

GASPAR DEL BUFALO

AS I KNEW HIM

Deposition of

St. Vincent Pallotti

at the Ordinary Process in Albano

for the Beatification and Canonization

of

ST. GASPAR DEL BUFALO

founder of

the Missionaries of the most Precious Blood

under the care of

Fr. Beniamino Conti

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[With the approval of the Superiors]

PREFACE

We are publishing, in its entirety, the deposition of St. Vincent Pallotti (Rome, April 21, 1795 - January 22, 1850), the founder of the Società dell' Apostolato Cattolico, delivered during the summer of 1841 at the ordinary process held in Albano for the cause of the beatification and canonization of St. Gaspar del Bufalo (Rome, January 6, 1786 - December 28, 1837).

Previously, in a summary of the informative process printed in 1551, only a few citations from it were published. Since that summarization gathered together citations from various depositions according to set topics, it was impossible to get its full organic structure as well as the originality of Pallotti's deposition, as it included other testimonies.

In 1937, under the direction of Fr. John Hettenkofer, &~C, the postulator for the beatification of Pallotti, a small volume, *Nemorie biografiche scritte o dettate dal Ven. Vincenzo Pallotti*, was published. In it, together with other depositions given by Pallotti, all of the citations of his deposition at St. Gaspar's process, printed in the summary made in 1851, were gathered together. In that small volume, apart from lacking the entire deposition (perhaps only about half of it is presented), the principal lacuna is the arbitrary arrangement of the topics treated. This does not allow one to see the masterful structure of Pallotti's deposition. That lacuna became evidently clearer after I read the original manuscript of the deposition.

The idea of publishing Pallotti's deposition in its entirety came to me at the time that I handled the printing of the deposition of the Venerable Fr. Giovanni Merlini, namely, *Gaspare Del Bufalo. un santo scruta Un santo*. Roma-Albano 1884. Unfortunately, various circumstances at that time prevented me from bringing it to reality. Recently, however, it came to the forefront again quite vividly when, in preparing a work on the Blood of Christ, I made use of Pallotti's deposition which I found to be very precise and exhaustive. Likewise, encouraged by the very authentic judgment of my confrere, Fr. Luigi Contegiacomo, a profound Gasparian scholar, I proceeded, at the beginning of this month, to take the first steps to make the transcription of that manuscript available. I oversaw its redaction while adhering to the twofold criterion: fidelity to the original manuscript and legibility suitable to today's readers.

The reasons for regarding his testimony as very important are many. Above all, in accordance with the official characterization of his deposition at the process, he was "very, very well acquainted" with St. Gaspar and therefore was able to state many things. Since, while making his deposition, he used the phrase "as I knew him" so often, I have selected that as the sub-title of this volume.

Pallotti's deposition has no particular value in providing information concerning Gaspar's external activities. That is given to us quite abundantly in the depositions of other people. The information concerning Gaspar's life that Pallotti provides is easily reducible to a few principal elements: a Roman priest, deported, an apostle in Rome, a Missionary, founder of the Congregation of Missionaries of the most Precious Blood, propagator of the devotion to the Blood of Christ. These biographical items are continuously represented and examined under different aspects. However, since Pallotti had with Gaspar a relationship of cordial friendship for some twenty years during which, especially in Gaspar's final mortal illness, he served as his confessor, in his deposition he brings us principally to a knowledge of Gaspar's interior life. As a result, I was tempted to give this volume the sub-title: *an X-ray of a saint*; indeed, in bringing us to a knowledge of Gaspar's sanctity, he is likewise indirectly making us aware of his own sanctity. I would have liked to have used another title, namely, *Two Roman saints face to face*. As a matter of fact, anyone who is acquainted with the life of St. Gaspar and St. Vincent could easily point out that, even though they were diverse in character, they have very many

convergent biographical points: both were Romans and contemporaries (only a difference of nine years in age); both were apostles during the same historical period of restoration (Gaspar worked more outside of Rome than in Rome, while Pallotti worked more in Rome than outside); both were founders of a society of apostolic life; both were animated by a missionary zeal; both nourished almost at the same font of spirituality; both died quite young because neither would spare himself any work "for the glory of God and the salvation of souls" etc. To verify these differences-likenesses, all one has to do is read what Pallotti says about Gaspar in May of 1818, a few days before his own ordination to the priesthood, as he wrote in letters to him; we have included those letters in the Appendix.

But this is surely not the fundamental characteristic of Pallotti's deposition because Merlini likewise presents an excellent portrait of Gaspar's sanctity in addition to indirectly portraying his own sanctity. The particular quality that Pallotti's deposition has lies in this: he offers us a profound and systematic analysis of Gaspar's sanctity, even apart from the examination that is ordinarily made in causes for beatification and canonization, the theological virtues (faith, hope and charity), the cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude) and pertinent adjuncts, in such a way that the result is viewed almost as an ascetical treatise; a glance at the General Index would confirm this. Because of that, and also spurred on by a spiritual writing of Pallotti entitled *Trattato della perfezione cristiana*, based on a study of those same virtues (were these themes developed in view of the process held for "the Servant of God" Gaspar Del Bufalo?) I got the urge to use even another sub-title: *applied Christian perfection* for in his deposition Pallotti reveals his great ability as a masterful spiritual director both in theory and in practice.

Indeed, there is no doubt at all about his abilities as a spiritual director, a thing that was highly treasured and sought after in the Rome of his time. The greater part of the young clergy, both Roman and foreign, other priests, nuns and male religious as well as the laity found in Pallotti a testimonial witness to sanctity, an inspirational spiritual director. Thus, Fr. Giuseppe De Luca wrote the following about Pallotti: "he has been definitely numbered among the most recent and highly regarded educators for the Roman clergy in the past century". He adds that his is a sanctity "in both the practical and theoretical order, an ascetical formation based on graces and mystical illuminations properly so-called".

All of this appears clearly in Pallotti's deposition. Its integral publication is not only a further testimony to Gaspar's sanctity, but also a better recognition of Pallotti as a masterful spiritual director.

For the spiritual heirs of these two saints, what remains for them to do is to enlist themselves in their school. St. Gaspar and St. Vincent satisfy fully the needs of the contemporary individual who, as Paul VI wrote, "should more willingly listen to the testimonies rather than the masters or that the masters are to be heeded because they have given witness". These two saints, pearls of the Roman clergy, were and continue to be great masters of spirituality.

We hope that this publication will be effective in producing for them a further diligent scholar.

Rome, April 21, 1988 Birthday of St. Vincent Pallotti