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MOTHER LEOPOLDINA NAUDET

**Foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Family
and her**

**WITNESS OF HUMILITY –
A MESSAGE FOR THE
CHURCH OF TODAY**

A Written Exercise for the Baccalaureate

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INTRODUCTION

The intention of this reflection is not that of treating exhaustively the theme of Humility, nor that of celebrating the virtues of Leopoldina Naudet¹. The scope of this study is rather that of considering, reflecting upon and verifying, in the light of the writings of a Christian woman who has preceded us in the pilgrimage of faith, how a humble attitude, so present in Salvation History can still be lived, and whether her experience may still be proposed to Christian men and women who live in a time called by some to be ‘Post-modern.’

The development of this work is divided into three Chapters:

- the **First Chapter** offers an introduction to the theme of Humility. It is necessary to withdraw Humility from any subjectivity, and from *devotionism*, and to remember that it springs rather from Jesus Christ, who has stated; *Learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart.* [Mt 11:29].

In the light of the renewal brought by the Second Vatican Council², this research will seek to grasp what is truly meant by Humility from its being revealed in the Mystery of Jesus Christ, and inserted into Salvation History. Then, we will reflect on that contribution alternating between the Fathers of the Church, and the Spiritual Writers, tapping into the History of the Church. The goal throughout will be that of attempting to affirm the validity of the Witness of Humility, also for men and women of today.

- the **Second Chapter** then gathers certain passages from the Writings of Leopoldina Naudet, in order to present Humility with the unique characteristics of a concrete experience. Among her many writings, we will take into consideration her *Letters, Conferences, Constitutions*, and *Spiritual Writings*, because they seem to be her compositions which the more emphatically bring out the Humility that she actually lived. For each one of these writings, the following will be the modality of the work:

[1] The presentation of texts in which it is possible to ponder the theme of Humility.

[2] These texts will be preceded with a brief historical and descriptive introduction.

- the texts actually chosen will permit in the unfolding of the **Third Chapter**, the attempt at a synthesis of the present-day value of the witness of Leopoldina’s Humility. In order to facilitate the operation of an orderly reflection, all the texts quoted will be given a number and preceded by an abbreviation which refers to the immediate source of the idea from the Foundress’ various writings. These will be as follows:

L.	=	<i>Letters</i>
CF.	=	<i>Conferences</i>
C.	=	<i>Constitutions</i>
Ms.	=	<i>Spiritual Writings</i>

¹ Leopoldina Naudet: cf. the **Appendix**, n. 1.

² cf. OT 16.

- The Letters will be sub-divided into groups, keeping in mind the various persons to whom they were addressed.
- only those Conferences, will be taken into consideration where the theme of Humility is expressly considered.
- as for her Constitutions, all of these are permeated with Humility, and so there will be presented certain passages regarding the virtue, following the original order, in order to grasp from them the context into which these have been inserted.
- her Spiritual Writings are generally considered her most precious writings for anyone interested in understanding the spirituality of Mother Leopoldina Naudet. It is a collection of manuscripts of a spiritual character.

Following the sub-division as presented in her Cause of Beatification and Canonization ³, under the heading of the Discussion of her Virtues, we will subdivide this research into three successive paragraphs according to the chronological order which coincides with the different periods of Spiritual Direction she received over the years from Fathers Paccanari and Bertoni, and lastly for that stretch of time when for all practical purposes she did not have formal spiritual direction.

- in the **Third Chapter** we will discuss the matter whether in this 21st Century it is still worthwhile to speak of humility, for the simple reason that it would seem that our modern society allows itself to be impressed only with success at any cost. We will offer some reflection on how to bring together the paradox noted in the desire to have the first place, with the invitation of Jesus Christ to take the last place at the table of this world.

In the light of the writings of Mother Naudet, we will attempt to trace an Itinerary of humility, having as its foundation that Humility of Jesus Christ and some insight will be meditated on how this might be an expressive witness for the believers of all time.



³ cf. *Positio*, See **Appendix**, n. 2.

CHAPTER I THE MATTER OF HUMILITY

The ‘great humility’ of Mother Leopoldina was recognized by so many who knew her⁴: Fr. Charles Maggi, who was her Confessor, and who ministered to her while she was dying, wrote:

... Lady Leopoldina, that soul who was so dear to God, how exact she was in manifesting her conscience, and in not ever being ruled by her own judgment alone, while she was all the more discerning in hiding her own virtues with a rare level of humility. This virtue was very extended in her, and the foundation of all the others...⁵

Before analyzing how Leopoldina lived Humility, we need to ask: What is Humility? This might seem to be a rhetorical question, but it is not. The reason is because ‘there is no virtue which has been placed under such discussion in the history of Christianity as Humility has’⁶. Fr. Dalmazio Mongillo, OP, in the *New Dictionary of Spirituality*, states that Humility is one of the most ambiguous, the fullest of equivocations in the entire spiritual and religious language⁷.

Humility is even thought to be a ‘suspect’ virtue because it comes to us, weighed down with its inheritance that renders this an individual virtue, the goal of the quest of each individual’s self-perfection. It often appears synonymous with the self-annihilation of the creature before God, who is all – and the diminution of oneself before others, an attitude that today is thought to be no longer fitting to describe God - Who does not crush human beings down, but lifts up human nature and values humanity. At times, it might even seem to be making reference to a false attitude, an effort to show oneself to be even less than that which each person realizes she may already be. It follows from all this that to speak of humility is not easy, especially today, in the light of the interpretations of the ‘masters of suspicion’, who have left their mark on our culture.

According to Nietzsche, Humility is the great lie of the weak, who in their passivity succeed in this manner to give cleverly an appearance of authentic virtue. For Freud, Humility is a masochistic variant of a guilt-complex. For Adler, Humility is very close to an inferiority complex. Furthermore, how does one reconcile *enslavement* [which is very close to the ancient Latin term, *humilitas*] as proposed by some American psychologists?⁸ How can one make sense today of always choosing the last place according to the Gospel saying, with a

⁴ In the *Recollections of Metilda di Canossa*, one may read that she truly desired to be the smallest of all; in the *Reminiscences of Sophia Gagnere*, it is related that she often said that to take any glory in that which God achieves through us is to render oneself culpable of the most crass thievery, cited in Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove’s *From the Court to the Cloister. Lady Leopoldina Naudet, Foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Family*, Scuola Tipografica Missioni Padri Stimmatini, Verona 1954, p. 399.

⁵ Cf. *Lettera da Reggio a Metilde di Canossa*, November 16, in Nello Dalle Vedove, *Dalla corte al chiostro...* o.c., pp. 400.

⁶ cf. Edward KACZYNSKI, “Umilta’”, in: *Nuovo Dizionario di Teologia Morale*. ed. by Fr. Compagnoni, G. Piana, S. Privitera. Roma: Paoline 1990, p. 1392.

⁷ cf. Dalmazio MONGILLO, OP, “Umilta’”, in: *Nuovo Dizionario di Spiritualità*, ed. by S. DiFLORES and T. GOFFI. Roma: Paoline 1985, p. 1610.

⁸ cf. A. LOUF, “L’umiltà” – a translation cared for by the Monastic Community of Bose, in: *Sumpathetika*. Magnano [BI]: Ed. Qiqajon 2000, *passim*.

world in which it is necessary to struggle in order to be first, since only the one is first place receives any notice? A further difficulty is represented by a certain ambiguity which remains bound to the very idea of humility?

On the one hand, following the development of Salvation History and of Tradition, there is bestowed on Humility an important place, one that absolutely can never be renounced, in the experience of the believer. However, on the other hand, when one tries to speak of the Christian virtues, there is always some difficulty in finding the proper place for it, even though so many authors are convinced of its priority.

We note, then, that there is difficulty in recognizing Humility as a virtue up to the Middle Ages, and this is because it is difficult to express the absolute primacy of Humility in the categories of philosophical moral from which it is necessary to begin in order to explain the virtues⁹.

The same definition finds greater support in not being considered so much as a virtue, but as the foundation, the bond of all the other virtues: Humility is the mother, the root, the foundation, the bond of all virtues,” is the testimony of St. John Chrysostom. However, the on-going effort has consistently remained in making Humility a virtue, and above all in making it a unit of measure of the esteem greater or lesser, that one would nourish toward herself, with the risk of even weakening its importance to a considerable degree. For this reason, in the **Second Chapter** of this study, the effort will be made to analyze humility in a concrete experience, that lived by Mother Leopoldina Naudet, in order to try then to grasp, even more than the specific virtue of Humility, a state of Humility, i.e., in the original sense of the Greek word, *tapeinosis*, regarding a condition of abasement. It is a condition which, in Faith, it brings about the realization that the Humility of God, unveiled by Jesus Christ [cf. Ph 2:8], becomes the humility of a believing person, in this case of one Leopoldina Naudet.

In order to do this, it is necessary to withdraw Humility from any subjectivity and from any pietistic devotion, and to remember that it is born in Jesus Christ, Who states: *Learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart...* [cf. Mt 11:29].

For Christianity, any reflection on Humility is always one a reflection on humanity [the anthropological dimension], on God [the theological dimension], and on the relationship between God and man [the historic-salvific dimension], recognizing its Christological root.

Therefore, in the light of the renewal brought by the Second Vatican Council [cf. OT 16], in order to be able to grasp the authentic meaning of Humility, this reflection will begin with its foundation in the Mystery of Jesus Christ, inserted then into Salvation History – then, the consideration will unfold regarding the contribution brought by the Fathers of the Church and by the spiritual teachers throughout the History of the Church, to see whether it is possible to communicate the validity of the witness of humility to the men and women of this time.

†††

⁹ NB: **St. Thomas Aquinas**, of course, did not find Christian Humility in the list of the fundamental virtues formulated by Aristotle. He would catalogue Christian Humility as part of Temperance, considering it as a restraint on the soul. *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 161, a. 4.

1.1 Humility as an Event that flows from the Encounter between God, as manifested in Jesus Christ, and Humanity. In these paragraphs, the effort will be to offer a synthesis of the development of the concept of Humility in Salvation History.

1.1.1 In the Old Testament, the Word of God leads Humanity to Glory through the Path of Humble Submission to God, Creator and Savior.

In the OT, Humility is seen as an “attitude of the spirit”, which explains its proper positive effects before God and before other human beings. Before God, Humility means an expression of piety, justice. God protects the humble [cf. Mi 6:8], He consoles them [cf. Is 57:15], He raises them up [cf. Ps 147:6] and enters into communion with them [cf. Ps 51:19]. By means of Humility before one’s fellow human beings, one can find God [cf. 2 Ch 36:12]:

... In the OT, there is no mention of the Humility of God, but only of the Humility of men and women, and it stands out in the obedient and submissive conduct toward God and towards the leaders of the people. As for the humble attitude toward God, the believer is induced to it by the realization that each one is created by God and depends upon Him for life... [cf. Gn 2:7; 18:27]...¹⁰

Along-side being an attitude of the spirit, Humility also indicates the ‘situation of smallness, of the necessity of poverty’, so the ‘poor’ can also be considered as the ‘humble’ ones. The terms utilized in Hebrew to indicate the ‘poor’, are *ani* and *anaw*, deriving from the same verb *anah*: meaning to be lowly, bent over, weighed down. These terms basically describe the socio-economic aspect of poverty, both as an interior attitude, as well as a material situation¹¹:

... In the Wisdom Books, the term *anawah* loses its social-economic connotations, coming to express only an interior attitude [cf. Pr 15:33; 18:22; Si 3:17-20]¹².

The term assumes a religious meaning beginning with the Prophet Zephaniah: to seek God means to seek poverty, which is Humility [cf. Zp 2:3]. After the Day of the Lord, the ‘remnant’ of the People of God will be ‘humble and poor’ [cf. Zp 3:12 – the Greek expressions here are *prays* and *tapeinos* – cf. Mt 11:29; Ep 4:2]. In the OT, the models of this Humility are Moses, the most humble of men [cf. Nb 12:3], and the mysterious Servant who, with his humble submission unto death, realizes the Plan of God [cf. Is 53:4-10].

On the return from Exile, the Prophets and Wisdom writers will preach Humility since the Most High dwells with the one who has a humble spirit and a contrite heart [cf. Is 57:15; 66:2]. ... *The fruit of humility is the fear of God, richness, glory and life.* [cf. Pr 22:4] - ... *The greater you are, the more humbly you should behave, and then you will find favor with the Lord.* [cf. Si 3:18; cf. also Dn 3:39]. Lastly, Zechariah announces that the Messiah will be a humble king; he will enter Sion, riding on a donkey [cf. Zc 9:9]. Truly, the God of Israel, the King of Creation, is the *God of the Humble* [cf. Jdt 9:11, ff.]¹³.

¹⁰ cf. E. Kaczynski, op. cit., p. 1393.

¹¹ cf. P. ADNES, Humilité”. In: *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, Tome VII, First Part*, Paris: Beauchesne 1969, pp. 1143-1144.

¹² cf. Kaczynski, o.c., p. 1393.

¹³ cf. M.F. LACAN, Umilta”, in: *Dizionario di teologia Biblica*, ed. by Aa.Vv., Torino: Marietti 1917, p. 1311.

1.1.2 In the NT, the Humility of God, unveiled by Jesus Christ becomes the Humility of Human Beings.

...We have two groups of words in the NT to express the act of humbling oneself, the submission of one person to another, or to the power of another, which is imposed through events. In these cases, one person becomes *praus*, *tapeinos*. The two groups of words are bound among themselves by the fact that they have basically, in many passages, the same Hebrew word...Many times the words of both groups are used in the same context...¹⁴

a.] *praus*: ‘meek, humble’ – *epieikes*: ‘meek, clement, good’ – these words in the NT are present in the Pauline Letters, 1 P, Ac and Mt. The influence of the OT is evident only in Mt – while for the rest of these documents is borrowed prevalently from their Hellenistic meaning.

1. ***praus* and *epieikes* are Typical Indications of the Lordship of Jesus Christ:** against those who would hold for a political Messiahship, Jesus rejects the employment of force in order to establish the Reign of God. His action on earth is that of a non-violent salvific king, alien to war as was prefigured in the OT [cf. Mt 11:29; 21:5; cf. Zc 9:9]. From the moment, though, that at the base of Mt 11:29 there is a Semitic manner of thinking, there is added that the word *praus* indicates also the humble condition of the Messiah. In 2 Co 10:1, Paul mentions *praus* and the *epieikeia* as a characteristic attitude of Jesus Christ in the presence of His contemporaries during His earthly life, and calling to mind His example, Paul exhorts the Church in this direction.

2. These words designate also an attitude that is then required of Christians [cf. Ac 24:4; 1 P 2:18]. In Mt 5:5, *praus* appears as the mark of the life of the disciples: as the ‘virtue’ of those who will inherit the land, i.e., who will have dominion over this world. However, Jesus thinks here also of the ‘poor’ about whom the OT speaks [this is a citation of Ps 37:11]: those who are now oppressed and disdained have obtained the promise that one day matters will be over-turned in their favor. This Beatitude is fundamentally an implicit affirmation of Jesus Himself: He is the Savior of the Poor. When the NT exhorts all to the *praytes*, this does not refer to a manner of conducting oneself exercised by the human will, but rather manifests precisely where human beings are in communion with Jesus Christ and they are ever more ‘uniformed’ to His image through the intervention of the Holy Spirit ¹⁵.

†††

b. [*tapeinos* – ‘a humble condition, inferior, humble – *tapeinophrosune* = ‘humility’:

These terms in the NT are present often [cf. Mt 4; Lk 7; Ac 2; Rm 1; 2 Co 4; Ep 1; Ph 4; Col 3; Jas 4; 1 P 4]. The word is absent in Mk, in the Johannine writings and in those letters not mentioned ¹⁶.

1. The use of these terms in Mt and Lk is intimately bound to the announcement of the eschatological coming of the Royal Lordship of God. The new content that emerges

¹⁴ cf. W. BAUDER, ‘Umilta’’, in: *Dizionario dei concetti biblici del NT*. ed. by Aa.Vv. Bologna: EDB 1986, p. 1902.

¹⁵ cf. W. BAUDER, o.c., pp. 1903-1905.

¹⁶ cf. H. H. ESSER, ‘Umilta’, ‘meekness’, in: *Dizionario dei concetti biblici del NT*. Ed. by Aa. Vv. Bologna: EDB 1986, p. 1907.

here is variously connected to OT texts and with Judaic literature. The theme is announced by Lk in the Infancy narrative of Jesus: in her Hymn, the Mother of Jesus, takes words from the OT [cf. 1 S 1:11; cf. Ps 113:5, f.] – she praises the greatness of the Lord, Who has looked upon the lowly state of His Servant [cf. 1:48, *servant, slave*, suggests the meaning of ‘humility’ – cf. v. 38] – and He has raised up the lowly [cf. 1:52; cf. 1 S 2:7; Jb 5:11; Ps 75:8; Ezk 21:31]. The entire undertaking of St. John the Baptist is placed at the service of the coming of God; in preparation for this event, every mountain and every hill will be laid low, as is written in the prophecy of Is 40: 3, ff.

Lastly, Jesus, the One Who is to come, uses the path of humility [Mt 11:29]¹⁷. Jesus reveals Himself as ‘humble’; He is humble towards His contemporaries; He is also ‘humble of heart’, i.e., in the presence of God; in other words, He is completely submitted to Him, and therefore, He can call to Himself all those who are wearied and oppressed, promising eschatological peace to all those who will follow Him.

2. In Paul, the Hymn found in Ph 2:6-11 shows Jesus Christ, Who *empties Himself* [cf. Ph 2:7 – *kenos* = emptied], through His Self-humiliation is raised up to the point of exaltation achieved by God. Christ’s Self-humiliation is the basis and renders possible the new life under His Lordship [cf. vv. 10, ff.] – His is a life that will be explained in an availability to the service in harmony with His example [cf. v. 5: *have in yourselves the same sentiments that were in Christ Jesus*].

The meaning of this Self-humiliation is defined concretely by the path followed by Jesus: to become obedient even unto death, and a death that was extremely shameful, such as that on the Cross. He knew of no other support than the almost unbelievable promise of the faithfulness of God¹⁸. When mention is made of ‘humility’ in Jesus, this does not refer only to a quality in which Jesus would have come to give us an example, but rather this is the genuine and proper path of salvation, the first stage of which consists in an inevitable abasement. This is a matter of the Paschal journey, to which every Christian is called, to follow after Jesus.

... In humiliation and in the glory of the Cross, Jesus has revealed the meaning and the ultimate goal of that invitation to share the ‘yoke’, i.e., the style of the Father’s love, the source of all love, the font and path of the definitive and conclusive Covenant. God, Whom humanity accepts and loves in Jesus Christ, is God-made-man; God, Who is love, sacrifice, gift, *Kenosis*, God Who limits Himself in order to raise up humanity from His misery, in order to share filiation with each in His Son, the ambience, the subject and the term of His revelation...¹⁹

3. In Ac 8:33, the citation of Is 53:8 has the function of making comprehensible the sense of Jesus’ ‘humiliation’ and ‘exaltation.’

4. The exhortations of Jas and 1 P do not add anything new to the exhortations to the OT ‘humility’, and to that presented by Paul²⁰.

¹⁷ cf. H. H. ESSER, o.c., pp. 1907-1908.

¹⁸ cf. H. H. ESSER, o.c., p. 1908.

¹⁹ cf. D. MONGILLO, *Umiltà*”, in: *Nuovo Dizionario di Spiritualità*, ed. by S. DeFLORES and T. GOFFI. Roma: Paoline 1985, pp. 1615-1616.

²⁰ cf. H. H. ESSER, o.c. p. 1909.

On the basis of an analysis of terms, Humility assumes a light of its own in the Mystery of the Incarnation and of Redemption. It can be said that in the NT, the determining characteristic of Christian Humility is the Will of being conformed to Jesus Christ, humble, obedient to the Father's Will. The Humility of Jesus Christ, Model for His disciples, and is known to us through His words and His life. Christ has come to bring the Good news to the Poor [cf. Mt 11:5]²¹. He presents Himself to us as meek and humble of heart [cf. Mt 11:29]²². Jesus blesses the little children and presents them to us as models [cf. Mk 10:15, f.]²³. Far from seeking His own glory [cf. Jn 8:50], He humbles Himself to the point of washing the feet of His disciples [cf. Jn 13:14, f.]²⁴. It is that Humility of one who has come to serve and not to be served [cf. Mt 20:28; Ph 2:1-2]. The Humility of Jesus Christ is the sublime expression of the spirit of service²⁵.

The Christian is called to be humble as her Master, and she is called to follow Him [cf. Ph 2:5]. Humility in Jesus Christ becomes His will of abandoning Himself confidently into the loving hands of His Father [cf. Jn 4:34]. Making her own the style of love for the Father as revealed by Jesus Christ, each Christian is called to concretize it [cf. Col 3:12-14] in the service of her fellow human beings [cf. Rm 12:10], and of the most weak among them [cf. Rm 14:1] – it is clear that such Humility is bound to charity. Humility has nothing to do with that weakness, or passivity – on the contrary, it demands a full commitment to the service of God and of human beings. Humility is not the attitude of slaves, but of free human beings who are full of love. The manifestations of Humility are nothing other than characterizations of the unique Christian precept of charity [cf. 1 Co 13:4-7]²⁶.

In conclusion it might be said that:

- in the OT, there is no mention of the Humility of God, but only of human Humility – the Word of God leads a follower to glory through the pathway of humble submission to God, the Creator and Savior;
- in the NT, the Word of God becomes flesh in Christ Jesus in order to lead humanity to the heights of Humility which consists in serving God in one's neighbors, in humbling oneself out of love for the purpose of glorying God, at work saving humanity²⁷.

1.2 The Meaning attributed to Humility along the Course of the Centuries: faith always undergoes a process of inculturation. The question needs to be posited in what pertains to Humility, in this long process, that lasted for centuries, keeping in mind the particular emphases of the environment in which it is incarnated, whether or not Humility has been a victim of some alteration. Here the reflection will consider how Humility was understood in the Greek-Roman world, then in the Patristic Period, and finally in the modern epoch.

²¹ cf. G. ROSSI, "Umiltà", in : *Dizionario Enciclopedico di Teologia Morale*. Ed. by Aa. Vv. Roma: Paoline 1974, p. 1192.

²² cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1393.

²³ cf. M.F. LACAN, o.c., p. 1311.

²⁴ ib.

²⁵ cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1393.

²⁶ cf. G. ROSSI, o.c. p. 1192.

²⁷ cf. M. F. LACAN, o.c., p. 1312.

1.2.1 Humility in the Greek Roman World

Many Fathers of the Church sought to research in the thinkers of antiquity to see whether there was any intuition of the eventual Christian realities? A question might be: was there any pagan ‘humility’?

... The Latin terms *humilis* and *humilitas*, as their corresponding Greek concepts, are etymologically connected with the word *humus*, and imply something like *pertaining to the earth, lowly, something that can be disdained* - in referring to persons, in a figurative sense, these terms would figuratively designate somebody of little importance, the obscurity of one’s origins, the baseness of someone’s character. That which is ‘base’ cannot of itself constitute a virtue, or a positive trait. However, while employing a different vocabulary, classical antiquity knows of categories that make one think in some way of the Christian ideal of Humility²⁸. One example would be the *ideal of proper measure*, which is the principal rule of ancient morality, affirmed that virtue resides in a just measure, in the just perception of one’s proper limits.

If the reflection on Humility concentrates on the Greek-roman world, there is noted that the morality of the Greeks, from Socrates on ward, was based on the under-lying principle: *Know thyself!* - a slogan written in the temple of Delphi. In the interpretation of those times, this motto meant: ‘remember that you are mortal, and not a God!’ However, the interpretation that Socrates would make of this shows a more intense moral characteristic, i.e., he understands this as the realization of one’s own ethic is a nothing, the acceptance of one’s *deficiency*, of one’s own insufficient being²⁹.

However, the original meaning for the classical world is that every person needs to recognize that she is a mortal being, and not divine, and therefore, each one ought to avoid every excess of wealth, power, happiness – because all of these would lead her to the most serious catastrophes³⁰. This honest recognition of oneself as mortal is not understood as humility toward God, because the Greek world did not have the concept of God as Creator, or Transcendent. Even the Stoics, who counseled modesty, patience, self-dominion, did not consider humility toward God, due to their pantheistic view of the world³¹.

... The Christian notion of Humility implies the recognition of the transcendancy of a personal God, and that of our creaturely status, ideas that had not totally invaded pagan philosophy ...³²

Furthermore, for Christians, even before being an attitude to assume, Humility is understood as a manner of being, and of entering into relationships. It characterizes a person in the manner of evaluating and accepting oneself both in the position that one assumes in this world, and how one stands before God³³.

²⁸ cf. G. ROSSI, o.c., p. 1190.

²⁹ cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1392.

³⁰ cf. G. ROSSI, o.c., p.1190.

³¹ cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1392.

³² cf. G. ROSSI, o.c., p. 1191.

³³ cf. D. MONGILLO, o.c., p. 1610.

1.2.2 Humility in the Patristic Period :

... Among the Apostolic Fathers, Humility is reduced to the prevailing designation of a penitential attitude of its practical expressions, [especially in First Clement and Hermes]...³⁴

It is not possible, given their vastness, to recall here all the writings of this period pertaining to Humility³⁵, and so there will be recalled here a few concepts that recur the most often:

a. The Specificity of the Christian Virtue of Humility:

... St. Augustine summarizes the entire Christian life in the antithesis between 'pride and humility', and he brings out its specifically Christian character...³⁶

The Fathers are unanimous in affirming that Humility is not a virtue like the others, but rather stands at the base of every virtue and is a characteristic of every proper relationship between humanity and God. Furthermore, they are unanimous in proclaiming that pride is the root, the source of sin, and Humility is the principle of the return to God.

b. Humility consists in recognizing that which one is:

... For Augustine, Humility is the beginning, the way, and the culmination of the conversion to God, and it is bound to the knowledge of oneself also as a sinner...³⁷

For the Fathers, Humility does not consist in the lowering of oneself below one's proper condition, but in the recognizing who each one is, not only in the limited human nature as the Oracle of Delphi admonished, but above all in the sinful human condition. This disposition of spirit renders the humble person open to the divine action and capable of reaching with Jesus Christ one's own authentic grandeur³⁸.

1.2.3 Humility in the Middle Ages: the Augustinian ethical thought, in addition to being continued by St. Bernard, would be divulgated by the work of St. Gregory for the monastic asceticism.

... In the Benedictine monastic life and in the Cistercian as well, the virtues are indicated within a well organized orientation. They assume a beginnings of a systematization. The monastic life, in so far as it is virtuous, is a struggle against the vices, and it is the art of living well under the influence of charity. It is expressed above all in Humility, which is explained as the form of charity. Humility is the general manner of situating oneself before God, oneself and others. Along-side Humility, there are held in great esteem obedience, silence, the virtue of religion. In general, the monastic theology of the 12th Century, there was noted an evangelical seven-fold number of virtues: poverty, humility, meekness, compunction, piety, purity and mercy...³⁹

St. Benedict of Norcia, in his *Rule*, resents Humility as the foundation, the mother and mistress of every virtue and of love itself.

³⁴ cf. H. H. ESSER, o.c., p. 1910.

³⁵ cf. P. ADNES, o.c., pp. 1152-1164.

³⁶ cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1394.

³⁷ cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1394.

³⁸ cf. G. ROSSI, o.c., p. 1192.

³⁹ cf. T. GOFFI, 'Virtu' morali', in: *Dizionario Teologico Interdisciplinare*. Ed. by Aa. Vv., Torino: 1977, p. 551.

... The monastic tradition was concerned above all with knowing the paths in order to reach Humility. Among these, in addition to prayer and the consideration of one's own sins, manual labor and corporal fatigue have a fundamental place...⁴⁰

St. Bernard, following in the path traced out by the monastic tradition of Cassian and St. Benedict, concerned himself with the Degrees of Pride and Humility. In his treatise on *The Grades of Humility and Pride*, he writes as follows:

... Humility is the virtue, thanks to which a person, through the process of an authentic knowledge of self, considers that she is of lowly condition. The fruit of humility is the truth, which is its first degree; successively, humility disposes one to charity, which is its second degree, where the person in her lowering of herself loves her neighbor in a disinterested manner; finally, humility breaks out into contemplation of the Truth of God, which is its third stage. In the first degree the Son will act; in the second, the Holy Spirit; and in the third, God the Father...⁴¹

The work of St. Thomas Aquinas which for much time served as the basis of many treatises on Humility merits a particular interest. In the plan of the virtues in the *Summa Theologiae*, Humility is placed among those virtues connected to temperance, and precisely, to modesty. For St. Thomas,

...the achievement of goods, whether moral or spiritual, demands two virtues: one in order to restrain and moderate the exaggerated aspirations of man, and this is Humility; and the other, in order to preserve man from being overwhelmed, and to urge him onward in the conquest of great goals, and this is magnanimity...⁴²

...The magnanimity understood in the Christian sense is not opposed to Humility; the perfection of Humility demands in fact that the recognition of one's own nothingness and of one's own sins be accompanied by a parallel recognition and a courageous utilization of the great gifts received from God...⁴³

... Humility implies knowledge of the person, of the natural and supernatural capacities, in order to know what is the place assigned to each person by God in the plan of redemption...⁴⁴

In the thought of St. Thomas, Humility enjoys three points of reference:

- Towards Oneself: attending to the rules of right reason, Humility clarifies for each one the exact esteem of one's own abilities.
- Towards Others: the Humility which regulates the relationship with God regulates also that with one's neighbor. Each person being submitted to God can think that in one's neighbor there is some good that she does not have, or also, that in oneself that maybe some evil that is not found in others, and thus each person can consider herself under herself below her neighbors.
- Towards God: the humble attitude before God has nothing to do with humiliation, because each person may elevate herself in proportion to the more she submits herself to God with humility.

⁴⁰ cf. G. ROSSI, o.c., p. 551.

⁴¹ cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1394.

⁴² II-II, q. 161, a. 1; cf. also E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1394.

⁴³ cf. G. ROSSI, o.c., p. 1193.

⁴⁴ cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p.1394.

... How is one to achieve Humility? St. Thomas indicates two ways the first and the principal way is grace in so far as Humility, as all the other authentic virtues, flows from it as its operative principle; the second way is personal effort. As all genuine virtues, humility is a virtue that is infused by God...⁴⁵

1.2.4 Humility in the Modern and Post-Modern Epochs: the authors of the 16th and 17th centuries have strongly emphasized the importance of Humility in the spiritual life. The *Imitation of Christ* served to pre-announce the modern spirituality: the work opens with an appeal to Humility, and returns to this in all the books, as its preferred theme⁴⁶. St. Ignatius of Loyola, at the end of the Second Week of the Spiritual *Experience* of the Exercises, proposes for the Retreatant three grades of Humility:

- the first is an essential degree in order to be saved: it is that which places the soul under the Law of God, which obliges under pain of mortal sin; [God obliges under pain of sin because he loves humanity, as the mother would have recourse to threats – when the child grows, she will understand that this was all out of love;
- the second degree, more perfect, creates in the soul a complete indifference of will and of affection between wealth and poverty, honors and disdain, a long life or a short one, provided that God be equally glorified. For no reason in this world, would one commit even a single venial sin;
- the third degree demands even more: in order to imitate Jesus Christ, to prefer as He would, poverty over riches, the disdain over honors, and the desire to be held as the most useless and stupid person out of love for Jesus Christ, Who wished in the first place to be considered as such, rather than to be held as a wise and prudent man in the eyes of this world.

For St. Ignatius, to advance in the way of perfection it is required to go out from oneself, to understand the emptiness of creatures, in order to make way for the Creator. It does not mean to undergo mortification, simply for mortification's sake, but to deny oneself in order to stay with Jesus Christ: *If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me!* [cf. Mk 8:34]⁴⁷.

... St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross illustrate the function of acquired humility and especially of infused humility as an element that knows of no substitution in order to reach contemplation. The French School of the 16th Century develops the theme of the nothingness of creatures before God and strongly emphasizes the necessity of humiliations...⁴⁸

In the 19th and 20th centuries, philosophical, psychological and sociological research has been concerned in a certain measure with Humility. According to Nietzsche, humility is the virtue that is proper to slaves in capable of vindicating themselves before their masters⁴⁹.

... M. Scheler, in his work on the re-evaluation of the virtues, has in mind the objections brought forward by f. Nietzsche to the life of virtue in general, and to humility in particular. For f. Nietzsche,

⁴⁵ cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1394.

⁴⁶ cf. *Imitazione di Cristo*, a cura di Giovanni Bacchini [In Latin and Italian] Milano: Edizioni Ares 1996.

⁴⁷ cf. St. IGNATIUS of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, A New Translation by Louis J. Pohl, SJ. Westminster: The Newman Press 1963.

⁴⁸ cf. G. ROSSI, o.c., p. 1193.

⁴⁹ ib.

humility is the expression of the moral resentment of the weak, a dangerous and calumnious ideal in order to hide the sniveling fear of taking up life decisively and with courage. Scheler, in conducting a phenomenological analysis of the virtues, presents humility as the most delicate, the most mysterious and the most beautiful of the Christian virtues – rather, it is the Christian virtue, *par excellence* ⁵⁰.

1.3 The Contemporary Value of Humility

The preceding brief panoramic view on the meanings and varying vicissitudes of Humility, throughout the History of Spirituality, is sufficient to have one understand the difficulty of correctly classifying it. This however, does not impede seek to grasp from within Humility the central message which today still has value.

1.3.1 The Foundation of Humility: Humility is concretized and grows in historical situations, but may not be reduced to any single one of its manifestations: it needs these, verifies them and transcends them all ⁵¹. This study has already pointed out how varied and insidious are the objections brought up against the virtue of humility all through the long course of the centuries. P. deBerulle, J. Eudes, N. Malabranche and others, however, conceived Humility as self-emptying, abnegation ⁵².

Finally, in our own times, J. Pieper, stating that Humility is not an attitude of doing self-harm, or denigrating one's own being and personal activity, tries to present a just perspective in all this discussion. In the course of the centuries, it has been held that Humility would be directed either by the conscience, or by the will, or by an interior sentiment. The directing rule of Humility consists in the knowledge of oneself, and this might be found in that old axiom of Socrates and of the Stoics, *know thyself*. This, then, was taken up by Augustine and the Christian mystics for whom Humility consists in walking according to the truth. St. Thomas Aquinas adds that the knowledge of oneself and of one's own place in the world created and saved by God is the norm of Humility towards oneself, towards the world, towards others and towards God ⁵³.

The common opinion is that the origin of Humility might be sought in the area of 'lowliness', baseness. In the OT and in the NT, the consciousness of human dependence as a creature and as a sinner on God the Creator and Savior is the fundamental motive of the humble attitude. In all the presentations of Humility, there emerges the recognition of human limitations, the fundamental element which in a certain sense is common to Christianity and to pagan thought. According to modern psychology, the recognition of one's proper limits is the indispensable foundation of the psychic balance and of human maturity. Revelation reminds the believer that without the direct experience of poverty and of humiliation, it is difficult to achieve spiritual humility, and powerfully brings out that there is an ulterior motive to lower human pride: the common condition of sin ⁵⁴.

⁵⁰ cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1395.

⁵¹ cf. D. MONGILLO, o.c., 1617.

⁵² cf. P. ADNES, o.c., pp. 1177-1178.

⁵³ cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c. pp. 1395-1396.

⁵⁴ cf. G. ROSSI, o.c., pp. 1193-1194

The realization of one's own inconsistency and weakness is influenced by Protestant theology, which affirms that a two-fold recognition is at the source of Humility: that of our creaturely state, and that of the fault inherent in sins. These elements define the negative aspect of this virtue. For a positive and integral conception, it is necessary to keep in mind a further essential aspect: the recognition of the dignity of human nature and of grace.

Humanity, created by God and saved by Christ, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, has to recognize the gratuity of all the gifts received: the Gifts of intelligence and of freedom, of grace and of all the virtues connected to this. The similarity with God and with Jesus Christ from the visage of the authentic Christian virtue of humility⁵⁵.

... The content of humility in Christianity is part of Salvation History. On the one hand, it is connected with the complex situation in the strength of which man, at the very origins of his history, rebelled against the Plan of God – and from the other hand, in the light of the deliverance of the human situation that took place in Jesus Christ...⁵⁶

Jesus Christ reveals the greatest novelty of Christian Humility. The *Kenosis* of the Word has shown believers that authentic greatness consists in a voluntary abasement, animated by charity and directed toward the service of one's neighbors⁵⁷. Humility is the 'way', the pedagogy, chosen by God, and each believer ought to conform herself along her pathway. Humility is the radical condition in which there is matured the believer's positive response to God, which requires one to renounce evil, egoism, in order to adhere to Jesus Christ along the path of the Incarnation, it is an adherence to that way that Jesus Christ has constructed in the obedience of His flesh. Humility is that personal relationship – has been chosen by God in Jesus Christ and this still holds its weight today for the Christian.

The humble of heart live and grow into Jesus Christ, and allow themselves to be led by His Spirit in their evaluation of situations and other persons, in truth and rectitude. The Spirit of God in Jesus Christ is the unique, supreme font, to which the believer, of every historical epoch, is inspired and from each one is vivified. But, from always, one arrives at the recognition of God in Jesus Christ only through the way of conversion and Humility is rooted in this and takes life. Jesus Christ, Who is the font of Humility, constitutes also its paradox and scandal. In and from Jesus Christ, the believer brought to light in His meek and humble heart, and thereby 'learns' to be meek and humble of heart.

It is necessary to be enrolled in the School of Jesus Christ, Who reveals to each person the path of humanity. However, His life and His judgments are not those that human beings would like. His life is the path of poverty, of meekness, and this contrasts with power, strength and a guaranteed result. It is necessary to find inspiration from the Crucified, to a Conqueror in His defeat. Jesus Christ presents Himself as the One Who has overcome death, but after this He subjected Himself to it. The Cross is revealed as the power in the mystery of total abnegation without reserve⁵⁸.

⁵⁵ cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.p., p. 1396.

⁵⁶ cf. D. MONGILLO, o.c., p. 1616.

⁵⁷ cf. G. ROSSI, o.c., p. 1194.

⁵⁸ cf. D. MONGILLO, o.c., pp. 1617-1618.

His ‘own’ are called to suffer with Jesus Christ, in a suffering that is presented as the source of the most sublime happiness. It is not any form of *masochism* that Jesus asks of, but rather perfect happiness: the most sublime happiness emerges where men and women are capable of supporting, at peace with pain, without rebelling against God, without unleashing violence on others. The Christological itinerary becomes for each believer an Itinerary of Happiness”⁵⁹.

Humility, therefore, is not some abstract attitude, or being bereft of any precise traits. It means a life in Jesus Christ – in Him, a man matures manners of conduct which characterize the children of God still today. Humility is a person of all times, is one who adheres to Jesus Christ, and follows Him wherever He goes.

1.3.2 Humility, its Acts and Its Properties

...Christian Humility is based on the evidence of the total dependence on God in all the dimensions of life presented in the perspective of Salvation History, which finds its central point in Jesus Christ and its realization in the Church, by means of the Holy Spirit...⁶⁰

Humility consists in having that esteem of oneself, that respect, which corresponds to the truth of one’s own place in the bosom of the world, created and saved by God. This does not exclude the joy and satisfaction of those goods which are possessed, provided that one does not attribute these to herself, but to God, the Giver of every good. Four principal acts of Humility might be enumerated:

- [1] to thank both the Lord, and others, for the good received, and not to nourish any rancor for human ingratitude;
- [2] to know how to receive gratefully the good of others, recognizing one’s own need of good, truth, and other values;
- [3] to know how to contribute good and to know how to give of oneself to others;
- [4] to ask pardon of the Lord and of one’s neighbor for wrongs committed, and to extend pardon in our turn⁶¹.

Furthermore, it is necessary to consider that Humility is expressed in the manner of existing, where one is situated, and of before reality. There are two aspects that need to be brought out that will recur many times in the writings of Mother Leopoldina, that will be discussed in the chapter that follows:

a. Humility as a Spirit of Service: the humble person feels the responsibility toward the community and the common good. The humble individual always gives of herself in those gifts that she may spread about and this is Jesus’ own attitude: *...the Son of Man has not come to be served, but to serve...* [cf. Mt 20:28]. A spirit of such service is nothing other than a manifestation of love – the gift of which Vatican II speaks: ‘Man on earth is the only creature whom God wants for Himself, and thus, can only find himself fully through a self-less gift of himself.’ [cf. GS 24].

⁵⁹ cf. X. PIKAZA, *Questo e’ l’uomo*. ROMA: Borla 1999, pp. 359-360.

⁶⁰ cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c. p. 1399.

⁶¹ ib., p. 1396.

Humility as a spirit of service turns to the profit of the entire community and not only of personal self-realization, and for this it is indispensable that the members of the Christian community have an interior attitude of service. Humility, as the spirit of commitment and of service, inspires a person to fight against the evils of the human condition of whatever type they may be: economic, political, cultural, national and international, and never permits one to remain passive and active in their presence.

However, 'the humble person cannot become either the slave of the world, surrendering her own dignity, and abdicating her own greatness⁶², or an arrogant and unfeeling tyrant before the demands of natural equilibrium of the world. Each one needs to make the effort to be a humble administrator in the Name of God Who is the sole Lord of the entire created universe [cf. Gn 1:28'⁶³.

b. Humility is intimately co-related to Love:

...Humility finds its energy in love; it is a style of manifesting love. It is received and matures in the contest of trust; it withdraws a person from those preoccupations of guaranteeing oneself, and draws each one toward the one who loves her, is the basis of that peace which flows from communion with the beloved, and leads to bringing oneself into harmony with the other, and moves one to take upon herself the concerns and the suffering of the other, to assume that initiative to make life different, to moderate the care and the worry concerning oneself, establishing thus for all new conditions of existence...⁶⁴

Humility matures in that balance and fragile and delicate harmony between love for oneself and that for others, lived and seen in the perspective of the love of God. It is bound to the reality of one's person, as it tends to correct the manner of representing one's relationships, to consider them for what they really are, and not as one would like them to be.

...a man is one who truly is what he is, and not what he may think he is, and the self of each person lives and becomes in a kind of osmosis with others. And thus the life of humility vacillates between what is already, and what has not yet come to be, in an endless process. The goal is to become what each is called to be...⁶⁵

Humility lives in that balance which springs from that precise area of being loved, and wanting to be loved and of loving⁶⁶.



⁶² cf. POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptor Hominis*, # 24.

⁶³ cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1398.

⁶⁴ cf. D. MONGILLO, o.c., p. 1619.

⁶⁵ cf. D. MONGILLO, o.c., pp. 1617-1618.

⁶⁶ cf. D. MONGILLO, o.c., p. 1620.

CHAPTER TWO HUMILITY IN THE WRITINGS OF MOTHER NAUDET

After having synthetically observed Humility in the unfolding of Salvation History, and in the History of the Church, and having noted its Christological root, it is important here to present this dimension with the characteristics of a concrete experience: that of Mother Leopoldina Naudet, who ‘tried to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ in the best possible way’⁶⁷, and to follow Him along the path of Humility.

It is opportune to begin with the analysis of the writings of Mother Naudet, in order to try to gather from them traces of her humility. These writings of a special individual, above all when they are autobiographical, reveal in their immediacy, the spirit, the intentions and certain depths which otherwise would be imperceptible.

...Leopoldina’s writings that remain to us are sufficiently numerous and also quite varied. None of these were written with a view to being one day printed, and some of these could be classified as ‘occasional’ compositions. They contain spiritual arguments and the treat of matters and concerns regarding the foundation of the Institute of the Holy Family. Almost all of the originals are found in the Archives of the Sisters of the Holy family in Verona... They are all manuscripts, with the exception of some that have been edited in recent times...⁶⁸

Among the multiple writings, the following will be taken into consideration: her *Letters*, *Conferences*, *Constitutions* and *Spiritual Writings* - because these seem to be those which the more greatly shed light on the Humility lived by Mother Leopoldina. For each of these writings. Much information will be drawn from the *Positio*.

†††

2.1 HER LETTERS

2.1.1 Introduction

...We possess 154 Letters of the Servant of God. For some of these, there still exists the original – for others we have a resume’, and for others, there exist copies. The first Letter that we have goes back to 1799, and the last was written in the year 1834. These are addressed to various persons whom Leopoldina had known in the different places of her pilgrimage: Vienna, Prague, Padua, Murano and Verona...⁶⁹

The Sisters of the Holy Family have chosen 104 of these Letters and have gathered them into a manuscript for the use their own Institute, under the title: *Spiritual Letters of the Servant of God, Leopoldina Naudet*. This correspondence, in its content, respects the life of Leopoldina as it unfolded.

⁶⁷ cf. her *Original Constitutions*, p. 44, n. 1.

⁶⁸ *Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum P.N. 1227. Veronen., Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servae Dei Leopoldiane Naudet [1773-1834], fundatricis Congregationis Sororum a Sacra Familia, Veronae. Positio super virtutibus.* Vol. II, Doc. XIV: *Writings of the Servant of God*: Intro.. 1, Romae, 1994, p. 1250.

⁶⁹ *Positio*, Vol. II, DOC XIV: *The Writings of the Servant of God*: Intr. 1, o.c., p. 1250.

2.1.2 TEXTS ON HUMILITY

Of her various letters, these will be sub-divided into groups, based on those to whom they were sent, and there will be quoted only certain passages, which shed some light on that Humility desired, lived and suggested by Mother Leopoldina.

2.1.2.1 HER CORRESPONDENCE WITH FR. NICHOLAS PACCANARI

In an early period of her life [1799-1808], her letters are addressed for the most part to Fr. Nicholas Paccanari ⁷⁰: and they concern matters of spiritual direction and take up some problems and happenings in the life of the Community.

LETTER 4: from Prague, July 8, 1799, where she indicates the extent of her alienation from self-love:

*...There continues within me that great persuasion of my own nothingness...*⁷¹

LETTER 14: after a correction she had received from Fr. Paccanari, this was written from Loreto, June 127, 1800, she describes her 'wretchedness':

*[L.2] ... I do feel that which I ought to be doing, or to put it more truthfully, I do feel it, but without knowing just precisely in what this consists. I note that I do place certain impediments with my wretchedness in the way of this knowledge, and at the same time, also in the way of the execution of that which I do know. And I cannot see, not even in any detail, just what these miseries are. This failing to see them, convinces me all the more of my weakness and blindness, and keeps me in great humiliation. In this manner, I find myself only rarely with my companions without having the thought that they are much more advanced than I am before the Lord. They are corresponding at least to that which the Lord wills from them. And a flood of thoughts and comparisons, all in favor of these companions keeps me occupied, in the manner that I ought to conduct myself before all of them, and to recommend myself to their charity. Every time that they obey me it is for me an objection of humiliation for myself, and admiration for them. These sentiments, the more frequent they are regarding my companions, I experience them also in the presence of every other person. And I am now at the point of humbling myself interiorally towards any other person whom I may meet...*⁷²

She recognizes having been lacking with regard to her Spiritual Director:

*[L. 3]... I failed because indeed I ought not to be lacking in trust in the Lord, rather, I should put my trust in Him, in that He, having willed that that I should depend on you, nothing ought to interfere with this. The Lord has led me to understand that I should wait in humility, and to receive those helps that you will know how to share with me; and I am not to have that presumption of demanding them, that which has come from my pride. But all I can do, under the title of charity, is to ask you to help me in the desire that I do have of pleasing the Lord...*⁷³

LETTER 16: this is a spiritual manifestation regarding various themes: natural defects, self-love, her sensitivity, love for silence, her call to holiness. This was written from Rome, between October and November of 1801:

⁷⁰ cf. the **Appendix n. 3** of this present study.

⁷¹ cf. *Spiritual Letters of the Servant of God, Leopoldina Naudet*, L.1, p. 4

⁷² *Letters*, o.c., pp. 9-10.

⁷³ *Letters*, pp. 9-10.

[L. 4]:...*I have a nature that bears with it great obstacles to virtue. But I do not pay much attention to these, but rather to the contrary virtues. The reason is that for me to think of my virtues has not helped me, because there are so many of them, and I get discouraged. Sometimes it seems to me that my passions are within me like so many mad dogs, that are chained; and I often beg the Lord to keep these chains very strong, so that they do not slip away. That which I feel is that they would like to do this often, and this gives me upsetment which I feel principally in my nature. These miseries of mine seem like mud. I do not pay much heed to them, because it seems to me that as there are so many of them within me, they would muddy me up all the more. And it helps me very much to go beyond myself, and to seek outside of myself the help of God...*⁷⁴

[L. 5]:...*My self-love still torments me a great deal... Or, to put it better, I take a certain pleasure in the clarity with which I seem to look on matters, and that just view that I think I have in judging these. However, this self-love holds me down low, because I am afraid that in the punishment of that pleasure that I experience on occasion, the Lord might take this gift away that I know comes from Him. And since I do esteem Him very much, I fear also very much to lose Him, because I believe that the Lord, in His Mercy, and in order to humble my pride has permitted that I would have this experience, from the failings that I have committed, of that evil that exists within me. And it is He alone Who is the One Who keeps me from committing even greater thoughts, since I have every disposition within my nature to do this...*⁷⁵

[L. 6]:...*I have always desired humiliation and mortification, even though I receive them badly, because I had hoped to conquer that repugnance. But now I confess that, even when there comes over the desire for them, I remain quiet, as I know that they do not do me any good...[my health was suffering much from them]...All this I have to say to my confusion, nor am I able to explain to myself where this comes from...*⁷⁶

[L. 7]:...*I was always one who spoke little... It does happen that there comes over me the desire to speak, when the conversation centers on matters I know something about. And since I do have a good memory, it almost naturally comes over me that I would say that which I have learned, or read. I would like to know whether it might be better to keep silent, even in those occasions, for my greater humility and mortification...*⁷⁷

[L. 8]:...*I find myself in an internal disposition of peace and confidence, and the persuasion that the Lord wants me to be a saint, and this is because He gives me so many stimuli, inspirations and advice, as I never lose track even for an instant of the thought and the sentiment of the presence of God, etc. At the same time, in this deepest part of my spirit, there is also the sight of my miseries. As these pass, it seems to me that the Lord moves me through the foundation of holiness, while the humiliation that comes over me occasionally, the knowledge of myself that these have given me - and that diffidence that I feel should surely serve me. But, I live in great fear of those faults that I might commit in the future...*⁷⁸

LETTER 22: This contains extracts of letters on personal matters, and is dated from Venice, May 10, 1806. In this she does state: *God alone is the author of the endeavor, and we can do nothing without Him.*

[L. 9] ...*In these days we have seen in practice that our plans were changed several times in a single week. And why? In order to make us die to ourselves, and at the same time, to have us touch with our own hand that He alone is the Author of the enterprise and there is known the necessity*

⁷⁴ *Letters*, p. 11.

⁷⁵ *Letters*, pp. 15-16.

⁷⁶ *Letters*, p. 16.

⁷⁷ *Letters*, p. 17.

⁷⁸ *Letters* p. 17-18.

*that we have to make recourse in all to Him and without Him, to do nothing but to be ready and prepared in every moment to work, at the first hint that we understand just what is His will...*⁷⁹

LETTER 23: This is an extract of a letter written from Venice, on November 9, 1806. Leopoldina offers this principle: *...we have to allow ourselves to be instructed by the Humility of the divine Master...*

[L. 10]: *...Let us indeed be instructed by the Divine Teacher, and with genuine humility of heart, let us submit ourselves to the blows that strike us, because in this way, we will learn to submit our judgment, and to die to ourselves. We can be afraid of nothing, because the great Sovereign Whom we have the happiness of serving, is all powerful, and His promises cannot fail...*⁸⁰

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2.1.2.2 HER CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE BELOVED OF JESUS⁸¹

LETTER 24: she wrote this to her beloved Sisters in Christ, at Mantua. The themes treated are: the spirit of the Institute of the *Beloved of Jesus*, charity, obedience, and the observance of the Rules. It is dated January 21, 1808, and is written from Verona. There are many exhortations pertaining to Humility:

[L. 11]: *...Be humble, obedient, detached from all, and particularly from yourselves, and then you will enjoy the fruit of all these virtues, and then you will indeed be able to say that you are the Beloved...*⁸²

[L. 12]: *...The spirit of this Union ought to be poor in itself, despoiled not only of one's proper will, but also from desires and from inclinations, that might tend to one aspect, rather than to another, regarding our purpose. But, each one full of confidence in God our Lord, is to say: 'Behold Your handmaid: let it be done to me according to Your Will' . Leave to God Alone the care of fulfilling within you His most lovable will, and dying to yourselves, allow yourselves to be guided as pleases the Divine Wisdom the more...*⁸³

[L. 13]: *...If you will have humility and consider that each one of you is the last, then it will come to be that charity is the better observed; because, then you will not contend with each other, you will not blame each other, you will not have that concern that your sentiment might prevail over that of your companions. Briefly, by means of this you will work so that your union might be a genuine paradise, where each one finds herself content, and you do not have to suffer from any superiority that one among you might want to exercise over the others, but there will come genuine union and charity. Have an authentic esteem for each other. And this will be easy for you when, by means of your knowledge of yourselves, you will notice your own misery, and you will observe the virtues in others...*⁸⁴

⁷⁹ *Letters*, pp. 28-29.

⁸⁰ *Letters*, p. 29.

⁸¹ **NB:** For the *BELOVED OF JESUS*, cf. **Appendix # 4** of the present study.

⁸² *Letters*, p. 30.

⁸³ **ib.**

⁸⁴ *Letters*, p. 31.

LETTER 25: this is another letter addressed to the Community of the *Beloved* in Mantua, dated March 12, 1808, also written from Verona. The themes present in this letter are: humility and humble discourses, the future of the Institute and the monthly retreat:

[L. 14]: *When you find yourselves in the situation of hearing and receiving some demonstration of esteem, humble yourselves, beloved Sisters, humble yourselves, and try to recall to mind some of those holy women who founded religious institutes. And then you will find for yourselves in these praises a motive to humble yourselves. This humility, which seems to be so difficult to acquire, is the fruit of the knowledge of oneself. Ask for this from God, and with this light, you will find it more easily. And you will see that the actions and the works that seem to be the best, are always quite stained, and share in our misery. In this you see that the very lights from God obscure these in carrying out that we are about. In a few words, whatever is within us is nothing more than poverty and failing in every good. It is very urgent to me that you might come to understand well these matters. And believe me: self-love is the fruit of a great lightness, which keeps one from understanding her own nothingness, stopping at mere appearances, to which one gives a certain weight which they do not have, and a price and worth that is only extrinsic. On this matter of humility, I will give you a reflection that I have made myself. And this is that in addition to the general necessity that there is in this virtue, the Lord wills it particularly from our Institute, to which He sends it many times. And it is clear that He does not want that this Institute have other foundations than that which others have had. So, let us follow the paths of Providence concerning ourselves, let us humble ourselves, and not with simulating pride in humiliation. How admirable is the Lord, and how well He know how to form and to perfect those virtues that He calls upon to form a given edifice! Let us think often, therefore, that in order to form this, the foundations are needed, and that we are presently involved in these. Very shortly these will come to an end, and all the more quickly will the rest be accomplished. I think often of the beauty of the building that the Lord wants us to make...*⁸⁵

[L. 15]:...[A servant of God said]: *'In all the religious Institutes, there may be seen at their beginning that there reigns the spirit of death to this world and to nature, and that there dominates there the spirit of grace. Human nature is scarcely seen: Jesus Christ appears there in an admirable manner.'* This, my beloved Sisters, is what we need to do on our part. We need to aim at the denial of ourselves, and to live in conformity with the spirit of our vocation, penetrating well into the greatness of this, and on how much this requires of us.. And hence, as I told you when I was there [and which I now repeat, being a comparison that seems to me to be so well- suited] if a child of tender age had a wrinkled face and the appearance of an old man, you and everyone would say that this person could no longer live, nor grow. The same would be said of a new Religious Institute, that in its infancy, if it already had the defects of those of extended time in existence that had weakened them and aged them. If we wish, therefore, that there be growth in life, let us seek mortification, the denial of ourselves, and the perfect observance, with all those other virtues which will serve to nourish this principle and to increase it. Let your endeavors be animated by an interior spirit that would make you do all this...⁸⁶

[L. 16]: ... I end with a quote from St. Teresa. She says: *'The state of Religion is a heaven [if there can be one on earth], for anyone whose sole interest is to give pleasure to God, and does not pay any attention to what would be of contentment to herself. When one would come to want anything else, then she will lose everything, because she simply cannot have it.'* Seek only what pleases God, and then you will see how much happiness can be enjoyed already in this world. To be ever more forgetful of ourselves and to practice mortification, concern yourselves very much in this time of Lent with the Lord's Passion. I tell you this, because I intend not only that this be your meditation, but even more your imitation in every encounter, seeking to accompany the suffering Jesus in your every chore and exercise of your day. He will infuse into you His Divine Spirit, so that you might benefit from every such holy exercise that fruit that the saints would find in it, and

⁸⁵ Letters, pp. 32-33.

⁸⁶ Letters, pp. 33-34.

*so many servants of God who practiced it. Pray to the Lord also for me, poor and wretched as I am, so that in harmony with that comparison which the great St. Ignatius made, that I be not like those high peaks which receive immediately from heaven the dew, but they do not send it down into the valleys: and while they put on weight and get richer, the mountains themselves remain arid and dry...*⁸⁷



2.1.2.3 HER CORRESPONDENCE WITH FATHER ROZAVEN⁸⁸ - another group of her Letters is found in her correspondence with Fr. Lodovico ROZAVAN. These are found within her correspondence from the year 1815 – and these letters become quite numerous in the years 1824-1830. It was in this period that Mother Leopoldina was providing a definitive form to her Constitutions.

Fr. Rozaven, was a former *Father of the Faith*, and in a later period he was Assistant General of the Company of Jesus, and was then among the most capable persons to serve as a counselor regarding the writing and approval of Constitutions, and also in that those of Leopoldina were inspired by those of St. Ignatius. There are also a few letters sent by Fr. Rozaven to Mother Leopoldina, but only very few of those written by the Servant of God, addressed to him. Here the interest will center only on those letters written by the Constitutions; the spirit of her Institute, and the fusion, or not, with the Institute of Sophia Barat; the possibility of having a foundation of the Company of Jesus in Verona.

LETTER 28: this was written to Fr. Rozaven, to thank him for the interest he had manifested in her regard, and defining herself a ‘wretched’, she recommends herself to his prayers. She wrote from Verona, the Convent of St. Joseph – Monday of Holy Week. March 7, 1815:

[L. 17]: ...*Permit me to express personally my gratitude for the interest, as I have come to know through my good Sister, that you retain for me, and for the goodness with which you remember my wretched person before God...*⁸⁹

[L. 18]: ...*My Sister will have informed you of our projects, and will have made known the mercies which the good God has directed to us, and especially toward me, who am the most miserable of all. He has saved us in the storm, and with a marvelous chain of graces He had conducted us little by little even to the point of giving to me the most vivid confidence that will lead us to the desired goal, which is to serve Him in everything, according to our vocation...*⁹⁰

[L. 19]: ...*In this time of waiting, reverend Father, help us with your prayers. And have those who are zealous for the Glory of Our Divine Master do the same, begging Him to render me that which I ought to be, in order to cooperate in His designs for me. I have always before my eyes the holiness that would be necessary to have, but I continue to be quite miserable: and this is unconceivable, after so many mercies...*⁹¹

⁸⁷ *Letters*, pp. 34-35.

⁸⁸ **NB:** for Fr. Lodovico ROZAVEN, cf. *APPENDIX*, n. 5.

⁸⁹ *Letters*, p. 38.

⁹⁰ *ib.*

⁹¹ *ib.*

LETTER 59: she wrote this one from Verona to Fr. Rozaven, on June 15, 1827, in order to present to him some considerations, comparing the Institute of the *Madames of the Sacred Heart*, founded by Sophia Madalene Barat⁹² and her own.

[L. 20]: ...*A little after the election of the Holy Father*⁹³, i.e., in January 1824, with regard to a certain priest sent to Rome by the *Madames of the Sacred Heart*, you made known to me your impressions and your opinion regarding us: i.e., since our rules are like those of the *Madames*, whenever I would have presented some questions, you would have responded that I come to some understanding with those rules. Whatever helps the interior life pleases me; as a result, I do not like noise. And in one of your letters, Reverend Father, you said to me, and I have understood in so far as I know these *Madames*, as they do make a considerable amount. You also spoke to me in one of your letters of May 1821 in a manner rather elevated in the spirit that God has given to me. It is very difficult, you said, that humility can resist for a long time in the midst of much external noise, etc. ...⁹⁴

LETTER 61: this is a letter addressed to Fr. Rozaven, that she wrote from St. Teresa's Convent, sometime in January/February of 1828. The themes treated here are: the comparison with the *Madames of the Sacred Heart*, her relationship with God and His work:

[L. 21]...*'The Lord, Who is rich in Mercy' [Ep 2:4], pours this out in abundance upon me, even though I am so wretched. He does not cease to fill my soul with graces, and to fill it with interior consolations. I experience above all a sense of joy for all that God is in Himself, for His infinite perfections, etc. I love that humiliation that I feel in His presence, I enjoy not being anything, because he is all. And in the uninterrupted vision of the truth, in which it seems to me that God immerses me ever more, experience the peace that derives from it...*⁹⁵

[L. 22]: ...*If there is something of good that is found in us, this is Jesus, Mary and Joseph who have accomplished it all. As for whatever I say, the world continues to offer me something, and I suffer sincerely from this, because all that I do on my own is to commit errors and to slow down the carrying out of God's work. In this manner, it seems to me that I see the truth and that my name be eclipsed and God alone glorified...*⁹⁶

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2.1.2.4 HER CORRESPONDENCE WITH FATHER BERTONI⁹⁷: from 1812, there begin her letters addressed to Fr. Bertoni. Mother Leopoldina addressed many documents to him but he, in the interests of maintaining confidence, destroyed these once he had responded to his penitent. There remain to us only some bits of the spiritual letters of Mother Naudet sent to Fr. Bertoni.

LETTER 62: this is a letter in which she manifests the spirit of her Institute, 'the Devotion to the Holy Family, its Christological centrality, and seeks advice:

⁹² **NB:** for SOPHIA MADALENE BARAT, cf. *APPENDIX* n. 6.

⁹³ Pope Leo XIIth.

⁹⁴ *Letters*, p. 63.

⁹⁵ *Letters*, p. 67.

⁹⁶ **Ib.**

⁹⁷ **NB:** St. Gaspar BERTONI, cf. *APPENDIX* n. 7.

[L. 23]: *...I am really a bother, but I cannot be at peace without giving you disturbance. In the desire of going on in the exposition of the spirit of the Institute, I find myself in a matter that I do not know if I will be able to explain it. But, you who understand my worthlessness, will put up with me and perhaps will understand. But, it is fitting that I expose my spirit, and I entrust totally to your confidence. I have always found within me a sole devotion, which is that for Jesus. And there my heart is so concentrated that the devotion that I have for Mary Most Holy and for St. John are but relative with that compared to what I nurture for Jesus our Lord. And I do not think of these holy personalities unless in so far as their relationships with the Most Holy Humanity of Jesus; and they are therefore most dear to me, because I see them in praying with him. And this is not so for me regarding the other saints. In indicating, therefore, the Devotion to the Holy Family, I would like to individuate the most loving Heart of Jesus and that of Mary – and St. Joseph, then, as the one who the most familiarly converses with Jesus and Mary, he attained so to speak in those most holy hearts that charity toward God and towards his neighbor, etc. Only I do not want to say what is incorrect, and for this I address myself to your goodness and learning...*⁹⁸

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2.1.2.5 HER CORRESPONDENCE WITH HER SISTER LUISA

Her sister, Luisa, shared with Leopoldina the educational formation of their youth, as well as those spiritual and religious experiences of the *Beloved of Jesus*, but, she never entered the Sisters of the Holy Family. She lived in Rome from 1825 on. Hers was a very engaging spirit, and she made the acquaintance and acquired the esteem of a number of Prelates. She exercised the role of intermediary for Leopoldina, with the Roman Congregations, in order to obtain indulgences, to reach the much desired Approbation of the Institute of the Holy Family and to bring clarifications in the tormented journey of the examination of the proposed Constitutions.

After the death of the Servant of God, the Sisters of the Holy Family insisted on having from Luisa the letters she had received from her deceased sister, but Luisa rather than sending the entire folder of the correspondence, re-copied faithfully those paragraphs which would have been of interest to the Institute, leaving out personal news and sent these to Verona, while she kept for herself, as a remembrance, the hand-written letters. Of this entire correspondence, the Sisters of the Holy Family have only one hand-written letter of Leopoldina to her sister, Luisa. The theme treated were relative to the content of the Constitutions which were under examination in Rome, and they show that Mother Leopoldina made known the motives for her choices so that her sister might be able to explain in an opportune manner to the Roman Cardinals her genuine intentions.

LETTER 64: this was written in 1829, from St. Teresa's Convent in Verona. She confides to her sister that she 'desires only to be holy.'

[L.24]: *...They speak very well of this Bishop⁹⁹. I was not lacking in respect in having the Marquis di Canossa present to him my best wishes. The Bishop said to him: 'I have heard others speaking much in behalf of this very fine lady...' I repeat this only because I can give pleasure to you. But, I tell the truth, as for me, I would like no other epithet than that of a saint. And this no one has ever been able to give this to me, nor do they give me this now. Rather, I have put down impediments to the mercies of God in this work with my own inactivity and miseries, and still this*

⁹⁸ *Letters*, p. 68.

⁹⁹ Bishop Joseph Grassler.

*seems to be a bit bold! I think often that the Lord does this in order to sustain me regarding my reputation, in so far as this serves to His glory. I am content with this, that I already feel that which I am, and I see that which I do, that serves only to bring me greater confusion...*¹⁰⁰

LETTER 74: this, too, was written from St. Teresa's Convent, in Verona, and, treats of her 'desire to go into Paradise.'

[L. 25]: ... *This is a reflection that I make often: I want to go to heaven, like so many others who do so much to reach this goal, while I seem to be doing nothing. What to do? Great confusion!*¹⁰¹

LETTER 92: this is a scrap written following the reception of the Brief of Approbation, in 1834, from St. Teresa's Verona. In it, Mother Leopoldina emphasizes in humility that the genuine founders of the Sisters of the Holy Family are Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and not her.

[L. 27]: ...*The words that are on the Cross that we wear signify: Let us run onward in proposing to ourselves that track, looking toward our Holy Founders*¹⁰². *I have wished that there should remain forever this idea in the Institute, that the Holy Family is the one that founded this Community*¹⁰³.

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2.1.2.6 HER CORRESPONDENCE WITH VARIOUS PERSONALITIES:

There have been conserved some fragments, or copies of letters that Leopoldina wrote to different people, such as: ecclesiastical dignitaries, procurators, advocates, functionaries and influential individuals. These treat of counsels on how to conduct oneself through bureaucracy, along with explanations of certain problems – and all with the avowed purpose of rendering possible the official approval of the Institute on the part of the religious and civil authorities. In all these, there may be seen manifested a humble attitude on the part of Leopoldina.

LETTER 29: this is one addressed to His Holiness, Pope Pius VII, in Rome. In it, Mother Naudet, while recognizing herself as a 'weak and lowly instrument', asks humbly for his blessing for her Institute. It was written on April 1, 1815, from St. Joseph's Convent, Verona.

[L. 28]: ...*Since I have remained without all human support at the death of the Archduchess, I have taken on a greater confidence in God, Who in His works is pleased to choose the most weak and lowly instruments, in order to bring His glory to the fore. And I also recognize that what you keep me from presumption in this confidence of mine, would be the apostolic Benediction of His Vicar on earth, and I so have hastened to beg this, humbling myself at the feet of Your Holiness for our small union of Sisters. And there was a two-fold consolation in having obtained this from Your Holiness, in that time in which he found himself in glorious captivity in Savoy...*¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ *Letters*, p. 71

¹⁰¹ *ib.*

¹⁰² Cf. Heb 12:1, ff.

¹⁰³ *Letters*, p. 95.

¹⁰⁴ *Letters*, p. 39.

[L. 29] ...Now, once more, I place before you this small union of ours, begging Your Holiness to bless it anew, so that by this means all might be carried through on our part, and with ever great assurance, according to the will of the Lord and for His pure glory...¹⁰⁵

LETTER 79: this was written on June 15, 1833, from St. Teresa's Convent, in Verona, and is addressed to His Excellency, Bishop Grassler, the Bishop of Verona. In this, she asks for the diocesan approbation of the Institute and of its Constitutions:

[L. 30]...all of these matters make me supplicate most humbly, and infuse in me the hope of obtaining from Your most illustrious and Reverend Lordship, following the careful examination of the Constitutions which I have the honor of submitting to you, and the approbation of the Institute itself which, recommended by the most valid sponsorship of your most illustrious and Reverend Lordship, I would supplicate you to place these at the feet of the reigning Supreme Pontiff, if you might deign in a provisory manner to approve them.

*The most singular favor was granted to me very recently by His Imperial, Apostolic Majesty, Francis I, who sanctioned this Institute with his much sought after Decree on May 5th, recently passed. Hence, now that it stands under the auspices of such a religious and powerful Monarch, these events do not permit me to delay any further to beg of Your most illustrious and Reverend Lordship, that grace which humbly I humbly ask, so that with divine assistance, for the greater glory of God and the greater advantage of our neighbor, there might seen the fruits of all this which are being proposed...*¹⁰⁶

LETTER 80: this was written to His Eminence, Cardinal Odescalchi¹⁰⁷, the Prefect of the Congregation of Regulars, in Rome. Mother Naudet wrote to thank him for the benefits already received, and to recommend herself to his authority and wisdom. The Letter was dated Sunday, August 4, 1833, from St. Teresa's in Verona. This Letter was also accompanied by some notes, in which Leopoldina clarified with careful precision a few points in the Constitutions, with a view to obtaining their approbation:

[L. 31]: ...In placing before Your Eminence this supplication for the present favor, being mindful of those already received from your goodness and kindness, I beg you to receive my most humble and due thanksgiving...¹⁰⁸

[L. 32]: ...In the instance that I humbly present to the Holy See the new Institute and the Constitutions of the Sisters of the Holy Family, and which I hope in the most powerful patronage of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, to obtain from the Holy Father the canonical approbation, I see all too well how for the realization of this my desire, there will be need to remove not a few difficulties, since our rules may be found in many different parts of those Institutes and religious communities approved already thus far. ... Our purpose is two-fold. We propose not only the sanctification of ourselves: but also that of others, in so essential a manner, that almost in everything we make our own sanctification depend on our procuring that of others...¹⁰⁹

[L. 33]: ... As I now recall the dispositions of the sacred canons and the pontifical decrees, from which it is prescribed that no religious order of women should be introduced new into the Church of the Lord, unless it should profess some one of those Rules which may already have been approved by the Holy Apostolic See. So I have always feared that this new Institute of the Sisters of

¹⁰⁵ ib.

¹⁰⁶ *Letters*, p. 80.

¹⁰⁷ **NB:** for this **Charles ODESCALCHI**, cf. *APPENDIX*, n. 8

¹⁰⁸ *Letters*, p. 81.

¹⁰⁹ *Letters*, p. 81.

the Holy Family which the Lord has deigned to raise up in these times, beseeching the canonical approbation, would have to be subject to this same law, common to all the others.

I say I had feared, not because I do not nurture a most sublime esteem for all these other institutions of nuns, who profess one, or other of these above-mentioned rules; rather, I and our Sisters, we venerate them as something truly holy. But, I would have been happy if it had pleased the Lord to give to this very small Institute of ours a different end, shows that He also would want a diversity of rules to be observed...¹¹⁰.

LETTER 82: this one was written September 3, 1833, and was also addressed to Cardinal Odesclachi. This letter treats of further clarifications concerning the notes found in her Letter of August 4, 1833, and recognizes that which the Lord had accomplished in her and in her Institute, already for so many years. Mother Naudet wrote this Letter from St. Teresa's Convent, in Verona:

[L. 34]: ...I never ceased wanting to be a religious, and to desire that the Institute of the Sisters of the Holy Family, should also be religious. In the course of so many years I worked for this end, which I knew that I could never achieve, if I did not find the support of some powerful patronage.

And the Lord therefore, inspired me to take as our Founders Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and with their assistance there were overcome all the greater difficulties, without my hardly even having noticed that I was meeting them: I would like to say without any merit in that which I was doing, because they accomplished everything, and I was not helped by anyone else...¹¹¹.

[L. 35]...So, I repeat that in exposing my reasons, I did not intend not being a religious, but I was hoping to be able to be one in all of its extension, without any Rule which for formality is needed, with all that submission that this demanded, by means of the most valid patronage of Your Most Reverend Eminence, before the Holy Father, for a supplication for a Pontifical Bull that is required for new Religious Institutes, to make use of one of the four approved Rules. I had read that such a petition had been granted to other religious institutes, even those of women. Most humbly, I sought, as I was saying that those constitutions and rules that the Sisters of the Holy Family observed, which are nothing other than those drawn from the Saints. I believed that I would be able to ask [please pardon me, Your Eminence, Most Reverend, if I expose to you so clearly my state of mine], for an Institute which being diversified clearly from others among the ancient Nuns, which does not have as its object only its own sanctification, but demanding, on all levels also that of our neighbors...¹¹²

LETTER 86: this one is addressed to the Congregation of Regulars in Rome, written on October 29th, 1833. from St. Teresa's Convent, Verona. It includes several responses to observations made known to her, regarding her Constitutions by the Congregation.

[L. 36] ... In the instance which out of my just duty I have taken upon myself to come to grips with the clarifications asked for by the most eminent examiners of the Constitutions of the Sisters of the Holy Family, I note that I have been excessively vague in my writing, and for this reason, or for others, the work remains obscure, I offer this premise: that in order to handle both of these defects, I may now be excessively abundant in putting down my motives and reasons that moved me to draw up these Rules, which were the object of the kind remarks that have been received by me. It will not have escaped the most eminent Cardinals that in the Institute that is totally new, even though it does reunite the branches of the active life of some other Institutes, this one has almost totally depended on the active life of a few other Institutes, this is totally dependent on an internal spirit, as there has been hinted in the Plan, 3rd Paragraph, 'which is essentially founded

¹¹⁰ Letters, p. 82.

¹¹¹ Letters, p. 84.

¹¹² Letters, p. 85.

on the mortification themselves, in prayer and in internal recollection, from which proceeds good and fruitful activity'. And the continual assistance helps this, self-denial, detachment from family and from every other thing, that this praying often, that I place in the Rule with all discretion, is being practiced with greater frequency to the one indicated. And in brief, all the exercises proposed for this need, makes it happen that there is a frequent coming and going to prayer and retiring from activity, and then from this, once more back to prayer and recollection.

The Lord, wanting to establish an Institute dedicated to the Holy Family, and to make use of me, no matter how unworthy I may be, to serve Him in this enterprise, has brought it about that I would have occasion to see many monasteries, and to study their Rules, to be privy to the confidence of many superiors, and to come to know what was it that brought about their initial spirit.

Among other realities, I saw that not having the superiors really knowing their Sisters, was harmful and also for the superior, not knowing what burdens this or that religious might have been carrying – and, from the other side as well, upon whom some burden was thrust, and they were found not to be with sufficient strength...¹¹³

[L. 37] *...manifesting one's interior life to the Superior... I have found from this Rule a great advantage, both on the part of the Sisters themselves who are called to obey this, as well as for the Superior, who having to assign her Sisters to this or that task, has a need of knowing them deeply...¹¹⁴.*

[L. 38] *... After having adopted this experience which proves the necessity of this Rule in the Institute of the Sisters of the Holy Family, I tried humbly to expose that which is found already approved by the Holy See...¹¹⁵.*

[L. 39] *... In the Constitutions of the Sisters of the Holy Family, Second Part, Chapter 7, Paragraph 2, it is read: 'They will have a great openness of heart with the Superior, making known to her,.... etc. [here the entire paragraph was copied].*

And yet, comparing the article of St. Francis¹¹⁶ with this, I found that I have rather sweetened the matter, with having let fall this manifestation of rendering an account only regarding that which it is 'necessary to direct them in the path taken up by them.'

Without this Rule, the entire machinery would be through into disorder, and it would seem that there would be lacking to this Institute of the Holy Family that simplicity of sacred spiritual childhood, as the already quoted St. Francis calls it, which ought to be so esteemed by the Sisters of the Holy Family...¹¹⁷.



¹¹³ *Letters*, p. 88.

¹¹⁴ *Letters*, p. 89.

¹¹⁵ *Letters*, p. 89.

¹¹⁶ **NB:** this is St. Francis de Sales.

¹¹⁷ *Letters*, p. 89.

2.2 HER CONFERENCES

2.2.1 Introduction:

Mother Leopoldina was chosen by Fr. Paccanari as the ‘first President’, or the Superior of the nascent Institute of the *Beloved of Jesus*, at the age of just 27. The office of superior, according to their Regulations of 1799, included the commitment of holding every day a spiritual instruction to her companions.

Naturally, at the beginning, these would have had to be familiar gatherings, or fraternal exhortations. But little by little as the number of these *Beloved* increased, the instructions took on a more elaborate and studied format. The sheets of the manuscripts of these Conferences which have come down to us, do not bear any title. They were simply called *Spiritual Conferences*, somewhat later, from a generic indication placed in the body of the writings of the Servant of God.

The sheets used by Leopoldina for the notes of her *Conferences*, were gathered and united together by the Sisters of the Holy Family, after her death and they formed a manuscript of some 184 pages, numbered at that time. This is preserved in the Archives of the Sisters of the Holy Family¹¹⁸.

The Servant of God, in addition to noting down her own reflections, also put down long passages, copying them over by hand *ad litteram*, from the writings of saints, or from spiritual authors. She would then further develop this verbally, and adapting and applying these insights to her listeners. We can therefore say that all of her Conferences are hers, in so far as she chose the arguments and the texts, according to her spirit and expounded upon them after she had digested them for herself¹¹⁹.

Her method certainly gave greater authority to what she was expounding upon and at the same time, she directed attention away from her own person. She was able in this as well, to maintain that humility as she sought to do. In her *Conferences*, the spiritual and religious life is presented as a serious ideal, which demands every energy and asks for the despoilment of oneself, together with the constant effort to practice virtue¹²⁰.

The authors from which she for the most part drew her *Conferences*, are the following: St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Francis de Sales, St. Jeanne Fremiot de Chantal, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa of Avila, the Jesuit author, Fr. Bartoli, etc. Leopoldina never noted the date of her *Conferences* : only rarely does she offer even the vaguest hints. The Historical Commission is of the considered view that the writings of her *Conferences* were composed between 1808 and 1816, in that period when she was lodging at the Institute of Madeline de Canossa¹²¹.

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¹¹⁸ **NB:** the abbreviation for this is *ASFV* - the address is: Via Fontane di Sopra, n. 2. Verona

¹¹⁹ cf. *Positio*, Vol. II, Doc. XIV: *Writings of the Servant of God*. Intr. C, p. 1306.

¹²⁰ cf. *Positio*, Vol. II, Doc. XIV: *Writings of the Servant of God*. Intr. C, p. 1309.

¹²¹ cf. *Positio*, ib., p. 1307.

2.2.2 TEXTS ON HUMILITY: for the development of this theme, there have been taken into consideration only those Conferences where this theme is expressly treated.

2.2.2.1 CONFERENCE ON EXTERNAL MORTIFICATION: this Conference does bear the date of ‘December 18’. In it, Mother Naudet affirms that the principal mortification of the Saints is ‘to make of necessity a virtue’, ‘to adapt to the circumstances that succeed one after the other, and where it is necessary to be subjected to them.’

[CF. 1] ... *Mortification was practiced by Jesus on the supreme level, and in a special manner in the mystery of His Holy Infancy...*¹²².

[CF. 2] ...*I have often spoken to you of internal mortification. Today, it will be about external mortification that I intend to speak: that of the senses, which are the gates of the soul, which, if they are not guarded and instructed by mortification, they will ruin us...*¹²³.

[CF. 3] ... *When I began by saying that I wanted to speak to you about external mortification, some of you might have thought that I was going to suggest to you the taking of the discipline, chains, fasting and that [against which you have heard me always repeat, that these are good things, but help in no way if there is not always internal mortification], but I will offer a contrary reflection.*

No. Rather, I am much convinced that you are better instructed about external mortification and there is not much chance that you would fall into any illusions.

Do you know, then, what has always been preferred by the saints? It is not that mortification which they have chosen and invented on their own, but it is that which are furnished by the occasions in which they found themselves; and they would not have even esteemed external mortifications if in those events in which God would ask of them some sacrifice, they would have hesitated, and would not have chosen to accept it ... Their principal mortification, then, was in a word, to make of necessity a virtue.

*It is a good to admire for a bit the great goodness and infinite mercy of God. He does not overlook the fact that we might find ourselves forced to adapt to those circumstances which succeed one another, and where out of necessary, we have to subject ourselves...*¹²⁴.

[CF. 4] ...*Be attentive not to lose anything of those immense goods and merits that you can accomplish during the day. Try to silence at times that word which seems necessary for you to say, when it really is not. Make of necessity a virtue when the Lord sends you illness, by putting up not only with the discomfort, but also with all that you then have to do: all the annoyances, etc...*¹²⁵.

[CF. 5] ...*The Lord wills only that which He sends you, well put up with, resignation, and union with His divine will. Bear mortification with you in such a way that you will learn how to flavor everything with it...*¹²⁶.

[CF. 6] ...*Let your fasting be the mortification of the tongue, which procures such harm to ourselves and to our neighbor. Make your senses fast, by mortifying the curiosity of your eyes, that want to see everything, look at everything; mortify your ears, that would like to hear and know everything, even that which can bring such prejudices to your soul, with occupying you and distracting you in prayer and in your duties, and fills your heads with empty and vain thoughts.*

¹²² *Conferences: The Spiritual Writings of Leopoldina Naudet. Foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Family. Verona, p. 10.*

¹²³ *Conferences, p. 10.*

¹²⁴ *Conferences, p. 10.*

¹²⁵ *Conferences, . 11.*

¹²⁶ *Conferences, p. 11.*

*In a word, mortify your every sense, and make a virtue of necessity; and you will see anew in every day how much gain you will have made. But, for this kind of mortification, it is necessary to exercise vigilance, attention; otherwise, all these possible gains will end up as so many losses...*¹²⁷

†††

2.2.2.2 CONFERENCE FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY:

Mother Leopoldina states that the unity of two virtues: confidence in God, and humility founded on ‘the knowledge of ourselves.’

[CF. 7] *...There cannot be authentic humility unless it is accompanied by confidence, nor can there be genuine and solid confidence unless there is humility. In the manner in which I make the perfection of one of these virtues depend upon the other, it seems to me that there would always be lacking something to the one when it would not have the other virtue as its companion. When I speak to you of genuine and solid humility, I intend to refer not so much to those acts which are customarily employed in so far as they begin with such a sentiment that accompanies them; but I intend to speak to you rather of that virtue which is one founded on the knowledge of ourselves, and that is increased and intensified in the measure that we enter the more minutely and to the very depths of this kind of knowledge.*

St. Ignatius says, and many others before him said it as well, that anyone who wishes to construct a grand and tall building, has to make sure at the same time that he digs solid foundations. In other words, anyone who wills to tend to great perfection and to advance in the way of holiness, has to go to the depths of humility, which is the authentic foundation, without which everything is overturned at the slightest breeze.

*Therefore, we should not neglect to deepen ourselves in the knowledge of our own nothingness and of our own non-being, so that being well persuaded of this, we would have recourse to the One Who possess all, and Who alone is...*¹²⁸

[CF. 8] *...The more we are persuaded that we can do nothing, and yet desire to act, greater will be our confidence in God, to ask of Him to make up for all that we are unable to accomplish ...*¹²⁹

[CF. 9] *...Let us be humble, and let us trust in the One Who alone can do all, and we will notice the effect. We will indeed experience that which all have come to know: that whoever confides in God will never be confused...*¹³⁰

†††

2.2.2.3 CONFERENCE ON HUMILITY: this is a conference which was delivered on St. Michael’s Day, September 29th. In it, Leopoldina states that ‘all the goods have come into this world through humility.’ Humility ought to fill the whole religious person, who would then say of herself: ‘one is whatever she is as she stands before God, and nothing more.’

[CF. 10]: *... All evils have come into the world with pride...*¹³¹

[CF. 11] *... Let us say the other way around that all the goods also have come into the world through humility. And we see this in the Mystery of the Incarnation, where a God totally emptied Himself, and in Mary most holy, who was chosen for this mystery, totally humble, and so therefore, precisely for this effect, that had there been any creature on earth who was more humble, she would have been chosen to be the Mother of God.*

¹²⁷ *Conferences*, p. 22.

¹²⁸ *Conferences*, p. 20.

¹²⁹ *Conferences*, p. 22.

¹³⁰ *Conferences*, p. 23.

¹³¹ *Conferences*, p. 46.

From all this, we can deduce how much God loves humility, and how much He hates pride, self-love. St. Ignatius was sent by Mary most Holy to St. Magdalene de Pazzi, to instruct her in this virtue. And he said to her that she ought to suggest this to religious as oil for their lamps. And just as oil fills the whole jar, so humility ought to fill each religious person.

This virtue is of supreme necessity for us. And in vain would we yearn for the practice of other virtues, if this one is lacking; since it would be the same as if in a palace there were joys and precious goods, but there was lacking the door to close them in and protect them. So, naturally, the whole treasure would be in danger of being stolen.

The same may be said of a soul who does not have humility as guardian. Sell, therefore, all that is necessary for the acquisition of humility. The same may be said of yourselves: One is as much as she is as she stands before God, and nothing more.

Ponder these words well, meditating attentively on them...¹³².

[CF. 12] ... *You are whatever God sees, and nothing more...¹³³*

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2.2.2.4 **CONFERENCE ON THE VIRTUES:** this was a Conference that was delivered on the Feast of St. Teresa [October 15th]. It treats of the virtues exercised by the saints in imitation of Jesus Christ.

[CF. 13] ... *All the saints have been persuaded that the virtues prepare the way for holiness...¹³⁴*

[CF. 14] ... *The virtues are the money that circulates in eternity. And God, seeing that virtues are difficult for human beings, and that He would not know, in a way of speaking, how to place all in this undertaking, He sent Jesus Christ on earth to teach them. And so, He was not content to work out our redemption in a single moment, but He lived thirty-three years on earth among men, in order to give us all an example of these, Who then was imitated by the saints.*

Therefore, the manner of exercising these virtues, and that which a virtue would ask from us that would lead us to holiness, is that which Jesus Christ has practiced. He exercised humility, with the loss of His own reputation, with His being rejected, etc.; He exercised patience, with all His fatigue and suffering. And in like manner with all the other virtues, directed by charity which all throughout His life was resplendent in Him...¹³⁵

†††

2.2.2.5 **CONFERENCE ON SIMPLICITY** in this conference, mother Leopoldina affirms that with simplicity, humility is likewise acquired.

[CF. 15] ...*Simplicity, says St. Francis de Sales, is nothing other than a pure and simple act of charity, which has but one end, which is that of acquiring God's love...¹³⁶.*

[CF. 16] ... *The foundation of this virtue is the right intention, that of seeking only God...¹³⁷.*

[CF. 17] ...*With simplicity, there is acquired interior mortification, the humility of the intellect and heart; since this mortification is all internal, and can only make headway with one's spirit united with the simplicity of God...¹³⁸.*

†††

¹³² *Conferences*, pp. 46-47.

¹³³ *Conferences*, p. 47.

¹³⁴ *Conferences*, p. 50.

¹³⁵ *Conferences*, pp. 50-51.

¹³⁶ *Conferences*, p. 166.

¹³⁷ *Conferences*, p. 166.

¹³⁸ *Conferences*, pp. 166-167.

2.2.2.6 **CONFERENCE ON THE SPIRIT OF THE INSTITUTE:** in this conference, Mother Naudet recalls to the Sisters' minds what the foundation of the Instituted called *the Beloved of Jesus* really is: 'to be poor of themselves', in order to follow behind Jesus Christ.

[CF. 18] *...The spirit of the Beloved of Jesus is that of being poor of ourselves, despoiled of all self-will, affection and desire that would tend more to one reality than to something else in the choice of means in order to arrive at our purpose; but, rather to leave God the care of carrying out upon us His most lovable will, saying with all confidence: 'Behold Your handmaiden, let Your will be done in me!'*

The perfect denial of ourselves is precisely that, therefore, which constitutes the spirit of the Beloved, and that which ought to console us is that spirit of Jesus Christ, and which combines with the maxims of the Gospel. Since the Lord in the Gospel says that all who wish to follow Him, has to deny themselves [cf. Mt 16:24].

This, then, is the great means of following after Jesus. It is this, therefore, that leads you more securely, without all that mixture that other means bear with them. All those who commit themselves to the spiritual life are to be led to this great means; but, with those others, we lengthen the way, while it is shorter, to follow behind, and by embracing this negation of one's own will, without being stopped through so many paths...¹³⁹.

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2.2.2.7 **DESPOILMENT OF ONESELF:** it is to be noted that this Conference unfolds in the third person masculine singular, and therefore, does not seem to be addressed to the *Beloved of Jesus*.

[CF. 19] *...I desire to see you despoiled fully of all in you that pertains to selfishness, so that you might be found vested in the Crucified Christ. And just think that all that we reserve for ourselves, is that which in us is lacking of Him. When, therefore, we ought to eradicate from ourselves all self-will, and to kill it, and to deny it, since there is cause to deprive ourselves of such rich garments, as this illumines the soul, enflames it, fortifies it...¹⁴⁰.*

[CF. 20] *...O how boldly this soul navigates which is despoiled so well of itself! This soul no longer desires to will nothing other than the glory and the praise of the name of God, which is to be sought in the salvation of souls...¹⁴¹.*

[CF. 21] *...To this state one cannot come with the weight of our garments and so, despoil yourselves fully of your very selves...¹⁴².*

†††

2.2.2.8 **St. IGNATIUS ON HUMILITY:** this Conference has as its subtitle: 'Advice offered from heaven regarding this virtue, to St. Magdalene de Pazzi.' In it, Mother Leopoldina states: 'Humility ought to occupy the powers of one's soul', and 'it ought to shine forth from all words, deeds and works.'

[CF. 22] *...I, Ignatius, have been elected by the Mother of your Spouse, to speak to you about humility. Listen, then, to my words. Humility ought to be poured like oil into lanterns in the new plants of the state of religion. And like oil occupies the whole container that it is poured into, so humility and the genuine self-knowledge ought in such a way to occupy the powers of their soul,*

¹³⁹ *Conferences*, p. 175.

¹⁴⁰ *Conferences*, p. 177.

¹⁴¹ *ib*, p. 177.

¹⁴² *ib*, p. 177.

*which directing themselves in any direction, they do not manifest anything other than humility and meekness...*¹⁴³.

[CF. 23] ... *Humility in the exterior ought to be, and to shine forth in all one's words, gestures and deeds. And there should be avoided every word which does not have the flavor of humility, just as curses are forbidden in the world; one has to eliminate from the religious state every gesture that is far from humility, just as so many efforts are brought forward to eliminate in the world the gestures against honor and hunger; there have to be abhorred all those deeds performed without humility, as a king would abhor that his son should dress in the clothing of a keeper of animals.*

*All should be humility, in the superiors [as they should first give an example of it] so that in their corrections, exhortations or other interventions, they might not be forced into making acts of humility...*¹⁴⁴.

[CF. 24] ... *And for anyone who finds such humility repugnant, let her be given over into the hands of her Crucified Spouse, showing her Him Whom she ought to imitate. Let no one give up any of this effort even unto death in the exercise of humility. And whoever has care of souls should never rely on herself in not exercising herself in this virtue, in much the manner of which flesh and bones are both united with life. The reason is that it is all like a ladder on which there are many rungs that are always necessary to ascend; and these same steps ought to be ascended many times, by multiplying their acts. Souls who do not have this humility can never go out from themselves, because there arise in them thousands upon thousands of passions, and much curiosity, and souls would be occupied in these...*¹⁴⁵.



2.3 IN THE CONSTITUTIONS

2.3.1 Introduction

The *Rules* and the *Constitutions*, composed by Leopoldina, were the fruit of a not brief and patient effort, after years of experience and study, in communion with good counselors and illumined people of the Church¹⁴⁶. There may be distinguished three successive moments in the legislative journey of Mother Leopoldina:

[1] From 1816 [when she was able to live somewhat independently in her own place of residence] until 1827: the Servant of God gave to her companions a brief Code of norms, which she entitled: *Plan of the Institute*. A manuscript of 11 pages, conserved in the General Archives of her community. It is a kind of outline, containing the major themes of the new institution with those norms and those principles that she held as necessary, but sufficient for the beginnings of the enterprise. There is very clear here the Ignatian inspiration.

[2] From the years 1828-1833: Leopoldina brought to a conclusion the organic and definitive writings of her *Constitutions*, having present to herself those *Rules of the Society of the Sacred Heart* of Sophia Barat, recently approved by the Holy See. This text came

¹⁴³ *Conferences*, p. 196.

¹⁴⁴ *Conferences*, pp. 196-197.

¹⁴⁵ *Conferences*, p. 197.

¹⁴⁶ *Positio*, Vol. II, Doc. IX, *Constitutions and Rules of the Sisters of the Holy Family*, p. 885. [Translators' Note: these have been translated into English, with the title: *The Integral Copy of the Original Constitutions of the Sisters of the Holy family written by the Foundress, M. Leopoldina Naudet.*]

from Leopoldina and was sent to Rome for the purpose of obtaining the Pontifical Approbation. The original manuscript, conserved in the Vatican Archives, has this title: *Constitutions of the Sisters of the Holy Family*. This text includes three distinct documents:

- the *Plan in Compendium*;
- the *Constitutions*;
- the *Common Rules*.

This text was the object of the examination on the part of a Commission of Cardinals, which made its observations on some of the points.

[3] Leopoldina accepted, in part, the observations of the Cardinal Examiners and this led to certain modifications, corrections and additions to her *Rules*. This happened during the years 1833-1834. While she was bringing to a conclusion this work of revision and was continuing her epistolary dialogue with the Cardinals' Commission, clarifying certain points, she was overcome by death on August 17, 1834¹⁴⁷.

As for what is contained in the definitive redaction of the *Rules* and of the *Constitutions*, drawn up by Mother Naudet, keeping in mind the observations received, in particular from Fr. Rozaven and from Fr. Bertoni, we can offer some outline in this manner:

[a] The title page, *Plan in Compendium*, is sufficient to designate the content of this manuscript. It begins with the motives that inspired the choice of the title of the Congregation, as the *Sisters of the Holy Family*, whose devotion was presented as having gone back to 'the very origins of our Union'. Then the manuscript passes over to the 'scope' of the community, which gravitates around the 'imitation of Jesus Christ' in a study of the Holy Family, which inspires the 'spirit' of the Institute, founded on 'the mortification of themselves, on prayer and internal recollection'¹⁴⁸. Then, there is the presentation of the 'four principal activities in behalf of our neighbors'¹⁴⁹.

[b] The *Constitutions* properly so-called, are divided into four parts:

- **the First Part:** calls one's attention on that which is usually referred to as 'preparation': i.e., the manner of receiving subjects, upon which depends 'the entire good of the Institute';
- **the Second Part:** concentrates on the virtues: and primarily, on Charity for God and on the manner of exercising this, considered as 'the soul of all the activities' of the religious – and 'on the exercise of Charity towards our neighbor': here there is treated the natural development of Mother Leopoldina's own spirituality, concentrated on *God Alone*, from which flows 'charity and mutual union.' It is significant beyond measure that after principles such as these, with their global character in Chapters 1 & 2, there follows then, Chapter 3 *On Humility*; and this is understood from the underlying fact that she considered humility as 'the foundation of all the other virtues.' Only after Humility, do the *Constitutions* speak of Poverty, in Chapter 4. Then follows the presentation on *Chastity, Modesty and Obedience*;

¹⁴⁷ *Positio*, Vol. II, Doc. XIV. *Writings of the Servant of God*, Introd. Pp. 1252-1253.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Articles 2 & 3.

¹⁴⁹ *Positio*, Vol. II, Doc. IC, *Constitutions and Rules*, Intr., II, 3, p. 919.

- **the Third Part**: takes up *Study and those Means that the Institute uses for the Benefit of our Neighbors*. Carrying through on Teaching as the purpose of the Community, it is only logical that here she would speak in Chapter 1 of *That which the Sisters ought to do in order to make themselves suited for Study*. Then Chapter 3 takes the *Means which the Institute employs for the Eternal Salvation of its Neighbors*. Here four separate activities are taken into consideration:

- the teaching of young girls of the nobility living in our houses;
- tuition-free education for those young girls, whether they be poor, or well off, who come daily to our schools;
- to instruct the young girls of the parish in which a house of the institute has been established, who do not attend our schools, when they have to prepare for the reception of the most holy sacraments of Penance, Confirmation and the Eucharist;
- the Spiritual exercises that will be offered to girls and women who live in the world.

- **the Fourth Part**: in six chapters, pertains to the Government of the Institute.

[c] While the *Plan* offers the major themes of the Institute, as such, the *Common Rules* present those teachings treat of the interior life, beginning with that intimate and spiritual, social exchange among the Sisters, their specific duties and then their general comportment. These are formulated in brief statements and have shown themselves to be very useful and easy to remember ¹⁵⁰.

As for the *fonts* of these, the structure is taken from the legislative material of the Jesuits, and then there are added the studies which Mother Leopoldina herself carried out on the **Rules of St. Benedict**, the writings of Pope Benedict XIV and St. Charles Borromeo, Francis Suarez, and St. Francis de sales, and the *Decree of the Sacred Council of Trent regarding the Reform of Nuns, together with the Constitutions of these Nuns for the City and Diocese of Verona*, Verona 1565. The holy Foundress also made use of a goodly number of publications regarding Nuns, especially those from the perspective of Ascetical and Spiritual Formation, from which she drew elements both for persuasion and emphasis ¹⁵¹.

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2.3.2 **TEXTS ON HUMILITY**:

As far as Humility is concerned, all the *Constitutions* are impregnated with it. For a more analytical study, this study has chosen to present an integral review of those texts which the more specifically make reference to the theme of Humility. There follows here a presentation of the texts, the fruit of this reflection, following the original order.

¹⁵⁰ *Positio*, Vol. II, Doc. IX, *Constitutions and Rules*, Intro. II, 3, pp. 919-920.

¹⁵¹ *Positio*, Vol. II,, Doc. IC, *Constitutions and Rules*, Intro. II, 4, pp. 921-922.

2.3.2.1 THE COMPENDIUM OF THE PLAN

In this *Compendium of the Plan of the Institute of the Sisters of the Holy Family*, Humility may be found where the ‘Spirit of the Institute’ is treated:

[n. 3] *The spirit of this Institute is essentially based on the mortification of ourselves, on prayer and on interior recollection. From these proceeds every good and fruitful activity. We are committed to studying the Holy Family most profoundly in order to unite our intentions to it and conform our activities to it.*

[n. 7] *The Sisters of the Holy Family live a perfect common life. They wear a black habit, simple in style, modest in its uniformity, with silk being absolutely excluded. It is to be such that it serves for edification, reminding the persons of the world that these Sisters with whom they are dealing, are consecrated to God.*

†††

2.3.2.2 PART ONE: the First Part treats of the receiving [c. 1], and of the dismissing [c. 2] candidates, and of the Novitiate [c. 3]. There is emphasized here the ‘perfect abnegation of oneself for one’s own perfection and for that of our neighbor.’

[n. 5] *Concerning vocations, it is right to examine what the motives are that moves candidates to seek entrance into the Institute. This is needed in order to know whether their purpose is correct, and whether they are truly motivated by a genuine desire to consecrate themselves to the divine service. It has to be known whether they truly wish to tend toward their own perfection and to the sanctification of their neighbor. It must be declared to the candidates what total abnegation of themselves will be asked of them, to which they will have to submit themselves in whatever obedience will be prescribed for them in the Lord.*

[c.2, n. 4] *Only with great prudence and charity should the community proceed to the dismissal of a candidate, particularly observing what follows here:*

1. - *To have recourse to God with humble and fervent prayer, in begging of Him the light to make the decision, and to know what His most holy will is. This is also to despoil oneself of all personal reasons, and placing before oneself only the greater glory of God, and the greater good to be achieved. In this spirit should the decision to dismiss be deliberated.*

[c. 3, n. 5] *In this time of Novitiate, care will be taken that the Novices will be formed and adjust to the spirit of the Institute as they control their passions and inclinations.*

Care will likewise be taken to form them to a strong, vigorous devotion, having God Alone as the principle and purpose of their activities. They will learn to desire God Alone as their only reward, both in time as well as in eternity, with a perfect abnegation of themselves.

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2.3.2.3 SECOND PART

The Second Part, which treats of the ‘Virtues’ is the most significant section, dedicating also its Chapter 3 precisely to Humility:

[c. 2, n. 2] *In accord with the precept of the Apostle, they will ‘love one another with the charity of brotherhood, with honor preventing one another’ [cf. Rm 12:10], considering others more worthy of honor] with manifestations of esteem and benevolence.*

They will give in to the wishes of their Sisters in whatever is just and reasonable, having compassion on one another, offering mutual support. And should there arise among them some difference of opinion, and it seems that they should maintain their position, they will propose their

reasons with modesty and charity, with the desire only that truth win out, and not just so that one's own view prevail.

[c. 3, n. 1] *Since humility is the foundation of all the other virtues, the Sisters of the Holy Family will be truly committed to this as evidenced in the most lovable heart of Jesus. He chose in a special manner to be the teacher of this virtue, saying in the holy Gospel: 'Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart.'* [Mt 11:29].

And from within their own nothingness, each will think very lowly of herself, each one considering herself to be the least of all.

[c. 3, n. 2] *Since by their very vocation, the Sisters are called to cooperate in the eternal salvation of their neighbors, with all the more reason they should be humble, and penetrated with the sentiment of their own wretchedness and unworthiness. They consider it a special grace that they have been chosen by the Lord for such a great good.*

And with all their spirit the Sisters ought to give totally of themselves to the divine service. At the same time, they need to think of themselves as useless servants in the Lord's House, in accord with what our Divine Redeemer said in His holy Gospel; ' So you also, when you have done all these things that are commanded, you say: We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do.' [Lk 17:10].

[c. 3, n. 3] *Each one will accept humbly whatever has been decided by the Superior regarding duties, as well as whatever else has been commanded by her. And with true humility of heart, each Sister will be ready to take care of the most humble and abject services, as far as the world would judge these. It is necessary to think of Jesus Christ, Who out of love for us, submitted Himself to every humiliation.*

[c. 3, n. 4] *For the greater abnegation of themselves and progress in the virtues, the Sisters will be content when their defects are made known to the Superior, no matter who may have seen her commit these, and makes them known to the Superior.*

[c. 3, n. 5] *All those who in the judgment of the Superior are not impeded by occupations of greater importance, or by some indisposition because of illness, should make their own beds and tidy their own rooms. Each one should take full advantage in every encounter to making herself useful, remembering that the Divine Redeemer said of Himself: 'I have not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give my life a redemption for many'* [Mt 20:28].

[c. 4, n. 3] *Let us make known at the proper occasions, our esteem and love for this virtue, and the disdain we have for all that the world loves, as wealth, honors, and the like. And let all watch over their own hearts to keep them always detached from that which self love might incline them to desire, and also from all that which will be granted to them for their own use from obedience.*

[c. 5, n. 3] *They will keep careful custody at all times and in every encounter, and with every caution possible, over their senses, which are the gates of their soul. Modesty shines forth in all their actions. Let them be guarded in their speech, cautious with their eyes, and sober in eating. And in all their external conduct, let it be seen that their humility and modesty are joined with a religious maturity...¹⁵².*

[c. 5, n.4] *They will flee laziness, the origin of every evil, and will practice that holy internal mortification, in so far as this will be possible in everything, and the greater abnegation of themselves.*

As for external mortification, they will depend on the Superior's permission.

¹⁵² **Translator's Note:** In Mother Naudet's printed Original, there is also this following sentence: *They should not touch one another, even in jest, keeping before their minds that edification that ought to be given by one who is dedicated to the divine service.*

[c. 6, n. 3] *Animated with this faith, they will conduct themselves with utmost reverence and respect toward the Superior, considering in her Jesus Christ, our Lord. And at the same time, they will love her as a mother; and whenever she will speak to them, or correct them, they will listen humbly without interrupting her.*

And should one of them ever be denied something by her, they will not speak of it to another who might have received from her some authority, unless they manifest to her the denial of their request, for their greater submission.

[c. 7, n.3] *Each week, the Superior will assemble the community in a suitable place. After having invoked the Holy Spirit, she will say whatever she will judge should be said, for the spiritual good of the Sisters. And she will give them instruction on some points of the Constitutions, or on something else.*

Following this, for their greater humility, the Sisters will state publicly whatever failings against the Constitutions or the rules they might have committed, as well as any fault contrary to the observance of the common life and of the religious discipline. And with a genuine desire for their own emendation and spiritual profit, they will receive from the Superior that correction which will be meted out to them.

[c. 8, n. 3] *Those virtues that they should exercise particularly [in the time of illness] are the following:*

1 – a humble submission to the divine will, which one is all the more certain of following in sickness as one is all the less in this state in accord with her own will.

2 – patience in supporting all the discomfort and painful consequences of the illness, offering experiences of his, and by bringing one to know that she receives this tribulation from the merciful hand of God for the good of souls.

3 – obedience, not only to the Superior, but also the Infirmarian in all that pertains to the care of the body.

4 – mortification in taking those remedies that are prescribed, overcoming natural repugnance out of love for the most beloved Jesus.

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2.3.2.4

THIRD PART

This *Third Part* treats of *that Time of Study in which Humility is exercised*, and *the means that the Institute uses for the Benefit of its Neighbors.*

[c. 1, n. 1] *The Sisters of the Holy Family, in assuming their studies and applying themselves to them for this purpose of assisting souls redeemed with the most Precious Blood of Jesus, ought to renew often this right intention: they are to seek nothing in their studies other than the glory of God and that fruit they will thereby achieve in souls, assisted by their competence.*

Furthermore, through study there will be facilitated the good result of all they take up for the glory of God.

Since we can do nothing without the divine assistance: ‘without Me, you can do nothing’ [Jn 15:15], they will often ask the Lord in prayer that they might make progress in study for this end.

[c. 1, n. 3] *They will apply themselves with greater intensity in this period, to exercise themselves in humility, both for themselves and for their neighbors, preferring to be deprived of study, rather than of virtue. Humility is that quality that can dispose them the more to receive from God the necessary lights for the acquisition of true wisdom.*

[c. 2, n. 4] *Those who will be proven capable to be able to be employed in the various areas of the Institute’s work, and those who by obedience will be assigned to these, in whatever field they work, will faithfully carry out the particular rules of their office. All need to operate according to the*

spirit of the Institute, which is the imitation of Jesus Christ, and to take this divine Teacher as our model in all that needs to be done for the well being of our neighbors. None should allow herself to be concerned with her own self-love, nor by any particular talent and inclination.

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2.3.2.5 FOURTH PART

This *Fourth Part* treats of the Government of the Institute and also in this, the reminder is toward Humility, and the subject here is the Superior herself.

[c. 1, n. 4] *As for the First Superior, it is likewise necessary that she should be free from every disordered passion, which with the grace of God will be conquered and overcome, so that nothing will disturb her judgment and reason.*

She needs to be so forgetful of herself and of her own interests that she would seek God in everything, and that the rule of her every thought and act should be God's good pleasure and His divine will.

[c. 3, n. 4] *[The First Superior] will have near her another Sister, who will approach God in prayer, and after having consulted the divine goodness and considered the matter to be just, will present her view to her with due respect and humility [but with all frankness and evangelical freedom]. She is held to point out whatever she believes in the First Superior should be for her greater service and glory of God, and not only for the good of the Institute, but also for its perfection.*

[c. 4, n. 8] *The local Superior will be charged with rendering reports and sharing information with the First Superior of each and every concern of some importance that might arise that is out of the ordinary, and which might seem to be beyond her ordinary faculties. She will refer all this to the First Superior to obtain direction for the manner of conducting herself in these matters. She is called to give to all that example of respect, love and perfect submission towards her. She should demonstrate this in every encounter, both by her words as well as by her actions, by manifesting these sentiments to the Sisters of the house over which she presides.*

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2.3.2.6 COMMON RULES

[n. 9] *Modesty should be resplendent in all their actions. Let them be attentive in their speech, cautious in their looking about, sober in their eating, and in all their external conduct, let there be united humility and modesty with a religious maturity. They should not touch one another, even in jest, keeping in mind that edification that ought to be given by anyone dedicated to the divine service.*

And no one should leave her room unless decently dressed, nor sleep with the windows opened, nor without covers.

[n. 11] *Each Sister should conduct herself with great reverence toward the Superior. Whenever the Superior should speak to her, or correct her, she should listen humbly, without interrupting her.*

[n. 14] *Each one should attend to herself, and to her own duty, in accord with the Apostle's advice: 'Take heed to thyself' [1 Tm 4:16], nor should anyone seek curiously to know from others those matters that pertain to the government of the house. No one should enter into any reflection on all this; but each should await as from the hand of God, whatever will be determined concerning her and others.*

[n. 25] *In the time of illness, each Sister will obey with humility, not only the Superior, but also the Infirmarian, in all that pertains to the cure of her body.*

[n. 28] *The Sisters will take care of one another. They shall not contradict each other. And should any diversity of opinions arise among them, and it does seem that the matter should be manifested, the reasons will be proposed with modesty and charity, in the desire that truth win out, and not so that one's personal view prevail.*

[n. 35] *For the greater abnegation of themselves and for their greater progress in virtue, the Sisters will be content if their defects are made known to the Superior, and these should be told to her by anyone who might have seen the sister in question commit a fault.*

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2.3.2.7 SUMMARY

After the *Common Rules*, there are listed in the Foundress' document the *Formulae of Simple Vows and Solemn Profession*. Then follows a *Summary of the teachings that can maintain the Spirit of the Sisters of the Holy Family*. This *Summary* is rich in references to Humility:

[n. 4] *Everyone who enters into this Institute, following Christ's counsel: [Lk 14:26] has to make every effort to separate herself from all carnal affection for her relatives, and convert this into a spiritual bond, loving them only with that affection that ordered charity seeks, as that which is dead to this world and to self-love, and lives only for Christ, our Lord, and holds Him in place of father, mother, family and everything else.*

[n. 6] *...Thus, just as the people of the world follow its values, love and seek with great diligence the honors, the fame, to have a great name on earth, as the world teaches – so, those who walk according to the Spirit and truly follow Christ, our Lord, will love and ardently desire all that is contrary to this, namely, to be vested in the same livery as their Lord out of love and reverence for Him.*

And so, if it is possible without offending the divine majesty, and without sin for our neighbors, we would prefer to suffer injuries, wrongs, false witnesses, and to be held and considered imbalanced [however, without every giving occasion for any such accusations], that we might the more be similar and imitate in some way our Creator and Lord, Jesus Christ, and to put on His garments and livery. It was for our grater spiritual profit that He vested Himself in this way, and He has given us the example in everything. Thus, in so far as it is possible with divine grace, we wish to follow and imitate Him, since He is the true way that leads human beings to life.

[n. 7] *In order to reach this most precious degree of perfection in the spiritual life, each one ought to exercise the greatest and most efficacious diligence in seeking in the Lord the greatest abnegation of oneself, and continual mortification, in so far as will be possible, in everything.*

[n. 8] *In the exercise of the lowly and humble duties, the Sisters ought to more readily take on those for which they might find the greatest repugnance, if it should ever be imposed that one should be exercised in such duties.*

[n. 10] *Let us all constantly make every effort not to neglect any aspect of perfection which, with God's help, we can acquire, in carrying out whatever the proper manner of life our Institute demands.*

[n. 14] *It will help very much to carry out with devotion, in so far as this will be possible, those exercises in which one is more exercised in humility and charity*

And generally speaking, the more one comes closer to God, and the more generous will she show herself toward his divine Majesty, so much the more will she find Him generous, and she will be from day to day the more disposed to receive from him in ever greater abundance and spiritual gifts.

[n. 19] *Their manner of food, clothing, and bedding will be as would be proper to the poor. And each Sister will be persuaded that of all the things that there are in the house, she will look for those in the worst condition among them, for her own greater mortification and spiritual profit.*

[n. 21] *The Sisters will strive with every diligence to keep from all disorder the windows of their sentiments, particularly their eyes, hearing and tongue. They will observe this in peace and genuine internal humility, and showing it in silence, when it is fitting to observe this;*

- *and when it is necessary to speak, let it be done with consideration and with edifying discourse;*
- *in modest of expression – in maturity in one’s gait and in all movements;*
- *without giving any sign of impatience or pride;*
- *striving and desiring in all matters to give way to others;*
- *esteeming all others within her own spirit as superior to her;*
- *and in her exterior conduct, deferring to them with reverence that the state of each one would demand, with religious simplicity and modesty;*
- *hence, it would follow that considering one another devotedly, and they will praise God our Lord, Whom each one will strive to recognize in the others as in their proper image.*

[n. 22] *In their bodily refreshment, they will take steps to observe temperance, modesty and both internal as well as external decency, in all matters.*

Before eating, all will offer the blessing, and afterwards, a thanksgiving, which all will render with due devotion and reverence.

And while the body is restored with good, the soul also is given its nourishment.

[n. 23] *Above all else, it is most helpful and is very necessary for their spiritual progress that all the Sisters surrender themselves to perfect obedience, recognizing in the Superior, whoever she may be, one taking the place of Christ our Lord, and manifest to her internal reverence and love.*

And they will obey not only exteriorally with promptness, perfection and due humility, in the external carrying out of whatever will be imposed on them. They will do this without making excuses or offering complaints, whenever she may command difficult charges repugnant to their sensuality.

But, in addition to this, they will make every effort to have interiorally a genuine resignation and abnegation of their own will and judgment, bringing this into conformity with whatever the Superior wills and feels, in all that does not enter the realm of sin. They will take the will and judgment of the Superior as the rule of their own opinions and feelings, so that they might most perfectly be in conformity with the first and supreme rule of every good will and judgment, which is the eternal goodness and wisdom.

[n. 32] *During the period of illness, not only should each one obey the Superior with great purity, but also this obedience must be extended to the medical doctor and to the Infirmarian with like humility, as they govern the body.*



2.4 HER SPIRITUAL WRITINGS

2.4.1 Introduction:

Her *Spiritual Writings* are commonly considered to be her most precious composition for anyone desirous of understanding the spirituality of Mother Leopoldina Naudet¹⁵³. This book is made up of manuscripts, of a spiritual nature, with different purposes. The texts were united in one paper folder, bound together without any chronological order. However, on the top of each page, even the blank ones, there was placed a progressive numeration - and thus, the end result is some 186 pages. On the title page, there may be found this wording:

*The Spiritual Exercises, and other Matters, in the Hand of the Venerated Foundress*¹⁵⁴.

Mother Leopoldina called some of these papers of hers by the name of *Personal Reminiscences*, - others were entitled: *Journal* and still others bear the name: *Retreats*. At the head of a few texts there may be seen her slogan, *God Alone*¹⁵⁵. The Historical Commission of the *Positio* preferred the title for all these writings to be: *Spiritual Diary*, one that was used already by the Stigmatines, Fr. Joseph Stofella¹⁵⁶ and by Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove¹⁵⁷. Thus, it has passed into current use. In this study, though, in this study the decision has been made to take upon again the title *Personal Reminiscences*, because this responds the more to the desire of Mother Leopoldina herself who chose this wording for the oldest pages found in the gathering of personal manuscripts¹⁵⁸.

Seventy years ago, these pages came to Fr. Joseph Stofella, a great scholar and biographer of both St. Gaspar Bertoni, and Mother Madeline di Canossa, and he undertook the arduous task of giving some order to them. The difficulties were considerable: the small handwriting, the rather hard text, and also because of the poor grammar and handwriting, written in a language not perfectly possessed by Mother Naudet, as well as because of the not simple concepts used in such sublime material. To all this, then, there should be added the evident need of a certain historical re-construction, the necessity of trying to verify certain dates, and then the need to hazard guesses concerning others¹⁵⁹.

From those pages which are chronologically the first pages of these *Reminiscences*, one might understand the real challenge for the reader of Mother Leopoldina's writings as she speaks of her profound experience of God's action within her¹⁶⁰. It should be remembered that 'her confessor [in that time, it was Fr. Nicholas Paccanari, the Founder of the *Fathers of*

¹⁵³ *Leopoldina Naudet. Memorie Segrete.* A cura di M. Bonato e P. Accordini. Verona: Scala Edizioni 1999. p. 7. [**Translator's Note: in this study the abbreviation will be Ms.**]

¹⁵⁴ These words seem to be in the hand-writing of Sr. Metilde di Canossa, as she was the one who set about collecting them, and preserving them.

¹⁵⁵ **Translator's note:** often there would just be the abbreviation for 'Dio Solo', D.S.

¹⁵⁶ cf. *BERTONIANO* Anno XV, suppl. N. 1, 1930, *passim*.

¹⁵⁷ *Dalla Corte al Chiostro.* Verona 1954, *passim*.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. *Positio*, Vol. II, *The Writings of the Servant of God.* Intro. B., p. 1268.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Fr. G.P. DePAOLI, CSS, "An Invitation to the Reader", in *Leopoldina Naudet. Memorie Segrete*, o.c. p. 9.

¹⁶⁰ cf. G.P. DePAOLI, o.c., p. 12.

the Faith, and the Sisters' Congregation, called the *Beloved of Jesus*] invited her to put in writing that which she found difficult to express verbally¹⁶¹.

The ample pages that she wrote for her Director show the power of analysis of the most intimate aspects of her soul, her solid spiritual formation and, at the same time, her obedience to God's minister¹⁶². Mother Leopoldina was a transparent person, very frank, humble, when she would set about manifesting her interior life to her Spiritual Director. The scope of this writing is that of being illuminated and assisted to know and to carry out God's Will in her regard¹⁶³.

As a Foundress, Mother Leopoldina often sought the advice of learned Church personalities so that they might assist her in understanding and in following the Will of God. However, she was moved ultimately and always by evaluating everything in her own interior reflection, under the light received from the holy Spirit, in that clarity that she felt she had received as a gift¹⁶⁴.

... A position of special importance in her Spiritual Direction, beyond any doubt, is to be reserved for Fr. Gaspar Bertoni, Founder of the Stigmatines, her Spiritual Director and sometime Counselor from 1810 until her death. There existed a great harmony between these two holy individuals who walked together in dialogue under God's light. The *Personal Reminiscences* are often the echo of this inter-weaving of conversations, where the divine signs and words were recognized and shared, and became an exchange in faith, insistent prayer, on the way to a deeper mutual understanding, and collaboration in the divine plans. Mother Leopoldina would experience quickly with regard to Fr. Gaspar, how the Lord would remain her guide, even when the light would pass through His minister...¹⁶⁵.

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2.4.2 TEXTS ON HUMILITY

The *Personal Reminiscences* refer to that extended period of time between 1800 and 1831. Following the suggestion proposed by the *Positio*, this work may be sub-divided into three successive paragraphs, according to the chronological order which coincides with the periods of the Spiritual Direction with Fr. Paccanari, then that offered by Fr. Bertoni – and the third segment is of that period when she lacked any fixed spiritual direction¹⁶⁶.

However, the official compilers of the *Positio* did not print integrally these *Personal Reminiscences*, and so the work here draws the texts presented from the later complete edition of this work that has appeared with this title: *Leopoldina Naudet. Personal Reminiscences. Under the care of M. Bonato and P. Accordini. Verona: Della Scala 1999*. Hopefully, for greater clarity in these various paragraphs as they unfold, they effort will be to present the texts on Humility, not according to any chronological order, but rather according to the themes under discussion.

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¹⁶¹ cf. G.P. DePAOLI, o.c., pp. 12-13.

¹⁶² cf. G.P. DePAOLI, o.c. p. 13.

¹⁶³ Cf. *Leopoldina Naudet. Memorie Segrete*, o.c. "To the Readers", p. 7.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. G.P. DePAOLI o.c., pp. 11-12.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. G.P. DePAOLI, ib., p. 18.

¹⁶⁶ *Positio*, Vol. II, *The Writings of the Servant of God*. Intro. B, p.1277.

2.4.2.1 FOLLOWING THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTION OF Fr. NICHOLAS PACCANARI [1800-1806]

There are presented here various spiritual insights, lights and sentiments that flowered during her meditations, or on the occasion of days of recollection or retreats. Mother Leopoldina opens up her soul, somewhat hesitant, but confident, in taking on the responsibility of the superior-ship of the *Beloved of Jesus*. In some of her reporting, directed to Fr. Paccanari, she manifests her own difficulty in speaking about the gifts and graces with which God was favoring her. There are also hints, always with utmost discretion, of the profound suffering of spirit she endured because of the very regretful situation that came to the fore caused for her Director and Superior, due to the opposition and accusations leveled against him. Leopoldina thrusts herself fervently toward God, and becomes immersed in Him, seeks *Him Alone*, notwithstanding the complications and the contentious situation in the back-drop in which she had to conduct her life.

a.) Humility in being named Superior

[Ms. 1] *O Lord, my heart longs to pour itself out to you in the affliction it now experiences. I see in this moment my own wretchedness now evident to all; and this perspective, which is a grace from You, renders even more burdensome the weight of the responsibility that I now must bear¹⁶⁷. It is not, though, o Lord, that it lacks confidence in You, and that it has ever believed that I could accomplish anything of myself.*

No, my confidence is still on a par with the diffidence I exercise in my own regard. But as the moment draws near, my nature feels all its weakness, and I experience a fear that surpasses in some things the contrary reflections and sentiments that I muster at regarding this. You, o Lord, are my strength, my support¹⁶⁸.

[Ms. 2] *Here I am, Lord, on that day when I have to take over, and exercise leadership over other Sisters, and how much this thought concerns me, only You know – because You see the depths of my heart. I am totally confused. It seems to me that I see all my companions far superior to myself. I could not think of anything else during the meditation, that this responsibility that I must now have.*

I fear being a real harm to the community, and of impeding the good of each and every one of them in particular, with my sins: do not permit this, o Lord; The desire of my heart would be able to lead all of these Sisters to you. And how to do this? I can do nothing!. Oh! How happy I would be in being the least of all, and hidden in order to live all for You and toward You! This is the life for which I have always yearned! But, since now you call me to act, and to work, I do not refuse the challenge...¹⁶⁹

[Ms. 3] *I was very concerned, at Holy Communion, and the other spiritual exercises before the Most Blessed Sacrament, with my own wretchedness, as also the fact that my sins place an impediment to the general good of the work, and of each one of the Sisters in particular. I have thought of telling the Father General that if, the Lord should make it known to him, that he may not want to make any further use of me in this role, that I am ready to be whatever he wants: it would be too easy to be a Lay Sister.*

¹⁶⁷ This is dated May 31, 1800. Mother Leopoldina was in Padua, a guest at the Convent of the Community known as the *Dimesse*. Making available a building of their own, the *Beloved of Jesus* were able to plan constructing a genuine and proper community of their own. Leopoldina was re-elected superior, and so she allows to appear in these notes her sentiments of humility and confidence in God, united to a profound sense of duty.

¹⁶⁸ *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 35.

¹⁶⁹ June 1, 1800. *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 36.

I certainly desire that Lord should grant me the grace of committing myself to His Work, but for its good I am ready to renounce myself in order to move ahead. In this thought, I have seen myself to be so wretched, that I have thought that perhaps I would be a burden to the Institute and that, were it not for His compassion in my regard, I would merit to be expelled.

This afflicts me very much, but with all for which I have this sentiment, I have furthermore experienced that no matter how much I might merit this, they will not do it.

Going ever ahead with such thoughts regarding myself, I felt a movement of zeal that was so strong for this Endeavor of the Lord. Thus, I prayed to Him, that if it were not His most holy will, that I be committed to it, and that He would not permit that I be of impediment to my fellow Sisters, and that rather He would let me die. With a strong sentiment, I accepted an immediate death, in order not to be of harm to the Work of the Lord...¹⁷⁰

b] Humility in considering at times what is an Obstacle to Grace

[Ms. 4] *Later, before the Blessed Sacrament, humbling myself even further before the Lord, it seemed that I experienced that not only should I think of the evil that I have done and am still doing, but also of the good I might have done and neglected. All the while the Lord wanted much from me and with such mercy a number of times led me to understand this by telling me in the depths of my heart: ‘From you, I want the highest perfection, as it simply is not possible to do otherwise, without abusing My graces, since these have been infinite...’¹⁷¹.*

[Ms. 5] *I come, o Lord, to confess to you, my ingratitude. These I feel with even greater force that I am moved to this recognition by Your goodness. Yes, my God, the feeling that when I want to raise up my spirit, my soul to You, to go beyond my misery and weakness, I re-discover You in the depths of my heart always the same. I find You ready not only to listen to me, and to pardon me, as the sinner that I am, but even more to assure me that always, despite my ingratitude and negligence in serving You, You have been with me in that particular manner. This leads me to experience even a more intimate union with You, and this indeed opens my eyes upon myself and leads me to see the abyss of misery in which I am...¹⁷².*

[Ms. 6] *I feel that which I ought to do, or, to put it with even greater truth, I feel this but without knowing clearly in what it consists.*

I see that I place certain impediments with my wretchedness to this knowledge, and at the same time, before the execution of that which I do know: and I cannot see even in detail just what these miseries are. The failing to see them convinces me that in proportion to my weakness and blindness, and holds me in great humiliation, so to this extent it is that I find myself rarely with my companions, without having the thought that they are much further advanced than I am before the Lord; they correspond at least to that which the Lord wills from them. And a flood of thoughts and comparisons all in favor of these same Sisters keeps me occupied in the manner that I ought to conduct myself in order not to make known these sentiments to them, and I would wish sometimes to humble myself before all of them, and recommend myself to their charity.

Each time that they obey me is for me an object of humbling myself and of admiring them. These sentiments, even though most frequently pertain to my companions, I experience them also toward every person and I am now at the point of humbling myself interiorly toward any other person whom I might see...¹⁷³

[Ms. 7] *In reflecting upon myself, I have seen that I do everything with great imperfection and I have thought to remedy this with the Lord’s help, by doing the contrary, and by seeking to place*

¹⁷⁰ Thursday, 1800. *Leopoldina Naudet...*, p. 38.

¹⁷¹ Tuesday 1800; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c. p. 37.

¹⁷² August 11, 1800; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 44.

¹⁷³ [1800]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 45.

*the greatest perfection in the least things. This exactness, done for God, will lead me to know these same imperfections and I hope from the Lord that having overcome all the impediments, that I place in the way of grace, the Lord will grant me greater than all these: that of corresponding to His benefits and never to leave grace unfruitful...*¹⁷⁴

[Ms. 8] *I feel that my will is orientated continuously toward God for everything, but I do not see to it that it responds in accord with this goodness. Rather, I often find myself doing precisely what I would rather not do, and not doing what I would want to do. And I believe that I am all the more culpable, because this will is not contrary to good within me, rather I always find it firm in this direction...*¹⁷⁵

[Ms. 9] *I cannot describe the obstacles that I retain in my nature against virtue: they are many! However, the little I pay heed to them, occurs when the means in order to overcome them succeed in me – and when all goes contrary, then it is that I do not pay attention to them. Rather, my attention is more riveted on the virtues that I should exercise to combat this tendency. The thinking over of my defects has never helped me to emend them, because there are so many of them, and I get discouraged. This is so much so that it seems to me that my passions are within me as dragons in chains. And I often pray to the Lord that He will not allow the chain to be opened. I would often like to go forth, and I feel a certain irritation that brings harm to my nature. My miseries then appear to me like a mass of mud. I pay so little heed also to them, because they overwhelm me. That which helps me the more is to think of the contrary virtues, and to attach myself to these. I should, therefore, overcome myself and outside of myself I do find assistance in the Lord, while, as I remain in my own mud, I become all the more muddied...*¹⁷⁶

[Ms. 10] *In this intimate part of my soul, there is the view of my miseries. As for those past, it seems to me that the Lord moves me to make use of them as the foundation for holiness, remaining that humiliation that they cause for me, the knowledge of myself that they have given me, and that diffidence that I feel that I should most assuredly employ. But I remain in great fear of those that I might still be able to commit in the future, now that I find myself furnished with experience, and with so many lights, as well as by interior strength to look at myself, that I want to suffer all, no matter what, in order to avoid even the least imperfection over past happenings...*¹⁷⁷

[Ms. 11] *I do not want to respond when I am corrected, but to receive the correction even if the matter is different from that which has been so judged, thinking therefore that I merit even worse, and if others even knew of the favors that the Lord had bestowed on me, and how ungrateful I am for it all, all would hate me...*¹⁷⁸

[Ms. 12] *Being as wretched as I am, should I fall into some failing, in all that I have proposed for myself, I will do all that I can not to be discouraged, nor to afflict myself, but I will humble myself before God, renewing my resolutions with greater effort than ever and recommend myself to the Lord...*¹⁷⁹

[Ms. 13] *The benefits, then, which the Lord bestows on me in other things as well, I will come to recognize them in these days, in which I have such ease concerning them, and in which the Lord bestows on me the grace of being able to remember them in my spirit. Those failings, which I have committed, how numerous they are, o God!*¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁴ [1800]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 47.

¹⁷⁵ [1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 58.

¹⁷⁶ [1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 50.

¹⁷⁷ [1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet ...* o.c., p. 60.

¹⁷⁸ [1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c. p. 65/

¹⁷⁹ [1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 65.

¹⁸⁰ [October 10, 1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 68.

[Ms. 14] *What can I add in order to excuse myself? Also in the world, I experienced my rebellious nature, which would have wanted at times to seek human satisfactions and to love creatures, but sustained by the intimate sentiment, which led me to realize that I was already on my way toward God, I overcame every affection, every thought - in brief, the least reality which was not of God Alone, not even allowing the time to pass on then to any other sentiment.*

So, it is not that my nature was different, but I was different not because I allowed myself to be surprised and with the grace of God I continuously held the weapons in my hand, without any victory rendering me more bold to take on others. Rather, this simply put me on guard and on the defensive. What confusion there is for me when I think of all that I have done, and then, that I am now in the religious state!

But still, Lord, I have to thank You, because You have not yet punished my boldness in offending You, but You have awaited my repentance, my conversion, and You have granted me all the means to do so. You have also kept me interiorally all Yours: if You had ever let go of the bridle of my passions, oh! What would ever have become of me! Yes, Lord, I am confounded in being such a guilty sinner, and I thank You for all the worse from which You preserved me...¹⁸¹

[Ms. 15] *I have come to know that the Lord has given me more than He would have required of another in order to make her a saint. I have not been lacking in either the means, or the lights, nor the grace and all of this in abundance. However, from my part I have been lacking in everything, nor have I corresponded to these things. Thus, I went on as though I was just sure of having them each and every time that I would have needed them, since I did not keep custody over them...¹⁸²*

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c] **Humility in recognizing that which she had received from God**

[Ms. 16] *As a religious sister, I have had even stronger stimuli in order not to offend Him, being able to remind myself that He had chosen me as His Bride and that, even before my infancy, He had disposed me for this happiness, having ordered everything in His admirable Providence and preserved me in my ten years of Court life from attaching myself to any other than to Him Alone...¹⁸³*

[Ms. 17] *All that is created, has been created for us and not that we have been created for all these goods: we are Only for God! That all that is created might not fully satisfy our hearts is a proof that we have had our beginning through that, but that God is our end...¹⁸⁴*

[Ms. 18] *Yes, Lord, I confess it before You, that I have never been able to call myself happy with the love of any creature, because I have known Your love and convinced of the inconstancy and the instability of man, I could never see happiness in that which does not last, and I saw that You Alone are the unique genuine happiness. And so my heart has been in the sweet necessity of confessing that we have been created for a more noble end...¹⁸⁵*

[Ms. 19] *He has placed in me so many good desires, that I have let them almost remain neglected. It just did not seem possible to me that how could He offer so many graces to a wretched person like myself, so full of weaknesses...¹⁸⁶.*

¹⁸¹ [October 13, 1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 68-69.

¹⁸² [October 13, 1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 74.

¹⁸³ [October 10, 1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 68

¹⁸⁴ [October 11, 1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c. p. 69.

¹⁸⁵ [October 10, 1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 69-70..

¹⁸⁶ [1803]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 86.

d.] Humility in speaking of her Own Interior Life

[Ms. 20] *I have a great difficulty in speaking about my own interior life, and so of all that I hold within. There are certain matters, it seems to me, that are so much a part of the intimate part of my soul, that it is not even possible to explain how they feel. As for the doubts, though, it seems to me, that rather than saying nothing, these would merit to be noted more. I do not say all, but those that I have that are few, because it seems to me that it is necessary to suffer something. All the more so that they give me some disturbance and that I feel that it would favor the more my self-love, if I were to do certain things with more assurance.*

*Generally, then, the inclination that I have of being silent about that which is within, it seems to me that this is a sentiment that I have of interior matters, given to know, are like a bottle of liquor: once the stopper is taken out, it evaporates. This could also happen regarding my own self-love, because as I am persuaded of my own wretchedness and that I have many defects, I wonder myself regarding those lights and good sentiments that the Lord gives me. And I think that in you it should have the same effect. I do not know how to make any decision on this...*¹⁸⁷

e.] 'Mortifications', 'to die to oneself.'

[Ms. 21] *Today, on this Feast of St. John the Baptist, I made my meditation on the life of this great Saint. There occupied me the spirit of mortification and penance that he had, even though he had been sanctified before being born. I spent some time on this, strongly criticizing myself from the bottom of my heart for the difference that there is found in me, sinner that I am. How I rebel before penance and I am so distant from mortifying myself in the least matter...I then paused on another aspect of the Saint's life, this was thinking of that mortification, which was the greatest that he offered in being so close to Jesus Christ, and yet he remained in the desert. It is this that makes me think of this Saint as the greatest of the martyrs. I thought that even in this I might take on as a model in all that pertains to the active life which takes away that facility of remaining for as long as one would like at the feet of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament...*¹⁸⁸

[Ms. 22] *I have always desired humiliations and mortifications, even though I receive these so badly, because I hoped to conquer that repugnance. But now I confess that even when there comes to me the thought of desiring it, I remain quiet because I know that they do not do me any good, while with a thought I bring myself more easily to the victory over myself, which with all the mortifications that they give me; they irritate me, more than healing me. I was the same way as a child. And they have not led me any longer along that path, from the moment that the effects that they had came to the fore, like now, that my health suffered much from them. I have to say all this to my great confusion, nor can I explain to myself from where they come...*¹⁸⁹

[Ms. 23] *If it should ever happen that I do not practice mortification, and allow myself to be taken over by some human sensibility, I feel the correction rise up in prayer. And this is very bitter for me, because it offends that love which God wishes from me. And this bitterness remains with me, and gives me discomfort, so much so that I willingly would make any sacrifice whatever, rather than have this thought to correct me...*¹⁹⁰

[Ms. 24] *I wish to love God with all my heart and to love Him Alone because He wills this of me. To combat every human sentiment, that would like to find a place: to do all for Him. and because He sees all, I will never speak of that which I will have done, of which I will do, but I desire all that is by Him alone known...*¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ [1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 53.

¹⁸⁸ [Tuesday, 1800]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 42.

¹⁸⁹ [1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 58.

¹⁹⁰ [1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c. p. 61.

¹⁹¹ [1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c. p. 64.

[Ms. 25] *The Lord has also led me to believe that I need to humbly await and to receive those helps that you will give me and not to have the presumption of demanding the, that which comes through my pride. But, I can only, under the title of charity, beg you to assist me in the desire that I have of pleasing the Lord...*¹⁹²

[Ms 26] *The Second Meditation*

The purpose of a religious Sister: to die to the world, to die to herself.

To die to the world and to that which is of the world, in a heart-felt manner, this seems to me to be easier. And therefore, since I never lived with my heart given over to the world, it seems also that there was no need to die to it...

To die to oneself: this is difficult. And I have not died this way yet, but on the contrary I still feel very much alive to the world in all occasions. What does all that matter to me which could be said or thought of me, if indeed I were dead? But, since I am not, I feel this.

In hearing this meditation, o Lord, I said to you in my heart that I wished to died indeed this time indeed. I want to feel nothing of my own self. But, o God, diffidence is that which accompanies my every resolution, my every sentiment.

*It seems to me that all these proposals have only a time. And perhaps that time is only during this Retreat. And then? And then it is always the same: I live just as I was before! I can hope, o Lord, that this my diffidence might find mercy before You, such, such that it might lead to Your compassion and that You will give me the grace, that hoping in You Alone, my hopes might not remain confused...*¹⁹³

[Ms. 27] *Having known the advantage that comes to my spirit from mortification, and the wrong and harm that it brings to my self-love, I resolve, after so much time that I am enslaved under this tyranny to submit perfectly in my judgment and to rejoice in humiliations that will be heaped upon me, and also not to lose therefore the freedom of spirit, knowing this to be deception of the devil that allowing myself to be overwhelmed by mortifications. I wish to place myself against my pride, not losing the occasion to beat this and to heap upon it with the spirit so much damage, that I have done thus far to it.*

*It is burdensome to me to experience that sensibility in which my sister has for me. I am thinking, therefore, to say this to her in a strong manner, because I am resolved to die, and not to look for that which my nature may suffer. Furthermore, from this same will of being mortified, I will ask the Father General not to pay any attention to that which might bring suffering to my nature, as he wants only my salvation and the life of my soul...*¹⁹⁴

[Ms. 28] *In those days*¹⁹⁵ *we saw in practice that our projects were changed several times in a week, and why? To make us die to ourselves, and at the same time to make us touch with our own hand that He Alone is the author of this Work, and that there be recognized the need that we have of having recourse in everything to Him, and that without Him, we are to do nothing. But we are to be ready and prepared in every moment to work at the first hint that we understand that this is His will...*¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² [1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 6.6

¹⁹³ [October 11, 1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c. pp. 70-71.

¹⁹⁴ [October 1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 84.

¹⁹⁵ This was a period of great suffering for Leopoldina and for all the *Beloved of Jesus*, since the accusations leveled against Fr. Paccanari, began to emerge in 1801, and they impacted the entire group of persons who had gathered around him.

¹⁹⁶ [May 10, 1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 88.

f.) **Her Fear of being ‘attached to herself’ and her ‘self-love’**

[Ms. 29] *I have another cross, but I feel it very little though; this is my quick judgment and my freedom of spirit. I love both, but at the same time that I love them, they hold me in humility and in a lowly state, because I think of the deception that these might bring in judging myself: that which unfortunately does happen! And often I say to myself that I should tell all to you, in order not to fall into this mistake...*¹⁹⁷

[Ms. 30] *My self-love still torments me, and much. I no longer have any love for virtue. In other words, the failings that I have committed regarding these, have given me in intimate persuasion and one rooted in my misery and in the evil inclination of my nature. In the manner that this has given me a certain diffidence regarding myself and very much comprehension for my neighbor with whom each time I have treated even of defects, I have always found more virtue in her than I have in myself. I have a certain contentment of the clarity with which it seems to me I am able to see various matters, and of the justness that I feel I have in judging them. But, this self-love keeps me in a lowly position, because I am afraid that in the punishment of the pleasure that I experience, on occasion, the Lord might also take from me this gift, which I know comes from Him. And as I esteem this highly, I am also quite afraid of losing it, because I believe that the Lord, in His mercy and to humble my pride, has permitted me to have this experience, from the failings which I commit, and of the evil which resides in me. And that He alone is the One Who keeps me from committing even greater faults, for which I have every disposition in my nature...*¹⁹⁸

[Ms. 31] *It still happens that I have the desire to speak, when there is a discussion on things which I know about and, since I do have a good memory, there naturally comes to me to tell that which I have learned or read. I would like to know if it would be good to keep silent, even on those occasions, for greater humility and mortification...*¹⁹⁹

[Ms. 32] *My self-love and my weakness make me suffer at times. But no matter how afflicted I may be at that time, it is not something that remains to me...*²⁰⁰

[Ms. 33] *I will not seek human consolation, but I will be animated with courage, thinking among other truths that the Lord will have permitted all that has happened to me, so that in reflecting upon it, I might serve him with greater commitment and without danger of self-love, having now the motive to humble myself for all the time of my life...*²⁰¹

[Ms. 34] *Another form of attachment to myself is that love for internal peace and quiet of soul, which I love very much. Therefore, it is not pleasant for me to be hassled. In brief, I find myself composed of misery and it is in this state that I begin this retreat...*²⁰²

[Ms. 35] *I have thought that my self-love, my freedom of spirit have hidden within me on many occasions also the gravity of my faults and that with these two things I have often been able to deceive my own judgment that I have made regarding myself...*²⁰³

[Ms. 36] *Reform regarding obedience.*

Examen. I have experienced many failings on this particular matter...

It is true that I do not do this with the intention of doing my own will and in order not to obey, but out of a presumption that leads me to believe that I see things more clearly and that I have a certain experience: all of this is the effect of self-love, that still makes it seem that there is some defect in

¹⁹⁷ [1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet ...*, o.c., p. 56/

¹⁹⁸ [1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 56.

¹⁹⁹ [1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., 58.

²⁰⁰ [1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 61

²⁰¹ [1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet....*, o.c., p. 65.

²⁰² [Retreat: October 10, 1801; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 67.

²⁰³ [October 12, 1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet....* o.c., p. 71.

not being able to keep quiet - while it is solely this self-love that moves my tongue and that if this were not ever teased, I would gladly remain without talking.

I also have to say that the Lord, in having given me the grace to reflect on what takes place, I have observed often that the matters that do pertain to me have unfolded against my wishes when I have not held myself to obedience and that I have also paid more attention to my own interests, by the experience had of all of this...²⁰⁴

[Ms. 37] *My own self-love is that which torments me the most, and makes me impatient when I fail, and so I am always impatient. The mortifications, when they last, bring me also the same effect. If I then examine myself, regarding my own responsibilities, I find that external matters, the defects of others, they do not give me the same impatience and this is because I always have to recognize that they are less than mine. And thus, no matter how obligated I am to take them up, they do not disconcert me.*

But, when they do not understand and with those who by nature seem prone not to understand matters well, or, in detail what they are doing, then I experience also some of that impatience – which, however, I am not able to compare with that which arises regarding myself...²⁰⁵

g.] A Definition of Humility and the Humility of Jesus Christ

[Ms. 38] *A Reform of Humility: that whatever is done, it is nothing if it is accomplished without humility.*

A comparison with a flask which contains either spirits, or oil, or something similar. Humility is the cruet which conserves the other virtues. Without this, they would all spill and be lost. There are three characteristics of humility: to love criticisms; to desire that our faults be known by others and that these be made known; to hide the good that one does. The Examen is proposed on these three points.

My Examen: Far from loving criticisms, it displeases me much when they are brought up, or they demonstrate that others do not have that esteem of me that I would like, deceiving or, rather, desiring to deceive, since I pretend an esteem from others, that I do not have myself because I know that I am unworthy.

Secondly. By hiding, whenever I can, my defects and if I should ever commit one before others, it would make me very unhappy. Of all this, I make excuses regarding my undertakings, which does not imply that my Sisters might see that I do have many defects. And thus, I deprive myself of the humiliation that I might have.

Thirdly. By not doing anything well, I do not have the occasion of making it known and there is too much self-love in order to speak about it, should I accomplish something. However, if I should be accused of something, then I depart from these considerations and I speak up and defend myself, and make it known that I am really innocent to such an extent that in the moment of examination that I make, I have to be embarrassed...²⁰⁶

[Ms. 39] *Consider the supreme, the best and our primary Captain and Emperor, Christ.*

1st Point: Consider Christ in a pleasant field near Jerusalem, established in a humble place, but very beautiful in form and supremely lovable of visage.

2nd Point: Ponder on how the Master of the universal world, the chosen Apostles, disciples and other ministers, He sends throughout the world, who impart to every class of human being and state and conditions, the sacred and salvific teaching.

3rd Point: Listen to the preaching of Christ, offering exhortation to all of His servants and friends, destined for this enterprise. He commands that they study to help any and everyone. And first they

²⁰⁴ [October 13, 1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 74-75.

²⁰⁵ [October 16, 1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 79.

²⁰⁶ [October 12, 1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 72-73.

need to commit themselves to put on the spiritual affection of poverty. And besides [if the reason of the divine service (ossequio) and election leads to this] to bring to reality this same poverty.

And then, they are to be nourished in the desire of shame and disdain, from whence, springs the virtue of humility. These are diametrically opposed to riches, honors and pride and very soon thereafter, all the virtues come to the fore...²⁰⁷

[Ms. 40] *This is the authentic school where all the saints have studied, and where they took up the great path to holiness. Let us then also be instructed by the Divine Teacher, and with genuine humility of heart, let us submit ourselves to the whips that strike our backs, because thus we will learn to subject our judgment and die to ourselves. We can be afraid of nothing, because the great Sovereign, Whom we have the happiness of serving, is most powerful, and His promises cannot be lacking to us. The paths of His providence are unknown to human beings, because I am speaking of an uncreated wisdom...²⁰⁸*

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2.4.2.2 Following the Direction of St. Gaspar Bertoni [1811-1815]

Leopoldina lived in Verona, at St. Joseph's Monastery, a guest of St. Maddalena di Canossa for eight years. Here she came to know Fr. Bertoni, first as Confessor, and then, after five years, she had not been receiving any spiritual direction. At first, Mother Leopoldina resisted the inspiration – but, then accepted the will of God that indicated to her to entrust herself to the spiritual direction of Fr. Gaspar.

This is the period of the full spiritual maturity of Mother Naudet. This time was notable for its evident progress in all the virtues and in the bestowal upon her of numerous mystical gifts on the part of God. Her mission became ever clearer as Foundress of a new religious institute that would live under the name and the protection of the Holy Family. The divine inspirations solicited her to form a group of women vowed totally to God, in contemplation and action, and to become herself the corner-stone, in humility and love, of the new Congregation. The quest and the carrying out of the Will of God regarding herself and her Institute reached, in this period of her life, a rather elevated level. This is the most sublime and important part of her *Personal Reminiscences* ²⁰⁹.

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a.) Humility as 'submission to the Divine Will' – 'considering oneself secure in the Lord's Hands' – and 'to establish everything in Him'

[Ms. 41] *I exposed the desires that I had to obey, as it seemed to me that the Lord had willed up to now that I would have left this all up to Him Alone: but now, it seemed to me that He wanted an external help for me. I spoke of my difficulties: and of a certain pleasure that I have of God Alone in all matters. And therefore, in a time of prayer, while making clear to the Lord that I stood well before Him, I heard Him respond to me that it was that I would stand even in a better way before Him in that He wanted this of me. I exposed the workings of this obedience: it was to assist, to second, the internal operations for those external. And it was established in this manner, since I had to make use of the means as a means, and to look solely toward its end. After all this, before*

²⁰⁷ [October 17, 1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 82.

²⁰⁸ [September 9, 1806]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c. p. 89.

²⁰⁹ *Positio*, Vol. II, Doc. XIV, *Writings of the Servant of God*: Intr. B, II, pp. 1282-1283.

Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament, I submitted myself to the most Holy Will, since in so far as there was no greater means of correspondence, this brought me consolation...²¹⁰.

[Ms. 42] *In another time of prayer, the Lord led me to understand that I had to await humbly and to accept those aids that He would be about to give me as through the means of His minister, and not to have the presumption of demanding them – which is precisely what my pride could very easily do. But, I can only, under the title of charity, beg him to assist me in the desire that I do have of pleasing the Lord...²¹¹.*

[Ms. 43] *Having a natural concern in speaking to a companion and in wishing to persuade her about a matter: the Lord led me to understand that the result and the efficacy of what I say and do, I have to await all this from Him, by entrusting myself which is to give Him, not believing that He is dependent on the manner in which I may express matters...²¹².*

[Ms. 44] *I began the prayer with greater abandonment in God, with regard to the manner and the commitment of this time that I could dedicate to it. And the Lord gave me the light to understand, and the manner with which He wills that I carry this out always, and other insights that will serve me still for instruction and admonition.*

I knew then that He willed that I should go and dedicate myself in prayer in that total silence of the faculties and repose in Him, that renders one in this more passive than active: and that the willing at times to do something on my own, is that which disturbs that which He wishes to do alone in me, without me, and I could almost say, without me even seeing it.

The Lord then moved to lead me to understand that this repose in Him, wishes that this be had even outside of prayer, and being He the One Who takes over my potencies, the use that I would like at times to make of them, occasions in me defects, fears, solicitude, impatience; all of which I experience only then, which even briefly, I place myself in that which I carry out and I do not remain in that total abandonment that He wants of me.

In knowing these things, I exposed to the Lord the difficulties that seemed to me to be in that which He willed so absolute, having awaited the operations of the active life, which seem to me to render necessary the use of one or the other of the faculties. And the Lord in response reminded me of that light which He gave me a month ago, i.e., that there would be necessary courage and constancy, faith and confidence in Him, for this path, but which He wants.

I submitted myself...²¹³

[Ms. 45] *He made me understand that in all that in which I find myself as obliged to do, and awaiting my commitment, I should not consider myself as the mistress, but only as the slave, keeping in mind that these are not my interests, but those of the Lord. And I am to obey His slightest indication, awaiting the orders from Him.*

This matter pleased me and persuaded me much, but at the same time I knew that He wanted, from my part, a greater detachment from myself, a total death...²¹⁴

[Ms. 46] *‘If you remain in that center where I want you to dwell, you will not have anything to fear, but outside of this there is a bit of everything.’*

I knew then that the Lord with these words wished to stimulate me the more to repose in Him, against the fears that try my nature in that total loss of myself and that only by means of this will I

²¹⁰ [January 9, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet*, o.c., p. 93.

²¹¹ [January 9, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet*, o.c., p. 96.

²¹² [January 22, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet*, o.c., p. 98.

²¹³ [April 22, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet*, o.c., p. 115/

²¹⁴ [April 24, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet*, o.c., p. 116.

*be able to avoid every evil. I then made new acts of abandonment, wishing really not to know anything other regarding myself, and to repose continuously in God...*²¹⁵

[Ms. 47] *The Three Classes. I stopped at the Second Prelude, experiencing consolation in seeing me before the Lord and He looking on my desire to please Him, as the only reality to which I aspire...*²¹⁶

[Ms. 48] *Concerning that which pertains to the Institute, under the article of whether the members may possess or not, it seemed to me that the motives I have for a positive response, are only relative to the greater glory of God, and for not knowing that He wishes otherwise. But, I feel more disposed for the contrary, as His will.*

*Representing to the Lord this disposition of mine, I felt myself formulating this expression: 'Behold, Lord, that which Your love, Your charity, has produced in me and the disposition in which it has placed me.' Recognizing that I have nothing of good within me, nor could I have anything...*²¹⁷

[Ms. 49] *I thought how, in this sea of the world, the Lord has placed me in a small boat, in which He is also present, as in that of the Apostles. I sat very close to Him and I thought that in every storm that might arise, since He is with us, there is nothing to fear, even if He gives the impression that He is sleeping. I felt myself full of confidence in Him and in His power, and I thought that without wonder I would see every storm sedated by Him, recognizing Him for being omnipotent, good and merciful...*²¹⁸

[Ms. 50] *In making the Examen of the first meditation in that manner in which it had been prescribed for me, i.e., with asking humbly of the Lord to lead me to know the defects in which I had fallen, He drew me more intimately to Himself and led me to understand that in this I was not abandoned – or, to put it better, having left without direction that love with which He drew me to Himself. That I am too held back for Him: I place for my part, certain limits and confines that He does not wish for me to place.*

*I resolved to emend this...*²¹⁹

[Ms. 51] *It seemed to me still that the Lord was saying to me that He so wished to be the Master of my spirit, that I do not have enter into this for anything, and that all of its operations He would like do to them himself, and my care should only be that of not allowing anything of my own to enter there, as insignificant as this would be, under any pretext of good, whether of a spiritual nature or for greater profit. This succeeded in me in a grateful sense, and at the same time also one of some suffering...*²²⁰

[Ms. 52] *At Communion, the Lord led me to understand that He wanted in everything that pertains to my soul, that I desire all that is entailed, and procure all these only to give Him glory, and not to aim any more at my own advantage, that for all this, I should leave the care up to Him, being forgetful of myself.*

Following this sentiment and light, which the Lord had bestowed on me, the moment in which I received Him in holy Communion, I dedicated all myself to Him, in order to serve His glory and

²¹⁵ [April 26, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 118.

²¹⁶ [*Spiritual Exercises, The Two Standards*, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c. p. 128.

²¹⁷ l.c.

²¹⁸ [*Spiritual Exercises, The Storm Subdued*, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 132.

²¹⁹ [*Spiritual Exercises, Fourth Week*. 1st Day, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, .c., pp. 135-136.

²²⁰ [*Spiritual Exercises, Fourth Week*. 1st Day, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., . 136.

*His love. It seemed then that this would help me more efficaciously to despoil myself from myself and not to seek my own interests, nor to find me in those things...*²²¹

[Ms. 53] *It seemed to me that the Lord has instructed me on this, by bringing me to know that when He gives me the vision of my own miseries [which He wishes to purge in the furnace of His charity, by means of prayer], He does this because He wants from me acts of confidence and abandonment in Him, that begin not from a general knowledge of His omnipotence in order to free my soul from every misery, but from that almost security of His goodness and love that He wants to bestow. Hence, I need to trust and to think that He has greater care to put my soul in order than that which I could have for myself....*²²²

[Ms. 54] *For the space of a quarter of an hour it seemed to me that I offered up so many expressions of love and affection for the Lord and that reciprocally He did so with me. I made great promises: for as many defects as would be committed, to wish to entrust myself to him and not to waste a moment over these, but to animate myself with love of emendation. I renewed still the will to do all for His love and glory, without thinking further of myself, not even of my own spiritual profit, since He is to think of all...*²²³

[Ms 55] *I ended the Retreat on June 2nd, Pentecost Sunday. Following the Retreat, I experienced greater desires to seek solely for the divine glory, without mixing in to this anything of myself.*

*In presenting myself to the Lord in prayer, and in experiencing that usual joy of finding myself in His Divine Presence, and being able to occupy myself only with Him Alone, I experience this difference: that in place of imagining myself that for me there was nothing else in this world but God and myself, now I feel that there really is not even myself there either, but Only God. I no longer want to think neither of myself, nor of anything for me, but for the unique Glory of God, not looking even any more for my own spiritual advantage, and wishing to live only for God, for His glory...*²²⁴

[Ms. 56] *In seeking that the Lord comes always to the support of all that His minister says to me, and that he follows the divine will in my regard in all that he counsels me, I renewed in myself the desire to obey always more and the thought, already had by me many times, of binding myself by vow to this obedience. Concerning this, the Lord made me know who I was already bound to this, His Will, manifested by Himself, in a manner that I could not doubt it.*

And then, I recalled the circumstances, and He gave to me a knowledge and intellectual view of the mediated origin that this obedience had from Him and the submission that I have to offer His minister.

*And it seemed to me to have an even greater obligation, as though by my spontaneous vow that I would have obligated myself to it...*²²⁵

[Ms. 57] *The Lord in this day gave me a very strong and internal sentiment on those words of the Our Father: 'Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven' ...*²²⁶

[Ms. 58] *The final words of this petition were those that impressed themselves strongly on my spirit, and the knowledge, that this received concerning these, enkindled my will to desire the*

²²¹ [*Spiritual Exercises, Fourth Week. 2nd Day, 1811*]; Leopoldina Naudet, o.c. p. 137

²²² [*Spiritual Exercises, Fourth Week. 3rd Day. 1811*]; Leopoldina Naudet..., o.c., p. 138

²²³ [*Spiritual exercises, Fourth Week, 7th Day, 1811*]; Leopoldina Naudet..., o.c., p. 141.

²²⁴ [June 1811]; Leopoldina Naudet..., o.c., pp. 142-143.

²²⁵ [July 26, 1822]; Leopoldina Naudet..., o.c., p. 144.

²²⁶ Mt6:10: note n. 3, August 14, 1811; o.c., p. 146.

*fulfillment in me of this request, and to carry out with all perfection the divine will in all things, thus repeating within my spirit: 'as it is in heaven'...*²²⁷

[Ms. 59] *In all this time, I experienced in prayer a great emptiness of myself and great confidence in the omnipotence of God to form something out of an instrument that was as wretched as I am. This misery led me to feel and know strongly, but at the same time, sweetly – and it seemed to me that this is a knowledge given to me by the First Truth, which is God. This is not something of a speculative nature. The effect of this impresses itself on my spirit, which is humble before God, but full of confidence. Beyond this knowledge, which the Lord gives me of my misery, He continues explaining to me how He wants to make use of me for His glory, that there be consumed in me every small sentiment of myself and of confidence in anything that there might seem to be in me, and that I have not seen all of God...*²²⁸

[Ms. 60] *It seemed to me that in uniting myself to the Lord by means of the exercises of an interior life, there is to be received such a force for every encounter and obstacle that I will have to meet in the carrying out of His divine will, which will overcome all.*

And without this support it seems that I would not be able to support the least matter.

I had also the desires to fix on those things on the outside, which might have a relation in this life and that are suited to support and sustain this spirit.

*I hope all from the Lord of lights, from whom I have to depend, and with pleasure I see myself deprived of all, because I am more sure that everything will come from Him and that all will be in conformity to His Most Holy Will...*²²⁹

[Ms. 61] *In prayer this morning, the Lord drew me to Himself with sentiments of confidence, and making me understand that in that which He wills that be carried out, this is the sentiment that is the most necessary for me, and that I have nothing to fear: only that of losing this confidence and trust in Him.*

All the rest cannot hurt me.

*From this I came to understand the necessity that I have of exercising the acts, and of not losing these encounters that I have to exercise this virtue of obedience, and to have them more often...*²³⁰

[Ms. 63] *On this day, I experienced great confidence in God for that which I have to undertake, not supporting myself on anything but Him, with consolation, that was also aware of not having anything else...*²³¹

[Ms. 64] *In prayer today, I felt myself all immersed in God with the desire of His Holy Spirit, and of being so imbued by this, that my every action, every thought, every word, would be directed by this.*

*And it seemed to me that I was like a sponge, all full of this Spirit and I asked the Lord that He might give me help, so that after the prayer there was conserved in me the effect of all then that He gave me to experience...*²³²

²²⁷ [August 14, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 146.

²²⁸ [August 26,31, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c.,

²²⁹ [September 23, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*o.c., p. 152.

²³⁰ [October 29, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 157.

²³¹ [November 30, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 162

²³² [March 3, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 168.

[Ms. 65] *In prayer, there continued in me a great sentiment of God, of total confidence in Him, of abandonment.*

*And these followed me in every circumstance and activity, so that I do not ever lose sight of God and the strength and the grace that He communicates, trusting myself solely in Him. This is accompanied by continuous stimuli of pleasing Him in all things, of consulting Him and seeking His Will in everything...*²³³

[Ms. 66] *In the prayer after lunch, which made ever stronger and rendered more vivid those sentiments expressed above, there was joined a great desire of total annihilation and emptying of all myself, so that God might totally and solely work out everything in me. I had at the same time an intellectual view of this entire death to myself and of this totally spiritual life and one being of God. And He made it known to me that He wanted me to live in this way...*²³⁴

[Ms. 67] *All these days I took full advantage of that quiet, into which the Lord placed me, in order to work through everything and to handle all the matters before me. There helped me likewise the prevailing within me of that sole confidence in Him, in order to remove from me self-love in the outcome of matters, knowing that they indeed would not have turned out the way they did, because of this special assistance the Lord flooded me before hand in order to accomplish them.*

Hence, as to the extent that my self-love is great, it was not possible since, knowing clearly this truth, I could hide myself there, from Whom all good proceeds.

*And being much assisted, I proposed for myself to stand very attentive in seeking Him Alone in everything, and nothing of myself...*²³⁵

[Ms. 68] *I experienced Him at work in me and I felt that my heart expanded for His operations and not to limit them. I desired that the Charity and the fire that it produces, might consume everything that was not in accord with God.*

*I experienced a great confidence that these operations of grace and the leaving me by Him to work and to manage them, was to render me suited to all that He would want of me. And in these sentiments of trust, with every confidence in the Lord, I said to Him: 'I am not good for anything, but You and I will do great things...'*²³⁶

[Ms. 69] *In Communion today, the fervor continued that the Lord had excited in me the day before at prayer and it seemed to me to see clearly, but intellectually, that in everything He would do the most, and that only if I had a hand to extend, without feeling its weight, that He would carry everything.*

*I desired to transform myself wholly into Him, becoming more immediate with Him, seeing that with every force and every capacity in working it could not come to me except from this...*²³⁷

[Ms. 70] *The Lord made me not only understand, but also almost, I would say, made me see openly how all this takes place and how uselessly I at times worry about things, while all that I really have to do is to love him and to follow that which he wants from me, and as for all the rest, to leave this up to Him...*²³⁸

²³³ [March 6, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 168.

²³⁴ [March 12, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 168-169.

²³⁵ [From April 11-16, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 171.

²³⁶ [June 3, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 174.

²³⁷ [June 4, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 174.

²³⁸ [October 9-10, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c. pp. 178-179.

[Ms. 71] *There was presented to me also another view and this was to see the present state, in which the Lord had placed my soul, with that which I was just a little while back.*

It seemed to me, then, another time, when the Lord made me experience there the view of being all taken up and worried, while taking from me for some time even the use of the powers, and I found that He possessed me totally.

*Now, it seems to me that it is no longer I, but that it is only He, with some little contribution from me, and even this I have to cast away...*²³⁹

[Ms. 72] *The Lord still endowed me with a great fear of the greatness of these graces that He bestows on me. It seemed to me that there would not be needed any more than a very thin wire, like the width of a hair, that could break all this, and I would be thrown down.*

*This view seemed to place me in a state of humble reverence before God and in a great attention to all the teachings which He gave me...*²⁴⁰

[Ms. 73] *When in prayer these days, out of a certain habit, used internally with the Lord, the usual expressions [that I would want the Lord solely to be in me, that I wish to be wholly His etc.], I experienced that this is already so, that I do not any longer have to tend toward this, with seeing that he is indeed already within me, but that I am no longer myself, it is no longer I – I have to will in the dwelling that is already His that there should enter there any more anything of my own...*²⁴¹

[Ms. 74] *The Lord endowed me with a grand desire to look solely to His glory and to procure this with all my strength.*

*These sentiments which I had in Communion, continued for me during prayer and I desired to forget even myself, in order to look only at what was for His glory...*²⁴²

[Ms. 75] *I prayed the Lord to purify all that remains of misery, which is found in me, and to give me a supreme readiness in the encounters, that can render me contrary to willing that which He wills, with all my heart, with all my affection and with all myself...*²⁴³

[Ms. 76] *The Lord drew me ever more to remain fixed on Him and not to have any other aim than toward Him in everything. In prayer, I found myself always passive, feeling though that the Lord worked in me and wished to do all the work, in a manner that I was not able to do anything, without feeling that I was emptied, the more that I did not do. This led me to abandon myself ever more in Him and to remain unmovable in His hands...*²⁴⁴

[Ms. 77] *Confidence in God, a great indifference for all that might happen.*

*I experienced this confidence, in a particular manner, concerning the endeavor that the Lord has placed in my hands. Through this, it seems to me, that I should remain so secure, in that I should not fear anything and that should some event, the most contrary happen, by remaining fixed on God, I would overcome all...*²⁴⁵

[Ms. 78] *I found myself other times drawn toward the Lord which led me to understand in Him that sympathy that is found between Himself and our soul. I experienced this in certain moments in*

²³⁹ [October 17, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 181.

²⁴⁰ [October 21, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c. p.182.

²⁴¹ [October 21, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 182.

²⁴² [December 11, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 189.

²⁴³ [December 14, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 189

²⁴⁴ [January 1813]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 191.

²⁴⁵ [January 1813]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c. pp. 191-192.

*a powerful manner, with an ever greater detachment from this earth and with the desire to unite myself ever more to the Lord. Toward Him, my soul aspires with a great attraction, making me yearn for an ever more intimate union with Him...*²⁴⁶

[Ms. 79] *The Lord led me to abandon everything into His hands and attracted me totally toward Him, so much so that I could not do other than to love and to enjoy, feeling that He possessed all of me and held me intimately united to Him...*²⁴⁷

[Ms. 80] *The First Meditation was on the Reign of Christ.*

In beginning this, it seemed to me that the Lord was drawing me to consider not a call to this reign, which is the usual and the most ordinary, but one that was higher, raising me up and drawing me to Himself, leading me to comprehend that if He calls some to serve Him, He called me not to do this as the lowest servants of His Court – and not even like those who stand closest to the King and who are the most favored, but as His Bride, who is called to seek and to imitate in all her Spouse, seeking in everything to be similar to Him and to please Him.

*There was represented to me, therefore, that purity that I should have, as really how I ought to live totally of the spirit, not giving the slightest attention to the things of here below, and how I always ought to have in my sights God Himself, striving in every way to please Him and to give Him glory, etc. However, I saw all this in an intimate and spiritual manner, that words can only very poorly represent...*²⁴⁸

†††

b.) Humility as ‘Mortification’, a ‘dying to oneself’

[Ms. 81] *The Lord also led me to know that to guard that center, where He dwells within my soul, it would be right to place there a hedge. It came to me what is meant by the word ‘mortification’. And as my health does not permit me undertake any, I made a reflection concerning it. But, I know that the Lord does not ask penances of me, but rather that I keep careful guard. This can only be done by means of the virtues, which can protect that charity, that the Lord has placed in my soul...*²⁴⁹

[Ms.82] *I made reflection on a matter that mortifies me and that is that whenever I manifest anything, even when no question is addressed to me, as that would render the manifestation easier and less difficult. The Lord will correct me for this, all the more so in that He has always given me the sentiment of rejoicing in that which mortifies me, now more than ever, having bestowed on me so many graces, and which I need. Thinking then that this is not said so much to me for my spiritual profit, as it is to others, and fearing that this is a punishment for my pride, so also on this I felt that I should respond that I just have to trust in His mercy, of which I have so many proofs, and in all these matters, I lacked charity toward Him...*²⁵⁰

[Ms. 83] *I reflected twice, in a letter, on the expressions of esteem that it contained, which is something I should avoid, not curing myself of this sentiment, from anyone, not matter how holy this person might be.*

‘Do not believe every spirit: but, try the spirits if they be of God...’[1 Jn 4:1].

²⁴⁶ [January 1813]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p.192.

²⁴⁷ [Spiritual Exercises, March 1813]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 193-194.

²⁴⁸ [Spiritual Exercises, March 1813]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 198.

²⁴⁹ [January 9, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 95.

²⁵⁰ [January 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 99.

‘And do you all insinuate humility one to another, for god resists the proud, but to the humble he gives grace...’ [1 P 5:5]. ‘For if any man thinks himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceives himself...’ [Ga 6:3]...²⁵¹

[Ms. 84] *The Lord showed me further how many gifts and lights He would communicate to my soul, but He wills that I become the more despoiled of myself and truly bereft of any self-satisfaction.*

He explained to me the need of this, with His customary mercy and love which He employs in my regard, by leading me to understand that He is jealous of His glory and perfection of soul. And so, both would be compromised by entrusting His gifts to anyone who is not so despoiled of herself, since she would not be leaving all to Him, when self-love makes her draw her contentment from that which belongs purely to Him Alone, and also one’s own perfection with this self-satisfaction set aside...²⁵²

[Ms. 85] *In prayer, the Lord let me know the great purity with which He wishes to embellish my soul, and in a particular manner, that total despoilment from all self-love and taking satisfaction in things, a disposition that demands of me also for the sake of communicating to me greater graces.*

No matter how many times He had shed His light on me regarding this, it was never before as subtle as this time, and the expressions with which I can express the matter are the same. However, the substance is different, thereby increasing the meaning of the manner, with the Lord, little by little, raising a curtain before my eyes, so much so that after having made me see a level of purity that He wills, He then goes on making me then consider another degree that is even greater.

Now, therefore, this is very subtle, so that it seemed to me that I came to comprehend a total death to myself in everything.

In seeing humanly the difficulty, without however, this being able terrify me away, I marveled at not feeling myself overwhelmed by the hard task, but rather was most consoled in tending toward it. And the Lord made me understand that I owed this to the desires that in the preceding days He had placed in me, which were both strong and ardent. They thus rendered easy every difficulty that there was to be overcome, in order to tend and to arrive at the point of uniting myself to the object of my desires, and just as I know with the purity, emptiness, despoilment and death to myself, and that this will make me arrive all the sooner.

I love all that gives me light to procure all these things, not looking at anything but the top where I still have to arrive, and not at the street. Thus, with all the more courage I grasp that I know how good the Lord is, and how He helps me so that it seems to me that it is no longer I who has something to accomplish, but He, as I know that He is in all things...²⁵³

[Ms. 86] *During the days that have passed, there continued in me the same sentiments of abandonment and total loss of myself in God.*

One day, after Communion, there came to my mind the example of the phoenix – as I have to die, in order to live anew then in the new and total life in God. I feel that I should no longer live I, but that Jesus lives in me...²⁵⁴

[Ms. 87] *2nd Point. Concerning all things that God has created for human beings, I saw that the greater part of them could lead me to arrive assuredly at my end by the negative part, by mortifying*

²⁵¹ [These are biblical citations copied in Leopoldina’s own handwriting and placed among her spiritual notes, without any precise date. Cf. her notes under January 16, 1822; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, pp. 100-102. The verses were quoted in Latin].

²⁵² [February 27, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 107.

²⁵³ [March 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 108-109.

²⁵⁴ [April 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 110.

*me in their use. And further, I noted that the lack of this mortification at times has distanced me, and at other times, had slowed down, tending toward them as I should...*²⁵⁵

[Ms. 88] *I took courage in exposing them to the Lord how much I found myself embarrassed and tired of the many remnants that there are in me of sins, of the acts of inconstancy that I have from sins, and from those actions of inconstancy that I have placed in the exercise of virtue and mortification, by those habits of pride, of self-seeking, of self-love, from all that I find in me impeded from all that I ought to be doing and that He led me to know what He would want of me.*

*I begged Him, therefore, to unloose these remnants of the bonds, which without tying me down totally, they do impede me. I asked this of Him through the infinite merits of my Redeemer...*²⁵⁶

[Ms. 89] *These remnants that I have, and how they displease me, have come anew into my mind, and it seems to me that I would need much contrary virtue in order to smother them, particularly with the great disdain of myself, since this is the ultimate root of pride...*²⁵⁷

†††

c.) Humility in 'recognizing the truth concerning oneself before God', one's own 'miseries', and the 'not corresponding always to grace':

[Ms. 90] *He gave me the great desires to increase and to aspire ever forward without ever stopping. Concerning this, I made it clear to the Lord that I am not even good enough to do that which now He makes me understand, i.e., the debt that I have of acting under the movement of grace, in all, and only for the sake of pleasing Him, and that in this, I commit many faults. I begged Him, therefore, that just as He already took over the use of my potencies, so he also placed in me a sweet necessity of not being able to do anything materially and without an actual aim and will of pleasing Him...*²⁵⁸

[Ms.91] *Having used a certain negligence regarding myself concerning the particular Examen and other matters, the Lord in prayer led me to understand this. It seemed to me that I have been a vagabond and need to come back therefore to take my refuge in the arms of my Lord, Who gave me also sentiments of compunction, for which I cast myself at His feet, begging pardon from Him for having even for a part of the day, neglected that vigilance that I ought to have over myself, the sole means with which I can ask Him some little expression of gratitude for all the love that He bears me...*²⁵⁹

[Ms. 92] *This very morning, the Lord represented to me as way up on high, that toward which He was making me tend ardently toward Him. It seemed to me that following yesterday, He gave me to understand where He would draw me, if I did not place any impediment before so many things, which He would like to achieve in my soul. He represented to me always more vividly my ingratitude, not so much as a correction, but as a wrong that I used toward God, when I would commit so many miseries and I did not keep attentive vigil to cast them aside. Among other things, the Lord led me to understand that certain small things, that in others would be nothing and would not offend Him, He does not want them in me. This, among other faults, is that rather harmless conversations, useless, of insignificant matters that serve only to distract me and make me lose that attention on Him, which I understand I should always have...*²⁶⁰

²⁵⁵ [Spiritual Exercises, 'The End of Man', 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 119.

²⁵⁶ [Spiritual exercises, 'Meditation on the Incarnation', 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 123.

²⁵⁷ [Spiritual Exercises, 'The Supper', 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 133.

²⁵⁸ [January 9, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 96.

²⁵⁹ [February 5, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 104.

²⁶⁰ [February 6, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 104-105.

[Ms. 93] *I began this day to examine myself every hour, since this had been suggested to me. I had the occasion to find thousands upon thousands of defects, which I commit, which distract me and impede my hastening toward God, as He would wish...*²⁶¹

[Ms. 94] *In all these past days, I experienced continuous desires to make advancement in my love for God. These were my concern in all my prayers, or, to put it better, it was the object about which the Lord kept me busy, giving me vivid yearning.*

*I thought further that the love I feel for the Lord is all of affection and tenderness, but without works. It seemed to me that there was in this nothing further for me other than the negative aspect, in so far as under the pretext of disgusting the Lord, but there was nothing positive, and I really do nothing for Him...*²⁶²

[Ms. 95] *All these past days, I spent in desires, more or less vivid, of making some advancement in the way that the Lord wishes that I should follow, that of charity.*

*The acts of ingratitude that I commit continuously concerning this and the many times that I lose sight of the object upon which I make the particular Examen, He gave me even greater desires than those experienced at other times, of being powerfully taken up again, and whenever I accuse myself of them, and there was the desire to be disdained...*²⁶³

[Ms. 96] *I occupied myself with that abandonment that Jesus chose to suffer on the Cross, and I consoled myself in being able in these days to have something to unite myself to him. I passed a part of my prayer in a profound humiliation regarding myself, as it seemed to me that I was already quite lowly, vile and miserable in the divine presence...*²⁶⁴

[Ms. 97] *In prayer this morning, just as soon as I began, it seemed to me to be touching the feet of the Lord, and immediately I experienced being consoled. This raised my spirits high. But whenever I see myself very lowly, nonetheless, I felt confidence in having touched His feet with His help, or to put it better, He having placed me immediately in that position, He wished to draw me once more on high, with that same infinite goodness and mercy of His...*²⁶⁵

[Ms. 98] *It seems to me that my spirit is also weak, without energy and that when the Lord wants to draw it bit by bit upward toward Him, I am without force, nor do I surrender to what He wills and does.*

In the evening prayer, I seemed to realize once more that my spirit is still rather rude, that the clarity the Lord pours forth, cannot penetrate, nor produce those effects that it should, having encountered this roughness. It seemed to me to see this like a piece of mineral in which there are discovered veins of pure gold, but this gold is all mixed in with much earth, which one has to remove with hard work so that that metal might become pure and beautiful.

*I prayed to the Lord that He would do this hard work. The veins of gold seemed to me that they were those rays of light that the Lord shed there...*²⁶⁶

[Ms. 99] *In the prayer of this morning, there continued that insight into my miseries, and in a particular manner, those of my spirit which seemed to me that I could not be raised up from the*

²⁶¹ [February 7, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c. p. 105/

²⁶² [February 17, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c. p. 106.

²⁶³ [February 26, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 107.

²⁶⁴ [April 5, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, p.c. p. 112.

²⁶⁵ [April 10, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c. p. 112.

²⁶⁶ [April 10, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p.113.

*weight of the earth and be united to the lord, as He would want. I tried to form acts of humiliation...*²⁶⁷

[Ms. 100] *Today, the same commotion, excited by the same insight into the state toward which the Lord would want that I should reach, and to be displeased to see me all immersed by so much mud and wretchedness that they impede that flight toward Him...*²⁶⁸

[Ms. 101] *In the evening prayer, being still concerned about my miseries and that state to which the Lord wills that I should reach, in addition to the sentiments of humiliation, on the one hand, I also experienced affection and love for the Lord...*²⁶⁹

[Ms. 102] *During prayer, I experienced confusion and humiliation in seeing that the Lord manifested to me the reason for some things, while I should after so much time that he has been teaching me, obey Him with simplicity and love, and to have no need of so many explanations. I thanked His infinite goodness, in the act that I had to recognize my own weakness and wretchedness...*²⁷⁰

[Ms. 103] *The Lord told me in an internal locution that it is not enough to abandon myself to Him, Who by means of those repeated stimuli of abandonment, He wills to draw me to the total transformation into Him. He wills to do this so that I will no longer be just one who lives, but that He lives in me, by explaining the effect that this would produce. This seems to me to be a greater level than simple union, having present my misery, I could do no less than expose to the Lord, in the simplicity of my heart, that it was too soon for me to pass from one to the other, that I am doing everything in such a superficial manner, and that I am full of sins and miseries.*

*But, He said to me that He is the Master and that I should obey Him, since it is not I who am searching for these developments, and that on my own could I even think of them, nor even understand them. But it is He Who wants these, and manifested to me His will. I made an act of submission and humiliation...*²⁷¹

[Ms. 104] *Prayer was following this on how much the Lord had let me know. I gave some thought to it all, and this made me afraid to see that the operations within me do not correspond to that which the Lord has led me to understand and what He wants of me, so much so that it seems impossible that all this is true.*

*Besides, I already have natural fears, since I no longer seem good enough for anything in this drowsing of everything within me. But, above all the Lord comforted me and led me to understand that, as far as I am concerned, I am trying to make that gain that a poor person would try – when such a one receives a single coin, he would like a hundred thousand ducats...*²⁷²

[Ms. 105] *1st Point. That with pride and self-love, I am often distanced from my end. This most noble end for which God has created me, which was to praise, to revere and to serve Him, in order to make me then arrive with possession of Him. And in this, I have given the impression of being great, as one who would be called to the court of a sovereign in order to make up part of his cortege, and to serve his greatness and glory. And in place of this, He Himself would like to shake up this honor and glory, of one who is called to give, and not to receive...*²⁷³

²⁶⁷ [April 11, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 113.

²⁶⁸ [April 15, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 114.

²⁶⁹ ib

²⁷⁰ [April 23, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 116.

²⁷¹ [April 26, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 118.

²⁷² [April 26, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 118-119.

²⁷³ [Spiritual Exercises, 'The End of Man', 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 119.

[Ms. 106] *I realized that this impedes me from uniting myself to the Lord: that this earth is nothing other than where my spirit is so entangled, and which renders it difficult for that flight that the Lord would want.*

The Lord led me to understand, in the process of sins, that which He wanted from me in the different levels, in which I found myself, and that in all He had particular designs over me.

In my infancy and in the time that I went to the cloister, He showered me with thousands of graces, and He wanted me even then to be a saint, a model in that state. But, I only abused His gifts and used them to offend Him.

He wanted me in the royal Court, and with those sentiments that He placed in me and continued to infuse, He willed that in the Court that I should come to understand that one could not live there without sharing in its pomp, vanity and pass-times.

And with those very gifts and weapons which He afforded me, I made use of them in order to become more involved in the life of the Court with more security, and I would say better, with presumption. This now brings horror to me in seeing how I was still enabled to escape from all this to be saved. He called me then to the Institute, and there, too, my ingratitude and sins seemed only to increase.

*Now He wants once more to entrust all to me. What will happen to me if I do not correspond?*²⁷⁴

[Ms 107] *He led me to understand the cleanliness and the purity of conscience that I ought always to have from now on, that total nudity in which He wants me to get rid of so many little pleasures and self-seeking.*

*Such as these are my desires for esteem and approval. All the remnants that have remained of that rooted and habitual pride, which has always dominated me, but which now stops me and impedes me both in my own life and in being suited for His glory...*²⁷⁵

[Ms. 108] *I experienced sentiments of gratitude and the desire to remain very close to the Lord, as I have such need of this, in that I have so much left over from the past, regarding pride, self-love, self-seeking, and the like.*

*In this meditation, the Lord once more consoled me with making me know that these meditations that are for me a kind of interlude between Him and me, will serve then to raise up that which I often found as an obstacle to my spirit; that land which I saw, those remnants of misery, and thus one interlude will give rise to another, because one will correct the other...*²⁷⁶

[Ms. 109] *In the first prayer, I experienced beginning it with sentiments of humiliation, remembering the reflection that I made last night.*

At the sight of the love of the Lord for my soul, which I felt that He was drawing to Himself, there came to me such a sentiment of my own misery, that there shone forth all the more so close to the supreme purity of God, that I felt deep commotion.

It seemed that I could not even look upon myself and this brought me such horror, that I feared the violence of the matter which did not proceed from God. I sought to find quiet in Him for myself, thinking on that which he led me to understand yesterday, that I ought to make use of this life in order to through myself into His arms and simply hope in His goodness.

²⁷⁴ [Spiritual Exercises, 'The Repetition of Sin', 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 120.

²⁷⁵ [Spiritual Exercises, 'The Baptism of Jesus', 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 129.

²⁷⁶ [Spiritual Exercises, 'The Vocation of the Apostles', 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c pp. 130131.

However, I remained in confusion and in the desire to seek those means to mortify myself, and to overcome my entire self out of love for the Lord.

*It seemed to me further that he wanted me to see clearly that up to this point it had been He Who had so loved me, but that I had not love Him, and that I had done very little for Him...*²⁷⁷

[Ms. 110] *Placing myself one day in prayer, it seemed to me that the Lord was saying that He wanted us to be like two intimate friends, that one would think for the other. This would mean that He would be thinking totally for me, and that I should occupy myself solely for Him, for the sole motive of His glory and to give Him joy.*

I experienced happiness in these words and entire abandonment in God. In the greater part of the prayers that I then offered, these sentiments occupied me, and seemed to me that I remained in the presence of God as something truly wretched, but that he wanted anyway to work and to be suited for his glory.

*I remain, therefore, with the recognition of what I am, but with confidence in God, thinking that His omnipotence can make use of my most wretched person for sublime matters in His service. It seems to be at times impossible, seeing that the Lord gives me the light to see how much greater is the abyss of my misery, but I strive to give greater worth to His omnipotence and mercy, than to any other thought that might enkindled fear within me...*²⁷⁸

[Ms. 111] *In my prayer this morning, I was more than ever penetrated with my own nothingness, with a great consolation of my spirit, which understands the great good there is indeed in losing myself in the abyss of the All, which is God.*

And the more He gives me the grace to know myself and not to find any more in me any support, the more do I find this in Him and I hope to find it and to advance in the recognition of Him and in union.

It seemed to me how nothing swims in that Total, and I desired ever more to remain there, to find Him Who Alone is.

*I consoled myself to be non being, because He is All, and of not having anything of me, because He has all...*²⁷⁹

[Ms. 112] *The Lord holds me in a state of nullity regarding myself, so much so that it seemed to me not to have any capital in me to be able to do that which I should, and which He wills.*

Not even the suggestions of my self-love, which presents itself at times to my mind, that which persons of merit have said in years passed regarding this, and now are sufficient to flatter me. And I do not believe anything concerning them, finding myself deprived of gifts both natural, as well as those supernatural ones.

This seems to me to be the most often precisely that which is the most suited to do what the Lord wills, Who is pleased to choose those most weak and wretched instruments, to make His own omnipotence stand out the more. And therefore, I am happy that to Him Alone will be all the glory.

Other times He has bestowed on me a certain diffidence to be able to carry out the Divine Will, and there have come into my mind at times some persons, of whom the Lord could indeed make use to serve Him, rather than of me.

I experience some regret when I think of this, because being a particular mercy, that He has chosen me for a work of His glory, and I ought not to have such sentiments which cover over, at

²⁷⁷ [Spiritual Exercises, The Fourth Week, 4th Day, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, oc., pp.138-139.

²⁷⁸ [June 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 143.

²⁷⁹ [September 2, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 149.

*times, the desire that I would have if the Lord were served with every perfection and that by this Institute He would be very glorified, that which seems to me any other person would be more suited to do this...*²⁸⁰

[Ms. 113] *After Communion, the Lord gave me a great regret for my faults, and a regard for His infinite goodness, and for the opposition and impediment that I had placed before those greater graces, that he wished to grant to my poor soul.*

*It displeased me to have placed these impediments before Him, and not for the advantage of my soul, but because with greater graces I could better have served Him, now that He gives me both the desire and the occasion to do so...*²⁸¹

[Ms. 114] *I experienced in this month a certain aridity in prayer, but some effects remained to me of that so vivid a sentiment, that I experienced for almost the entire past month. With the recollection of this, I helped myself and I remembered that the Lord, not making me navigate any more without fatigue with the sails, but He lent me the oars, by giving me that desires also, and to be pleasing to Him to be able to do for Him in a time when I was not experiencing that usual consolation.*

I desired much to serve God at my own cost, but I saw that in all this it was always at His expense that I did this, knowing clearly that these same desires and this good will came from Him, since I am incapable of having them. In working, I helped myself very much with confidence in God, supporting myself upon Him, all the more strongly in that deprived of any sensible sentiment, I saw all the more clearly with the fact that with simple cognition, that which I really am, and feeling more being raised up and moving in my lower nature certain sentiments of pride, and of blame for the activities of others, and even at times, a certain envy of their good.

*All these things made me understand the necessity of recurring each moment to God, and to keep myself as best I can very close to Him, begging Him to purify and to annihilate in me these base motions, and to render me such as He willed that I should be, being totally bereft of these unworthy thoughts. I should consider only that orderliness of conscience and find my pleasure in him, resigning myself to be deprived of consolations, even for my whole life, and only that I might be able to have this grace to love Him, to serve Him and not to offend Him...*²⁸²

[Ms. 115] *Feeling all that I am, makes me come to know all the more that the Lord is the One who works in me, when I do not commit outlandish deeds, and He renders me more sensible to that separation that I see, from all that is His and from what I place on my own...*²⁸³

[Ms. 116] *On this day, it seemed to me that that feeling so much would not content me, but that I would desire a more solid love.*

*Many defects overwhelmed me which I commit and which seem to me not so much to distance me from God, but they do disorientate me a little. I saw that purity that I ought to have, and finding myself still far away from this, I felt regret, without however disquiet nor disturbance, but only the sorrow of not being as I see that I ought to be. And having received always new graces and an increase of charity, not corresponding to so many blessings that the Lord shares with me: this led me to take the resolution to watch much over myself, in order not to disgust the Lord any more even in the least matter...*²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰ [October 27, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet*...., o.c., pp. 155-156.

²⁸¹ [[November 27, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet*...., pp. 160-161.

²⁸² [February 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet*...., o.c. p.167.

²⁸³ [April 16, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet*...., o.c. p. 172.

²⁸⁴ [June 23, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet*...., o.c., pp. 174-175

[Ms. 117] *In that moment, the Lord gave me the grace to experience again my own misery and how justly I ought to fear myself.*

*I have before my mind these days and in a very vivid manner, how many graces the Lord has communicated to my soul, which for the greater part, after having received them, they are diluted, as I do not give them that attention that I should, not watching over myself in order not to lose them and not making that use of them for which the Lord granted them...*²⁸⁵

[Ms. 118] *I busied myself a great deal in prayer with the view of the benefits of God in my regard, with the recollection [quiet, though] of how badly I have always conducted myself in these.*

*At the sight of one thing or another, I felt myself enkindled toward love for God and of a concern to correspond with greater ardor for Him. It seems to me, each time that I feel this duty that I have, which it is only right that I bring to it a supreme care and that the slightest reality could separate me from God...*²⁸⁶

[Ms. 119] *The view that the Lord gave me in these past days, of that which He would like from me, continued for me also today.*

And experiencing that I ought to spiritualize everything regarding myself, He led me to know how much there is still lacking in what I am.

My misery is made ever more manifest to me. I was, it seems to me, penetrated by this thought, with the desire for humiliation.

*It seemed to me that I can see within me two abysses united together: the one of mercy, on the part of God – and the other, of misery, on my part...*²⁸⁷

[Ms. 120] *In one moment, when I felt united to Him, it saddened me further that I was not doing anything in exchange for the love, that He has for me.*

*I saw my misery and I exposed to Him that it is fitting for me that I should give myself to Him so that I might be able to respond to Him. This was all in a most sweet manner and with an internal conversation, dictated by love...*²⁸⁸

[Ms. 121] *Self-knowledge, and that of my own wretchedness with sentiments of sorrow in the depths of my soul for this impediment being there to procuring the greater glory of God.*

*Lights for the advantage of such knowledge. Confidence in what the Lord can achieve with my nothingness. There was also confidence that He would accomplish this. Sentiments of courage. Stimuli and desires to remove from my part every impediment and to embrace the Lord ever more closely...*²⁸⁹

[Ms. 122] *Two thoughts alone occupied me: God is paradise in its entirety, the deprivation of God is hell. God alone is the good to be desired, and the deprivation of God is hell. God alone is that only good to desire, the deprivation of God is the only evil to fear.*

*I thought that my greater need is humility, thus from the manner that I spent this meditation, I have only motives to humble myself...*²⁹⁰

²⁸⁵ [October 14, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 180.

²⁸⁶ [October 20, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 181.

²⁸⁷ [November 21, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 186.

²⁸⁸ [Spiritual Exercises, March 10, 1813]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 200.

²⁸⁹ [September 25, 1813]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 202.

²⁹⁰ [Spiritual Exercises, July 24, 1815]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 211.

d.] The Humility of the Institute

[Ms 123] *I experience at times a particular joy and a great consolation when I think that the Lord would wish one day to be served by us and to find among us His delights. I desire, therefore, that that which He will be really done in us, and that He be loved by us continuously and glorified in all that extension which is ever possible and that this be done by His creatures...*²⁹¹

[Ms. 124] *The Lord made me understand that on no other reality should I place my every confidence for the Work that He wants of me, other than on this: that He wants it. And this should suffice for me in order to believe with every certitude that being so, it surely will be and everything will succeed without it being necessary for me to have any fear for anything, nor to make any account of external realities, that might seem to be opposed to what He wants that should happen. It seemed to me, then, to feel that I am all the more animated and courageous...*²⁹²

[Ms. 125] *The need that I feel in my misery that he wants to work there, the desire to meet in every small thing His joy and good pleasure, so that in a work of such importance and that is to have such a long endurance, that all be in accord with him: this seemed to me to be the motives of the content and the satisfaction that I experienced...*²⁹³

[Ms. 126] *This evening, the Lord gave me an entire communication with Him, in which I felt myself powerfully drawn to establish a great internal spirit in the Institute.*

I experienced some fears that the external occupations and those realizations that, because of this that had to be established, they might bring some harm to it. However, I thought of weighing well everything and of placing every possible reparation to that which might serve as a danger to a reality of such major importance. The Lord gave me as many more desires to establish the whole with profound roots of humility. And it seemed to me that to these there would be added further an intellectual view of the depth of humility upon which there was to be established such a grand edifice as that of the Institute. I desired this with supreme ardor that it might be great before the Lord and as small as possible in the eyes of men.

*The Lord led me to internalize in this view, with desires and sentiments...*²⁹⁴

[Ms. 127] *I spent the time of the second Meditation, which was on the end of the religious Sister, in admiring the infinite mercy of God in my regard, in calling me not only to serve Him in religion, but also in having chosen me to such a great undertaking, as is that which He has placed in my hands.*

I thought that the Lord, without looking at my enormous faults, in designating to establish this Work, so committed to His glory, rather than choosing so many others, who better might in this be able to serve Him. But, He called me to Himself and said to me: 'I want to establish a Work, an Institute, in which I wish to be served with perfection. For this undertaking, I want you to bring it all into reality. I will do everything: you look solely to Me, in order to conduct yourself in accord with My will.'

*I paused in the consideration of this choice, seeing the holiness to which this sole reflection ought to commit me, as really I ought to be wholly of the spirit, in order to unite myself and to remain always united to God, from Whom I ought to take my every step...*²⁹⁵

²⁹¹ [June 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 143.

²⁹² [September 26, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 153.

²⁹³ [December 3, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 163.

²⁹⁴ [December 6, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 163.

²⁹⁵ [Spiritual Exercises, March 1813]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 194-195.

e.] **Considerations on the Humility of Jesus**

[Ms. 128] *It was said to me to begin the Particular Examen on these words of St. Gregory: ‘In every action, look always to Him: rectify always your life and direct it toward the One Who in His humanity has delineated the physiognomy of the elect.’*²⁹⁶

In the prayer that I offered after this had been said to me, I experienced much consolation in having a means to consider more often, the Redeemer, and consequently also of uniting myself to Him, since it is difficult to consider Him without feeling oneself drawn to Him; the time for prayer was passed totally in this consideration and in desires of learning to imitate such a model.

*The lights which the Lord bestowed on me, concerning that great purity that He wishes from me, discovering for myself at the same time the injury that is leveled against Him, and that in particular of a soul whom He draws lovingly to Himself, whenever reservations are put down regarding that total death of oneself, that is so necessary, in order to make Him Alone reign in us and to give to Him all the glory...*²⁹⁷

[Ms. 129] *I was occupied with the Passion of the Lord, with a continuation of the view of my own miseries, which appeared all the more in comparison with such mercies of the Lord...*²⁹⁸

[Ms. 130] *There was admiration concerning the Humility of Jesus and His submission to the Law, which virtues were imitated also by His most holy Mother and St. Joseph.*

It seemed to me to see Jesus as light, which illumined those two holy Personalities. I thought also that the greater the dignity, that the Lord has been able to concede, was that that Mary most Holy had, but this was a dignity that had to be all accompanied by humility, poverty. And in the eyes of men, she did not appear other than under this aspect.

*There did not withdraw from me the desire of imitation and of affection...*²⁹⁹

[Ms. 131] *I saw also along-side the humiliations and the annihilation of Jesus, the Eternal Father from heaven took care in every principal encounter to exalt Him to make Him known to some persons for precisely what he was. And seeing the holy old man, Simeon, desiring death after having seen the divine Infant, I took confidence in exposing to the Lord that I still yearned for, after He had been made known to me with so many of His communications, that I was loosed from the bonds of the body, willing that which he wills, but to be loosed from the bonds of so many necessities, that little by little were introduced into my living. Of the many remnants of sins and inconstancies in virtue, which hold me subjected, and impede me from the imitation of His life and virtue...*³⁰⁰

[Ms. 132] *I saw further that according to the example of Jesus, I should in certain things adapt myself, which are not things that one day I should do among us. And the entire operation with the authentic spirit of humility in the imitation of Jesus. To imitate Jesus also, in His modesty in the Temple, while He was asking questions and teaching. And when my opinion would be asked of me, I will say it with humility, modesty, discernment, all according to the example of Jesus. Not with*

²⁹⁶ [NB: the Latin text for this: *In omni quod agit semper ad ipsum respicit et vita sua rectitudinem in eo dirigit, quem per assumptam humanitatem ad componendum electorum speciem venisse recognovit.* Leopoldina translated this in note 15. cf. *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 109.

²⁹⁷ [march 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 109.

²⁹⁸ [April 12-13, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 113.

²⁹⁹ [The Spiritual Exercises, ‘Meditation on the Presentation of Jesus’, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 124.

³⁰⁰ [Spiritual Exercises, ‘Meditation on the Presentation of Jesus’, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 125.

*that pride, persuasion of my view, as all things are according to my own spirit, and not that of Jesus...*³⁰¹

[Ms. 133] *I thought further of imitating Jesus in those words that He responded; ‘Did you not know that I had to be about My Father’s business?’ and to say this often to myself.*

*When my self-love would be that which has come to dominate, when I would seek my own nature and its comforts, when human respect would place me to work perhaps, I will look to see what are the interests of the glory of my Father who is in heaven, and in conformity to that activity, not wishing to have any other rule...*³⁰²

[Ms 134] *The Lord led me to understand, that in addition to the fact that He had come for a great undertaking, yet He remained hidden, humble, and still gave the impression that He was nothing more than a simple carpenter.*

And that this ought to serve me as an example against my own pride, which makes me believe sometimes that it is necessary to make myself known.

*It displeases me not to have had the appearance of things that I did, and all this is represented under the pretexts of the Institute, and not of my own person. But, I ought to quiet myself, and follow rather His Spirit, which hints to me that I should remain hidden, and that He will know at the proper time, to do all...*³⁰³

[Ms. 135] *I found myself, often enough, in the traps that the demon sets, in those particularly of pride and worldly honor, but I got caught in that I was not following Jesus, nor did I keep myself so close to him as I should, and He wanted me to do. I saw, therefore, more than ever the little power of the devil, or to say it better, His weakness, when one stands close to Jesus...*³⁰⁴

[Ms. 136] *The Lord gave me sentiments of fervor and desire to go attentively investigating that which He did before beginning His active life, to be able to follow in His footsteps. I attached myself to Him closely, contemplating Him. I admired His humility. I begged Him to infuse this virtue into me, in that I am lacking in it...*³⁰⁵

[Ms. 137] *In those words that in the Baptism were heard: ‘This is My Beloved Son...’³⁰⁶, I reflected on how in every encounter where Jesus humbled Himself, the Eternal Father took care to exalt Him.*

*I developed this reflection further that the same thing happens to those who follow Jesus in His humiliation, that He takes care of them, to defend them, and the life...*³⁰⁷

[Ms 138] *I observed in the condition of these [Apostles] the humble genius of the Lord, Who could equally have called others. The gentle manner of His call: without either force, nor even words. One alone sufficed. I experienced myself stopping long on the grace that the Lord granted*

³⁰¹ [Spiritual Exercises, ‘The Going of Jesus to the Temple’, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 126.

³⁰² [NB: in Leopoldina’s text, the Latin words appear: *Nesciebatis quia in his, quae Patris mei...* **Spiritual Exercises, ‘Jesus’ Going to the Temple**, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 126-127.

³⁰³ [Spiritual Exercises, ‘Jesus’ Going to the Temple’, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p.127.

³⁰⁴ [Spiritual Exercises, ‘Two Standards’, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 127-128.

³⁰⁵ [Spiritual Exercises, ‘Baptism of Jesus’, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 128.

³⁰⁶ Mt 3:17; *Hic est Filius Meus*. Note 20 [Spiritual Exercises, ‘Baptism of Jesus’, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c. p. 129.

³⁰⁷ [Spiritual Exercises, ‘Baptism of Jesus’, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 129.

*to me, calling me to His Court. A two-fold grace and one that demands a two-fold correspondence...*³⁰⁸

[Ms. 139] *I stopped long on the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament, with gratitude and love, thinking that one of the effects of the most holy Communion is that of transforming us into Jesus Christ [an effect that He often moves me to desire], thinking how far I am still from having achieved this, notwithstanding the fact that I receive every day...*³⁰⁹

[Ms. 140] *At the end of the meditation, I set myself to contemplating Jesus, so disdained and derided, and I felt even greater confusion for my pride, and of all those defects which flow from this. I detested them with a desire ever greater to emend myself in this regard, not being able to suffer a confrontation with that humility such as Jesus exercised.*

*Love seeks similarity. If, therefore, I love Jesus, I have to be similar to Him, and with courage put my hand to my defects...*³¹⁰

[Ms. 141] *The second Meditation I made on the Incarnation.*

This I spent with total recollection, with a few reflections. I produced some traits of gratitude toward the Lord and of the desire for humility, seeing the lowliness of a God and I found confusion over my pride.

*The Examen of the same I spent in recollection, feeling myself drawn to stand united with him...*³¹¹

[Ms. 142] *A sentiment of being entirely isolated from God Alone, not only in my heart, but also in my mind. In prayer, there were stimuli and excitement to a life hidden in God, with Jesus. There was Joy in this...*³¹²



2.4.2.3 Alone with God Alone [1820-1831]

Fr. Bertoni, after eight years, discontinued the spiritual direction of Mother Leopoldina. She suffered greatly from this, but not discouraged, and entrusted herself to God Alone [her entrustment is noted in her *Act of Abandonment*]. In this period of her life, her notes are rare, but quite dense in meaning:

...By this time, Leopoldina was fixed on God in the integral following of Christ, her Spouse. She experiences, and almost ‘sees’ the continuous action of Jesus in her own soul. The Lord fills her with peace and consolation, a prelude of that definitive encounter, which by now was close at hand...³¹³

a.) ‘Recognize the Truth of Oneself before the Lord’

[Ms 143] *Remember, my soul, how great your misery is, and that when the Lord has put you to the test, you were quite weak, listless, agitated by a thousand thoughts and much anguish. You*

³⁰⁸ [Spiritual Exercises, ‘Vocation of the Apostles’, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 133.

³⁰⁹ [Spiritual Exercises, ‘The Last Supper’, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 133.

³¹⁰ [Spiritual Exercises, ‘Jesus Christ in Herod’s House’, 1813]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 134.

³¹¹ [Spiritual Exercises, March 9, 1813]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 199.

³¹² [September 26, 1813]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c.... pp. 202-203.

³¹³ *Positio*, Vol. II, *The Writings of the Servant of God*, Intr. B, III, o.c., p. 1302.

were already tired of suffering, and you found yourself in a stormy sea. Your anguished spirit and in the midst of the waves of temptation, it seemed that it was about to be submerged.

The potencies occupied with that which saddened you. Memory brought much concern to you with its memory of the past.

The intellect represented to you all that could give more weight to the tribulation. The will brought you to desire its end, and tired you from suffering and from its length.

And now then, all that you are, and even worse, of what is known here.

Therefore, when once again the Lord will give you the grace of peace and quiet of soul, remember that it is His gift and that, as far as you are concerned, you are the most miserable and vile creature, that there is in this world...³¹⁴

[Ms. 144] *I experienced in the act of preparation, joy in annihilating myself before God in being a nothing, a worm: He is all...³¹⁵*

[Ms. 145] *Second meditation: Humility*

In order to repair that which I had lacked in the other, I thought of taking up again the subject and in the difficult I experienced in reflecting over it, I proposed to do that which from now on at times, and even often, the meditation on the Life of Jesus Christ. And I humbled myself seeing that with the experience of myself and of my own misery, I made my meditation on Humility...³¹⁶

b.] She humbly pronounced her Act of Abandonment in the Lord

[Ms. 146] *I am confused, o my Lord, for being far from the abandonment in You that You wish of me, and I ask of You a thousand pardons for this. And from this moment, for always, I abandon all my interests into Your hands, entrusting myself entirely to Your infinite goodness, sure that You have more care and thought for me and for those matters entrusted to me, than that which I myself could ever have. Therefore, from now on I wish to live without anxieties and fears, to do all that I will be able to do for You, in order to serve You and to make You loved and served by others, in so far as within me lies.*

I wish to give thought to procure Your glory and Your holy service: and You think for me.

I need a guide for myself, and for this Work. Think of us all, my Love. To You, I abandon everything. You can, you know, you will and this is enough for me in order to be sure that You will do it.

Give me Your holy Love, zeal for Your glory and increase always more in me trust and confidence in You.

This I beg You through the merits of Mary most holy, of her, Your Mother, to whom You can refuse nothing of what is asked of You – for those of St. Joseph, Your Guardian Father and my advocate, St. Ignatius...³¹⁷

³¹⁴ [1820]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 213.

³¹⁵ [1820]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 220.

³¹⁶ ib.

³¹⁷ [1820]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 214-215.

c.] The Humility of Jesus Christ

[Ms. 147] *Third Meditation: the Humility of Jesus Christ in His Incarnation, Nativity.*

In the Examen, it seemed to me it could also occur that of not having been able to apply myself, nor to internalize in that meditation, from not reflecting ever on the Humility of the Lord.

I thought, then, that I was totally lacking in this humility, in so far as practicing it in union with that of Jesus, and in those manners that He practiced it.

I see a total separation between that which the Lord, by His mercy works in me, and that which I do, which is evil. From this view I never depart.

But that which is more, through a clear truth that I know more through faith, than through humility. I am persuaded that from one moment to another, I am rather stolid, if the Lord does not help me. But even this is through a faith, which I cannot even call such because it is a seeing. And I have also experienced these a number of times.

I am afraid that I might take comfort in something good that I might achieve, sure that there is nothing of me in it. Whereas in an instant the Lord could raise me up with His grace, His help, and therefore, I can no longer do anything. Of my own...

All this I touch with my hand, and therefore, it seems to me a recognition of experience, which is according to the faith.

I love to speak of my misery and this is just doubled. It seems to me that I would be content that all would see in me that which I see, but so that the truth might be known and glory rendered to God.

I suffer, and I feel that, attending to the Work that the Lord has deigned to entrust to me, they sometimes heap some glory on me because of it. I would like that as I do, all might see that the Lord does this all Himself. And it seems to me that I would be very happy if all were to come to understand that I am not suited for anything and am like a rusty old machine that does not work unless the Lord moves it, and even then, quite badly, because I resist and am not good for anything: and it is the mercy of this good Lord, if He does not cast it all in the fire.

It is not, though as happens in the truly humble, that I love being disdained. No, because this would not please me. But, it is because I rejoice that God is glorified and because it seems to me that he will be even more so, if others would know these above noted matters.

In fact, in all this, as in everything, I see that I do not have any truth, not even that which St. Thomas calls the first level and the lowest of all, in which the most common actions are produced...³¹⁸



³¹⁸ [1820]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 219-220.

CHAPTER III THE PRESENT VALUE OF MOTHER LEOPOLDINA NAUDET'S WITNESS TO HUMILITY

3.1 In the Following of Christ, the Christian chooses the Last Place

After having shown in the collection of some of the writings of Mother Leopoldina, a lived experience of humility, a legitimate question arises: in this 21st century does speaking about Humility make any sense at all.

Today serious obstacles are met in any attempt to speak of Humility in our modern society, which lead one to respect all the more only those successes at any cost. Yet, it is precisely today's society that would benefit greatly from humility. Looking at today's society through the eyes of some: we see young people assume positions of enormous leadership in the political world; there are the *golden boys* in the economic sphere; there is the temptation of unbridled creativity and a sense of omnipotence in the field of science, and in all branches of learning. There is the wide-spread diffusion of a truly narcissistic individualism tending to obliterate every 'other' in so many daily situations. Furthermore, it has been noted that 'our present situation is strange: on the one hand, the planet is being unified; but, on the other, every ethnic group, every culture affirms its identity, and affirms this against every other. Threatening wars are breaking out everywhere.'³¹⁹

How is it possible to conjugate the desire of everyone always wanting the first place, with Jesus' challenging invitation to the last place at the table of this world? [cf. Lk 14:7-11]. In the following of Christ, the Christian is called to chose the last place, and is cognizant that in Him, each one will be exalted. Fr. T. Spidlik, SJ, in his *We of the Trinity. A Brief Reflection on the Trinity*, observes that:

... 'The life which we live is a continuous battle for the better places. A certain few do succeed in taking these; while others do so in a much reduced manner – and there are lastly still others who are rejected to the very last places, marginalized from the common well-being and esteem. How do they react?

Some give serious thought to revolution, to revenge, while others despair. However, the traditional response of God is the same: "Do not lose courage, there is One Who thinks of you, and Who will raise you up and invite you to better places, *the One Who throws down the mighty from their thrones, and lifts up the lowly...* [cf. Lk 1:52]...These, in fact, are the chosen of God in the Bible and in Church History, such as Mary confesses regarding herself, and such was Jesus Himself, *humbling Himself even to death*, and therefore He was raised up to eternal glory [Ph 2:6, f.]...³²⁰

There might be noted here a new manner of understanding the 'first' and 'last' place. According to the generally accepted sense, the 'first' are those who impose their will, the aggressive, those who command. The 'last' are considered those who are not to do anything of themselves, but only to carry out the will of others. This often implies a painful humiliation.

³¹⁹ F. MORANDO and M. TENACE, *Fondamenti spirituali del futuro. Intervista a Olivier Clement*. Roma: Lipa 1997, p. 89.

³²⁰ T. SPIDLIK, *Noi della Trinità...*, o.c., Roma: Lips 2000, p. 106.

Jesus Christ, with His words and by His life reveals to us that:

...the first place, absolutely speaking, belongs to the Father. The Son can only accept His Will. However, the acceptance of this Will of the Father which is, so to speak, supreme humility, and at the same time, the most grandiose exaltation, because with this acceptance the Father communicates to the Son His divine nature, His knowledge and His power. The Son Who chooses the last place becomes, thereby, a participant in the first place...³²¹

Humility in this sense means the same as greatness and the weakness also of human beings who, with Jesus Christ, are called to choose the last place, and not ahead of anyone else, but only before the heavenly Father, in order to reign with the power of God. The Spirit in concrete situations suggests which place to select, and in what manner human beings are to be humble, the last and the first at the same time³²².

†††

3.2 AN ITINERARY OF HUMILITY TRACED BY MOTHER LEOPOLDINA NAUDET

‘Genuine humility would be the authentic fruit of the Holy Spirit.’³²³ If the Christian allows herself to be led by the Holy Spirit, in order to be conformed to Jesus Christ, Who does the Father’s Will, then also today Humility may be lived. Mother Leopoldina, who in her life, allowed herself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, is a clear witness of the possibility for every man and woman of being placed along the way marked out by Jesus, meek and humble of heart, and the Teacher of Humility. With Christ, there was initiated a new existence in Humility. Her Humility is a style of a woman who expresses herself in the manner of existing, of situating herself and placing herself in reality. In her journey of Humility, Leopoldina has left behind the traces, the path, for anyone, like her, who would want to follow Jesus, meek and humble of heart. It is an itinerary that might be described in terms such as these:

Leopoldina grasped quickly that God desires to communicate His gifts if she would humble make herself available for them. In receiving God’s gifts, she understood clearly that she was a creature with regard to god, and perceived that one does not always correspond to gifts received. This not corresponding to God’s gifts does not place one in a state of anxiety, but increased always in her the humble confidence in the merciful love of God. And thus, realizing that she was indeed loved by God, she desired to correspond and to be like Jesus Christ. But, to imitate Him, she came to know that it is necessary to allow oneself humbly to be moved by the Holy Spirit. Recognizing that it is God Who works in her, she desires to fulfill His Will by His greater glory. The humble relationship with God permits her to know herself and this attitude led her to live in a humble relationship with others and to perceive creation in a different manner.

³²¹ T. SPIDLIK, *Noi della Trinità...* o.c., p. 107.

³²² ib.

³²³ *In colloquio, Alla scoperta della paaternita; spirituale.* A cura del Centro Aletti. Roma: Aletti 1995, p. 126.

At the end of her long journey, Mother Leopoldina reached, much in accord with the example of Christ, a ‘supreme level of humility’: the full acceptance of the Father’s Will placing herself confidently with assurance, into His hands. Experiencing the path of humility traced by Jesus Christ, meek and humble of heart, she fervently desired that others would also follow this path. This itinerary of Humility, traced by Mother Leopoldina Naudet, emerges in fullness from her writings:

1.] LEOPOLDINA UNDERSTOOD THAT GOD DESIRES TO COMMUNICATE HIS GOODS IF SHE WOULD BE HUMBLY DISPOSED FOR THEM:

[L. 8] *I find myself in an internal disposition of peace and confidence, and the persuasion that the Lord wants me to be a saint. Therefore, He gives me so many stimuli, inspirations and advice, of never losing for a moment the thought and the sentiment of the presence of God...*³²⁴

[Ms. 72] *The Lord still endowed me with a great fear concerning the grandeur of these graces that He bestows on me. It seemed to me that would not be needed any more than a very thin wire, like the width of a hair, and could break all this, and I would be thrown down.*

*This view seemed to place me in a state of humble reverence before God and in a great attention to all the teachings which He gave me...*³²⁵

[Ms. 84] *The Lord showed me further how many gifts and lights He would communicate to my soul, but He wills that I be more despoiled of myself and truly bereft of any self-satisfaction.*

*He explained to me the need of this with His customary mercy and love, which He employs in my regard, by leading me to understand that He is jealous of His glory and the perfection of soul. And so, both would be compromised by entrusting His gifts to anyone who is not so despoiled of herself, since she would not be leaving all to Him, when self-love makes her draw her contentment from that which belongs purely to Him Alone, , and also one’s own perfection this such self-satisfaction set aside...*³²⁶

[Ms. 85] *In prayer, the Lord let me know the great purity with which He wishes to embellish my soul, and in a particular manner, that total despoilment from all self-love and taking satisfaction in things, a disposition that demands of me also for the sake of communicating to me greater graces.*

No matter how many times He had shed His light on me regarding this, it was never before as subtle as this time, and the expressions with which I can express the matter are the same. However, the substance is different, thereby increasing the meaning of the manner with the Lord, little by little, raising a curtain before my eyes, so much so that after having made me see a level of purity that He wills, he then goes on making me then consider another degree that is even greater.

Now therefore, this is very subtle, so that it seemed to me that I came to comprehend a total death to myself in everything...

*... I love all that gives me light to procure all these things, not looking at anything but the top where I still have to arrive, and not at the street. Thus, with all the more courage I grasp that I know how good the Lord is, and how He helps me so that it seems to me that it is no longer I who has something to accomplish, but He, as I know that he is in all things...*³²⁷

³²⁴ *Spiritual Letters of the Servant of God, Leopoldina Naudet*, o.c., pp. 17-18.

³²⁵ [October 21, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet, Memorie Secrete...*, o.c., p. 182.

³²⁶ [February 27, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 107

³²⁷ [March 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 108-109.

[Ms. 127] *I spent the time of the second meditation, which was on the purpose of the religious Sister, in admiring the infinite mercy of God in my regard, in calling me not only to serve Him in religion, but also in having chosen me to such a great undertaking, as is that which he has placed in my hands.*

I thought that the Lord, without looking at my enormous faults, in designating to establish this Work, so committed to his glory, rather than choosing so many others, who better might in this be able to serve Him. But, he called me to Himself and said to me: 'I want to establish a Work, an Institute, in which I wish to be served with perfection. For this undertaking, I want you to bring it all into reality. I will do everything: you look solely to Me, in order to conduct yourself in accord with My will.'

I paused in consideration of this choice, seeing the holiness to which this sole reflection ought to commit me, as really I ought to be wholly of the spirit, in order to unite myself to remain always united to God, from whom I ought to take my every step...³²⁸

2.] IN ACCEPTING HUMBLY THE GIFTS OF GOD, THE CREATURE RECOGNIZES HERSELF WITH RESPECT TO THE LORD:

[L. 9] *In these days we have seen in practice that our plans were changed several times in a single week. And why? In order to make us die to ourselves and at the same time, to have us touch with our own hand that He alone is the Author of the enterprise and there is known to necessity that we have to make recourse in all to him, and without Him, to do nothing but to be ready and prepared in every moment to work, at the first hint that we understand just what is His will...³²⁹*

[CF. 8] *The more we are persuaded that we can do nothing, and yet desire to act, greater will be our confidence in God, to ask of Him to make up for all that we are unable to accomplish...³³⁰*

[CF. 9] *Let us be humble, and let us trust in the One Who Alone can do all, and we will notice the effect. We will indeed experience that which all have come to know: that whoever confides in God will never be confused...³³¹*

[Ms. 59] *In all this time, I experienced in prayer a great emptiness of myself and great confidence in the omnipotence of God to form something out of an instrument that was as wretched as I am.*

This misery led me to feel and know strongly, but at the same time, sweetly – and it seemed to me that this is a knowledge given to me by the First truth, which is God. This is not something of a speculative nature. The effect of this impresses itself on my spirit, which is humble before God, but full of confidence. Beyond this knowledge, which the Lord gives me of my misery. He continues explaining to me how He wants me to make use of me for His glory, that there be consumed in me every small sentiment of myself and of confidence in anything that might seem to be in me, and that I have not seen all of God...³³²

[Ms. 111] *In my prayer this morning, I was more than ever penetrated with my own nothingness, with a great consolation of my spirit, which understands the great good there is indeed in losing myself in the Abyss of the All, which is God.*

³²⁸ [Spiritual exercises, March 1813]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 194-195.

³²⁹ *Letters*, o.c., pp. 28-29.

³³⁰ *Conferences: Spiritual Writings of Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 22.

³³¹ *Conferences...*, o.c., p. 23

³³² [August 26, 31, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 147-148.

And the more He gives me the grace to know myself and not to find any more in me any support, the more do I find this in him, and I hope to find it and to advance in the recognition of Him and in union.

It seemed to me how nothing swims in that Total, and I desired ever more to remain there, to find Him Who Alone is.

I counseled myself to be no-being, because He is All, and of not having anything of me, because He has all...³³³

[Ms. 115] *Feeling all that I am, makes me come to know all the more that the Lord is the One Who works in me, when I do not commit outlandish deeds, and he renders me more sensible to that separation that I see, from all that is His and from what I place on my own...³³⁴*

[Ms. 144] *I experienced in the act of preparation joy in annihilating myself before God in being a nothing, a worm: He is all...³³⁵*

†††

3.] SHE PERCEIVED HUMBLY THAT SHE DID NOT ALWAYS CORRESPOND TO THE GIFTS RECEIVED:

[L. 19] *In this time of waiting, reverend Father, help us with your prayers. And have those who are zealous for the Glory of our Divine Master do the same, begging Him to render me that which I ought to be, in order to cooperate in His designs for me. I have always before my eyes the holiness that would be necessary to have, but I continue to be quite miserable: and this is unconceivable after so many mercies...³³⁶*

[L. 22] *If there is something of Good that is found in us, this is Jesus, Mary and Joseph who have accomplished it all. As for whatever I say, the world continues to offer me something, and I suffer sincerely from this, because all that I do on my own, is to commit errors and to slow down the carrying out of God's Work. In this manner, it seems to me, that I see the truth and that my name be eclipsed and God Alone glorified...³³⁷*

[Ms. 8] *I feel that my will is orientated continuously toward God for everything, but I do not see to it that it responds in accord with this goodness. Rather, I often find myself doing precisely what I would rather not do, and not doing what I would want to do. And I believe that I am all the more culpable, because this will is not contrary to good within me, rather I always find it firm in this direction...³³⁸*

[Ms. 50]I *In making the Examen of the first Meditation in that manner in which it had been prescribed for me, i.e., with asking humbly of the Lord to lead me to know the defects in which I had fallen, He drew me more intimately to Himself and led me to understand that in this, I was not abandoned – or, to put it better, having left without direction that love which He drew me to Himself. That I am too held back for Him: I place, for my part, certain limits and confines that He does not wish for me to place.*

I resolved to emend this...³³⁹

³³³ [September 2, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 149.

³³⁴ [April 16, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 172.

³³⁵ [1820]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 220.

³³⁶ *Letters...*, o.c., p. 38.

³³⁷ *Letters...*, o.c., p. 67/

³³⁸ [1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet ...*, o.c., p. 58.

³³⁹ [Spiritual Exercises, 4th Week, 1st Day, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet ...*, o/c/ pp. 135-136/

[Ms 88] *I took courage in exposing them to the Lord how much I found myself embarrassed and tired of the many remnants that there are in me of sins, of the acts of inconstancy that I have from sins, and from those actions of inconstancy that I have placed in the exercise of virtue and mortification, by those habits of pride, of self-seeking, of self-love, from all that I find in me impeded from all that I ought to be doing and that He led me to know what He would want of me.*

*I begged Him, therefore, to unloose these remnants of the bonds which without tying me down totally, they do impede me. I asked this of Him through the infinite merits of my Redeemer...*³⁴⁰

[Ms. 105] *Ist Point. That with pride and self-love, I am often distanced from my end. This most noble end for which God has created me, which was to praise, to revere and to serve Him, in order to make me then arrive with possession of Him. And in this, I have given the impression of being great, as one who would be called to the court of a sovereign in order to make up part of his cortege, and to serve his greatness and glory. And in place of this, he Himself would like to shake of this honor and glory of one who is called to give, and not to receive...*³⁴¹

[Ms. 106] *I realized that this impedes me from uniting myself to the Lord: that this earth is nothing other than where my spirit is so entangled, and which renders it difficult for that flight that the Lord would want.*

The Lord led me to understand, in the process of sins, that which He wanted from me in the different levels, in which I found myself, and that in all He had particular designs over me.

In my infancy and in the time that I came to the Cloister, He showered me with thousands of graces, and he wanted me even then to be a saint, a model in that state. But, I only abused His gifts and used them to offend Him.

He wanted me in the Royal Court, and with those sentiments that He placed in me and continued to infuse, he willed that in the Court that I should come to understand that one could not live there without sharing in its pomp, vanity and pass-times.

And with those very gifts and weapons which He afforded me, I made use of them in order to become more involved in the life of the Court, with more security, and I would say better, with presumption. This now brings horror to me in seeing how I was still enabled to escape from all this to be saved. He called me then to the Institute, and there, too, my ingratitude and sins seemed only to increase.

*Now He wants once more to entrust all to me. What will happen to me if I do not correspond?...*³⁴²

4.] THE NON-CORRESPONDECE TO GIFTS DOES NOT PLACE HER IN A STATE OF ANGUISH, BUT INCREASES EVER MORE IN HER THE HUMBLE TRUST IN THE MERCIFUL LOVE OF GOD

[L. 4] *I have a nature that bears with it great obstacles to virtue. But, I do not pay much attention to these, but rather to the contrary virtues. The reason is that for me to think, of my virtues has not helped me, because there are so many of them, and I get discouraged. Sometimes it seems to me that my passions are within me like so many mad dogs, that are chained; and I often beg the Lord to keep these chains very strong, so that they do not slip away. That which I feel is that they would like to do this often, and this gives me upsetment which I feel principally in my nature. These miseries of mine seem like mud. I do not pay much heed to them, because it seems to me that*

³⁴⁰ [Spiritual Exercises, 'Meditation on the Incarnation', 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 123.

³⁴¹ [Spiritual Exercises, 'On the End of Man', 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 119.

³⁴² [Spiritual Exercises, 'Repetition of Sin', 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 120.

*there are as many of them within me, they would muddy me up all the more. And it helps me very much to go beyond myself, and to seek outside of myself the help of God...*³⁴³

[L. 5] ...My self-love still torments me a great deal...

Or, to put it better, I take a certain pleasure in the clarity which I seem to look on matters, and that just view that I think I have in judging these. However, this self-love holds me down low, because I am afraid that in the punishment of that pleasure that I experience on occasion, the Lord might take this gift away that I know comes from him.

*And since I do esteem Him very much, I fear also very much to lose Him, because I believe that the Lord, in His mercy, and in order to humble my pride has permitted that I would have this experience, from the failings that I have committed, of that evil that exists within me. And it is He alone who is the One who keeps me from committing even greater thoughts, since I have every disposition within my nature to do this...*³⁴⁴

[Ms. 1] *O Lord, my heart longs to pour itself out to you in the affliction it now experiences. I see in this moment my own wretchedness now evident to all; and this perspective, which is a grace from you, renders even more burdensome the weight of the responsibility that I now must bear. It is not, though, o Lord, that it lacks confidence in You, and that it has ever believed that I could accomplish anything of myself.*

*No, my confidence is still on a part with the diffidence I exercise in my own regard. But, as the moment draws near, my nature feels all its weakness, and I experience a fear that surpasses in some things the contrary reflections and sentiments that I muster at regarding this. You, o Lord, are my strength, my support...*³⁴⁵

[Ms. 4.] *Later, before the Blessed Sacrament, humbling myself even further before the Lord, it seemed that I experienced that not only should I think of the evil that I have done and am still doing, but also of the good that I might have done and neglected. All the while the Lord wanted much from me and with such mercy a number of times led me to understanding this by telling me in the depths of my heart: 'From you, I want the highest perfection, as it simply is not possible to do otherwise, without abusing My graces, since these have been infinite...'*³⁴⁶

[Ms. 12] *Being as wretched as I am, should I fall into some failing, in all that I have proposed for myself, I will do all that I can not to be discouraged, nor to afflict myself, but I will humble myself before God, renewing my resolutions with greater effort than ever and recommend myself to the Lord...*³⁴⁷

[Ms. 53] *It seemed to me that the Lord has instructed me on this, by bringing me to know that when He gives me the vision of my own miseries [which He wishes to purge in the furnace of His charity, by means of prayer], He does this because he wants from me acts of confidence and abandonment in Him, that begin not from a general knowledge of His omnipotence in order to free my soul from every misery, but from that almost security of His goodness and love that He wants to bestow. Hence, I need to trust and to think that He has greater care to put my soul in order than that I could have for myself...*³⁴⁸

³⁴³ *Letters...*, o.c., p. 14.

³⁴⁴ *Letters...*, o.c., pp. 15-16.

³⁴⁵ *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 35.

³⁴⁶ [Tuesday, 1800]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 37.

³⁴⁷ [1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 65.

³⁴⁸ [Spiritual Exercises, 4th Week, 3rd day, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., . 138.

[Ms. 91] *Having used a certain negligence regarding myself concerning the Particular Examen and other matters, the Lord in prayer led me to understand this. It seemed to me that I have been a vagabond and need to come back therefore to take my refuge in the arms of my Lord, Who gave me also the sentiments of compunction, for which I cast myself at His feet, begging pardon from Him for having even for a part of the day, neglected that vigilance that I ought to have over myself, the sole means with which I can ask Him some little expression of gratitude for all the love that He bears me...*³⁴⁹

[Ms. 119] *The view that the Lord gave me in these past days, of that which He would like from me, continued for me also today.*

And experiencing that I ought to spiritualize everything regarding myself, He led me to know how much there is still lacking in what I am.

My misery is made ever more manifest to me. I was, it seems to me, penetrated by this thought, with the desire for humiliation.

*It seemed to me that I can see within me two abysses united together: the one of mercy, on the part of God – and the other of misery, on my part...*³⁵⁰

5.] EXPERIENCING THAT SHE IS LOVED, SHE DESIRES TO CORRESPOND TO BE SO LIKE JESUS CHRIST:

[C. 31] *...thus, just as the people of the world follow its values, love and seek with great diligence the honors, the fame, to have a great name on earth, as the world teaches – so, those who walk according to the Spirit and truly follow Christ, our Lord, will live and ardently desire all that is contrary to this, namely, to be vested in the same livery as their Lord out of love and reverence for Him...*³⁵¹

[Ms. 40] *This is the authentic school where all the saints have studied, and where they took up the great pat to holiness. Let us then also be instructed by the Divine Teacher, and with genuine humility of heart, let us submit ourselves to the whips that strike our backs, because thus we will learn to subject our judgment and die to ourselves. We can be afraid of nothing, because the great Sovereign, Whom we have the happiness of serving, is most powerful, and His promises cannot be lacking to us. The paths of His providence are unknown to human beings, because I am speaking of an uncreated Wisdom...*³⁵²

[Ms. 69] *In Communion today, the fervor continued that the Lord had excited in me the day before at prayer, and it seemed to me to see clearly, but intellectually, that in everything He would do the most, and that only if I had a hand to extend, without feeling its weight, that He would carry everything.*

*I desired to transform myself wholly into Him, become more immediate with Him, seeing that with every force and every capacity in working it could not come to me except from this...*³⁵³

[Ms. 71] *...It seemed to me, then, another time, when the Lord made me experience there the view of being all taken up and worried, while taking from me for some time even the use of the powers, and I found that He possessed me totally.*

³⁴⁹ [February 5, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 104.

³⁵⁰ [November 21, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 186.

³⁵¹ *Original Constitutions, Summary*, n. 6, o.c., pp. 99-100.

³⁵² [September 9, 1806]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 89.

³⁵³ [June 4, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 174.

*Now, it seems to me that it is no longer I, but that it is only He, with some little contribution from me, and even this I have to cast away...*³⁵⁴

[Ms. 78] *I found myself other times drawn toward the Lord which led me to understand in Him that sympathy that is found between Himself and our soul. I experienced this in certain moments in a powerful manner with an even greater detachment from this earth and with the desire to unite myself ever more to the Lord. Toward Him, my soul aspires with a great attraction, making me yearn for an ever more intimate union with Him...*³⁵⁵

[Ms. 79] *The Lord led me to abandon everything into His hands and attracted me totally toward him, so much so that I could not do other than to love and to enjoy, feeling that he possessed all of me and held me intimately united to Him...*³⁵⁶

[Ms. 80] **The First Meditation on the Reign of Christ.**

In beginning this, it seemed to me that the Lord was drawing me to consider not a call to this reign, which is the usual and the most ordinary, but one that was higher, raising me up and drawing me to Himself, leading me to comprehend that if he calls some to serve Him, He called me not to do this as the lowest servants of His Court – and not even like those who stand closest to the King and who are the most favored, but as His Bride, who is called to seek and to imitate in all her Spouse, seeking in everything to be similar to Him, and to please Him.

*There was represented to me, therefore, that purity that I should have, as really how I ought to live totally of the spirit, not giving the slightest attention to the things of here below, and how I always ought to have in my sights God Himself, striving in every way to please Him and to give Him glory, etc. However, I saw all this in an intimate and spiritual manner, that words can only poorly represent...*³⁵⁷

[Ms. 118] *I busied myself a great deal in prayer with the view of the benefits of God in my concern to correspond with greater ardor for Him.*

*At the sight of both, I experienced myself be enkindled in love toward God and with concern to correspond with greater ardor toward Him. It seems to me, each time that I feel this duty that I have, which it is only right that I bring to it a supreme care and that the littlest reality could separate me from God...*³⁵⁸

[Ms. 120] *In one moment, when I feel united to him, it saddened me further that I was not doing anything in exchange for the love that He has for me.*

*I saw my misery and I exposed to Him that it is fitting for me that I should give myself to Him so that I might be able to respond to Him. This was all in a most sweet manner and with an internal conversation, dictated by love...*³⁵⁹

[Ms. 136] *The Lord gave me sentiments of fervor, and desire to go attentively investigating that which He did before beginning His active life, to be able to follow in His footsteps. I attached myself to Him closely, contemplating Him. I admired His humility. I begged Him to infuse this virtue into me, in that I am lacking in it...*³⁶⁰

³⁵⁴ [October 17, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 181.

³⁵⁵ [January 1813]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 192.

³⁵⁶ **[Spiritual Exercises, March 1813];** *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 193-194.

³⁵⁷ **[Spiritual Exercises, March 1813];** *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 198.

³⁵⁸ [October 20, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p.181.

³⁵⁹ **[Spiritual Exercises, March 10, 1813];** *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 200.

³⁶⁰ **[Spiritual Exercises, ‘The Baptism of Jesus’, 1811];** *Leopoldina Naudet....*, o.c., p. 128.

[Ms. 139] *I stopped long on the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament, with gratitude and love, thinking that one of the effects of the most Holy Communion is that of transforming us into Jesus Christ [an effect that He often moves me to desire], thinking how far I am still from having achieved this, notwithstanding the fact that I receive every day...*³⁶¹

[Ms. 140] *At the end of the meditation, I set myself to contemplating Jesus, so disdained and derided, and I felt even greater confusion for my pride, and of all those defects which flow from this. I detested them with a desire ever greater to emend myself in this regard, not being able to suffer a confrontation with that humility such as Jesus exercised.*

*Love seeks similarity. If, therefore, I love Jesus, I have to be similar to Him, and with courage put my hand to my defects...*³⁶²

6.] IT ORDER TO BE LIKE HIM, SHE UNDERSTOOD THAT IT WAS NECESSARY FOR HER HUMBLY TO ALLOW HERSELF TO BE WORKED ON BY HIM:

[Ms. 61] *In prayer this morning, the Lord drew me to Himself with sentiments of confidence, and making me understand that in that which He wills to be carried out, this is the sentiment that is the most necessary for me, and that I have nothing to fear: only that of losing this confidence and trust in Him.*

All the rest cannot hurt me.

*From this I came to understand the necessity that I have of exercising the acts, and of not losing these encounters that I have to exercise this virtue of obedience, and to have them more often...*³⁶³

[Ms. 66] *In the prayer after lunch, which made ever stronger and rendered more vivid those sentiments expressed above, there was joined a great desire of total annihilation and emptying of all myself, so that God might totally and solely work out everything in me. I had at the same time an intellectual view of this entire death to myself and of this totally spiritual life and one being of God. And He made it known to me that He wanted me to live in this way...*³⁶⁴

[Ms. 68] *I experienced Him at work in me and I felt that my heart expanded for His operations and not to limit them. I desired that the Charity and the fire that it produces, might consume everything that was not in accord with God.*

*I experienced a great confidence that these operations of grace and the leaving me by Him to work and to manage them, was to render me suited to all that he would want of me. And in these sentiments of trust, with every confidence in the Lord, I said to Him: 'I am not good for anything, but You and I will do great things...'*³⁶⁵

[Ms. 76] *The Lord drew me ever more to remain fixed on Him and not to have any other aim than toward him in everything. I prayer, I found myself always passive, feeling though that the Lord worked in me, and wished to do all the work, in a manner that I was not able to do anything without feeling that I was emptied, the more that I did not do. This led me to abandon myself ever more in Him and to remain unmovable in His hands...*³⁶⁶

³⁶¹ [Spiritual Exercises, 'The Supper', 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 133.

³⁶² [Spiritual Exercises, 'Jesus Christ in the House of Herod', 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 134.

³⁶³ [October 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 153.

³⁶⁴ [March 12, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 168-169.

³⁶⁵ [June 3, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 174.

³⁶⁶ [January 1813]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 191.

[Ms. 98] *It seems to me that my spirit is also weak, without energy and that when the Lord wants to draw it bit by bit upward toward Him, I am without force, nor do I surrender to what He wills and does.*

In the evening prayer, I seemed to realize once more that my spirit is still rather rude, that the clarity the Lord pours forth, cannot penetrate, nor produce those effects that it should, having encountered this roughness. It seemed to me to see this like a piece of mineral in which there are discovered veins of pure gold, but this gold is all mixed in with much earth, which one has to remove with hard work so that that metal might become pure and beautiful.

I prayed to the Lord that He would do this hard work. The veins of gold seemed to me that they were those rays of light that the Lord shed there...³⁶⁷

[Ms.108] *I experienced sentiments of gratitude and the desire to remain very close to the Lord, as I have such need of this, in that I have so much left over from the past, regarding pride, self-love, self-seeking, and the like.*

In this meditation, the Lord once more consoled me with making me know that these meditations that are for me a kind of interlude between him and me, wills serve then to raise up that which I often found as an obstacle to my spirit; that land which I saw, those remnants of misery, and thus one interlude will give rise to another, because one will correct the other...³⁶⁸

7.] RECOGNIZING HUMBLY THAT GOD WORKS OUT EVERYTHING IN HER, SHE DESIRES TO CARRY OUT HIS WILL FOR THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD:

[L. 12] *The spirit of this Union ought to be poor in itself, despoiled not only of one's proper will, but also from desires and from inclinations, that might tend to one aspect, rather than to another, regarding our purpose. But, each one full of confidence in God our Lord, is to say: 'Behold Your handmaid: let it be done to me according to Your will...³⁶⁹*

[L. 28] *Since I have remained without all human support at the death of the Archduchess, I have taken on a greater confidence in God, Who in His works, is pleased to choose the most weak and lowly instruments in order to bring His glory to the fore...³⁷⁰*

[CF. 5] *The Lord wills only that which He sends you, well put up with, resignation and union with His divine will...³⁷¹*

[C. 4] *Only with great prudence and charity should the community proceed to the dismissal of a candidate.*

1. To have recourse to God with humble and fervent prayer, in begging of Him the light to make the decision, and to know what His most holy will is. This is also to despoil oneself of all personal reasons, and placing before oneself only the greater glory of God, and the greater good to be achieved. In this spirit should the decision to dismiss be deliberated...³⁷²

³⁶⁷ [April 10, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 113.

³⁶⁸ [Spiritual Exercises, 'The Vocation of the Apostles', 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp.130-131.

³⁶⁹ *Letters*, o.c., p. 30.

³⁷⁰ *Letters*, o.c., p. 39.

³⁷¹ *Conferences...* o.c., p. 11.

³⁷² *Original Constitutions*, Ist. Part, c. 2, n. 4, 1, o.c., p. 19.

[Ms. 28] *In those days³⁷³ we saw in practice that our projects were changed several times a week, and why? To make us die to ourselves, and at the same time to make us touch with our own hand that He Alone is the Author of this Work, and that there be recognized the need we have of having recourse in everything to Him, and that without Him, we are to do nothing. But, we are to be ready and prepared in every moment to work at the first hint that we understand that it is His will...³⁷⁴*

[Ms. 48] *Concerning that which pertains to the Institute, under the article of whether the members may possess or not, it seemed to me that the motives I have for a positive response, are only relative to the greater glory of God, and for not knowing that He wishes otherwise. But, I feel more disposed for the contrary, as His will...³⁷⁵*

[Ms. 52] *At Communion, the Lord led me to understand that He wanted in everything that pertains to my soul, that I desire all this entails, and procure them all only to give Him glory, and not to aim any more at my own advantage, that for all this, I should leave the care up to Him, being forgetful of myself.*

Following this sentiment and light, which the Lord had bestowed on me, the moment in which I received Him in holy Communion, I dedicated all myself to Him, in order to serve his glory and His love. It seemed then that this would help me more efficaciously to despoil myself from myself and not to seek my own interests, nor to find me in those things...³⁷⁶

[Ms. 65] *In prayer, there continued in me a great sentiment of God, of total confidence in Him, of abandonment.*

And these followed me in every circumstance and activity, so that I do not ever lose sight of God and the strength and the grace that He communicates, trusting myself solely in Him. This is accompanied by continuous stimuli of pleasing Him in all things, of consulting Him and seeking His Will in everything...³⁷⁷

[Ms. 112] *...the Lord is pleased to choose those most weak and wretched instruments, to make His own omnipotence stand out the more. And therefore, I am happy that to Him Alone will be all the glory.*

Other times He has bestowed on me a certain diffidence to be able to carry out the Divine Will, and there have come into my mind at times some persons, of whom the Lord could indeed make use to serve Him, rather than of me.

I experience some regret when I think of this, because being a particular mercy, that He has chosen me for a Work of His glory, and I ought not to have such sentiments which cover over, at times, the desire that I would have if the Lord were served with every perfection and that by this Institute he would be very glorified, that which seems to me any other person would be more suited to do this...³⁷⁸

³⁷³ [Translator's Note: Mother Leopoldina is referring back to Fr. Paccanari's serious difficulties, which began in 1801, impacted in a negative way the small group of Sisters, called the *Dilette di Gesù*. cf. *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., c. p. 85, note 11.

³⁷⁴ [May 10, 1806]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 88.

³⁷⁵ [Spiritual Exercises, 'Two Standards', 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 128.

³⁷⁶ [Spiritual Exercises, 4th Week, 2nd Day, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p.137.

³⁷⁷ [March 6, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 168/

³⁷⁸ [October 27, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 155-156.

[Ms. 128] *It was said to me to begin the Particular Examen on these words of St. Gregory: 'In every action, look always to Him; rectify always your life and direct it toward the One who in His humanity has delineated the physiognomy of the elect'*³⁷⁹.

In this prayer that I offered after this had been said to me, I experienced much consolation in having a means to consider more often, the Redeemer, and consequently also of uniting myself to Him, since it is difficult to consider Him without feeling oneself drawn to him; the time for prayer was passed totally in this consideration and in desires of learning to imitate such a model.

*The lights which the Lord bestowed on me, concerning that great purity that He wishes from me, discovering for myself at the same time the injury that is leveled against Him, and that in particular, of a soul whom He draws lovingly to Himself, whenever reservations are put down regarding that total death of oneself, that is so necessary, in order to make Him Alone reign in us and to give to Him all the glory...*³⁸⁰

[Ms. 147] *...I love to speak of my misery and this is just doubled. It seems to me that I would be content that all would see in me that which I see, but so that the truth might be known and glory rendered to God.*

I suffer, and I feel that, attending to the Work that the Lord has deigned to entrust to me, they sometimes heap some glory on me, because of it. I would like that as I do, all might see that the Lord does this all Himself. And it seems to me that I would be very happy if all were to come to understand that I am not suited for anything and am like a rusty old machine that does not work unless the Lord moves it, and even then, quite badly, because I resist and not good for anything: and it is the mercy of this good Lord, if He does not cast it all in the fire.

*It is not, though, as happens in the truly humble, that I love being disdained. No, because this would not please me. But, it is because I rejoice that God is glorified and because it seems to me that He will be even more so, if others would know these above noted matters...*³⁸¹

8.] THE HUMBLE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD PERMITS HER TO KNOW HERSELF:

[L. 24] *They speak very well of this Bishop*³⁸². *I was not lacking in respect in having the Marquis di Canossa present to him my best wishes. The Bishop said to him: 'I have heard others speaking much in behalf of this very fine lady...'*

I repeat this only because I can give pleasure to you. But, I tell the truth, as for me, I would like no other epithet than that of a saint. And this no one has ever been able to give this to me, nor do they give me this now.

*This is something that human beings never really are! I would like to know what good they are able to find in me. I have done nothing, nor do I know how to do anything. Rather, I have put down impediments to the mercies of God in this Work with my own inactivity and miseries, and still this seems to be a bit bold! I think often that the Lord does this in order to sustain me regarding my reputation, in so far as this serves to His glory. I am content with this, that I already feel that which I am, and I see that which I do, that serves only to bring me greater confusion...*³⁸³

³⁷⁹ [NB: in this passage, Mother Leopoldina cites St. Gregory's Latin here].

³⁸⁰ [March 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 109.

³⁸¹ [1820]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 219-220.

³⁸² **Bishop Joseph Grasser.**

³⁸³ *Letters*, o.c., p. 71.

[CF. 7] *There cannot be authentic humility unless it is accompanied by confidence, nor can there be genuine and solid confidence unless here is humility. In the manner in which I make the perfection of one of these virtues depend upon the other, it seems to me that there would always be lacking something to the one when it would not have the other virtue as its companion. When I speak to you of genuine and solid humility, I intend to refer not so much to those acts which are customarily employed in so far as they begin with such a sentiment that accompanies them; but I intend to speak to you rather of that virtue which is one founded on the knowledge of ourselves, and that is increased and intensified in the measure that we enter the more minutely and to the very depths of this kind of knowledge.*

St. Ignatius says, and many others before him said it as well, that anyone who wishes to construct a grand and tall building, has to make sure at the same time that he digs solid foundations. In other words, anyone who wills to tend to great perfection and to advance in the way of holiness, has to go to the depths of humility, which is the authentic foundation, without which everything is overturned at the slightest breeze.

Therefore, we should not neglect to deepen ourselves in the knowledge of our own nothingness and of our own non-being, so that being well persuaded of this, we would have recourse to the One Who possesses all, and Who Alone is...³⁸⁴

[CF. 12] *You are whatever God sees: and nothing more...³⁸⁵*

[C. 5] *In this time of Novitiate, care will be taken that the Novices will be formed and adjust to the spirit of the Institute, as they control their passions and inclinations.*

Care will likewise be taken to form them to a strong, vigorous devotion, having God Alone as the principle and purpose of their activities. They will learn to desire God Alone as their only reward, both in time as in eternity, with a perfect abnegation of themselves...³⁸⁶

[C. 10] *For the greater abnegation of themselves and progress in the virtues, the Sisters will be content when their defects are made known to the Superior, no matter who may have seen her commit these, and makes them known to the Superior...³⁸⁷*

[Ms. 5] *I come, o Lord, to confess to You, my ingratitude. These I feel with even greater force that I am moved to this recognition by Your goodness. Yes, my God, the feeling that when I want to raise up my spirit, my soul to You, to go beyond my misery and weakness, I re-discover You in the depths of my heart always the same. I find You ready not only to listen to me, and to pardon me, as the sinner that I am, but even more to assure me that always, despite my ingratitude and negligence in serving You, You have been with me in that particular manner. This leads me to experience even a more intimate union with You, and this indeed opens my eyes upon myself and leads me to see the abyss of misery in which I am...³⁸⁸*

[Ms. 7] *In reflecting upon myself, I have seen that I do everything with great imperfection and I have thought to remedy this with the Lord's help, by doing the contrary, and by seeking to place the greatest confidence in the least things. This exactness, done for God, will lead me to know these same imperfections and I hope from the Lord that having overcome all the impediments, that I place in the way of grace, that the Lord will grant me greater than all these: that of corresponding to his benefits and never to leave grace unfruitful...³⁸⁹*

³⁸⁴ *Conferences*, o.c., p. 20.

³⁸⁵ *Conferences*, o.c., p. 47.

³⁸⁶ *Original Constitutions*, Ist Part, c.3, n. 2, p. 21.

³⁸⁷ *Original Constitutions*, Part II, 'On the Virtues', c. 3, n. 4, p. 34.

³⁸⁸ [August 11, 1800]; *Leopoldina Naudet*, o.c., p. 44.

³⁸⁹ [1800]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 47.

[Ms. 10] *In this intimate part of my soul, there is the view of my miseries. As for these past, it seems to me that the Lord moves me to make use of them as the foundation for holiness, remaining that humiliation that they cause for me, the knowledge of myself that they have given me, and that diffidence that I feel that I should most assuredly employ. But I remain in great fear of those that I might still be able to commit in the future, now that I find myself furnished with experience, and with so many lights, as well as by interior strength to look at myself, that I want to suffer all, no matter what, in order to avoid even the least imperfection over past happenings...*³⁹⁰

[Ms. 71] *There was presented to me also another view and this was to see the present state, in which the Lord had placed my soul, with that which I was just a little while back.*

It seemed to me, then, another time, when the Lord made me experience there the view of being all taken up and worried, while taking from me for some time even the use of the powers, and I found that he possessed me totally.

*Now, it seems to me that it is no longer I, but that it is only He, with some little contribution from me, and even this I have to cast away...*³⁹¹

[Ms. 111] *In my prayer this morning, I was more than ever penetrated with my own nothingness, with a great consolation of my spirit, which understands the great good there is indeed in losing myself in the Abyss of the All, which is God.*

And the more He gives me the grace to know myself and not to find any more in me any support, the more do I find this in Him and I hope to find it and to advance in the recognition of Him and in union.

It seemed to me now nothing swims in that Total, and I desired ever more to remain there, to find Him Who Alone is.

*I consoled myself in non-being, because he is All, and of not having anything of me, because he has all...*³⁹²

[Ms. 134] *The Lord led me to understand, that in addition to the fact that he had come for a great undertaking, yet He remained hidden, humble, and still give the impression that He was nothing more than a simple carpenter.*

And that this ought to serve me as an example against my own pride, which makes me believe sometimes that it is necessary to make myself known.

*It displeases me not to have had the appearance of things that I did, and all this is represented under the pretext of the Institute, and not of my own person. But, I ought to quiet myself, and follow rather His Spirit, which hints to me that I should remain hidden, and that he will know at the proper time, to do all...*³⁹³

9.] THE HUMBLE KNOWLEDGE OF SELF ALLOWS ONE TO LIVE IN A HUMBLE RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS:

[L. 2] *I do feel that which ought to be doing, or to put it more truthfully, I do feel it, but without knowing just precisely in what this consists. I note that I do place certain impediments with my wretchedness in the way of this knowledge, and at the same time, also in the way of the execution of that which I do know. And I cannot see not even in any detail just what these miseries are.*

³⁹⁰ [1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet*, ... o.c., p. 60.

³⁹¹ [October 17, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet*..., o.c., p. 181.

³⁹² [September 2, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet*..., o.c., p. 149.

³⁹³ [Spiritual Exercises, 'The Going of Christ to the Temple', 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet*..., o.c., p. 127.

This failing to see them convinces me all the more of my weakness and blindness, and keeps me in great humiliation. In this manner, I find myself only rarely with my companions, without having the thought that they are much more advanced than I am before the Lord. They are corresponding at least to that which the Lord wills from them.

And a flood of thoughts and comparisons, all in favor of these companions keeps me occupied, in the manner that I ought to conduct myself before all of them, and to recommend myself to their charity

*Every time that they obey me it is for me an objection of humiliation for myself, and admiration for them...*³⁹⁴

[L. 32] *...Our purpose is two-fold. We propose not only the sanctification of ourselves: but, also that of others, in so essential a manner, that almost in everything we make our own sanctification depend on our procuring that of others...*³⁹⁵

[Ms. 6] *...each time that they obey me is for me an object of humbling myself and of admiring them. These sentiments, even though most frequently pertain to my companions, I experience them also toward every person and I am now at the point of humbling myself interiorally toward any other person whom I might see...*³⁹⁶

10.] THE HUMBLE RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS PERMITS HER TO PERCEIVE CREATION IN A HUMBLE MANNER:

[CF. 10] *All evils have come into the world with pride...*³⁹⁷

[CF. 11] *Let us say the other way around that all the goods have come into the world through humility.*

And we see this in the Mystery of the Incarnation, where a God totally emptied Himself, and in Mary most Holy, who was chosen for this mystery, totally humble, and so therefore, precisely for this effect, that there had been any creature on earth who was more humble, she would have been chosen to be the Mother of God.

From all this we can deduce how much God loves humility, and how much He hates pride, self-love....

*... Say to yourselves clearly: One is whatever God sees, and nothing more. Ponder these words well, meditating on them attentively...*³⁹⁸

[Ms. 17] *All that is created, has been created for us and not that we had been created for all these goods: we are Only for God! That all that is created might not fully satisfy our hearts is a proof that we have had our beginning through that, but that God is our end...*³⁹⁹

[Ms. 18] *Yes, Lord, I confess it before You, that I have never been able to call myself happy with the love of any creature, because I have known Your love and convinced of the inconstancy and the instability of man, I could never see happiness in that which does not last, and I saw that*

³⁹⁴ *Letters*, o.c., pp. 9-10.

³⁹⁵ *Letters*, o.c., p. 81.

³⁹⁶ [1800]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 45.

³⁹⁷ *Conferences*, ...o.c., p. 46.

³⁹⁸ *Conferences*. ...o.c., pp. 46-47.

³⁹⁹ [October 11, 1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 69.

*You Alone are the unique genuine happiness. And so my heart has been in the sweet necessity of confessing that we have been created for a more noble end...*⁴⁰⁰

[Ms. 87] *2nd Point. Concerning all things that God has created for human beings, I saw that the greater part of them could lead me to arrive assuredly at my end by the negative part, by mortifying me in their use. And further, I noted that the lack of this mortification at times has distanced me, and at other times, had slowed me down, tending toward them as I should...*⁴⁰¹

11.] AT THE END OF HER JOURNEY, SHE ACHIEVED FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST ‘SUPREME HUMILITY’: THE FULL ACCEPTANCE OF THE FATHER’S WILL, BY PLAING HERSELF SECURELY INTO HIS HANDS:

[Ms. 46] *‘If you remain in that center where I want you to dwell, you will not have anything to fear, but outside of this, there is a bit of everything.’*

*I knew then that the Lord with these words wished to stimulate me the more to repose in Him, against the fears that try my nature in that total loss of myself and that only by means of this will I be able to avoid every evil. I then made new acts of abandonment, wishing really not to know anything other regarding myself, and to repose continuously in God...*⁴⁰²

[Ms. 53] *It seemed to me that the Lord has instructed me on this, by bringing me to know that when He gives me the view of my own miseries [which He wishes to purge in the furnace of His charity, by means of prayer], He does this because He wants from me acts of confidence and abandonment in Him, that begin not from a general knowledge of His omnipotence in order to free my soul from every misery, but from that almost security of His goodness and love that He wants to bestow. Hence, I need to trust and to think that he has greater care to put my soul in order than that which I could have for myself...*⁴⁰³

[Ms. 70] *The Lord made me not only understand, but also almost, I would say, made me see openly how all this takes place and how uselessly I at times worry about things, while all that I really have to do is to love and to follow that which he wants from me, and as for all the rest, to leave this up to Him...*⁴⁰⁴

[Ms. 86] *During the days that have passed, there continued in me the same sentiments of abandonment and total loss of myself in God. One day, after Communion, there came to my mind the example of the phoenix – as I have to die, in order to live anew then in the new and total life in God. I feel that I should no longer live I, but that Jesus lives in me...*⁴⁰⁵

[Ms 103] *The Lord told me in an internal locution that it is not enough to abandon myself to Him, Who by means of those repeated stimuli of abandonment, He wills to draw me to the total transformation into Him. He wills to do this so that I will no longer be just one who lives, but that He lives in me, by explaining the effect that this would produce. This seems to me to be a greater level than simple union, having present my misery, I could do no less than expose to the Lord, in the simplicity of my heart, that it was too soon for me to pass from one to the other, that I am doing everything in such a superficial manner, and that I am full of sins and miseries.*

But, He said to me that He is the Master and that I should obey Him, since it is not I who am searching for these developments, and that on my own could I even think of them, nor even

⁴⁰⁰ [October 10, 1801]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 69-70.

⁴⁰¹ [Spiritual Exercises, 4th Week, 3rd Day, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* p. 119.

⁴⁰² [April 26, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet,* ... o.c., p. 118.

⁴⁰³ [Spiritual Exercises, 4th Week, 3rd Day, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 138.

⁴⁰⁴ [October 9-10, 1812]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 178-179.

⁴⁰⁵ [April 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...* o.c., p. 110.

*understand them. But, it is He Who wants these, and manifested to me His will. I made an act of submission and humiliation...*⁴⁰⁶

[Ms. 124] *The Lord made me understand that on no other reality should I place my every confidence for the Work that He wants of me, other than on this: that He wants it. And this should suffice for me in order to believe with every certitude that being so, it surely will be and everything will succeed with it being necessary for me to have any fear for anything, nor to make any account of external realities, that might seem to be opposed to what He wants that should happen. It seemed to me, then, to feel that I am all the more animated and courageous...*⁴⁰⁷

[Ms. 142] *A sentiment of being entirely isolated from God Alone, not only in my heart, but also in my mind. In prayer, there were stimuli and excitement to a life hidden in God, with Jesus. There was Joy of this...*⁴⁰⁸

[Ms. 146] *I am confused, o my Lord, for being far from the abandonment in You that You wish of me, and I ask of You a thousand pardons for this. And from this moment, for always, I abandon all my interests into Your hands, entrusting myself entirely to Your infinite goodness, sure that You have more care and thought for me and for those matters entrusted to me, than that which I myself could ever have. Therefore, from now on I wish to live without anxieties and fears, to do all that I will be able to do for You, in order to serve You and to make You loved and served by others, in so far as within me lies.*

I wish to give thought to procure Your glory and Your holy service: and You think for me.

I need a guide for myself, and for this Work. Think of us all, my Love. To You, I abandon everything. You can, you know, you will and this is enough for me in order to be sure that You will do it.

Give me Your holy love, zeal for Your glory and increase always in me trust and confidence in You.

This I beg You through the merits of Mary most holy, of her, Your Mother, to whom You can refuse nothing of what is asked of You – for those of St. Joseph, Your Guardian Father and my advocate, St. Ignatius

12.] EXPERIENCING THE PATH OF HUMILITY, TRACED OUT BY JESUS CHRIST, WHO WAS HUMBLE OF HEART, SHE DESIRES THAT OTHERS WOULD ALSO TAKE UP THIS WAY:

[L. 10] *Let us indeed be instructed by the Divine Teacher, and with genuine humility of heart, let us submit ourselves to the blows that strike us, because in this way, we will learn to submit our judgment, and to die to ourselves. We can be afraid of nothing, because the great Sovereign Whom we have the happiness of serving, is all powerful, and His promises cannot fail...*⁴⁰⁹

[L. 12] *The spirit of this Union ought to be poor in itself, despoiled not only of one's proper will, but also from desires and from inclinations, that might tend to one aspect, rather than to another, regarding our purpose. But, each one full of confidence in God our Lord, is to say: 'Behold Your handmaid: let it be done according to Your Will.*

⁴⁰⁶ [April 26, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 118.

⁴⁰⁷ [September 26, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 153.

⁴⁰⁸ [September 26, 1813]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., pp. 202-203.

⁴⁰⁹ *Letters...* o.c., p. 29.

*Leave to God Alone the care of fulfilling within you His most lovable will, and dying to yourselves, allow yourselves to be guided as pleases the divine Wisdom the more...*⁴¹⁰

[L. 13] *If you will have humility and consider that each one of you is the last, then it will come to be that charity is the better observed; because, then you will not contend with each other, you will not blame each other, you will not have that concern that your sentiment might prevail over that of your companions.*

Briefly, by means of this you will work so that your union might be a genuine paradise, where each one finds herself content, and you do not have to suffer from any superiority that one among you might want to exercise over the others, but there will come genuine union and charity.

*Have an authentic esteem for each other. And this will be easy for you when, by means of your knowledge of yourselves, you will notice your own misery, and you will observe the virtues in others...*⁴¹¹

[L. 15] *[A Servant of God said]: ‘In all the religious Institutes, there may be seen at their beginning that there reigns the spirit of death to this world and to nature, and that there dominates there the spirit of grace. Human nature is scarcely seen: Jesus Christ appears there in an admirable manner.’*

This, my beloved Sisters, is what we need to do on our part. We need to aim at the denial of ourselves, and to live in conformity with the spirit of our vocation, penetrating well into the greatness of this, and on how much this requires of us.

And hence, as I told you when I was there [and which I now repeat, being a comparison that seems to me to be so well-suited], if a child of tender age had a wrinkled grace and the appearance of an old man, you and everyone would say that this person could no longer live, nor grow.

The same would be said of a new religious Institute, that in its infancy, if it already had the defects of those of extended time in existence, that had weakened them and aged them

*If we wish, therefore, that there be growth in life, let us seek mortification, the denial of ourselves, and the perfect observance, with all those other virtues which will serve to nourish this principle and to increase it. Let your endeavors be animated by an interior spirit that would make you do all this...*⁴¹²

[CF. 18] *The spirit of the Beloved of Jesus is that of bearing poor of ourselves, despoiled of all self-will, affection and desire that would tend more to one reality than to something else in the choice of means in order to arrive at our purpose; but, rather to leave to God the care of carrying out upon us His move lovable will, saying with all confidence: ‘Behold Your hand-maiden, let Your will be done in me!’*

The perfect denial of ourselves is precisely that, therefore, which constitutes the spirit of the Beloved, and that which ought to console us is that spirit of Jesus Christ, and which combines with the maxims of the Gospel. Since the Lord in the Gospel says that all who wish to follow Him, has to deny themselves. [cf. Mt 16:24].

*This, then, is the great means of following after Jesus. It is this, therefore, that leads you more securely, without all that mixture that other means bear with them. All those who commit themselves to the spiritual life are to be led to this great means; but with those others, we lengthen the way, while it is shorter, to follow behind, and by embracing this negation of one’s own will, without being stopped through so many paths...*⁴¹³

⁴¹⁰ *Letters, ...o.c., p. 30.*

⁴¹¹ *Letters, ...o.c., p. 31.*

⁴¹² *Conferences, o.c., p. 175.*

⁴¹³ *Conferences, o.c., p. 175.*

[CF. 24] *And for anyone who finds such humility repugnant, let her be given over into the hands of her Crucified Spouse, showing her Him Whom she ought to imitate.*

Let no one give up any of this effort even unto death in the exercise of humility. And whoever has care of souls should never rely on herself in not exercising herself in this virtue, in much the manner of which flesh and bones are both united with life. The reason I that it is all like a ladder on which there are many rungs that are always necessary to ascend; and these same steps ought to be ascended many times, by multiplying their acts.

Souls who do not have this humility can never go out from themselves, because there arise in them thousands upon thousands of passions, and much curiosity, and souls would be occupied in these...⁴¹⁴

[C. 1] *The spirit of this Institute is based on the mortification of ourselves, on prayer and on interior recollection. From these proceeds every good and fruitful activity. We are committed to studying the Holy Family most profoundly in order to unite our intentions to it and conform our activities to it...⁴¹⁵*

[C. 7] *Since humility is the foundation of all the other virtues, the Sisters of the holy Family will be truly committed to this as evidenced in the most lovable heart of Jesus. He chose in a special manner to be the teacher of this virtue, saying in the holy Gospel: ‘Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart.’ [Mt 11:29].*

And from within their own nothingness, each will think very lowly of herself, each one considering herself to be the least of all...⁴¹⁶

[C. 8] *Since by their very vocation, the Sisters are called to cooperate in the eternal salvation of their neighbors, with all the more reason they should be humble, and penetrated with the sentiment of their own wretchedness and unworthiness. They consider it a special grace that they have been chosen by the Lord for such a great good.*

And with all their spirit the Sisters ought to give totally of themselves to the divine service. At the same time, they need to think of themselves as useless servants in the Lord’s House, in accord with what our Divine Redeemer said in His holy Gospel: ‘So you also, when you have done all these things that are commanded, you say: We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do.’ [Lk 17:10]...⁴¹⁷

[C. 9] *Each one will accept humbly whatever has been decided by the Superior regarding duties, as well as whatever else has been commanded by her. And with true humility of heart, each Sister will be ready to take care of the most humble and abject services, as far as the world would judge these. It is necessary to think of Jesus Christ, Who out of love for us, submitted Himself to every humiliation...⁴¹⁸*

[C. 20] *Those who will be proven capable to be able to be employed in the various areas of the Institute’s work, and those who by obedience will be assigned to these, in whatever field they work, will faithfully carry out the particular rules of their office. All need to operate according to the spirit of the Institute, which is the imitation of Jesus Christ, and to take this divine teacher as our Model in all that needs to be done for the well being of our neighbors. None should allow herself to be concerned with her own self-love, nor by any particular talent and inclination...⁴¹⁹*

⁴¹⁴ *Conferences*, o.c. p. 197.

⁴¹⁵ *Original Constitutions*, n.3, o.c., p. 6.

⁴¹⁶ *Original Constitutions*, 2nd Part, *On the Virtues*, c. 3, n. 1, o.c., p. 33.

⁴¹⁷ *Original Constitutions*, 2nd Part, *On the Virtues*, c. 3, n. 2, o.c., pp. 33-34.

⁴¹⁸ *Original Constitutions*, 2nd Part, *On the Virtues*, c.3, n. 3, o.c., p. 34.

⁴¹⁹ *Original Constitutions*, 3rd Part, *Concerning Study and the Means that the Institute uses for the Benefit of its Neighbors*, c. 2, n. 4, o.c., p. 59.

[C. 30] *Everyone who enters into this Institute, following Christ's counsel...[Lk 14:26], has to make every effort to separate herself from all carnal affection for her relatives, and convert this into a spiritual bond, loving them only with that affection that ordered charity seeks, as that which is dead to this world and to self-love, and lives only for Christ, our Lord, and holds Him in place of father, mother, family and everything else...*⁴²⁰

[C. 31] *Thus, just as the people of the world follow its values, love and seek with great diligence the honors, the fame, to have a great name on earth, as the world teaches – so, those who walk according to the Spirit and truly follow Christ, our Lord, will love and ardently desire all that is contrary to this, namely, to be vested in the same livery as their Lord out of love and reverence for Him...*⁴²¹

[C. 37] *The Sisters will strive with every diligence to keep from all disorder the windows of their sentiments, particularly their eyes, hearing and tongue. They will observe this in peach and genuine internal humility, and showing it in silence, when it is fitting to observe this;*

- and when it is necessary to speak, let it be done with consideration and with edifying discourse;
- in modest expression – in maturity in one's gait and in all movements;
- without giving any sign of impatience, or pride;
- striving and desiring in all matters to give way to others;
- esteeming all others within her own spirit as superior to her;
- and in her exterior conduct, deferring to them with reverence that the state of each one would demand, with religious simplicity and modesty;
- hence, it would follow that considering one another devotedly, and they will praise our God our Lord, Whom each one will strive to recognize in the others as in their proper image...
⁴²²

[Ms. 123] *I experience at times a particular joy and a great consolation when I think that the Lord would wish one day to be served and to find among us His delights. I desire, therefore, that that which He will be really done in us, and that He be loved by us continuously and glorified in all that extension which is ever possible and that this be done by His creatures...*⁴²³

[Ms. 126] *This evening, the Lord gave me an entire communication with him, in which I felt myself powerfully drawn to establish a great internal spirit in the Institute.*

I experienced some fears that the external occupations and those realizations that, because of this that had to be established, they might bring some harm to it. However, I thought of weighing well everything and of placing every possible reparation to that which might serve as a danger to a reality of such major importance. The Lord gave me as many more desires to establish the whole with profound roots of humility. And it seemed to me that to these there would be added further an intellectual view of the depth of humility upon which there was to be established such a grand edifice as that of the Institute. I desired this with supreme ardor that it might be great before the Lord and as small as possible in the eyes of men.

*The Lord led me to internalize in this view, with desires and sentiments...*⁴²⁴

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⁴²⁰ *Original Constitutions, Summary, n. 4, o.c., p. 98.*

⁴²¹ *Original Constitutions, Summary, n. 6, o.c., pp. 99-100*

⁴²² *Original Constitutions, Summary, n. 21, o.c., pp. 103-104.*

⁴²³ [June 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet...*, o.c., p. 143.

⁴²⁴ [December 6, 1811]; *Leopoldina Naudet ...*, o.c. p. 163.

SUMMARY

In the light of this itinerary which Mother Leopoldina has traced out with her manner of living, seems that in her that Humility even before being conceptualized, was lived. This is noted in her manner of positioning herself in the world[in her just relationship with God, with herself, with others, and with all of creation], and in those choices in life which emerge from her writings. She does not limit herself to live the virtue of humility, but rather lives in a ***State of Humility***, and she proposes this to her Sisters of her Congregation – and further, to every Christian who would become committed to the Following of Jesus Christ, *meek and humble of heart*.

Leopoldina, following the example of Jesus Christ, the Master of Humility, chooses the last place, fully cognizant that the first place, in the absolute sense, pertains to the Father.

In her Act of Abandonment, she reaches the high point of her availability to the Father's Will, being guided by the Holy Spirit, she lives *supreme humility*, and in the Son she becomes a participant in the first place.

The Christological foundation of the Humility which she lives, confirms the validity of her witness for these times, and for every man and woman for all times.



CONCLUSION

In this study, the emphasis has been to bring out one aspect of the Christian life: Humility. The approach has been to show how this was lived by an individual, and from this experience, the effort has been to show how this way of living is still relevant today.

On the basis of an initial analysis of terms, it can be concluded that Humility sheds its own light particularly in the Mystery of the Incarnation. In **Salvation History**, it is evident that Humility is an event that flows from the encounter between God, manifested in Jesus Christ, and man. In the **Old Testament**, there is hardly any mention of Humility, other than the Humility of human beings: the Word of God carries human beings to glory along the path of humble submission to God, the Creator and Savior. In the **New Testament**, the Word of God has become flesh in Jesus Christ. He leads humanity to the culmination of Humility, which He shows consisting in serving God in one's neighbors, and in humbling oneself out of love for the sake of glorifying God, in His saving the human race.

Faith undergoes a process of inculturation, and this extends also the theme of Humility which has assumed in the course of the centuries different meanings. Beginning with the Fathers of the Church, for example, the study brought forward the teachings of **St. Augustine** who accentuates the specifically *Christian* character of Humility. He states that in the pagan authors there may perhaps be found excellent moral norms, but the authentic notion of Humility can be taught only by the example of Jesus Christ, the Doctor and Master of Humility. These Fathers of the Church are unanimous in stating that Humility is not a virtue like so many others, but stands at the base of each virtue, and is a characteristic of all right relationship between human beings and God. Furthermore, for these Fathers, Humility does not consist in lowering oneself under one's proper condition. Rather, Humility is our recognizing what we truly are – and not only in our limited nature, as the **Oracle of Delphi** warned, but above all, in our sinful condition. This disposition of soul renders the humble person open to the divine action, and makes each capable of reaching with Christ to authentic grandeur.

This study has also brought out the view from the Monastic Theology of the 12th Century, which considers Humility in the general sense of situating one before God, others and also oneself. **St. Benedict of Norcia** in his *Rule*, presents Humility as the foundation, the mother and mistress of every virtue and of love itself. **St. Bernard**, following the path laid out by the Monastic Theology of Cassian and St. Benedict, occupies himself reflecting on the degrees of pride and humility, in his Treatise, *De Gradibus Humilitatis et Superbiae* [**On the Degrees of Humility and Pride**].

In his plan of the virtues, **St. Thomas Aquinas** in his *Summa Theologiae*, places Humility among the virtues connected to Temperance, and precisely, under Modesty. In St. Thomas' thought, Humility has three areas of reference: oneself, others and God. **St. Ignatius of Loyola** proposes three grades of Humility: for the Jesuit Founder, in order to advance in the path of perfection, it is necessary to come forth from oneself, to bring about an emptiness in creatures to give place to the Creator.

In all the presentations of humility, there emerges the recognition of human limitation. This realization of each one's inconsistency and weakness is then accentuated in Protestant

Theology, which holds that there is a two-fold recognition at the origins of Humility: that of our creature-hood, and that of the fault due to sins. These aspects, however, define solely the negative aspect of Humility. For a positive and integral conception of Humility, it is necessary to keep before us an ulterior essential aspect: the recognition of the dignity of human nature and grace.

The authors of the 16th and 17th Centuries, have strongly brought out the importance of Humility in the spiritual life. It is not mortification for its own sake, but the denial of oneself in order to be able to follow behind Jesus Christ: *If anyone wants to follow Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.* [Mk 8:34].

Diversely, the **French School** of the 16th Century developed the theme of the nothingness of the creature before God, and emphasizes in a strong manner the need for humiliations. In the 19th and 20th centuries, **Philosophical, Psychological and Sociological Research** was also concerned in a certain measure with Humility. **M. Scheler** objected to **F. Nietzsche** who held that Humility was nothing more than the moral experience of the weak. Scheler presents Humility rather as more delicate, more mysterious and the most beautiful of the Christian virtues – rather, he saw it as The Christian virtue, *par excellence*.

Today, in the 21st Century, the aspect is brought out that Humility has an anthropological, theological and Historic-Salvific value. However, it is above all necessary to note its Christological root. It is Jesus Christ Who reveals the greatest newness of Humility, the *Kenosis* of the Word shows us that true greatness consists in the voluntary lowering of oneself, animated by charity, and one that is turned toward the ‘service of one’s sisters and brothers.’ Humility is thus the ‘way’, the pedagogy chosen by God, and toward it each person is to conform herself along her path of life.

Humility matures in the fragile and delicate balance and harmony between love of oneself and of others, lived and seen in the perspective of the love of God; it is united to the reality of the human person, tends to correct the manner of representing one’s relationships, in considering them as they are, and not as perhaps one would wish them to be. The way of Humility oscillates between what is ‘already’ here, and what has not yet occurred, and which still lies ahead, in an endless process. The oblation of the Christian life, lived in fullness, is always a gift to be accepted with gratitude, but also a commitment that must be continuously brought to life. The goal is to become all that one is called to be, i.e., to find one’s proper place in the Plan of Salvation.

Since Humility is expressed in a manner of existing, of situating oneself, of placing oneself in the reality considered above, beginning with the writings of Mother Leopoldina Naudet, her experience of life, and in the light of her principle:

*One is only what she is before God – and nothing more*⁴²⁵

She truly desired to live this evangelical aspect as the *foundation of all the virtues*⁴²⁶, and *that virtue particularly necessary for her Institute*⁴²⁷.

⁴²⁵ Cf. her *Conference on Humility*.

⁴²⁶ *Original Constitutions*, n. 1, p. 33.

In her writings, Mother Leopoldina shows Humility with deep Christological roots, and she seems to trace out an itinerary, one for her, and for anyone who would want to follow Jesus Christ, *humble of heart*: she understood immediately that God desires to communicate His gifts if she would humbly render herself available to them. In receiving the gifts of God, the creature recognizes herself with regard to her Lord, and perceives that one does not always correspond to the gifts received. This lack of correspondence to His gifts does not, however, place her in a state of anxiety, but increases ever more in her that humble confidence in the merciful love of God. And thus, experiencing herself as loved by God, she desires to correspond and to be like Jesus Christ. However, to imitate Him closely, she recognized that she needed humbly to allow herself to be developed by the Spirit.

In the moment in which she recognizes that it is God who is at work within her, she desires to fulfill His Will for His greater glory. The humble relationship with God permits her to know herself and this attitude leads her to live in a humble relationship with the others, and to look on creation in a different manner. At the end of her long journey, Mother Leopoldina reaches, in following the example of Jesus Christ, that *supreme humility*: the full acceptance of the Father's Will, by placing herself confidently in a secure manner, in His hands. Her Humility is not some abstract attitude, or one that has easily decipherable boundaries: it is simply life in Jesus Christ. The experience of this path of Humility as traced by Jesus Christ, *humble of heart*, leads her to desire that others, too, might proceed along this way, and manifest Him on various occasions.



As the conclusion of this study, it seems that it can be stated that only a small candle has been lit in order to perceive something of the Humility of Mother Leopoldina Naudet. With this, many other possible avenues of approach have been opened that could succeed in shedding every a great light on this, as for example:

- one might consider the documents regarding the historical testimonies regarding her, in order to gather in them how Mother Leopoldina herself showed how she lived Humility;
- or, to compare the concept of Humility noted in Mother Naudet, with those texts which are found in her own library, from which most likely she obtained her idea of Humility⁴²⁸;
- another approach would be to synthesize that Humility as lived by Mother Leopoldina and to place this in relationship with that lived by other Founders in the 1800's in Verona;
- and still another avenue that could be investigated is to assemble those biblical texts used by Mother Leopoldina in order to establish her brand of Humility.

These and other approaches might be undertaken. This present study proposed for itself to consider, to reflect upon and to verify, in the light of the writings of a Christian woman who has gone before us along the path of faith, as a humble attitude, so present in

⁴²⁷ Cf. *Letter* 25.

⁴²⁸ As for these sources of Mother Leopoldina – cf. the concluding Bibliography of this present study. This has been followed somewhat in this present study only in part. However, this would require research that would go beyond the modest economy of this present reflection.

Salvation History and how this is still able to be proposed as a value to the Christian men and women who live in a time called 'post-modern.'

At the end of this research, it might be stated that Mother Leopoldina's humble attitude, is one attempt, following on the example of Jesus Christ, the Master of Humility, to choose the last place, fully realizing that the first place, absolutely, pertains to God the Father. Accepting the fulfillment of the Father's Will, guided by the Holy Spirit, Mother Leopoldina lives that *supreme humility*, and thus, in the Son, became a sharer in the first place. The Christological foundation of Humility which she lived, seems to illuminate its radicality and to justify the present value of her testimony. In Mother Leopoldina Naudet there may be seen more than the virtue of Humility, a *state of Humility*, i.e., in the original sense of the Greek word, *tapeinosis*, a condition of self-abasement.

This is the condition which, in the faith, brings it to bear that indeed that the *Humility of God* is unveiled in Jesus Christ [cf. Ph 2:8]. This, then, becomes the *Humility of Humanity*, of one woman, **Mother Leopoldina Naudet**.



HISTORICAL APPENDIX

1. **LEOPOLDINA NAUDET**: she was born in Florence in 1773, preceded by her sister, Maria Luisa, who was born in 1770. She lost her mother in 1775 in Vienna, and was given over to the care of her maternal grand-mother until 1778. At this time, together with her sister, she was sent to Florence, and was entrusted to the Augustinian Sisters for their early education. In 1783, the two sisters were transferred to the Monastery of Soissons, conducted by the Regular Canonesses of St. Augustine, in order to learn the French language well, which was in vogue in that era at the Hapsburg Court.

Her father died in 1789, and she then returned to Florence, being sent there by the Grand-Duke Leopold, and the sisters returned to the Augustinian Sisters in order to acquire some familiarity with the Italian language, and to continue their education. In 1790, they entered into the service of the Grand-Duke and followed him to Vienna where he, that same year, became the Emperor of Austria, following the death of Joseph II. Leopoldina received the charge of being the first teacher of the younger children of Leopold, and then she was assigned to the Arch-Duchess, Maria Anna, and would follow her to different places, up until 1805.

In May of 1799, Leopoldina with her sister, Luisa, and the Arch-Duchess, began the *Society of the Beloved of Jesus*, guided by a Fr. Nicholas Paccanari, who had already organized the *Company of the Faith of Jesus*. The Society of these *Beloved* showed some signs of development, notwithstanding the real difficulties of that period of history, and founded houses in France, London and Belgium.

A juridical Cause was initiated against Fr. Paccanari, and this ended with the condemnation of the Holy Office, and this led to run the *Company of the Faith*. It also had serious negative repercussions on the *Beloved*. As a result, the houses in London, France and Belgium divided from those in Italy. Leopoldina then went to Padua, and eventually to Verona, with a group of the *Beloved of Jesus*.

In Verona, she worked along-side the initiative already begun by Mother Madeline di Canossa, since the growth of the *Beloved of Jesus* was hindered, due to the adverse circumstances which hounded Fr. Paccanari. Leopoldina's cooperation in the initiative of Madeline di Canossa permitted Leopoldina to live in Venice and to open the path for the establishment of other houses, and enabled her to begin the writing of the Constitutions:

... The Lord had blessed Mother Madeline and Mother Leopoldina with differing vocations, with talents and graces in proportion to the various purposes that they hoped to reach. Leopoldina Naudet's aspiration was to found a cloistered religious Congregation, inspired by St. Ignatius and dedicated to the upper classes of society, through colleges for young ladies. This was the view, without, however, any intention to exclude school and instruction for the daughters of poor families. Blessed [now Saint] Maddalena di Canossa was moved more to the young girls of the lower classes, and she intended to set up schools in which there would be taught reading, writing, domestic chores. She wanted her Sisters to embrace also the teaching of Christian Doctrine in the parishes and visits to

hospitals She did not want either the cloister, nor a cloistered community, taking her inspiration, in quite broad strokes, from St. Vincent de Paul...⁴²⁹

In 1811, Mother Leopoldina, in the light of a different spirituality, and having obtained the blessing of Pope Pius VII, made the decision to go ahead with the realization of her own project. She thus left St. Joseph's Convent and placed her own religious family under the protection of the Holy Family. The concrete setting into motion of her plan took place on November 9, 1816, in St. Teresa's Convent. From that time onward, Mother Leopoldina committed herself wholeheartedly to the Constitutions, to the formation of her sisters and to the stabilization of her Work, through the government recognition, and then eventually, that of the Holy See.

She died on August 17, 1834.

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2. THE POSITIO

The full identification of this work is as follows:

Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum. P.N. 1227. Veronen., Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servae Dei, Leopoldinae Naudet [1773-1834], fundatricis Congregationis Sororum a Sacra Familia Veronae, Positio super virtutibus, vol. 1-II. Romae 1994.

This massive work, the *Positio*, was compiled by the Very Reverend Relator General. Monsignor Giovanni Papa, and comprises two volumes, with 26 different documents⁴³⁰.

There is first a section labeled the *Informatio*, to which follows the *Summarium*. The individual documents are presented in three parts which touch critically on the Biography of the Servant of God [Documents I-VI]; the foundation of the Sisters of the Holy Family [Documents VII-XV]:

- **Document I**: treats of her family, and there is described her living in France, Spain and Vienna.
- **Document II**: takes up her college years
- **Document III**: offers a perspective on the Servant of God in her spiritual maturing. Even though she had been entrusted to the care of the Arch-Duke, the contemplative vocation made some growth in her.
- **Document IV**: concentrates on the *Beloved of Jesus*, who would later develop into the Sisters of the Holy Family of Verona.
- **Document V**: centers on the matter of the *Beloved*.
- **Document VI**: is the meticulous reconstruction of the case against Fr. Nicholas Paccanari.

⁴²⁹ Fr. Nello DALLE VEDOVE, CSS, *Dalla corte al chiostro. Donna Leopoldina Naudet, Fondatrice delle Sorelle della Sacra Famiglia*. Verona: Scuola Tipografica Missioni Padri Stimatini 1954, p. 193.

⁴³⁰ [**Translator's Note**: this impressive undertaking includes well over 1750 pages].

The **Second Part** of the *Positio*, rotates around the idea of the foundation of the Sisters of the Holy Family. There precedes a synthetic and precise picture of the ecclesial life in Verona and its works of charity. Verona was living in a fertile moment for holiness with so many structures and institutions, with men and women who have left a profound trace on the city's life of piety.

- **Documents VIII & IX**: constitute a *corpus* on the Institute of the Sisters of the Holy Family, from which emerges Leopoldina's role as Foundress guide and Mother. One proof of this may be the fact that her Constitutions received both civil and ecclesiastical approbation with an uncommon rapidity, for that time. Her Spiritual Director, St. Gaspar Bertoni [**Document XII**] offered a fundamental role for the Servant of God, and this is given its own consideration⁴³¹.

- **Document XIII**: takes up the matter of Leopoldina's relationship with the personalities of her time.

- **Document XIV**: on her writings, reveals the existence of 154 letters, dating from 1799 to 1834, and her Spiritual Diary, or *Personal Reminiscences*, from 1800 – 1831. These are texts of various weight and all of these refer to the Servant of God. A mention apart is deserved for her *Spiritual Conferences* in so far as these reveal her union with God and express a content of an ascetical and penitential value.

Part Three presents the testimonies of the reputation for holiness attributed to Leopoldina, after her death:

- **Document XVI**: collects some beautiful witnesses.

- **Document XVII**: is dedicated to the testimonies of her sister, Luisa.

- **Documents XVII, XIX, & XXI**: treat of Leopoldina's biographies.

- **Document XX**: speaks of her funeral celebration, and this is to be joined with **Document XV**: is regarding Leopoldina's death. The same might be said of **Document XXIV** which is about the recognition and the translation of the body of the Servant of God.

- **Documents XXII and XXIII**: attest to the permanence of her reputation for holiness.

The *Positio* then concludes with the Process in **Document XXV** with a list of graces received and healings obtained in **Document XXVI**. The *Positio* is based on the consultation of 104 archives and libraries⁴³².

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⁴³¹ [Translator's Note: this will be translated apart to show the **SPIRITUAL BOND** between the Stigmatine Founder and Mother Leopoldina Naudet].

⁴³² cf. the *Relatio et vota sulla Seduta dei Consultori Storici tenuta il 5 novembre 1996*, in: *Beatificationis et Cononizationis...o.c.*, pp. 4-7.

3. Fr. NICHOLAS PACCANARI [1773-1820]

He was born in Valsugnana, and in 1796 he founded in Rome the *Congregation of the Fathers of the Faith*. His intention was to bring to life anew the Company of St. Ignatius. In 1798, he entered into contact with a Fr. Varin, and on April 18, 1799, there occurred the fusion of their two groups. Notwithstanding the fact that Fr. Paccanari had not completed his literary studies, he was elected Superior General.

In May of 1799, Fr. Paccanari, through the intercession of Fr. Varin, had a conversation with the Arch-Duchess, Maria Anna, at the Court of Prague. He proposed to Marianna, to Leopoldina and to Maria Luisa, the ideal for a feminine Institute, inspired by the Ignatian spirituality of the *Fathers of the Faith*. There was thus born the *Beloved of Jesus*, on May 31st, the Feast of the Sacred Heart. Leopoldina, who was the youngest in the group, was elected the first president, while Fr. Paccanari himself was the Superior of the *Beloved of Jesus*.

The *Company of the Fathers of the Faith* and the *Beloved of Jesus* spread into many localities of Italy and Europe. But, in 1804, Fr. Paccanari was powerfully attacked on a variety of fronts, both regarding ecclesiastical circles in the re-establishment of the *Company of Jesus*, as well as those pertaining to personal and formative elements that were indeed most delicate. The Servant of God was called as a witness in the judiciary inquest, but in no way was she sullied by any of the accusations. She remained ever faithful to Fr. Paccanari, convinced that the faults attributed to Him were never of the gravity of the accusations leveled against him. However, out of fidelity to the responsibilities she had undertaken, which she considered as the genuine will of God, she left Rome for the purpose of seeking for the *Beloved* a certain arrangement that would be extraneous to the embroiled Fr. Paccanari, and far from all attacks, she thus went to Padua, then to Venice and finally to Verona.

Fr. Paccanari finished his life in the Convent of the *Fathers of Penance* in Rome. He had directed Mother Leopoldina from 1799 until 1806⁴³³.

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4. The BELOVED OF JESUS:

...While among the undertakings of Fr. Paccanari, there was configured the Society of the *Fathers of the Faith*, at the same time the idea of a parallel feminine foundation also made some headway. The thought was that these Sisters could be of some help to the Fathers, especially in the area of education of young girls, and they would intercede for them to God, with prayer and offering, and giving indispensable assistance. From this plan, there arose at Prague on May 31, 1799, the *Company of the Beloved of Jesus*. The first such group was constituted by Leopoldina Naudet, the first superior, her sister Luisa, and the Arch-Duchess, Maria Anna of Hapsburg. The *Beloved* then were diffused throughout Italy and Europe. When the questions concerning Fr. Paccanari arose, this movement seem to come apart, and in France, in the year 1806, St. Madeline Sophia Barat founded the *Society of the Madames of the Sacred Heart*. In Italy, in 1816, Mother Leopoldina, with a few Sisters who remained with her, dedicated their lives to the *Sisters of the Holy Family*...

⁴³³ *Positio*, Vol. I, *Summarium*, o.c., pp. LXXIII-LXXXVI.

Fr. Rozaven proposed the union between the two Institutes, given their common provenience, but this never had any success⁴³⁴

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5. Fr. LODOVICO ROZAVEN [1772-1851]

...He belonged to the *Fathers of the Company of the Sacred Heart*, and then joined the *Company of the Fathers of the Faith*, when there was realized the fusion of the two orders. He worked for the foundation of the *Beloved of Jesus* in England. Especially in this role of his he was in contact with Mother Leopoldina. In 1804, he, too, as so many others, left the *Society of the Fathers of the Faith*, and joined up with the Jesuits in Russia. He remained, however, in contact with Mother Leopoldina also after this fact and, in particular, he counseled her when at times she wanted to follow the path of the fusion of her group with the *Madames of the Sacred Heart*, of St. Madeline Barat...⁴³⁵

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6. St. SOPHIA MADELINE BARAT [1779-1865]:

... As a young girl, she had already wanted to become a Carmelite Sister, but she entered into the small French branch of the *Beloved of Jesus* on the suggestion of Fr. Varin. Leopoldina, the superior of the *Beloved*, entrusted Luisa Naudet as the Visitor of the Community of Amiens, which housed the small nucleus of the *Beloved*: Sophia Barat, Octavia Bailly, Frances Loquet and Marguerite Malleard. On that occasion, Luisa named Sophia Magdeline as the superior. In 1804, following the collapse of the work of the *Beloved*, she founded the Society of the *Madames of the Sacred Heart*. When she died in 1865, she left more than 80 Houses between Europe and America.

Leopoldina kept before her the Constitutions of the *Madames of the Sacred Heart* for the formulation of the rules of her own Institute, and she was convinced of the profound affinity between the two spiritualities. She took some steps in an attempt at union, following the counsel of Fr. Rozaven. This eventually failed, even though in her own heart, she was convinced of a certain diversity between the two institutes...⁴³⁶

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7. St. GASPAR BERTONI

...In 1816, he became the Founder of the Congregation of the Stigmata. Beyond any doubt, he became the person who, more than any other, exercised a fundamental presence in Leopoldina's story. There was a profound spiritual affinity between the two, and the common Ignatian theme predisposed them to an understanding that might have been unique. Fr. Gaspar was the Confessor of the women who had followed Magdalena di Canossa and Leopoldina at St Joseph's Convent. Leopoldina then chose him as her own spiritual director. In addition to guiding her in her vocation and in her decision to found an Institute dedicated to the Holy Family. Leopoldina often turned to him in the period of her life when she was writing her Constitutions for the new institute. This Spiritual Direction continued also following Leopoldina's transfer with her companions to St. Teresa's Convent. However, at a certain point, it was Fr. Bertoni's decision that this would end for good...⁴³⁷

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⁴³⁴ *Positio*, Vol. I, Doc. IV, The *Beloved of Jesus*, Intr. C, 1. o.c., p. 105.

⁴³⁵ S. FONTANA, ... *non io, Ty, Leopoldina Naudet e le Sorelle della sacra famiglia*. Verona: Ed. Cercate 1993, pp. 120-121.

⁴³⁶ S. FONTANA, o.c., p. 109.

⁴³⁷ S. FONTANA, o.c., p. 110.

8. CHARLES ODESCALCHI:

He was born in Rome on March 5, 1786, and was ordained a priest in 1808. He dedicated himself to preaching parish missions. On March 10, 1823, he was created a Cardinal and named the Arch-Bishop of Ferrara. In 1826, he returned to Rome and became the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and was Arch-Priest of St. Mary Major's. In 1834, he was named the Vicar General of His Holiness in Rome. In 1838, he came to Verona, and was introduced to Fr. Bertoni. In the Consistory of November 20, 1840, he resigned as a Cardinal, in order to enter the Society of Jesus. He died in Modena on August 17, 1841.

He was part of the Commission for the approbation of the Institute and the Rules for the Sisters of the Holy Family [December 20, 1833], together with Cardinals Sala and Lambruschini⁴³⁸. Cardinal Charles Odescalchi had shown a particular interest for the new Institute, because it was of an Ignatian spirit. As has been stated, he would enter the *Company of Jesus*, and would die a Jesuit⁴³⁹. He nourished a sincere esteem and admiration for Mother Leopoldina and her Institute. He made this evident, with his solemn expressions at the announcement of the death of the Foundress⁴⁴⁰.



⁴³⁸ Cf. *The Report of the Historical Commission to the Sacred Diocesan Tribunal for the Cause of Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God, Leopoldina Naudet*. 7th Volume, c. XXXI, p. 209.

⁴³⁹ Cf. *Positio*, Vol. II, Doc. XIV, *The Writings of the Servant of God*, o.c., p. 1260.

⁴⁴⁰ Cf. *Positio*, Vol. II, Doc. XXII, *Testimonies regarding the Servant of God*. 5, p. 1509.

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