The life of the Blessed Paul of the Cross (Vol 1)

by

Strambi, Bp. of Macerata

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The Saints and Servants of God.

THE LIFE
OF THE
BLESSED PAUL OF THE CROSS,
FOUNDER OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE BAREFOOTED CLERKS OF THE MOST HOLY CROSS AND PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

VOL. I.

"Gaude Maria Virgo, unctus hæreses sola interemisti in universo mundo."—Antiph. Exsultet.

LONDON:
THOMAS RICHARDSON AND SON
172, FLEET ST.; 9, CAPEL ST., DUBLIN; AND DERBY.
M.DCCC.LIII.
We hereby approve and sanction the Series of Lives of the Canonized and Beatified Saints, the Servants of God declared Venerable, and others commonly reputed to have died in the odour of sanctity, now in course of publication by the Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, and we cordially recommend it to the Faithful, as calculated to promote the glory of God and of His Saints, the increase of devotion, and the spread of our holy Religion.

Given at Westminster, the Feast of the Nativity of our B. Lady, A.D. 1851.

[Signature]
TO

THE REGULAR CLERGY

OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ENGLAND,

THE CHILDREN

OF ST. BENEDICT AND ST. BERNARD,

ST. DOMINICK AND ST. FRANCIS,

AND THE SONS

OF THE HOLY IGNATIUS,

THE GREAT MASTER OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

AND THE NURSING-FATHER OF SAINTS AND MARTYRS,

WHO,

IN THE STRAITNESS AND NEGLECT

OF THEIR UNHONOURED CLOISTERS,

OR THE CHEERLESS SOLITUDE

OF THEIR HIRED LODGINGS,

HAVE JOYFULLY EMBRACED THE POVERTY OF JESUS,

AND EARNED BY LOVING ZEAL

THE CROWN OF MARTYRDOM,

AND WHO,

THROUGH SCENES OF AWFUL SACRILEGE,

AND TIMES OF BITTER PERSECUTION,

THROUGH THE LONG AND WEARY VISITATION

OF ACTIVE MALICE OR OF COLD CONTEMPT,

HAVE PERPETUATED,

AMONGST THEIR UNWORTHY COUNTRYMEN,

THE BLESSED LINEAGE

OF THEIR HOLY FOUNDER.

ST. WILFRID'S,

FEAST OF ST. BERNARD,

M.DCCC.XLVII.
PREFACE.

The following Life of the B. Paul, is from the Italian of the Venerable Monsignor Strambi, which is considered a classical work in its own department. It is brought out at the present time, because of the approaching solemnity of the public Beatification. Monsignor Strambi thus prefaces his work:

To write the Lives of the Servants of God is to draw out the character, or to paint in lively colours the portrait of a bright and noble virtue, that may serve for the example and model of copies deeply impressed with similar acts of virtue, in order that those who read them may be encouraged to imitate the servant of God, and by imitating his virtuous and praiseworthy actions, may at last in some way resemble our Lord and Master Jesus Christ Himself, the first and most perfect exemplar of every virtue. In the memorials remaining to us of the Servants of God, in the traces they have left, stamped and imprinted with so much labour and merit in the royal road of perfection, it seems that they are ever repeating, with their whole hearts enflamed with ardent love of the glory of their Lord: "Be ye imitators of me, as I also am of Christ." "Imitatores mei estote, sicut et ego Christi."* No one, then, can

* 1 Cor. iv, 16.
believe, that in this age, amidst the vast mass of useless and pernicious literature now inundating the Christian world, it is unprofitable to write books, which may with greater easiness insinuate in us the practice of true virtue, the most precious treasure of the soul, and draw us more effectually to the imitation of Jesus our Divine Redeemer, of whom every one, desirous of saving his soul, ought to trace within himself a clear and faithful likeness.

As there have now been so many Lives of Servants of God written, it may appear superfluous, or perhaps even tedious, to add a new one to the number. But if it is useful for various writers to publish the virtuous and edifying Life of even one servant of God, in order that, being by different authors, and the saint's actions being written in various styles, each one may suit his own taste by reading the author that pleases him most, and being thus led on according to their particular inclination even those may obtain a share in so great a benefit, who would otherwise be most disinclined to such a course of reading at once so valuable and so full of profit:—Why, is it not an action worthy of praise to write and publish for the first time the Life of a servant of God, whom the Lord in these latter days has raised up in His Church for the edification of all, and the guide of many? Is not this, then, a devout way of following the loving Providence of our Lord to bring into sight these fresh examples of virtue, whom He, by the communication of His Spirit, is continually raising up in Holy Church, ever the fruitful mother of
Christian heroes, and placing as on a lofty mount, the virtue of these really great men, who are in the house of God, as lamps burning, and resplendent to give light to others? Is it not a particular advantage and consolation to souls to set before them a new and secure model of perfection in a servant of God, who has a genius of virtue altogether his own, as much and peculiarly his own, as that of any of the saints and servants of God whose Lives have been hitherto written? For although all the saints have that glorious train of the virtues united to charity, as to their mistress and Queen, and have practised, at various times, one or other of them with great perfection; yet each one, according to the special grace given him by God, has practised them in a manner distinct and different from the rest. Whence, as you will not find two faces exactly alike in every feature, so you will scarcely discover two virtuous and holy souls entirely alike in the same path of virtue, and which have, if I may say so, the same air and features. Well may the Church sing of each one of her holy confessors in the Antiphon, which with sweetest jubilee chants their praises; “Non est inventus similis illi, qui conservaret legem excelsi.”* If, then, every one has a peculiar and distinct way of practising virtue and adorning himself, as in a richly embroidered vestment, with holy perfection, it will certainly be a great consolation to souls who are in the pursuit of virtue, and are making, in union with God, the acquisition of holy perfection, to be able to discern

* V. D. Thom. 1. 2. qu. lxvi, art. 2. ad 12. S. Fran. di Sales, Tratt. dell’amor di Dio, par. II. l. I. c. 7.
and distinguish amongst these noble exemplars of virtue, by selecting that one who is most conformed to their own spirit and inclination. It will therefore be better for those who profess the same institute and manner of living, consecrated to intimate conversation with God, and the salvation of their neighbour, as this our servant of the Lord, to profit by this, and closely follow his footsteps, by copying and tracing in themselves from Him, rather than from others, those beautiful features which may form a picture so complete and graceful as to engage even the love of God Himself. These are the motives which have induced us to present our readers the Life of the Ven. F. Paul of the Cross.

This servant of the Lord was a man of the most sublime prayer and union with God, of the most lively zeal in the salvation of souls, and of the utmost tenderness, compassion, and love, in contemplating the bitter passion and most cruel death of our Divine Redeemer, into whom he was truly transformed by love. He lived the whole time he was on this earth truly as a pilgrim, detached from everything, or rather as disgusted with this exile, which he looked upon with compassion and contempt. He kept his heart in heaven, where he desired to hold an uninterrupted conversation. The vanity of this world obscured not that clear and penetrating ray of the loving faith which was always his guide, and which rather, by passing from one communication of light and love to another, made him taste of the truth of the faith, with extreme tranquillity, safety, and sweetness. Admirable were the
discourses he made us, all full of penetration, life, and efficacy. When he spoke, God alone was on his lips, and when he was silent divine love seemed to be breathed forth from him. So great was the abundance of charity diffused through his spirit, that, wherever he was, he always took delight in his Best-beloved alone. Forsaking his country, parents, and father's house, he undertook long and disastrous journeys, he gave himself up to the most austere rule of penance, more admirable than imitable; and in the midst of the greatest difficulties, opposition, persecution, calumny, and contempt, he undertook, regardless of fatigue and toil, to execute the design of a new congregation, inspired him by God. He knew no other rule of acting but the most holy will of God; he loved nothing, he desired and saw nothing in anything but God alone. An enemy to his last moments of that worldly prudence condemned by St. Paul, he travelled on with the simplicity of a dove, but not without due regard to that true prudence, which is in accordance with the heart of God, and comes from God Himself, the author of all virtue. Exterior occupations, and they were many and difficult, deprived him not of that interior solitude, where in the sanctuary of his heart he enjoyed God, or sought lovingly and eagerly for God alone.

Because of the favour he found in His sight, God put him to the severest and most difficult proofs of his virtue: a long and grievous illness, the malignity, calumny, and treachery of man: dreadful and frequent vexations from evil spirits, internal abandonments, horrible desolations, crosses, and the most terrible mental agony. In the midst of all these
troubles, which from all sides impetuously as a furious tempest raged against his soul, and in their bitterness penetrated its inmost depth, the servant of God always seemed entirely resigned and constant in the fulfilment of the Divine will. It was a marvellous thing to see him, in such distress himself, comfort and console, with an admirable and almost miraculous efficacy, those who ran to him for direction, aid, and consolation, in paths the most hazardous in the spiritual journey. But above all was it edifying to see that the servant of God, possessing the most rare and precious gifts of the sublimest virtue, and intimate conversation with God, had an esteem of himself the most lowly and most abject that can be imagined. In fine, in this blessed soul were united all humility, simplicity, and union of spirit with God. Oh, how delightful was it to hear him speak of God, and of perfection; the terms he used were so appropriate and intelligible, that without any difficulty, he made all comprehend ideas the most subtle and profound, and in such a way that any one could easily perceive that God had given him the peculiar grace of speaking aptly on subjects the most sacred and venerable. His mode of conducting souls was full of tenderness and compassion, sweetness and long-suffering. Whence the most inveterate sinners, hearing the good news from others, were encouraged to go to him to get cured of their noisome wounds. His virtue was not of the terrible and austere kind, but gentle, courteous, and full of sweetness. His conversation was joyous, cheerful, and most simple. He avoided the slightest appearance of sadness, or that
gravity which might make him an object of admiration, as far as his exterior only was concerned; but sweetly, affably, and most heartily did he talk of God, and the things of the Spirit, and he understood so well and so naturally how to enliven his discourse that every one remained at the same time edified and contented.

To so many gifts of grace, the Lord bountifully united many and various gifts of nature, by granting him a lively, penetrating, and universal genius, a memory as happy in retaining as in learning, a heart magnanimous, generous, and ready for any great undertaking, a bearing modest and devout; whence it seemed that the Lord, as is generally His way, had left nothing out that might tend to the perfection of this work which His omnipotent hand had designed for His glory. Whatever we here say, will be admitted on reading this history, which we have undertaken to write. And the picture we here present, is but a sketch of the ordinary and every-day course of the virtues and gifts God had imparted to him, as the reader will easily perceive on glancing through these pages, which are formed and composed simply on the notices deposited on solemn oath, in the processes, with the addition of a few other things which, having seen with our own eyes, we have a full and secure certainty of; whence any person of good sense may safely believe what he here reads, everthing being sustained by certain and indisputable facts.

No one who has the Lord's spirit, or possesses true doctrine with some degree of Christian humility, will be surprised when he reads in this life, of
the sublimest graces, united to an innocent and peni-
tential life, and admirable virtue, because he knows
well that the loving Right Hand of the Most High,
which has continually formed in His Church perfect
and holy souls, is and will always be admirable in
its illimitable and infinite powers. But if any one,
full of the spirit of the world, refuses to believe
anything, because not having experienced it in his
own person, he therefore cannot imagine it in others,
let him remember, that our God, because He is in-
finitive Goodness, performs a work most worthy of
Himself, whenever He communicates Himself so
lovingly to a soul, whom He has created in His own
image and likeness, and redeemed with the precious
blood of His own only begotten Son; it is no won-
der, however, that the man who lives in obedience
to his senses, understands not the sovereign riches
of the Spirit of God, a Lord, always great, liberal,
and munificent in His holy works.

The fruit, which is expected from whoever reads
this history in a spirit free from prepossession and
prejudice, ever a hindrance to embracing truth, will
more than justify the design, and console the desire
of him who undertook it, to fulfil the most Holy
Will of God, on whom be benediction, honour, and
glory, for ever and ever.

So far Mgr. Strambi.—Our readers will be glad
to have a faithful translation of the Pope’s brief
for the Beatification.

PIUS IX. POPE.

FOR THE FUTURE MEMORY OF THE THING.

There is nothing which is more suitable, and fit
to enkindle in souls the fire of divine love, and to bring men back to the way of justice, from which they have miserably strayed, than the constant meditation of those most bitter torments, which Christ our Lord suffered for the salvation of men, having been made obedient for us unto death, even to the death of the cross. This remembrance of the passion of our Lord, as just as it is salutary, the Ven. servant of God, Paul of the Cross, Founder of the new Congregation of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, endeavoured to excite among men, desiring both for himself and his children no other knowledge but that of Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, while by the splendour of his eminent virtues and by his apostolic labours, he shed lustre on the Catholic Church. Born at Ovada, a town in the diocese of Aix, in the year 1694, from his very childhood he gave sure and brilliant indications of his future sanctity; for showing an aversion to the amusements and delights, with which children are ordinarily captivated, he took delight in giving himself to prayer, in obeying his parents, in giving alms to the poor, in fasting, and in meditating continually on the sufferings of Christ in His Passion. He passed his youth in exercises, and literary studies, shining out among his fellows as a bright example of all virtues, and especially of continence, from the observance of which neither the offer of a most honourable marriage, nor that of a very rich inheritance, could withdraw him. Thus making noble advances in the way of perfection; and inflamed with a desire of promoting the glory of God, he thought of instituting a
new religious society, which might at once be a defence to the Church, and exert all its strength for the salvation of souls. With the consent, therefore, of the Bishop of Alexandria, whom he had for his director, he put on a mean dress of black, to which he fastened the emblems of our Lord's Passion, and with bare feet and uncovered head sought the retirement of a narrow cell, where, severely tormenting himself in all his members, he prepared himself by the exercise of every kind of virtue, and by assiduous prayer, to draw up the rules of the new society. When he had finished them he went to Rome, to obtain the approbation of them from the Apostolic See; but he left it without effecting his purpose, and retired to Monte Argentario with his brother, and lived there with him for two consecutive years, devoting himself assiduously, amid his austerities, to the study of the Holy Scriptures. From Monte Argentario he removed to Gaeta, where both by word and example he excited the faithful to enter upon the path of virtue. Having returned to Rome to obtain the approbation of his rules, he exhibited in that city such illustrious proofs of sanctity, that he was promoted to the sacred order of Priesthood by Benedict XIII. himself, who then held the Apostolic See, together with his brother the imitator of his virtues, and also deserved to receive from Clement XII., who succeeded Benedict XIII. in the Sovereign Pontificate, the office of Missionary Apostolic by letters in the form of Brief. He then again retired to Monte Argentario, and there, though the rule was not as yet approved, he built the first house of the new Congregation in the year 1737;
and at length he obtained from Benedict XIV. the confirmation, by Apostolic authority, of the rule which he had drawn up; which rule, having been once or twice slightly altered by the venerable founder, as it had seemed expedient, was ratified and confirmed, first by Clement XIV., and afterwards by Pius VI. There were not wanting illustrious men who embraced the new institute, and by the power of Divine Grace, the religious society began to increase, and spread itself, and the venerable servant of God, though against his will, was by common suffrage elected Provost-General. In this office he outstripped his companions in his ardour for suffering and prayer, in humility of heart, love of poverty, charity to God and his neighbour, and in a word in all virtues, and in observance of regular discipline; and thus by his example he spurred them on, as it were, to run with alacrity along the way of perfection. Although he was continually occupied with the cares of governing his religious society, and of founding everywhere new houses for it, yet he never left off preaching the word of God, burning as he did with a wondrous desire of the salvation of souls. He set on foot, therefore, sacred missions, and traversed many dioceses, inveighing with such zeal against the prevailing licentiousness, that an immense multitude of men lost in sin were brought to a sense of the shamefulness of their past lives, and converted to a mode of life becoming their Christian profession. Weakened as he was by his Apostolic labours, he never, even to his last hour, remitted anything of his austere manner of life, so that, worn out as much by austerities as by old age, he fell into
PREFACE.

a severe sickness, and joyfully ended his days at Rome, on the 18th of October, 1775. The fame of his sanctity, which had spread far and wide during his life, increased still more after his death, and a judicial enquiry into his virtues, as is usual, having been instituted, Pius VII., our predecessor, of glorious memory, on the 18th of February, 1821, by a solemn decree, pronounced that they had reached the heroic degree. A consultation was next held upon the miracles which were said to have been wrought by God, at his intercession, to manifest his eminent virtue; and we, having received the votes of the consultors, and the opinions of the Cardinals of the congregation of Sacred Rites, declared that two of those miracles were true ones, approving the first of them on the 25th of February, 1851, and the other on the 2nd of August of the current year 1852. Finally, on the 24th of August of the current year, the Cardinals appointed to take cognizance of Sacred Rites were assembled in our presence, and having received the votes of the consultors, were unanimously of opinion that the venerable servant of God, Paul of the Cross, might be declared Blessed whenever it should seem good to us, with all the usual indults, until his solemn canonization be celebrated. We, therefore, moved by the prayers of the whole congregation of Discalced Clerks of the most holy Cross and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the opinion, and with the consent, of the aforesaid Cardinals, by our Apostolic authority give permission, by virtue of these letters, for the aforesaid servant of God, Paul of the Cross, Priest, and Founder of the congregation of Discalced Clerks of the most holy Cross
and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, to be in future honoured with the title of Blessed, and for his body and relics, or remains, to be exposed to the public veneration of the faithful, though not so as to be borne in solemn processions. Moreover by the same authority we grant permission that his Office and Mass may be annually recited from the common of a Confessor not a Bishop, with proper prayers approved by us, according to the Rubrics of the Roman Missal and Breviary. This office, however, we only permit to be recited in Rome and its district, as well as in all Churches, in which the congregation of the most holy Cross and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, or the Nuns of that institute are established, by all the faithful, both secular and regular, who are bound to recite the Canonical Hours on the 16th day of November; and with respect to Masses, by all Priests who go to those Churches in which the feast is celebrated. Lastly, we grant that in the first year from the date of these letters, the solemnities of the beatification of the servant of God, Paul of the Cross, may be celebrated in the above-mentioned Churches of the city and of the congregation, with Office and Masses of the rite of a greater double; and we command this to be done on a day to be appointed by the Ordinary, and after the said solemnities have been performed according to custom in the Vatican Basilica. All apostolical constitutions and orders, all decrees prohibiting worship, and all other things to the contrary notwithstanding. We desire also that copies, though printed, of these letters, provided they be signed by the secretary
of the above-mentioned congregation of Sacred Rites, and authenticated by the seal of the Prefect, may have the very same credit given to them, even in judicial investigation, as would be given to the signification of our will by the production of these very letters.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the seal of the Fisherman, the 1st day of October, 1852, the seventh year of our Pontificate.

A. CARD. LAMBRUSCHINI.

In the place + of the seal.

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Romana seu Alexandrina et Aquen.

OF THE BEATIFICATION AND CANONIZATION OF THE VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD,

FATHER PAUL OF THE CROSS,

PROFESSED PRIEST AND FOUNDER OF THE CONGREGATION OF DISCALCED CLERKS OF THE MOST HOLY CROSS AND PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

---

COLLECT.

O Lord Jesus Christ, who hast chosen the Blessed Paul to honour the mysteries of Thy Passion, and to incite us to remember it, and hast through him gathered together a new family in Thy Church; mercifully grant, that walking in his footsteps, we may deserve to reap the fruit of the same Passion. Who livest and reignest, &c.

SECRET.

May that Holy Spirit inflame us, O Lord, as we offer this sacrifice to Thee, by whom Thou didst for-
tify the Blessed Confessor, Paul, for glorious con-
flicts, in order to propagate in the hearts of the
faithful the memory of Thy Passion. Who livest
and reignest in the unity of the same spirit, &c.

POSTCOMMUNION.

We have received, O Lord, the heavenly Sacra-
ment the perpetual memorial of Thy Passion, and
we suppliantly beseech Thee, that by the merits and
example of the Blessed Confessor Paul, we may
draw waters in joy from Thy fountains, and the
memory of Thy Passion may remain ever in our
hearts. Who livest, &c.

DECREE.

Since, according to ancient custom and the prac-
tice of the Congregation of Sacred Rites, in the
apostolic letter shortly to be expedited in the form
of brief for the formal beatification of the venerable
servant of God Father Paul of the Cross, professed
priest and Founder of the Congregation of Discalced
Clerks of the most holy Cross and Passion of our
Lord Jesus Christ, there ought to be inserted pro-
per prayers in honour of the beatified, to be recited
in the Office and Mass de Communi by all those
to whom permission for this purpose is granted in the
above-named Brief. Our most holy Lord Pope Pius
IX., the Supreme Pontiff, at the most humble prayers
of the Rev. F. Antony of St. James, General Pro-
vost of the said Congregation and Postulator of
the Cause, laid before him by me, the undersigned
Pro-secretary of the same Congregation of Sacred
Rites, has now, by word of mouth approved the
above proper prayers in honour of the B. Paul, after
they had first, by His Holiness's command, been dili-
gently revised according to custom, and has allowed
them to be recited by all, to whom the Office and
Mass of the beatified have been | granted, as soon
as the formal beatification shall have been com-
pleted. 8th day of September, 1852.

A. C. LAMBRUSCHINI, Pref. C. S. R.

In the place ± of the Seal.

DOM. GIGLI, Pro-secretary, C. S. R.

In all things it agrees with the original. Wit-
tnessed by me at the Segretaria of the Congregation
of Sacred Rites, 20th of October, 1852.

DOM. GIGLI, Pro-secretary, C. S. R.

In the place ± of the Seal.

London,
The Oratory,
The Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas,
M.DCCC.LIII.
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THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED PAUL OF THE CROSS.
INTRODUCTION,

BY THE LATE

FATHER DOMINIC, OF THE MOTHER OF GOD,
PASSIONIST.

The following Life of the venerable Father Paul of the Cross, founder of the Congregation of Passionists, was written originally in Italian, by another venerable servant of God, Father Vincent of St. Paul, at that time a religious of the same congregation, but afterwards better known under his secular name, as Monsignor Strambi, bishop of Macerata and Tolentino, and since his death declared venerable by the Holy See. He was a man celebrated for his learning, zeal, and piety; beloved by all good Christians of his time, especially by Pope Leo XII., who called him in his old age from Macerata to Rome, that he might give him help and light in the government of the universal Church. It is believed that this good bishop, Monsignor Strambi, on occasion of this Pope falling dangerously ill, offered his own life as a sacrifice to God for the preservation of that of the holy father, and died of an apoplectic seizure a few days after the offering had been made, while the Pope was recovering from his attack. The virtues and great actions of this holy bishop,
will be better known in this country, when his life, which has been published in Italian, is translated, as it will be, into English. This short notice will suffice to let our reader know something of the author of the Life which is now presented to him; and we have introduced it, as we think that the work itself will acquire new merit and value in his eyes, from a knowledge of the merits of the writer. None but a saint is qualified to draw the picture of a saint. It required a soul full of divine unction and of the love of God, such as that of the venerable Monsignor Strambi, to enable him to give to the Life of the venerable Father Paul, that captivating sweetness and warmth, that touching and instructive character which ought to distinguish it, and which will be seen throughout the following pages. This work may be considered, not only as the history of a single holy man, but also as a school of holiness, as an emporium, wherein will be found collected whatever may conduce to the instruction and edification of every one who reads it; but, especially whatever may be reckoned necessary to form a skilful guide of souls, one capable of training them to the highest degree of perfection and sanctity. There is no virtue requisite for a soul, which aspires to perfection, of which this life does not furnish a pattern and a rule. The venerable Father Paul, as he was himself a model of all heroic virtues, so was he an eminent guide to others in the same path, which he himself trod; and no one was better qualified than Monsignor Strambi, as a skilful judge, to apprehend perfectly
the various beauties of his character, and to dispose and arrange them in the best form for instruction. From this consideration, the pious and accomplished Editor of this Life, relinquished the idea which he at first entertained, of omitting or abridging certain parts of it for the sake of brevity. After mature reflection, he determined to give it entire; considering that we have but few books in the English language for the guidance of those who are engaged in the spiritual direction of souls, and that this collection, which will be found here of the admirable instructions given by the venerable Father Paul to various persons, would be of the greatest use in this respect.

Having said thus much of the Life of which a translation is here given, and of its author, we think it well to add some account of the Congregation of the most Holy Cross and Passion of our Lord, established by the venerable Father Paul of the Cross, of its rules, its spirit, its establishment in Italy and in some other parts of the world, but especially here in England.

It would be superfluous to say anything in this preface of the first establishment of the congregation in Italy, as the reader will find some account of this in the Life of the venerable founder itself. Between the year 1775, which was the time of his death and the year 1810, several houses or "ritiri," (retreats) as they are called, were opened in Italy; but at the time of the French revolution, that impetuous torrent swept them all away. Religious orders were suppressed
by order of Napoleon, who was then despot of Europe wherever his power extended; and, for the poor Passionists, who had no houses out of Italy, this suppression was total, as the whole of that country was under his tyrannical sway. But in the year 1814, the arm of God reached that proud man and brought him low; while the object of his persecution, Pius VII., was, to the joy of all good men, brought back to the possession of his rights; all the powers of Europe, Catholic or Protestant, contributing to the work. It is well known that our English government played a distinguished part in his restoration. After his happy return to Rome, Pius VII. began to consider how he might best repair the immense losses which the Church had suffered in the late persecution; and one of the measures which appeared to his enlightened mind to be of the greatest importance, was the speedy restoration of the religious orders. It is to us a most interesting fact, that the first of these which attracted his attention, was the Congregation of the Passionists, although it was the smallest of all. The Passionists were the first to enjoy the singular happiness of putting on once more their religious habit, and to fill with joy the hearts of all the devout people of Italy, by the sight of it. The date of this bright event was the 16th of June, 1814. The ten religious of our body, who happened to be then in Rome, were quickly assembled in their former house of SS. John and Paul, and took immediate measures for gathering again together their dispersed brethren. The whole number
INTRODUCTION.

was not great; several of the ancient members had died since their separation, and some did not return to the congregation, so that at the first they had not sufficient subjects to open all the former houses: but after a while, not only this was effected, but new ones also were founded in the kingdoms of Naples and Sardinia, in Tuscany, and elsewhere; but what must interest us the most, is their establishment here in England. This kingdom had, from the first, been one of the principal objects of interest to the congregation. The venerable founder, full of the Spirit of God, like all God’s faithful servants, was continually praying for the salvation of all mankind: but England always was the country of his predilection. It might almost appear to those who knew him well, as if he had no heart, no feeling but for England. England was always in his thoughts; England was constantly the subject of his discourse; England was always before him in his prayers. For the space of not less than fifty years, he prayed for England without intermission, as will be seen in his Life.

It is a wonderful phenomenon that he should have persevered thus long, in one prayer, though he never could have seen the semblance of any fruit from it. In fact, he died before any visible encouragement of hope for England had been granted. From all outward appearances, he might conclude that his prayer was rejected; and some might say, if his prayer was offered in a right way, how is this to be reconciled with the promises of our Lord; “omni potenti dabitur.” “Petite et
accipietis, &c.?" We shall find no difficulty in explaining this, if we remember that He who said "ask and you shall receive," did not say you shall receive as soon as you begin to ask, or in answer to your first prayer: it is enough to make the promise good, that the grace be given at some time, when it will but please Almighty God. Although the venerable Father left this world without having seen any effect produced by his prayers for England, he now sees very cheering effects already brought about by them. But even during his life, he was not left wholly without encouragement. It is related that Almighty God, to shew him that these his prayers were acceptable in His sight, and to move him to perseverance in them, shewed him the effects of them in a vision. This fact was thus related by the confessor of the venerable Father. One day, whilst he was celebrating mass in one of our Churches situated in the Diocese of Viterbo, under the invocation of St. Michael the Archangel, in Monte Fogliano, he remained longer than usual at the altar, and stood motionless at the time of communion for about half an hour. During this long time, he was observed by Father Giannmaria of S. Ignatius, his confessor, with a face radiant and full of heavenly light. After the mass was over, the same Father Giannmaria said to the venerable Father, in a playful manner: "Questa mattina è piovuto bene; è vero?" "This morning, there fell a good shower of rain, did there not?" This was a phrase, very familiar to the venerable servant of God, to express an abundance of divine unction, or other heavenly favours in prayer. The
face of the venerable Father Paul was covered with
blushes, and with tears in his eyes, and his voice
broken by sobs, he said; "Oh! what have I seen
this morning! My children, the Passionists, in
England! My children in England!!" His con-
fessor was anxious to hear something more from
him upon the subject; but he could obtain no
answer but this: "I miei figli in Inghilterra!"
"My children in England!" We may presume
that some farther particulars were communicated
to him on that occasion to console him and strength-
en his hope for the conversion of this realm, so
dear to his heart; however this was, it is quite
sure that he went on to the end incessantly pray-
ing for the welfare of this country, and never could
lose sight of it; as he used to say of himself: It
would be impossible for me to abstain from pray-
ing for England; because, as soon as I kneel down
to pray, England comes before my eyes. May we
not indulge the thought, that at these times not
only was England before him, but also those of his
children, who were to be the first to land on these
coasts, and those who should embrace his institute
in this kingdom; their sufferings, their labours
and all which concerned them? I think we may;
at least, I am confident that Almighty God now
permits him to know their state, and what is more
interesting for them, that he prays for them now
in heaven with more fervour and efficacy than he
did or could do while he lived on earth.

It appears that Almighty God granted to His
beloved and faithful servant another grace not
less precious, which is, that all his spiritual chil-
dren have inherited from him a love for England, and an ardent desire to see this country reconciled to the Catholic Church, and to spend their own lives, if they are permitted, on this great achievement: for I am convinced that there is not a Passionist, who does not feel interested in it, and who does not endeavour to inspire others with the like feeling, exciting them to pray for England’s conversion. We might look upon this as a kind of appendage to the religious vocation to our congregation. May God grant us to see some good fruits arising from this happy tendency. It seems that, many years ago, these feelings had already met with a sympathetic chord in England itself. Long before there appeared any probability of the thing being accomplished, some zealous souls in England had expressed their desire of having Passionists among them. I remember being told that the Chevalier Drak, who, from the Jewish profession had entered the Catholic Church, once called at SS. John and Paul, when he was at Rome, more than fifteen years ago, and said that the first time that he had heard the name of Passionists was in England, and that an impression existed among many people that the Passionists were to contribute to the conversion of England. Before that period I have heard of another more distinguished person having been interested about bringing the Passionists to England. This was Dr. Milner, late vicar apostolic of the Midland District, a man so well known to the world, for his zeal and his literary exertions in the cause of religion. He
was at Rome for some affairs of his district, about thirty years ago, and made an application to the Very Rev. Father Tommaso dell' Incarnata Sapienza, then General of the Passionists, to give him some of his religious for England. The good general was not able to comply with his request, having no subjects fit for this mission. Dr. Milner, however, though he could no longer entertain the hope of seeing Passionists in England during his lifetime, seems to have been confident that they would come at no very distant period; and by the way in which he spoke on the subject, one might suppose that he had even received some supernatural intimation of the event. There is a nun still living in the Central District, to whom he said: “I am old, and shall not live so long as to see Passionists in England; but you are young, and before you die you will have this consolation.”

It was a subject of great astonishment to Father Dominic, the first of the congregation who ever did land in England, on his being called to give a retreat in the convent to which this nun belongs, to be thus accosted by her: “Father, how long have I been expecting you!” “How so?” said he; “did you know anything of me?” “No,” she replied, “I did not know you; but when I was young, Dr. Milner told me that before my death I should see Passionists in England.”

Whatever view be taken of these previous circumstances, the settlement of the Passionists in England has been happily brought about. The first movement towards this event took place in the year 1830. Father Dominic, the present provin-
cial of the order in England, was lector or teacher of theology in the Ritiro of SS. John and Paul at Rome, and in this year first made acquaintance with Englishmen, although for many years previously he had been inspired with the like ardent love for England as had filled the breast of our venerable founder, and with a constant desire of devoting himself to labour for its good; which desire he always firmly believed Almighty God would one day gratify, though he could not see in what manner this would be accomplished. He declared those feelings to his new friends, among whom were the Hon. and Rev. George Spencer, who had but lately been received into the Church, and Mr. Ambrose Lisle Phillipps, of Grace Dieu Manor. They had much conversation together on the subject of bringing the Passionists to England, and afterwards kept up a correspondence with this view for several years, although for the time nothing could be concluded.

In the year 1839 Monsignor Acton (afterwards Cardinal) presented by the hands of Father Dominic a memorial to a general chapter of the congregation, asking for an establishment of Passionists in England. The general chapter acquiesced, and the long-desired event appeared now on the eve of its accomplishment; but new unforeseen difficulties interposed, and the plan was frustrated. In the following year, however, a foundation was offered in Belgium, in the diocese of Tournay, by way of a step towards England, and was accepted, four religious being appointed for it. Father Dominic was not comprehended in the number. He
said pleasantly, "I am not chosen by men, but if God has chosen me it is enough; I shall go." So it happened; for one of those who had been named, and the one who was to be the superior of the new establishment, began to feel discouraged with the thought of having to learn a new language in his old age, and of other difficulties, and he therefore begging to decline the undertaking. Father Dominic was in fact nominated in his place, and came to Belgium with his companions. It was a few months after this that Dr. Wiseman was consecrated Bishop, and appointed Coadjutor to the Right Rev. Dr. Walsh, Vicar Apostolic of the Central District. As soon as he was come to England from Rome, he invited Father Dominic to visit him, in order to make arrangements for a foundation in England. This first visit led to no conclusion; but in the course of a year he returned with a companion, and by the favour of these two prelates was at length put happily into possession of the house of Aston Hall, near Stone, in Staffordshire, where he opened a novitiate. For a considerable time, as may be supposed, he had to contend with great difficulties, from his ignorance of the English language, but gradually these were overcome, and about four years ago he began to go out in every direction giving missions and retreats, which he and some of his brethren have continued since without interruption. In 1846 a second establishment of Passionists was formed in Gloucestershire, under the patronage of William Leigh, Esq., a recent convert, who is engaged in building for them a church and house. For this
advantage also they are indebted solely to Dr. Wiseman, who recommended them to Mr. Leigh, and whom, therefore, they must regard as the chief instrument for their introduction and establishment in England. I need not say, that all the religious of this congregation will entertain, as they are bound to do, an eternal gratitude to this eminent prelate, whose learning, zeal, and charity have gained him the veneration of the whole Catholic Church. May he receive an abundant reward from Almighty God.

The house and chapel of Aston Hall are not, in their present state, fit for a community such as we would wish to see assembled at the mother house of the congregation in England, especially as the novitiate is established here; but by the help of God and the charity of many pious English Catholics, a new church has been begun, and is well advanced towards its completion; and it is intended also to build a new convenient house adjoining to it. As Almighty God has thus far assisted the congregation in this difficult undertaking of building a church and house, it is hoped He will further bless them by sending them many good and zealous young men to join them in working for His honour and glory for the conversion of England.

Having now given this brief narrative of the establishment of the Passionists in this country, we will go on to give some account of the end and spirit of the institute itself, and of the manner of life pursued in it. We shall not enter on the circumstances under which it was