

**THE SPIRITUAL LIFE (AUTOBIOGRAPHY)**  
**OF**  
**BLESSED CAMILLA BATTISTA VARANO (1458-1524)**



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## **BLESSED CAMILLA BATTISTA VARANO** **(A Short Biographical Account)**

Blessed Camilla Battista Varano (1458-1524) lived during the height of the Renaissance. She inherited and internalized the best features of her time, which permeated her spirituality infusing it with liveliness, freshness, and generosity, while also enriching her writings (from a grammatical, literary standpoint).

Being endowed with an open, generous temperament, sensitivity to beauty and to love, young Camilla fully enjoyed the pleasant life of her father's Court. Her noble birth and high intelligence allowed her to attain a deep humanistic learning, ever enriching her personality.

The daughter of Giulio Cesare Varano, Duke of Camerino in the Marches, Camilla often rejoiced in the conversations, feasts, and entertainments, which took place in the princely halls of that high society of the region. Yet though she resisted with all her strength, she was not able to escape the pressing appeal of Grace, nor the demands of that Love which tormented her spirit since her childhood. The perseverance, by which she kept the vow which she had made as a girl to shed at least one tear for the Passion of the Lord every Friday, shows a firm, non-wavering will.

It was precisely this will that aided her in the struggles and successive trials; first to overcome the resistance of her relatives – especially of her father – to her entering a Convent; later to accept the painful inner darkness which afflicted her for many years; as well as the cruel martyrdom of her deepest affections – when her father and three brothers were murdered by usurpers of power at Camerino. She was vested as a Poor Clare nun in 1482 in the Convent of Urbino, taking the name Sister Battista. In 1484, with eight other sisters of Urbino, she took possession of the new Convent which her father had constructed in her native town, where she was elected Abbess many times. She was forced to leave the Convent for the first time from 1502 to 1503 when she stayed in the region of Abruzzi a result of political disturbances that threatened her and the Convent.

She left a second time from 1505 until 1507 to establish a new Convent - still existing - in the nearby town of Fermo. She died at Camerino on the 31st of May 1524.

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Blessed Camilla Battista Varano let her interior graces overflow into many writings, about twenty; the best known are: "Spiritual Life" (her autobiography) and the "Mental Sorrows of Jesus in His Passion." These writings are precious treasures for the Franciscan Order and particularly for the Order of Poor Clares, and put Blessed Camilla Battista Varano on the level of a most eminent mystic. Furthermore they reveal the talents of an authentic, brilliant, unconventional writer. Here follow some quotes from various academics:

*"These octave-rhymes (Laud of the Vision of Christ), for their harmony, may be compared to Mueller's of the golden age of Danish literature..."*  
(John Joergensen)

*"Her autobiography is a wonderful psychological, literary document... 'The Mental Sorrows is an infinitely moving work, where truly, after the beautiful expression of Tommaseo "'hear, a high sorrow groans'. Her sober, lively style springs out in one stroke like her feeling."* (Venanzio della Vergiliana)

*"Blessed Battista, an ardent strong-willed creature, had the temper of the true artist, who is not subject to the literary fashion of the time... the humanist education doesn't deprive Sr. Battista's prose of the flowing simplicity of the dialect of the Marches.... Along the way of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, between Saint Gertrude and Saint Margaret, we find this Poor Clare of the Renaissance... Her intimate story ('Spiritual Life') seems modern and the reason for its actuality consists in the immediateness of its style and in its closeness to the reader's soul... Camilla Battista is a writer both for her nature and education, having a very rich lyric style and an easy narrative vein; both supplied with humanistic learning."* (M. Sticco)

*"The Mental Sorrows, very beautiful with human delicacy and mystic*

elevation." (P. A. Gemelli)

*"I never found in any other autobiographic writing of other even very great mystics, such a full, accurate and complete analysis of the mystic life - closed in few well written pages - as I found in Varano's writings (I allude to the Spiritual Life). In these pages - few and dense - the gradual, mysterious growth of grace is described in an almost visible manner... Really it is worth while reading with a fond enthusiasm Varano's writings and Life; they are a true, happy, fruitful revelation!" (G. La Pira)*

*"Blessed Battista, of Camerino has true, literary qualities; her language is easy, the inflections of dialect produce the spontaneity, the frankness, the immediateness of her style, and catch, with a subtle keenness, e very least accent, every most hidden movement. Camilla Varano had for her time and for her condition an unusual store of learning. Physically beautiful, she adorned herself with intellectual charms by studying grammar, rhetoric and dialectics. She was able to compose poems in Italian and Latin; but when we read her writings, especially the historical-autobiography we find a writer of an absolute originality... Her words overflow with vehemence and sincerity... An unparalleled writer, an example not only of a deep spirituality, but also of frankness in expressing herself and of ability as an author." (P. Bargellini)*

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Here we offer "SPIRITUAL LIFE" translated into English, and regret that the work loses much of its freshness in the translation, which gave exceptional charm to the original text, with the ease of her language made plastic by incisive, familiar, idiomatic expressions, unfortunately untranslatable.

The Poor Clares of Camerino

Translated by Sister Clara Tommasina Clifton, OSC - Convent Santa Clara of San Severino Marche, and Bret Thoman, SFO

# BLESSED CAMILLA BATTISTA VARANO

## SPIRITUAL LIFE (AUTOBIOGRAPHY)

“Jesus, Mary  
O Christ the most pious King,  
Possess our hearts  
So that we can continually praise You  
in the right way.”<sup>1</sup>

### CHAPTER I – INSPIRATION TO WRITE THE LETTER

My dearest Reverend father<sup>2</sup> I am letting you know in this letter that during this entire month of February [1491] I have been in great torment and mental anguish. The reason is this: an intense, strong, and fervent inspiration which I countered with great and forceful resistance, as I thought it might be a temptation of the devil and feared that the spirit of greed and pride would overcome me, having received from God such a power over me owing to my sins and iniquities that I committed.

Finding myself afflicted and deprived of any help or human counsel, I took recourse to my usual weapon of holy prayer: I prayed to God and His sweetest Mother with all my heart and love, that He would enlighten me in such great darkness in which I found

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<sup>1</sup> These verses are from a hymn taken from the Liturgy of Hours.

<sup>2</sup> As we have seen in the preface, this letter-confession is directed to Father Domenico of Leonessa, born in San Severino Marche. As a child, he moved with his family to the city from which he took the name when he became a friar. He was elected seven times Provincial superior of the friars of the Marches province, he was a preacher, and propagator of the *Monti di Pieta'*. He died in Urbino in the Marches on April 20, 1497.

myself because of my sins, that I would know whether it was His will or not to write.

Truly, my dear father, I can tell you in good conscience that during this entire month I have been almost beside myself, a result of praying unceasingly to God that He would help me in such great agony.

In order to find peace, while sleeping, waking, praying and saying the Divine Office, today, the second Sunday of Lent, the 27th of February, after having received Holy Communion, I finally resolved to obey and begin to fulfill such an inspiration, or else I could find no rest.

I hope with the grace of God that I have chosen His will, and it seems to me, through his goodness and grace that I have rather than not.

However it may be, from what I shall write, I cannot truly recount anything but confusion and shame in front of you and of God. Precisely this, more than any other consideration, persuades me to obey such an inspiration, even though many other useful and necessary considerations have come to me.

My dear father, the inspiration I had is this: for the health of my soul and in order that you may better understand what I am going to say and the importance of what I have already told you, it is necessary that I tell you and openly explain to you that which I have never said nor explained to anyone: I mean my spiritual life - how it began and how it continued until this moment.

This I wish to do, although it is difficult and bitterly painful for me, as God knows.

My dear father, till now I have spoken incompletely by letter or verbally with you when I have given you some sign or mentioned the pain that breaks my heart.

Now the time has come, to my confusion, for me to bear my entire soul and openly show that hidden sore that for almost three years has been consuming my poor afflicted soul.

This has been and still is a sharp knife that has pierced my heart; this was and is that lance "of the powerful soldier Jesus, that has penetrated the recesses of my heart."

O my dear father, do not be displeased and do not grow weary of listening to me, because thus, like another Magdalene prostrate at the feet of good Jesus, I throw myself at your good paternal feet, full of tears, all full of shame and blushing, and I'll humbly tell you the story of my most unhappy happiness.

It seems to me that I can call it with complete sincerity "most unhappy happiness" because as a result of my sins, unfaithfulness, and ungratefulness, happiness has changed for me into bitterness and poison.

But, my dearest father, I earnestly beg you to try to look and see with paternal and sympathetic understanding "if there is any sorrow like my sorrow?"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This is a biblical quote from Lamentations 1,12 that Camilla repeats eight times throughout the letter.

## CHAPTER II - CAMILLA ASKS DIVINE FAVOR TO WRITE

Now speaking about such a great topic - that is about God and the things He secretly worked in my soul through only His goodness and grace - makes my heart tremble. Thus I recount and write with great fear [and reverence].

And since I know that what I am and what is in me are nothing other than falsehood, deception, and lies, I therefore invoke and call the good Spirit of blessed Christ with pious and heartfelt love to assist me during my recounting.

I know that in fact only He is the true and simplest Spirit, without any darkness, "and he loves truth and purity."

May He give me the grace and make me a gift to be able to tell you, my father, with simplicity the graces and particular gifts that I received unworthily and without recognition from most clement God, Father of mercies.

And I wish to do it in this manner: to say as little possible rather than add even one syllable too much. In fact, I wish to show you these things as they are and under the seal of confession, therefore I say: I confess to Almighty God and to you, father.

## CHAPTER III – THE BEGINNINGS OF CAMILLA’S SPIRITUAL LIFE

You should know, sweet and dearest father, that my entire spiritual life had its origin, beginning and foundation from you, and not from anyone else.

I am very sure that this will surprise you and perhaps be quite difficult for you to believe, because I know you don’t know anything of this, nor did I ever believe or think of relating such things to you or to anyone else. But listen to what happened and you’ll see that with God everything is possible.

My father, when you preached at Camerino the last time, I think I could not have been older than eight or ten years old<sup>4</sup>, and you can calculate [my age] if you remember when you preached there.

On the 9th of April I will be the age of Our Lord Jesus Christ, as I was born in 1458. Subtract the years gone by since you preached here from thirty-three, and what remains corresponds to my age then.

One Holy Friday, I “spontaneously” desired to come to [hear] your holy and blessed sermon, which I listened to, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, not only attentively, but totally enraptured, and almost inebriated. I was like someone who was hearing things said that had never been heard before by anyone. It seemed to me that such things hadn’t yet happened, but were happening just then.

You can understand my age and how innocent and naive I was from this: when you said that Jesus was dragged before Herod and that he would have freed Him if only He would have spoken, I immediately had so much compassion that I prayed to God to give me the grace that this Jesus Christ would speak and respond, in order not to be killed.

But when I heard that He did not desire to speak, I was

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<sup>4</sup> Father Domenico of Leonessa preached at Camerino in 1466 or 1468.

overcome by a great pain and I kept on saying within my heart in order to remove the suffering I was feeling: "Woe to Him; why did He not respond? It seems as if He Himself wanted to die." That's how it was, my good Lord, but I did not understand it.

I have recounted this, my father, so that you may know how old I was when this sweet God began to want to take possession of this ungrateful soul of mine.

At the end of your holy sermon you offered a heartfelt exhortation to the people to lead their hearts to shed a tear and meditate on the Passion of Christ.

And you urged them at least on Friday to remember His Passion and to shed a little tear "just one." You affirmed with much conviction that that little tear would be more acceptable to God and more useful to the soul than all other good works one could do.

As that holy word went out of your mouth by the virtue of the Holy Spirit, by that same virtue it was engraved so deeply in my tender child's heart that it could never leave me or be forgotten.

So when I had grown a little older, on remembering your holy sermon, I made a vow to God that every Friday I would shed at least one tear for the love of the Passion of Christ. And my entire spiritual life had its beginning from this, as you will be able to understand from the following.

Therefore, don't be surprised if I told you that my spiritual life had its origin and beginning from you, but praise God with me and let us together thank our Creator, from which come this and every other good thing.

## CHAPTER IV - THE DIFFICULTY IN OBSERVING THE VOW

Having made that vow, I strove as much as possible to keep it, though every Friday evening before going to bed, I struggled a lot to shed that tear.

It irritated me to read religious things and neither could I stand to hear them read. That's why I struggled much before I could shed that poor little tear.

But, with the help of God, when one fell from my eyes, don't think I waited for the second, because with little notice, I would quickly get up and run away.

Sometimes, because of my vivacious temperament - laughing and chatting all evening long - it was not possible for me to shed one.

Then I would feel unhappy that entire week, and it seemed that some disgrace would come to happen to me.

During Lent I went to confess to Father Pacifico from Urbino. After the confession he asked me whether I had made a vow. I answered I hadn't. But after reflecting briefly, I remembered and said I had made one, but sometimes I could not keep it, even though I always desired to fulfill it. He asked me what the vow was. I did not want to tell him, as I was embarrassed because it was a good thing. Yet, after some resisting, I told him.

He said: "My child, I will not release you from this vow. On the contrary, I wish you to keep it. But if, after every effort, you are not able to succeed, do not believe you have sinned."

After persevering for a long time in this vow with great difficulty, as I said, it pleased God that I happened to find a meditation of the Passion divided in fifteen parts. It seems that it was written just for a person who did not know how to meditate.

At the end of each chapter, it prescribed the recitation of a Hail Mary, then the next part began with these words: "I thank You, my Lord, for having done this and that for me..." It was a very long event.

Just the same, I took that little book and tried to read it all while devoutly kneeling before the Crucifix every Friday. And so I have done for many years.

In those fifteen "Hail Marys" and mysteries, I always attempted to shed some tears for each mystery. Precisely when I said the Hail Mary, God granted me the grace more often than not to shed more tears than I desired.

One Friday night I had been busy till the third watch [2:00 am] when I had permission from the lord my father to go to bed.

As it was very late and that meditation was very long and the others had already gone to bed, I was strongly tempted to neglect it that evening. More than four times I struggled between saying yes and no. At last God helped me to win and I made my usual devotion.

If you knew, my father, from what danger I was set free through that prayer about one hour after going to bed, you would be astonished. If you ask me about it, I will tell you, but now I shall skip over it so that I do not tire for writing long.

Blessed be that creature who through no temptation avoids the good begun! I say this from experience, because I was tried. To keep it brief, let us go back to where we were distracted.

From this continual reading of the Passion, I obtained such a profound partaking in it that I didn't wish to read it any more, but only to meditate on it; but I wanted to reflect on it for a certain period of time not just on Friday, but each day, and not following the written meditation by rote, but how God deemed to inspire me.

And so great was the gift of holy tears God was giving me, that many times I desired to be able to recite a rosary without weeping, for the sake of the people who were around me, given the shortage of places suitable to prayer.

I did this for three recurrent years before I resolved to give myself up wholly to God. However, the devil's malice tried to deter me in every way possible from this meditation that made me weep, and he caused the people in the house whom I could not avoid to believe that I was weeping for some silly foolishness or another.

All that gossiping and whispering behind my back pierced

my heart. Yet by the grace of God I took it lightly and never allow myself to be deterred from doing what I desired. I turned my back on them and turned my heart to God and minded my own business. "Think good or bad of me - I said in my heart - I will consider it little."

And so I continued for those three years through an ever fervent devotion towards the Passion of Christ. On Fridays I always fasted on bread and water alone. I had also made a vow to abstain on that day from some of my faults and sins, yet sometimes out of my weakness I violated this vow.

Also on that day, many times I scourged my entire body and I would get up every night to say a rosary and whenever I didn't get up out of negligence, I said two of them instead of one. And now that I am a nun, I don't get up, nor do I do any good. Moreover during those three years, I used to fast on all the Feasts of the Lord and of Our Lady on only bread and water. There were some weeks in which I fasted three days on bread and water or either two days consecutively and it happened more times, but at present I never fast. But I did all this good not only to win a prize in Heaven, but, rather much more on Earth.

But at the end of my long, devoted, moving prayer when I desired to quit and distance myself from God, my soul was enraptured in such great tranquility and peace that I can't even describe.

Because in that brief time of prayer, perhaps the duration of two Hail Marys - sometimes more, sometimes less - my body stopped breathing as if it were dead, but my soul was completely tranquil and peaceful.

Therefore I said to God so many times with all my heart: "My Lord, if You desire that in order to correspond with the world I should separate myself from You even in the slightest, then first send me not just one, but one thousand plagues" - I intended simply to say: "If you know that I could lose this little devotion that I have now."

I did not know any other way to get close to God, because, except for that little time of prayer mentioned above, I spent the rest

of my time playing, singing, dancing, and strolling, in vanities and in other youthful and worldly things that follow.

Religious things, friars and nuns so irritated me that I could not stand to see one; I made fun of those who read spiritual books. On the contrary, I was very concerned with looking nice and reading worldly things.

In those three years [1476-79] my heart was imprisoned and I prayed so much to God to give me the grace to set it free; but with my prayers I was never able obtain such a gift. Listen, however, to how I was delivered.

Oh God, You are very good because You always help, in a thousand ways, the soul that sincerely seeks good.

## CHAPTER V – THE BEGINNING OF A VOICE THAT CALLS

In order to lead me out of the darkness towards the true light, God ordered in His mercy that that blessed soul should come to preach in Camerino, that true “trumpet” of the Holy Spirit, Father Francesco of Urbino, who now rests in peace,

His words and teaching were like thunder and lightning that struck my soul, because during that entire Lent he continued preaching these terrible words: "Fear God!".

These sermons filled my soul with such a fear of God, such a knowledge of the wrongs and injuries I had done to Him and such a great fear of Hell, that, had I not already known that despair displeases God more than any other sin, truly, my father, I would have despaired of ever obtaining mercy.

All my hope and comfort during that pain was in only one word: “mercy.” I never spoke to anyone of my anguish, but I wept bitterly all day and night as my penance.

Because of fear of Hell I intensified my prayer and meditation on the Passion of Christ. And while before I considered and wept just once a day, now I would reflect and weep twice – morning and night.

On Friday I committed this folly: either I ate three or four mouthfuls of bread and drank a sip of water, or I didn’t take in anything at all.

And at night out of reverence for the Passion of Christ I did not sleep because I did not even lay down in bed and I could truly say: “*I sleep, but my heart stays awake.*” (Cant 5, 2)

Persevering in my vow and frequent prayers for fear of Hell, I began to hear certain voices within my soul. They seemed to be coming from far away, but not so far that I couldn’t hear them clearly. These voices told me that if I wished to avoid Hell, which terrorized me, I ought to flee the world and enter a convent.

At the same time I received an illumination, which allowed me to see clearly that if I chose to remain in the world, I would have damned myself, because of my worldliness.

These voices seemed to me more bitter than gall since my naturally worldly temperament went contrary to what they were telling me. I felt a strong repugnance to the idea of entering a convent, a result of my sin and for the desire that I had to abandon myself to the dishwater and filth of the world. I had many reasons that would in no way allow me to agree to this plan. Nor could I decide on something like that because I did not feel my heart free from certain passions, which freedom is necessary for one who truly wishes to serve God.

## CHAPTER VI – LETTER EXCHANGE WITH FATHER FRANCESCO

Through the inspiration of Almighty God, true and only lover and freer of souls, I felt inspired to write a strictly personal (and private) letter to the preacher for the zeal of the salvation of others, not myself. Thus I did, without hope of receiving any response, though there were gains not to others, but to myself.

I don't remember if in my letter I had written any word that could have made you think either good or bad about me; except that I concluded the letter thus: "Remember me in the serene elevation of your mind." I said this because I believed that every servant of God felt, upon closing his prayer, that peace I spoke to you above; so much more he who seemed to me an angel of God and not a mere creature.

Father Francesco, as God inspired him, gave me an answer by secret means, as was necessary so that a scandal would not be created. He told me that he would do everything possible both in public and in private regarding what I had written him.

Then he added these holy words: "My daughter, I beg you to strive to keep your heart and body spotless, like the holy virgin Cecilia, until God shows the way you are to follow Him; and do not allow yourself to be conquered by worldly, sensual passions that pass through your mind. Strive to overcome yourself. Farewell."

Having read these words, I felt as if I were going to faint, because they did not seem to me simple words, but very sharp arrows sent by God to pierce my heart. That friar had never seen me nor spoken to me: how could he have known my imprisoned heart so well?

When I came to my senses I said to God: "You, Lord, speak to me through the mouth of this friar, because I know that he knows nothing about the state of my soul. You tell me that I should overcome myself if I wish to be free. Thus I resolve to do".

And truly, my father, it only took overcoming myself just three or four times in avoiding seeing what attracted and delighted

me, that I was free of that passion. That's why I felt such great affection and love for Father Francesco, perhaps a bit too much – but it was necessary – because the false and worldly love that I felt changed into holy and spiritual love. The great benefit I received from his words compelled me to this.

## CHAPTER VII –INTERIOR STRUGGLE WITH HER RELIGIOUS VOCATION

Just like in former times, when God urged his people, having been freed from the slavery of Pharaoh, to sacrifice in the desert, so much more was he soliciting my soul to embrace religious life.

But that maliciousness of mine, that impeded the fulfillment of such a calling and the divine voices, would not consent in any way; on the contrary, with me rebelling strongly, it found other excuses, not the least of which was worldly love.

Then I added a particularly important one: “Who would ever be able to detach me from the powerful hands of my father?”, which hands kept me close and tight because of a great affection, and from which it seemed impossible to free myself, regardless of my decision.

“Oh my God, my God, what did You wish to do with this false and prostituted soul of mine? What need did You have of my works, my sweet Jesus, You who so forcefully sought me out and desired me? What gift have I brought You? How could I reward You, my Lord?”

Here I shall say nothing of those many offers God made me while trying to wrest me from my powerful father’s hands, because, my father, they break my heart, and I am unable to recount them without great suffering.

Thus, this most patient and wise God, seeing the hardness and obstinacy in my heart, sought to soften it in another way. On the eve of the Annunciation, the preacher - friar Francesco of Urbino – spoke of the divine love that the Virgin Mary felt at the moment of the Annunciation.

He spoke with such fervor and affection that he appeared as a seraph and affirmed that there was more sweetness in one spark of love that the Virgin felt in the moment of the Annunciation, than in all worldly loves put together.

As soon as the sermon was over, I knelt before the altar and made a vow to the Virgin Mary to keep all my feelings pure until

God would ask otherwise of me. But on one condition: that God would allow me to feel at least one spark of that love that Mary felt on that day.

In such pleas I persevered day and night with much fervor and desire. But since my impure soul was not ready for such a precious treasure – this spark of divine Love – God sought to purify it in the following way.

The preacher wished to preach on Holy Saturday – even though it was against custom and in opposition to his superiors, since there were many events happening in the Cathedral on that day. Few people were present since the sermon was unscheduled, but there was one person for whom God willed this sermon!

The friar asked everyone to forgive him for preaching on that day, but said he felt called to do it – in order to calm his conscience. Since the next day was Easter, he wished to clarify some things that rendered receiving Communion illicit.

He said many things, but what struck me in particular was this: “One who confesses without a true promise to avoid all occasions of mortal sin cannot receive Communion.”

Then I said within my heart: “Poor me! I have almost always received Communion that way, because I have never had the willingness nor the readiness to let go of my vanities and foolishness until now. This evening when I confess, I will confess this sin.” And so I did.

Father Oliviero who heard my confession asked: “How long have you been confessing and receiving Communion in this way?” I answered: “Almost always.” “My child,” he replied “I do not wish for you at all to receive Communion tomorrow. Reflect well on your sins and return in one week for a general confession.”

And so I did, though I felt a lot of shame and confusion in front of the others since I was not able to receive Communion with them. I feared they would gossip saying, “She must have done something very bad.” Thus I felt the truth of the saying: “He who does not give what is painful, cannot get what he wants.” So it happened to me.

Having made that confession, by the grace of God, I felt deep

contrition for my faults almost all Lent. It is true that I was not scrupulous of every little thing out of neglect and ignorance, as I am now; but what I did not do then I did later on, as you will see. But it was enough then for me to do as much as I knew and understood.

On the Octave of Holy Saturday I confessed to Father Oliviero in St. Peter's in Muralto, I received Communion and then I spoke with my devout Father Francesco of Urbino, to whom I had never spoken before. He asked me if I wanted to become a nun to which I said no. This seemed to sadden him and he said: "By now you have become healthy, don't sin anymore. Go in peace!" Thus I returned home quite comforted.

After my soul had been purified in the aforesaid way, divine goodness began to hammer me more forcefully and those voices were no longer distant as before, but near - very near - and so clear and evident that sometimes I covered my ears with my hands to avoid hearing them, because I did not wish in any way to consent to them.

But it was no use because I constantly heard them, since they spoke to my soul and not to my body. Therefore every time I went to prayer, it seemed to me as if I were going to war. And it truly was, for is there any greater battle than this?

But I never avoided going to prayer, as I was accustomed to. But once, when the benign Spirit of God forced me more powerfully and I with equal strength rebelled, He threatened me saying: "Do what you wish, give yourself to the world, you will never get any good from it." Think please, my dear father, how this pained me. And I thought and kept on thinking, but by no means would I persuade myself nor consent to become a nun.

While persevering in prayer - a Friday if I'm not mistaken - such a conflict came to me during prayer, a battle in my soul between yes and no, that as a result of the great agony, my entire body began perspiring.

In the end, my will - which has always been strong and sound - in that moment spontaneously and freely sat like a judge on the bench in court to judge the cruel struggle, and uttered its sentence against me.

With much love and courage I decided to serve God so fervently that, if for this it would have been necessary to suffer martyrdom, I would have chosen it right away, rather than regret my decision.

In that moment the inspiration to become a nun in the Convent of Urbino was infused inside me; never would I have wanted to go elsewhere. As it is a great comfort to an afflicted and martyred body to be laid on a soft bed full of flowers and roses, so my resolution gave rest to my martyred soul. Then I remained in a deep peace, very calm, serene, rested and happy.

O my God, I beg You, guard me and be near to me, because hereafter I shall say nothing but angelic and divine things. My sweet Lord, give me the grace, that with this rotten mouth and poisoned tongue of mine I shall be able to relate and show, to my confusion and shame, the wonderful graces you granted to me – a sinner.

So that You, my Father, may tell me not once but a thousand times: “These things are very good for you, My daughter, this and every trouble you have. What more could God do to you that he hasn’t already done?” And that’s the truth.

## CHAPTER VIII – AFTER THE GREAT DECISION

Now having united myself to the divine Will through my resolution, in a few days the floodgates of Heaven opened above me and the flood of the abyssal divine mercies totally filled my sinful soul.

Then God, benign Father, embraced His prodigal son; He received him sweetly in His paternal arms embracing him benignly; then with His mouth, He gave him the sweet kiss of His holy peace, not just once or twice, but many times. Oh heart of stone, why don't you break? What are you doing? Why do you still delay?

It seemed that God, most high and true good, could not get enough of embracing my unworthy and adulterous sinful soul in His most holy and sweet arms.

It is very true what I say, even if many times out of holy humility, I fled and humbly prayed to Him that He would leave my soul alone, that He wouldn't keep it any longer in His holy arms; in fact sometimes I stopped praying. But it did little good to flee or pray because He wouldn't leave me until His clement majesty liked; and sometimes after concluding prayer much time would go by before my soul recovered.

Here I won't write the sweetest, most loving words full of Heavenly food and honey, full of exultation, cheerfulness and joy, such as to inspire a deep love and soften a heart of stone, because, as the prophet says: *"In my heart I treasure your promise, that I may not sin against you."* (Ps 119, 11).

But truly and surely I could repeat those words of the Canticle: *"My soul failed at this flight"* (Cant 5,6), and the words of the Prophet: *"How sweet to my tongue is your promise, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"* (Ps. 119, 103) and *"Your servant loves your promise; it has been proved by fire."* (Psalm 119, 140).

In those moments, I no longer remembered the fear I previously had of Him, nor did I remind Him of any sin that I had committed.

I truly understood from His words and by experience that in

myself those words of the Prophet had been fulfilled: *“None of the crimes he committed shall be remembered against him.”* (Ez 18, 22).

Thus, I submerged myself and completely went down into divine love.

## CHAPTER IX - JESUS SHOWED HIMSELF AS FATHER, FRIEND, SPOUSE

Thus, I learned on my own: *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; prudent are all who live by it."* (Ps. 111, 10). As the fear is great, so much greater love's delight that follows. And since the reverence that I had for God was great and prodigious, so too was love's sweetness great and unmeasured.

Then I loosened the rein on love which my heart with great toil had mightily restrained for years through timidity because of fear of worldly honor. I let it go wildly and furiously, and cast it all on my sweetest and most blessed bridegroom Jesus.

Thus I called Him because in my soul He so showed and proved Himself: sometimes like a most benign father; sometimes in the most familiar and practical terms that He seemed like a very dear friend and companion; but mostly as the sweetest Spouse.

When God shows Himself in the form of a Spouse to a pilgrim soul, I believe - by the little experience I had - that this is the sweetest way that God can communicate or give Himself in this earthly life. If that sweetest joy had lasted long, I would never have longed to die, because it seemed to me I was already enjoying everlasting life and Heaven in this world.

And I don't believe there is any difference between Heaven and this delight, except what there is between an advance deposit and the full payment: whereas one is sure and lasts forever, it is certain that we could lose the other. But alas, this difference is not little, but infinite.

Therefore I saw myself so enormously loved at the depths of my core and I knew with certainty that in me there was nothing but iniquity and sin, because when one finds Jesus Christ, the sun of justice, then it is possible to see oneself with clarity. I wondered greatly and felt amazed.

Therefore one day I told Him with great humility: "O Lord, I know that the demons try to blaspheme You, but now I believe that much more they will dare call You a lover of iniquity." I beg You, my Jesus, do not let yourself be called thus on account of my love.

For I am nothing other than deep iniquity and You take such great delight in me: what else can they call You except a lover of iniquity?"

Then my sweet God kindly responded: "You should know, my dear daughter, that I am not at all a lover of iniquity and I do not take delight in that, on the contrary I delight in the innocence, in which you were born and which is still yours." I was ignorant of spiritual expressions and I didn't understand what this innocence meant.

But when I became a nun at Urbino, I found in a book such a word referring to a soul to whom God had granted such a grace, and I asked: "What does it mean: I restore you to your original innocence?" And those true servants of God explained to me what it meant: "I forgive you your sins as regards both guilt and punishment."

Thus I realized that all my sins had been forgiven. Until then I had thought that this innocence was a beautiful gift given to the soul, but I didn't know of what it consisted.

And blessed Christ added: "Actually, I take delight in Myself and not in you, because I Myself have placed this innocence into your soul; it is Mine, not yours. I rejoice and love Myself, not you."

And here He thoroughly let me know that He did not love nor delight in anything but in Himself in Heaven and Earth - by putting His love in people; because nothing outside of Him and without Him is lovable or pleasing either in Heaven or on Earth. Thus He set me free from my pride and vanity.

Oh my father, this is such a topic that the more I say, the more I would have to say; and even if I ever spoke such a lot, I would have said nothing. It is enough that you clearly understand in what peace and tranquility, in what sweetness and love, in what confidence and familiarity I found myself in that holy spiritual Jubilee.

In fact, I often found myself in divine conversations in the sweet arms of the celestial Spouse, in the love and familiarity of the benign eternal Father, in the grace and consolation of the Holy Spirit.

Oh most gracious time, serene and soave, how you have become stormy, dark, and tenebrous.

Oh incomprehensible peace, how you passed over every reasonable aspect, how you have been transformed into mortal war.

Oh indescribable sweetness, how you have changed into gall and bitterness!

Oh love, how you rip out my soul, you have changed into such cruel hatred!

Oh friendship, oh unimaginable familiarity, how you have changed into discord and enmity!

Oh sweetest arms, how you have let me fall from such a sublime height into the depth of Hell! Alas! It was a terrible fall! It's no wonder that you broke all your bones, my poor soul.

Now weep, now sigh and say: *"Bitterly she weeps at night, tears upon her cheeks, with not one to console her of all her dear ones."* (Lam 1, 2). *"All my intimate friends hold me in horror; those whom I loved have turned against me!"* (Job 19, 19) *"Oh, that my head were a spring of water, my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night over the slain of the daughter of my people!"* (Jer 8, 23). *"The garlands have fallen from our heads."* (Lam 5, 16). *"My eyes shed streams of tears because your teaching is not followed."* (Ps 119, 136)

Let Heaven and Earth weep for me: let all reasonable creatures join in my sorrow. Weep, my dearest father, if you haven't a heart of stone, for your inconsolable daughter, *"look and see whether there is any suffering like my suffering"* (Lam 1, 12)

This has been and is still that hidden wound which long ago broke my heart. Now I show it to you, I reveal it to you, as I can no longer conceal it - I can no longer cover it. Aid it, if you can, otherwise, treat it with compassion, which will relieve me a little.

I can no longer bear it, I can no longer suffer this wound. The pain is wearing me to the bone. I am as one inebriated from the sorrow and bitterness, and I am almost uncontrollable.

I don't know what to say and what to do, so if I err with some word, forgive me, because it is written: *"To the measure of her boasting and wantonness repay her in torment and grief."* (Rev 18, 7)

## CHAPTER X - THE GIFT OF THE THREE LILIES

Now let us return to the story already begun. As promised, I shall recount in all truth and simplicity (as I have done so far) the order of my spiritual life: how it developed until the time of my tribulation.

By the grace of God, He who is a "*flower of Sharon, a lily of the valley*" (Cant 2, 1) and who "*browses among the lilies*" (Cant 2, 16) left me three fragrant spring-lilies in order to give me a sure sign that He Himself had been working in my soul.

**The First Lily** was this: a hatred so deep for the world so that if anyone had asked me: "What do you prefer: either to stay in the world and become Empress of the whole earth with assurance of your salvation, or to enter a convent with the risk of being damned?", truly, my father, without hesitating I would have chosen at once to enter a convent even with the risk of being damned, rather than stay in the world with all its seductions and glories even with the assurance of my salvation.

And all this is owed to the deep hatred I felt for the world. But it didn't seem any longer to me the world, but what it really is - a kind of temporary hell and an anticipation of the eternal one. And thus it is, even if there are those who don't think so.

**The Second Lily** was this: a whole-hearted humility because I confessed and sincerely believed with all my heart that there was no worse sinner than I on the earth. And I believed that the greatest mercy God could show me was to save my soul, while the greatest justice that he could administer would be to send me to Hell.

And when God awarded me His gifts and graces, I considered myself depraved all the more. He always granted me the grace to consider all His gifts debts and not merits. And in fact, it really is so, He - the most lovable Truth - taught me so.

**The Third Lily** was this: a burning desire to "suffer badly." This desire was so strong that even if He had offered me Heaven without suffering, I wouldn't have wanted it.

Thus I prayed to God and told Him with sweet affection: "If

the great love that You showed me and continue to show me is true and not a joke, give me this true sign: that I might wear that same vestment which your beloved Son wore – that is, to suffer badly in this world.” He announced and promised me so much, that it already satisfied me four times over.

Soon after, I became ill with a sickness from which I never healed and have had now for thirteen years. But I bore it so willingly that perhaps it will not even seem credible. However, for a year it seems I can now no longer bear it, while before I was very happy. But in this I do not glory in myself but in the Lord: “*My soul, be at rest in God alone, from whom comes my hope.*” (Ps 62, 5) And while I was like another Job afflicted in my body by a cruel and mortal disease, I sang psalms and thanked God in my heart.

After seven months during which I was in danger of death, I got up from bed. Father Gregorio<sup>5</sup> (whom I’ve heard died) taught and directed me to meditate on Christ’s life by reciting beads of the Virgin Mary. This took me three hours.

The sweetness and consolations I received in that prayer were so many, that I neither knew how nor was able to stop. Everything was honey, sugar, and sweet and tasty manna to my mouth; and everything I meditated on did not seem to me to have already happened, but was as if I was physically present to the words and maternal gestures of the glorious Virgin Mary and the child Jesus, as if I were accompanying them on their tiring journeys.

But while contemplating the Transfiguration of Jesus, such high and great gifts were promised to me, that now I cannot even hear the word “transfiguration” mentioned without rejoicing in my heart.

And following the words of the Prophet: “*taste and see*” (Ps 34, 8) after having tasted Jesus, a desire so great came to me to see Him, that all my prayer was nothing other than a continual longing

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<sup>5</sup>Father Giorgio Albanese, whose name Camilla mistakes, was a soldier who converted from a sermon by Saint James of the Marches in Camerino in 1445. Having become a friar, after a holy life, he died in the friary of Morrovalle in 1495.

to behold His most serene and loving face.

And all the plants, flowers and roses seemed to recall His beauty; and when I saw the starry sky my heart would burn within, saying: *"The Heavens declare the glory of God; the sky proclaims its builder's handiwork."* (Ps 19, 1)

Oh my sweet Jesus, if the works of Your hands are so beautiful what will it be like to behold Your splendid face? Show Yourself to me, let Yourself be seen, my good Lord! Why do You let me yearn so? You alone are all my life, my only hope, and all the love of my heart and of my soul. Why do You hide Your most holy face? And [I said] other similar words.

Then I no longer fled from Him, but eagerly ran after Him: *"Your name spoken is a spreading perfume"* (Cant 1, 3) telling Him: *"More delightful is your love than wine"* (Cant 1, 1) and *"how much more delightful is the fragrance of your ointments than all spices."* (Cant 4, 10) *"Let him kiss me with kisses of his mouth"* (Cant 1, 1)

Therefore, after having let me suffer six months for this wish, He granted it - but in the following way. I asked to see His glorious face but He turned his back on me. Therefore I said jokingly: "This Jesus Christ turns everything backwards!"

But if my wish was truly granted "backwards" that time I was truly satisfied "right-wards," because I was left feeling satisfied and very happy.

Hear now how He showed Himself to me. One day while I was praying, I clearly felt that He was in my soul. Before leaving me, however, He said: "If you wish to see Me, look at Me." And as when a person distances himself from another and turns his back, going his own way, thus He did in my soul.

When I began to see Him, He was already far from me- more than six strides away - and He was walking ahead across a large hall. At the end of this hall there was a very small door, similar to the door to a room.

I continued to watch Him, until He bent His head, (for He was very tall) and entered that little door. Then I no longer saw Him, the room, nor the door.

So I saw Him from behind not facing me. He wore a dazzling

white garment – such a whiteness that can't be seen in this world – reaching the ground. It was hemmed at the bottom with a border an inch high with gold letters, which I could not read because they were too far off and though He was walking fairly slowly, He did not stop.

His slender waste was tied with a belt – solid gold and two inches high. He was a head taller than other men. His hair was rather tightly curled and was long and seemed golden, reaching almost to His belt. I could not see all of His head to discern if He wore a crown or a diadem, or a wreath of flowers and roses. He did not want me to see this. I think He wore something on His head so beautiful, that I didn't deserve to see. But it was so beautiful to see His full blonde hair on His wide, well-proportioned shoulders, creating a striking likeness to shade on white vestments, that it was all quite wonderful!

During those two and a half years in which I still remained in the world with resignation, I received many favors and gifts from God, which I won't recount here. In fact, it is better to say less regarding more than to say too much of something little – doing so makes me feel more at ease.

But you must know, my dear father, that during that period I came to know all my afflictions and future tribulations, as you will soon clearly see, in order that I might be prudent and patient.

Poor unhappy me, I was neither one nor the other, but I behaved like a wild sheep. Therefore I can't help complaining and saying: *“All you who pass by the way, look and see whether there is any suffering like my suffering.”* (Lam 1, 12). *“Those accustomed to dainty food perish in the streets; those brought up in purple now cling to the ash heaps.”* (Lam 4, 5).

## CHAPTER XI – ENTRANCE IN THE CONVENT AT URBINO

Then came the fullness of time, for *“there is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the Heavens”* (Eccl 3, 1), in which I was afflicted and tested to see whether or not I was gold or lead. I suffered disease, temptation, threats and prison, but with the help of God in everything, I answered it all in the proper manner – by refusing pleasures and joyfully embracing diseases and threats.

In accordance with His promise, God willed to completely set me free from the worldly slavery of Egypt and from the hands of powerful Pharaoh<sup>6</sup>. For those two and a half years his heart was hardened, and he had said with his own mouth that if he hadn't feared God's punishment, he would never have permitted me to enter a Convent.

Having thus plundered Egypt – full and rich with treasures and spiritual graces, with dry feet, that is without any weariness and regret I crossed the Red Sea. I mean that I left the vanity of worldly pomp and the comforts of the courtly life. Such things seem red in color: beautiful to look at like the color red, but in fact they aren't beautiful at all because they're nothing but smoke and kindling that doesn't last long.

And looking back at the Sea, I saw Pharaoh submerged with his entire army in that Sea, that is: the devil with all his snares, vices and sins.

And I was thus placed in the desert of holy Religion, in the sacred Convent of Urbino, and it was precisely you, my father, who were present and a witness.

I was truly so happy when I saw myself leave the world free of its snares, such that I could have sung with the prophetess Miriam: *“Sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously triumphant; horse and chariot he has cast into the sea.”* (Ex 15, 21).

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<sup>6</sup> Camilla compares her own story to that of the Jews who were enslaved by the Pharaoh in Egypt. In this case she refers to her father, Prince Giulio Cesare, who loved his first-born daughter.

It is possible that others may leave the world with as much heart and fervor as I did by the grace of God; and they could possibly do so even more than me, but I don't think so.

Do not be scandalized that in some ways I have claimed for myself the image and dignity of the chosen Jewish people - so full of so many benefits and divine gifts; it's just that I can't come up with a better comparison to myself to describe the innumerable benefits I received from God - all the more considering my immense hardness and ingratitude.

## CHAPTER XII – THE VISION OF THE NAME OF THE HEART OF JESUS AND OTHER GRACES. RETURN TO CAMERINO

Until now I have told the story of my spiritual life when I was in the lay state, in which I tasted just a spark of divine love which I sought through the intercession and merits of Glorious Virgin Mary.

It was truly just a spark when compared with the essential fire of love that exists in everlasting life; just the same it was such and so much that I couldn't bear it any longer, nor contain any more and neither did I want it anymore. Over and over I said: "No more, my God, no more!"

Now I'll recount what took place after I took the habit of the Poor Clares. As "In the plains of the world one finds the song of the birds, the splendor of flowers, the secret refuges of animals" - as Ubertino of Casale says - so in the holy Convent of Urbino I found the sweetest songs of holy prayers, the beauty of good examples, the secret treasures of divine graces, and of heavenly gifts.

And as I was moved and urged by the Holy Spirit, I felt the holy desire to enter into the interior of the desert (Ex 3, 1), that is: the very secret sorrows of Jesus' Heart. Then with all my heart I refused every sweetness of divine manna, not out of rejection, like that chosen, ungrateful Jewish people, but out of holy humility. For I considered myself most unworthy of that gift, which for me would have become more a debt than a merit. With an upright and pure heart I prayed to God that He would feed, satisfy, and fill me with only the most bitter, poisoned foods of His Passion, because my soul hungered and thirsted only for those. I longed for, searched for, and ardently desired only those things and nothing else, in harmony with the beloved spouse of the Canticle: "*my beloved is a sachet of myrrh lying between my breasts.*" (Cant 1, 13)

Then I resolved to spend all my prayer time in meditation of Christ's Passion; and I did not wish any longer to meditate or think of anything else. I concentrated all the energy of my soul on entering

into the most bitter sea of the spiritual agony of Jesus' Heart, in which I would have desired to drown, were it possible.

It is no wonder that I had the desire to enter inside Your Heart, oh good Jesus, because when I was still in the world You showed me that my name had been written in golden letters on [Your Heart].

Oh, how beautiful did Your vermilion Heart appear written in those ancient large golden letters: EGO TE DILIGO CAMILLAM [I love you, Camilla]

And You showed me all this, oh good Jesus, because I was so astonished that You loved me so immensely. Then apologizing, You said that You could not do otherwise, because You were carrying my name written in Your heart and, raising Your glorious arm, you let me read the above words.

O my poor soul, why can't you derive a little comfort in remembering the great love and affection of your beloved Christ? But I know you will say: it is not possible, because all these recollections are not consolations to me, but stinging arrows that pierce through my heart. Therefore I can't help saying: "*Come, all you who pass by the way, look and see whether there is any suffering like my suffering?*" (Lam 1, 12)

Now, returning to my story, I continued in such desire and prayer for those two years and maybe six months, in which I remained in Urbino. Then I returned to Camerino. During that time, I was introduced, by the wonderful grace of the Holy Spirit, into the most secret nuptial-bed of the Heart of Jesus, true and only sea, most bitter, poisoned, and unfathomable to every human or angelic intellect. Many times I would have sunk and drowned in that sea, if the mighty hand of God had not helped me, because I would have been able to stand much less such bitterness than the sweetness of His divine love.

Then I said: "No more, no more, my Lord, I cannot bear it any longer. I am drowning, because this love has neither end nor bottom!" Then it seemed no longer a Paradise to me, but His whole being seemed a cruel hell. I say this because many times out of holy simplicity and compassion, I called Him "hell", and didn't give Him

any other name, as I didn't find any other name so suitable. I'll say no more about this here, because I'll tell it elsewhere.

However, I do not wish to omit this: although I was shown only as much of Jesus' mental sorrows as I could bear, and, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, as much as my soul was capable [of bearing], still, when facing the reality of them, I understood them only as much as a grain of sand would be when compared to the sky or the entire earth and, on the contrary, much less, if it were even possible to understand them.

During the two years I was in that blessed Convent of Urbino, through the divine influence of the Sun of Justice, my soul was marvelously flowering and blooming in holy desires pleasing to God. I could truly say: "*flowers appear on the earth*" (Cant 2, 12).

But more than any other flower, one in particular branched out and flowered with such sweet perfume - that Spring-lily that had already been planted at the beginning of my conversion in the sterile soil of my soul: that is the burning desire to suffer badly.

In that holy time this lily - more than all the others - was blessed, ploughed, and weeded by the royal hand of the true King Ahasuerus<sup>7</sup>, blessed Christ Jesus, and irrigated, sprinkled and soaked with the waters of His spiritual sufferings.

Even though in those years I was frequently very near death, I often begged God saying: "O my Lord, when will You lead me to those rich pasture-grounds, to those pleasant gardens of bad suffering, where Your chosen beloved sheep graze? Oh my Lord, you delay too long in giving me what You promptly and generously promised. My Lord, I can no longer be patient because of my many sins. Do not regret giving me what You promised. Do not deprive me, my Lord, of such a great gift."

Then followed the great distress of my bitter religious Profession which greatly troubled the Franciscan Order and also the

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<sup>7</sup> Camilla compares Jesus to King Ahasuerus who loved the Jewess Esther so much that he took her as his spouse and filled her with every gift and favor, as is recounted in the Book of Esther.

world – friars and nuns, nobles and laymen.

Here, out of prudence, I won't write what happened, for I do not wish for others to suppose that I am telling it with some other personal aim in mind. However, I do not wish to be silent on this: it is true that there was some disturbance because of my profession on earth, but be sure, my most beloved father, that there was a great feast and joy in Heaven among the angels. I don't say this out of assumption, because I knew with certainty that it was so in Heaven.

Not that I believe that such a feast was on account of me, rather I am sure that it happened for the future good of this blessed Convent of Camerino that would rise up after my Profession and for the glorious and angelic rank of virgins, snatched from the world, who would live there. Therefore it was right and just that the devil caused disturbance on Earth, while the angels rejoiced in Heaven.

And note this: in that same year of my tribulation, by divine will you were elected Provincial Minister for the first and last time. Most wise God willed by His goodness and grace that as you had been the cause and beginning of my salvation, so you were present in the middle and at the end; that is: in the middle of my tribulations and trials and at the end of what I have been doing from September to today.

It was fitting that you, and no one else, were Provincial in that period, so that the one who from the beginning had been the cause of such great good should participate in that great disturbance among the friars and nuns, Lords and Ladies.

Now it is certain and quite clear that, as you were not outside of those troubles and tribulations, so God willed that you should also take part in all the good that has been and shall ever be done in this sacred Convent of Camerino.

And although as Provincial you tried hard to prevent it from being founded, God chose precisely you – willing or unwilling – with your authority and presence to accompany us here by giving the beginnings of life of this sacred Convent.

Stay away from Camerino if you like, but nowhere else in the world have you obtained such good fruits and done such good as here in Camerino. It is actually the devil, knowing the spite you

have done him here, persuades you to hate this town and want to get away from it. I tell you these few words with filial sincerity.

After I was transferred to this Convent together with the other reverend Mothers, through the authority granted to you by the Pope, I was not unaware, but was rather fully conscious that His divine Majesty was pleased that I return here, in order that I should have greater serenity and consolation, and God wished to give me another clearer, nobler sign, and it was this.

It was not the first Friday, but if I remember correctly, it was the second after we had entered this Convent. Sister Costanza, whom you know, was spinning by the fire and I was sewing. She began to sing that Laud (of Jacopone of Todi) that says: "*O blessed soul of the highest Creator...*" and I began to sing with her. When we came to those words that say:

*"look at those hands...*

*look at those feet...*

*look at that side...etc."*

I couldn't bear it any longer: I fainted and fell into the arms of a nun who was near me.

The nuns thought it was just a physical ailment, because we were accustomed to my fainting-fits. But this time it was spiritual, because at that moment my soul was enraptured in the contemplation of the mystery of Jesus taken down from the Cross into the sad, maternal arms of His afflicted Mother.

I was taken present [to the scene] and I heard the sweet and sorrowful sob of the grieved Mother; I heard the loving disciple, Magdalene, shout loudly in a heartfelt voice: "My Master!"; I heard the beloved disciple John weeping bitterly and groaning quietly: "My Father, Brother, Master!"; and likewise I heard the laments of the other devout women.

I remained in such a state from just before Compline till one at night, and I would have remained like that the entire night, had I not made a great effort to recover my senses, such that I would not be a strong burden to my sisters. In fact, while I was in that state, sometimes I heard the nuns quite well, other times very little.

But when the glorious Virgin's voice became louder I heard

nothing at all of this world and then it seemed to me that my soul was almost separated from my body, while my eyes shed tears when I heard what was said and done around me.

When I recovered my senses, I felt so tired and afflicted that for fifteen days it seemed as if my body had risen from the tomb, so changed was I and my face transfigured.

Before that happened, I thought little or nothing of the mystery of Jesus taken down from the Cross – when the Virgin Mary kept her beloved dead Son in her arms, but instead usually meditated on Jesus' Crucifixion or His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane; these had attracted me more than all the rest. But since then I have always been devoted to the Mystery of Jesus taken down from the Cross.

That episode left its mark on me: for more than two years, I could not bear to look at a Crucifix, nor could I see ladders, hammers, nails or pliers; in fact, I can't remember having seen those things at all during that period.

This was the sign that God gave me to let me know that my return to Camerino pleased Him. But now I say: "*Come, all you who pass by the way, look and see whether there is any suffering like my suffering?*" (Lam 1, 12)

## CHAPTER XIII – REMORSE FOR NOT HAVING CONFERRED TO BLESSED PETER OF MOGLIANO

As the Hebrews were baptized in water and fire, according to the Apostle Paul, so my soul was baptized first in the waters of tears of repentance and devotion, then in the divine seraphic fire. Now hear how God wanted to baptize and purify my soul from the faults in the tribulations mentioned above, in order to give me new gifts and favors.

The year of my tribulation ended during which I was bitterly afflicted. God had disposed this for my merit and crown for no other reason but because, as I have said, He wanted this Convent to be founded under the name and Rule of the Poor Sisters of Saint Clare, as it currently is.

Then, by the grace of God, our pastor and Provincial Minister was elected - Father Peter of Mogliano - that glorious and holy soul, truly blessed by the miracles he worked while alive and continues to work after death.

Upon coming to our Convent, after completed several tasks, he told me in the presence of several other nuns: "Sister Battista, get ready, I wish to hear your confession before I leave."

I answered promptly: "No, no! I do not need to confess." He replied: "I feel an inspiration and I wish to hear your confession. I feel that you need to."

And since I kept on saying no, he sent the other sisters away and repeated: "Come here. I feel this inspiration; why do you not wish to confess?" I responded: "Because I don't want to; I don't need it." He seemed a little displeased and said with a sigh: "I don't like this response. Think better of it." And he went away.

O my father, you were very kind with me, donkey that I was! Perhaps just a day passed after he had departed Camerino, and my heart was already in anguish. I said within myself: "What an obstinate donkey and ignorant I was to answer Father Provincial in that way. I wish to truly confess to him as soon as he returns." So I wrote him begging him to forgive my gross blunder.

In a few days this desire to confess to him grew so much that I could no longer find peace. So many things I had never formerly confessed (owing to my broad conscience) were now made evident to me, that I couldn't do anything but plead him by letter to return. But, like a wise old fox, he delayed in order to increase my determination, as he told me afterwards. His delay lasted from the Provincial Chapter to the Sacred Stigmata of Saint Francis.

Meanwhile by the grace of God I was given such great sorrow and contrition for my sins that I wept bitterly for both those confessed as well as those not yet confessed.

I suffered immensely for having offended the infinite divine goodness and I felt such a great hatred for myself that I wished with all my heart that, after my confession, Father Provincial would feel a deep hatred and detestation also for me. And as I desired to be detested, God promised me that I should have love. And so it happened.

Having made my general confession with great honesty, illumination, and contempt for myself, he was so satisfied and pleased that from that point on he always loved me with a holy spiritual love, more than any spiritual daughter that he ever had in the world; and I am certain of this. After that confession, I was left more pleased and happier than he, and my soul was in peace.

## CHAPTER XIV - THE APPARITION OF SAINT CLARE

A few days later, a nun of our Order appeared in my soul, not only during prayer, but almost continually. She was very beautiful and was dressed just like one of us with a black veil on her head.

I saw her as clearly as I had ever seen anything plainly with my own eyes. I enjoyed seeing her more with the eyes of my soul than if I had seen her with the eyes of my body.

I rejoiced and felt much love at her beautiful and joyful face. I felt a great joy in both seeing her and feeling so loved; but I was surprised and wondered why I didn't recognize her. However, she seemed to delight in my bewilderment, as if saying: "Don't you recognize me?".

When she appeared to me interiorly, my soul instinctively threw itself on its knees before her, although my body was seated at table, or by the fire, or by the grill. But she gently wished me to rise. However, I did not want to because I felt that her reverent appearance deserved that I remain kneeling before her.

In her eyes it seemed that she emitted rays, they were so beautiful - and all of her was beautiful. I did not know why I celebrated and felt so joyful at her presence, nor why she was so kind and gracious.

The vision lasted a long time - without exaggerating around fifteen days. She seemed to be around forty years old. Then she disappeared. I never saw her again - neither before nor after.

During those days I never had the slightest idea that she was Saint Clare, our glorious mother and standard-bearer, because I had had the desire to see her not in this world, but in the next.

But hear, my father, what this little sheep of yours was thinking. Out of principle I was always against nuns from other Convents being received here. I thought she was a nun from some other Convent whom God wished to transfer here, and for that reason He showed her to me so that I might not be against her, but receptive and favorable. So I said in my heart: "Who could ever be

sad or discontent should this nun come to our Convent? Her presence alone will make us all happy.”

After she had vanished from my mind, I was left with such great love and devotion toward our glorious mother Saint Clare, that I had no doubt that the nun was her.

And if by the blood of Christ I shall ever go to Heaven, I would recognize her among a thousand thousands and I shall embrace her and tell her: “My sweetest mother, you were the one who visited me in the world.”

Alas! What was I then and what am I now? Therefore I say again: “*Come, all you who pass by the way, look and see whether there is any suffering like my suffering?*” (Lam 1, 12)

## CHAPTER XV - TWO ANGELS HOLD HER SOUL AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

*"Wonderful are your decrees; therefore I observe them."* (Ps. 119, 129) Under the firmament, there are no clearer or truer witnesses than God's. And to You, father, who search for Him so sincerely, I know they are much appreciated.

For this, oh Lord God, I will not remain silent of Your praise to my old devoted father, but I shall give an account of it to Your Glory and to my confusion, not to unbelievers and foolish men, but to you, my father, because I know that he who has been tried, believes.

And I beseech and beg you, angels, about whom I must say a few things, to help me so that I may truthfully recount the generosity and kindness you showed my ungrateful soul.

A few days after our glorious mother, Saint Clare, had vanished from my soul, two golden winged angels came to me wearing the same dazzling-white garments as the one I had seen blessed Christ wearing.

One of them seized my soul from the right side, and the other from the left. They carried me up and placed me at the sweet crucified feet of the human Son of God. And they kept me there almost continually for more than two months, so that I seemed to walk, speak and do what I wished without a soul. My soul was there where those two angels kept it, and they never left it. I don't remember if before then I had ever had a desire to stay continually at the feet of Christ.

After this time passed, they let my soul return to my body as before, but I remained with such great love and devotion towards the seraphim that I did not desire to think or speak about anything else but the seraphim, and I always begged them with sweet affection that one of them would visit me, as he had done to the prophet Isaiah.

After having prayed to them for many days, and with no one coming, one morning before the First hour prayer, I turned to plead

to the sweet Mother of God. With holy impatience I said to her: "My sweetest Mother, most benign queen, I know you are Empress of the angels and all obey you as their true Lady and Mistress. I beseech you, my sweet Madonna, that you command a seraph to visit me, as he did the prophet Isaiah. You know, my Lady, how much I long for it."

And without begging too much, she gladly promised to send me one. I was so delighted at this promise that my heart exulted. After a few days passed, one night after Matins I began to pray. I felt a strong desire to meditate on the love of God for His creature.

This wasn't my usual meditation, nonetheless I let my mind go where God led it and I began to think of ordinary things that mattered little.

But suddenly I was indescribably drawn to exalted and sublime thoughts and I entered such a deep and profound ocean that I would have turned back more than twice if I could. They weren't words or visions, but rather an interior illumination that I cannot explain with words. But for your consolation, beloved father, I will say a few things. These things cannot be easily spoken of, but rather contemplated by the grace of God.

First of all, I saw that if another god was similar in every way to our most benign and clement God and did all things out of love, as our God did for us, two things would still remain due and could never be repaid: the first is this: the act of love, by which He loved us first, not us Him, will always remain a debt that one can never repay; the second is that another god might suffer for a god like himself, equal in everything to his infinity; but our God has suffered for us, most vile nauseating worms, for our sins - this, too, remains a debt that cannot be paid.

The second thing: I saw that every love that we could offer God is nothing but the worst hate; any praise of ours is unpraiseworthy; and all our thanks, compared with what is owed our holy God, is blasphemy.

The third thing: I saw with certainty and clarity that the glorious Mother of God, together with all the angels and human beings, are not sufficient to thank divine charity for the creation of

the smallest flower that exists on earth, created by God for our usefulness, considering His infinite excellence and greatness and our immense nothingness and insignificance.

Now, my father, think how humble I regarded myself when considering all the benefits and graces I had received from God, much more than flowers and plants!

Then truly I lost all trust in myself and in all my good deeds. Then I refused with all my heart all God's gifts in order not to add debts on top of debts and ungratefulness to ungratefulness; such that if Christ should have appeared to me, I would have closed my eyes in order not to see Him.

Then, with my head bent to the ground, I asked the grace of His divine majesty to place me perpetually and continuously at the most clement feet of His crucified Son, and that the time I stayed there should be imputed to blasphemy and fornication, because I was sure that I would have committed these and every possible evil had His merciful hand not held me. Further, I asked that after my death He would send me where I would most honor Him; and though it might be to Hell I would have been quite happy, because I wished only that His will be fulfilled in and through me. In this were all happiness, reward and my glory.

I saw His immense love as the ocean so profound and exceeding all bounds which God bears to His creatures. When I recovered my senses I couldn't contain myself saying, "Oh madness, oh madness!"

No word seemed any longer true or appropriate for such great love. Then I was conceded those most gracious feet, which for five years I possessed with so much continual contemplation of them and with so much peace that surely, if I were to speak to you of it, oh my father, it would seem hard to believe.

Now I am deprived of them and have become a widow; now I am stripped of such a rich vestment, now I am deprived of the treasure of my heart. Oh crucified feet, oh only hope of my soul, how is it possible to live without you, that were the life, heart, and treasure of my soul?

Oh my Jesus, give them back to me, and then send me to

Hell and I'll be happy! Then in that hour I am sure I shall weep, embrace, and kiss those very holy wounds so much, that my heart will burst and be consumed in my miserable body.

Oh feet, by which it pleased me to touch, embrace and kiss all feet! Oh sweetest feet! How you have embittered the sweet experiences I spent over you, that is all my devout tears full of love and devotion!

Oh merciful feet! I never thought this spot would be forbidden or taken away, since it was not even denied to adulterers or prostitutes!

Alas! And a thousand times alas! I'm so much unhappier, much more miserable than all other sinners! Oh most clement feet! If it wasn't for my fear of tiring those who are listening to me I would spend all this Friday weeping and sighing, as I am doing now.

Do not be surprised at this, my father, because, as gold shines more brightly than all other metals, this affliction oppresses and torments me above all others. I think it is because I possessed this grace longer than others. Therefore "*my harp is turned to mourning.*" (Job 30, 31)

## CHAPTER XVI - WHY CAMILLA CANNOT YET LEAVE THIS LIFE

Those most lovable and sweet feet made me lose my train of thought, but by the grace of God, I'll continue and finish the garment which, only by His grace and inspiration, I began to sew and weave.

When the light I just spoke of disappeared, in my soul a blaze so great remained, that I dare say with utmost truth that my soul was strongly inflamed and scorched by this ardent spiritual blaze, as every material thing is inflamed and scorched in earthly fire. That blaze lasted - if I remember well - more than three months.

Such a fire was a desire to leave the prison of this body to be with Christ. And this desire was so great that perhaps you won't believe me, but God knows that I tell the truth: it was such a violent, burning desire that to be in my body made me feel the pains of Hell.

On the contrary, the pains of Hell seemed to me a relief compared to what I was feeling. Never again would I like to experience it, except when about to die; because should I die with that longing, death would no longer be death, but going to a wedding "*pulsantibus organis*." <sup>8</sup>

Then I could say most sincerely with the Apostle: "*I long to depart this life and be with Christ*" (Phil 1, 23); and with the prophet David: "*Lead me out of my prison, that I may give thanks to your name. Then the just shall gather around me because you have been good to me.*" (Ps 142, 8)

Then I clearly knew that it was one of the seraphim that had visited my soul, according to the promise made me by the sweet Mother of God, their sweetest Empress and mine.

Violently afflicted in my soul and body by this burning desire, I wept and sobbed bitterly and begged God that He free me

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<sup>8</sup> Literally: accompanied by organ music, as during a wedding march.

from the misery of my body and of the world.

Thus one ordinary day while praying, weeping loudly, and begging God for this, it seemed to me that blessed Christ showed me a great compassion and held my soul to His most sacred Heart with His arm, telling me over and over: "Don't cry so much!" And with the other hand He dried the eyes of my soul; because those tears were spiritual, not from my body, though I also wept very much corporally.

Nonetheless, those sweet words of blessed Christ did not dry the eyes of my soul, on the contrary everything liquefied into tears and still more and more I begged Him to set me free from this corporal prison. In the end He said: "I cannot, not yet."

And He showed me in different ways that His powerful hands were bound and tied, then He said: "These are the prayers that the nuns and friars are offering up for you, so that you may not die. Have patience!"

I don't remember whether what I am going to say now happened before or after what I said above. Once, while feeling so much spiritual fire that I could hardly bear, I foolishly turned to lament to the seraphim. Nearly repented of having begged them to visit me, I said to them: "O sweetest spirits, I have long been praying that one of you would visit me, because I believed that those to whom you came would have paradise, because you are so near God. How is it then that, after you came to me, I now suffer the pains of Hell? I do not understand how your nearness to God can be a benefit."

Then in a sweet and familiar way they spoke to me, as if to a dear family member or friend and said: "What gives you pain, gives us pleasure. You have a burning desire within, but because you are living in your body, you lack the presence and fullness of Him who is present to us; that is why you feel a great pain in proportion to the desire you feel. But we have the burning desire completely united with the real presence of Him whom we desire. Therefore our delight is great, in proportion to the greatness of our incomprehensible longing."

They declared that they were so intimate with God that He

never stayed nor could stay without them, nor they without God. They said that they - the seraphim - were also in such harmony with the cherubim (and the cherubim to them) that one could never visit a soul without the other. And they said: "It is true that cherubim have the greater influence in some souls, while in others seraphim; but in your soul we seraphim have pre-eminence. Therefore you have more fire than light."

And so it was the truth! Though that illumination I had received, as I said above, was great and incomprehensible, yet I had received three times more fire than light. Now I clearly understand that the two angels, who held me so long at the feet of the Cross, were a cherub and a seraph.

This is the fire by which I said I had been baptized and purified through the sincere general Confession I made to my holy Father Peter of Mogliano, now in glory.

## CHAPTER XVII – DECISION TO TRANSFORM EVERY DAY TO GOOD FRIDAY. CHRIST ORDERS HER TO WRITE “MENTAL SORROWS”

*“The sacrament of Eucharist is truly the bread of angels.”*<sup>9</sup> I say this because after the visit of the two angels I had such a great appetite and hunger for the sacrament of Communion that could not be quenched. For almost two continual years I received Communion every Sunday.<sup>10</sup> But my longing was to receive Communion every day, if it had been possible. And when I thought of staying without it more than eight days, I felt I would pass out, so great was my sorrow.

The three years before my tribulation began were as if I were in a sabbatical year – my spirit was filled with angelic peace.

Then, all the ways to Sion (that is to holy Heaven) were freed up, peaceful, and traversable for me, and I ran along them without any obstruction. All this owed to my holy desire and devout prayer.

Then, truly my father, I had - or thought I had - a heart more like an angel than human, more heavenly than earthly. I do not think I ever had any other presumption than this: If anyone then had told me: “You will arrive at this situation,” that is at the point I had reached and which you now know, I would never have thought it possible. It is true that I had this presumption and vanity in my heart, but I don’t think I had others.

Then I considered this holy reflection in my heart by the grace and gift of the Holy Spirit: that every day of my life I wished

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<sup>9</sup> Camilla Battista freely cites in Latin from the Liturgy of Corpus Christi: *Ecce panis angelorum...vere panis filiorum...*

<sup>10</sup> In Camilla Battista’s day, people only received Eucharist on Easter; the confessor could allow the penitent to receive on other times, but this was rare. Therefore, to Sr. Battista, and perhaps the other Sisters, it was a privilege granted them to be able to receive Eucharist every Sunday.

and still wish to be one long Good Friday, in which I would always weep a result of the most bitter Passion of Christ, in order that at my death He might appear to me risen in glory.

From that time on, I no longer wished to interiorly recognize Easter nor Christmas, nor any other Solemnity that the Church celebrates. I did not even know how to add anything more to the Rite of Good Friday than that which I was already accustomed to. Indeed it is true that for a while now, my mind is forced to think of all the feasts the Church celebrates, almost against my will, since it is invariably attracted to the Passion of Christ, following the promise I made that my entire life should be a Good Friday.

So the last things are connected to the first: that is on Good Friday my salvation was initiated through your holy sermon, and now on a Good Friday of my continual meditation, I conclude the revelation of the story of my spiritual life to you, who were present at the beginning of it.

On *“coming up from the desert”* (Cant 8, 5) of this world, full of delights I embraced my passionate Spouse, separated from Him in body, but not in soul. As the time of my unhappiness and spiritual desolation came near, just as *“He who knows all things before they exist still knows them all after they are made”* (Sir 23, 20), I was warned in the following way, but I, ignorant, did not understand.

One day, as soon as I had begun prayer, I was told: *“Go and write the mental sorrows of My Passion, as you know.”* I excused myself and said: *“My Lord, I don't even know how to begin, because I don't wish in any way that people may think that these things are my own invention.”*

I was told: *“Begin in this way: Once there was a soul very willing to graze and be nourished, etc.”* And He read out two pages. I quickly got up and obeyed the command. The words came so fully that I never needed to think of what I had to say. And so it happens even now: every time I am going to write I feel no little fatigue, but then the words come plentifully, without thinking.

Oh, what bad news was that command to me, when it seemed Jesus wished to say: *“I see that your soul must suffer not a small corruption, but a huge one. So now emit the balsam of My*

mental sorrows and spread them in others, because they are of no avail to you, because of your corruption.”

This is why I write. But I strongly doubt that what I am doing at present is not the same but much worse, almost as if God were saying: *“So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.”* (Rev 3, 16) Oh God, spare me this bitter judgment.

This happened in August [1488] when my cruel battle had already begun. But I was ignorant of the devil’s crafts and, because of the great peace of my soul, I didn't foresee any trouble. On the contrary, I thought that everything was tranquil, peaceful and safe from enemies.

## CHAPTER XVIII - THE TWO YEARS OF TRIBULATION AND THE DEATH OF BLESSED PETER OF MOGLIANO

In the eight days following the Feast of Saint Francis I was so cruelly beaten and trodden by my enemies, that I clearly recognized that they were not friends, nor were their inspirations good. On the contrary I saw and experienced that they were mortal enemies towards my soul. Then God opened my eyes a little bit and I saw myself in the middle of the battle-field encircled all around by powerful foes. And I saw that I could escape from their clutches only by divine power. Any other route would have been impossible.

Then I was wounded by a mortal suffering. Not knowing what else to do, I fasted on bread and water during the Octave of Saint Francis and begged God and the Saint to help me.

One night, in a dream, I was shown all my future trouble in an image. "*On the poplars of that land, we hung up our harps*" (Ps 137, 2). At this point all my happiness ended and every evil began. Then the well of diabolical wickedness, which had been kept closed for ten years, was thrown open, and the poisoned dragon came out. Its jaws were wide-open, roaring against me with great force and furor that it seemed as if it wanted to swallow me alive.

In its evil will it would have devoured and swallowed me. But the almighty hand of God, who never forsakes "he who hopes in Him" pulled me out safe and sound from its roaring jaws, as you know, by His goodness alone, not by my merit or prudence.

Then I was stripped of every rich, precious vestment of mine. My eyes were gouged out, my hair was shorn and shaved of all its spiritual force<sup>11</sup>: "*they stripped and beat him and went off, leaving him half dead.*" (Lk 10, 30)

In these two years [1488-90] during which I was afflicted, I never had any human help or comfort, except for the three times I had the opportunity to speak with my holy and glorious Father

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<sup>11</sup> Sr. Battista compares herself to Sampson: (Judges, chapter 16.)

Peter of Mogliano. When he was elected Provincial, I rejoiced much saying: "Now I'll meet with him often. The devil may do what he likes, because now I'll be helped with such wisdom." O my holy father, you came to Camerino, but your beloved daughter couldn't speak a word to you! Death suddenly took you from me.

The thought of this loss overwhelmed me. This death, in fact, made me so upset that I was almost desperate. I firmly proposed within my heart to never again open myself to anyone because of this anguish, if God, through the merits of Father Peter, had not revealed clearly with whom.

O my father, you didn't wish to leave me an orphan, because you saw what was necessary for my salvation! First of all, in fact, when you were almost in Heaven, you at once freed me from the power of my enemies, and led me unexpectedly "on the way of Truth."

Then God inspired me, by the intercession of Father Peter, to put all my trust in you, as I previously had in Him, and as a consequence refer to you how my tribulation had developed, having me understand that it was necessary for my salvation. And it was indeed so, as you know. Only God knows, and no other, how much this inspiration was so bitter to me, against my entire will.

But after I had related to you my story - I tell it, not for flattery, but with utmost sincerity, I remained so satisfied and content that I wouldn't be open with anyone in this world but with you, my father. For different reasons I hoped that I might be allowed to rest and have some spiritual respite after the mortal battle, that had already been going on for two years. But alas, my father! This was not true; on the contrary after your departure I was more cruelly afflicted and beaten down than ever.

I rebelled strongly, accusing God of my every vice, sin or error; I complained of Him and blamed him of many things, I blamed Holy Scripture of being deceitful: "that is the biggest iniquity"; and other things which I'll pass over.

I believe, most devout father, that when you hear these things, it will seem to you that my poor soul was among the pains of Hell after you left six months ago. And in fact it really seemed to me

to be hellish and diabolical. But above all it broke my heart not to be able to say a word to anyone, as you know, or receive the least comfort in such great need and necessity.

O my father, where had you been? O my father, during this time I have longed, I could not speak to you, nor can I now, nor you to me.

Oh ill-fate and misfortune! How great it has been from beginning to end; therefore throughout this painful story, I have always sown those words of lament and suffering: "*Come, all you who pass by the way, look and see whether there is any suffering like my suffering?*" (Lam 1, 12).

Oh my father, I speak to you alone: please reflect and see whether there is suffering like mine. Oh, if God gave me a voice so powerful as to be heard in all the world, I would cry out loud and say: "Oh all of you servants of God who pass along the way of His divine love, do learn at my cost and be humbled; because we may talk to and with God, with the Virgin Mary and all the angels and saints and yet miserably fall into the ruin of mortal sin, as I did. Learn from this unhappy wretched soul that has arrived in the ocean of divine love and of spiritual sweetness, but now a strong tempest has submerged it in the depth of the abyss and of Hell."

## CHAPTER XIX – WILL AND ENTRUSTMENT TO HER CONFESSOR

A proverb from the Book of Ecclesiastes says that “*all rivers go to the sea.*” (Eccl 1, 7) It was just and right that, as the salvific waters of my salvation which had their beginning and origin from you by the grace of God, my father, by the divine design after passing so much time, should return to you: “*the rivers keep on going.*” (Eccl 1, 7) “*I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth.*” (1 Cor 3, 6)

The astuteness of Satan has not uprooted the plant, but there is still some green, that is the interior life, generosity and willful inclination towards good. God has taken care of me so much to keep me unhurt, pure and immaculate in the body, so that for His grace not for my capacity, I’m still chaste and I can say with the Mother of God: “*I have no relations with a man.*” (Lk 1, 34) So, dearest father, give thanks with me to the Creator, who deigned to look after me as friend and bride.

I believe without a doubt, my father, that this letter, something that I have never before done – new even for my soul – will come to bring either great good or great wickedness. With all my heart, I beg God and His glorious Mother to grant me the grace that it contains this purpose: that it may be my last Will and Testament.

If God should wish, I will indeed make my Will about what I possess, that is my soul and body; since for love, desire and affection, I certainly do not possess anything else in this world.

I leave my body to the earth; may God grant me, by His grace, that it may soon dissolve into dust, according to its vile substance.

I leave my soul in your charitable hands, my most beloved father, because you are, after God, the only hope of my salvation.

And if, by the precious blood of Christ and your prayers, I shall find a place of peace and mercy, I won't forget you.

I greet you farewell, dearest father, in Jesus my Lord.

Remember to pray to Him for your daughter.

In The Convent of New Saint Mary,  
Camerino, 13<sup>th</sup> of March,  
Year of the Lord (A.D) 1491

**Sister Camilla Baptist**

I am infinitely grateful to You, my sweetest Lord, who has given me the grace of telling Your truth in all sincerity and simplicity.

Thus I beseech You to grant me the grace that this story be believed with simplicity to Your praise and glory and to my shame and confusion.

I proposed to obey the inspiration to write about these things of my spiritual life as it seemed to me they were of divine inspiration and I decided in my soul to tell you out loud; but I was obliged to write it.

I had thought, then, to give it to you with my own hands; but it's necessary, instead, to send it to you wherever you are, I don't know why nor for what reason. May God grant me to understand correctly.

## **Prayer to the Blessed Camilla Battista Varano**

Father, You, who are the giver of every good,  
allowed Camilla Battista  
to learn everyday to recognize herself  
as a beloved daughter,  
completely surrendered to your hands  
trustworthy and glad for the benefits received from you.

Son, You, who are the Savior,  
gave Camilla Battista  
the gift of contemplating the mystery  
of your Passion, Death and Resurrection  
so that in a continuous walking  
in conformity of the Gospel  
she became your living memory.

Holy Spirit, You, who are the Love,  
burned Camilla Battista's heart  
with the burning fire of your knowledge,  
and you molded her to become capable  
of a love that gives life.

Holy and Blessed Trinity  
allow us too, like Camilla Battista ,  
to live like true Father's sons,  
to follow the Gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ,  
and to let us be molded by the fire of the Holy Spirit  
So that our life might be a reflex of your beauty and holiness

Allow us, through the intercession of the Blessed Camilla Battista,  
the grace we beseech so that your Holy Name  
may be completely glorified in her.

Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be

*With ecclesiastic approval*

*For requests of relics,  
publications or holy cards  
or if you want to communicate graces obtained  
by the intercession of Blessed Camilla Battista of Varano*

*Write to:*

Monastero Santa Chiara  
Via Ansovino Medici, 20  
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