Part II
Christmas Letter
Rome 2019
Dear Members of the Rosminian Family: Fathers and Brothers, Rosminian Sisters of Providence, Adoptive Sons, Ascribed members, I am sending you, as promised, the second part of my Christmas Letter, which deals, as you know, with the transformation in charity which the Lord operates in each of us.

For each week, I shall write following this pattern: 1. The Word of God; 2. Its resonance in the writings of the Fathers of the Church; 3. References to the teaching of our Blessed Father Founder; 4. A brief comment; 5. Rosmini’s ejaculatory prayer.

In this letter I shall deal with the first Seven Weeks of Ordinary Time, right up to Lent.

In my previous Letter, I used the image of running streams flowing into larger quantities of water. This second part deals once again with water, considered in its power to quench the thirst and to transform. As we meditate on this “thirst for water which can transform us”, we shall find help in the book of Proverbs, in a page written by St. Ephrem, in a few lines written by Rosmini and Fr Clement Rebora, and in a few words spoken by St. Theresa of Calcutta.
INTRODUCTION

Proverbs: “‘Pay attention to my warning: now I will pour out my heart to you and tell you what I have to say” (Prov. 1:23).

St. Ephrem, Deacon: “Lord, who can understand even one of your words in all its richness? The little we can understand is overshadowed by the greatness of what we cannot understand. We are truly like thirsty people who drink from a spring of water… Such spring is like the water from the rock in the desert, which became a spiritual drink for men who came to it from all directions”.

Rosmini: The Bible “was the sublime book used in Christian schools. In the hands of the great men who expounded it, it became the nourishment of other great men” (The Five Wounds, n. 39). It is obvious that Rosmini himself was not born “great”, but he became great, like many others, by quenching his thirst for truth at the spring of God’s Word, from a very early age.

Rosmini’s other words, “think big” were addressed to Fr Joseph Aimo, to encourage him to discern the design of divine Providence, going past the difficulties which he, as a doctor, had experienced after being assigned by Rosmini to the study of Physics. We are not dealing therefore with natural greatness but with a great love for the Word of God and Divine Providence.

Clemente Rebora: The following verse, taken from one of Rebora’s poems, should highlight the right attitude of the Christian, and even more of the priest: “The priest is like a waterfall, which gives life to the water even as it rushes into the deep, confused and humbled by his call” (The Priest).
St. Theresa of Calcutta: On one occasion, when someone told her that her work was like a drop in the ocean, she replied: “But even the ocean is made up of drops of water”.

Brief comment: The following are some of the characteristics of water: water merges gently with greater entities – drops go into a stream, which goes into a torrent, which goes into a river, etc.; it brings life to the vegetation, to animals, to human beings. Water is constant, a quality which was expressed by the ancient dictum: “A water droplet hollows a stone”. We could also think of the beneficial power of water, when it is well channelled. In the early years of ‘900, water from the Diveria stream (still flowing today from Alpe Veglia) was used to make the Simplon Pass Tunnel for the railway. The water was channelled into a perpendicular duct with a 1000 m drop in altitude to produce a pressure of 100 atmosphere capable of powering the hydraulic drilling machines used for the digging of the long tunnel. This method avoided the build-up of dust in the tunnel, ensuring that the thousands of workers labouring there did not develop silicosis or other diseases.

WEEK ONE: TRANSFORMING WISDOM

The Office of Reading has a first Reading, taken from the Word of God, and a second Reading, chosen to complement, underline, and enhance the message of the first Reading. Many of the passages are taken from the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Feasts and Memories of more recent Saints, who have left writings beneficial for the spiritual life of Christians, may have a second Reading with passages taken from their writings.
This week, the Office of Reading has passages from the book of Ecclesiasticus. They invite us to seek wisdom, which has the effect of forming and transforming those who find it. The Readings from the Fathers are like a rainbow and they help us contemplate the beauty of God’s Word.

**Monday.** Before the splendour of divine Wisdom, we become aware of how small we are, and we experience the fear of the Lord.

**St. Clement** highlights JESUS’ wise work, who called us out of darkness to light, from ignorance to the knowledge of the glory of his name. A splendid prayer follows: the first part, in praise of the wisdom of God, the second part is a thoroughly inspired prayer to God to open the eyes of our heart. For the conclusion of the prayer we have to turn to Saturday of this same week, when we have also the conclusion of the readings from Ecclesiasticus. St. Clement invites us to give faith the primacy which is due to it, and he asks: “Should we relax our efforts at well-doing, and cease to exercise Christian love?” He adds words which are similar to the words used by our Fr Founder when he speaks of the “order of charity”, a charity, that is, marked by wisdom.

**Tuesday:** The reading from Ecclesiasticus invites us to “put our trust in the Lord and to keep at our toil”.

**St. Basil** confirms his trust in the Lord when he says: “*Man’s spirit has within itself the tendency towards an adaptation to love*”. It is a question of “contributing, by God’s gift and your prayers, to stir up the spark of divine love hidden within you according to the power given us by the Spirit”. (...) “The rule to use things well is also to be applied to using well the gift of love”.
Rosmini: “The Word dwells in each disciple and there pours out his Spirit so that each one is a kind of centre and end of the whole, although he is also a member – more or less important, playing a more or less important role – of the body of which Christ is the head. Each, therefore, possesses his own light of truth and each has his own fire of charity. Even the least of Christians who remains in a state of grace has it.” (‘The Concept of Wisdom’, n. 108)

Thursday: The passage from Ecclesiasticus says that the sun, the moon, the stars sing the glory of God. It adds: “Look upon the rainbow, and praise Him who made it, exceedingly beautiful in its brightness, it encircles the heaven with its glorious arc; the hands of the Most High have stretched it out”

Comment: The rainbow is still an amazing phenomenon, and people are very keen to take pictures of it. Yet, fewer people have the good sense of referring it to its most wise Artist. People are satisfied with the scientific explanation that the rainbow is made up of billions of tiny drops of water suspended in the air after the rain; only a few rises to acknowledge its Most High Author.

St. Athanasius: “The Word of the Father, who has ordered all this universe, illuminates it by his providence. He is the good Word of the good Father, and it is he
who has established the order of all things, reconciling opposites and from them forming a single harmony”. The Friday reading develops the theme of harmony; in it, St. Athanasius uses the example of a skilful musician and of a chorus composed of different men, children, women, old people, and youths, conducted by one leader”.

Rosmini: He has written hundreds of splendid pages on the Word, similar in content to the pages left by the Fathers of the Church. His commentary on the Prologue to the Gospel of John “appears to our eyes as a miraculous spiritual elevation which goes past the miseries of the world: it is a display of his interior freedom untouched by events, even though such events were most painful and humiliating for a man of good will and high intellect” (Maria Teresa Raschini). If we seek transformation in God, we have here a great help from the example of Rosmini. The Commentary on the Gospel of St. John will soon be published in English.

Comment: Dear Friends, take courage! Let us build up unity and transformation through a harmonious chorus of love! Let us speak well of others. Let us bear each other’s burdens. Let us escape from the theology of prosperity, that is, the theology of the accumulation of material goods and of being served. Let us live our transformation in our own vocation and let us pray for vocations. Do we wish to have vocations, of Rosminian Religious, of Rosminian Sisters, of Ascribed members? Let us be transformed, as in a chorus. Where there is unity and harmony vocations are sure to arrive and to persevere.

O my God, I was made for You: may I not lose you”. 
WEEK TWO: A GUIDED TRANSFORMATION

The Readings are taken from the book of Deuteronomy.

The passages we are invited to read are eloquent and demand our commitment. The people of Israel must undergo a profound transformation. It is God who has chosen His people, and He promises to take care of them, to convert them, to forgive them, to renew them. He promises that He will send another, great prophet.

The Readings of Week Two invite us to acknowledge God’s initiative and to respond to it with a sense of responsibility. We have to practise the law of love with all our strength. Union with God must be sought and strengthened day by day. Moses raises his prayer to God on behalf of his sinful people.

Monday: St. Ignatius of Antioch had already anticipated St. Athanasius in his words on harmony: “The perfect harmony of brotherly love is the fruit of unity: remain in peaceful accord and God will be present among you, attuned like the strings of a harp and the result will be a hymn of praise to Jesus Christ”

Tuesday: St. Ignatius: “It is better to be a Christian without saying it than to proclaim it to the world without being one”.

Wednesday: St. Clement, as he explains the commandment of love of God and neighbour, says: “Love binds us fast to God. It was in love that the Lord drew us to himself. What a wondrous thing love is. Its perfection is beyond words. My friends, if we keep God’s commandments in a true loving comradeship together, so that our sins may be forgiven for that love’s sake, we are blessed indeed”.

7
Friday: Diadochus of Photike: “The fortunate man who has reached such perfection, passionately longs for the illumination of knowledge to the point of feeling it in his very bones, no longer aware of himself but wholly transformed by the love of God. Such a one is in this life without being in it. He still lives in his own body, but his soul unceasingly goes out to God. His heart is burning with the fire of love and he adheres to God with a sort of irresistible desire, as if quite torn away from the love of self”.

Comment. The quote from Diadochus deserves a few special words. Our charism of universal charity, the effect of an invasion of the love of God into the faculties of our spirit and of our soul, is described in a passage of the twelfth sermon of Rosmini, as he was ending his ministry as parish priest at Rovereto. He was preaching on the Gospel’s passage about the greatest commandment. The title of this sermon is about the intensity of love, that is, of its strength and greatness. Rosmini uses images very similar to the ones used by Diadochus. “The more a person welcomes God’s love the more he will love God”. It is easy to understand such exchange if we try to imagine a furnace where the molten bronze used to forge a bell, or a statue is poured into the container as incandescent fire which fills it and over-flows on all sides, with flames bursting forth in all directions. This image fits in with the image of the Christian “Rosminian”.

I ask all of you to make an effort to read and reflect on the following passage. You will not regret it. Rosmini’s language contains some words which may be outside our common way of talking, but we must keep in mind that we are before a mystical vision: we cannot change or adjust the words, we can only contemplate and learn.
Rosmini: “Love comes from the heart, indeed from the whole heart, and it is poured out in the soul and in the mind. No part of man is neglected, as St. Augustine says; the whole of man must become love. The heart is the seat of affections: there the will abides. The sparkle of love based on reason, which is properly called charity, is in the will, as in a fireplace, and its flames at once engulf everything around, so that it touches not only the whole will - ex tote corde, but it engulfs with its flames all the inferior faculties of our animal nature - in tota anima tua; and it rises to the superior faculties, touching and capturing the whole mind - in tota mente tua. As a result of such heavenly love, the blessed lover takes on, so to speak, the characteristics of fire, and from his central point, which is the heart, sends his rays to opposite directions, that is, to his animal life and to his intellectual life. Both lives are taken over by divine love, thus creating new conditions and new laws. At that point, one can notice that even the irrational carnal instincts become moderate, are purified, and are ready to obey the overwhelming charity. The rational instincts of the spirit, under the guidance of love, are no longer tempted to go astray after illusions, but direct their efforts at conquering the full truth, as the Spirit says: “Wisdom is more readily seen by those who love her, and those who look for her will find her”. Christ had in mind all these things, so high and so perfect, when He pronounced the simple words: “Love the Lord you God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind”.

“You know what in me is imperfect: remedy it”.

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WEEK THREE: A TRANSFUSION OF REDEMPTIVE BLOOD

The passages from Deuteronomy tell the story of God’s pedagogy in the forming and transforming of a rather coarse people, who received marvellous benefits during their exodus from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land. The temptation of asking for more benefits while being cold in love comes once again to the fore.

Tuesday: St. Basil asks: “What shall we render to the Lord for all the benefits which he has bestowed upon us? If God gave so many benefits to the Jewish people who, in Abraham, was only “a wondering Aramean”, to us God has given His Son, and has made us sharers in his divinity. When I think of all this, I fall into a fearful shuddering and terror, lest perchance through carelessness of mind I should fall from the love of God”.

Wednesday: The first reading goes back to the theme of God’s favours to the Jewish people and to their duty to respond to them. The Jewish people behaved like farmers who expect the soil to produce a good harvest without making any effort to cultivate it. God mentions their future punishment: “The Lord has torn them from their country and flung them into another land”.

St. Bernard: With the coming of Christ, God’s action is transformed. The punishment is no longer exile for the people but exile for the Son of God at the hands of the people who rejects him. This work is done to raise a new people. “Where is a safe stronghold for the weak to find rest, if not in the wounds of the Saviour? There
safety is measured by his power to save… The nail that pierced became for me the key that opened the door, so that I may taste the sweetness of the Lord. What should I see through that opening? The nail cries out, the wound opens its mouth to cry that truly God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself. The iron passed through his soul and drew near to his heart that he might know how to feel for my weaknesses. The secret of that heart is laid bare through the openings of the body, that great mystery of love lies open; revealed is the tender mercy of our God which has dawned on us from on high”.

**Rosmini:** In the first of his sermons found in the book, *A Society of Love*, Rosmini uses the same images: the nails served the purpose for the pouring out of the Blood of the Redeemer, more than for keeping Jesus nailed to the cross: “Daily we see our divine Teacher of love, the only law-giver for our Society, bleeding and wounded as he hangs from a cross. There he remains, hands and feet pierced not so much by spear and nails as by the arrows of love which alone account for his death”. Jesus’s cry from the cross was indeed a cry caused by pain, but it was, moreover, an appeal to the Father to let the walls of the rebellious Jerusalem fall, as in the case of Jericho, and to open the hearts to the new Jerusalem. Jesus’ prayer at the Last Supper for the unity in love of his followers became the cry of the cross, the cry for transformation. This was the interpretation suggested by Clemente Rebora, who made a list of the “cries” of great Saints as they “offered their life”, to highlight the fruit of Jesus’ cry from the cross. Rebora chose this simple ejaculation to indicate Rosmini’s cry: “Father, you see into the depths of my soul, make me good”. This is the cry for transformation and transfusion on the footsteps of Rosmini.
“Father, you see into the depths of my soul, make me good”
WEEK FOUR: APOSTOLIC MINISTRY FOR TRANSFORMATION

This week, the Office of Reading offers passages from the two Letters to the Thessalonians. The theme of transformation recurs constantly. The cares for the apostolic work produce fruits. Without quoting from the texts of the Letters, I will simply highlight the teaching of the Fathers and of our Founder.

**Sunday. St. Ignatius of Antioch:** “I have seen how immovably settled in faith you are; nailed body and soul, as it were, to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, and rooted and grounded in love by his blood”

**Wednesday. Diadochus of Photike** writes about discernment, recalling St. Paul’s words, “Never try to suppress the Spirit” (1 Thess. 5, 19). “The spiritual sense is an exact taste of the things which we discern. Just as, in fact, through our bodily sense of taste, when we are doing well, we distinguish unmistakably the good from the bad, and desire what is useful, so, in the same way, our spirit, when it begins to move vigorously in all quietude, is able to feel in all its fulness the divine consolation. Through the action of love the spirit retains an unfading memory of this taste, discerning infallibly what is best”.

**Rosmini.** We all know the sixth Maxim: “To regulate all the occupations of our life with a spirit of intelligence”. We recommend it, as the summit of the daily journey towards perfection.

**Pope Francis.** His Apostolic Exhortation “Gaudete et Exultate” talks about and recommends discernment in chapter 5.
Thursday. St. Cyril of Jerusalem had anticipated in his writings both St. Bernard and Rosmini on the voluntariness of the Passion of Jesus. “He gave not up his life by compulsion, nor was he put to death by murderous violence, but of his own accord, rejoicing in his noble deed, smiling at the crown, cheered by the salvation of mankind… Do not be a friend of Jesus in time of peace and his foe in time of wars”.

Rosmini: We all know that one of the five directives of our spirituality is the offering of our own blood in union with the Blood of Jesus. The pelican is our symbol, twenty-four hours a day. Our Most Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Sorrows and our Captain is also the Queen of Martyrs invoked by all Christians. We too ought to be martyrs, daily. I add the short formula proposed by Fr Giuseppe Bozetti: “Lord, I offer myself and my blood to you. You know well what I can truly give, you know it better than I do: accept, therefore, all that I can give you now as my little strength allows it, but please add grace and strength so that I may one day offer and give you much more, to the point of offering you the sacrifice of my life”

“Mary, what I ask is that which is good as God sees it, and as your Son sees it, For to me, too, that is good”.

14
WEEK FIVE: A FUNDAMENTAL AND RADICAL TRANSFORMATION

The Office of Reading offers passages from the Letter to the Galatians. Many are the topics in evidence, all of them very important; but we shall dwell on St. Paul’s insistence on transformation, which is the very theme we are developing. The Galatians had been converted by Paul only recently. Some of them came from Judaism, others from paganism; all of them, however, were in need of a radical intervention by God in their life. The problem is to accept and live the transformation required by the Good News. St. Paul asked even St. Peter to make a clear step forward. The passages taken from the Fathers explaining the letter to the Galatians are very powerful.

**Monday. St. Bonaventure** applies to the word of God St. Paul’s phrase in the Letter to the Ephesians concerning the dimensions of love: “With this knowledge we must ask for a love of him, so that finally achieving a solid faith and a deep-rooted love, we may be able to know the length and breadth, height and depth, of holy Scriptures”. Rosmini, with St. Thomas, explains the same words referring them to the four dimensions of the love of Christ on the cross.

**Thursday. St. Augustine** is profoundly touched by the very tender words of St. Paul: “My little children, I am in travail over you afresh, until I can see Christ’s image formed in you” (Gal. 4, 19). This is his comment: “Christ is formed in a believer through faith implanted in his inmost soul. Such a one, gentle and lowly of heart, is summoned to the freedom of grace, and he does not boast of the merits of works which are of no value but attributes his merits to divine grace.
Christ, then, is formed in him. The result is that through this imitating he becomes, in the nature permitted to him, the same as Christ”.

What a transformation! My dear brothers and sisters, to be born again and again, to be fed by the Word of God, to be cared for by the Church and by the Institute, until Christ is fully formed in us, all of this is truly worth-while.

I will not add my reflection, since we can always read Rosmini’s *Spiritual Affections* to see how close he was to the two great Fathers, whom he regarded as his predecessors and formators.

*Friday.* **St. Leo the Great,** writing about the words to the Galatians concerning the freedom of the children of God, concentrates on love, which is the fulfilment of the law. This is also our motto. And he adds an important message: “O man, rouse yourself! Learn to know the dignity of your nature. Remember that image of God in which you were created, which, though defaced in Adam, is now restored in Christ… For if we are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells within us, what each of the faithful has in his soul is greater than what can be seen in the heavens… Hence, since we are born into this present world, but reborn into the world of the future let us not be given over to what is transient but let us set our hearts on what is eternal”.

*Saturday.* **Blessed Isaac of Stella** explains the words: “Bear the burden of one another’s failings, then you will be fulfilling the law of Christ” (Gal. 6, 2). “For that is the love on account of which everything should come into being or cease to be, should be changed or left unchanged. That love is the source of all things and the final end
towards which everything should be fittingly directed. Nor can anything be blameworthy that is done in truth on account of that love and in accordance with it. May it be his will to grant us that love, whom we cannot please without it, and without whom we can do nothing at all, he who lives and reigns, God, through endless ages. Amen”. It becomes clear to us that Rosmini may have found inspiration for the writing of the words of the first and fifth Maxims of Christian Perfection from the words of Blessed Isaac of Stella.

“O my God, o incarnate Word, may your Spirit be the cause of all my activities, of all that I do: may nothing in me come from myself, but everything from you”.

WEEK SIX: THE PROVERBIAL TRANSFORMATION

The Office of Reading presents passages from the book of Proverbs. The favourite theme is wisdom, as it was in the first week with the book of Ecclesiasticus. Wisdom is found by whoever seeks her and is available to everyone. The book reaches its climax when it praises the perfect woman, a truly magnificent and very relevant page today. From this sixth week, I have already used for my introduction the passage from St. Ephrem: our thirst for God must be insatiable, since our spring is not a little lake, is not a brook, but an ocean, that is, God Himself! Rosmini mentions this in his first Maxim, when he talks about our insatiable thirst for justice, that is, for the will to adhere in love to Truth.
Monday. St. Bernard, commenting on the sentence: “Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and is rich in understanding” (Prov. 3, 13), says: “Seek her, therefore, whilst she may be found”. He recommends dwelling in Wisdom and to taste her abundance: “You pour forth wisdom and understanding in three ways: if on your lips there is the admission of your own sinfulness, thanksgiving and the voice of praise, and the words that encourage”.

It may be useful at this point to recall a famous line of encouragement of the same St. Bernard, quoted by Fr Luigi Lanzoni in his commentary on the Rosminian rules for the religious transformation of postulants, novices, and religious: “Jugis conatus ad perfectionem, perfectio reputatur” [The constant effort towards perfection is valued as perfection]. Let us try at all times to abound in humility, gratitude, and holy communication among us.

Wednesday. St. Procopius of Gaza explains the phrase: “Wisdom has set up her seven pillars” (Prov. 9, 1). “To man God gives the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, to make him perfect by participating in the divine nature of faith, and by his sharing in supernatural things”. He ends his teaching on spiritual transformation with the following words: “Come, eat my body, the bread that makes you grow according to virtue, and drink my blood, the wine that delights you according to knowledge and intoxicates you to become divine, the blood which I mingled with my divine nature for your salvation”.

Antonio Rosmini (see Introduction to Philosophy, the section entitled About the Author’s Studies, the subsection entitled, The Concept of Wisdom). He deals with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. In paragraph 95, he provides a list of the steps which take us up to wisdom.
The starting point is the reverential fear of the Lord, and the arrival is the greatest degree of wisdom reached by “very few people who, ascending above all finite things, live enveloped in the infinity of
God. In the contemplation of their mind they communicate reflectively with God, re-immersing in him themselves, and the things that make up the universe, while God re-immerses Himself in them and through them in the things that make up the universe”. The word “re-immersion” seems to indicate transformation to a highest degree of realisation.

Paragraph 96 points to the Incarnate Wisdom, the Word made flesh. Rosmini, together with the reader, goes over the same seven steps or seven gifts, beginning, however, from the top, from the sublime divine exemplar realised and living in Jesus, the Wisdom of God, the perfect and wise man. “God’s wise man was Incarnate Wisdom”.

On 1st October 2018, on the occasion of the Audience of the Pope with the delegates at the General Chapter, together with the Mother General and the Vicar of the Rosminian Sisters of Providence and two Ascribed members, I presented the book, *Introduction to Philosophy*, to Pope Francis, in four languages. The copy I gave him was in Spanish.

*Friday. St. Augustine* develops a very useful exhortation, keeping in mind that “we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3, 2). Our being like Him presupposes a transformation and a growth in our desire to have access to the vision of Him. St. Augustine’s reflection is based on desire: “The whole life of a good Christian is a holy desire. What you desire you cannot see yet. But the desire gives you the capacity, so that when it does happen that you see, you may be fulfilled. Suppose you want to fill some sort of bag, and you know the bulk of what you will be given, you stretch the bag or the sack or the skin or whatever it is. You know how big
the object that you want to put in and you see that the bag is narrow, so you increase its capacity by stretching it. In the same way by delaying the fulfilment of desire God stretches it, by making us desire he expands the soul, and by this expansion he increases its capacity. Then, brothers, let us desire because we are to be filled… This is our life, to be exercised by desire. But we are exercised by holy desire only in so far as we have cut off our longings from the love of the world. I have already pointed out – empty that which is to be filled. You are to be filled with good, pour out the bad”.

**Rosmini**, as we know, dedicated the first Maxim to the holy desire of being dear to God.

**Reflection.** The more we are capable of receiving God, the more we become efficient, because we are full of Him. If we become capable, in the sense of the first Maxim, we become able, that is efficient in performing generously our operations, in the sense of the sixth Maxim.

**Saturday.** The first reading contains the praises of the perfect woman (Prov. 31, 10-31). It is commented by the homily given by **Pius XII** to the newly-married couples, in which the bride is called the radiant sun of the family. “A marriage augurs well when both partners seek the happiness of the other rather than their own”.

| “Create in me, Lord, what you want to make of me”. |
WEEK SEVEN: PREPARATION FOR OUR OWN LENTEN CORRECTION

The first reading is taken from the Book of Ecclesiastes. The stress is on the vanity of all things. The second reading expands and elevates the perspective.

Monday. St. Maximus the Confessor, Abbot: “Charity is a good disposition of the soul, according to which one prefers no creature to the knowledge of God. Happy the man who is able to love all men equally. He that loves God most certainly also loves his neighbour. Such a man cannot keep money, but, God-like, distributes it, giving to each one in need. Not only by the distribution of money is a charitable intention made manifest; no, far rather by the distribution of the word of God and physical service of others. He that has made divine charity his possession has no labour in following after the Lord his God; he bears nobly every hardship, every rebuke and insult, thinking no evil at all of anyone. The work of charity is the intentional doing of good to one’s neighbour and long-suffering and patience; also, the use of things in due measure”.

Don’t we see in the description a portrait of our own Fr Founder?

This day has an additional reading taken from the writings of St. Augustine: “If you do not wish to die, drink love. It is the spring which the Lord provided for us so that we do not become faint along the way, and we shall drink from it abundantly when we reach our country”. “When we speak of mutual love, we must be careful not to confuse it with small-mindedness or with inert passivity. Love is power, which prompt us to correct and to raise others up. Do not
love error, but man. Man is from God, error is from man. Love what has been made by God, not what man has made. If you truly love man, correct him. And even if at times you must show yourself a hard man, do it for the greater good of your neighbour”.

“O my Head, my Life, my God: take charge of all my faculties”.

CONCLUSION.

The quotes taken from the Fathers of the Church strengthen our conviction that we have in Rosmini a great Father, since he has drawn abundantly from their great writings and from their great example. Rosmini himself was fond of saying that he had not invented anything. Instead, he had put into the light the perennial truth. I give you a proof of this. In the first part of my Letter I have already given you Rosmini’s *Spiritual Affections*. Read the following words and see what they say to you.

*O Father, O Son, O Holy Spirit!*

*O Most Blessed Trinity! O Jesus! O Mary!*

*Blessed Angels, and all Saints in Heaven, we beseech you to grant us the graces we ask through the most precious Blood of Jesus Christ:*

1. *To do always the Will of God*
2. *To abide in God*
3. *To think of nothing else but of God*
4. *To love God alone*
5. *To do all things for God*
6. *To become saints for God*
7. To be aware of our own nothingness
8. To know always the Will of our most adorable Lord
9. Mary Most Holy, offer to the eternal Father the most precious Blood of Jesus Christ, for the sake of our soul, for the holy souls in Purgatory, for the needs of Holy Church, for the conversion of sinners and for the whole world.

You could do a research on the identity of the author of these lines. He lived before Rosmini’s time. Rosmini was a humble person and did not mind “copying” from others. He drew much of his teaching from other sources, from other great men. From whom did he copy in this particular case? I will give you the answer in my next Letter.

**PARABLES AND GOOD EXAMPLES**

Transformation demands humility, but not a false humility based on other people’s merits, which steals, so to speak, feathers to the peacock to embellish itself. I would like to add a short story which I heard from Fr Jim Flynn, our Fr General Emeritus, which can help us keep in the right, avoiding making ourselves as big as an elephant.

- A huge elephant was crossing the forest. All the branches of the trees bent as he passed. He arrived at a bridge suspended over the river and he crossed it. As soon as he rested his mighty feet on the other side, he heard a small voice in his enormous ears. It was a small insect, who repeated with great emphasis: “Did you see how we made the bridge roll?” Rosmini did not fall into that kind of illusion. There is a danger
that we might seek for a pedestal to place under our feet, to make ourselves look bigger, higher, more important, more capable than we are.

- Mons. Luigi Bertazzi, bishop emeritus of Ivrea, accepted the invitation to come to Rome for the first Anniversary Mass on 10th December 2018 of the late Mons. Antonio Riboldi, He is the only European Bishop still alive who participated in the Second Vatican Council, and the only one who quoted from Antonio Rosmini during the Council. Besides giving us his precious witness about the work of Mons. Riboldi he also gave us a taste of the cheerful vitality of his spirit. I am pleased to mention one of his lessons on authenticity and humility, under the form of a story. Imagine someone is accompanying a non-Catholic person to Heaven. He shows to this person many large halls in Heaven filled with people from every race, religion, and with people of no religion at all. The person remarks: “Even these people are here in Heaven!” They arrive at a large hall which is, however, closed, but they can hear many voices coming from inside it. The one who accompanies the non-Catholic person says: “Inside this hall you will find all the Catholics. Unfortunately, they believe to be the only ones in Heaven!” It is obviously a parable: I hope no one comes to the conclusion that the only lost sheep are the Catholics.

- Once again, I come back to the theme of the river, in the hope that it will be useful. A certain person received as a gift a piece of land, which was not tilled. Part of the land was full
of stones, another part was arid and dry, another had the basin of a torrent which had caused extensive damage. He decided to transform the land: he planned to have an orchard, a garden, a green patch of grass, and even a little bush. He began by using the stones, being heavier and non-productive, and he built a wall all around, an embankment to channel the water, a couple of little bridges, a storage place, and a farmhouse. Everything else followed spontaneously. It was indeed an excellent transformation.

- Another example comes from the experience of an Ascribed member who is a permanent deacon. I remember how fond he was of saying to a group of young people during the hour of Adoration: “At this point, let us offer to Jesus our commitment to eradicate one defect and to try to gain a virtue. It must be a strong commitment. I give you the example of a shepherd who had to keep safe his flock of sheep. He opened a passage in a very thorny hedge. At the end of his effort, he looked at the scratches in his arms, and he looked at the hole in the hedge, and he realised that through it could pass only the very little lambs. What could the little lambs do without the mother-ewes? He continued in his work until it became possible to move through the hole in the hedge the bigger sheep”.

- A good example of transformation was given by another Ascribed member, who died recently, rewarded, hopefully, with the joy of heaven. She was a teacher. One day, she was asked to take a very unruly class of students. At first, she panicked; soon after, however, she said to herself: “I am a
Rosminian Ascribed, I trust in divine Providence. I shall go the class which has been assigned to me”. She walked in and spoke to the students: “My dear students, whenever I am asked to do something important, I am in the habit of saying a prayer, asking for God’s help with the Our Father.” After that prayer, she never had any problem with those students: she had placed under the protection of God, and she had made them feel important in their own eyes. From her last will, we can detect her spirit of intelligence, which helped her to organise in the best possible way not only her daily routine, but also her properties. In her will, she left the greater part of her goods to a hospital in Brazil, through the services of the founder who was known to her; she left another part to the Institute of Charity, for the work of formation of the religious; and she left other parts to various other people.

THE POPE’S EXHORTATION

It is good to conclude this Letter by quoting from Pope Francis’ exhortation, Gaudete et Exsultate. Precious are his words about transformation, which is the work of God.

In my first Letter I had recommended passages taken from the first 21 numbers. Here you will find other passages.

n. 23. “Allow the Spirit to forge in you the personal mystery that can reflect Jesus Christ in today’s world.”
n. 24. “Let yourself be transformed. Let yourself be renewed by the Spirit”.

n. 25. “You cannot grow in holiness without committing yourself, body and soul, to giving your best to build the kingdom of God”.

n. 26. “It is not healthy to love silence while fleeing interaction with others, to want peace and quiet while avoiding activity, to seek prayer while disdaining service. Everything can be accepted and integrated into our life in this world and become a part of our path to holiness”.

n. 28. “We are challenged to show our commitment in such a way that everything we do has evangelical meaning and identifies us all the more with Jesus Christ”.

n. 31. “We need a spirit of holiness capable of filling both our solitude and our service, our personal life and our evangelizing efforts, so that every moment can be an expression of self-sacrificing love in the Lord’s eyes. In this way, every minute of our lives can be a step along the path to growth in holiness”.

My dear friends, we are at the end of the second part of the annual Christmas Letter. If our transformation is of such great importance for us in the eyes of God during the Ordinary Time of the Year, how much more will it be during the special time of Lent and Easter?

Fr. Vito Nardin