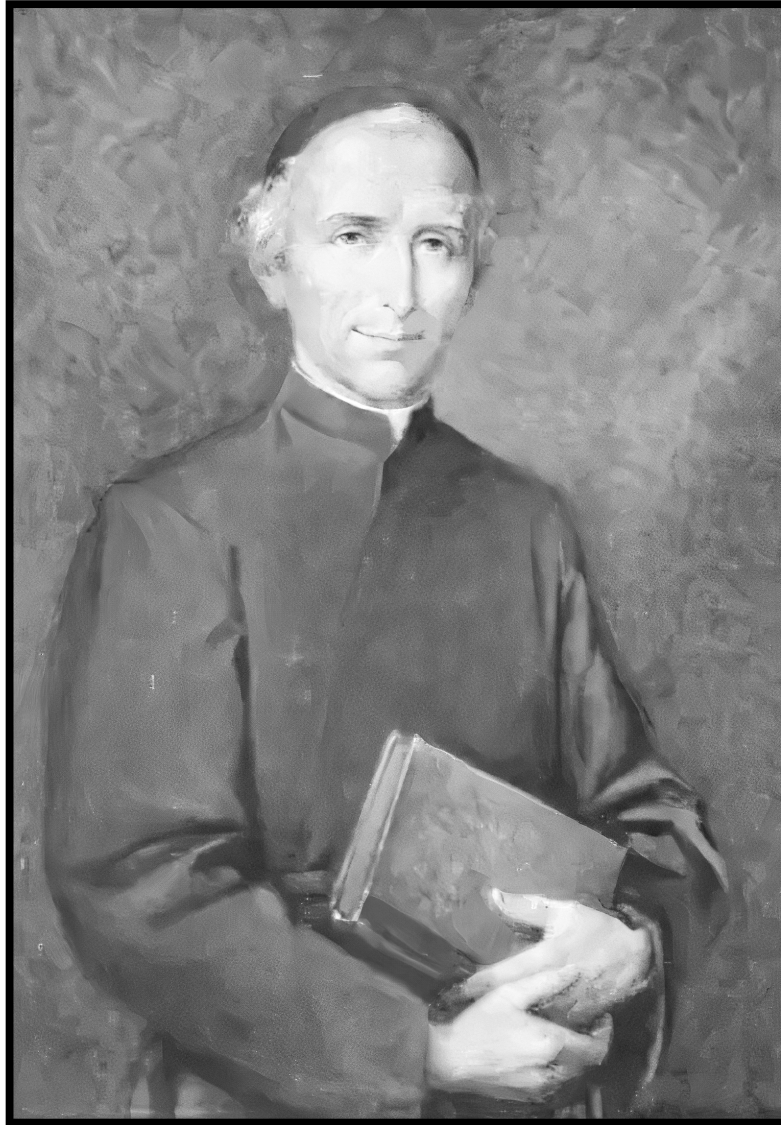


Overcoming Spiritual Discouragement



*An Online Retreat
with Fr. Timothy Gallagher, O.M.V.*

**Letters of Venerable Bruno Lanteri to his spiritual directee, Gabriella Solaro della
Margarita**

1.

My Lady and my Daughter in Jesus Christ,

Your letter just arrived; I was glad to receive it, and it gave me real joy. I am happy to hear that your trip went well, and that your whole family is in good health. I see no reason why you may not entrust your little Louise to your dear sister, the Lady Countess Vidua. She could not be in better hands, and the reasons for doing so are many. In my view, you may do this with total peace of heart.

And it gives me greater happiness still to know that Fr. Ferrero is already there with you. It is important, then, to begin immediately, to arrange with him for receiving Communion, and to do so as often as you can. You must be consistently faithful to meditation and to spiritual reading, if it be only a quarter of an hour of meditation and a single page of spiritual reading, and the same also for the examination of conscience which you can do while you are working. Do not forget to raise your heart frequently, but gently and with peace, to God, and to make acts of mortification, especially interior ones; for you, this means the effort to live each moment with a gentle and joyful spirit. For the love of God, I beg of you to wage continual warfare against negative moods, and never fail to begin again.

Do not wait until you have devotion to begin these things. Begin even without devotion since that will come with time, and this is precisely the means to attain it. Devotion must be the fruit and not the cause of the practices I have recommended. For the rest, you know that true devotion consists in readiness to be faithful to the Lord, and not in sentiment. I hope that soon you will send me consoling news in this regard

I ask you to give my greetings to Father Cesare and to tell him that I would be happy to see him here, and that I always hope to be able one day to visit with him there. For the present, tell Fr. Ferrero that, even though I have not yet had the joy of meeting him, I ask him to give you no rest in committing yourself to practicing all that I have just recommended to you and to call you strictly to account, and I will be grateful to him for this.

I bless you together with all your family, I recommend myself to your prayers, and I am, with the highest esteem and respect,

Your Servant and Father in Jesus Christ, Fr. Lanteri

Turin, May 22, 1807

2.

Madame,

I would like to use this opportunity of the departure [from Turin] of Monsieur your son for some profit, but I do not know of what I should speak: Should I praise you for your fidelity to God? Ought I chide you? I do not know at all. So I will take a sure course and that is to counsel you to begin each day, abandoning the past to the Lord's mercy and the future to his divine Providence. In the meantime, reflect each day that you are entrusted with a mission by the good God. In regard to your temporal affairs, never let anything trouble you, and the same with respect to your faults, taking care to counteract them immediately by an act of love of God. Be attentive to

practice the virtues of patience and gentleness; you can make a special examination concerning this in the evening and at midday.

Do not forget meditation, at least for a quarter of an hour, frequently raising up your heart to God throughout the day. Remember spiritual reading as well, if it be but a single page. Finally, do not fail to receive communion at least two or three times a week. I beg you to inform me about all these things, praying to the good God that he assist you in carrying them out.

It may be that I will come myself to learn how you are doing. It would be a great consolation for me, and I hope for it all the more since my eyes, which continually grow weaker, will not permit me to dedicate myself to other occupations that might hinder me from coming, as happened last year.

I do not have time to remain longer with you in this letter as I would desire, and so I conclude by recommending myself to your holy prayers, and blessing you, having the honor of being,

Your Servant and Father in Jesus Christ, Fr. Bruno Lanteri, Turin, July 4, 1808

3.

Madame,

When I learned from your mother-in-law that you had lost your little Enrico, I felt great sorrow for what you must be undergoing, since no sacrifice could be more painful for you. He had such wonderful qualities that he won the love of all, and how much more the love of his mother. And so, because of this, you have every reason to feel his loss and to weep for him.

Yet, in another way, I share with you a joy that you have surely gained a protector in heaven who cannot fail to care for you, because he is your son. And because you love him so deeply, turn your thoughts to his eternal happiness, share in his glory, and do not imagine that you have lost him. It would be wrong to think so, because you have lost him only from sight, and not in reality. Consider that he is at your side like another angel, that he encourages you to dedicate yourself to the things of heaven, and to share in his joy; that he assures you of his efforts before the throne of the Most Holy Trinity for you, for his father, his brother, and his dear sisters, to obtain for all of you great and abundant graces for your eternal salvation.

Remain in continual and loving conversation with him. Speak to him about all that you experience in your own heart, all that happens in your family, and anything of importance for you. Be on guard against thinking that he does not care about you, or that he is powerless to help you. That would be to misunderstand the immense love and almost infinite power that each of the Blessed enjoys, with all the other divine perfections that God shares with them in the greatest possible abundance. And so, if before you had no reason to be discouraged in the service of God, you have much less reason now. I would add that if it were possible for your little Enrico to feel any sorrow even now in heaven, it would be to see you discouraged and saddened because of him, because of your own failings, or because of the difficulties you encounter in the service of God.

This will be the remedy for any sadness or lack of courage you may feel: the thought that, with the grace of God and the protection of your little Enrico, you can do all things.

I beg you to share some part of these reflections with your respected and worthy daughters to console them also in their great affliction for the loss of their beloved brother. Tell them that I too take part in their pain and that I will hold them constantly present in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to obtain for them consolation of heart and their spiritual growth.

I end this letter by blessing you all, and I am, with all possible esteem and respect,

Your servant and father in Jesus Christ, Fr. Bruno Lanteri Bardassano, July 31, 1818

For personal reflection:

As you read these letters, what do you note about Venerable Bruno?

What stands out for you?

What does he emphasize in his spiritual direction?

What qualities in him emerge from these letters?

How does he interact with this spiritual directee?

How does he seek to help her?

How does he relate to her in her time of suffering?

Can you describe your sense of what these letters might have meant to her?

If you were to meet Venerable Bruno, what do you think you would sense in him? See in him?

If you were to write a letter to him, what would you write?

If you were to receive a letter from him, what do you think he would say? (You could consider writing a letter from him to you!)

Correspondence between Venerable Bruno Lanteri and his spiritual directee, Sister Leopolda Mortigliengo

1.

To the Honorable Sister Leopolda Mortigliengo, January 10, 1813

Dear Sister and daughter in Jesus Christ,

Your affliction with regard to the past has no basis; it is simply a temptation of the enemy. I can assure you of this in the name of God. Instead, therefore, of giving in to this, give glory to God and thank him from your heart for the infinite goodness with which he has forgiven everything. This same enemy does not stop at attacking you only regarding the past; he seeks to attack you with respect to the future as well. Be watchful of this. If you did not make all the progress you wished in the past year, such will not be the case this year if you humble yourself and have all

the greater hope in God, asking him without ceasing to grant you these two graces that we need so much and that he so desires to grant you, having promised this to you and merited it for you.

Say then with boldness, "Now I begin," and go forward constantly in God's service. Do not look back so often, because one who looks back cannot run. And do not be content to begin only for this year. Begin every day, because it is for every day, even for every hour of the day, that the Lord taught us to say in the Our Father, "Forgive us our trespasses," and "Give us this day our daily bread."

Do you not yet see that the enemy seeks in this way to strip you of your peace and confidence in God, two dispositions we so need in order to pray well? Follow, therefore, the counsel of Saint Teresa, "Let nothing disturb you," not even your own spiritual failings, because these are the object and the foundation of the infinite mercy of God that infinitely surpasses the malice of all the sins of the world. Firmly resolved never to let yourself be troubled by anything in the world, present yourself humbly and with full confidence to the Lord in prayer, and he will not fail to have compassion on you.

Do not be concerned if prayer does not go as you would wish; it is enough that it be as God wishes. And this is not difficult; you need only avoid voluntary negligence.

Ask, then, from your heart forgiveness of the Infant Jesus for any times in the past when you lacked courage; these are only failures to grasp the infinite goodness of his Heart. And begin every day to place yourself, just as you are, in the adorable Heart of God, which showed itself so visibly loving for sinners, not for the just.

Pray for me, and I bless you,

Your father in Jesus Christ.

2.

To the Honorable Sister Leopolda Mortigliengo, February 6, 1813

Dear Sister and daughter in Jesus Christ,

I am taking the occasion of Father Loggero's trip to Turin to send you this brief note.

Do not be surprised at your lack of energy, listlessness, and boredom in spiritual things; this is caused by age and physical issues. God does not exempt you from these, because ultimately, it is he himself who procures this for you, and he would be asking something impossible of you. He asks only that you be patient with yourself, that you always begin with a holy tenacity to be faithful in your spiritual practices. It is enough for him that you approve in your heart what those books say, and he accepts that approval just as if you had expressed those sentiments from the bottom of your heart. You must, therefore, be content with this as well. Otherwise we are not seeking any more to please God but rather to please ourselves. On the contrary, we should always seek above all what God wants rather than what we want, to have no hope in ourselves but rather in God, to adhere only to the holy and adorable will of God, and to hope only in his infinite mercy.

This is what I wished to say to you. For the rest, I am happy that you get along well with Sister Crocifissa. Through the practice of true Christian charity you will gain perseverance in this charity and a reward in heaven.

Continue to pray for me, and often. I leave you in the Heart of Jesus,

Your father in Jesus Christ

3.

To the Honorable Sister Leopolda Mortigliengo, August 18, 1813

Dear daughter in Jesus Christ,

I find that you do very well to spare yourself some of the promenades on the Rubat. The other times that it is necessary to take these, the denial of your will is enough to supply for the spiritual practices that you are unable to do on those days.

The gentle exercise of the presence of God when you find that empty things fill your imagination and torment you so, is beyond doubt the best remedy to rid yourself of them in an opportune way, and with greater ease.

In the meantime, I am happy to see you firmly ready always to begin, and to live by faith. That is all the fruit I ask of you and that I desire for you in the novena of your holy Mother [St. Jane Francis de Chantal]. Add to this a care firmly to keep yourself from all discouragement and all lack of confidence in the service of God, especially with regard to your daily faults, and I promise you that the Lord is happy with you, all the more because perfection itself, as your holy Father [St. Francis de Sales] says, does not consist in never failing but in never persevering in the will to fail.

Pray much for me, and continue to let me know how things are with you. I bless you.

Your father in Jesus Christ.

4.

The one letter conserved of Sister Leopolda to Venerable Bruno. His reply is given in the following letter.

Long live Jesus. December 6, 1813.

My father in Jesus Christ,

I finished my retreat Saturday morning. During it, I was not bothered or disturbed by anyone who caused me the least distraction, which made the time in my room and before the Crucifix very welcome. I never went out except for Mass.

I found the rereading of the *Meditations* of Father Judde [S.J.] very helpful, without, however, adding any thoughts of my own, consistently finding myself too dull and unable to generate a good thought. I saw that my faults are always the same. I regret that until now I have let my prayer go;

and even as I reproach myself for my infidelity, I am unable to resolve to undertake it. During all the eight days of the retreat, it was only by seeking the help of books that I was able to complete the times of prayer. Yet, Father Judde says that if we abandon prayer everything will collapse in our spiritual life, and that if we make only the proposal to be faithful to prayer every day, that will be enough. That good proposal, if we keep it faithfully, will soon produce others! This struck me deeply.

I have kept all the duties of my religious life very badly during this past year. I spent this whole year doing myself continual violence to conquer myself and adapt to the way of living in our household, but all without merit since I only did it because I had no choice and without purity of intention. It seems to me that I hear you say that we must always, and in very moment, begin again, and this will be my third resolution, but it is very hard to see myself always beginning without ever finding any improvement.

Father Guala was good enough to help me as much as the Lord made possible. I told him that I am always troubled by daily Communion because I see that I do not profit from it and only go out of habit, that I go almost without preparation. I suggested that I should go twice a week and on all feast days, as our rule [for the Visitation sisters] says, but he did not wish to consent to this without your approval.

I find that I increasingly like the little book of our holy Father [St. Francis de Sales] that you gave me. I read a little from it every day.

My health would be very good were it not for some problems with my eyes, a present that heaven gave me during my retreat. It does not stop me from my daily occupations.

I commend myself to your prayers and assure you that you have a frequent place in mine. I ask for your blessing. I am, in the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

Your daughter in Jesus Christ, Leopolda Mortigliengo. May God be blessed.

5.

Reply to the preceding letter, a week later

December 19, 1813

My honored Sister in Jesus Christ,

I rejoice, and I thank the Lord from my heart that you were able to make your spiritual retreat without exterior distractions and in peace, as this is a great grace from the good God. I approve very strongly your three resolutions: 1. purity of intention will unite you all the more to God and will also spare you many sorrows that ordinarily come from seeking oneself and not God; a holy tenacity, in the second place, in never omitting even a little of your daily prayer and your other spiritual practices will discourage the enemy from increasing the difficulty of doing them, with the purpose of leading you to omit some of them; 3. the decision always to begin will close the door to discouragement, and that of itself will free you from tepidity and from past faults.

As regards Holy Communion, I give you permission on occasion to omit it once a week, if Father Guala gives you permission. When you trouble yourself about not having good thoughts

when you receive Holy Communion and in your other spiritual practices, you run the risk of having the Lord keep you in that condition, because the Lord wishes that we learn well that of ourselves we cannot have any good thoughts, and this is the teaching of our faith. When, therefore, you trouble yourself about this, it is a sign that you are not sufficiently convinced of this truth. You will say to me that you always fear that you are the cause of this, and I will not reprove you for this. But note that only a voluntarily chosen cause can harm you, and even that voluntarily chosen cause, once we dismiss it, no longer harms us because that very dismissal is for us of merit.

If you like the little book of St. Francis [de Sales] and if it is a help to you, all the better. It is a sure sign that your holy Father cares for you, and you should thank him for this.

I am sorry to hear of your problems with your eyes and hope that they will not last. Take care to avoid the cold, which can harm them.

I thank you that you always keep me in your prayers before God, and I certainly do not fail to do the same for you. I bless you. May God be with you.

Your father in Jesus Christ.

6.

January 18, 1814

My honored Sister in Jesus Christ,

I thank you from my heart for your best wishes for this year expressed to the Lord on my behalf. I have not failed to do the same for you at the altar. For the rest, do not let yourself be discouraged even a little. Be sure that your proposals regarding your spiritual practices will not be without effect and will gain for you many graces in this year. Suffer only in seeing the defects of your soul, but rather than be disappointed, seek always to encourage your soul to begin, but *gently*, as your holy father prescribed for you, who loves to see us practice gentleness not only toward others but also toward ourselves.

Let us also fix our gaze of faith on the Crucifix, and we will find that he was not satisfied only with the possibility of suffering but wished truly to suffer every kind of pain in body and in spirit, because it is not the mere possibility of suffering but suffering itself that brings us merit. Let us, then, accept from his hand every occasion of suffering and of practicing virtue. And because everything is disposed for our salvation, let us seek to enter his loving purpose and to adhere to it as best we can, sure that with every event and with every cross he gives his grace, and that each grace to which we adhere will have its eternal reward.

Do not forget me, I beg you, in your prayers. May God be with you.

Your father in Jesus Christ.

For personal reflection:

How do the human and the spiritual relate in Venerable Bruno's spiritual direction as seen here?

How does he suggest that she view her failings? That she respond to them?

What tactics of the tempter does Venerable Bruno highlight for her?

How does he respond to her description of her listlessness in spiritual things?

What place does suffering have in her life, and how does Venerable Bruno respond to this?

What do you imagine these letters meant for Sr. Leopolda?

Correspondence between Venerable Bruno and His Spiritual Director Leopoldo Ricasoli

1.

Luigi Ricasoli to Father Bruno Lanteri

Florence, September 28, 1826

Most Venerated Signor Theologian Lanteri,

A few moments after you left Poggibonsi, the enclosed letter for me arrived from Father Rector Rossini, which I wanted to pass on to Your Reverence as Father Rossini asked. I hope that you have returned home safely, but I would appreciate hearing directly from you about this.

In the meantime, I ask you once again from the heart to remember me greatly before the Lord when you celebrate Mass, that he might give me true contrition for my serious sins, the grace of final perseverance, and the grace to provide in the best manner for the education of my young Stanislao, who is about to turn twelve.

Oh, how sorry I was that you did not remain with me even a day! But I thank God that I saw you, and this was a true miracle.

I greatly need to overcome sloth and lukewarmness in the service of God. I greatly need to grow more fervent and gain a little zeal for the salvation of my neighbor, and to overcome my accursed human respect and the grave temptations which I suffer against the faith. I place my woes candidly before you, so that you may help me quickly by your prayers, and gain for me also the help of the prayers of many good persons whom you know. I know that I ought rather to pray myself for my needs. But I repeat that I am lazy and thus waste time without praying, or by praying lukewarmly.

I have begun to have read the wonderful book on *Liguori* that you left with me. Tell the Marquis d'Azeglio that I received *Belleccio* and the other booklets, and that I shall send back his manuscripts as soon as I can. Please give my respects to Fathers Guala, Daverio, and Massimino. And with all respect I am,

Your most unworthy Servant and Friend in Jesus Christ,

Luigi Ricasoli

(Postal stamp FLORENCE)

2.

Monsieur and dear Friend in Jesus Christ,

I do not want this mail coach depart without writing you a short note, in haste. I usually wait for the day the coach leaves to write, and usually some unforeseen occupation stops me from writing as I planned. That happened last week, and it is happening again today.

I cannot hide the true and deep joy [*le vrai et sensible plaisir*] that your most appreciated and valued letter [*très précieuse et très chère lettre*] gave me. I awaited it with impatience, and I hope you will renew this pleasure for me weekly if you can, all the more because this is not just a question of satisfying my wish and my concern in your regard, which certainly are not small, since I can never forget the great goodness you showed me. But this is a matter of God's glory, which can be promoted by this means; and so, do not refuse me this joy.

In your letter I sense discouragement in the service of God. For God's sake, guard against this since there is no enemy more to be feared than this. A holy tenacity in the faithful practice of your ordinary exercises of the spiritual life, especially in meditation and spiritual reading, will always be a source of great blessings for you. Add to this a weekly practice of the Sacrament of Penance and more than weekly Holy Communion, with a firm and invincible resolution always to begin again and to hope ever more firmly in God, and I guarantee you safety from major failings, at least from their unhappy consequences, which you fear with such reason. It is of these matters especially that I beg you to write and tell me how you things are with you, since the well-being of your soul, which certainly can never be indifferent to me, depends principally on these.

I have no time to write further. I beg you to present my respects to Madame the Marquise, your worthy spouse, to Monsieur and Madame d'Azeglio, and above all to the most worthy Doctor Bucelli. Be assured that I will never forget you in my prayers before God. As I wait to hear once more from you, I recommend myself to your prayers, and I am in haste,

Your Servant and Christian Friend,

Fr. Bruno Lanteri

Turin, February 29, 1804

3.

Turin, November 28, 1804

Monsieur and very dear Christian Friend in Jesus Christ,

Your letter consoled me greatly, as I have been unhappy not to have heard from you for so long! I thank you sincerely because by writing you have lifted no small worry from my heart. Forgive me now if my reply comes later than I would have wished, as I had hardly received your letter when some special business took all of my time.

May the Lord be eternally blessed for the special graces he has willed to bestow on you. Oh! If only we could truly understand how precious the state of grace is, what sacrifices would we not make, and what victories over self would we not be ready to undertake in order to preserve such a state? For this reason, I can never recommend too highly to you the daily meditation of the holy teachings of our faith, made with true dedication and devotion, and pursued with a holy tenacity, and always, as much as possible, at the same time of day. Spiritual reading done

peacefully every day from well-chosen spiritual books will assist you greatly in carrying out this exercise.

You will be all the more sure of preserving this state of God's grace if you do not neglect to receive the holy Sacraments weekly, and even more frequently if necessary. These are the channels through which the Lord especially chooses to communicate his graces to us, and it is these that above all we need.

I rejoice greatly and thank God from my heart to see that you have such dispositions and such firm resolutions, nor do I allow a day pass without remembering you especially at the Altar, asking of the Lord that he grant you holy perseverance.

Above all, I beg you with all my energy to keep yourself from discouragement, trouble of heart, and sadness. Seek constantly to calm your poor heart and to encourage it, and to serve God always with holy joy. Maintain always these two resolutions, which I counsel you to renew frequently and with a holy tenacity: first, never to offend God knowingly, and second, should you commit some failing, never to persevere in this with your will, but immediately to lift yourself up with humility and courage, and to begin again, firmly convinced that God forgives you in the moment itself that you ask his forgiveness with humility and trust.

I am sure that the Lord God, who has already given you such special graces, will continue to bless you so that you will be able increasingly to serve his greater glory....

I close by rejoicing from my heart with you and with your worthy wife on the happy birth of a son [Alessandro]. Please give her my regards, assuring them that I will always keep both present in my poor prayers, and will not cease to ask for them every blessing from heaven. With heartfelt sentiments of esteem and respect, I am

Your humble and devoted Servant and Christian Friend, Fr. Bruno Lanteri

Letter of Venerable Bruno to his spiritual directee, Clementina Celebrini

A letter of November 17, 1817, to Clementina Celebrini, wife and mother,

Madame,

Forgive me if I have not replied earlier to your letter, since I could not. I have done what you asked, and you need not be anxious. You would like to live already in heaven where happy events are not followed by trials, but you must be patient since you must still remain here on earth, and suffer with patience the trials necessary to enter heaven.

If you want peace in this life, you must, first of all, decide to accommodate yourself to circumstances and not demand that circumstances accommodate themselves to you. You must, secondly, strive to practice uniformity of your will with God's. It is he who disposes everything, arranges everything, and permits all that takes place. We need only seek and follow his fatherly

design, which is always to provide us opportunities for practicing different virtues, at times one, at times another, so that he will have something for which to reward us.

I have noticed in your letters that you often turn in on yourself. Try to watch for this, and to focus less often on yourself, but to serve God with great simplicity. Instead of turning in on yourself, lift your gaze often with peace and love to God, to his lovable will, to his adorable Providence. Tell him that regardless of whether you are good or bad, you want to be totally his, and that it is his to make you become better. Cast also upon him all your concerns about your children and your husband. The more you trust in him, the greater will be his care for you.

Please give my greetings to Fr. Canaveri. Pray for me. I bless you and leave you in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Your servant and father in Jesus Christ,

Lanteri

For personal reflection and group discussion:

What style does Venerable Bruno use in replying to this woman?

On what themes does he center his counsel?

Do you see similarities with the letters to the others? Differences?

This letter, like the others, meant enough to this woman that she kept it all her life. Why do you think she did so?

LIVING WITH HOPE

Personal Spiritual Directory: If I should fall even a thousand times, I will not lose courage, I will not be troubled, but I will always say immediately with peace, *Nunc coepi* [Now I begin]. My God, I have acted in accord with what I am, what else could you have expected from me, nor would I have stopped here had you not held me back; act now in accordance with what you are, I do not desire to think so poorly of you, that I could think that you allow yourself to be conquered by my faults, when I know that you hold my conversion and salvation so deeply in your heart.

For a lay woman: “If I should fall a thousand times a day, a thousand times a day I will begin again, with new awareness of my weakness, promising God, with a peaceful heart, to amend my life. I will never think of God as if he were of our condition and grows weary of our wavering, weakness, and negligence. Rather, I will think of what is truly characteristic of him and what he prizes most highly, that is, his goodness and mercy, knowing that he is a loving Father who understands our weakness, is patient with us, and forgives us.”

Letters of Spiritual Direction: “Keep constantly before you these two proposals that I urge you to renew often and with a holy persistence: first, never to offend God knowingly, and, second, if you should fall, never to persevere in this with your will, but, with humility and courage, to rise

immediately and begin again, firmly convinced that God forgives you in the instant itself that with humility and trust you ask his forgiveness.”

“It is very important that we understand deeply how good God is, and not measure him by our own limitations or think that he tires of our wavering, weakness, and negligence. Our God is not such. Let us think of him as he truly is, filled with goodness, mercy, and compassion, and let us know him as the loving Father he is, who raises us when we have fallen, who never tires of forgiving us, and to whom we give great joy and honor when we seek forgiveness.”

“Say then with boldness, "Now I begin," and go forward constantly in God’s service. Do not look back so often, because one who looks back cannot run. And do not be content to begin only for this year. Begin every day, because it is for every day, even for every hour of the day, that the Lord taught us to say in the Our Father, ‘Forgive us our trespasses,’ and ‘Give us this day our daily bread.’”

“Be on guard against discouragement and lack of trust. Strive to do well all that you do, but do this with respect for your humanity, without striving for an impossible perfection, focusing simply on the day at hand. Remember that ‘The just man falls seven times a day,’ and so you will find blessing in beginning not only every day, but every hour.”

"Holiness does not consist in never failing, but in rising immediately, recognizing our weakness and asking God's forgiveness, and in doing this with peace of heart, without letting ourselves be troubled."

Counsels to a married woman: I will never give in to discouragement, no matter what fault I fall into. Convinced that I will fall often, I will immediately ask forgiveness of God and will always try to correct myself. If I fall one thousand times a day, one thousand times I will-begin again. I will recognize my misery, but with equal peace of spirit I will promise God to amend my life.

I will take care not to think of the Divine Majesty as if he were of our condition, that is, that he were weary of so much instability, weakness, and forgetfulness, punishing me, therefore, by removing the help and graces I need.... We do a great wrong to God when we measure him by our own limits. I will always attribute to him that which is proper to him, that which is most precious to him, that is, to be filled with goodness, merciful and compassionate, to be a loving Father who knows our weakness, bears with us and forgives us.

In speaking of God to others: We must always have before our eyes that saying of the Holy Spirit: “Think of God in a spirit of goodness.”⁵ Therefore, we should seek to attain sentiments worthy of God, first of all in ourselves, so as to inspire them also in others, and so reach the goal of loving him and bringing all others to love him. (Directory for the Exercises of St. Ignatius, Un’esperienza, 249).

Fr. Giuseppe Loggero, OMV: He truly fulfilled that which the Holy Spirit says, “Think of God in the spirit of goodness,” and he had truly great sentiments in regard to the divine goodness (Loggero, Positio, 631).

Fr. Antonio Ferrero, OMV: If we wish to speak of his hope in God, this was the joy and the comfort of his entire life. He would say: “We must always grow in this virtue: it is impossible to hope too much. The one who hopes for everything, obtains everything.” Therefore he had from God the grace of comforting the troubled, of providing clarity for those in doubt, of giving joy to

the sorrowing, of encouraging the hesitating. He consoled many religious in their sorrows, and penitents departed from his confessional filled with consolation (*Positio*, 603).

Letter to a discouraged person: Call to mind from time to time these words of Sacred Scripture: Behold the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29); I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners (Mt 9:13); It is not those who are well that have need of the physician, but those who are ill (Mt 9:12); If anyone has sinned we have an advocate with the Father (1Jn 2:1); The Lord waits to show us His mercy and in forgiving you, He will be exalted (Is 30:18); All have sinned and have the need of the glory of God (Rm 3:23); There will be greater joy in heaven for a sinner who repents than for ninety-nine just who have no need of repentance (Lk 15:7).⁸ Continue to reflect on the parable of the Prodigal Son, of the Good Shepherd, on the way Jesus on this earth dealt with sinners, and finally on the outpouring of love with which he immolated himself on the cross and does yet every day on the altar, for sinners. Let the conclusion be that we place ourselves immediately in God's presence, recognizing him as Father, hoping in him, never for a moment doubting that we shall be well received by so good a heavenly Father; that he will generously forgive us; that, indeed, we will be filled with his blessings (Letter to "a discouraged person," not further identified: Gastaldi, 170).

For Personal prayer and reflection:

Prayerfully reflect on what has spoken to your heart, unhurriedly rereading the texts as helpful.

When you find yourself falling once again into the "same old" failings, what stirs in your heart? What does Venerable Bruno's encouragement to respond at such times say to you?

Nunc coepi: Begin again! Every day, even repeatedly in the day. What do these words and their meaning say to you? How might they affect your life?

In times of discouragement, what helps? What is unhelpful? What does Venerable Bruno's insistence that discouragement is the main obstacle in the spiritual life say to you? What is God saying to you?

Reflect unhurriedly on the biblical passages in the Letter to a Discouraged Person. What stirs in your heart? What is God saying?

What do you see in Venerable Bruno's approach to confidence in God and "beginning again" that speaks to your heart? That suggests ways to grow?

Scripture for prayer: Psalm 131, "I have quieted my soul."

Personal Spiritual Directory:

In going to the altar I will imagine seeing Simeon who went in the Spirit to the Temple for the Presentation and Circumcision of Jesus, or I will imagine seeing some other fervent saint.

In the Mass, during the Penitential Rite, I will seek the sentiments and the heart of the tax collector [see Lk 18:9-14].

At the Gloria those of the Angels (see Lk 2:13-14).

At the Collect those of an ambassador sent by the Church.

At the Readings and the Gospel those of a disciple.

At the Creed those of the Martyrs.

At the Offertory those of Melchisedech [Gen 14:18-20].

At the Preface those of the Heavenly Court.

At the Consecration those of Christ.

At the "Our Father" those of one who asks for what he needs.

At the Lamb of God those of one who is guilty and in need of forgiveness.

At Communion those of one in love.

At the "Go in Peace" those of an apostle.

All of this with living faith, hope, charity, with pauses, emphasis, affection.

I will go forth from the altar as if breathing fire.

To a lay woman: God has placed me in this state of life; in this and no other I must serve him and be saved. All of the circumstances and events in my state of life, for example the different dispositions I have to deal with, the events that will take place, the times and places in which they will happen, manifest the order of Providence that the Lord has willed to save me. I have to adapt myself to all these things that happen to me, and not think I can force them to adapt to me. In fact, I will always try to adapt with peace and joy of heart, convinced that God knows better than I what is best suited for my good.

Counsels given to me verbally by Fr. Lanteri... To carry out every occupation and temporal matter that may arise as if fulfilling a task given by God, and to consider that the entire day is a mission given to me by God (Gabiella Solaro della Margarita, *Carteggio*, II, 236, note 6).

Way of Carrying out the Actions of Every Day:

Way of carrying out the actions of every day: Regarding the manner of carrying out our daily actions, we follow the only one pleasing to God and proposed to us by the Eternal Father, that is, the imitation of God's own Son who made himself a servant so as to be the model of his servants. In every action, then, we keep Jesus Christ before our eyes, taking him as our companion and model, and seeking to imitate him in the most perfect way, both outwardly and inwardly, together with the example of the Most Blessed Virgin. In this way, with the intercession of Mary, we become ever more like the image of Jesus, which we must impress upon our souls.

And the better to succeed in this undertaking, we undertake always to begin the action not impetuously, but with faith, that is, with a peaceful look of faith toward Jesus, our model. We clothe ourselves in his spirit and unite ourselves to his will, in order to act as he would have done in similar circumstances.

We carry out the action not indifferently, but with affection, with frequent peaceful and serenely confident glances of the heart towards Jesus.

We finish the action not abruptly but with reflection, that is, with a brief look to see if the action was wholly according to the Heart of Jesus or not, so as to thank Our Lord or express our contrition. We set ourselves to do this always, whether it be a question of praying, acting, or enduring and suffering.

The fruits that arise from this way of acting — this grace that we unceasingly ask of Jesus and Mary — consist in a great likeness to Jesus and union with him, in which lies our entire sanctification. To this end, we constantly seek to keep our memory from empty wandering and tranquilly fixed on Jesus, our mind accustomed to see and judge everything according to Jesus, and our will always peacefully united to Jesus. In short, in this way we always live in Jesus's company, we always speak with Jesus, we are always united with Jesus in our intentions and our actions, and so become living copies of Jesus. 65. Thus Jesus becomes the sole treasure of our hearts.

Jesus dwells in our hearts, and we live in the Heart of Jesus. Is there anything greater or more consoling than this?

Retreat notes: Particular examen on gentleness. I will read from [Alfonso] Rodriguez [*The Practice of Perfection and of Christian Virtues*], or elsewhere, about the nature, the kinds, the acts, the degrees, the incentives, the obstacles, the means, and the examples of this virtue.

From time to time, I will give thought to compare my senses to those of Jesus Christ.

Immediately upon awaking, I will call to mind my proposal to live this virtue, and I will commend myself to God for help.

I will examine myself often and I will write down my defects in this regard, even if I should be out in the streets, going from place to place. Before retiring at night, I will make the particular examen on this; I will compare the days and the weeks.

Michele Cavour, *letters to his wife*: We have one of the most skilled orators that I have ever heard, Don Reynaudi, who notwithstanding the fact that he is just getting over a chest infirmity, gives us three completely developed meditations each day. The superior, Fr. Lanteri, is most gentle; his health could not be worse, but I have preferred to address my personal matters to him since he assisted grandmother, the memory of whose last moments is ever present to my recollection. My room is near his, and I speak with him during the two hours of recreation after lunch and after supper. The rest of the time is in silence, and as yet I am most attracted by it.

For myself, I tell you that I am most content with Fr. Lanteri; I have spent a great deal of time with him. I find him gentle, persuasive and above all very pleasing. God gives him a great deal of inspiration to understand and explain things very well.

A few words in a hurry, Thursday at 9:00 a.m., April 25, 1829. I have received your letter and that of mother. I have the chance to reply to you, and I send to you that which I have written I was most moved when I received your letter. I had been to see Fr. Lanteri to ask his permission to read it. I found him weaker than on other days; he said to me, read as much as you desire, such sentiments are pleasing to God. But tears were falling from his eyes, he could scarcely breathe. He said to me, the light is being extinguished. There was a great tranquility in him; he looks toward heaven when the infirmity attacks him most strongly and he pronounces the word "paradise" with

so great a faith, that to hear it moves everything within me It is sweet, my Adele, to shed such tears. I shed many at these words. I do not think that Fr. Lanteri is really so close to his end.

Spiritual Counsels: Let us fix the eyes of our faith and love on the crucified Christ, and we will see that he was not satisfied only with the possibility of suffering, but that he truly suffered every kind of pain, both in body and in spirit, since it is not the possibility of suffering but sufferings themselves that cause us to gain merit. Let us then accept from his hand every occasion of suffering and practicing virtue, and since all things are disposed for our salvation, let us try to enter into his purpose of love, to follow his plan the best we can, convinced that grace is linked to all that happens, to every cross, and that every such grace we welcome will receive an eternal recompense and reward (in *Gastaldi*, 473)

Fr. Antonio Ferrero, OMV: He was enamored of the Virgin Mary: he put up pictures of her everywhere, he had a precious collection of books which speak of her, and he read from them for a few hours every week. He celebrated her novenas, and spoke very frequently about her. He used to say that it is not enough simply to cause devotion toward her in others, but it is also necessary to lead them to a great confidence in her. He always wanted a talk given on her whenever the Exercises were given, and he called her his mother, his nurse, his paradise. In his final illness he told me on several occasions that he had seen a beautiful lady with a beautiful child in her arms who never left him, but would say no more than this.

Personal Spiritual Directory: I desire to have a tender love for the Virgin Mary, and a confidence in her as a son toward his Mother, to such a degree that it appear impossible to me that she could permit me to be overcome, and that I be lost in that battle; I will have recourse to her, therefore, as the chick takes refuge under the wings of its mother when it hears the cries of the preying hawk, and, after the act of the love of God, I shall say, *Monstra te esse matrem* [Show yourself to be a mother], etc., *Sub tuum praesidium* [We fly to your patronage] etc., *Maria mater gratiae* [Mary, mother of grace], etc., and I will do this with the confidence that a child has toward its mother, asking of her what it needs with great surety, as if she were bound to grant it to him, and turning to her in all his troubles, such that the mother is, as it were, obliged to come to his aid, and draws from this a motive to love her son yet more deeply. And if earthly mothers, even though at times they may be bad, do not refuse the requests of their children, what shall be said of the Great Mother of God? I will avail myself of all the merits, graces, and privileges of this my Lady, as one who knows that he has such right to them as sons have to their mother.

Prayer for the Intercession of Venerable Bruno

O Father, fountain of all life and holiness, You gave Venerable Bruno Lanteri great faith in Christ, your Son, a lively hope, and an active love for the salvation of his brethren. You made him a prophet of your word and a witness to your mercy. He had a tender love for Mary, and by his very life he taught fidelity to the Church. Father, hear the prayer of your family, and, through the intercession of Venerable Bruno, grant us the grace for which we now ask . . . May he be raised to

the altars that we may give you greater praise. We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

LITANY TO BEGIN AGAIN

(Compiled from the words of Venerable Bruno Lanteri, OMI)

That I may begin immediately,
That I may never fail to begin again,
That I may begin even without devotion,

That I may begin each day,
That I may begin every day,
That I may begin every hour of the day,
That I may say with boldness, "Now I begin,"

That I may begin humbly and with full confidence,
That I may begin with holy tenacity,
That I may begin with faith,
That I may begin with gentleness,
That I may begin with peace,

That I may decide always to begin,

That I may begin again, firmly convinced that God forgives me,
That I may rise immediately and begin again,
That I may always, and in every moment, begin again,

That I may begin again to trust,
That I may begin again to hope,
That I may begin again to love,

Venerable Bruno, pray for me. Amen.

Resources:

Biography of Venerable Bruno:

Timothy M. Gallagher, OMV, *Begin Again: The Life and Spiritual Legacy of Bruno Lanteri* (Crossroad: New York, 2013)

Writings of Venerable Bruno on hope:

Timothy M. Gallagher, OMV, *Overcoming Spiritual Discouragement: The Wisdom and Spiritual Power of Venerable Bruno Lanteri* (EWTN: Birmingham, AL, 2019)

Brief Selection of Writings:

Timothy M. Gallagher, OMV, *The Venerable Bruno Lanteri: Spiritual Counsels for Life in the World* (Omaha, NE: Discerning Hearts, 2016)

Conferences on Venerable Bruno and Overcoming Spiritual Discouragement:

<https://www.frtimothygallagher.org/product-page/overcoming-spiritual-discouragement-1>

Podcasts:

discerninghearts.com and the Discerning Hearts App: series entitled “Begin Again.” Sixteen half-hour podcasts.

To request prayers or share graces received through Venerable Bruno's intercession, and for information regarding his cause of canonization, go to:

www.omvusa.org/bruno-lanteri/

Fr. Gallagher's website: www.frtimothygallagher.org