

The request to have the Letters of Don Luigi Libera published is therefore justifiable and not to be disregarded, also because in the ecclesial life of today, the need of being spiritually oriented enlightened and helped, is emerging among Christians as a salutary reaction to the previous deplorable neglect of spiritual direction.

The present collection of letters, therefore, would meet two needs: to give a more complete panoramic view of the spiritual guidance of Don Luigi Libera to the young Marchioness; and to show, though in a modest and limited way, the marvellous possibilities offered to the priest in his ministry to form people to a Christian way of life. Even today many persons, not only the youth, would find in his wise and discreet dialogue an answer to their anxieties and aspirations, if they accept to be led by the Spirit of Christ. For Magdalen of Canossa this possibility became a reality. May it show itself still at work and rich in promise for many young people in search of their own identity in the Church. May it awaken new hope and energy in all pilgrims walking towards their heavenly home and may they discover the Christian meaning of life, of community, and communion.

ADELE CATTARI
DON LUIGI LIBERA

We give here whatever material we could gather after our previous publication\(^1\), about the person and work of this worthy Veronese priest, who spent his whole life in Verona. He lived in the second half of the XVIII century, to be precise from 1737 to 1800, the year in which on January 22, a "fit of apoplexy" ended his life here on earth, to make it more alive and splendid in the joyous contemplation of that loving and caring Father whom in faith he had loved and helped others to love.

The scholar who, to the best of our knowledge, more than anyone else, undertook research on Don Luigi Libera, was the Stimmatino GIUSEPPE STOFELLA, well versed in the Veronese milieu since he lived in Verona at the "Stimate", the cradle of the Institute founded by Bl. Don GASPARSE BERTONI who was a contemporary of Magdalen of Canossa, and what is more, the Confessor at "Ritiro Canossa" from the year of its foundation 1808 to 1812.\(^2\)

The competence and integrity of Stofella's studies are amply documented by P. NELLO DALLE VEDOVE, Postulator General of the Stimmatini\(^3\) who reproduces excerpts of our author's letters to a confere who disagrees with his "discoveries to rectify information till then current, on the relationship between their Ven. Founder and Bl. Magdalen of Canossa".

Stofella so wrote: "As you see I am always in search of something. The Municipal Library and Archives of the State, the Seminary Library, the Archives of the Curia, Pighi Library at S. Bernadino, a little with the Filippini, then it will be the turn of other Archives, and ... our old manuscripts". (November 24, 1928) And some years later, always to the same confere persisting in his own point of view:

\(^1\) The “essentials” about Don Luigi Libera has been already given in: CATTARI A. Maddalena Gabriella di Canossa. Gli anni decisivi di un Itinerario spirituale. Milano 1980. pp. 10-13. Henceforward this book will be referred to as: M.G.C.

\(^2\) These details taken from the obituary of Fr. Giuseppe Stofella by Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove, justify our preference for Stofella's studies on Magdalene of Canossa.

"But, dearest Father, you have every reason to keep your peace. When one has done everything possible under the circumstances, why be upset? And I would be fully wrong if I would presume to be somewhat infallible ... I also try to do what I can, not to be led into error, not for nothing have I spent long years in pursuing this research. However succeeding to do it, and succeeding always is a different matter". (July 31, 1933)

For Stofella, the most fruitful period, limited to archival research, was between 1926 to 1934, eight years of patient work; temporarily exonerated for reasons of health and being a member of the "Stimate" community he could easily draw from various sources of information in Verona.

Dalle Vedove informs us also that "in 1941 Fr. FERDINANDO ANTONELLI, Relator General of the Historical Section of the Sacred Congregation of Rites⁴, on the suggestion of the Veronese P. MARIO VANTI—the Historian of the Camilliani — requested Fr. Stofella through his Superior General, to prepare the work necessary for the cause of their Ven. Founder ... The Summarium Additionale ex officio compilatum by the Historical Section on the heroicity of the virtues of the Servant of God ... remains his masterpiece⁵.

The same Relator General writes: "Fr. Stofella through many years of unremitting labour made vast researches ... and gathered enormous material, part of which was completely new". He presented each document or series of documents, with critical introductions "that often are a treatise on various questions or aspects of life and activity of the Servant of God". (Informatio pp. VII-VIII)

Fr. Antonelli did not hesitate to call Fr. Stofella "a serious historian, gifted with a delicate intuition and a balanced judgement".⁶

Following the writings of Stofella, the figure of Don Luigi Libera has already been presented in a previous book but only today, almost two centuries after his death, the Letters to Marchioness Magdalen

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⁴ The “Sacred Congregation for the Cause of the Saints” was instituted in 1969 by Paul VI, to replace the Section for the Saints, then part of the Sacred Congregation for Rites.

⁵ DALLE VEDOVE N. “Il Bertoniano”, o.c., p. 429

⁶ Ibid. 
Gabriella of Canossa (1792-1799) are published. They are the only writings of his which can be found and whose authenticity had already been proved. Magdalen neither lost nor misplaced any of her director's letters, which though unpolished and incorrect are full of the Spirit of the Lord. She kept them with scrupulous care, in order to find "good food for her soul", not imagining certainly that, when published two centuries later, they would be as much "good food" for her followers and the lovers of her spirituality. In fact, here, in these letters, the pure and still living springs can be recognized.

The life of Don Luigi Libera has remained also so long in the shadow, that traces of him have been almost lost. The only documents—fortunately reliable—regarding him are some pages of the Status Clericorum Seminarii Episcopalis Veronae 1753-1759; as well as some rosters of Liber Monialium (January 1795—May 1, 1857) of the well known Biblioteca Capitolare di Verona.

It should not seem useless to give some sober facts of the life of the Verona Seminary from its beginning to the second half of the XVIII century, for a better understanding of the formation in piety and ecclesiastical studies of our Don Luigi Libera.

The history of the Verona Seminary began in 1567 with Bishop AGOSTINO VALERIO (1565-1606) who in compliance with the

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7 M.G.C., pp. 9-13
8 STOFELLA G., Note per una biografia compêleta della Marchesa Maddalena di Canossa, f. 125.
9 “La Biblioteca Capitolare di Verona, started in the IV century, is one of Fhe most ancient centres of study and culture existing in Europe. The Bibliographical treasures of this prestigious institution is made up, in great part, of scientific, liturgical, patristic and literary works, early printed books, rich and precious manuscripts, palimpsests and richly illuminated Godes”. (MAIMERL M., Verona, Guida storico-artistica, Verona 1976, p. 53). The most ancient Gode in manuscript, existing in the Biblioteca Capitolare, is the City of God by St. Augustine written in the first half of the V century, perhaps when St. Augustine was still alive (and therefore before 430). “It is well to remember also: a very ancient Codice manoscritto of 517, the Codice di Giustiniano, the Codice delle “Istituzioni di Gaio”, the Commentari Virgiliani of Angelo Maj; a beautiful and rich picture-gallery, a collection of ancient musical instruments, and of sculptures, among which is the famous bust of Homer belonging ;perhaps to the I-II century B.C. (Ibid. pp. 53-54)
Tridentine Decree of July 15, 1563\textsuperscript{10} tackled the roots of the problem of the religious and cultural formation of the diocesan clergy.\textsuperscript{11}

"In the first years, teaching was imparted by only one master, with obviously limited results. Bishop Valerio, close also in this to the directives of his eminent friend, St. Charles Borromeo, neglected nothing to obtain before long, the services of the Jesuits, who besides other duties had also the direction of the Seminary"\textsuperscript{12}. But for half a century, from 1606 to 1656 the Jesuits\textsuperscript{13} being absent from Verona, the management of the Seminary declined. In the second half of the XVII century it regained its vitality, specially after 1695 when Bishop PIETRO LEONI (1690-1697) started constructing a new building for the Seminary\textsuperscript{14}. With the succession of Mons. GIANFRANCO BARBARIGO (1697-1714) to the See of S. Zeno, the Seminary saw a new splendour, be it for its "artistic building", greatly admired by foreign visitors, be it especially for the guidance of wise superiors and the teaching of competent professors.

"In a See so well planned and structured there could not but flourish the best cultural initiatives, among which is remembered — under Bishop GIOVANNI BRAGADINO (1733-1758)— the founding of the Seminary Printing Press, which in the course of a few years printed various theological, philosophical, literary works"\textsuperscript{15}.

"The Jesuits had set up a teaching and cultural plan of studies based on the Ignatian Ratio Studiorum, which proposed courses in physics and logic, scholastic and moral theology for the High School;

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{10} I° CONCILII TRIDENTINUM, Decreta super reformatione publicata in eadem sessione septima Tridentina sub Pio IV Pontifice Mazimo, Canon octavus decimus: Forma erigendi seminarium clericorum, praesertim tenuiorum in cuius erectione plurima observanda; de educatione promovendorum. in cathedralibus et maioribus ecleysiis. In: Diariorum, actorum, epistolarum, tractatuum, Tomus nonus, Actorum pars sexta, Fnburgi :Brisgoviae MCMXXLV, pp. 628-630.
  \item \textsuperscript{11} Cf. MONTORIO V., Il Seminario di Verona, Verona 1968, p. 5.
  \item \textsuperscript{12} BARBIERI G., Religione e Religiosità a Verona da Raterio al sec. XVIII, in AA. VV., Chiese e Monasteri a Verona, Verona 1980, p. 321.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} In 1606 the Jesuits left Verona because df the Interdict of Paul V issued to the Republic of Venice which under the influence of the Servite, Paolo Sarpi passed laws and violated the rights of the Church.\textsuperscript{14}
  \item \textsuperscript{14} BARBIERI G., Religione ..., p. 321.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} It is enough to remember one work: the Sunima di S. Antonio da Firenze, frlshished by the Balterini brothers, both Jesuits, frien4s and antagonists of the well-known writer Scipione Maffei — on the question of lending money. The various phases of the dispute ... help us to better understand the deep cultural tone that characterized the XVIII century Veronese clergy and as a consequence the Seminary" (Ibid. p. 322).
\end{itemize}
the elementary and advanced elements of grammar, humanities and rhetoric for the Middle School; a system of theological and classical studies, of which noteworthy traces remained in the academic exercises for the closing of the scholastic years at this great living centre of culture which the Bishop's Seminary of Verona had become.\footnote{16}

Precisely in the time of its greatest splendour we find among its students, the seminarian Luigi Libera.

From Status Clericorum ... attesting "Prout quisque se gessit in proxime habitis examinibus", we come to know that the Veronese Luigi Libera attended the Seminary as a "day student" from 1753 to 1755 (first and second Years of Humanities), that in 1758 (the second year of Philosophy) he was one of the "Acolytes" and in 1759 he received the "Subdiaconate".

The results of the examination held at the end of each scholastic year are quite flattering. Aloysius Luigi Libera of Verona is rated:

— Diligence: to be set as an example to others (1754);
— Ingenuity: eminent (1753), ingenious (1754), quite determined (1755), creative (1757), rich (1758), sharp (1759);
— Memory: strong (1753), unfailing (1754), good (1755-56), excellent (1757-1759), unfaltering (1758);
— Expectations: quite great (1753), very great (1754), good (1755), great (1756);
— Latin Composition: elegant (1753), pleasant (1754), polished (1755), rating very high (1756);
— Translation: optimum (1754), refined (1755), praiseworthy (1756);
— Explanation of Literary Works: worthy of praise (1754), exact and sharp (1755);
— Solution of Doubtful Cases: erudite (1757), clear and open (1758), excellent, prize-worthy (1759);

The remark: "to be awarded" is given for the years:

1755 (second Class of Humanities), 1756 (Class of Rhetoric),

But even the Seminarian Luigi Libera had his "Achilles' heel": Spellings. In 1755, next to SPELLINGS: "to be corrected" can be read.

\footnote{16} Ibid.
His contemporaries with regret, but also with much indulgence, take cognizance of his weakness in spelling. Nevertheless it is profitable and commendable to go over his letters because of the great spiritual inspiration that pervades them. Comparing the spirit that animated Don Libera's direction to that of St. Francis de Sales Stofella writes:

"With this I do not mean to say that his letters have the inimitable grace of those of the Saint, neither do they have the tender expansive expressions which sometimes seem to border on the dangerous, nor do they attain the charm of that language and style; but the substance is there, he is master of it; and under a literary form, almost always unpolished but deeply paternal, there is always a bit of his heart . . . .".17

The Liber Monalium testifies to the ministry of Don Luigi Libera. In fact in six of its lists Rev. Don Aloysius Libera is mentioned as Ordinary or Extraordinary Confessor of Nuns of different Monasteries in Verona and precisely:

— S. Maria a Virginibus (also called of the Magdalenes);
— S. Christophori;
— S. Theresia.

Our Don Libera was appointed, always as Confessor, also on special occasions as "On the occasion of the Jubilee, extended to the diocese (1775-76), Bishop Morosini in addition to the ordinary Confessor, appointed 42 diocesan priests and 44 religious, from whom the Nuns living in the city and its suburbs could choose. Among these was Don Luigi Libera, future spiritual director of Saint Magdalene of Canossa".18

As can be seen, the life of Don Luigi Libera was humble, hidden, "buried", it brings to mind the "seed" Jesus spoke of: "... if the grain of wheat dies, it bears much fruit". (Jn. 12:24)19

17 STOFELLA g., NOTE ..., CIT. IN M.G.C., P. 11, N. 2. The italics are ours.
19 The body of Don Luigi Libera — as said in M.G.C., p. 12, no. 3,— had a worthy burial in the niche for urns of the Priests who served the parish of S. Vitale, in the Church bearing the same name. It was a very ancient church on the left side of the Adige, mentioned — so Lenotti informs us — in the Ritmo Pipiniano. (Monumenta Germaniae historica, Versue de Verona, Poetarum Latinorum Medii Aevi, Tomi I, Pars prior, Berolini MDCCCLIII, pp. 119-122). In 1186 it belonged to the Cavalieri Templari di S. Giovanni who founded there
From that abundant harvest that came from this "grain" which accepted to fall into the ground and die, something, perhaps the best, has come down even to us. And it is not a small inheritance.

the Commenda di S. Giovanni e del S. Sepolcro, commonly known as Croce di Malta. The Commenda in a short time, became very rich. It possessed numerous churches outside Verona, and besides vast lands, and many houses it received large sums of money for leases from public bodies and private citizens ... Noteworthy is the activity of this Order in Verona and its contribution to military undertakings, religious in aim, providing galleys and armed ships.

The Church of S. Vitale, an edifice (between Via Scrimiari, Via S. Vitale and today Via Carducci) of noteworthy proportions, was, however, in a precarious place because, being near the canal Acqua Morta — now buried — it was subject to recurring floods. Reduced to a bad state, and since restoration was not deemed worthwhile, the church was demolished in 1784. The parochial cemetery, situated in Via S. Vitale, behind the apse of the church, survived and with it the niche for urns of the priests of the parish.

In 1806, in compliance with the napoleonic decrees of April 18 and 25 of the same year, the Commenda was suppressed and all its goods taken over by the Municipality. The parish and all that was of value in the church was transferred to S. Maria del Paradiso (cf. LENOTTI, Chiese e Conventi scomparsi (a sinistra dell’Adige), Verona 1955, p. 8-10).
INTRODUCTION TO THE LETTERS

Since the Letters of Don LUIGI LIBERA to Marchioness MAGDALENE GABRIELLA of CANOSSA show how she progressed in discerning her vocation, it seems useful to discover in them, the meaning and the weight each letter bears in relation to this process. The progress was not simple, not easy, not evenly paced; nevertheless if viewed in retrospect, it appears very coherent with the criteria proposed by her "Spiritual Father".

He directed Magdalen of Canossa for nearly eight years from July 1792 to the end of 1799. Departure point: Magdalen's bitter disappointment in leaving the cloister for the second time to rejoin her family; arrival point: the vision of another way within a vast horizon, a journey she would have to experiment, towards the heights of Christian charity.

Her progress, we said, was not evenly paced. In fact, intervals may be noticed and correspondingly too: in the Letters there are breaks and at least four periods can be perceived: the first (1792-1794) comprises 22 letters; the second (1794-1796) 26 letters; the third (1797-1798) 12 letters; the fourth (1799) 8 letters. From this, it can be seen that every stage has its own rhythm, weight and a clear, though temporary, demarcation.

The period from July 1792 to May 1794 is marked by the "liberation" from a personal project, believed by young Magdalene to be the Will of God, but which she progressively recognized as 'interior slavery".
From December 1794 to November 1796 through recurring scruples and temptations, there is a spiritual growth in the young Marchioness.

In November 1796 a decisive "turn" takes place in her spiritual journey. Faced with the difficult decision to mother her young nephew and accepting it as a precise sign of God's will, Magdalen goes towards a higher stage in discerning her vocation: to make of her life an incessant gift.

Finally, from March to December 1799, after an acute crisis of faith, the radical conversion to the authentic project of God takes place in the young Magdalen. In a society shaken by recurring ferment and upheavals that will bring about inevitable and deep changes, she will be "the contemplative in charity".

The criteria used by Don LuEgi Libera can therefore be summed up as: formation to interior peace through prayer and frequent reception of the Sacraments; obedience with no compromises to his directives; simple confidence in the fatherhood of the always provident and merciful God.

Magdalen, so guided and supported, walks an important part of her journey: the decisive one for her personal vocation and for the foundational charism.
This first letter is the written addition of a previous talk during which there was no time to treat of those spiritual exercises commonly defined as "practices of devotion". The first stage of Magdalen Gabriella of Canossa's journey towards the discerning of her vocation is beginning, a journey that is uncertain and obscure, kept closed as God's secret. Don Libera, in line with the divine action, is not in a hurry to uncover it and demands from his "daughter" calmness, peace, serenity. He wraps her in silence and recollection, to permit her heart to rest, so that the wound, opened by that second entry into the family and which seemed to break her, should heal; instead it sharpens her desire to consecrate herself totally to God.

(Of the double sheet, only half is left—A.C.R., A1/1)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

I forgot to suggest to you to make five visits a day to the Blessed Sacrament, with this condition however: every time you are in Church to receive Holy Communion, you could make two visits: one as soon as you enter, the other before you leave; one in the evening when you leave the house for your usual round, not returning home before paying a visit = perdonanza¹, in some Churches where there is the Bl. Sacrament, if it is possible to do it. The other two, and, if you cannot leave the house, all of them, you will make in your room, putting yourself in spirit before the Bl. Sacrament for about ten minutes. At every visit, you will say the Pange Lingua and the Litany to Our Lady; also three times a day, the Veni Creator Spiritus. The last action of the morning will end with the recitation of the Miserere; that of the evening, with the recitation of the Litany of the Saints without the final prayers. I recommend that you observe recollection in a special way

¹ Perdonanza: an archaic term proper to popular Christian piety that was still in use at the beginning of the 20th century, to indicate a short visit of devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament. The term is explained by the fact that an “enlightened” piety suggested that the first thing to do was to ask pardon of God for one’s faults, and even because the sign of the Cross, made with holy water and if done with faith, effectively cancels venial sins.
and all the silence possible without calling attention to it, but using prudent ways in avoiding or quickly withdrawing from occasions to talk. During the day say some ejaculations according to the feelings you experienced and the resolutions made during your meditation. I beg you through the kindness of Jesus Christ, to give your most devoted attention and application to imploring the Divine Mercy to grant us light in this matter connected with your eternal salvation. In dealing with Fr ... do not speak of your vocation if he does not ask about it; and even in that case, do not dwell much on it. May the Lord bless you.

July 18, 1792
The Marchioness is still waiting and must wait for a whole year without being preoccupied about choosing her state in life. For the moment there is only one thing to do: listen to the interior movements to discover in which direction she should turn her steps. Around her is a desert where God loves to manifest himself and reveal his will, the only point of reference on which to base her orientation. The world has no right to Magdalen's attentions, not even her family, when opposed to the exigencies of divine love. Throughout her journey, in the search for the Absolute, the young Marchioness will find strength and support in the Eucharist from which her heart will draw pure light and joy.

(Half sheet written on both sides—A.C.R., A1/1/2)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

I do not repent the least bit, for the decision taken in spite of what the Rev. Father Provincial and Stefano say. It was taken after much thought and very rightly after much prayer, and certainly from the human point of view, more cannot be asked. Therefore you can and must be certain and sure that you will not have to give an account to the Lord that you have failed to correspond in this matter. Besides I desire that you be on guard not to be lured by the world. For one year, my Daughter, do not give the least hearing to any proposal made. I wish that your firmness of soul be known without wanting in that politeness which is proper to your noble birth, but also not wanting in fidelity to God. You do not know what God has in store for you. But when we shall know his Divine Will, we shall with his help, take the necessary measures that will bring it to fulfilment. In the meantime let us apply our hearts seriously to implore this light from the Lord. Among the practices of devotion we have so far been doing, besides prayer, reading, frequenting the Sacraments, I recommend as much as I can that you retreat and live alone, as much as you can. The Lord speaks to the soul in solitude, I do not mean however, to exhort you to live like a

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1 It may be inferred that the Carmelites disapproved of Don Libera's decision to keep Magdalen with her family. According to them, God had already made known his will for her; but the new Director had different insights.
hermit, but be very reserved. Moreover in this I would desire, barring some exceptional cases, you should depend on Holy Obedience.

As regards your Noble Uncle's displeasure at your frequent reception of Holy Communion, I judge it opportune, since you have to depend on him, that you declare your mind. At the same time show him sweetly but cleverly your desire to receive Holy Communion frequently. Inform him, using these or similar words, that though you have put aside the resolution to become a discalced Carmelite, you intend, nevertheless, that your heart be only for God, as the Apostle suggests, and that for the time being, you have no intention of dividing it with anyone else. Perhaps your Uncle is displeased that the Church is a good distance away. Truly when you were thinking of becoming a Carmelite, no one opposed your going there frequently but on this occasion some scrupulous persons are displeased. If that is the reason it could easily be remedied. I am not against a General Confession rather I strongly exhort you to do it, with this condition however: I do not want you to think of doing it until such time we have talked it over. Continue faithfully in the methods I have told you orally. As soon as it is possible and I have some time, I will do it in writing. If you are not impeded and if I am not prevented by some pressing duties, I will have the honour of paying you my respects on the 20th of this month. If you are impeded, I beg you to inform me, I too will do the same in case I cannot come. May God bless you and make you holy, because I certainly wish that you be holy whether God wants you in the world or a Religious. Amen.

August 12, 1792
We are at the foot of the "holy mountain" and Magdalen's heart longs for the heights. Although the Confessor and the Director view the General Confession Magdalen made as a "special meeting with the Lord", it does not satisfy her desires. Doubts and fears rise up in her soul, a dense haze threatens to make her lose her path, her courage and her faith. Don Libera is there beside her, with the authority of his robust faith and his complete disinterestedness. In the meantime he keeps her on prayer, leading her towards contemplation, in response to a divine invitation which is clearly manifest and he puts her on guard against an insidious self-love always ready to lay a snare. The obedient man will sing of victory is the promise of the Holy Spirit.

(A double sheet with two written pages and three lines on the third page—A.C.R., A1/1/3)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

For all the knowledge I have of your soul, I can and must fully assure you that you may be completely at peace. Yes, because you have not been to Confession\(^1\) to remedy past bad ones, but only to draw greater stimulus to serve the Lord more perfectly. If anything has been overlooked, not for that should you regard the Confession as done badly. Anyway, it would be enough that when any defects that were not mentioned at that time, would come to your mind, you can accuse yourself if it is serious and with the permission of your Confessor, which I myself would have great difficulty to grant you. You must not judge past sins according to your present knowledge; because before God, there is guilt according to the knowledge you had at the time they were committed. I think that with this Confession you expected to enjoy the peace and quiet of Paradise, but my Daughter, this is not a place where one may reach such a peace. You have done the best you could, be in peace then and abandon yourself totally to God's goodness and mercy. Obey and you will find as much peace as can be enjoyed in this vale of tears. Besides, I assure you with all the

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\(^1\) The reference is to the General Confession. Magdalen had asked permission of her Director and he had granted it.
sincerity with which I, in conscience must deal with you, that from what you wrote, I can see some salutary and useful effects, what profit this confession has brought you, for which I certainly believe what Fr. Gaspari maintained: to have seen and felt a special presence of the Lord. My Daughter, the ways of Divine Providence in dealing with the souls dear to him are very different from what we think. Trust in your God who loves you. What will I say to Fr. Provincial? He passes a sentence on an issue he has neither examined nor known, therefore what value has it? Let us condone everything and put it down to the esteem and respect he has for his most worthy Daughter. Do not be distressed on that account, because he is off the path and I feel more than ever deeply sure of it. Let us come to prayer.

First of all I recommend, as much as I can, that you do not ever leave out prayer, not even for fear of doing it badly. Present yourself before God with a simple desire of paying tribute to his Sovereignty. Do not entertain distractions willingly and deliberately and be content with the way God deals with you. We do not know what is best for us, but the Lord knows it well and he knows how to draw what is good for us from everything. Very often he wishes to use those very means, which to us seem least adapted, so that we may admire his wisdom and trust in his love. Besides, everytime you feel attracted to stay in the presence of God without thinking of anything in particular, do it without feeling afraid that you are wasting time or that you are doing it out of laziness.

That, my Daughter, is a suggestion from the devil to distract us from a prayer which is the most useful practice, because it is more God's work than ours; and therefore he being the Agent so great, it is clear we must consider it the more precious, even though it seems different to us. But if we are faithful to God's love, at the proper time we shall also be convinced of its usefulness. I warn you, however, that this attraction is not in our power and comes when we want. And so one must regulate oneself. When God gives this holy attraction, do not ever refuse it. When God takes it away remain content all the same with the Lord's doing, and in that case turn back to holy meditation.

My Daughter, give full liberty to your heart, always, however, taking care to deepen your affection with sweetness without being anxious. Always cultivate these affections, no matter from where they spring, so that we may draw good. My Daughter, they are not the
effects of love but dispositions that help to acquire the love of God. So you can see that many reasonings and reflections which make us lose the thread of holy prayer are only castles in the air. I console myself at seeing how our common enemies are trying to turn you away from doing well, because they are afraid of you. Therefore be strong and walk straight along the path of Holy Obedience, and with this support, I am certain we shall triumph over everything, as the Holy Spirit assures us: the obedient man, says he, will be victorious over his enemies.

Fight against the fear of damnation with a strong exercise of trust in the divine mercy and goodness of a God who loves you. Let us not be slaves to scruples. With regard to sin, there must be deliberation and the will. Blessed is he who lives in the fear of offending God, but let us try to make our fear filial and reasonable, born of love. The fear of being attached to your sister is a big scruple and to be despised. God has made us social beings and therefore it is not forbidden to share troubles. Courage, Marchioness, God is leading us along the path of the Saints, let us not get entangled with useless reflections, let suffering not frighten us. Anyway if you have no desire to say anything before the appointed time. I will inform you when I can come. From now on, I desire that you end your letter in this way: your most obedient Daughter in the Lord, nothing more. May the Lord bless you and enrich you ever more with his grace.

_without date_

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2 Don Libera’s insistence on obedience led Stofella to deduce that Magdalen of Canossa had made a vow to her new Spiritual Director, Don Luigi Libera. (Cf. M.G.C., pp. 139-141)
3 Because of its reference to the General Confession already stated in the preceding letter, it is certain that this letter is written later but near to the one of August 12, 1792. It is best placed chronologically as the third letter.
Other obstacles in Magdalen's are: ill health and doubts about the legitimacy of prayers of petition. The Director patiently dissipates the new clouds. He insists on obedience from his "Daughter" and suggests "turning the heart frequently to God".

(Half sheet, written only on one side—A.C.R., A1/1/4)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

To hope for anything from the Lord God and to ask him and beg him for his graces, is surely not pride but is the result of that hope with which he himself commanded us to honour him as our most loving Father and the only source of our every good—spiritual and temporal. Certainly we may not expect them because of any merit on our part—that would be pride, but only because he has promised it out of his goodness, and the only motive is his own Goodness. Now if the doctor thinks that you should be bled\(^1\), I give you the merit of Holy Obedience and exhort you to submit to it. The faith then that I desire you to have in this obedience is that you be convinced that through the grace of God, it will be of help and you may recover in a short time, and then to obtain it from the goodness of God I bless you and give you the merit of Holy Obedience. If ever your Uncles insist that you must divert yourself by going to Mantua or with your sister\(^2\), try to be clever and get out of it by begging them, pointing out that since autumn is approaching, you will divert yourself in their company at Grezzano\(^3\). Live quietly and all will go well. For the present, shorten your prayer and make up for it by

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\(^1\) "The drawing of blood": a therapy much used at that time. It will be a habitual remedy for Magdalen of Canossa.

\(^2\) Magdalen of Canossa had three sisters: Laura, Rosa and Eleonora. Laura was already married to Count Antonio Maffei, nephew of Scipione Maffei, promoter of the cultural movement during the second half of the 1700's—"it was the golden age of the history of Verona" (G. GASPERONI, Scipione Maffei e Verona settecentesca, Verona MCMLV, p. XVIII); Eleonora, the youngest was a boarder with the Benedictine Nuns of S. Antonio sul Corso (Verona), while Rosa four years younger than Magdalen, was by then completing her studies. The reference here is probably to Rosa.

\(^3\) The Villa at Grezzano: The name and the place are derived from "gregge" = flock and in ancient times was a pasture land. In 1414 it was acquired by Simone of Canossa from the Treasury of Venice. The Villa Canossa at Grezzano was begun by Sannicchell (as also the Palace at Verona) and was completed during the time of Marquis Carlo, Magdalen's grandfather. The building is said to have 365 windows—as many as the days of the year. Villa Grezzano was the usual holiday home of the family and here, during the holidays, Magdalen's nephew, Cardinal Luigi Canossa spent his time in big game hunting and horse breeding. (Cf. DOSSI E., in CANOSSA M. Epistolario 1, p. 55)
turning your heart frequently to God, but sweetly, lovingly, without anxiety. Next Thursday, if nothing comes between, I hope to come and meet you, but I shall inform you. The Lord bless you, console you, strengthen you to serve him generously and trustfully.

September 11, 1792.
The correspondence between Magdalen and Don Libera has been at a standstill because of the serious family duties of the Marchioness; but at a deeper level, because of her secret aspiration, which is contrary to the directive of Don Libera who does not consent to expedite her along the path of "becoming discalced". All the same the Director, in the certainty of interpreting the will of God, is not moved. Instead he gives his "Daughter" a key/text for the solution of the problem of her vocation: "It would give the Lord great glory and be of great advantage to souls if you would live in the world with the heart of a discalced." Therefore she is not to seek herself but seek the Will of God, who will reveal himself in prayer, in a prolonged exercise of faith, and in a generous abandonment to the demands of his love.

(A double sheet, written only on one page—A.C.R., A1/1/5)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Your letter has been very welcomed because it has been quite a long time that I desired to have some news about you. Oh, how good is the Lord! I cannot express what consolation I experienced in knowing how much care he takes of your soul and his jealous love in keeping all the affections of your heart for himself. Courage my Daughter, what can you not expect from such a generous and good Lover? If at present you cannot dedicate yourself to prayer as much as your heart desires, remember to do everything in a spirit of love and every now and again renew this intention, enkindling your affection for God with some ejaculations, revive some thoughts that will keep alive always this love for him. Do all this with sweetness and tenderness of spirit. God is love, says the Beloved Disciple, and he who lives and works in love and with love, lives in God and God in him. To assist the sick, to console them and lighten their burdens is a work of charity. Even in this work, let us try to do it more out of love for (d than natural affection: we mean to assist Jesus Christ, because he did not disdain to accept what is done to the poor sick as done to himself, when done out of love for him. Your dispositions to receive Communion are the best and from now on, you will have also the merit of obedience. The Novena we shall do when we
are less busy, and for the time being we shall not talk about your vocation. The Lord can preserve and reawaken in you good and holy desires for different purposes. It would give the Lord great glory and be of great advantage to souls if you would live in the world with the heart of a discalced. For the present it is enough, we do not have to decide anything, but recommend ourselves much to the Lord. In the meantime, I think it is good for you to be with your family. As regards your interior and exterior conduct, I am not the least bit sorry for what has been decided. The most holy will of God will always be the only aim and rule of all that is to be done, as it has been till now. I intend visiting you when I hear from you that you are a little more free. In the meantime may the Lord bless you and renew you ever more in his holy love.

November 19, 1792

To HER EXCELLENCY
THE NOBLE LADY MARCHIONESS MAGDALEN OF CANOSSA

VERONA

(Round wax seal)
New obstacles spring up along Magdalen's path, and the young lady confidently turns for help to her Spiritual "Father" who shares her preoccupations in the search for a suitable Confessor for herself and her sister Rosa and promises to help. Don Libera enlightens and sustains her also in another most important "matter". A proposal of marriage, much favoured by her whole family, reaches Magdalen just when she is entertaining another attempt to join Carmel. But to follow this impulse would mean—according to the Director—to look back and regress; so he invites her to reflect more deeply on the sanctity of Christian marriage before she decides she is not called to it. He exhorts her to decide for herself: her best counsellor will be her heart, of which Don Libera says (his affirmation could not be more reassuring) "I am very sure God holds it in his hands". It is a necessary pause, time to rethink deeply. Magdalen is at the crossroads: which direction does God want for her?

(Half a sheet, written on both sides—A.C.R., Al/I/6)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

It was a pleasure to receive your letter, and therefore write to me freely any time you need my help. In that way you will behave as a true spiritual daughter and I will endeavour always to behave as your true Father in the Lord. But my Daughter, you are asking my advice in a difficult matter. And yet it is more than reasonable to ask for it. To find the best and most suitable Confessor, is a matter of great importance especially when it concerns persons like you. I think it is almost absolutely necessary, for your sister and you to have a Confessor at your convenience and close by, only I am sorry that I know no person who could fulfil that ministry either at S. Lorenzo or at the Fratta. As regards the Parish Priest ... he is a great friend of mine and we know

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1 It is towards the end of 1792 when Magdalen decides to change her Confessor. The obvious motive given is the distance to the Convento dell'Annunciata, where Fr. Ildefonso della concezione resides, but soon enough a deeper one can he discovered. The Church of s. Lorenzo and that of S. Maria alla Fratta were actually much more accessible; the former being the parish of the canossa family and the other fairly close by.

2 The ... correspond to an erasure over which, with another ink and another handwriting "della Fratta" has been inserted. And here at this point arises the real motive for the change of Confessor: "the goodness, the sweetness (but even the connivance)" of Fr. Ildefonso.
each other since the time when we were young. He has been a person of very good moral character, of sound doctrine but I fear that he is inclined to share in the goodness, sweetness and connivance of Fr ...³, therefore if you will kindly inform me who are the Confessors in S. Lorenzo and the Fratta, I will find out if they are suitable and then give you my advice. It is enough if you give me their names. Also embarrassing is the news you give for the reason why your Aunt D'Arco has come. But to get out of the embarrassment, your heart may help you more than anybody else. The Director has no right to decide that his spiritual daughter should choose one state in preference to another. He may only counsel her, always after reflecting over the inclinations he sees bending her heart, moved by the grace and inspiration of the Lord, more towards one or the other. Therefore question your heart and sometimes try to take sides with the proposal made, and then observe what it says and on which side it leans, where it finds greater peace. If the repulsion for that state is strong what reasons urge it: do they come from the senses or from the desire to serve the plan of Divine Providence. Again, a disposition to the married state is given by the Lord, it is a state of sanctity for those who know how to live it hollily; and in the history of the Church we have many married people who became saints. Ponder over all these reflections. If they do not move or incline your heart to embrace marriage, rather your heart persists in not wanting anyone else but God, we shall answer in a stronger and precise tone. We have taken a year to decide your vocation if it be for the religious state or secular, but we have not taken a year to decide whether to marry or not. Just because one decides for the secular state, it does not mean one has decided for marriage, especially if the decision was not made capriciously but regulated by love for the Will of God. My Daughter, pray much to the Lord. Even these encounters are necessary to arrive at a more basic and firmer decision, in order to be assured that it is the Will of God. But I want you really to listen to your heart, because I am very sure God holds it in his hands and so I can tell you to take good note of its motions, whether they be for one state or the other. As regards the young lady, I say

³ Another cancellation, above which—in the same way—"Gaspari" has been written.
without hesitation, let her go to the "Paulote" which will be the best thing for her. I approve that you console Countess Brenzoni by going one day to lunch with her. To console the afflicted is a work of mercy, you may go with this intention. Remember to go over several times, the maxims I have written for you. I will come when I am less busy and at your good pleasure. Courage, Marchioness, the one who wants to serve the Lord must be full of courage that comes from a true trust in him who can do all things and from a sincere distrust of ourselves. I bless you again and again desiring all the blessings of God on you.

November 26, 1792

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4 "Paulote": the name by which all those who belonged to the Third Order of the Minimi di S. Francesco da Paola, were called. This Order came to Verona in 1596 with the erection of a Church and a monastery in Campo Marzo. The Monastery was rebuilt and enlarged towards the first half of the XVIII century. The Third Order (Tertiaries) resided in a little Convent, but they did not live a common life. Each one had to provide for her own living by working. In 1693 the Tertiaries were 21, in 1810 only 4; the little Convent was suppressed and taken over by the Municipality. The buildings in Via Nicola Mazza, 57, were used as barracks of the Guardia di Finanza; (Cf. LENOTTI T. Chiese e Conventi scomparsi (a sinistra dell'Adige), Verona 1955, p. 30)

5 Countess Brenzoni was Magdalen's aunt as one of the following letters will show. That the Brenzoni family also belonged to the most prominent nobility of Verona is attested to among other things, by the fact that in Verona, in the Church of S. Fermo the Great, the monuments on the tombs of a certain Bernardino Brenzoni and Nicolo Brenzoni can be admired.
The path of the young Magdalen is strewn with difficulties, also because of her young fellow traveller in whom Magdalen—showing that she is rather a pessimist—discovers attitudes that worry her. But the Director recalls her to a sense of proportion and consequently to evaluate matters more serenely. The practice of mortification will help her to free her heart of so many anxieties and fears and to find courage and promptness to undertake to walk righteously in God’s ways.

(Half a sheet, written only on one side—A.C.R., A1/1/7)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

I greatly praise, rather I advise and exhort you to be clever enough to get Don Zorzi to hear the confession of your young sister, informing him however, that if she has recovered in health, it will be difficult for her to make her confession in the house; and in that case it would be better to ask him to come either to the Fratta or to S. Lorenzo, after having obtained the permission of the respective Parish Priests, and if Don Zorzi is willing to help her in the future, I would advise you to entrust her to him, because I fully trust him. Finally no one could make any comment as he is the confessor of the monastery from which she has just come out. Should this stratagem succeed I would have no difficulty if you choose the Oean of the Fratta as your Confessor. The next time you write to me, I will be happy to know the outcome of your stratagem. In the meantime I will try to obtain as much light as I possibly can about the persons whose names you have given me. My Daughter, I do not want you to be anxious. Try to give your young sister all the attention possible and be certain that God does not require more human prudence than one can have and that when a young lady . . . ¹ starts growing, the best means to help her is a good Confessor who will help her to grow in confidence and certainly keep her far away from bad company, but I think it is impossible to be wise enough to be able to shield every fault into which human inclination drags us. Do not afflict yourself excessively, because perhaps these defects stem more from the light-headedness of youth rather

¹ The original is cancelled and corrected.
than from bad will. Take courage, if God is giving you some occasions for mortification. Mortification is very necessary to become saints, my Daughter, and without practice no skill is acquired and similarly without practice no virtue is acquired, therefore it is necessary to destroy within us a part of the old man, so that the new man all conformed to the virtues of Christ is born. It is a work that cannot be accomplished without great fatigue and sweat. But all things can be done with God's help. I recommend you to work with tranquillity, to raise your heart and mind frequently to God with affection and ejaculations until the Lord gives you greater opportunity to deal and converse with him only through prayer. Try to attend to it the best you can and as much as you can but without anxiety and restlessness.

God bless you.

Without date

2 The contents of the letter and in particular its reference to Confessors suggest that it was written soon after the letter dated November 26, 1792.
Now that the search for the Confessors has ended satisfactorily, it is necessary to clear the ground of another stumbling block, that of the "French Teacher", a person not commendable morally and who might harm Rosa. For this, a valid help could come from Rosa's Confessor. In the meanwhile Magdalen will proceed more courageously along her way if she will dismiss every desire for a perfection according to her own ideas, to abandon herself with simplicity to God's ways. Certainly for her too, the way of trustful obedience is better so as to come to know her project and set out confidently towards the goal.

(Double sheet, written on both sides. The lower left hand corner is frayed—C. R., Al/1/8)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Benedictus Deus! May the Lord be praised and blessed in all things. The matter concerning your little sister has been concluded, however, not with the perfection I would wish, but time will settle everything. To go to S. Andrea when ...¹ is going to S. Fermo and Rustico is an excellent expedient. But I would not like that your sister, because of this reason, should go too rarely to Holy Communion and Confession. It is necessary to accustom her at this age to frequent the Sacraments, because my Daughter, the time will come, unfortunately, when for one reason or another, the usual interval of time will not be kept, but if now she is accustomed to frequent the Sacraments she will later on skip them less often. Take my advice: Don't be afraid to request Don Zorzi to do the charity of coming sometimes to a church near by so that going to S. Andrea or in another church she could approach the Sacraments at least every fifteen days. Rather, since we are talking about your sister, I advise you to talk to Don Zorzi on the matter regarding the French Teacher, so that he may cleverly and prudently find out the disposition of the Marchioness and the conduct of this teacher and he can hint to the young lady, in case your Uncle should want her to take up her studies again under such a teacher, that

¹ Illegible cancellation. From the context it may be deduced that the person who used to go to the Church of S. Fermo and Rustico was Uncle Gerolamo.

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for the time being she herself would want to stop these studies or have another teacher if Don Zorzi would think it good. My Daughter, these french people are a questionable lot, besides their behaviour is too effeminate and polite, proper to persons of that nation, it is not in any way suitable for a young girl like your sister who is without father or mother. I want you to take this matter up very seriously and without scruples. I wish you would do it as secretly and hiddenly as you can, so as to avoid being judged scrupulous or any such thing, and not to hinder all the good God now wants from you in your family. Let's come now to you: I am very satisfied with the choice of the Dean of the Fratta as your Confessor, and so we shall be free from all obstacles and satisfy your heart that desires to be fed with this food of love with greater frequency than in the past. I give you full liberty to go as many times as you desire. Regulate yourself with prudence to avoid the talk of idle people or displeasing your Uncle. My Daughter, for the present, leave aside every thought of your vocation, be attentive to follow the wishes of your God. He is working chastely in your heart; let us see that we do not turn aside the work of your perfection at this time with things that would be more of a hindrance than a help. Believe me Marchioness; this is a matter to be left in God's hands in all simplicity. You have very certain proofs of his love. You are disposed to do all that he wants and how can you doubt that at an opportune time he will not manifest those loving designs which from all eternity he has for you? I have no reasons to fear; and I want you too, to nourish this firm hope in exchange for his love. It may be, my Daughter, this desire is distracting your heart, causing agitation, insinuating anxiety. All this could impede those greater effects which now the Lord wants to produce in your soul. This can easily happen in your heart; at a time when it recognizes it is overwhelmed by God's mercies, as a purely natural movement, without acknowledging it as a direct intervention of God. Abandon yourself to the Lord, trust in obedience think of loving him and don't be afraid, we shall succeed. This is the sacrifice the Lord wants from you; believe me that with this you sacrifice yourself entirely to him. Regarding the loving feelings you experience when you turn to Mary in your needs, it is a motive for you to attach yourself all the more, my

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2 On the whole, from the correspondence of Don Libera one may guess that probably he was referring to Magdalen's desire to become a discalced Carmelite, a desire she repeatedly manifests to her Director, who anyway never recognized it as a true vocation for the Carmel.
Daughter, to this great Mother, to nourish sentiments of gratitude and devotion towards her in your heart. I am very content if you entrust the matter of your vocation to Mary and surely we shall experience her favour. My Daughter, it cannot in any way be pride, to recognize that she has answered your prayers without any merit on your part, rather it would be ingratitude not to recognize the good results as graces received through Mary. Be fully in peace as regards the doubts about the vow, because even if it were there, this is not the time to put it into effect and we need not entertain any scruple which has no apparent and substantial foundation. May the Lord bless you and may he fill you with that peace which he came to bring to earth to all those of good will.

*Without date* ³

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³ It is presumed that this letter was written in the later half of December 1792, because of Its reference to the choice of Confessors and also for its typical Christmas greetings of peace with which the letter ends.
Magdalen is assailed with the fear that when Don Libera's term of office as Confessor of the "Terese" terminates, he will not be able to continue to guide her. Even if that fear should have no foundation, it would not be a major obstacle on the path that she is treading with difficulty. The real obstacle that threatens to become insurmountable instead, is Magdalen's obstinacy in clinging to a vocation to the Carmel. Don Libera, in unusually severe words, recalls her to the denial of self and to trust in God. Love cannot tolerate a divided heart. Free from every hindrance, it must tend with all enthusiasm to the only object worthy of being loved. Not even the temptations against purity can stop it in its path, except the seeking of self and the attachment to one's own judgement.

(Double sheet. written on both sides—A.C.R., A1/1/9)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Although I have changed monastery,¹ I have changed neither my heart nor my solicitude to serve the Lord in helping souls whom he is pleased to entrust to me for his greater glory inspite of my weakness and ignorance. You may freely command me. Since I firmly hope that it may give the Lord great glory. I serve you gladly and it would give me great displeasure to know that you treat me with some reserve. I am not at all displeased that you choose to become a discalced² to satisfy yourself. This is a sign that on your part, you naturally aspire to what is good. I do not forbid you to say it. As for me, it is enough that you desire only what God wants for you and that you maintain the disposition to sacrifice your every desire and self will for the will of God. Take care that this thought does not distract you from doing good during this present time and it does not divide your heart, that it may be all for and always fixed in God, specially in those moments when alone, you can with full freedom be in his arms. Remember, my Daughter, to do all that love suggests to find time to spend with God, but without anxiety, and when you are prevented from satisfying your desires, accept everything in peace, doing your work willingly, following

¹ Cf. M.G.C. p.83 n.2.
² Cf. Ibid. pp. 95-128.
those ends and intentions which I have already suggested to you. Our spirit, my Child, even if kept imprisoned can still always aspire to God.

Courage, my Daughter, God is giving much of himself to your heart and he intends to enrich it with his mercies. Do not get frightened if he also permits the devil to tempt you. He does it only to increase your merit and make it a motive to love you more. This is his style in dealing with those he loves and wants to use for his greater glory, as we see in Job, Tobit, Paul and many others. Go ahead with great trust in the Lord. Evil does not consist in being tempted, but in yielding to temptation. God will always be there with his help, as he says in very many places in Sacred Scripture. Continue to recommend yourself to Our Lady. Don't get agitated, my Daughter, keep as much tranquillity as you can in these storms, because even this is an efficacious means not to remain always crushed. I am glad that they are a source of horror because, as St. Francis de Sales used to say, as long as temptations displease us, they are like dogs who bark but do not bite. Have courage, I would give my soul as security that you never consent. I recommend you to be tranquil and receive the Sacraments frequently.

I am happy that you are satisfied with the Dean\(^3\). My Marchioness, what am I to say about the invitation of Her Excellency Capitania?\(^4\) I do not want to make our devotions ostentatious in the eyes of the world. If you can sweetly and politely absent yourself, I will be pleased; if not, go just the same, only I warn you that the luncheon party does not end with going to the theatre if it is ever possible; because for this time I absolutely do not want you to appear impolite. In case it should happen that you have to go, fortify yourself beforehand with those reflections St. Francis de Sales suggests to his Filotea if she would be forced to attend a dance. I consent to your reading the devotions to Our Lady of Sorrows.\(^5\)

\(^3\) Don Fiartolomeo Neola, Dean of S. Maria della Fratta, Magdalen's Confessor.

\(^4\) Precise information on the identity of this person is lacking. Stofella thinks she can be identified with "Her Excellency, the wife of the Captain of the City" (STOFELLA G., Note ... f. 63).

\(^5\) "The devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows was widespread in the Veneto" (PICCARI T., Sola con Dio solo, Milano 1966, p. 225); it was very natural that even in Verona books of popular devotion on the Virgin honoured under this title were circulated. Since there is no indication as to the name of the book, it is not possible to quote the text here mentioned.
Oh God, how sorry I am at the state Teresina\textsuperscript{6} is, but if the Lord wishes to take her to heaven because of her illness, we should adore the divine dispositions. I order you to speak to the Doctor and find out if for the time being you must take some precautions and ask him to keep you informed should the illness take a serious turn, so that you can provide for her spiritual wellbeing, for your health and that of your sister, because otherwise, my Daughter, you will not be of help either to Teresina or to yourselves. I want you to love her but not to attach yourself to her because this is reserved fully for God.

I have spoken to Don Zorzi, and I listened to everything, to my great satisfaction; moreover, he has charged me to tell you that your information has been appreciated and whenever there is need, you may continue to tell him and I too suggest you do it. He has not replied in writing to avoid any occasion of suspicion for your little sister, and that he will help in the future too, solely for her sake whenever he receives any information from you.

My Daughter, I do not want us to get entangled because of your sister. We have to steer a different course in the world and therefore we can, with courage, turn our shoulders to its entanglements. God is telling us very clearly that he wants your heart just now for himself alone, and therefore it is proper to renounce everything else. But we cannot say that of your sister. I cannot approve of keeping her away from acquiring those refined graces that are expected in an aristocratic society. To refuse to go to the theatre once or twice this year would not displease your uncles very much. Reasons of health or some other excuses could be given but I would advise you not to resist learning to dance too much. My Daughter, I feel that it is necessary to adapt oneself to the duties of one's station in life, otherwise we would make devotion odious to the world. Where there is no absolute evil, it IS necessary to condescend as long as we do not see danger. If from now on you will have more time for prayer and to write to me, I will be very pleased. When I too am less tied up, I will be happy to pay you a visit, if it pleases you, since I have held back till now because of your duties. I will wait till you inform me as I have already said several times. In the meantime, my Daughter, walk with courage and simplicity. What have

\textsuperscript{6} Cf. M. G. C. pp. 211-217. We have already mentioned that Don Libera deals with "Teresina's case" in 21 letters.

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you to fear if you are in the arms of the Lord? Yes, my Daughter, God holds you in his hands. Believe me and live in this assurance. I think I have answered all and therefore I close blessing you.

*January 12, 1793*
Perhaps because of her continuous interior struggle, Magdalen is physically tired and falls ill. But the Director points out the spiritual advantage such a situation offers. He insinuates that the illness may be a means willed by God jealous for her love, to withdraw her "from all the engagements of Carnival". The illness, therefore is not an obstacle in the path of perfection but rather a means of shortening it, provided one knows how to use those occasions offered by it to exercise Christian virtue and thus conform oneself more intimately to Jesus Christ, patient for love.

(Half a sheet, written only on one side—A.C.R., A1/1/10)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Even illnesses are loving visits from the Lord. Even in illness one loves the Lord with a true love. Even in illness one can practise virtue and which beautiful virtue can be practised? All this you know already and all this, I believe, you will try to practise with a loving and sweet conformity to the most amiable Will of your God and Spouse. Who knows, my Daughter, if the Lord is not using this as a means to withdraw you from all the engagements of Carnival¹. If that is the case, very certainly we should say he loves you very much and is behaving like a little jealous Lover, but in any case you are very dear to him. My Daughter, I protest with all sincerity, that I really believe it is like this. May he be praised for everything and praise him with all your heart even if it were not so because all things work unto good for those who seek to love the Lord truly. Courage, my Daughter, remember to be obedient to the doctor solely out of love for the Lord; to take the remedies even if they are unpalatable, thinking of the gall and vinegar that the good Jesus tasted out of love for you; to be sweet with those

¹ Verona too, used to celebrate Carnival gorgeously, even if not in the measure and magnificence as Venice. Regarding this, there is a page in the manuscript of Don Santi Fontana entitled "Notizle intorno il nuovo casino aperto In Verona—Nel Carnivale del 1777 in Casa Angeleri" ... The programme for entertainment is given. The following advertisement is striking: "The Casino will be open till six in the night (our midnight) for the common benefit of young lovers: here we talk, jest, banter, sing, dance, play music, laugh and sigh; we play every kind of game, specially the game of love, the merchant at the fair, Meneghella, ... and always love is Father, Genius, Prince and Deity." (Arch. Sem. Vescov. Verona, Busta 12, cit. da DALLE VEDOVE N., La Giovinezza ... pp. 122-123, n. 18)
who assist you and to use even the present situation to edify your neighbour with your obedience, patience, charity and sweetness. When you are well enough to receive me freely let me know and I will come most willingly. In the meantime I will not fail to recommend you to the Lord, so that he grant you health, and for this intention I bless you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

January 13, 1793
Magdalen’s anxieties regarding her spiritual state continue. And still she goes ahead, trusting in the affirmation of her Director who assures her that she is dear to God, adding as proofs, the examples of the saints and the "lively tugs of love" which she recently experienced. But the untrodden path of self-denial is still enveloped in thick darkness and Magdalen’s steps are uncertain. However, sure means are not wanting: trust in God, frequent recourse to him, assiduity infrequenting the Sacraments, a healthy optimism even as a natural means are efficacious and must give her courage and serenity. To stumble is not necessarily the same as falling.

(The second half sheet is torn but not completely; the wax seal is intact—A.C.R., A1/1/11)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Oh God, the more the Lord gives himself to you, my Daughter, the more you think he is far away from you. No, no, the Lord is in no way displeased with you, may be he is a little bit saddened because of your diffidence and resistance and perhaps, if I may add, at your slow submission to what I have been telling you. As long as Peter was full of faith and confidence, he walked over the water as if he were on firm and solid earth, but as soon as he felt a little breeze, his confidence diminished, he began to sink and would have been drowned, had not Jesus held him by the hand. Marchioness, if God is giving you faith in my miserable person, I tell you, and pledge my soul for it, you are doing well and God is with you. Courage, my Daughter, God has worked along the same lines with all the souls dear to him. Not for nothing has he given you those lively tugs of love. Through them, my Daughter, God has prepared and fortified you for these trials. But I pray you by all that you hold dearest, for God’s sake I mean, do not neglect any of your exercises of devotion and do not resist the feelings of affection you have for God, the only object of your heart. Continue receiving Holy Communion sacramentally whenever you can and many times a day spiritually. Temptations are not sins and I want you to believe me. There is no need to confess them except in a general way because God permits them only to make you richer in merit. I permit you to read and
sing those songs¹. Do leave the thoughts of your health in the hands of God, but do all that is necessary for your present condition. Marchioness, how is it possible for God to abandon a heart that so hates any thing contrary to purity? My Daughter, the heart cannot sin; the thoughts and imagination or any thing else that disturb you, do not stain or tarnish in any way the beauty of that lovely virtue of purity when the heart is fully for God. Cheer up, let us walk with courage and trust in God along these paths. They are rugged and hard but they bring us to God. Steep and narrow is the path that leads to life. I renew the blessing and the merit of obedience to improve in health. All things are possible with the help of God.

*March 6, 1793*

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¹ It seems that they were: *Sette Canzonette in arru marinaresca sopra le sette principali feste di Nostra Signora* by Girolamo Tornielli.
Rosa's "wrong attitude" has wrenched a cry of help from Magdalen's heart and Don Libera is at her side with the weight of his paternal authority. He reminds her to have a faith vision and that being in the "arms of God" she has nothing to fear, not even the armies of hell. In fact, Magdalen is experiencing the effects of God's mercy: infused recollection, sweet rest, feelings of tender love. So fortified, she not only walks, she flies.

(A single sheet, written only on one side—A.C.R., A1/1/12)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

I plan to visit you next Tuesday if the weather is not very bad and no unavoidable duty prevents me; in case you are not available kindly inform me. And what have we to say, my Daughter? ... Let us adore the divine dispositions. Let us look upon these combinations as master strokes of that wise and loving hand who with strength and sweetness means to detach our heart from the things of earth and he makes us touch sensibly the vain support of creatures, so that we may aspire and be united only to God, our true friend and our spirit's only resting place. Let us abandon ourselves ever more to the loving arms of our God, and in him and leaning on him let us not be afraid even if all the armies of hell break loose against us. My Daughter, let us allow God to lead us in the matter concerning your sister. We know that all those educated in Castiglione¹ are well behaved. Perhaps even in these changes, the loving Providence of God is hidden, and it will be manifested as time goes by. With regard to Teresina, I think it is proper that you consult your heart and after having prayed, believe that God wants you to stay on what you feel inclined. I am very much consoled to know of the affection and comfort God is giving you in prayer.

¹ It has been verified that the Marchionesses Rosa and Eleonora Canossa were educated in Verona, with the Benedictine nuns of the Monastery of S. Antonio al Corso. How is it that Castiglione delle Stiviere is mentioned? Stofella's interpretation is: "The real place, ideal for Marchioness Rosa was not to be then with her family but in the Collegio delle Vergini at Castiglione delle Stiviere Her education was to make of her, an accomplished lady according to her station in life and for this there could not be a better place. I do not know if it was said that the Marchioness was exposed in that College to better marriage opportunities than in Verona, since aristocrats were always looking to these Colleges for their choices. " (STOFELLA G ., Note . . ., f . 71 )
Respond to God's mercies, because this is the nourishment and food with which God feeds the souls most dear to him and he strengthens them for everything. Oh God! how can I not want to approve of that silent and quiet prayer, which I have desired for you for quite some time. When it comes from God, I want to say every time God wants to give you this sweet rest, stay there, do not mind if you do not understand, neither entertain fears that you are wasting time, because my Daughter, this is the best way to use time. The soul is more fortified in half an hour spent in this quiet prayer than in several hours of the other kind. I remind you to be confident, courageously despise your apprehensions. May God bless you now and always.

*April 5, 1793*
After enjoying a time of intimate serenity, Magdalen is again assailed with fear about sins committed perhaps unknowingly. The Director enlightens her that such apprehensions are unfounded and exhorts her to go ahead with confidence along the path of obedience and love. Even if it were in the nakedness of faith, what does it matter? Better plod along in the dark than stop disheartened at the side of the road. In the meantime, along her way, Magdalen meets persons who turn to her for advice and help. Don Libera agrees, however with some caution, that she helps them, so that charity prevails without causing any risk to her own sense of insecurity.

(A double sheet, written on three pages. Many tears along the folds and lower margin—A.C.R., A1/5/67)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

It is certainly necessary in an affair of such importance and great consequences, to take the surest, cautious and prudent means, but let us also believe everything does not end with these precautions. When real prejudicial inconveniences are discovered, the evil is to be remedied with courage and without scruples, beginning with the causes from which they originate and managing everything with charity and Christian prudence. As regards your Uncle, I think it is a vague fear and things are going on as before. I pray the Lord that they stay so always. In all that concerns your worthy sister, let us leave the conduct of her marriage proposal to the Divine pleasure which certainly, in its own time will give you consolation. Next, about the young girl who wishes to become a nun, I think, if God wants her in that state, he will open up the way for her, but if you do not succeed in this, for one reason or another, it would mean that he disposes otherwise. Every now and again such cases spring up. Any way let us not precipitate any decision. Let us temporize as much as we can also with the young man who wants to marry her. If he has good habits, has the means to maintain her and the consent of their parents, the proceedings for such

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1 Cf. M.G.C., pgs 176-178.
a project are not to be cut off except for a different opening. For the other young girl to be placed to serve Regina, I have no difficulty at all, and if it comes to pass, do not fear for Regina, for I am quite convinced that in her goodness she will not be the cause of any harm.

Let us come now to us, my Daughter. The Lord is testing you, a most sure sign that he loves you and is expecting something of you. I approve and am quite consoled that you are trying not to let any evil you may have committed enter your mind or your thoughts. You already know that I put you under obedience but it consoles me because it seems to me that I am discovering that you are improving in this virtue. It is the most efficacious means to preserve peace of heart in the midst of the storms of this miserable life, consequently an efficacious means to reach perfection and acquire divine love in a short time. My Daughter trust in this beautiful virtue of obedience, try your best to practise it as simply as you can, specially in submitting your own opinion and apprehensions which now and again seize you and make you restless. Besides be assured that sins are not committed without the will and without awareness, and therefore do not give any thought as to how many sins you have committed! If we are talking about venial sins committed because of our weakness that can be said; but if we are referring to real and formal sins, no, and again no, we have nothing to fear that they are sins, specially in one who has no bad habits but in her heart nourishes a genuine desire to love her God and is attentive not to want to offend him. And so, my Daughter, do not allow these troublesome thoughts to make you lose heart. It is absolutely not true.

It seems to you that they happen that way, but it is not true. It is unfortunately an anguish that afflicts many souls on this point, but it is not so. Despise these vain apprehensions very much. I am content that in this matter you entirely distrust yourself and do not distress yourself, but be circumspect in guarding your senses and be careful to flee as much as lies in your power, from all that could be a reasonable motive or occasion for these thoughts. For the rest, live fully, abandoned in the love and goodness of your God who is always watching over you to help you and defend you. Placing ourselves in the heart of Jesus, let us deepen our desires to serve him ever more faithfully and love him ever more ardently, placing before him our insufficiency in big things with sentiments of true humility and patience, firmly hoping that there may
not be wanting all the help necessary to give him that glory which he wants and the way he wants it of us. Yes, yes, let us live with such faith in the divine goodness. Continue to receive Holy Communion frequently, be diligent in treasuring those few moments the Lord grants you to stay at his feet and adore him, always content with the way he deals with you. During the day and between one occupation and another, do not forget to turn to him with some brief and loving ejaculations continually, nourishing your heart with trust in the God who is all love for us and pleased when we honour him by practising this beautiful virtue. The Lord blesses you and enriches you ever more with his divine mercies.

Without date

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2 Trying to date this letter presents some difficulty. It may be placed as the thirteenth letter for three reasons:
First of all, it refers to the situation of the receiver afflicted with fears but trying to overcome them with the help of obedience according to the directive of Don Libera, in line with the preceding letters of March 6, and April 5, 1793. Secondly there is an allusion to Rosa's marriage which appeared to surface in the twelfth letter. Lastly, the fact that we do not have a letter in May 1793 while up to this time, there was a letter written every month, in some cases even more (two letters in November 1792 and two in January 1793) this letter would fill the gap. The reference to persons outside the family circle, creates a problem in the sense that Magdalen's withdrawal for a year before taking a decision about her future is not yet over. As can be seen with regard to the chronology of this letter, our position has changed from that assumed in the preceding book (M. G. C., pgs 104, 130-131, 140, 177, 184, 233, 246) where this letter is given the third place. It is a matter of hypothesis, to be verified, susceptible to further change.
It is almost a year since Don Libera undertook to guide the Marchioness, Magdalen of Canossa and it seems apparently there has not been much progress in discerning her vocation. It is clear that she is not called to the married state; but what form of life her consecration to God must be, no one yet has any idea. The prospect of a temporary stay at a Retreat House without enclosure, stands out before her, it is true, but how far this still is from her desire for a total consecration! The Director then comes out with an unexpected and disconcerting declaration when he writes that he "has not discovered sure signs and undoubted proofs of a religious vocation". Are we therefore at the beginning? On the other hand, the real problem is that of discerning the Will of God, not that of procuring one's personal satisfaction! This turn is undoubtedly dangerous: Magdalen’s spirit is deeply disturbed.

A double sheet, written only on one page—A.C.R., A1/1/13)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Truly your restlessness gives me food for thought. But any way I do not feel I can change my opinion. I have prayed to the Lord and I do not repent for what I have said. I see that this decision may be somewhat repugnant to human nature because it demands a detachment of some consequence, even if it is not apparent and limits in some way, a spirit which for certain family situations, had never been restricted as it should have been according to your age and lineage had the Lord kept your father alive. I wouldn't wish, my Daughter that this could be the hidden motive of your restlessness. Besides it is certain that to face something new for one who is very sensitive, causes some restlessness. My Daughter, I see your heart attached to God and in possession of the truth. Anyhow I have not discovered sure signs and undoubted proofs of a religious vocation\(^1\). On the other hand I see a constant aversion to the married state. Therefore I say, let us follow

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\(^1\) This declaration which Don Libera often repeat, is certainly surprising. But at that time there existed for women, only monasteries with strict enclosure. The expression "religious vocation" meant "a vocation to the cloister". Since Don Libera felt that the young Marchioness of Canossa had a different vocation, he did not give in to her repeated insistence to join the cloister.
that way which does not shut the door to whatever plans the Lord may have for you, and which at the same time, keeps us out of danger of those stumbling blocks which we, living in the world inevitably and necessarily encounter, when we want to give ourselves truly and perseveringly to God². I will want to visit you on Thursday morning of this week and we shall come to some conclusion. Please inform me only if you are not free. Courage, my Daughter, God is not reached without the continual denial of our inclinations and without suffering. May the Lord bless you and make you his ever more and more.

June 16. 1793

To HER EXCELLENCY
THE NOBLE LADY MARCHIONESS MAGDALEN OF CANOSSA
VERONA

(Round wax seal)

² Cf. M.C.C., PRs. 106-110.
Magdalen has found peace in prayer and she experiences more and more the demands of divine love. Don Libera is convinced that his "Daughter" is not called to the cloister, while Magdalen's interior torment at being misunderstood and contradicted increases. According to her, along her path, a barrier is raised that precludes every other progress.

(A double sheet, written only on one side—A.C.R., A1/1/14)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

I am very pleased that you have found your peace and your God in prayer. I protest, my Daughter, that it would cause me great sorrow to see you too quiet in the resolution taken, but anyway, I would not wish to budge, since I feel more than ever convinced that this is the Will of the Lord and there is no better way than this in the present situation. Being discalced is not for you, because I have not discovered signs of a vocation to the religious state and if I have been sure that God has not called you to be discalced, it is most certainly now. The insistence of the Dean that you go to the Dimesse\(^1\) as a boarder—a thing I cannot agree with—makes me think. I will find the convenient hour and the time to talk to him in his house before I meet you. I would not wish that this should happen without the knowledge of your Uncle and the insistence of the Dean makes me suspect that he is in connivance with the Dimesse\(^2\) and he cleverly and prudently gives you to understand that he is very much concerned to keep everything secret. My Daughter, be in peace, even should this be the intention of the Dimesse, when we have your Uncle's consent, everything will turn out well. So I hope. I will come to visit you this coming Thursday, the feast of the Visitation; but I tell you confidentially that I will first talk privately to the Teacher\(^3\), because I think he is free that day and I would

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1. Cf. M. G. C., pgs 106-108 on this plan which however was not followed.
2. If we interpret correctly the reticence, Don Libera fears that the Dean Bartolomeo Neola, the Ordinary Confessor of the Dimesse in the Citadella of Verona, advises Magdalen to retire to their Institute, previously agreed upon with them, then they have other intentions and not purely the aim of providing for Magdalen's spiritual good.
3. It is almost sure that the reference is to her brother Bonifacio's Tutor, called "the Teacher" (used as a title to identify him), and to whom Magdalen had confided her wish to enter the Convent (Cf CANOSSA M. Lettera al Padre Domenico Maria Federici. EPistolario 1. PaS. 1-3).
wish to know if he has any doubts. Do not say anything to him and do not give a hint to anyone. I bless your Communions and I wish with all my heart that the Lord consoles you with regard to your sister. Courage, courage. God bless you.

*June 27, 1793*

To HER EXCELLENCY
THE NOBLE LADY MARCHIONESS MAGDALEN OF CANOSSA

(Round wax seal)
The prospect of a temporary withdrawal ended up in smoke and Magdalen seems crushed under the weight of a serious decision, agreed upon by Don Libera and her Guardian-Uncle: Magdalen must stay with her family and take care of Rosa "until she would marry" (CANOSSA M., "Memoirs" no. 16). Moreover her Director wrote: "we regard the matter of our vocation as closed". Magdalen is dismayed. The exercise of virtue and the practice of prayer, but made with simplicity, will be the two firm points to which to cling to, not to stagger under the hard blows from the "master hand of God" of whose Will, Don Libera is the humble but authoritative interpreter. There is nothing left for the young Marchioness except to obey. But for the rest, is there a more radical consecration than obedience, lived with love, in the daily sacrifice of one's will in resemblance of Him who "became obedient until death"? (Phil. 2:8)

I truly desired to know how you feel, since it seemed to me I left you somewhat confused that day\(^1\). I am very happy to hear about your Uncle and that the matter has been concluded in such a way, that I cannot but recognize the hand of God in it. In the meantime, my Daughter, we have to look upon the matter of our vocation as closed and for the present we have only to think of sanctifying ourselves with those means which will please the Lord to give us day by day. We shall put our attention on holding on to virtue and specially on the practice of love for the Will of God in the various situations and circumstances in which it will please the Lord to put us. Prayer will be our food. But

\(^1\) From the previous letter we know that Don Libera had in mind to visit Magdalen on July 2, and there is nothing to suppose that the visit was not made. The day recorded here could very well be July 2, 1793. It is a decisive day if one remembers that between June and July of 1793, the year of waiting which the Director had wanted, was ending. It was precisely then that Don Libera and her Guardian-Uncle decided together that Magdalen should remain with her family. It was a serious decision for the young lady who more than twenty years later, would write that "although she did not want it, she was forced by her Director to obey." (CANOSSA M., Memoirs).
here, my Daughter, I do not want much study and much perplexity in
holding on to one way rather than another. The less you think, the
more your heart will be attracted by God. To pray well, one needs more
heart than head and therefore I desire that you cultivate much the
presence of God and do not expect to have heaven always open. Even
the most contemplative saints had their times of obscurity, aridity, and
were stripped of every sensible comfort. Let us live this life with
sweetness, trust and with a great love, endeavouring to please God, at
times even without the pleasure of knowing that he is pleased. It is
very true, my Daughter, that I asked Mother Luigia to write to you what
I feel, but I want, as I have said above, that we look upon this matter as
closed. Neither therefore because of this, are we going to oppose the
dispositions of God, rather I consider it the only means to know them
when God would dispose otherwise.

You have managed very well with your sister and let us
sympathize with her, because the Lord deserves it and she as well. I do
not remember having agreed or told you not to ask more graces from
the Lord. Marchioness, this is one of those apprehensions that you,
with great resolutions, promised me to disregard. We need God's help
every day and often we are in such circumstances that we are in need
of some special grace and help, and it would certainly be a blunder not
to ask it from the only one who can give it; more so when He Himself
teaches us in the Gospel to ask for it. Therefore put aside every scruple
and listen to all that the Dean has said and I too agree with him. I have
no difficulty whatsoever, that you satisfy the care of that Mother in the
way you have informed me. Do it, but since you are putting it in writing
do so after reflection and with all circumspection.

Be somewhat cautious in assum-ing some tasks. I do not
absolutely forbid you being helpful to your neighbour and when you
have the opportunity to console and provide for some persons,
without too many complications, do it. But if it should be undertaking a
work that requires too much involvement, I do not think it opportune
just now for your spiritual profit, unless it is a matter of serious
consequence.

Courage, my Daughter, let the world say what it wants; it is
enough for us to please God. Besideles, I tell you that I have heard you
being praised by several wise; and prudent persons. I have just received
the news from the Tercese of the death of their aspirants. Let us recommend them to thoe Lord. Oh God, how much I feel about it! May the Lord bless you.

*July 29, 1793*
Magdalen is still struggling in a sea of woes, no doubt permitted by God, but often magnified by her imagination, incapable yet of restraining herself from being preoccupied about her future. Therefore her Director insists on trust in God "who gives her so many proofs of his love". She must love him and keep herself in humility if she wants to "persevere in his divine service". And since the Marchioness is more and more devoted to Our Lady, with this help, the Director's hope of success in releasing Magdalen of much anxiety also increases, so that he can introduce her and launch her into the infinite ocean of the divine mercy.

(Half a sheet, written on one side only. A.C.R., A1/2/16)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Oh how many woes, my Daughter, how many woes! And how can one ever love a life which is only woven with fears, anxieties, temptations, dangers and illness of every kind? And yet it is proper to adore the divine dispositions and not want anything but what God wants. Oh when will it ever be, my Daughter, that we will live totally and entirely according to the divine will without thinking of tomorrow, but working today, only and always according to the good pleasure of that God who is the only object of our thoughts, affections and of all our claims? Come on, take courage, put up with all our anxieties which we have to endure for one day. So it is, my young Marchioness. I renew the order to recollect yourself for a very brief moment of time, twice every morning, twice after lunch and once in the evening; and this, it is understood, while you are in the midst of your domestic duties, because I do not mean that you are to exempt yourself from all the good you can do, and which your occupations, conveniences allow you, and if you want to say, your distractions too. I am content, provided you learn to put up with yourself, live in peace, get rid of your useless fears and nourish your heart with a loving and sweet trust in God who has given you so many proofs of his love. As long as we are nourishing ourselves with this beautiful virtue, we shall be dear to our good God and all the opportune help to-love him will not be wanting.
Yes, my Daughter, love him and love him in the midst of all that is human and imperfect, which he allows us to feel, so that we may keep ourselves faithful in humility and maintain the knowledge of our nothingness, so necessary to persevere in his divine service. Keep up your courage! I am consoled that your Uncle is better and Teresina is in the countryside. The Lord and his Mother, the Virgin Mary, will console us at the right time, for all that still remains. Cherish this hope warmly and God will certainly fulfil it. I recommend you to receive Holy Communion as often as you can. Let us help ourselves through this great means and certainly all the time which we spend in it is spent for God. When I know that you have more time at your disposal, I will visit you. In the meantime be cheerful. In the morning, offer all your actions to the Lord and say that you want none but Him and for Him alone you will live and die. The Lord bless you now and always.

Without date
The young Marchioness is always agitated, not only because of her sister, but also because she has not definitely abandoned herself to the designs of Divine Providence. Don Libera who guesses that his "Daughter" is uneasy and reticent, paternally reproaches her for it, encourages her to renew the early confidence she had in his spiritual support and exacting too, that when she writes to him she will always "give an account of her obedience" and "of her heart". Had he not become her fellow-traveller?

(A half sheet, badly torn—A.C.R., A1/2/17)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

I received your esteemed letter dated 11th, on the 12th. I say that to assure you of our meeting and I say too, that it was very dear to me and with that let us finish with our ceremony. I am very willing to serve you and nothing can give me greater consolation than that you avail yourself with filial liberty in all this and all I can do for your peace. Besides, to come to the point, I say first of all: I do not want you to be so anxious; because if again you would have to see to the education of the young Marchioness. ¹ In Castiglione, I think, you do not have to worry your Uncle by presenting him immediately with another new thing. My Daughter, it is proper that one who wants to serve God and walk the way of perfection, should habituate oneself to take things calmly and sweetly, never turning the heart from Divine Providence, on which such a soul must find all her comfort. In the meantime, my Daughter, since your young sister is going away, you will be freed from many preoccupations and obligations and I am of the opinion that we should experiment how things go in the house. But for the moment, let us put the heart in peace let us wait and see what happens and then at the right time, we shall act according to the Will of God. What I have at heart in this matter is that you are not to be an accomplice in all those deceits and given the occasion, you are to regulate yourself in a way that is not snobbish but simple so that it be known that you have no

¹ In the place of . . . there is a cancellation, over which "Rosa" has been written by the same hand.
hand in all that. With regard to the young lady, reply what you have written to me and which is just what you must reply and stay out of every embarrassment.

My Daughter, I have received two of your letters without you giving me an inkling of your interior life and without telling me anything of what I have at heart. I pardon you this time, but remember when you write to me, I desire always, but always, to have a word about what goes on in your heart, and that you give me an account of your obedience, and most of all, if you are going ahead with courage in despising those vain fears and apprehensions which serve for nothing except to delay our progress in loving the Lord. May the Lord bless you. Do not forget me before the Lord and I give you my word of never forgetting you at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

October 13, 1793
The tempest in Magdalen's heart has abated and a new light has arisen, certainly through the intercession of Our Lady. The Director is pleased because together with a more enlightened knowledge of God's divine mercy which she continues to experience, his "Daughter" progresses also in self-knowledge, drawing sentiments of gratitude and love from it. But he warns her also against temptations to discouragement caused by some infidelity to her resolutions, leaning more on momentary fervour, which unconsciously makes her rely on her own strength and not exclusively on God's help. What will make her pliable in directing securely the rudder of her little boat, instead, will be diffidence in herself in proportion to her trust in God.

(A double sheet, written on two sides. On the right side of the fold there is a big tear.—A.C.R., A1/2/18)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Here I am my Daughter, a little bit late due to some circumstances, but I am ready to serve you with the same love and with greater care. I am very happy that you recognize the affection and love with which God comes to you by a simple act of his mercy. Because, my Daughter, there is no more suitable and efficacious knowledge than this: to return the love of a God of such goodness. At the same time, to know our poor correspondence is a right light and a legitimate consequence of this sweet knowledge. The brighter the light, the more the least stain can be discovered and then in comparison to this excellent divine love, must not human love, I mean to say that of a creature, seem weak, of little or no value? I do not speak of this because I do not want to believe all that you write about your miseries and imperfections. My Daughter, I will speak freely, as regards miseries, you do not see the least part of your miseries as God who alone searches the heart, sees in you. Oh God, how ugly we would be to ourselves, my Daughter, if God would uncover all our evil, right to its depths! He knows it perfectly, and inspite of it he loves us. Let us not lose courage. The more miserable we are, the more it will serve to show the Lord's greatness, because, my Daughter, God is more glorified in being merciful and loving towards one who does not merit it than from one who is less unworthy. So it pleases our good God to act, as it is expressed in the parable of the Good Shepherd, who

1 “A little bit late”, as to what? Not as regards the preceding letter which is dated October 23, therefore a little more than a month. Most probably “a little bit late” refers to the "affair" of which he speaks later; but it could also be in regard to the needs of Magdalen, always anxious and dissatisfied with herself.
goes in search of the lost sheep, leaving the ninety-nine faithful for some time. Oh, the abundance of the Divine Goodness! O excess of Divine Love! My Daughter, I wish that from our very miseries, we would draw motives to know his kindness more and be stimulated to love him more. Besides, my Daughter, it could be that your inconstancy to your resolutions, stems partly from not leaning entirely on God. It is easy, when sometimes we feel fervent, to make holy resolutions, but they are not made, keeping in mind our insufficiencies and our lack in that entire and total dependence on God. Therefore, be warned my Daughter, to depend on him alone, so also in prayer and have no fear of every little distraction. Oh God, how I would wish, my Daughter, to convince you fully that God takes note of the heart more than the head! Cheer up, my Daughter, walk with courage and with confidence and I assure you truly that I am very glad that things are not so bad as you think. May God be blessed in everything.

I come now to the advice you desire of me. I am of the opinion, that given the opportunity of the very good encounter, to notify your Aunt of the obstacles that could hinder the good results of this affair since it could prevent difficulties much more, as you say, if your Aunt is informed. This step will be taken by the Teacher, and for your greater peace, I give you the merit of obedience for everything. Let not the two years worry you, because already your Aunt, as well as your Uncles will take those measures and care that is done in such circumstances, so we have to believe.

I have yet two more words to say, as in your goodness, you inquire about my health. From my first indisposition, I have recovered, thanks be to God, but another has been added which leaves me weak. With the help of God, I hope to recover also from it. Being occupied in hearing Confessions and because of the holidays and my poor health, I find myself full of debts. I think to use the little strength that I have to satisfy as many religious sisters as I can and then I will keep December 9, to come to you. May the Lord through his blessing grant you to enjoy the present situation ever more and fill you with his mercies and graces.

November 28, 1793

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2 It is not very clear what is the "affair" in question but from the context of this and other letters, we can infer that it deals with Rosa's marriage. The "two years" could correspond to the period of waiting, fixed by the family of the fiance; time long enough for the mentality and practice of the time quite a difference if one thinks of it today, two centuries later.
3 Don Libera during the fourth Tempora (here we are in Advent) is nominated Extraordinary Confessor of other Monasteries.
4 From what follows, the debts are not financial but moral obligations.
5 For a better understanding of Magdalen's spiritual state cf. M.G.C., pgs.
Along Magdalen’s path, a cross has been planted and the Director paternally participates in the sorrow of his "Daughter" with that vision of faith which has already become her "milieu". He exhorts her to raise her eyes to heaven in offering herself to the "divine dispositions" courageously abandoning the thought of her own future to God.

(A single sheet written only on one side—A.C.R., A1/2/19)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

I think it is my duty to write a few lines to you, to sustain your spirit so that you are not crushed under feelings so unavoidable to our miserable human nature and turn away from that submission, which in every case and every situation, we owe God, if we want to be united to him with all our heart and affection. For all this, please do not think that I am condemning you because this loss makes you feel sad and your eyes are filled with tears. Provided we do not allow ourselves to be overwhelmed, I cannot condemn a tribute to being human. Moreover my Daughter, how many motives for consolation, comfort and hope, wellfounded and sure, does the Lord not give you, having taken him and placed him in the beautiful place of peace. His life was always Christian and exemplary. His long and painful illness, the frequent reception of the Sacraments, the assistance of so many Religious, the reception of all the Last Rites of the Church, what more can we desire, my Daughter, to be able to hope more surely that he is saved, and in exchange for having lost him, we are more sure of enjoying copious fruits of that affection and love in which he held you? Remember that the best suffrage we can pay for our dear departed is precisely the sacrifice of our will to the divine dispositions Do it then, my Daughter, to a God who does everything well and merits everything. May the Lord in this holy feast of Christmas, exchange this affliction with his heavenly blessings, for which with all my heart I desire and pray. Do not give any thought to the future. Abandon this thought to God and we shall take the proper resolutions that he desires. May the Lord bless and console you.

December 23, 1793

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1 The death of Granduncle Francesco, whom Magdalen was particularly fond of and during his illness she was prodigal in her solicitude and affectionate care.
Along her difficult path, Magdalen very often meets persons to whom she devotes part of her attentions. But she also meets those who although unintentionally, end by increasing her interior torment. Don Libera puts her on her guard, be it from internal enemies (her "little submission"), be it from external unpleasantness (self-interested advice) insisting on abandonment in God. Even the poor state of her health conspires to slow down her pilgrimage, but obedience—as the Director assures her—will free her from all the snares that could "delay her progress".

(A double sheet, written on both sides and having many folds and tears—A.C.R., A1/2/20)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Inspite of not having informed you, I talked last week with the Abbess of the Redentore1 who is very inclined to agree to what you desire when she is in a position to accept a lay sister. She told me: "Truly we not only need them but it is a necessity for us. But for the present, we are not in a position to take in any persons. Assure the Marchioness that in case we take a decision, the candidate she recommends will be given the first preference, if she is free to join us, because I do not mean that she should be pledged to join us. If in the meantime she finds an opening elsewhere, ready to receive her, she may do so. I can only give you my word to give her preference over others. In fact, Msgr. Vicar 2 gave a strong recommendation for another young girl. I told him that I will keep my word to the Marchioness of Canossa and therefore I cannot for the time being give any pledge." She also asked me to present her respects to you. So my Daughter, all you must understand is that there is no commitment and when there is an opportunity to place her with the Terese3, I tell

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1 In 1587 there was built, on the left side of Adige, a Church with the title of S. Maria di Reggio with a monastery attached to it, which in 1671, the Sisters of the Bl. Trinity occupied. They took the monastic habit of the Lateran. They completed the extension of the Church which in 1675 was consecrated under a new title: Cristo Redentore. In 1689 it came under the strict cloister. On July 2, 1806 because of the Napoleonic decrees, the Church and monastery were suppressed and were taken over by the Municipality. (Cf. LENOTTI T. Chiese ... II pg. 28)

2 Mgr. Gualfardo of the Marquis' Ridolfi, was Vicar General of the diocese of Verona and later became Bishop of Rimini.

3 It was the monastery in which Magdalen made her first attempt to become a cloistered nun. During that time, she formed a holy and strong friendship with Sr. Luigia della Croce and here she providentially met Don Luigi Libera. The Convent of S. Teresa or "Terese" as it was called, was begun by Sr. Angela Maria Ventura Ferrazzi of the Bl. Sacrament who after founding at Venice in 1648, the St. Teresa's Girls School, commonly called le Terese or le Teresine, in 1653 turned to the Consiglio Communale of Verona, "knowing this very noble city is a stronghold of piety and religion", asking to found a monastery there. Having received its consent—and also that of the Serenissimo Principe (the Doge of Venice)—she reached the scaligera city with three companions and
you, decide what you think is the Will of God and what is better for the girl\(^4\). Just make sure about the way to do it and stop worrying. This I tell you and require of you.

Certainly I should lament your little submission, but because I do not want to believe you are doing it deliberately, rather than complain, I want to sympathize and encourage you so that you do not lose heart. In whatever situation God puts you, adore and love his will. Ah Daughter, let us try to keep our heart empty of every affection, of all that is not God, and for the rest, let us abandon ourselves into the hands of that Father who knows better than us, all that can be for our greater good. He loves us, he has always loved us with an act of his loving and free choice, let us hope he will do so in the future too. Our failings must not terrify us too much. Remember my Daughter that these too can serve for the greater glory of God. We must always disapprove of them, but sometimes it is necessary to be patient with ourselves and never allow ourselves to be discouraged and lose heart. Moreover if your indisposition should continue, I want you to talk to the Doctor and when he judges it necessary to let some blood\(^5\) submit to it obediently. If ever Fr Graziani\(^6\) should come to suggest something to you, try to find out what could be his intentions and his wishes, and having heard him, take your time to decide, because these are not decisions to be taken in a hurry. In the meantime we shall think over, and we hope that God will deign to give us light to do his Will. I am willing to give you permission to fast\(^7\) three days in the week, that is, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, when you are in good health, and if you have recovered from the letting of blood, should you have to undergo it, but then with this, I mean that you are to take your

\(^4\) Is this "girl" to be identified perhaps with the young girl referred to in Letter 13?

\(^5\) Cf. Letter No 1, dated September 11, 1792.

\(^6\) Cannot be identified with certainty; for equivocations about this person cf. 7 M.G.C., pg. 117, No. 33.

\(^7\) In fact it was Lent.
chocolate every morning. Take heart my Daughter, let us leave the thought of Mantova to the Lord’s dispositions. In the meantime, with a spirit of obedience and simplicity, let us frequently receive the Sacraments. Remember to rise above your fears which, my Daughter, serve only to tie down your spirit and delay your progress. Believe me, believe me. May the Lord bless you and make you holy.

March 3, 1794

To HER EXCCELLENCY,
THE NOBLE LADY MARCHIONESS MAGDALEN OF CANOSSA
VERONA

(Wax seal)
Don Libera’s suggestions, done with the intention of preventing his
deloved “Daughter” from stumbling and falling, have no immediate
effect. The young Marchioness besides worrying about the lack of a
solution to the problem of her vocation, is irked by “domestic difficulties”.
Troublesome intricate preoccupations besiege her on every side, so her fervour,
enthusiasm, ardour, the moments of ineffable intimacies with her Lord are remote
remembrances, perhaps illusions that fade forever. Magdalen fears she is lost ...
but her spiritual guide is at her side, untiringly pointing out the goal and the
efficacious means to reach it.

double sheet, written only on one side. There are many tears on the folds—
A.C.R.. A1/2/21)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

May 20, 1794

I suppose that your Aunt, Lady d’Arco¹ is a woman of prudence and foresight,
so I think it is opportune that you inform her in all secrecy of these domestic
difficulties, perhaps she can help you in this affair which is very important. Take
heed, my Daughter, when writing to her, to show her both sides of the matter, your
regret in disturbing her and that you have no other aim than to share a part of your
sorrows with your Aunt in whom you have full confidence. It will not be useless to
beg her to keep it secret so that she be better informed. All this you must do for the
peace and propriety of the family, because, should discord break out, your Aunt
could certainly complain that you did not inform her in time. Recommend yourself to
the Lord and write to her when you think it prudent. I have no difficulty if you
confide in the Teacher² and give your opinion, in all that you see, always keeping in
mind peace and prudence, and regulating yourself accordingly. I would think, my
Daughter, that before Teresina³ is transferred to the countryside, try and see first if
you can talk to her Confessor so as to put her in peace, otherwise I fear it will not be

¹ Cf. M.G.C., DE, 102 no. 11.
² Certainly this does not refer to the French Teacher, an unacceptable person, to whom reference is made in the
Letter of December 1792. Two hypothesis may be forwarded as to the identity of this person. Either he is a new
Teacher who substitutes the French Teacher or it is Bonifacio’s Tutor, Don Pietro Rossi, whom Magdalen calls ‘
Teacher” and of whose integrity of character and wisdom she had the greatest esteem, so much so that when she
was sixteen years old she had confided to him her desire to become a nun. (Cf. CANOSSA, Epistolario, 1, pg. 2;
M.G.C., pg. 73, no. 13)
³ cf. Letters: January 12,1793; April 5,1793.

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LUIGI LIBERA - Letters of Spiritual Direction
directed to Marchioness Magdalen
Gabriella of Canossa [1792 - 1799]
of much use to give her a change of air. I desire that you behave virtuously in having to detach yourself from her for some time. Yes, my Daughter, let us leave it to God to take care of your sister and he will provide according to her need. In the meantime let us take courage and accustom ourselves to keep our goals very high, in the vicissitudes of this miserable life, ordained by God or permitted by him to detach our affection ever more from transitory and apparent goods and to unite ourselves more to Him, the only centre and foundation of our heart and our happiness. Our evil helps us to rise nearer to God. I want you to trust much in the Lord. Every now and again, give your heart to him with affection, offering him with a spirit of patience, all your work, even your tedium, which it is not wrong to feel, but gives us occasions for gaining great good. Be assured that the Lord loves you very much. Courage, courage.

Do what you can for that woman and be sure that on my part, I will scrupulously keep secret what you communicate to me. I will see you this coming Monday. The Lord bless you and make you a great saint.

To HER EXCELLENCY
THE NOBLE LADY MARCHIONESS MAGDALEN OF CANOSSA
VERONA
FIRST INTERLUDE

At this point Don Luigi Libera's letters present a lacuna. From May 1794 one passes immediately to the second half of December (Novena for Christmas), a gap of six months! And when the correspondence picks up again, the tone is very normal as if there were no interruption at all.

The most obvious hypothesis is that some letters have been lost, but another, more reliable perhaps, can be presented. It can be noted in the letter of May 20, 1794, that there is an allusion to a delicate family situation: "domestic difficulties"—so writes Don Libera—a situation which obviously must be guarded with the greatest care. Fearful of some indiscreet eyes, Magdalen with what and how much regret God knows, must have decided to destroy her Director's letters, most comprising in this respect.

A third hypothesis would see reflected in this lack of correspondence, the state of interior uneasiness of Marchioness Magdalen, who felt misunderstood, as if frustrated in her aspirations to join the Carmel. Could it be a suspension then of Don Libera's direction to be attributed to the empty interior of his "Daughter"? This hypothesis is not to be excluded a priori, rather in the beginning\(^1\) it seemed to us most acceptable. But now, on calmer reflection we would decide in favour of the second hypothesis.

To conclude: the same motive which explains the erasure\(^2\) would justify the lack of letters. It could coincide with the end of a stage in the spiritual journey of the young Magdalen who at the beginning of 1795 presents her desire of accomplishing one of her initiatives—the foundation in Verona of a monastery of discalced Carmelites\(^3\). Perhaps as we have written elsewhere\(^4\) the Marchioness sees in the eventuality a sort of compensation for her inability "to be called the discalced of the Lord"\(^5\).

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\(^1\) Cf. M.C.C., pgs. 118-120.
\(^2\) Cf. Ibid. Fonti, pg. 12, no. 4. 3
\(^3\) Cf. Letter dated January 26, 1795.
\(^4\) M. G. C., pGs. 222-223
\(^5\) CANOSSA M. "Memorie" Qd. B. pg. 81.
The Marchioness is certainly in need of much understanding and Don Libera does not hesitate to give it to her, but helps her to transcend the purely "human" sphere and fix her gaze on a faith-vision, the only acceptable one in an existence that wants to be truly Christian. So he points to the Eucharist, "food of life", the dynamic origin of all her initiatives and decisions, for a responsible service of love.

(A double sheet, written on both sides, well preserved. A.C.R., A1/4/46)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Your letter has been most pleasing to me on every count; specially your frequent reception of Holy Communion and I wish that the Lord grant you the opportunity of being able to receive it ever more frequently. I praise and approve your daily reception of it during this Novena. And, my Daughter, we can only be strong with this food of the strong and it is impossible to receive this food of life frequently without growing greatly in love which is the true life of our soul. I know what you would like to tell me, but my Daughter, you are forced to confess from your trials and experience that God is good not only in Himself but also to you. And therefore, why not trust him entirely and nourish a sure and firm hope that he will make you all his own? Remember my Marchioness, that this is the way to be grateful to your Divine Benefactor, pleasing him and pledging him to continue to increase his mercies till he has led you to fulfil his loving designs. So it is my Daughter. I have understood and with much pleasure, that you have passed through your usual anxieties and dejection with greater ease. Oh God, how much I desire that the Lord will free you from this hindrance and delay in the way of perfection. I want you to be humble without reserve and without limit, but there is no true humility which is not also joined to a complete confidence in God. At the knowledge of your defects and failings, turn to your God, ask his pardon, throw yourself in his arms with the desire of not offending him again. All our sufficiency comes from him alone and only he can help us because he has compassion on our miseries and he knows that by ourselves we are capable only of offending him. Courage, courage. May the Lord deign to console you and I will not fail to pray with all my heart for this. Everyone speaks well of the Marchioness . . . 6. God grant her constancy and perseverance since the situation she is in, I think, must cost her much and even more having to adapt herself

6 ... Cancelled. above which can be read "Signora Carlotta"
to religious simplicity. When the vocation is genuine, God does not fail to help, and as long as there is correspondence to it, it will be of great edification. Otherwise it would be harmful to her and the monastery.

If the young girl we have talked about, would be destined to serve the young widower, I would certainly regard her as being in an occasion of great danger and I would advise you to provide for her elsewhere. If the widower's mother, being a refined lady as you say, would keep her in her service, the girl would be more secure than before. Inform them that they may keep her in the house on that condition and take those measures which prudence and charity dictate. I know that your Aunt, Lady Brenzoni is looking for a young maid who knows how to dress the hair; if she knows this, you know where to place her.

Let us say a word about our Teresina. God loves her and so he sends her suffering. Whom God loves, he chastises: he himself has said it. St. Teresa said that the balance against which the love of God is weighed and its quality gauged, is suffering for love of him and carrying the Cross willingly and patiently, at least with the will, because it is rather difficult for the body not to complain and to writhe in pain. Therefore be strong and do not get frightened if you sometimes feel what you would not want to feel, because without these contradictory feelings there would be no true cross and this brings us greater merit before God. The Lord bless you both and fill you with his heavenly blessings and that peace which he brings to earth to give to all those of goodwill, which truly I desire for you in this holy Christmas season.

P.S. The Marchioness Carlotta has been accepted up till now, only by word of mouth, because she will enter the monastery only at the beginning of Lent as has been said.

Without date

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7 Since there are Christmas wishes, it can be dated surely during the Christmas Novena. The year is most probably 1794, chiefly because of the reference to Teresina, actually ill and still in good rapport with the young Marchioness Magdalen.
Don Libera's solicitude for his "Daughter" is delicate and watchful. He is pleased with the progress she has made in her relationship with her sister Rosa, but is saddened by her persistent scrupulosity which, after a fairly consistent respite, is cropping up insidiously. Magdalen seems to have given up the "ambition" of becoming a Discalced Carmelite, but Teresian spirituality always exerts a strong attraction on her and induces her to plan the founding of a monastery of the Discalced Carmelites in Verona. The Director recommends caution and recourse to Divine Providence. Reading between the lines, one has the impression that his suspicion is well-grounded: Is the Marchioness unconsciously seeking a compensation? This would truly signify precluding herself from every effective progress.

(A double sheet, written only on one side, with a hole near a fold)—

A.C.R., A1/2/22)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Really I am telling you the truth, my Daughter, what you told me has surprised me very much, and although the vow may be valid according to the results of the consultation\(^1\), it seems to me to be a circumstantial case, so that it would be necessary to have some more consultations to see if there can be a just motive to ask for a dispensation, very easily obtained for a simple vow taken by an only son, at an immature age. Anyway, let us adore with all submission, what God has permitted and let us thank him that the affair remained secret and also that the Marchioness Magdalen draws profit from the event. O God, my Daughter! Man proposes but God disposes according to that order which in his infinite Providence from all eternity, he was pleased to establish for the good of his creatures. In the meantime, let us sweetly and confidently put our attention-on another matter, and we hope that God in his own good time, will listen to our just desires. Since we are already on the subject of vows, I say: you are not to think of doing something new with regard to yours, but continue the same way as much in renewing it as to the method of accusing yourself in Confession, because it is my firm intention that in all this, nothing is to be changed. I am very happy that you and Teresa as well receive Holy Communion frequently, every day if the opportunity presents itself. But I desire too, my Daughter, that you keep far from scruples and discouragement. Obedience desires you to be circumspect and cautious, but not scrupulous, it wants you to be

\(^{1}\) Cf. M.C.C., pg. 123, no. 46.

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humble, full of holy diffidence, with a salutary knowledge of your own misery but in no way dejected and discouraged. A heart which allows itself to be dominated by discouragement will not do great things for the Lord, nor even make great progress in love. Only a humble and trustful heart will reach there and such a heart I want you and Teresa to have.

My Marchioness, as to the foundation, I can only foresee a crop of major difficulties in the terms proposed. I am of the opinion that first of all you should pursue the matter with the Prince to obtain the necessary permission to found a monastery, which may be a hard bone to chew. Having obtained the permission, ways to begin the work will not be lacking, if it pleases the Lord. For St. Teresa, the foundation consisted in only buying the house and sometimes renting it. This is a work, my Daughter, which is to be done chiefly through Divine Providence. I would think it a great miracle, in these times, to obtain the permission to raise a new monastery. If the Lord deigns to work this miracle, I would not doubt at all that he will accordingly provide the ways and the means of subsistence. My Daughter, in short, we shall talk again about it and I will inform you. In the meantime I bless vou and wish you to be a great saint.

January 26, 1795
To HER EXCELLENCY
THE NOBLE LADY MARCHIONESS OF CANOSSA
VERONA
(Imprint of wax seal)

2 There is no doubt that the reference is to the Doge of Venice, Ludovico Manin, the last in the line. The name "Prince" was used since the XVth century. The fact then corresponds to the system of Venetian law with regard to the monasteries and such institutions as can be deduced from the following: "From ancient times, the Republic of Venice, specially with the laws of September 14, 1333, December 31, 1536 and March 26, 1605, was preoccupied with avoiding the formation of the so-called mortmain property following inheritance, donation, obligation and alienation, disposed by its citizens, in favour of ecclesiastical goods, pious works, ordering the selling of immovables ... In 1766 a special Commission nominated by the Venetian Senate took up the problem ... With regard to the work of this Commission ... on September 10, 1767, the senate approved a part or law of 11 articles having the aim declared in the motivation, of slowing down the rapid course towards which the goods of the laity are headed and prevent the serious harm that will result in the service of God, the good of the nation, from the enormous enrichment of the ecclesiastical and pious places. (Arch. di Stato Veronese, fondo Antichi Estimi Provvisori, vol. n. 2235 of ducal letters). The Major Council made the law of the Senate its own on September 20, 1767. For the practical application of the law ... the Senate on September 7, 1768 elected ... adding to the Three Provveditori sopra Monasteri already existing, a new officer called Aggiunto sopra monasten.” (SANCASSANI G., Aspetti giuridici nella vita ecclesiastica della città—di Verona—, in AA. VV., Chiese e Monasteri a Verona, Verona 1980, pgs. 244-245). This being the legislative context within which Magdalen of Canossa wished to found a monastery of the Discalced Carmelites, Don Libera had good reason to comment: "this will be a hard bone to chew."
Probably Canossa Palace, with its presumed conveniences, social and even worldly, was not the ideal place for Marchioness Magdalen to cultivate her aspirations to a devout life. Witnessing some frivolity left her disconcerted. Her spiritual guide however, although understanding the delicacy of the situation and the sensitivity of his "Daughter", reduces her apprehensions, showing her their inevitable presence in the alternation of the spiritual ups and downs and grounding her on faith and trust in the Fatherhood of God. Abandoning herself "in the arms of the heavenly Father", she will cover much ground and surely reach the goal.

(A single sheet, written on one side, torn where there is a fold—A.C.R.. A1/2/23)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

April 12, 1795

And what have we to say, my Daughter? The life of a Christian is interwoven with good and bad; it is a loom with the warp and woof of toil and pain, of anxieties and fears. We live far away from that only Good who can satisfy our heart and in a situation in which one can lose him. But then we have to hope with all firmness, of not losing him because of his infinite love and mercy. Courage, my Daughter. Let us willingly put up with the burden of this miserable exile, and let us remember that if we suffer with Christ, we shall one day be glorified with Christ. So our Faith assures us. Very certainly we ourselves create many of our troubles. Oh God, what apprehensions! Oh God, what anxieties! I should complain of the little spirit with which you serve so good a God, who gives you so many proofs and pledges of his love, and has given you so many signs of predestination. But I do not want to do it because I do not want to be harsh with you. I desire that, the love of God and for God alone, be the sole motive that moves you and urges you in the practice of virtue. Courage, my Marchioness, it was an expected thing, that after a time of comfort, some particular trials would follow. This is the usual way the Lord leads the souls he loves and wants to strengthen in the way of perfection. I am very happy the Spiritual Exercises did not upset you and also that everything else is well. My God, what unfortunate fears have been planted within you and what a miserable support we found, my Daughter, to have a little rest from these fears! Sleep? How much better it would have been to abandon yourself in the arms of our heavenly Father who takes...
so much care of us! For this too, I pardon you since there is no evil in it and the motive of the fear is so good that it compensates for everything. The agitation of Easter day is a bit too much to accept. My Daughter, there is no sin where there is no will and awareness. The agitation has been excessive as regard that Woman\(^1\). If we have had to do with a girl it would have been justifiable, but with a woman whom we suppose to have as much care, it has been too much. Now calm down. I hope by now you have been to confession, but believe me, Daughter, even before confessing it, you could have lived in peace. A generous and simple abandonment in God is a great remedy to the perturbations of this miserable life. During this week, I will be away in the countryside for two or three days, therefore we will not be in contact with each other, but certainly next week, God willing. I bless you in the name of the Lord, yes, you and Teresina so that both of you may walk the way of the Lord with spirit and courage and may you both keep good health. Have faith, have faith.

\(^1\) For a probable identification of this "Woman" see M. G. C., pg. 135.
At the approach of the Feast of Pentecost, Don Libera exhorts Magdalen to have trustful recourse to the Holy Spirit, the great "Advocate". Poverty, timidity, fragility and any other weakness will be helped by Him, provided they are recognized and humbly accepted. For the poor of spirit, the way to sanctity even though uncomfortable is easier to travel than for those who walk it weighed down with their own self-sufficiency!

(A single sheet, written only on one side, badly torn along the fold—A.C.R., A1/2/24)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Finally after many attempts I succeeded to talk with that person. He did not discover signs of a vocation. It is true that for quite some time he found her more mature in her way of thinking and behaving. Anyway I would not risk saying now, that she may have a vocation, rather I opposed everything she told me on this subject without saying yes or no. I thought that by herself she must have understood that I am not inclined to agree that she has a religious vocation. Besides when she decides to consult Zechinelli she should not be prevented from doing it, because certainly if she would insist or show a leaning towards the religious state in a way that he will believe that she is called, he would not be the only one to decide and settle on such a point that the subject is excellent and meets his full satisfaction. My Daughter, for the present do not show that you know anything, even though she may give her confidence to Teresina with the intention to inform you of her desires, in that case it would be necessary to please her and then we shall think of the way to do it.¹

My Daughter, we are in the Novena to the Holy Spirit. So now, let us try in these days to gain his favour through the mediation of our great advocate, Our Lady, in order that his gifts and his love may be showered abundantly on our souls so that fortified by them, we may keep his temple which we ourselves are, pure and uncontaminated in his most pure eyes and we may adorn and beautify them with holy virtues so pleasing to him. My Daughter, let us show him our poverty, so that he

¹The identification of this young woman is a problem, but not so great that one cannot risk a name: that of the young Marchioness Rosa, now under a strong delusion—unrealised marriage? There are other circumstances in favour of this hypothesis: the fact that "that person" (Don Zorzi?) did find the young woman in question "more mature both in her way of thinking and behaving", the facility with which she could confide in Teresina, besides the possibility that eventually she could give "a precise order to inform you (Magdalen) of her desires"—all this obviously would not have been possible to a person outside the family.
can make us rich; our timidity, so that he can make us strong, courageous, humbly confident, seraphims of love. The Lord bless you and Teresa. After the Feast we shall hear from each other but I shall let you know. Receive Holy Communion as often as you can. Walk confidently and free from vain fears. Amen.

March 17, 1795
Along the itinerary of the Marchioness of Canossa, difficulties keep on multiplying, caused by the family, by the servants, by outside persons who confided and recommended themselves to her. Don Libera supports her, suggests how to get around the obstacles, and how to overcome the barriers: humility and confidence in God are remedies for every thing.

(A double sheet, well preserved, written on both sides—A.C.R., A1/2/25)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

The liking and the fanaticism of our city for foreigners, I believe, may give much merit and credit to these French Professors. It is true that I heard from the doctor of the Count of Provenza¹, who speaks well of him and characterizes him as a learned person and a gentleman; but on hearing your opinion, I would not judge evil of him and whenever it would be necessary to pay a visit, you would need to find some wise and mature person to be present. To attempt this too, is an act of charity, deserving of merit before God and approval from creatures, but do not do it without the knowledge of your Uncle. As regard the other woman, I approve of the counsel of the Teacher and inform your Aunt of that too, and then do not worry at all about it.

With regard to the match-making, my Daughter, there are too many objections. I have this to say: that when something could be concluded with Serego from both sides, do not be afraid, God will bless everything. In case there is no accord or the young lady² should show her unwillingness, I would not mind taking either one or the other of the two proposals, even though from a foreign city. I would favour the former, being older in age and an only son. How many Ladies, my Daughter, are seen and by passed. We have the recent example of Sacramosa³. It is not necessary to look upon her as being sacrificed because that is not so. What is important is to assure oneself of securing information about everything. For the rest, sooner or later one has to be separated from the other and I do not want you to be affected so strongly. I do not condemn you for not being indifferent, but this separation must not prevent you from trying to get her married. My Marchioness, let

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¹ Count of Provenza (or Count of Lille), title of Louis XVI's brother. Louis Stanislaus Xavier in 1795 was an exile in Verona, where on June 8, with the announcement of the death of his nephew Louis XVII, he assumed the title of Louis XVIII. He ascended the French throne on May 3, 1814.

² Almost certainly it is Marchioness Eleonora, Magdalen's youngest sister. This hypothesis is supported by the name of Count (Federigo) Serego, whom in fact, Eleonora will marry on January 20, 1799.

³ Perhaps the Countess Massimilla Gavardi Pindemonte Sagramosa, daughter-in-law of Countess Marianna Sagramosa?
us be strong, perhaps God may want greater proofs. If your brother$^4$ is not very pleased with you, you must accept it peacefully, but I do not advise you to discuss it with him. Things are being promoted but nothing is being solved and therefore why get upset? Let the dead bury the dead and we shall do what is expected of us: love God and serve him as perfectly as it is possible with the duties which are our own. Courage my Daughter, the Lord will make us good in his own good time. In the meantime, let us take our own imperfections as a motive to humble ourselves before him and abandon ourselves totally and entirely in his arms. Believe me, do not leave off this exercise. Practise it as best as you can so that God may give his holy help to perfect ourselves ever more in this as well. Nourish, my Daughter, sentiments worthy of that infinite love of which God gives you so many proofs and do not measure the greatness of that divine heart with human standards. As high as God is above his creatures, so much the greater is his goodness and mercy. What I have at heart is that you have a correct idea of the goodness and love of your heavenly Spouse.

$^4$ Marquis Bonifacio. For the disagreements of the members of the Canossa family on account of their patrimony cf. M.G.C., pgs 121-123 in particular no 45.
The greater difficulties come from Magdalen herself, from her conscience inclined to scrupulosity. But it is impossible to walk on the ground without getting some dust on the feet and perhaps “on the heart”! Don Libera knows it, wants his “Daughter” to be aware of it and gets her to give up an ingenuous “idealism” which makes her dream of a life without defects. Certainly it is licit to yearn for Paradise where God is never offended but with simplicity, allowing the maximum freedom to the heart.

(A double sheet, well preserved, written on two sides — A.C.R., A1/2/26)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Well my Daughter, it is necessary to make up your mind to be a little more courageous. This continuous experience is making you aware that paying attention to so many fears hinders your spirit. And why can we not shake off these irksome ties by trusting in the Lord and be guided by obedience? Believe me, that until there is not a generous determination to despise that tick tock, permit me to express it that way, when you feel you have fallen into some defects, you shall not free the spirit. At the apprehension of the defect, without thinking other thoughts, turn to God, humble yourself before him, and do not waste any more time. My Daughter, I can assure you from the experience and knowledge I have of your conscience that certainly I have never found, in the midst of all your greater anxieties and agitations, any serious fault and I have no difficulty in pledging my soul that there is none at present.1 Courage, my Daughter, courage! Never to have some little dust attached to the heart is almost impossible to our human nature. It is not necessary to be excessively sad in these circumstances. It is necessary to humble one self, distrust ourselves more, and sweetly and simply abandon ourselves into the arms of Divine Love. Oh what a noble practice this is, my Daughter, oh how dear and pleasing it is to our Spouse and how fruitful in very many blessings. If one cannot pray because of a legitimate hindrance one must be patient. Let us help ourselves with frequent aspirations. If we cannot have an entire dish of food, let us not despise the crumbs, let us be content with what is left over and with the scraps. Everything from a simple and sincere heart is pleasing to God.

Let us not get tired of asking the Lord for your sister and Uncle. He will certainly do all that is better for them and for us. Cheer up, my marchioness, let us

1 Don Libera in other letters too is urged to involve himself personally in order to pacify Magdalen’s heart (cf. Letters No. 9—January 12, 1793 and No.11—March 6, 1793).
love the Will of God very much. In all our troubles, let him be our refuge and comfort. It is true I told you to go to Confession twice a week, but if to calm down some of your agitation there is no other remedy other than to speak it out, in that case I agree that you do it. You can for the time being suspend the letting of blood, let it be done at a more suitable time; but of this we shall talk when I meet you, which will be the coming Tuesday, that is the 25th of this month. In case there is some impediment be kind enough to inform me. My Daughter, we are made for Paradise because there we shall possess, love and praise our good God without fear of losing him, without danger of displeasing him. Oh dear God, should we think it a defect to have an ardent desire to achieve our end? How ingenious you are in tormenting yourself! Is not this a desire which is absolutely necessary to have? has not our good God taught it to us, almost commanded us to have it when every time in the Our Father he made us say: your kingdom come? Do we not ask for Paradise in this petition? Courage, let us walk with more simplicity and let us allow our heart all the freedom to deepen these affections, suggested by that love which possesses, governs and supports you. You have not given me any news of Teresina. I hope she is well and when you write to her, please wish her for me. The Lord bless you and make you simple and more trusting which certainly will make you holy.

August 16, 1795
1795 is without doubt, a year of hard intimate trial for Magdalen, who seems to totter at every step under a weight too heavy for her yet weak shoulders—not only has she the responsibility of one of her two sisters, but by this time, that of the entire family. All along her way, a clear light shines, a guarantee of certainty for the present and for the future: the protection of the Virgin Mary, "a token, an almost sure sign of predestination", why therefore be doubtful?

(A double sheet, torn at the fold, written only on one page—
A.C.R., A1/2/27)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

My Daughter, trust in obedience and without much ado, go to the countryside. Marchioness Rosa knows how to discern and possesses a good foundation. Do not be afraid, no, do not get agitated as to think, because of your delicacy and timidity of conscience, that some jokes or gallant ways are wrong because they are not so. I want you to be cautious but not withdrawn, always fearing danger and precipices. Time was and time is. Go then in a spirit of obedience and do not be afraid, God will assist you and Our Lady will help you. The occasion is not of such a nature as to oblig.e you to run away from it or make you rash in meeting it. So therefore directed by obedience, you are assured of every help from the Lord. Continue your trust in that great Virgin and take it also as a motive to love the Lord more because he grants so valid and special a patronage only to the one he lovesi and loves with distinction, for which St. Anselm and St. Bernard used to say that the protection of Mary is a token, an almost sure sign of predestination. I promise you I will sincerely thank her and beg her to continue to bestow her love and grace on you. I pray that the Lord bless all your desires and bring the matter of Modena to a successful conclusion, if all will be for his glor) and the good of your souls. The Lord bless too, the other mstte. so that it be concluded in peace and quietly. Let us sanctify this outing with the intWntion of renewing the spirit, to make it more willing to love the Lord. Remember that your God dwells in your heart and you have him always with you. The Lord bless you, give you some relief and keep you healthy according to the vow of obedience.

September 2, 1795
Magdalene is ready to leave for Grezzano in a spirit of obedience. The distractions of the holidays do not deviate her even a little from the road Divine Providence is marking out for her. She carries her God in her heart as in a temple, as on an altar, his love urges and comforts her.

(A single sheet, written only on one side, badly torn at the fold—A.C.R., A1/2/28)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

I heard with the greatest pleasure that you have happily returned and I wish good health to the one and the other. May God be blessed for everything. We shall go to Grezzano and even though we change our residence, provided we shall not change our heart, we shall find everywhere that our God is always kind and worthy of all our affection. If we cannot pay our usual homage, we shall pay all that an affectionate heart knows ingeniously to suggest in whatever situation it finds itself. Ah, my Daughter, let us love our good God and he will never deprive us of the way to glorify him everywhere. It is a very beautiful thing to find him in every place, to have within us a temple and an altar to meet him any time we please and offer him the most acceptable and dearest sacrifice—our affection! Yes, my Daughter, your heart is the temple and the altar, in which dwells the majesty of that God whom not even the heavens can understand nor contain; a temple and an altar built by his passionate love, with the sole aim of staying always with us, to converse with us which is his special delight. With so precious a treasure in the heart, let us go anywhere, when the duties of our station in life require, which he has himself obliged us. Let us continue our trust in Mary, and she will continue to help us with her love and protection. I have and will have at heart, your welfare and be certain and sure that God will console you always if it is for his greater glory and for your spiritual advantage. The coming Monday, that is the 28th of this month, I will pay you my respects. The Lord bless you and make you fully his.

September 20, 1795

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1 This detail could help us to understand Magdalene’s apprehensions regarding Rosa, mentioned in the preceding letter. It seems that the two sisters participated at Modena, in a feast with gallant aristocrats which would be an occasion for Rosa to be presented with a new offer of marriage. For Magdalene naturally, this worldly atmosphere presented some dangers: dissipation, vanity and perhaps scandal for her sister.
A letter much too short to be able to deduce anything regarding Magdalen’s spiritual state.

(A single sheet on which six lines, including the date, have been written. It is torn on the top left corner—A.C.R. A1/5/68)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

I am extremely sorry that my health does not permit me to visit you nor give an answer as you would require. But Your Ladyship, do not worry about me. Be sure things are going on well. Do not do anything new, even in the least thing. I am spiritually close to the Lord. As soon as I am well and able, I shall pay you a visit, but my Daughter, do not entangle me with regard to your sisters. God bless you now and always.

October 28
To HER EXCELLENCY
THE NOBLE MARCHIONESS MAGDALEN OF CANOSSA
VERONA

(Wax seal)

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1 The year is not written but based on some considerations, it can be dated in 1795:
(I) The letter is addressed to Verona therefore it cannot be 1796 or 1797 because during those years Magdalen was in Venice.
(2) The phrase "do not entangle me with regard to your sisters" suggests that neither of her sisters was married. The following years may be excluded: in 1798 Rosa was married in January and with greater reason 1799 because by that time Eleonora too, was married.
(3) In this brief note Don Libera writes of not enjoying good health. The next letter, written after three days comes from Vigasio, where he had gone for a short rest.
(4) The contents of the letter dated November 1, 1795 agree very well with what had been indicated in this note. All these reasons induce us to conclude that assigning the date October 28 1795 to this letter is more certain than probable.
Fear of hidden sins, fear of negligence in discerning her vocation continue to worry Magdalen. So her spiritual guide reproves her lack of docility and in particular, the submission of her judgement. This is the real danger which now and again suddenly threatens the regression of Magdalen who deceives herself that she is making progress in the way of sanctity by aspiring to a "greater perfection". Instead a total abandonment to the plan of God will be a true answer to her anxiety for an unconditional self gift.

(A single sheet, badly torn, written only on one side—
A.C.R., A1/2/29)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

November 1, 1795, Vigasio

I do not know if this letter will arrive at the right time. The lack of address is the only reason for such a delay. I approve of you talking with your Aunt. Inform her about what you have written to me and tell her as much as you already know and about what can happen according to the opinions of others, having to deal with subjects so clever at taking advantage. You can inform her too, about what we decided, show her all your displeasure at such an emergency, without however putting her under obligation to take any action. But if she feels to get involved let her do it, without it ever being said that Marchioness Magdalen had part in these dealings.

Oh God, how pleased I would be if I could quieten your fears and banish the apprehensions of so many sins from your soul! My Daughter, I do not look upon you as an angel from heaven, but I cannot be persuaded that you run into so many sins. In the inability to say everything that you would like to, I see clearly the source of so much agitation, but my Marchioness, a more docile spirit, well-grounded in holy obedience would not be tried in all this. Believe me, it is necessary to keep your intellect a little less discursive and so peace is found in obedience. Meanwhile I leave you all the liberty with the Dean but calm down with what he tells you. My Daughter, your suspicions in the present situation have the same value as a dicer's

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1 Vigasio: a holiday resort in the vicinity of Verona where Stofella assures us Don Libera had a house and property.
2 Don Libera was not sure if Magdalen was still at Grezzano or had returned to Verona.
3 This refers to Countess Claudia Marietta Buri, the very young wife of the middle aged Uncle Gerolamo. (Cf. M.G.C., pgs. 135:146-48: 220)
4 Don Bartolomeo Neola, Dean of St. Maria della Fratta, Magdalen’s Confessor.
oath! (of no value). They are not sufficient for any good judgement on your vocation. Be in peace, everything must be done for the love of God and do not think of wanting that which, at present, God does not want to give you. But just for this we shall not lack adoring and loving the divine dispositions, and remain strong in our entire trust in his love and providence. Let us persevere in trusting the Virgin Mary and let us hope your concern for your sister be blessed. If a definite time has been set, there is good hope; but if the time is indefinite, it is an expedient; according to me, it will be only an illusion. God knows everything. Courage, my Daughter, courage. In this week,

I return to my work and so we shall have more leisure, if it is necessary, to write and to have a more prompt answer. In the meantime, I bless you, soul and body. Be sure that I am keeping you present before the Lord as I believe you are doing the same for me. May the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit descend upon you and remain with you always.
Magdalen is always under a nightmare of faults which her Director reassures her as non existent, and he insists on the necessity of obedience of the "intellect". In order to give his "Daughter" the necessary stimulus to proceed confidently on her pathway—always pointed out clearly as a pathway of faith—for the umpteenth time he reminds her that Mary's protection is a pledge of salvation and exhorts her to receive Communion frequently.

(A single sheet, torn in an irregular way. It has the imprint of a wax seal. A.C.R., A1/2/30)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

I am replying to your most esteemed letter only very briefly because on Tuesday, December 1, I will be paying you a visit. Is it possible that everyone wants to betray you and that the Lord and the Virgin Mary who has given you undoubted proofs of protection and special assistance want to permit it? My God, in how many ways you have martyred the souls dear to you! Courage, my Daughter, sin is not committed except with awareness and voluntarily. You do not want to sin, then what have you to fear? We may be tempted, but between being tempted and sinning there is a great difference. I am glad that the more you know the world, the more you recognize how frightful it is¹ and worthy of your hatred and abhorrence. As long as we view it under its real aspect, it can in no way harm us. Let us put our trust in God and have recourse to Him in our troubles. Always receive Holy Communion as often as you can and the Lord will be with us, and with Him what have we to fear? God bless you and make you generous and obedient in will and intellect² and you will be holy.

November 29, 1795

¹ One needs not marvel at this attitude of pessimism in an age known for its serious moral and religious deviations.
² Underlined by Don Libera.
Physical illness and temptations unite together to keep Magdalen worried with the fear of having consented to them. She harbours a suspicion too, that she is an annoyance to her spiritual guide. But the contrary is true, because Don Libera can assure her that the Lord "is giving him an ever greater care for her soul." In fact, his interventions are marked not only at the level of a formation in faith, but by his penetrating psychological intuitions which suggest also, eminently practical advice. Magdalen can allow herself to be led with closed eyes and with a heart open to the greatest trust.

(A single sheet, written only on one side, and badly torn—
A.C.R.: A1/2/31)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Your letters are always very dear to me because the Lord is giving me an ever greater care for your soul. I do not think it suitable for you to take that syrup, without the knowledge of the Doctor, because your indisposition, according to my judgement, would need something strengthening rather than warming as perhaps those syrups are. Therefore consult the Doctor, since even a little thing, I think, could be of great help. Courage, my Daughter, you may suffer twice as much but God is not offended because of it. Keep a great love for purity in your heart and do not be afraid of anything. It is not feeling that makes us guilty before God but consenting with awareness and deliberate will. I confirm the obedience of doing freely some manual work and also that of enrolling yourself in the Association of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. I have no difficulty in agreeing that you and your sister read the Letters of St. Jerome.

The Lord deigns to grant your desires, when they redound to his glory and the good of your souls. I will not fail to recommend this matter to the Lord. I recommend as much as I know and can, that you keep your heart in peace, walk in great trust, in a spirit of faith and obedience. The Lord bless you and make you his more and more.

December 9, 1795

1 We think this refers to an Anthology—a collection of letters written by Jerome to some Roman noble ladies, his admirers and disciples among whom the very first was the widow Marcella (16 letters to her alone: MIGNE P.L., Tom. XXII, Epp. XXIII-XXIX, XXXII, XXXIV, XXXVII-XXXVIII, XL-XLV, coll. 425-480) with her daughter Asella; the matron Paola with her daughter Eustchio to whom Jerome dedicated his famous letter on the way of a true ascetical life: De custodia virginitatis, Ivi Ep. XXII, coll. 394-425).
The inconveniences that Magdalen complains about in the preceding letter do not seem to subside, so much so that Magdalen is assailed by doubts of committing sacrilege. Truly she is surrounded by thick darkness, which prevents her not only from proceeding with speed on her journey but the journey itself. All the same it is necessary to have courage and proceed on the wings of trust and love, believing that in reality, things are different from what they appear.

(A single sheet, written on one side only—A.C.R., A1/3/32)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

I am very sorry that I am unable, at such notice, to meet you, my most esteemed Daughter! Since I had to go to the Magdalens⁴ and St. Cristoforo il Confessor²; there were so many matters to be attended to, that they absolutely prevented me just now from coming though I would have liked to meet you before matters come to a boiling point³. I pray the Lord to conduct the affair with peace and charity and I recommend to my Daughter as much as I know and can that you regulate yourself in such a way that all may know that you have no part whatsoever in these intrigues. O good God, how unhappy is this life ! I pray that the Lord bless this matter of your sister and let us hope much because evening I read in St. John Chrysostom's writings that God mixes consolations and troubles for his dear ones, and this is the constant and unalterable practice of a loving Divine Providence. Bless the Lord in all things. Courage, courage, my Daughter. Come on, my Marchioness, let us walk with greater generosity and trust in the love and goodness of our most kind Lord. Oh how sorry I am to hear those expressions with which you say that by going to receive Holy Communion, it seems that you are committing sacrilege. Ah, a heart so narrow and timid cannot accomplish great things for its God ! Let us take heart, a generous heart if we are aspiring to love the Lord very much. I think, my Daughter, that excessive fear can cause some disturbance and many thoughts, but it will be always true that they are involuntary because you fear as much as you greatly love

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1 Convent of the Magdalens or S. Maria delle Vergini, built in 1226 by the Nuns of St. Clare in Campo Marzo under the title of S. Maria delle Vergini. In 1350 the Benedictine Nuns of the adjoining convent of St. Mary Magdalen and St. Martha being suppressed, the buildings were given to the Sisters of S. Maria delle Vergini, who from then on were called Magdalens. (cf. DALLE VEDOVE N. VitaepensierodelBeatoGasparesBertoni, lpgs. 16-17, no. 14)

2 S. Cristoforo: in 1214 the Church and Convent of a Congregation of Brothers and Sisters of the Umiliati in Campo Marzo. Later the Brothers were transferred to S. Maria della Giara, only the Sisters staying in S. Cristoforo. The Convent of these Sisters was suppressed in 1570 and the Benedictine Nuns took their place. On June 27, 1806 the Convent and the Church were taken over by the Municipality but the Nuns stayed on and they were joined by twenty-six other Benedictines coming from the suppressed Convent of St. Bartholomew. (cf. LENOTTI T., Chiese ....11 pgs. 30-32).

3 Don Libera most probably is alluding to the division of the patrimony of the Canossa family, a problem always being discussed but never resolved. (Cf. LETTER 27 dated May 19,1795)
this beautiful virtue of purity, and as the thoughts and all the others which follow are involuntary, they most certainly are not sins. You must not easily believe that you are the one who allows these thoughts to enter. It may seem so to you, Daughter, but in truth, it is not so. You can certainly believe me. Take courage, generously despise them all. Continue to receive Communion and live secure in the help and protection of your God who loves you very much. Give him your heart frequently and trust much in Mary. I am glad you are taking that medicinal wine with all due caution and in small quantity. The Lord bless you and shower on you his blessings and fill you with a spirit of christian fortitude, because it is very necessary in order to love the Lord very much. I wish and pray that all of you enjoy a very Happy New Year with the Lord. As soon as it is possible for me to come I shall inform you.

Without date

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The wishes for a Happy New Year make us place this letter in the month of January. As to the year, it may be ascertained from the Liber Monialium della Diocesi di Verona (January 1795—May 1, 1857) in which can be read "Confessarii Ordinem deputati R.R. Monialibus Civitatis et Diocesis a die prima Januarii 1797 usque ad diem trigesimam primam Mensis December 1798 Inclusive: S. Christophori: R.D. Aloysius Libera” (al 6° posto nell'elenco) . This letter is therefore of January 1796.
Since the "domestic difficulties" of the Canossa house hold only offer displeasing disagreements, Don Libera, to whom "God gives a great commitment for the soul" of Magdalen, advises her to stay out of it in order to contribute better to preserve peace. Rather let her be guided by God "the good Father", with a free heart, through the windings of that labyrinth of domestic preoccupations. He will bring her back to open and bright paths.

(A double sheet with tears round the wax seal—A.C.R., A1/3/33)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Oh God, my Marchioness, how many labyrinths! I think it is more expedient for you to warmly recommend things to God and stay out of every trouble. Fianza's project is a specious one but, my Daughter, many problems seem to come with it. Let them do what they want, I do not see much in it. By staying out of it you can more easily preserve peace and thus perhaps serve as a means of some conciliation. I see things that way and so I freely tell you to do this. Keep your heart in peace. Put all your worries about this matter into the heart of Mary. Abandon yourself to her protection and let us not waste any more time, thoughts and heart in such things, which after all, will take shape without our or others' manipulation. Is the matter of Mantova leaving no hope? I too would not be of the opinion favouring this marriage proposal, both for the difference in age and the distance of the place. Let it go, my Daughter. Through the intercession of Mary, God will console us at the right time. Have courage and faith that God will help you. Let us allow ourselves to be led by this good Father, who surely loves and knows infallibly what is better for us and he has all the ways to bring everything to the end he wants.

Courage, my Daughter, every thing matures in time and we shall wait and see the Lord's arrangement also on the subject you are writing about. If it should come true, it will certainly give us much to think about. For the time being let us keep everything in the heart and abandon ourselves into the hands of Divine Providence. Oh how sorry I am to be unable to come this week, but in the coming week at any cost, I will come and it shall be Tuesday. If you receive no other information, it is fixed for 19th instant. Be assured that God gives me a great commitment for your soul and I have it always present in my poor prayers. Continue to receive Holy Communion and give all the time you can to prayer. Take courage, let us frequently

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1 As can be seen, it treats of economic matters and confirms the hypothesis stated in no. 3 of the preceding letter.
raise our heart to God and abandon ourselves entirely and totally to Him. May the Lord bless and console you.

January 10, 1796

TO HER EXCELLENCY
THE LADY MARCHIONESS MAGDALEN OF CANOSSA
VERONA

(Wax seal)
Truly Magdalen's intimate trials are crucifying, but also blessed since they contribute to give her a keen knowledge of her own fragility and together with it an immense need for interior purity. Her guide does not let the occasion pass by. He raises her "up to a purer atmosphere", celebrating the divine mercy. In the last colloquy with his "Daughter" he was able to see her "heart so well united and loving to her God" as to feel a paternal legitimate pride in it, and exclaim with a heart over flowing with gratitude: "I am the one whom the Lord is pleased to use for the good of your soul". After much obscurity, finally a warm ray of the sun.

(A double sheet well preserved—A.C.R., A 113134)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

My Daughter, I wish that you nurture in your heart that loving and humble trust, which the abundant divine mercies and the strokes of his most special love towards your soul demand. My Marchioness, love is requited by love. It is true that we, imperfect and miserable as we are, can bestow only an imperfect love, but if this pleases our good God, we must be content also with this. I mean that it is our duty not so much to aspire always and continually to increase our affection for him as to watch over and purify it greatly, and never to be satisfied with our love, because a love towards a God so deserving of love must not have any limits. But all this must be practised lovingly and sweetly. My Daughter, thinking always that you are offending him when your heart does not want to offend him, to look upon every disorderly movement of the passions and human inclinations as sin, when it is impossible for one not to be subject to them as long as we are living on this earth, believe me, believe me, my Daughter, this will not help you much to advance in trust and consequently in love. The sight and knowledge of our weaknesses, imperfections snsl tSefects. rather than diminishing and cooling our yearning to love the Lord, must increase it, not by relying on our ability and confidence, but by stripping us of every presumption in trusting ourselves, and by abandoning ourselves fully in the arms of Divine Love. Neither believe, my Daughter, that he rejects us although we be imperfect and miserable. Ah, my Daughter, God's heart is kneaded, so to say, in a disposition so very different from what we can imagine. He wants only that we do not love our defects. As soon as we are sorry that we have committed them, he forgets them. And then, he is always waiting with open arms to lovingly embrace any repentant sinner. He is the first to go in search of them, having come down from heaven for this very purpose. Ah, my Daughter, God's heart is truly that of God. But I
already hear you say: what most of all disheartens me, is to see myself always enveloped in those imperfections, yes, I detest them, but then? ... very soon I'll fall into them again. Well, my Daughter, you act as a daughter of Adam and God acts as God. It gives him greater glory to forgive than to punish. He knows whom we are, what our strength is worth, that we are dust that can be put out by every little breath of wind; and so the Royal Prophet says that the Lord does not act according to our ways but according to his heart, and therefore his mercies are above our miseries as the sky is above the earth. I assure you, my Daughter, that I am very satisfied with your heart and I have seen it so well united and loving to your God that in no way does it deserve to be put down by so many fears, rather I want you to enlarge it to love our God. Go ahead, Marchioness, with courage. May our miseries bring us closer to God and knowing our nothingness through them, let us throw ourselves generously into the arms of love and abandon ourselves entirely and totally in him; and so we shall exchange our weaknesses into strength, and give him greater glory and more joy. Believe me, my Daughter, believe me. May the Lord bless you, and remember to stay with the thoughts I have given you, because I am the one whom the Lord is pleased to use for the good of your soul. May Almighty God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit descend on you and stay with you always. Amen.

February 3, 1796
To Magdalen's intimate trials are added those caused by the turbulent political and military events. After Napoleon's triumphal entry in Milan (May 1796) the Canossa family decided to take shelter in Venice, and on Magdalen's shoulders fell the responsibility for the preparations of the "flight" from Verona and for settling down in the "Capital". Now the Marchioness is doubly a pilgrim, but if in the bustle she will be overthrown or right down impeded in her way of life, nothing and no one will be able to prevent her from loving her God. All the same her Director forestalls her expected anxieties, exhorting her to that filial liberty of spirit, proper to a mature christian. On the horizon is outlined the exacting but also the reassuring Will of God, to whose fatherly providence it is a duty to abandon oneself with unlimited trust. Don Libera in his role as docile instrument is at her total disposition to guide her.

(A single sheet, written only on one side rather badly torn—A.C.R., A1/3/35)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

May 16, 1796

In the midst of these calamities which surround us on all sides, who is not forced to recognize, and I would add from experience as well, the wisdom of Solomon's saying: Vanity of vanities and all is vanity: so we recognize and experience in these events, the things and the greatness of the world. And yet what sentiments of sadness and bitterness do they not awaken in us what agitation and perturbation of soul and spirit do they not excite and promote? If the loss of the vain things of earth brings so much terror and regret, how much more will be the sadness and grief of those unhappy persons who see themselves deprived of real heavenly goods for all eternity? My Daughter, it is not that I want to condemn or reprove those disturbances of spirit which excite revolutions and which are very just and inevitable to us, but only to fortify our fragility, so you will not let the torrent of these sad feelings which overcome us, overwhelm you. What God permits, let us adore with bowed heads. He is just, He is infinite Wisdom although his ways are inscrutable. Anyway we must hold firm in believing certainly that they are just and right and ordained for the good of his elect. He who has God, lacks nothing and so St. Philip Neri used to say in such situations: as long as I am not deprived of loving my God, I do not care for other things. The Lord gives us his help so that we too can truthfully say what was said by this great Saint. It is certain, my Daughter, we can draw great
profit for our sanctification from these occasions. We do not have the possibility of stemming those evils which threaten us. Whether we want it or not, we shall be subject to all that God will permit should happen, but if we have a perfect submission to His Divine Will, then we can draw great advantage from everything. May God give us a lively faith, a firm hope and a true charity because all things work unto good to those who love God—I write it for your and my comfort. Courage, my Marchioness, I already foresee that you will find very many disturbances; that you will not be able to keep the order and method in your devotions and to the Sacraments; but I do not want you to be anxious for all that. If it is possible, at least every week, receive Holy Communion. This is the time, Daughter, to work very much with the heart. Although you may not be able to say your usual prayers, use well those few moments which now and again come within your power. A glance at the Crucified Christ, some kisses to Mary, some prostrations even though hurriedly, at the presence and majesty of God whom we can adore in any place and at any time, frequent acts of a true and simple abandoning of ourselves and of all that is ours in the hands of God our Father—let these be the exercises of your heart. Write to me when you can but without the least anxiety and let me know when you need and when it is convenient to speak to me. May God bless you and may the Holy Spirit strengthen you with his holy love and grace.
The "common affliction" with its load of troubles and tribulations has its positive side and with regard to Magdalen, it is destined to throw light on her pathway. The fickleness and the transitoriness of human greatness seems always more evident and becomes her lived experience, helping her to get out of her own individualism to busy herself and be concerned with others—that is, her family for the time being, waiting for God's plan for her, to manifest itself in its fullness and originality. In the meanwhile she must trust in him who, through trials, widens her heart exceedingly, preparing it to soothe much human sorrow.

(A quarter of a sheet, very creased on the lower left side—A.C.R. . A1/3/36

Praised be Jesus and Mary

I finally received the much desired news of your esteemed person from Mother Luigia¹. Bless the Lord, my Daughter, in everything, because there is no more efficacious means to sanctify oneself than troubles and tribulations. To feel them is not wrong and God is not offended by it. Let us in the intimacy of our hearts, always adore the ways of God, regulated by his infinite wisdom and goodness. This is the time, my Daughter, to keep our heart more than ever turned to that only Good for whom we were created to serve and love. If you cannot enjoy your liberty, give it to support, animate and guard your most worthy sisters. This too, is a work which can redound to your great merit and give great pleasure to the Lord. Provided we love him and please him, we will not mind the way. If you go to Confession, keep to the method I prescribed. If you do not have the time to write to me, don't worry, but recommend me to the Lord.

Keep to what you know He wants from you and I am very content. Let us pray that the Lord give us a little peace and calm down his anger because certainly, in this common affliction, I can only see the hand of God for the good of sinners and the greater sanctification of the good. Blessed be God always in everything and for everything. May the Lord bless you and make you holy.

Without date²

¹ St. Luigia of the Cross, Niccolini, whom Magdalen knew in 1791-92, during her stay with the "Terese" . For further information cf. M.G.C., pgs. 87-91 as well as Appendix 1, PRs. 373-375.
² Without date, but the allusion to the difficulty in exchanging news; Magdalen's duty "to support, animate and guard your most worthy sisters" in that "common affliction", and the recommendation of not changing the method of confessing, oblige us to place this letter in the first weeks of their exile in Venice. that is in June 1796.
Distance does not interrupt the correspondence between Don Libera and his "Daughter" who continues to experience the power of the Virgin Mary's intercession with God. In the tempestuous sea in which tradition, institutions and structures are suffering shipwreck, threatening to drag down those very same religious and moral values which once seemed to sustain and express them, Mary is truly the "Star of safety to those in peril". Fixing her gaze on Mary, Magdalen finds security and peace in her heart, to be sister and "mother". She finds the courage to sail towards the shores of pure love.

(Single sheet, written only on one side—A.C.R. . A1/3/37)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Verona, July 14, 1796

I did receive your esteemed letter and I was not in a hurry to reply because you will have received mine the same day I received yours and my reply anticipated your letter. From your letter to Mother Luigia, I have learnt with great pleasure of your continued good health and that of all the other members of your noble family. I thank God for it, more so because to live in Venice during this season is not very pleasant to those not acclimatized to it. For everything may the Lord be praised. It has been a source of great satisfaction to me to know that every week you receive Holy Communion and that you are also keeping the same method of confession that you maintained with the Dean. Do it with all courage and confidence. For the rest, keep to what we agreed on in our last but one conference. I recommend it to you as much as I can. My Daughter, continue to grow ever more deeply in your devotion and affection towards the Virgin Mary, with regard to your particular needs and for the present calamity, because every day she gives us proofs and indisputable evidence of her protection and love. Do not be afraid it will diminish your affection for God from whom comes everything good, because it pleases him to give us every good thing through the intercession of Mary, so that we truly love her, honour her with all reverence, imitate her as it is given to us, poor miserable creatures to do. Let us then imitate her, my Daughter, in that purity of heart by means of which we shall endeavour in all our thoughts, affections and deeds only to please God for whose love we were created. Let us imitate her great humility which made her so pleasing to God, a humility which fills us with holy confidence, irspite of the knowledge of our nothingness and misery; a humility which keeps us subject and submissive to the Divine Will in all circumstances in which our good God and absolute Master is
pleased to place us, with the only aim, always moved by his love for our greater
good. Keep up your courage, my Daughter, high is our love, high our expectations,
high yes, so that they transcend the sphere of all things transitory and material. We
are made for heaven. That is our Homeland. Let us fix our gaze there where our\textsuperscript{1} true
joys are found. The Lord bless you now and always. M. Luigia will write to you next
week.

\textsuperscript{1} Underlined by Don Libera.
With increasing strength, even if hurriedly, Don Libera exhorts Magdalen to run the way of faith, not seeking other supports, even if they be preternatural. These may foster illusion; the other, faith, relies exclusively on God, the only reliable One, in virtue of which we cannot fail to reach the goal.

(A single sheet, badly torn, written only on one side—A.C.R., Al/3/38)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

I heard with pleasure, from M. Luigia, of your continued good health. We are enveloped in our old woes. May God assist us and give us his grace to draw all that good he expects of us. You wish to enjoy the consolation of seeing with your own eyes the wonders the Blessed Virgin Mary is working. Well, my Daughter, if it pleases God, may it be so. But do continue to trust Mary—leaning on faith alone can be more meritorious. Let us adore the divine dispositions in every thing. Remember not to deviate from the method prescribed for you. Please keep me present in your prayers as I do for you. God bless you.

August 10, 1796  Verona

1 Some preternatural facts attributed to the Sorrowful Virgin. They are the origin of the Feast of "Our Lady of Miracles" instituted in the Veneto precisely in 1796. (cf. M. G. C., pg. 198).
A new crisis over her vocation, leads us to guess as to the interior uneasiness of Magdalen of Canossa. She arrives at another stop, much more dangerous in as much as she thinks it is a manifestation of the divine will. But her Director cuts off every hidden nostalgia, assuring her that he has pointed out the right way, traced for her by God Himself, on which it is necessary to proceed without hesitation. It is not one’s own satisfaction which will lead to sanctity, but only the seeking of God alone. He is calling her towards this sublime goal but through the monotony of daily duty.

(Praised be Jesus and Mary)

The Ordinary Confessor in his monastery is a true Parish Priest, because of him is expected the administration of the Sacraments as much to the healthy as to the sick and the dying; besides, no one else but he, is expected to assist them in all their spiritual needs; the cloister is opened to him in every need and all the parish functions depend on him while he depends on no one. So it is, my esteemed Daughter, that without the permission of the Superiors he cannot go away except for a very short time.

My Daughter, you need not be very afraid that you have erred as to your vocation in the present circumstances; and I have never been more sure, as at present, that I have declared the true will of the Lord, and I feel a holy satisfaction that God so evidently showed that the resolution taken was really His own. Cheer up my Daughter, let us leave aside all useless thoughts. Carry on with great trust, that God will not fail to give you all the necessary help to cooperate with his loving aims and fulfil the duties he demands of you just where he is pleased to place you. I wish only that you work lovingly and for so high an aim, as seeking only to please God. My Daughter, the idea of a reward from God for our work is a very good one, but much nobler it is to have no other thought but to work out of pure love for God, and more worthy of a heart that aspires to love the Lord generously. Let us tend to practising

1 To what could be attributed this detailed statement of Don Libera at the beginning of the letter? Could Magdalen of Canossa have asked him to go to Venice so she could talk to him? It is probable, given the new vocational crisis, clearly denounced by her Director. Another hypothesis could be the following: twice, that is, in June and August, the French had entered Verona, could the Marchioness fearing for the safety of Don Libera have suggested that he seek refuge in Venice? The two hypothesis depend on each other. By offering a certain security to her Director Magdalen would have had an opportunity to talk often to him. Don Libera does not accept the invitation, but keeps to his duty.
this nobler affection. I am very consoled that God has provided you with a Confessor to suit your need. I recognize in this, a sign of the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Cheer up, my Marchioness, keep high our affections, keep high our aim! God in the heart, God in the mind as much as we can, and for the rest, let us be busy with all that is pleasing to God. Let our supplications to Our Lady to stop so many woes and troubles continue trustfully. It has pleased God to add a serious and dangerous illness to my only nephew. Just now, things are better, but you can imagine what anguish I went through with so many other troubles altogether. Blessed be God in all things. Your letters are always very welcome, but I do not want you to be inconvenienced. M. Luigia is well and begs to pay you her respects. The Lord bless you now and always.

Verona, August 22, 1796
This letter is not significant from the point of view of Magdalen's spirituality, also because it was written after an interval of barely five days from the preceding one. Although meant to be reassuring, it reveals rather anxiety, preoccupation, uncertainty and insecurity. The "rather critical circumstances" abundantly justify the sender's perplexity.

(A single sheet, written only on one side with irregular tears—A.C.R., A1/3/39 bis)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

We should shortly know our fate\(^1\) and should matters prolong, certainly it would be necessary for everyone or part of the family to return to our motherland. In that case when everyone returns, I would advise you to come to Verona with your worthy sisters because it can be ascertained that those dangers others are thinking of, are not there. In your palace, there will always be some persons who, at least as a point of honour, can be counted upon to behave with all honesty. Besides no one can put a foot in your rooms. I have two officials in my house and they do not disturb us in the least. This is said, so that you may not feel such a disgust as to put your health in danger, because my Daughter, impressions at times can be harmful, and in this case till the war ends, I would advise you to take refuge in a Monastery and on no account abandon your sisters.

My Daughter, first of all, I tell you, you should inform your Uncle and Aunt\(^2\) about the matter so that they can examine it with all the attention and from all points of view which they must do in such situations and if in any event there will be the possibility of a comfortable place worthy of your family. When this is so and all the parties concerned are pleased, I would propose to (...\(^3\)) and you have to freely decide your future. All the difficulties you experienced are still there. What have we to say? We are in very critical circumstances. It can be the consolation of a family which for a noble and Christian soul, will always be the right motive of a true, strong

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1 When Don Libera wrote this letter, Verona was occupied by the French who entered the city for the first time on June 1, 1796, were driven away by the Austrians after two months but re-entered the second time on August 13. How great and hated was their arrogance can be seen in the "Pasque Veronesi" (April 17-23, 1797) which were put down with so much bloodshed. Bonaparte's cruel revenge, followed shortly after by the betrayal at Campoformio (October 17, 1797) would reveal to the ingenuous Italian "patriots" what kind was the much acclaimed and promised liberty. But then Don Libera, although he was not optimistic, could not foresee or imagine such excesses.

2 Uncle Gerolamo and his very young wife Countess Claudia Marietta Buri who had become Marchioness Canossa the previous year. 3 Cancellation, above which is written an illegible name.
and Christian consolation in itself. Today I received your esteemed letter and I am giving you a prompt answer. May the Lord bless you and console you in all that you desire.

August 27, 1796 Verona
Magdalen is still in darkness about her own future and her sister Rosa at her side, lives for some time too, in anxious uncertainty. In the midst of so many woes and responsibilities the health of the young Marchioness runs down. But this does not interrupt her itinerary towards God, rather Magdalen is more than ever resolved to consume herself for Him alone. "Trust in the Virgin Mary and in holy obedience," recommends the Director—these are the most efficacious means to help her to recover health and find again the courage to proceed along the hard path over which so many shadows and threats keep on gathering.

(A double sheet. written only on the first page. There are tears around the wax seal. Close to the address there are some sums in arithmetic which to not belong to the letter.—A.C.R., A1/3/40)

Praise be Jesus and Mary

This morning I went in search of Don Zorzi\(^1\) but in spite of all my efforts, I did not succeed in finding him, therefore I do not know if I will be in time to combine the answer Your Ladyship desires for Machioness Rosa. I will do the best I can to meet him. But in any case do keep your peace and be assured that Don Zorzi will write in a way that is sound and prudent because I assure you he is fully convinced that there is not the slightest sign of a religious vocation. Anyway, God alone knows the destiny of his creatures, because his alone is the right to dispose of them according to his good pleasure, and he disposes and calls them in his way and in his time. Also from what I learn through your letter, I do not find the least indication of vocation\(^2\). My Daughter if you were called to a particular Institute which could be found in Venice, I would regard it as a just motive to obtain an entrance through any way, but you know what a monastery is\(^3\). To enter the Monastery to reassure yourself of a vocation, my Marchioness, when you have two sisters to look after, does not appear right to me, and I tell you freely should you have this in mind, you absolutely must not do it.

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\(^1\) It may be remembered that Don Zorzi is the Confessor of Rosa who from time to time is in doubt that she is called to become a nun. This detail is connected with that of Note 1, in Letter no. 25. For the second time then, in the mind of Marchioness Rosa, the question of a call to the religious state is raised. But its motives are very weak! In May 1795 the marriage proposal failed, now probably it is the inconveniences of exile, fear of war. It is just as well that Don Zorzi and Don Libera were experts in discernment of spirits!

\(^2\) Here the reference is not to Rosa but to Magdalen. This can certainly be deduced from what follows. so falls the advice given previously by Don Libera who was hoping that Magdalen would finally give up every wishful aspiration to join the monastery. Now that he discovers she is still clinging to her plan he opposes it with authority.

\(^3\) Can we read here, the little esteem for Coistered life that, in general, was already in a state of decadence? (cf. M. G. C., pg. 24). We would say: Yes.
When your family decides to return to Verona I advise you, rather I would say, you have an obligation, to come yourself with your two sisters. This will not hinder your vocation in any way if God, contrary to what we think, would wish you in that state, and your coming back will be proper for many other reasons. I am sorry to hear you are not keeping well, but revive your trust in the Bl. Virgin Mary and in holy obedience and I bless you because I really want you to recover good health. I thank you for remembering me. My Daughter, do everything for the Lord and do not think of merit and demerit. God merits being served for his own sake. Let us aspire to love him for this noble motive. I recommend you to have a holy trust. The Lord bless you and make you holy.

September 22, 1796—Verona

TO HER LADYSHIP MAGDALEN OF CANOSSA
RECAPITO IN CALLE DEI FURLANI PRESSO IL SIGNOR MATTEO PIAZZA
VENEZIA

(The seal of Verona is legible)
Magdalen’s responsibilities do not show any sign of decreasing, rather they keep multiplying. Don Libera discovers the providential plan of God that is guiding young Magdalen toward the heights of pure love and he writes to her: “Console yourself that you are on the road to sanctity.” The steep and rocky path that Magdalen treads, although she stumbles, actually will be a short cut.

(A double sheet, well preserved, written on both sides—A.C.R., A1/3/41)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

My Daughter, I still believe that God makes use of the results of human weakness to make you more aware of the inconstancy of creatures, so that you may always keep your heart turned to him. Yes, my Daughter, yes, so it is and you will have to pass through cases similar to this one more than once, so as to purify and to help your neighbour for the one and only motive of working for God. But in the meantime what am I to say about this strange case? I am entirely confused because of being so far away, and circumstances changing from day to day may demand new remedies and solutions. Anyway I would say, that you stay away from ... and do not ever be the first to talk about it with her, so as not to expose yourself to some new insolence because when the iron is hot it is not expedient to touch it. If she talks about it, give her the answer you think opportune at that point, but be brief and sweet. Never, my Daughter, never oppose her if ever she asks permission, neither let it be known that it displeases you, nor that you make much of it. Cleverly then and secretly show all that comDassion that is worthv of your heart and prevent precipitating things as much as you can. Let the Teacher who enjoys the confidence of this blind woman, manage her and work on her, and you too follow his advice. He is wise and prudent and we can trust him. Try to get information from time to time how things are getting on. As much as it is possible prevent much talking and when you do not succeed and things go from bad to worse, it will be necessary to inform your Uncle so that if ever some disorder occurs he may not have to regret it. Remember that up to the present she is under your care and do not lose sight of her. If she does not depend on you as she should, you can then wash your hands of her.

She is of an age that can discern good from evil, even if she does not want to

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1 It is “Teresina’s case and has been discussed in M.G.C., pgs 210-217. Here it is enough to recall that during her stay in Venice, the young woman fell in love with a Greek adventurer.

2 Cancelled and above it the usual hand has written “Teresa”

3 The reference is to Bonifacio’s teacher, Don Pietro Rossi (Cf. M.G.C., pg. 73, no. 13).
avail herself of the counsel of one who loves her. Recommend her to the Lord and let her be responsible for herself. If she wants to marry him she is at liberty to do so. The Father cannot absolutely prevent her, much less can you. I hope she will think twice and come to know her foolishness. For the rest do not cease to exercise your authority, do not grant what is not to be granted just to please her because, my Daughter, if she makes out that there is a little condescension for love or for compassion or for a little care that is shown for her person, it is enough to make her more indocile and obstinate. My Daughter, do not be too simple to believe that he will become a Catholic. These are products of a devout fantasy which must not be entertained on any account. You have done everything you thought good to do. If for this reason, the matter did not succeed, should we think that we have sinned? Oh God, in greater and more relevant affairs the opposite of what had been hoped for happens, and at times with very great consequences, what would the one handling them feel if the fault be ascribed to her? We are human and God does not exact from us what we cannot do because of our ignorance. Let us work with a right intention and God is content. Success is a consolation to us, but it does not add to our merit. My Daughter, do everything for God and let this motive be your reward and consolation and do not think of something more. Believe me, believe me. It is the third time I am exhorting you to have so noble and excellent an aim.

I met Don Zorzi but I did not discuss the answer with him because having asked him for a prompt reply he sent it by the ordinary means. Besides he is of the same opinion as myself, neither does he think she should go to the convent, nor has she a vocation. He was supposing that may be it was the other sister wishing to be together with you in the convent, but never, never would he oblige the Marchioness Magdalen what he himself would never give permission to do. My Daughter, one must suffer much to become a saint. You can console yourself that you are on the road to sanctity. Ask Our Lady for strength and help. May the Lord bless you and bring you to Verona.

October 2, 1796

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4 The Greek young man was obviously an Orthodox Christian.
5 The reference here is to the ordinary weekly post.
6 The other sister is Eleonora. It was equivocal due to Magdalen's habitual reluctance in writing names. Don Zorzi knowing her aspirations to the monastery had thought it suitable that both sisters, Magdalen and Eleonora could try the Monastery in Venice for a period of time, but when the equivocation is clarified, he agrees with Don Libera that in fact, Rosa is not called to the cloister. The reconstruction of this episode, otherwise enigmatic, can explain partially Magdalen's insistence in withdrawing from the world: it was not a matter of 'obstinacy' but of condescension to her younger sister, may he an ingenuous attitude, but dictated by a responsible affection and therefore understandable.
“Strip yourself of every human affection” is the hard instruction which, through her spiritual guide, Magdalen receives as the Will of God. It is certainly sorrowful to receive ingratitude in return for love, but if the road to sanctity is strewn with crosses, trust and simplicity dispose the heart to receive pure comfort and peace.

(A double sheet with a tear on the left margin—A.C.R., A1/3/42)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Verona, October 18, 1796

My very esteemed Daughter in the Lord, I wish that you strip yourself of every human affection and that only charity fills and regulates your heart, your direction and ways. I absolutely do not approve that you risk your life to talk with the girl (Teresina) on such a matter. My Daughter, this is a passion which more than any other passion blinds human understanding; and to try to enlighten her when she is under this infatuation will make her more blind. Do not change anything of your support and manner of treating her. Recommend her to the Lord and to Our Lady, and if the Lord's grace touches and opens heart I will be very happy, then you may give her all those demonstrations of affection, of confidence and of christian charity that your heart dictates. Only on this condition otherwise absolutely no. I feel that it would be good that she knows that you know everything and if the Teacher should have no difficulty in doing it, I would advise you to make him do it, and together with it assure her that you are going to prevent her and you are not against her marrying when things are done in the right way, in a christian manner, with due regard for the family she is serving. As far as I can guess, I do not think there is any change in the girl but rather that she is totally engrossed in her passion, and there will be perhaps expectations which deceive her all the more. To change house will not be very wise because there is no passion more cunning and full of devices than this. Then when you would decide to return to Verona as I sincerely hope, this will be a decisive point which will bring about something and show it. Probably the Greek will withdraw and the girl will come to know his deception and in that case you ought to be firm but very charitable. If things should turn out differently, my Marchioness, I advise you to put the whole affair into the hands of your Uncle and leave him to take care of it and think about the man. With this however I do not mean to forbid you from suggesting according to the circumstances those proposals you think good. For the rest, my
Daughter, suffer her little correspondence to your affection and charity, in a spirit of patience and love of God. I am glad to hear that your sister is in peace. God never leaves those who love him without some comfort. Let not your spirit be cast down in your troubles. Through them we come to know our insufficiency. Learn to rely less on ourselves and abandon ourselves more and more with all simplicity into the hands of our good Father who knows more than us how miserable we are. Trust, trust, my Daughter, also with regard to your physical health and I hope the Lord will console you in this too. With this aim in mind, I bless you. Faith and obedience.

To HER EXCELLENCY
THE MOST HONOURABLE NOBLE LADY MARCHIONESS MAGDALEN OF CANOSSA
RICAPITO IN CALLE DI FURLANI PRESSO IL SIGNOR MATTEO PIAZZA
VERONA
Fully dedicated to her family duties which under the guidance of Don Libera, she discovers as expressions of the Divine Will, Magdalen progresses in her spiritual ascent which is as more authentic as it is less illusory. She is building in depth that Christian personality which in the humble recognition of her own frailty, in the exercise of the theological virtues, in the practice of prayer and the sacraments, will be revealed in its own time, what God has in mind: a fearless and generous woman.

(A double sheet, well preserved, written on both sides—A.C.R., Al/3/43)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

To take advice in some matter in which we must interfere and have those necessary lights in order to prevent evil or do good, although we may have to mention the defects of our neighbour—is never speaking evil of our neighbour; so teaches the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas (Aquinas). You can do much good and warn your sister that a young lady like her must be circumspect in dealing and conversing with whoever he be, even relatives, not to follow the example of ..., because that which does not harm a married lady can be prejudicial to a young lady of her age, in which the most exacting behaviour and the finest modesty must be seen in a special way; that you do not truly approve of the conduct of ... in this matter but that it does not pertain to you to correct that lady. So in similar things do not neglect to instil them in your sister from time to time, without repeating them excessively but with some prudent frequency and sweetness. Rather I would exhort you that when you are present you should have no difficulty in conducting yourself in such a way that will make your displeasure understood; that way of behaving can give them the light which they do not have and do that good which we did not even imagine. Let us recommend ourselves very much to the Lord and to Our Lady that we may regulate ourselves in everything and with everyone, in order to do the Will of God in a better way for our good and that of others. My Daughter. I will never cease to thank the Lord for the lights he gave me, to keep you in the world. To you it is a hard thing, but may all be done for the glory of God and be assured that in the cloister, under the present circumstances, you would not have done the good you can do in your home.

My Marchioness, do not consider it a duty that you have to go to the theatre and to such places in order to prevent a greater evil. Try to arrange things as best you

\[1\] A stain under which it is possible to decipher "must have".
\[2\] ... cancelled, under which Stofella reads: Lady Aunt.
\[3\] Ditto

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can, and if you can stay at home to pray it can be more beneficial to you and to others. There are too many enticements to evil in the theatres which, believe me, your presence will not be of any benefit in preventing them. Do not even mention about going to the monastery. If God will bless matters and all of you return to Verona, we can think of it according to the circumstances. Have no fear to encourage and exhort her to frequent the Sacraments, leaving her free to go to Confession to another priest if she desires it, but always in the same Church. For the advice given to Marchioness ... 4 specially in regard to ... 5 as in the past you have done very well, and advise her also to continue to do it, in spite of everything because in these circumstances any reluctance could cool her affection for you. But I am of a different opinion about disregarding her completely. I would not be against some words skilfully and prudently uttered at the right moment (when that can be done) 6. But my Daughter, I agree too that one needs not take the matter too much to heart and indulge in outbursts which perhaps, but without perhaps, could heat the iron on the side and cool it on the other. It is very true that the place of the Convertite 7, at present is inhabited by the French. To say a word to the ex-General, if it will not do any good, certainly will not do any harm. To come then to... 8 i would have thought that the Teacher's talk had produced another impression. If you would deal with her according to her behaviour, I know what she would deserve, but let us treat her with all charity. You may continue to treat her with seriousness but do not allow her any familiarity. If you cannot get the Mistress 9 to forbid him from coming to the house, at least let the Confessor oblige her never to leave them alone. If these visits are frequent, I would make the Teacher inform her that you absolutely do not want them and if she wants to continue being disobedient, you will speak to your Uncle so that he send her back to her mother in Verona. It is an abuse of your goodness and kindness and we must not let her do what she likes. Marchioness, how is it ever possible that this world merits love? and what reward does it offer its followers? Let us recognize the great benefit and mercy the Lord has done to us in giving us his grace and making us know the vanity of the world. Other's weaknesses warn us of

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4 Cancelled and illegible
5 Ditto
6 The parenthesis are in the original manuscript.
7 Pious place for young fallen girls who had decided to change their way of life. "Verona had till 1796 two such Institutes. The Convertite della S.S. Trinita and the Pio Luogo del Soccorso. Both were closed by the French with the excuse of using them for military purposes and its income was almost totally taken over " (DALLE VEDOVE N., Vita e pensiero... I pg. 139, no. 21).
8 Cancelled, illegible, but the context makes one think of Teresina.
9 It is not clear who the "Mistress" is, if it is the Marchioness, wife of Uncle Gerolamo, or with greater probability Signora Piazza, the hostess.
our nothingness. Let us entirely distrust ourselves. Let us walk with all the care and circumspection which the knowledge of the frailty and the inconstancy of the human heart must instil in us. O God, who would not feel afraid at these reflections and at such daily and frequent experiences! Let us keep our heart open, let us not abandon prayer and frequenting the Sacraments under any pretext. Faith, Hope and Charity are our inseparable companions and the object of our conversation and of our dealings. Courage, my Daughter. Remember that obedience wants you to be sufficiently healthy, and holy without any limits. May the Lord bless you, strengthen you and console you.

Verona. October 29 1796
Thanks to the goal of pure love which her guide points out with increasing insistence, the horizon of Magdalen's interest in work of charity widens considerably. The more the young Marchioness makes her neighbour's interest her own, the more she goes out of that "private self ' which stealthily and in spite of her, threatens to circumscribe her prospects. Decidedly the young Magdalen is entering into the bold plan of God.

(A double sheet with tears around the wax seal—A.C.R., A1/3/44)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

I thank you very much for being concerned about me¹. Till now I am not afraid. In every event God, I hope, will take care of us and so I firmly believe that no evil can happen to us, to be afraid that our lives are in danger. Let us hope for the best, my Daughter. I approve of the talk you had with Mother Fracanzana² and so try to establish a monastery of the Salesians (Visitation Sisters) for the education of the ladies from noble families and of the young Venetian girls. To endeavour to seek the Lord's glory and the good of our neighbour in every way, is the holiest thing and among divine works it is the most divine. Therefore I exhort you, animate you, encourage you to do all you can, and even if you should obtain nothing, God will be pleased with our good desires and will not leave you without a reward. Do not bother about the objections your head makes. God knows what will give him glory and he will never permit evil to come from good. Besides be convinced that there will be no diminution of monasteries in Verona, neither will Msgr. Vicar³ think that we are following the example of Venice, in establishing the Salesians in Verona. My Daughter, as to what you have written to me, I have no bias whatsoever against the Teacher or any other person. And as to assuming the entire management of the Family, I totally agree to your decision to oppose it and support you in not accepting it⁴. Rather, I exhort you to endeavour to seek the good of your Family, of union and peace; and if this cannot be obtained without excluding those persons who can directly or indirectly hinder it, then do it without scruple nor allow any fears to take over, because you will have to render an account to God for not cooperating and excluding from the Family those persons who are harmful, rather than for the

¹ Magdalen felt it her duty to offer Don Libera a safer shelter, in view of the deteriorating politico-military situation in Verona. In fact in November 1796 the napoleonic battles of Caldiero and Arcole were fought.
² Mother Fracanzana: A Visitation Sister of Venice to whom Magdalen confide(l her own solicitude with regard to education, in order to have some directives from her personal experience as educator.
³ Msgr. Gualfardo of the Marquis Ridolfi.
⁴ It will end by Magdalen having the duty to manage everything (Cf. M. G. C., pgs. 220-222)
damage that may come to these people⁵. If however, it is a matter of general supervision of those matters that are proper to a woman managing a house, so that everything may not be in the hands or at the discretion of servants, my Daughter, this I do not think is opposed to your system of living or to that devotion which we wish to practise, rather it could help you in many ways. For the time being let it be, we shall wait and see how things will turn out and what results follow from the management of your Aunt and her pregnancy⁶ which certainly when it happens will bring newness to the Family. I approve of the advice given by the Teacher about …⁷, certainly do not permit her to go out of the house without your permission. You have done well to inform your Aunt of everything; and should the girl continue to misbehave as she is doing and shows that she is not willing to do what she is told, again inform your Uncle too and let him think what to do. Cheer up, my Daughter, we are colliding with these products of human misery. May God never leave your heart and if we truly aspire to love him, let us allow him to try us as he pleases. May the Lord grant you good health and make you grow ever more through the grace of his blessing which I gladly impart to you.

I received your esteemed letter on November 19, 1796⁸

To HER EXCELLENCY
THE MAGDALEN MARCHIONESS OF CANOSSA
RECAPITO IN CALLE DE FURLANI PRESSO
IL SIGNOR MATTEO PIAZZA
VENEZIA

(Wax seal—The postmark of Verona is visible and the no. 4)

⁵ Cf. ibid pg. 221 no. 47
⁶ It was a difficult pregnancy on account of which, besides what has already been noted, Magdalen will find herself more and more involved in the government of the canossa family.
⁷ Erased above which "Teresia" can be read
⁸ This is the last of the letters Don Libera sent to Venice. There is a lack of letters for a full year: November 19, 1976 to November 5, 1797, by which time the Canossas have returned to Verona and are in mourning for the premature death of the Marchioness Claudia Buri who left Marquis Gerolamo a widower and the father of Carlino.
SECOND INTERLUDE

This interlude has been determined by a second period, “a lack of letters”, which covers an interval of about a year: November 19, 1796 to November 5, 1797 when the Canossas, after the Treaty of Campoformio (October 17, 1797), had already returned to Verona. The family is in mourning for the premature death of the Marchioness Canossa, the young wife of Uncle Gerolamo, and mother of a two months old baby. It is on the occasion of this mourning that Don Libera writes to Magdalen on November 5, 1797.

Why is there a lack of letters for the preceding eleven months?

Nothing prohibits us from thinking that the hypothesis formulated for the first period of 1794\(^1\) of no letters is valid, but to us it seems, it may be a motive for a new fact, very special in the life of Magdalen, which happened precisely in 1797 and which is the origin of the much desired discernment of her vocation, which for lack of better explanation is called: “only a dream”\(^2\). Magdalen confesses in her “Memoirs” that “for a long time I was thinking of a Work in which we would devote ourselves to gather girls, and assist at visiting the Hospital. I even thought that these persons who would have to live in the Work would have the duty of seeking their own perfection, but it all seemed only a dream. For some time I did not even mention it to my Director, rather I continued the negotiations for the Discalced Nuns although I remember that I felt a certain interior bitterness. On the morning of the day in which it was to be finalized I was feeling restless. I revealed my other intuition to my Director, who without much ado commanded me to cut short any further dealings with the Discalced Nuns, which I did and to dedicate myself to the other Work.”\(^3\)

Now, if one reflects on Don Libera’s letters, a foundation of the Discalced Nuns is mentioned for the first time in 1795\(^4\) and the order to “cut short any further

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\(^1\) Cf. First Interlude.
\(^2\) M.G.C., Appendix III, pg. 87.
\(^3\) CANOSSA M., “Memoirs”
\(^4\) LIBERA L., Letter No. 24 dated January 26, 1795
dealing” for the same is made in June 1799, we must agree that “only a dream” could be placed between these two dates. Since all the studies made on Magdalen of Canossa are in agreement that the happening occured in Venice, the span of time is restricted from May 1796 to November 1797.

Well then, Magdalen declares that for a long time... “she did not even mention it to her Director”. We think this is why there is not much correspondence between Magdalen and Don Libera in 1797. It was difficult for the Marchioness to write to her Director and not “betray herself”! It deals in fact with an important event, personal, specific, of that spiritual direction begun precisely in view of discerning her vocation.

Certainly other events, contributing causes must have intervened, among which, because of the insecurity of the way caused by the napoleonic wars (that of Caldiero and Arcole which occurred in 1797) some letters may have gone lost, but according to us, the most important reason for this “lack of letters” is psychological: Magdalen’s reluctance in manifesting so singular an experience.
Finally the hour of enlightenment dawns on Magdalen. In the presence of the mystery of death which challenges her heart, the young Marchioness is as if thunderstruck to give herself is her vocation. Just when her path appears irremediably barred, she walks speedily towards her full self-fulfilment.

(A single sheet, torn on the right side, written on one side—A.C. R., A1/3/45)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Although knowing how very painful is the loss of . . . ¹ though foreseen for quite some time...² I do not doubt that you knew how to bear yourself within the limits of christian resignation, but nevertheless, I feel it is my duty to address a few lines to comfort you. My Daughter, who will not exclaim at such blows. O the inconstancy of human things! O what a terrible spectacle is the world, how brief and uncertain and how worthy of being despised! It is good that our dear departed knew in time, to avail herself of grace and to put away those objects that at that great step, would only increase the fear and horror of death. O how good is the Lord, my Daughter. You were looking for the good of her soul—the great comfort for all good Christian families, in such a situation—and you have in this, a sign and a token on which to base with certainly your hope for the eternal salvation of her soul—the true and only comfort for a Christian. And who does not see in the order of all these things and all the vicissitudes of your home that surely can better promote the glory of the Lord in your family than if you were shut up in the cloister? I see, my Daughter, the weight of the responsibility placed on you³ but God who put it on you, will also give you the help to carry it. Think of basing yourself on these principles that God will give you the possibility of attending to your soul and to your family. Give as much comfort as you can to your afflicted Uncle who merits all your compassion.

Be attentive to the well being of the baby and take good care of him so that God may console you with the marriages of your sisters at the right time. Courage, my Daughter, all that happens is a continuous teaching to detach ourselves from worldly goods and put all our affections and thoughts on God. Let us work according to the dispositions of Divine Providence, but let our heart be fully for God and if now

¹ Cancelled, above it another hands has written "Signora Zia" i.e. Aunt.
² Reference has already been made to the difficult pregnancy of the Marchioness Canossa nee Buri. The fact that she died when her son was only two months old. makes one suppose that it happened as a consequence of childbirth.
³ At the bed of her dying Aunt, Magdalen had solemnly promised that she would herself be mother to the little Carlo.
and again it is necessary to think of some other things, not for that shall we go away from him, but we shall leave God for God's sake. May the Lord bless you, console you, enrich you more and more with the light of grace and Christian fortitude.

November 5, 1797
Now that Magdalen's vocation is revealed as "service", it is not surprising that in the Director's letters, needy persons will be mentioned. The Marchioness meets them at all times, in the house and outside. The more she gives herself, the more she discovers to whom and how to give herself in a dynamism in which the only norm that directs her is the Will of God.

(Half a sheet, badly torn on the right side. On the back of the sheet, in Magdalen's handwriting is written: p. Bettega in casa Mocenigo a S. Lazar—A.C.R., A1/4148)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

The plan of placing Teresia\(^1\) is very good and even better is that of placing her with the Terese when it is possible. Marchioness, I will speak freely. This is not a case of suggesting it to the Nuns, because surely we shall not succeed. It happened once that Msgr. Vicar, with great concern, asked that a girl of good family, but a little older than Teresia and on advantageous terms and with good hopes—as happened for that monastery which did accept her—and although the present Superior was very inclined to accept her as advised by me and by others and almost committed herself with Monsignore, for the peace of the monastery, she had to withdraw her word. She was extremely sorry, because the Vicar, if I am not mistaken, made Bishop Morosini\(^2\) recommend her to them with a letter written in his own hand to the Superior. In the Terese, such a thing never happened before and therefore I do not have the courage to ask M. Luigia\(^3\) to propose this matter, foreseeing that it will expose Your Excellency to receiving a negative answer; and the poor Superior, to her displeasure and anguish, will be unable to help you even though she knows that she is obliged to your worthy person. This case could be proposed to some Convent of the Tertiaries; her skill in work could be very helpful to them and this you could try when you have the possibility to put aside a sum of money necessary for her and which surely will not be a small amount. For the rest we shall talk about it when I will have the honour of seeing you again which I hope will be the 9th of this month, i.e. coming Tuesday.

\(^1\) As can be seen Don Libera had predicted correctly. The Greek withdraw. Now having closed the past, Magdalen is trying to find a suitable place to settle Teresina.

\(^2\) Bishop Giovanni Morosini (1772-1789) was the immediate predecessor of Bishop Gian Andrea Avogadro (1790-1804).

\(^3\) Cf. Letter39, no. 1.
For the other point, my Daughter, you already know that I am convinced and believe that God has kept you in the world for the good of your family; and such a charity will not be prejudicial to the good of your soul. The terms that you put are very good and I am very pleased that you assume it under such conditions. Of this too, we shall talk more decisively when I come. As to writing down your sins I say a big NO, it is enough that every day you detest them and try to correct yourself. I know very well that you are bad, but do we have to despair because of it?

My Daughter, let us nourish a true humility which is never without confidence in God. Do not give in to discouragement because the devil can use it to weave a trap to ruin you. Believe me and do all that you can solely for the glory of God and then trust in the Divine Mercy. The Austrians are giving us all the time to deal with that girl you are informing me about. The good that we are doing towards the poor can be applied as suffrage for the dead and so with one journey, two works can be accomplished. Courage. May God bless you now and always.

January 6, 1798

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4 Magdalen had assumed the duty of being the adopted mother to her little cousin Carlo. Don Libera is referring to the unstable politico-military situation in Verona, governed at intervals by the French and the Austrians.
If the Will of God is the norm, the Glory of God is the aim and love is the way to reach it. The one who loves certainly progresses, in sorrow as in consolation, in awareness as in ignorance, because love is to meet him and be in communion with him, walk with him to meet one's brothers, in an incessant yet discreet gesture of self-giving.

(A single sheet, torn on the left side, written only on one side—

A.C.R., A1/4149)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

To my very great consolation, I heard from M. Luigia as you asked me, the happy news of the marriage of Marchioness Rosa I suppose. May God be praised for everything, he who with so much care, knowledge and wisdom mixes sweetness and bitterness in this life so that we do not ever lose sight of him and we know from our experience that there is no need to be too afflicted when in trouble nor too joyous in prosperity because the one and the other are of short duration and they cannot therefore satisfy our heart, made only for an unchangeable and eternal good. In the meantime, my Daughter, I cannot do less than congratulate and console myself with you, for one thing which you have at heart and which I well know how much consolation it is to you, and how much stimulus your spirit can draw from it, to always love and confide more in God who shows himself so propitious to your vows and just desires. At times, it is true, he seems to be deaf to our supplications but he does it only to make us more aware and more grateful for his kindness.

Even this is one less worry, but for the present, we cannot experience its advantage because till it is completely done we will have to think about it. Let us take things with sweetness and without anxiety and everything will turn out well. I recommend you to use your discretion and to follow the doctor's opinion as regard Lent and do not do more than your weak health and poor stomach permits. Remember it is better to do little than nothing and what can give you a little bit of health in your present situation. May God bless you and console you more and more and make you holy.

February 3, 1798

1 Cf. Letter 39, no. I
2 The sisters of marriageable age were two: Rosa and Eleonora. The elder was Rosa: on this hypothesis Don Libera presumes it is Rosa and not Eleonora
Magdalen is now totally devoted to her mission of charity, no matter if she receives a response or not, since she is inspired and moved only by faith.

(A single sheet torn on the right side, but not entirely. On the remaining section there is a wax seal—A.C.R., Al/4/50)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

I have written that when your Aunt\(^1\) would assume the responsibility of doing what is necessary to provide for the honest placement of Giustina\(^2\), we should try our utmost to draw her out of those hands\(^3\) because we foresee that the Lady will not want to enter in this intrigue to get her back. If besides, she could cooperate also in this, it would be a double charity. Perhaps we too will not succeed to get the results we desire. Let us take care to be ready to do what we can for the girl's placement. It will be a good reason to encourage us to attempt all that is possible. I pray that the Lord may grant you a speedy recovery, and if some letting of blood would help you, do not waste time in getting it done. May the Lord bless you now and always.

*Without date. The reference to Giustina suggests dating it in the first months of 1798, because this "case " occurred just during that time.*

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\(^1\) This does not refer to Canossa Buri who expired in the beginning of November 1797. Does it refer perhaps to Matilde d'Arco or the Countess Brenzoni, mentioned in Letter 23? Sufficient indications as to the sure identity of this person is lacking.

\(^2\) It seems this "person" can be identified with the "young girl" mentioned in Letter 23. For "Giustina's case" cf. M. G. C., pgs. 217-219.

\(^3\) Cf. Letter 23.
The Lord evidently blesses Magdalen's undertakings, widening her heart and disposing it to new heights. To promote the glory of God—this is the new goal to tend, confiding in his merciful goodness and in the protection of Our Lady.

(A single sheet, torn but not entirely on the right side, the wax seal is on the remaininz section—A.C.R., A1/4/51)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Tuesday morning, if you are not hindered, I will come to meet Your Excellency. It will be the 17th of this month and I will have the pleasure of congratulating you in person on the successful outcome of your management and trouble. May the Lord continue to shower his divine blessings on you and may Our Lady grant you her protection to bring to fruition your desires, spiritual and temporal. I desire only one thing from you, that is, never losing sight of yourself; you nourish in your heart a great confidence in the Lord's goodness and mercy. A generous, trusting soul is able to make great progress in perfection and to promote and cooperate much, very much, for the glory of the Lord. For this virtue too, may the Blessed Virgin Mary be your Advocate. The Lord bless and console you in everything.

April 15, 1798
Finally Don Libera pronounces on the future of Magdalen, though vaguely, declaring that "God wants her all for himself ... for his glory". The "how" is still part of the divine secret, but in the meantime, in the heart of the young lady a light is lit, destined to brighten her future path, which remains a path of faith but under the sign of hope.

(A double sheet, written only on one side with tears around the wax seal—A.C.R., Al/4/52)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

My Daughter, may the Lord reward you for what you have done for Giustiria. If things have not succeeded according to our wishes, we must have patience. Do not however stop recommending her to your Aunt¹ in case she can and will want to join in helping for the good of this poor maid. Most of all I recommend that she speaks through Cavalier Modenese² to the Confessor of Generalo ...³ So that he pledges all the power he has with him, so as not to leave this young girl in danger, in such a bad situation⁴ without however insinuating the way to provide it. We shall see the outcome of these recommendations and from them we shall go forward with our projects for her security. Take great care to make these recommendations very heart-felt and pressing and for the time being let us not think of anything else. When we have other news from Giustina that show us her inclinations from these events, we can then proceed further. With regard to your sister, do not be anxious. Recommend the matter to Our Lady and you will see that everything will end well and you will be happy. The arrival of your Aunt d'Arco would be opportune, but everything will end well. My Daughter, I have not decided anything about your future state, but it has never crossed my mind that God wants you in the married state. No, my Daughter, God wants you all for himself, of that I am sure. How he would want you to work for his glory, he will manifest in the right time. In the meantime think of loving him with all your heart. Continue your Communions, live in a holy trust and he will be yours in time and eternity. On Monday, God willing, I will be at the Terese⁵

¹ From what is said later, it can be argued that the Aunt is Matilde d'Arco.
² Not identified
³ Cancelled and illegible.
⁴ As above
⁵ From Liber Monialium we read that from 1796-98 Don Luigi Libera was the ordinary Confessor in the monastery of S. Cristoforo and contemporaneously extraordinary Confessor of the Nuns of the Terese.
and in case you cannot come on Tuesday morning⁶, if you would want to talk to me, I will come and wait for you, if you inform the Terese. The Lord bless you now and always.

May 4, 1798

⁶ For the first time we have the proof from Don Libera that the colloquies between “Father” and “Daughter” were not held always in the Canossa Palace. This detail testifies also to the excellent rapport between Magdalen and the “Terese”.
This letter comes under the sign of detachment. Detachment from success, from worldly points of view, from feelings of affection for the family ... so that all her love and all her trust may rest in God alone. It is necessary for Magdalen to relieve herself of every load, even the most tenderly loved one, to go, in "perfect joy", to meet Him who has chosen her.

A double sheet, written only on the first page hadly torn obliquely.
The address is torn off—A.C.R., Al/4/53

Praised be Jesus and Mary

My most esteemed Daughter, I believe our Giustina has been convinced by her brother that she should marry and I think by this time, she is engaged to a lawyer in Cremona. She has herself written to the Abbess asking for her certificates of Baptism and Confirmation to be sent promptly by ordinary post with the intention of solemnising her marriage. I think it is my duty to inform you so that you desist from every management of this affair because it has already ended in this way. Undoubtedly you will gain a reward from the Lord as if you had succeeded in the other way.

I hope in the Lord that your concern for the family will end well. Do not fail, now and then, at suitable moments, to place before your sister¹ those reflections that can strengthen her soul and make her enter into those aims and sentiments that a young lady of her condition must have in this circumstance. Surely, among the sisters, you are distinguished in regard to many things, so be attentive not to embitter your happiness for things alien to those aims that you must have before God and the world. Let us recommend that matter to Our Lady and I hope in the Lord that everything will end well. I thank you very much for the news given to me, it would be desirable that everything continues in that way but I live in great fear that they may not be delusions and that every thing will take a long and perhaps, yes perhaps, we will need to adapt ourselves with the evil we have. I would never have thought to have to go through so many disastrous things². My Daughter, may the

¹ This concerns the younger sister Eleonora who in January 1799 will marry Count Fedcrgo Serego.
² Following the Treaty of Campoformio, the Veneto was exchanged by Napoleon for Lombardy and was occupied by the Austrians. On January 21, 1798, they entered Verona as masters. At the head was Baron di Kerpen who took possession of the city in the name of the Emperor of Austria, Francis II. The French however, only two miles from Verona came to lose two-fifths of its territory. They infested the streets, robbed goods, with great harm to those who possessed land towards Lake Garda (cf. DALLE VEDOVE N. La Giovinezza . . . pg 370)
Lord bless you. Often recall the thought of God and may you keep yourself as frequently as you can in the presence of God even if it is only for as long as the wink of an eye.

May 20, 1798

To HER EXCELLENCY
THE NOBLE MARCHIONESS MAGDALEN OF CANOSSA
VERONA
(Wax seal)
Magdalen is once again lost in a "dark valley", harassed by her habitual preoccupations, her usual fears and still more by poor health. "We are called, my Daughter, to the Cross"—reminds her Director—and exhorts her to practise patience, humility and abandon herself to God "like a little child in its mother's arms". Being in the arms of God, how can she not advance surely and quickly?

(A double sheet almost entire, written only on one side. On the fourth page is the complete address, wax seal and some arithmetic extraneous to the letter—A.C.R., A1/4/54)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

It is rather difficult for Teresia to make herself at home and stay longer in the monastery and I would almost think it would be more suitable to send her to the countryside and try to find a life-partner for her. It seems to me that in the countryside it will be difficult to find a life-partner, her work skill could be more useful to her in the city. Anyway when there is an opportunity to get her married decently with a man who is a Christian and a gentleman, we shall accept it and readily too, whether he be of the city or town. You should have no difficulty in recommending her to Gastaldo if he is a prudent man and knows to keep the secret. Do not say a word to Teresia, should there be a chance of marriage, till I have spoken to you. I think this is the best expedient to strengthen her a little in health and you can do it with a good conscience. Let us hope that the Lord will bless ever more your holy desires for your sister and for that intention I shall willingly pray. I am sorry to hear you are not keeping well.

If the water could help you, as I hope, you should take it and I think it could not harm you, to receive Communion every eight or ten days, otherwise, if it does not benefit you, perhaps you will have to stay away from Communion for a longer time. Decide to take this medical treatment but not longer than a month. I would desire too, that you should not be discouraged by these blessed fears. Restlessness of soul, unfortunately undermines the health. Trust in God and remember that the goodness of God is our richness and the wounds of Christ Crucified are our merits.

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1 The Monastery of the Ursulines in Cittadella as can be deduced from the letter that follows.
2 From these details it can reasonably be held that the place where Teresina was usually sent in the countryside was Grezzano.
3 Stofella identifies it as the waters of Montartone, which could be taken in one's home (cf. Note . . . f. 116). In what way could this cure be an impediment to frequent Communion? Perhaps because having to take it on an empty stomach, would it break the eucharistic fast rather rigid in those times?
we cannot keep our thoughts fixed on God, let us often raise them to Him, no matter for how short a time. It is necessary to have patience with ourselves. Let us make use of our miseries to be well grounded in holy humility and the gain will be the greater. For heaven's sake, my Daughter, cut short so many thoughts and reflections over yourself and your actions. Address everything to God and do not think about any thing else. We are called, my Daughter, to the Cross and let us be always prepared for new difficulties which, as long as we are living, will never be lacking. On the feast of St. Aloysius, I will come to see you. In the meantime live quietly, trusting in God like a little child in its mother's arms. May the Lord bless you according to the needs of your soul and body. Faith and obedience.

June 13, 1798

To HER EXCELLENCY
THE NOBLE LADY MARCHIONESS MAGDALEN OF CANOSSA
VERONA

(Wax seal)
The young Marchioness is still troubled with poor health, I hedged by problems of the family and others, and tried by persistent temptations to distrust ... So Don Libera as usual feels urged to be personally involved, teaches her how to find a remedy for her anguish: he points to Christ Crucified so she can turn to him. The Eucharist and the Cross: the one within and for the other. It is necessary to arrive till there. For the one who loves it is inadmissible to stop before.

(A double sheet, torn on the right side. There is the print of the wax seal—A.C,R.. A1/4/55)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

The present situation of the Magdalen¹ does not give me hope of being successful in the project. But just for this, I do not want to lose the opportunity to say a word. Later, in case, I will try at S. Giorgio². Have the goodness to give me some time and I will do what is possible to serve you with all my heart. As regard...³ try as much as you can to keep her with the Ursulines⁴, contributing some trifling amount to the one who is assisting her in her illness, since being ill, in this circumstance, it is not feasible to put her in any monastery. If she cannot be kept any longer with the Ursulines, I think, it is better to send her to the countryside⁵ with the aim of helping her to recover her health, which she always enjoyed there; in the meantime, try to find a marriage partner for her. Try also to freely use the services of some prudent women and if they cannot keep the secret, nothing wrong is done.

¹ Cf. Letter 35, no. 1.
² Monastery of the Augustinian Nuns. The monastery is named after S. Giorgio Maggiore. The abbey of S. Giorgio is listed among the Church and Monastery Buildings of "Verona Gentile"—to the left of the Adige—"which the Song of the Blacksmith, FRANCESCO CORNA of Soncino gave us in 1477" (CORN A F. da Soncino, Fioretto de la antiche croniche de Verona e de tutti i suoi confini e de la reliquie che se trovano dentro in ditta cittade, Verona 1973 cit. da BORELLI G. Aspetti e forme della richieza negli enti ecclesiastici e monastici di Verona tra i secoli XVI e XVIII in AA. VV., Chiese . . . Verona 19gO, p. 123) In this monastery, following the decree of June i805 the Augustinian Nuns of Sts. Giuseppe and Fidenzio came together.
³ Cancelled, can be read with difficulty. Stofella reads: "Teresia". The immediate context of the letter confirms his interpretation.
⁴ A Congregation in Cittadella of Verona, founded in 1580 and composed of virgins, commonly called "Ursulines", who after wandering from one house to another in the city, succeeded in acquiring in 1610 a House in Cittadella which later they extended into a monastery, building on one side a little church dedicated to St. Ursula and consecrated on August 28, 1619. In 1797 the "Pious Virgins", driven away from their Ritiro, established themselves here in the "Pio Istituto del Soccorso" founded in 1760 by Fr. Antonio Facci of the Oratorians for the so-called "Converts". There were only 4 Sisters when on July 2,1810, the building was taken over by the Municipality and sold together with the little church. The building was demolished and in that area an inn was built (today a hotel) called Cavallino (Cf. LENOTTI T., Chiese . . . I pgs. 60-61; CRISTOFALI G. A., Cenni storici sugli Spedali ed Istituti di pubblica beneficenza in Verona, Verona 1839, pgs. 23-24).
⁵ Cf. Letter 56, no. 2.
In the countryside I foresee, as I have always said, it will be difficult to secure a match for her but anyway by going there, who knows, as the saying goes that an opening may occur where we least dream of. I am very pleased with the recovered (inheritance?) of your brother, and the cessation of any ambition and suspicion with regard to your person\(^6\); so with these suspicions having calmed down, everyone will live more in peace. As regard your sister, keep on giving her those suggestions as you think fit, but never in a way as to break the engagement. Endeavour very prudently and skilfully to get her to frequent the Sacraments and let us leave the success of this matter to God and to the Virgin Mary. We shall wait to see the outcome of the talk with Countess Buri\(^7\) and let us hope for the best, my Daughter. I would like to hear better news about your health as well as your interior life. I recommend as much as I can that you take all the necessary good care of your health. It is a duty of conscience to do it and then we shall look upon all that He will dispose of us as the Will of the Lord. Remember that you must absolutely do this.

Truly your present situation is not very favourable for an interior life and for the Spirit. It is necessary to often sustain and nourish the spirit with some aspirations to God and some little thought contrary to those impressions which we can receive while doing our duty, not by our choice but because of necessity. My Daughter, daily and seven times a day, try to put yourself before Jesus Crucified to say this prayer: My Jesus, my sole Good, I give you my heart, my soul, my entire self. I recommend the frequent reception of the Sacraments and the practice of a continuous and persevering trust in the mercy and goodness of the Lord. Promptly cut off every temptation to distrust which the devil is trying to make use of to throw down your soul’s spiritual edifice. Courage, my Daughter, courage. In you, O Lord, have I placed my hope, let me never be confounded. May the Lord bless you and console you in everything and for everything. Please keep me informed if there is some news.

July 16, (17)98\(^8\)

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\(^6\) As has already been noted the disagreements among the members of the Canossa family on account of patrimonial affairs: “domestic difficulties” as defined by Don Libera (Letter 36).

\(^7\) Mother of the deceased Claudia Marietta Canossa nee Buri.

\(^8\) A double sheet torn, the right side is missing on which the address was written. The imprint of the wax seal can be seen.
This letter is fully dedicated to the persons helped by Magdalen for the glory of God. "Trust" in him then! Trust in him, because it is not anyhow that his glory is achieved, rather it is achieved precisely through the Cross when one has the courage to embrace it and follow him right to the end.

(A single sheet, written only on one side. The top left hand corner is missing—
A.C.R., Al/4/56)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

(My) Daughter,¹ do not bother about me, do not spare me on any account in which you know I am able to serve you, which in one way or another, I will try to satisfy you². Thanks to God, I am better. Let us not be afraid of anything, my Daughter. When . . .³ will say truly she is disposed to go again to the Mendicanti⁴ the project should not be abandoned. A separate room could be arranged for her and she could later, because of her skill in work and for her other qualities, obtain a good job and help her family. Keep working on the project. In case this cannot be actualized or the usual place does not want to receive her, I would find no difficulty in putting her in S. Martino⁵ in one of the two families where there is sound reason to think she will be better. Do not be too preoccupied because we are not in such critical circumstances as to be afraid and have much concern about the conduct of.⁶

I have spoken to the Magdalen about the young Jewish girl⁷, but the objections I had anticipated, were soon put forward and there is no hope of putting

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¹ The top left corner of the sheet is torn, so the first letters of the possessive (my) are missing.
² A clear allusion to Magdalen's reticence as has already been noted (Cf. Second Interlude).
³ Cancelled. Stofella reads the name of "Teresina".
⁴ Conservatorio dei Mendicanti: a pious home, an extension of the "Conservatorio dei Derelitti" instituted by Bishop Alberto Valerio and Signor Alessandro Canobio in 1620. According to the age of the poor children and their sex, they were assigned to one or the other of the charitable institutions where they were maintained, taught religion, good morals and occupied in various works (Cf. DALLE VEDOVE N., Vgta e penslero .... I pg. 39, no. 105).
⁵ A monastery called "S. Martino d'Avensa"—from the name of the area where it was situated—is listed in a document of the Veronese Rectors to the Venetian Government (a. 1489) about the economic condition of several monasteries (Cf. CASTAGNETTI A., Aspetti politici economici e sociali di chiese e monasteri, dell'epoca carolingia alle soglie dell'eta moderna, in Chiese .... pgs. 99-102).
⁶ ... correspond to a cancellation that is illegible.
⁷ A Jewish girl adopted "as spiritual daughter" (i.e. at her baptism) by Uncle Marquis Gerolamo. She was little Maria Rosa, daughter of Aron Vitta Capretti and Ester Enegoe who besides her paternal surname added that of Canossa. Magdalen with the help of Don Libera succeeded, though with much difficulty, to place her in a monastery so that she could be suitably prepared to receive Baptism and the other Sacraments (STOFELLA G., Note .... f.116)
her there. If you do not mean to try S. Giuseppe, I will go to S. Giorgio and speak personally to the Prioress.

My Daughter, do not get frightened at some sentiments that may be expressed by your sister. I would be glad if she does not undertake this journey and persuade him if it is possible, to make it with his wife at a more suitable time, which I think would be better for both of them. Be very prudent and tactful. I recommend as much as I can that you take care of your health and trust in the Lord. I forgot to tell you, take no notice of those jokes. If the young lady is well behaved, you must pay attention that she does not overdo it. If I feel well enough, I will pay you a visit on Monday. I will not write any more so as not to lose the opportunity of posting a reply to you. God bless you and keep you in good health.

August 1, 1798

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8 The Monastery of Sts. Giuseppe and Fidenzio, where the Eremitane of St. Augustine lives. It is this very monastery which after the napoleonic suppression remained vacant since the Nuns were forced to go to the Augustinian Monastery of S. Giorgio Maggiore. Magdalen of Canossa after long and difficult negotiations, obtained it from the Municipality to found her Institute.

9 Cf. LetterS7, no. 2.

10 It may he guessed that Rosa's husband, Count Girolamo Orti-Manara, had planned to undertake a journey with his wife who perhaps for reasons of health was then unable to stand it. From Letter 60 it can be argued that perhaps she was pregnant.
Magdalen's interest in settling monasteries continues to face difficulty. In the meanwhile, she is living her hour of temptations against faith and hope. "Never, never go back to examine them", is the Director's instruction. To turn back would mean to halt, delay her progress and run the risk of stopping. It would mean renouncing following the Lord who walks in front of her, patient and silent.

(A double sheet, almost the whole of the second half is missing.
There remains the wax seal.
On the back there are annotations concerning quantity and quality of cloth—A.C.R., A 1/4/57)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

It is a long time since I wanted to communicate to you and was always forgetting it—that the Salesians (Visitation Sisters) in Mantova will be establishing a Convent in Venice by order of His Imperial Majesty. I will not deny, my Daughter, that this may be the most propitious time to try to introduce the Discalced Carmelite Nuns to Verona, and I suggest and exhort you to make all efforts to succeed. What you wrote to M. Fracanzana to get in touch with the ex-General is very good. I would advise you to write to this priest to encourage him to give a hand in this matter and try to find a shelter for these poor Nuns. I certainly think it is a rather good thing to establish a monastery to receive these poor refugees: on the condition, expressed or understood, that they could live there always. For this we shall have to depend on the ex-General, who according to me, cannot have a different opinion. As for our Bishop, I would think it opportune for you to come to an understanding with Msgr. Vicar, the most efficacious means of obtaining from our Bishop all that is desirable and right. It will not be useless to secure a very warm recommendation from the Patriarch. As to their maintenance, try all the means possible and be sure that these will not be wanting; if Divine Providence gives a right turn to the matter.

1 It may be remembered that this project goes back to January 1795. (Cf. Letter 24).
2 About this opinion of Don Libera cf. M. G. C., pgs 223-224.
3 It is the Visitation Sister in whom Magdalen had confided her problems in the field of education, to receive her advice. (Cf. Letter 48).
4 Stofella identifies this ex-General as Fr. Giovanni Evangelista di S. Maria (a Bongiovanni of Yerona) of the Discalced Carmelites.
As for yourself, give all possible care for the good of this monastery and the gift of four thousand ducats from your dowry when it is given to you. It seems to me that the unmarried lady\(^7\) is over thirty years of age and of very good habits. I would therefore have no difficulty if having no other person, you keep her. You can take the opinion of your Aunt\(^8\) or that of Countess Buri\(^9\). I am happy that ...\(^{10}\) is keeping well and doing well, and you are trying to get her married.

My Daughter, keep up your courage. Frequently raise your heart and mind to God even if it is for a short time. Do not get upset with those troublesome temptations. Despise them with a holy courage and trust in God. Never, never, under any pretext whatsoever, go back to examine them. Receive Holy Communion frequently, have some brief recourse to Our Lady, live abandoned in the arms of Divine Goodness and Mercy, and do not be afraid of anything. Praised be Jesus and Mary, Amen, now and forever. May the Lord bless you and make you holy.

August 28, 1798

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\(^7\) Not identified.

\(^8\) It refers very probably to Aunt Matilde d'Arco

\(^9\) Cf. Letter 57, no. 7

\(^{10}\) Above the cancellation the usual hand has written "Teresia".
Although dealing always and only with plans to help persons in difficulty, Don Libera does not however allow occasions to pass to stimulate his "Daughter" to have a high goal—Pleasing God. Whether it be dealing with her sister, Teresa, or the Visitation Sister, ultimately God's interests are at stake. But are not Magdalen's interests the same as God's?

(A double sheet, written only on one side, one part is missing being torn obliquely. The imprint of the wax seal can be seen—A.C.R., Al/4/58)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

I would say, rather I am fully of the opinion that you do not say a single word to your sister about the medical consultation¹. If there is no more than what you think is necessary to be discussed—as regards giving birth, which is very uncertain, leave it to God's providence. A mother always loves to have children and they are always the objects of her delight. Let us thank the Lord that Marchioness Rosa is prepared to bring up a family. It will help her to be usefully occupied, to become mature sooner, and avoid those stumbling blocks which a lady of noble family can easily meet in an opulent and lazy life. Instil in her some good maxims, relevant to this and to Christian and noble way of living. Keep her in good spirits in the absence of her husband² and well controlled in her conversation. I am very happy that the Jewish girl has been accepted and knows to whom she has been entrusted and by whom she is being educated³. As regard . . .⁴ you know that I have always been in favour of sending her to the country-side to recover her health and with those words which caused a little confusion⁵, I did not mean to say anything else except that you must not give up the thought of finding a match for her if the Lord grants some possibility; on the other hand, leave her in the country till such a possibility occurs.

Truly I did not have any thought about the Will with regard to your dowry, which you cannot dispose of⁶ and therefore you have done very well in waiting to write to the ex-General⁷. However do write to him to get him to try to secure some

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¹ Probably a consultation with a gynaecologist.
² Count Girolamo was not willing or able to defer his journey are referred to in Letter 58.
³ Don Libera's "plot" to settle little Maria Rosa Vitta Capretti Canosa (cf. Letter 58) was successful. It is not known which monastery received her.
⁴ ... Over the cancellation, "Teresia" can be read.
⁵ Cf. Letters 58 and 59.
⁶ In 1798 Magdalen could not dispose of "her" patrimony, still tied to the patrimonial goods of the Canossa Family. Only on marrying or entering a monastery would she have the right to her share of it.
⁷ The ex-General of the Discalced Carmelites, Fr. Giovanni Evangelista di S.Maria. # The project of 1795, taken up again in 1798.
haven for these poor expelled Nuns. Use this occasion if Your Excellency would think it opportune, for the good of the foundation\textsuperscript{8}, but I fear, my Daughter, that the ex-General is not the man to promote it. Anyway to attempt promoting a work so holy is to please the Lord who is very pleased even with the good desires of his poor creatures. It is a great objective to have in the present circumstances and prevalent confusion\textsuperscript{9} but the works of God are not measured with the considerations of human politics because these are the very occasions in which it usually pleases God to reveal more splendidly the signs of his power and goodness. For the time being you must not pledge your person nor your income but you will offer to engage only in all that will be of help for the good results of this endeavour. The Lord bless you now and always.

\textit{September 4, 1798}

\textsuperscript{8} A clear allusion to the complicated politico-military situation.
THIRD INTERLUDE

The gap that separates the sixtieth letter from the sixty-first, (from September 1798—March 1799) is described in a context of "confusion", according to the expression used by Don Libera.

It is a general confusion, given the unstable and troublesome political situation, but even of the interior disturbance of the Marchioness who is struggling between her desire to conclude the negotiations for establishing a Carmelite Convent in her own city and the irresistible "urge" to fulfil her "dream".

An acute crisis of faith that attacks her spirit just at this time, constitutes a "stroke of grace" (in the real sense) so it makes her pass from the waverings of uncertainty to the boldness of charity in a prospect of well founded hope.

Between June and July 1799, after some insistence from the Director who warns his "Daughter" of the need of detachment, Magdalen will make her revelation and everything will rapidly turn in deciding in which direction to proceed, it will not be towards the cloistered life (Oh how much Don Libera had dissuaded her!) but towards the exercise of the works of mercy.
Reasons for anxiety and trepidation are not wanting to the young Marchioness, because this is the condition of the followers of the Crucified Christ, but the certainty of being saved by abandoning themselves with simplicity "into the arms of the Lord", is also their privilege. And in this moment—on the explicit declaration of Don Libera—such is Magdalen’s spiritual situation.

(Nine lines written on a double sheet which is well preserved. There are tears along the wax seal—A.C.R., Al/5/59)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

I thank you, Lady Marchioness, for the news you have conveyed to me and I think, things will end well. For the time being, my Daughter, let us not think of anything, let us abandon ourselves quietly in the arms of the Lord who being omnipotent can save us from everything and we must not limit our trust in God in any way. Of such things do not think deliberately, not even the least bit. I am most happy if you do not let fears overcome you and go to the Spiritual Exercises and take with you the women, about whom you already informed me. And now keep your peace on what we have said and do not be anxious any more. The frequent reception of the Sacraments is a proof which must keep you in peace and tranquility. I recommend you to take care of your health and to remain in that resignation and quiet which God has given you. May the Lord bless you now and always and console you in everything and for everything.

March 14, 1799
To HER EXCELLENCY
THE NOBLE LADY MARCHIONESS MAGDALEN OF CANOSSA
VERONA

(Imprint of the wax seal)
This letter is a teaching on simplicity, the only virtue — capable of bringing calm in the midst of the thousand preoccupations and anxieties of which some always accompany Magdalen. But in this stretch of time, they seem to characterize her spiritual experience, till it culminates in a great trial of faith. The Director does not minimize its harshness but discloses to his "Daughter" the astuteness of pride "disguised under the appearance of humility" and indicates to her the secret of the freedom of the heart, — precisely in simplicity, which is absolutely indispensable in every pilgrimage of faith.

(A double sheet, with the right margin strengthened, written only on one side. The usual tear—A.C.R. . Al/5/60)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

My Daughter, to have a little calm in this tempestuous sea, it is necessary to walk with simplicity, since so many tangled thoughts and reasonings cannot but produce restlessness. On the one hand, it is only too true that the duties that bind us to God are without number; on the other, our miseries are such that we cannot but find defects and failings in ourselves, and only simplicity and trust in divine mercy can be and must be our sole comfort and support. To consider it as pride that God loves us, can only come, my Daughter, from not knowing the Lord's goodness and from being taken in by a false idea of his mercy. In considering that God loves us, we do not give any honour to ourselves but give him a homage which very rightly is due to him and which we are bound to give him. Simplicity, my Daughter, simplicity. And when we are not conscious of willingly and deliberately committing serious sins, let us live with that filial fear which it is right to have, but let us not tire the head with thoughts, either of the past or of the present which certainly will do us no good except to acquire restlessness and bitterness, and are of no profit to us, nor do they give glory to God but only feed our refined pride, disguised under the appearance of humility. As to the thoughts against Faith, oppose them by confirming your faith in God three times a day by saying that you believe all that the Church teaches and you want to die in this faith. Do everything with tranquility and peace and without allowing yourself to be troubled by these thoughts. As to preparation for Holy Communion, let God guide you and let us not seek anything else. As regards the other matter, I am of the opinion that the division be hastened. Leave aside so many considerations which substantially are only hesitations and subterfuges to delay the
division. It is certainly necessary to reassure your old Uncle\(^1\), and he, like a good gentleman, will accept it in the long run. Try to put him in peace without losing courage. According to me, your Grandfather\(^2\) was unable to assign the primogeniture and therefore he does not mention it. Where you can be of help, give it with the usual prudence. Do not withdraw because you will be displeasing this side or that. Regulate yourself with prudence and think only of promoting the accomplishment of the affair which alone can calm down every one and restore peace and quiet. It is not necessary to think of all the possible woes, nor count the compensation for damages; odious things; and even if they come up with any other proposal, do not take any notice of it as long as they conduct everything with that peace and calm that alone must be sought in these matters. I cannot give you good news about my health\(^3\). Recommend me to the Lord. May God bless you now and always.

_May 21, 1799_

_To HER EXCELLENCY THE NOBLE LADY MARCHIONESS OF CANOSSA_

(Wax seal)

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\(^1\) Old Granduncle Borgia
\(^2\) The deceased Marquis Carlo, father of Marquis Ottavio. He died before the birth of his grandson Bonifacio so no mention is made in his favour in the Will. (For other considerations see M. G. C., pgs. 121-123).
\(^3\) While writing this letter, Don Libera was not enjoying good health and the shaky handwriting is proof of it. This letter is difficult to read for another reason—the paper was folded while the ink was still wet.
As in every pilgrimage of faith, Magdalen of Canossa's too, is a journey in obscurity, in silence, in suffering.

And when the sentiment of her own misery, instead of being a guide to humility, is transformed into temptations against hope, even faith seems to have nothing to say,—her solitude then is total. It is the moment to close her eyes and allow herself to be led . . . but by whom, if His presence is no longer felt or if it is felt, it is considered to be an illusion?

(A double sheet, well preserved. The usual tear—A.C.R. A 1/5/61)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

My Daughter, the biggest displeasure you can give me is to be hesitant and reserved, out of fear of being burdensome to me. My Marchioness, leave aside this concern and deal with me with the liberty of a spiritual daughter. Do it freely every time you desire to have my opinion on any need or doubt, and I for my part, will freely do all that I can. As to the affair you are writing about, I say: take note of this tailor, if he fulfills the conditions and has the qualities you are writing about and... freely agrees to accept him in marriage. It is true, that it is absolutely necessary to reassure that man, as much as you can, of her health and therefore it is excellent expedient that Countess Buri speaks with Dr. Zogni and then the tailor himself speaks with the Doctor, and based on the information and advice that the doctor gives, he will determine for himself, what he thinks is more suitable, and no one will have any real motive to have remorse or scruples of what will happen to her health later. All the other objections are not worth reflecting over and so too, for the time being, we do not mean to consider the proposals you mention.

I am sorry about your various woes, but most of all for your agitation because you are lacking the feeling of God's existence and of religion. I say the feeling, because, in conscience, I assure you that you are not wanting in faith. These fears and these agitations are always growing because you think too much and you do not trust enough in Holy Obedience. Continue to make acts of faith three times a day by reciting the "I believe" which contains all the truths of our holy religion and of itself is the most efficacious weapon to repel temptations against faith. Then live quietly.

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1 It is not the first time that Don Libera is exhorting his "Daughter to give up so much ceremony, and freely put forward her needs. As we have mentioned above (cf. The Second Interlude) Magdalen was guarding a secret in her heart—her project—which however, at one time or another she would have to confide in her Director for his advice and freedom of action. (Cf. also M. G. C., pgs. 223-227).
2 Cancelled, above which, as usual can be read: "Teresia".
3 See Letter 57. no. 7.
with what obedience assures you and if the temptations want to continue, let them rave, without your getting frightened. Imprint in your mind and heart that the obedient man will sing of victory. As soon as I can, I will pay you a visit, perhaps in the coming week. The Lord bless you now and always so that you become holy.

Verona June 5, 1799.

TO HER EXCELLENCY THE NOBLE LADY MARCHIONESS OF CANOSSA
VERONA

{Wax seal}
We are at an important turn: sudden and perhaps unforeseen. The young Marchioness, after an acute purifying trial of faith, comes out of it as if reborn after a painful gestation. There is open before her a vast and bright horizon? against which bold plans for charity stand out and take shape. So that everything should have the imprint of obedience, Magdalen moves according to precise directives: those of Don Libera who, in turn, directs her to the legitimate Superiors.

(A double sheet well preserved. There are the usual tears around the wax seal—
A.C.R., Al/5/62)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Since it please Your Excellency to work in a spirit of faith, and to be under Holy Obedience, I will freely tell you all that I think in regard to what you have written to me. First of all I approve of the journey to Ferrara to have the lights and direction of the Bishop and his protection too, because perhaps God can raise him to the most sublime post\(^1\), and in that case, it would be a great help for everything. I am of the opinion that for the time being, we should not talk about the union of the hospitals\(^2\), not to

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\(^1\) The Archbishop of Ferrara, at that time, was Cardinal Alessandro Mattei, whose name had already come up, in Italy and specially in the Veneto, as the future candidate of Austria for the conclave ‘. In fact. those were sad days for the Church, because the visible Head, Pius VI, was a prisoner at Valence and would die there on August 29, 1799. The Curia of Verona was not against one member of its diocese being in touch with the authority in Ferrara . . . there was no need for any one else. A journey to Ferrara would be useful also for the project for the Discalced Carmelites of Verona, if credentials could be obtained from the Patriarch of Venice. (Cf. PICCARI, Sola ..., pg. 212)

\(^2\) By the end of the XVIII century the hospitals existing in Verona were numerous and certainly the proposed union did not involve everyone. A project of unification of "Pious Places" in Verona dates back to 1780, made by a Commission of Elected Members: Francesco Cartolari of the College of Judges, elected; Giovanni Marchese Sagramoso, elected; Lodovico Maria Count de Medicl, elected. They were put in charge by the Magnifico Consiglio dei XII, by the Decree of August 25, 1744: "to examine the condition of the poor Pious Places . . . to find ways to meet their needs, and make them .. . able to provide for those charitable needs for which, with great piety, they had been established long ago by our elders . . “ But “two serious obstacles would have to be met: one coming from the Diverse conditions of the persons (among which were the Esposti), who should be united, and the other. from the excessive expenses that had to met.” These reduced the number of the Pious Places to be united. “The opinion we submit therefore would be to unite only the two hospitals, the sick of S. Casa di Misericordia; that is, to this union would belong: the boys of the Derelitti and Mendicanti who together with the little boys of the said S. Casa di Misericordia would form one part, in another place would be united the girls of the above mentioned two Pious Places with the little girls of the Casa di Misericordia who live at SS. Trinita, leaving the Esposti instead, where and how they now are ...” (CRISTOFALL G.A Cenni ..., pgs. 44-47)

The Plan remained a petition, because of the necessary and lengthy bureaucratic transactions and also because of the political-military situation which occurred later. We may ask: is this the "Plan" that Magdalen of Canossa intended to present to the Authority, obviously with all the necessary innovations? We are inclined to give an affirmative answer by quoting from an Appendix of the above mentioned Commission in which among other
raise up a tempest from many interested persons in this matter. As to the Abbey of S. Zeno, try to get it, without having any scruple or fear. It will be good to have the

things we read: "We have the honour to humbly present, that having seen, in this city and province, a serious situation which comes from the lack of education of many miserable orphans of both sexes and also of many others ... who although very young in age are left on their own ... to remedy as much as possible such a disorder, we humbly suggest that it would be suitable that the extension of the hospital, suggested by us in the previous Plan, would be implemented in order to receive as many miserable and abandoned orphans as funds and alms would make it possible to educate and also to receive a greater number of abandoned boys that come under the name of Derelitti Mendicant and Pupilli, and that the same would be for S.S. Trinita' to receive a large number of abandoned girls of the Derelitte, Mendicanti and Pupille. Here we must not omit another very important detail, that is, after the submission of the previous Plan, some pious persons wishing to cooperate by offering their wealth for the maintenance of the new hospital, made very advantageous proposals: to bequeath for its benefit, all their possessions consisting of real estate of some considerable value, with this specific condition, and which for their part they would not change, that when the Public Authorities obtain permission, such goods would not be sold but kept in perpetuity for the benefit of the said hospital and it would be a good thing that the Public Authorities would submit these intentions to the Royal Throne of His Serenity ... (Ibid. pgs. 61-63).

In the Plan we mentioned in the previous note, "the Place of S. Zeno Maggiore" has been indicated as convenient to receive the "Ritrirate" then living with the "Pupille della S. S. Trinita" (ibid. pgs. 47-48). Here however, we are referring not only to the "Place" but to the whole "Bazia di S. Zeno" about which Lenotti in his first booklet on the Churches and Convents in Verona which are no longer existing (to the right side of the Adige) writes: "The Abbey of S. Zeno ... was one of the most magnificent in Verona that because of its wealth and power, enjoyed political importance as well., In the palace of the Abbey, often Emperors, for example, Otto II, Frederick I and Frederick II were guests. Popes, Emperors, Bishops and Princes gave and confirmed to the monastery, feudal jurisdiction and various privileges. There are preserved in a section of the State Archives in Verona, about thirty parchments attesting to donations and privileges, among them, it is interesting to note are also the diplomas of Countess Beatrice and her daughter Matilde of Canossa, (August 10,1073) and that of Henry IV (June 17, 1084) in favour of the Monastery of S. Zeno. The Abbey began to decline under the Scaligeri. In 1400 it remained without an Abbot so its benefits were assigned to (omitted). In 1425 in the Convent there were Austrian monks (omitted). After the pestilence of 1630 and after various controversies, it was established that in the monastery, only Veronese or Venetian monks would reside . The monastery of S. Zeno was suppressed by the Serenissima with the Decree published on December 5, 1770. The goods were in great part given to the Civil Hospital." (LENOTTI T., Chiese ...1, pgs 69-72).

From the confiscation done by the Venetian government, "there remained only the revenues of the Abbey, very probably, out of respect for the Venetian Abbot, Carlo Rezzonico, son of Aurelio, the Procurator of S. Marco, and nephew of Pope Rezzonico, Clement XIII (1758-1768), who conferred on him the benefits also of the Abbey of Verona from 1758. But in 1797, after the occupation of Verona ... by Napoleon's French army in 1796, and after the Pasque Veronesi, the city was governed for three months by an autonomous democratic Municipality who was occupied all the time in satisfying, with goods and money, the demands made with insistence, by the French military commands ... In this historical situation, the suppression of the Abbey of S. Zeno and S.S. Trinita' was ordered on July 8, 1797, by the Commander of the French army with the aim of selling the real estate to finance the war against Austria. In 1797 Carlo Rezzonico was still receiving the benefits of the Abbey of S. Zeno, deriving from 4495 fields, situated in S. Pietro in Valle and Chiovo, and also the perpetual leases of Ostiglia, Moradega and Villimpenta. Carlo Rezzonico was also given by the Pope, the benefits of the Abbey of S.S. Trinita' which in the middle ages had belonged to the Order of the Vallombrosani . According to the survey made in 1752, the goods of the Abbey were worth 25940 ducats with a revenue estimated at 1556 ducats. The possession and rights of the Abbey, were found in various localities of Valpolicella, of the Valpantena, in Lessini, around Lake Garda in the southern part of the province of Verona, and outside the Veronese territory at Pazzolengo (Brescia) and at Montagnana (Padua). A few days after the decree of suppression, the Administrator of the contribution and finance of Italy, the Frenchman Haller, on July 13, 1797, offered to sell the goods of the two Abbeys to the Municipality of Verona for the sum of 9000(X) lire in French currency, deciding to consign to the said Municipality all the papers and titles pertaining to them." (SANCASSANI G., Le fonti archeoivistiche relative al monastero e all’abbazia di S. Zeno di Verona, in "Studi Zenoniani", Verona 1974, pgs. 54-56).

The same author Sancassani says that the political situation was settled by the Peace of Luneville (February 9, 1801 ) which determining the political borders between the French and the Austrian possession of the Adige, divided the city in two. The Municipality of Verona, with the Decree of September 1, 1801, gave about half of the goods of the two Abbeys to the new hospital of the city, established following the union of the various pre-
protection of the Patriarch\textsuperscript{4} and his strong support in Venice. For the journey then to Vienna, you could follow the opinion of the Cardinal and of the Patriarch and also the advice you will receive in Venice, so as to avoid all useless bureaucratic appointments. The plan\textsuperscript{5}, my Daughter, is to be managed with prudence, discretion and with the ease of practice. Certainly I do not think it is suitable to build a hospital in the Bazia di S. Zeno—it is in too remote a corner of the city\textsuperscript{6}. It is more suitable to have it in S. Eufemia or S. Francesco di Paula united to the Vittoria\textsuperscript{7}. Do not waste time trying to get the revenue of the Bazia (= Abbey). When you are able to secure the Rules of the Hospitallers instituted by St. Vincent de Paul, for both men and women, I believe you would draw great and useful lights\textsuperscript{8} from them. For the existing hospitals, together with the responsibility for the maintenance and care of the Basilica of S. Zeno, and the other half of the two Abbeys went to the Orphanage for Girls. (Ibid. pg. 56)

The union of the hospitals therefore became a reality. But in 1801 Magdalen of Canossa, in obedience to the Bishop, was preparing herself, also psychologically, for the education of poor girls, being satisfied with (this was God's Will!) simple visits to the sick in the hospital. (Cf. CANOSSA M. Memoirs, Ch. 1, no. 51; cf. Epistolario I, pgs. 6-103).

\textsuperscript{4} Patriarch of the Venice, His Eminence, Federico Maria Giovanelli.

\textsuperscript{5} Almost certainly to be identified in Plan B 6 (A.C.R.) "which draft ... as affirmed by M. Giacon ... cannot be dated later than 1799 or 1800. It represents even if only in hypothetical form, the first attempt to Godify the apostolic-social desires of Magdalen. We feel the experience of Magdalen in the "Fratellanza" (Evangelical Brotherhood of Priests and Lay Men for the Hospitals, to serve, aid and assist especially spiritually, the patients in the hospital) and her knowledge of the limitations of the simple service of the Brotherhood, made her aware of the necessity of vaster action, embracing not only the care of the sick but also their education and instruction. (GIACON M., L'azione..., pg. 113)

\textsuperscript{6} The Church and Monastery of S. Zeno were situated outside the ancient wall of the city, for which reason the Abbot Alberico began (in 1145) the construction of the tower, precisely for purposes of defence. Even today "we can admire the tower with brick work battlements in which are found the interesting decorative frescoes and also the cloister of rare beauty that preserves many remnants of its first construction (before the X century). It has double columns of red marble with arches in brick work and an evocative projecting niche (a wash place for the monks)." (LENOTTI T., Chiese ..., pg. 72)

\textsuperscript{7} S. Eufemia on the right bank of the Adige: In 1275 the Eremitane of St. Augustine came from their Convent outside Porta Vescovo, and started the extension of their Church and Convent, taking it up again in 1340. On January 4, 1797, the Church and the Convent were used by the French as military hospitals. In 1806 the Monastery became the property of the Municipality and was used as military barracks. (Cf. LENOTTI T., Chiese ..., I pgs. 73-74)

S. Francesco da Paola on the left bank of the Adige (cf. Letter 6, no. 4).

S. Maria della Vittoria was erected in 1355 by order of Cangrande della Scala following his victory over the opposing faction headed by his step-brother Frignano. In 1465 the Church and near by house were given to Bl. Filippo of the Order of St. Jerome of the Congregation of B1. Peter of Pisa. The Congregation popularly known as the Girolimini, started the construction of their convent in 1469 and completed it in 1481. The beautiful little Church was taken over by the Municipality in 1806. (LENOTTI T., Chiese ..., II pgs. 32-33)

\textsuperscript{8} It is evident by now that the original inspiration of Magdalen of Canossa to "start (but in collaboration with other persons equally called) a Congregation or Pious Union whose object is the fulfilment of the Two Great Precepts of Charity: Love of God and Love of Neighbour; and consequently with it, to sanctify oneself, and provide for the needs that they see in their place ... It seems that our neighbours' needs, from which all other evils are derived, can be reduced to three: the Need of Education, the Need of Instruction, and the Need of Assistance and help in sickness and in death." (CANOSSA M., Piano B 6 "Some persons . . . , published by Giacon in Appendix to his booklet and lately in CANOSSA M., Epistolario II/2 pgs. 1415-1419)

What was the condition of total misery of many abandoned children can be inferred, among other things, from the documentation of the above mentioned Commission of the Elected Members (see no. 2 above) already
commitment taken\(^9\), since your brother is involved in it, you be in peace about it. God does not oblige us to do more than we can and therefore be more cautious in the future\(^10\). I have at heart that . . . \(^{11}\) be married off. Just now, she is a bit of an inconvenience, but in the end you will be relieved of a heavy annual burden\(^12\). I not only agree, rather I exhort you strongly, and if you want it, I even command you to give all the help you can to establish an institution for these girls\(^13\). Besides these two girls,\(^14\) who knows how many others will be added. It is good also to run a school for those who come from their homes so that they can avail themselves of these teachings. Certainly see that they are young girls, of respectable parents and of sufficient means. For the rent, you can try to find some persons to help you and in time, the credit of the school will give good results making it easy for you to pay the rent. Cheer up, couragely. Let us work with greater simplicity and great trust in God and he will undoubtedly give all the success which will be pleasing to him and for his greater glory. I pray the Lord to give a successful outcome to the division\(^15\), that everything be managed with peace and quiet. The Lord bless you now and always.

July 5, 1799

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9 We can deduce that it was a 'commitment' of a financial nature.
10 Not a useless recommendation for Magdalen at that time, all taken up with a grandiose project for "the glory and service of God", and who was taking as norm for her activity, generosity more than prudence.
11 ... Above the cancellation can be read: "Teresia".
12 It is not clear what it could be and why.
13 Plan B. 6 treats precisely of the "need of education and instruction"; we can guess that it is with regard to girls to be gathered, educated and instructed.
14 In a short time, much had been done: Magdalen is gathering girls. Two for the time being, as a small seed of a tree that will flourish and will enrich the field of the Church of God, with flowers and fruits.
15 The "division" regarding the patrimonial goods between Uncle Gerolamo and her brother Bonifacio.
Coming out from the dark and cold underground tunnel into the full sunlight, Magdalen does not live for herself any more. Don Libera no longer has any doubts: she has definitely espoused God 's interests and those privileged by her: the poor.

(A single sheet, well preserved—A.C.R., A 1/5/63)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

I am consoled to hear of your safe journey, return, and good health. I thank you most sincerely for visiting my sister¹, who asked me to convey to you her deep debt of gratitude. I think I have a woman² very much according to your ideas, when you should establish a house for the education and formation of those girls as Hospitallers³. I want to inform you of all this because if you have not committed yourself to anyone, or if you should have others at hand, have the goodness to keep things in abeyance until we talk it over.

On the coming Monday, if nothing comes between and Your Excellency is free, I will pay you a visit. May the Lord bless you now and always.

September 9, 1799.

¹ We have only this reference to his sister as we had a reference to his only nephew. (cf. Letter 42)
² On her return from Ferrara, Magdalen had found a woman (Metilde Bonioli or Cristina?) for the formation of girls called to become Hospitallers. Referring to this woman, Magdalen will write in a letter dated January 29, 1801, to her Milanese friends, Carolina Durini: "I am very happy with my companion and the way she looks after the two girls." (CANOSSA M. Epistolario 1, pg. 15)
³ If the first idea of the Institute came from Magdalen's experience as a Lady Hospitaller, it is clear however from the last letters of Don Libers that she successfully overcomes the limitations of the Brotherhood. This Brotherhood founded to obviate urgent neccessities, now had need of mature and well formed persons, but precisely because she was aware of the lack of the necessary qualities even in "adult persons" s Magdalen was induced to think of havinz an Institute for formation.
Everything concurs to make Mugdalen sure. Don Libera congratulates her for it, but fears that his "Daughter" may fall a prey to vain glory and while exhorting her not to put any limits to her confidence in her "Divine Spouse", he puts her on guard against seeking the admiration of others. Daily Communion, and renewing herself spiritually at every act of obedience, will preserve her from deviations and falls, unfortunately always possible.

double sheet. written only on one page and with some tears— A.C.R. Al/5/64)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

From Villafranca¹ where I am spending a few days, I am replying in a hurry to your most esteemed letter which I received last night. I am happy to hear of the recovery of your brother-in-law². Your Ladyship has managed excellently with Msgr. Vicar³. We shall wait and see how the Lord is working and disposing things. Let us hope for the best because certainly the work can only be for the Lord's greatest glory; as His Eminence, the Cardinal⁴ has every reason to say, and is to be preferred to any other; therefore I thank God more than ever for the decision I made for your worthy self⁵. I am happy if you can receive Holy Communion frequently, even every day. I desire most of all that you have a humble and generous confidence in your Divine Spouse. Even in this, my Daughter, you must be obedient. Be all charity towards the sick but keep very far from all that can give rise to the admiration of others, so as not to give the devil a chance to tempt you to vanity which is the trap he uses to ensnare many very promising souls. Even on this point I desire you to be rigorously obedient. On no condition write to the Spanish lady⁶. The country-side has helped me recover a little, but not as much as I would wish. Let us hope for the best.⁷

May the Lord bless you, now and always.

October 24, 1799⁸

To HER EXCELLENCY LADY MARCHIONESS MAGDALEN OF CANOSSA

GREZZANO(?)

¹ Villafranca: it seems that Don Lihera's sister and only nephew resided here.
² ... Under the cancellation it seems signor can be seen Magdalen had three brothers-in-law: Marqis Antonio Maffei, Count Girolamo Orti-Manara, count Federico serego. It is not clear which one is referred to here.
³ Msgr. Gualfardo Ridolfi to whom Magdalen had presented her Pian while he was a guest at Grezzano.
⁴ Cardinal Alessandro Mattei of Ferrara.
⁵ Don Lihera recognizes that the decision taken at that time to keep Magdalen in the world, is a divine grace.
⁶ An unidentified person.
⁷ Don Lihera’s health keeps on declining, however no one would have imagined that his death would take place a few months later.
⁸ The handwriting is shaky in this letter.
Although at times, Magdalen receives disappointments and bitterness in exchange for her love, she is, more than ever committed to do good, reserving very little time for herself. But Don Libera thinks of her and her spiritual progress and he wishes to hurry the moment he can "revisit her heart". He knows very well that this is also the great longing of his most esteemed "Daughter" in her earnestness for perfection.

double sheet well preserved, very few tears around the wax seal—A.C.R.. Al/5/65)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

For the affair of . . .¹ you could help so that she is united to her husband but do it underhandedly. You must not receive her personally, it will cause you no small embarrassment, neither give her any more money. Leave aside all your scruples and be in peace, neither trouble yourself about what can happen. She is not a girl who deserves further compassion and let Countess Buri too, do the same. You can ask her to work to get her re-united in marriage. Msgr. Vicar being in between, it is easy to combine the matter and to see to the child that is to be born. For whatever happens, Your Excellency must not interfere at all. I pray the Lord that he give you the knowledge of the greater good you could work, despite so much scrupulosity; may he give you the strength to do it, because certainly it needs the hand of God. Recommend yourself to Mary and I hope she will grant you the grace². In the first week of Advent, we shall not hear from each other³ but surely at the beginning of the second week, because I too, wish to visit you. The Lord bless you now and always and fulfil all your holy desires.

November 29, 1799

To HER EXCELLENCY
THE LADY MARCHIONESS MAGDALEN OF CANOSSA
VERONA
(Wax seal)

1 Cancelled and illegible, but from what follows, it is Teresia's case comes to mind. (Cf. M.G.C., pgs. 211-217)
2 So strong were Magdalen's feelings and affection for this "girl". She was perhaps the person, more than any other, to have place in the voluntary young aristocrat's heart.
3 It will be remembered that Don Libera being also the Extraordinary Confessor of Nuns, during the four liturgical seasons had to fulfil this pastoral ministry.
We are at the last stage. In front of Magdalen there unfolds a grandiose work, inspired by faith and intended for the uplift of society in its weakest section: poor and defenceless girls. Beside her, to sustain her and even to condition her, are many Institutions, civil and ecclesiastical, on whom she will have to necessarily depend. But within and above everything, there is the strength of a charism: her charism, to overcome difficulties and contradictions, diffidence and egoism, narrow-minded mentality and limiting interventions ... On the horizon is a light just dawning but full of promise, the most magnificent prospects: the glory of God. Don Libera’s letters began with a caption of high spirituality and they will conclude with another inspiring one: to seek the divine good pleasure.

(A double sheet, written only on the first page. Big tears on the page in which the address had been written—A.C.R., Al/5/66)

Praised be Jesus and Mary

It is necessary, my Daughter, to undertake the works intended for the Lord’s glory with all the support of the Divine Will, managing them with a total commitment, courage and confidence in the Lord, together with a holy indifference as to its success, because this depends on God alone, and the merit will be ours whatever be the outcome. My Daughter, your project¹ is vast indeed and it will surely meet great difficulties from those who do not consider it with the eyes of faith. I personally think that Monsignore² can have aims different from yours, and from his proposals it can be seen that he wants to limit the vastness of your plans, and not being very convinced about the Religious Priests³ he may try to separate you from them. But do not lose courage because of all this. The difficulties of contradictions will not be lacking from beginning to end and it will not be easy in the beginning to found the whole of your vast plan. But it is not right to change it because of this and everything must tend towards the fixed goals. As to the proposed place of S. Nazaro⁴ I have my doubts and difficulties that the proposal will ever

¹ Plan B. 6 in which are contemplated "almost all the works of mercy", of course only as a Plan.
² The Vicar General of the Diocese of Verona.
³ Since 1796 Magdalen used to collaborate with Don Pietro Leonardi and other priests of the Pious Union of the "Brotherhoodi. We shall see how in practice, Magdalen will receive from the Bishop the advice: 'to work independently of all others.” (CANossa M., Memoirs, Ch. I, no. 42)
⁴ “It seems that a monastery at the side of the Church of Sts. Nazaro and Celso was existing from 1033. It was granted many privileges from 1037 by Bishop John, confirmed by Emperor Henry. From 1464 to 1455 extensions were made by the Abbot William of Milan. In 1767, the Convent was taken over by the Municipality and in 1771 acquired by the Nuns of St. Daniel till July 1, 1806, when they were forced to leave because of the
succeed. For the time being I do not think it would be opportune to speak with the Religious of the Hospital\(^5\), at least until you have conferred with the Prelate\(^6\) from whom, I hope, we will get greater light as to their aims and intentions. You can talk to Dean Galvani\(^7\), he is a man of sincere character and can be of great help for this whole affair. Do not be anxious about the proposals of Don Trevisani\(^8\). He is a clever Rector and has a big heart for the affairs of God. He is an excellent priest and has ways to help the Plan. My Daughter, in any event I do not want you to worry. His proposals cannot be prejudicial to your work, so be in peace. It is necessary to be on good terms with Msgr. Vicar. He is clever to manage big affairs, he is diplomatic but has an excellent character and is fully disposed to promote the glory of god. The Plan needs to be supported but we must adapt ourselves to the circumstances and to promote it, little by little, because all beginnings are very small. Be careful to agree with Msgr. Vicar before you go to the Bishop and use all your skill but do it with much prudence. Speak of your ideas with the Bishop, only after you have agreed with Msgr Vicar, because in such circumstances, certainly, it is necessary to work together. Recommend yourself to the Holy Spirit and to Mary. Take courage from the thought that God will bless everything that will be according to his good pleasure, which is all that we must seek and expect. May the Lord bless you now and always.

December 14, 1799

To HER EXCELLENCY
THE LADY MARCHIONESS MAGDALEN OF CANOSSA
VERONA
(Wax seal)

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\(^5\) L'Ospedale della Misericordia which Magdalen, as Dama of the "Brotherhood", used to visit regularly to fulfil her turn as helper. As to the origins of this Hospital we have an interesting detail with regard to one of her ancestors. In "Le. .Cc)Wle istoriche di letterati veronesi nuovo anlente raccolte da Alecchi, vol. 6, of which the first five are kept in the Marciana (Venice) and the sixth in the Library of the Capitolare di Verona, is listed in the Godice 155 r. "LUDOVICO CANOSSA. He died in 1532. Alecchi notes that he began at his own expense the Ospedale della Misericordia together with Matteo Giberti, the great Veronese Bishop during 1500’s." (Cf. GASPERONI G., Scipione Maffei ..., Verona 1955, pg. 440)

\(^6\) The Bishop of Verona, Msgr. Giovanni Andrea Avogadro. (Cf. M.C.C., pgs. 56-66)

\(^7\) Don Nicola Galvani, Dean of S. Giovanni in Foro, pointed out by Msgr. Ridolfi to Magdalen as an excellent spiritual Director and as likely successor to Don Libera even before Don Libera would die. (Cf. CANOSSA M., Memoirs, Ch. 1, nos. 44-47, and also DALLE VEDOVE N., La Giovinezza ..., pgs. 428-434.)

\(^8\) Don Luigi Trevisani, Prefect of Studies and later Rector of the Verona Seminary.
ON PILGRIMAGE AGAIN

One of our "biblical poets", commenting on the Jewish event in Exodus, affirms that it deals "not only with the epic celebration of the fundamental event of the pass-over, but also of a reality for every believer, who putting in practice the ancient word, can create in "his today", a presence that can cause a rebirth of a commitment and hope even now." Pausing therefore on the "going out—entering polarism", he shows how "within these two verbs, one can place the entire human existence which is a going out from the maternal womb to enter the world . . . "¹.

These affirmations encourage us to present the life of Magdalen Gabriella of Canossa during the period she was under Don Libera's guidance in the light of this polarism: the young Marchioness oriented and supported by her spiritual guide, goes out of a situation of self-inwardness, erroneously read as a vocation from God, to enter truly into His project, which He wants of her—a constant giving of herself in imitation of the "great Exemplar": Jesus Crucified.

Magdalen's exodus described through the Letters of Don Luigi Libera is only one stage of her pilgrimage certainly the decisive one, but still at the beginning of a new pilgrimage fully to be discovered, towards the heights of christian charity.

And Don Libera?

After having accompanied her step by step, in the discernment of her vocation, not without equivocation from the one and patient waiting from the other, he reaches "his" great exodus. Barely a month had passed since his last letter when suddenly on January 22, 1800, he goes out "from the horizon of this world to enter into the-womb of Mother Earth and in faith to emerge into the resurrection"² His prophetic mission was accomplished. He could take his eternal rest in the "Promised Land".

Magdalen instead, stage by stage, will give life—in the beginning, limited yet consistent—to the double Institutes of the Daughters and Sons of Charity, for the religious and moral uplift of the poorer classes, usually left to themselves. Today they are the object of the attention of many (often they are degradingly manipulated), yesterday, that is, during Magdalen's times, the poor were despised and relegated to the margins of society but they are always in the mind and heart of the Church.

¹ RAVASI G. Quale Dio è così vicino?, Milano-Roma 1976, pag. 56.
² Ibid.

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