

MARIA VALTORTA READERS GROUP

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BULLETIN No.109 - MARCH 2023

'Lord, I do not ask You for the glory of Your visions, but for the grace to love You more and more.' (*Notebooks 1944*, p. 439)

'Publish this work as it is... whoever reads it will understand...'
– Pope Pius XII



PRAYING WITH MARIA VALTORTA

King with the crown of thorns, may your martyrdom of love be for us the Love that helps us. With your pierced Hands, open for us your treasure of Grace and graces. Come to us with your wounded Feet, sanctify the Earth with the blood that drips from your Wounds: jewels from your regalia as Redeemer. Open our hearts to love with the flame of your Heart which opened for us.

(*The Little Notebooks p. 50*)

MARIA VALTORTA'S MISSION

Jesus says: 'Do you know what you are doing by writing? My Will. The will for the mission I want you to perform. *Even if a single soul, one alone, were to find the way through this effort of yours willed by Me, the exertion, which to human sight seems inhuman, would be justified.*'

(*Notebooks 1943, p. 229*)

EDITORIAL

Dear Maria Valtorta Readers Worldwide, I received a few emails regarding #108 (see **Letters** column) so I want to take this opportunity to make you aware that the content of these quarterly newsletters are not only inspired by my communication with Readers but they also consist of contributions from Readers themselves. When I think of a theme for the **Supplement**, it is often selected because of a question asked in an email, or from a passage selected, or a comment made by a Reader at a Zoom meeting. Furthermore, so many people are trying to evangelise Valtorta in so many ways – visually, aurally, orally and in written form. There are so many people who are gifted and people whose passion drives them. I always try to be attentive as possible so when something that is said strikes a chord with me, I run with it because it lifts my energy levels and enthusiasm, for the purpose of catering to your spiritual interests. Regarding the **Bulletin**, a few of the columns are contributions from a variety of people from different walks of life, different countries, different skill sets, different age groups and different professions. What a blessing that Maria Valtorta unites us all. I do hope something in this newsletter touches your mind, heart and soul.

St. Josemaria Escriva once said, 'Don't neglect your spiritual reading - reading has made many saints.'

Growing in faith,

Catherine Loft (catherine@valtorta.org.au)

FATHER ERNESTO ZUCCHINI – THE MV RETREAT

The second course of Valtortian Spiritual Exercises Retreat was held at the Convent of San Cerbone (Lucca) from 1 - 6 August 2022. To explain the content, one can refer to Chapter 164 of *The Poem/The Gospel* entitled 'The Retreat on the Mountain before the Apostolic Election'. In the caves of the Arbela Valley, Jesus led the first course of spiritual exercises in history for his twelve disciples. He himself describes them thus:

'We shall stay here for a week in prayer, to prepare you for a great event. That's why I wanted to be isolated in this deserted place, far away from all roads and villages. The grottoes have already been useful to men in the past. They will also be useful to you. The water here is cool and plentiful, whereas the earth is dry. We have enough bread and food for the time we shall be staying here. Those who were with Me in the desert last year know how I lived. This is a palace compared to that place. [...] To make use of you, I have to form you. I have recourse to the great medicine, to the great weapon: prayer. I have always prayed for you. But now I want you to pray by yourselves. I will not teach you My prayer yet. But I will let you know how to pray and what prayer is. It is a conversation of children with the Father, of spirits with the Spirit, open, warm, confident, collected, frank. Prayer is everything: it is confession, it is knowledge of ourselves, it is weeping over ourselves, it is a promise to ourselves and to God, it is a request to God, all done at the feet of the Father. And it cannot be done amidst uproar, among distractions unless we are giants in prayer. And even the giants suffer from this shock and noise of the world in their hours of prayer. You are not giants, you are pygmies. You are but infants in spirit. You are deficient in the spirit. Here you will reach the age of spiritual reason. The rest will come later.'

(*Poem 2,92; Gospel 3,34*)

With great humility, following the stages of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, but using passages from *The Gospel As Revealed To Me* that were deemed more suitable, we lived these days together in prayer, listening and meditation. We opened ourselves to the voice of the Spirit with the same disposition of mind that Jesus wanted in Arbela from his own, whom He would soon elect as Apostles, ministers of the Kingdom. Only individual participants can express how effective this retreat has been for their soul. We are happy to have

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guided them and, God permitting, we certainly intend to organize another in 2023.

[Ed: Look up the images of the Convent of San Cerbone in Lucca and you will see what an wonderful venue it is.)

THE BURIAL PLACE OF VALTORTA EXPLAINED

In an interview in his *Memorie and Testimonianze* series, Dr. Emilio Pisani explains why Maria Valtorta's remains were removed from the cemetery at Viareggio and were transferred to Florence. (Ed: As this has not been translated, I have transcribed it for Readers.)

Dr Emilio Pisani says that his wish was for Maria Valtorta to stay in Viareggio. Maria's father, Giuseppe, was buried at the cemetery there, and Maria's mother, Iside, was buried in the grave beside him. A month before Maria died, Iside's bones were moved and placed in the same grave as her husband's, leaving her grave empty. Maria was then buried in that grave. When she died, her right hand (that she wrote the Work with) was still life-like and pink whereas her left hand was bruised. This was highly noteworthy to Dr. Pisani but less so to Fr. Berti. He wanted something even more special to prove her authenticity, so he wanted to exhume her body in the hope of finding something significant like an incorrupt body. Fr. Berti had led a somewhat persecuted life in the Order: he was misunderstood by his brother priests because of his dedication to Maria Valtorta. So he invited the Apostolic General from Rome who was open to Maria's Work, along with several priests, to attend. On the day of her exhumation, Fr. Berti found that there were only bones there - not even an incorrupt right hand, so they placed Maria's bones in the same grave as her father and mother, so that all three were buried together. Maria remained there for two years. However, Fr. Berti still wanted a privileged site for Maria Valtorta. Dr. Pisani wanted Valtorta to be buried in **St. Joseph's church**, Viareggio behind which was the parish of San Andrea which belonged to the Servants of Mary, as Maria was a Third Order of the Servites. But the Prior at that time, Fr. Luca Caramelli did not warm to the idea. Dr. Pisani was disappointed because he had already mentally organised everything. Consequently, Fr. Berti applied to the **Basilica of the Most Holy Annunciation** in Florence which was the Mother church of the Servite Order. As Fr. Berti belonged to that Order, he wanted Valtorta to remain tied to them.

The Pisani Foundation relented somewhat because Fr. Berti was truly dedicated to Maria's Work. Not only was he one of the three present when Pope Pius XII uttered his statement '**Publish this work as it is... whoever reads it will understand...**' but he saved it from those in the Holy Office who were against it.

The **Basilica of the Most Holy Annunciation** in Florence (see pictured) was a national monument so it needed three authorizations from: 1. The Archbishop of Florence (who was already favourable to Maria), 2. The Fine Arts (who gave their permission but stated that the tomb had to follow a pre-established design). 3. The Minister of Health (who also approved).

When Maria was alive, this church had brought her both sadness and fond memories. Maria was attracted to this church when she was a Samaritan nurse at the military hospital. When she visited, she would stop and pray at the highly venerated image of Our Lady of the Annunciation. (The story has it that when the painter was about to complete this image and paint the face, he had difficulty

with it and fell asleep. When he awoke, the face was painted, believed to have been done by an angel.)

The day of transfer was set for 2 July which, at that time, was the Feast of the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth, (changed in 1969 to 31 May). On the day of the transfer, there was a brief visit to the cemetery at Viareggio to collect Maria's bones which were placed in a case. This was transported in Dr. Pisani's car with Fr. Berti and Fr. Roschini. Dr. Pisani's wife, Claudia, and Marta travelled in another car. Before leaving Viareggio, Dr. Pisani says he did a tour of the area and went past Via Fratti, the street of Maria's home. He said the traffic lights had changed to red when he was right in front of her house, giving him that extra time there with Maria's bones, which filled him with emotion.

Fr. Gabriel Roschini who had 'converted' a year earlier to Maria's Work, said the Mass at the **Basilica of the Most Holy Annunciation** and gave a blessing where Maria was buried in the church. In Florence, there was a community that was already favourable to Maria, and many people go there to visit each year.

[Ed: For detailed information on Fr. Corrado Berti's role, effort and commitment to Maria Valtorta, read Stephen Austin's *Summa and Encyclopedia of Maria Valtorta's Extraordinary Work* pp.465-77

<https://www.valtorta.org.au/Defence/Maria%20Valtorta%20Summa%20&%20Encyclopedia.pdf>]

BROWSING THE SUMMA – PROOF BY ASTRONOMY

The narrative of the *Poem of the Man-God* includes a number of specific observations of the positions of the stars, the moon, etc. For instance, in a Chapter entitled, "The Night at Gadara" dated 11 December 1945, Maria Valtorta wrote: "The magnificent stars of a clear night in the month of March are shining in the eastern sky.... It is a very tall house, situated in one of the highest parts of the town, so that the infinite horizon spreads out.... As the moon is waning, the sky is glistening with countless stars.... with its springtime constellations and the magnificent stars of Orion: of Rigel and Betelgeuse, of Aldebaran, of Perseus, Andromeda and Cassiopeia and the Pleiades united like sisters. And Sapphirine Venus covered with diamonds, and Mars of pale ruby and the topaz of Jupiter..." (*Poem, Vol.3, Chapter 356, pp.459-60: Gospel, Vol. 5, Chapter 357, pp. 431-2*)

Given that the joint visibility of these stars is uncommon, in 1992, Purdue University physicist Professor. Lonnie Van Zandt analyzed these events to estimate a date for the event described. Jupiter has roughly a 13-year cycle as it is seen against the background of the stars. Mars has an orbital period of 23 months, while Venus is almost cyclic, appearing every two years at about the same location, but advancing two and a half months each time. Using a computer planetary simulation system, Van Zandt noted that the only possibilities for the observation Valtorta described during the month of March would be AD33. Given that according to the narrative "the Night at Gadara" was one year before the Crucifixion of Jesus, the observation places the date of Good Friday during April AD34. According to Van Zandt the estimation of the joint observability of these three stars and the position of the moon during that time would have been almost impossible without a computer system.

[...] Professor Van Zandt had told [a colleague] that he was initially a skeptic of Valtorta's writings, and that he had first encountered the Work because his wife was reading them. One day, his wife told him that there are

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astronomical features in the Gadara scene and she asked him if that could prove anything. Being the skeptic that he was and not wanting to believe that they could have any scientific accuracy or significance, he responded, "I can disprove that in a minute." So the next day, he went to Purdue University and used astronomical software to go back in time and thoroughly analyze it, including the consideration of ten years forward and backwards. The planets, star constellations, and lunar phase matched up exactly to a specific date. What he found shocked him and through this, he began to give her writings a closer look and soon became a believer in the authenticity of Valtorta's writings. [...] This wonderful software has more than simplified the chore of reducing Valtorta's accidental mentions of celestial objects to a definite calendar [...] The work could not have been done without a computer.

It one considers the possibility that *the Poem* was Valtorta's own clever invention, she would have faced not merely the task of verifying the consistency of these scenes, as is done here, but of searching a much greater realm of possibilities in order to find unique astronomical situations to bury in the narrative to support her chosen system of dates. This would have been necessary whatever choice of years she had made. She nowhere calls any attention whatever to the implications of her off-hand astronomical observations, apparently confident that someday, somewhere, some mathematician, physicist or astronomer would eventually uncover their perfect internal consistency. The brief observation [is remarkable because] there was never any time in the history of Earth and sky when this constellation of sights could have been assembled. That Valtorta, who was by all accounts mystified by a slide rule, and had no personal computer, nor any other sort of calculating engine to use, could have carried out the sea of arithmetical operations necessary [...] all the while managing to keep permanently concealed the hundreds of pages of scratch sheets that anyone uses who does these things, must tax the credulity of even the immovable atheist more than the alternative that Jesus showed it to her.

In David Webster's book, *Voiding the Voices of Heaven*, he relates: Valtorta's numerous descriptions of moon phases, planets, and constellations, their positions in the night sky, her continual noting of the time of year, seasons, months, climate, Sabbath days and feast days (though never claiming these to be without possible misjudgment), are so precise that every one of her 647 episodes have been dated using the [Julian] calendar of that day and computer programs of the heavens for that period of time.

In the words of Sherlock Holmes, when you have eliminated the impossible, that which remains, however merely improbable, must be true.

(Stephen Austin, *The Summa And Encyclopedia Of Maria Valtorta's Extraordinary Work*. pp. 191, 195-7)

THE WORK – A FILM OR SCREEN PLAYS

Dr. Emilio Pisani wrote an article entitled, 'The Work of Maria Valtorta turned into Screen plays' (25 January 2023). In it, he states that the idea of making a film based on Maria Valtorta's writings had flashed across the minds of the lay and religious who knew about the Work through type-written copies back in 1948. [However], the Work was still unpublished at that time and had to be printed first to make it accessible to the public to be read in its complete original version first and not to be adapted into literary abridgements and stage performances.

Maria Valtorta did not want her Work to be turned into a film. She was against it for several reasons but the reason stated publically was the assumption that no actor could have impersonated Jesus, and no actress could have impersonated Mary, Most Holy. Of course, Maria Valtorta was not just alluding to the physical appearance of the two Characters, but to the superhuman aspect that illuminated all of their physicality (gestures, voice, gaze) as it was revealed to her. The proposal to turn the Work into a film or screenplays still arises from many fronts nowadays as the Work in print has been circulating for over sixty years for the benefit of readers. And yet, Maria Valtorta's reservation regarding the two divine Characters is still valid. Making a film of the whole Work is possible with Valtorta's text, which already has the structure of a script, but it would always be a colossal undertaking. [...] On the other hand, bringing those characters to the stage who have their own story in the Work would be easier to implement, and also more effective. One could choose not only well-known names, such as Mary of Magdala, but also unknown ones, such as John of Endor and Syntyche; or any of the apostles who are only [briefly] mentioned in the Gospels, such as Simon the Zealot, the first of mixed blood with a life spent as a persecuted politician; and Andrew, the silent and unsuspecting conqueror of souls. In the experiential story of those characters and of the apostles who experience the encounter with Jesus and Mary in Valtorta's Work, the two divine Characters are already represented, and could appear in the scene making their presence almost momentary which Maria Valtorta would perhaps approve.

[Ed: It is interesting to note that this is the exact approach taken in the Italian movie *Io sono Giuda (I am Judas)* where the flashbacks between Jesus and Judas were only shot with Jesus' back to the camera.]

READER'S CHOICE

The vision – the final resurrection of the dead. This is the "ultimate" and a powerful meditation. Really worth the time to read and meditate.

KATHY ROE, CANADA

(Maria says:) An immense expanse of land. As boundless as a sea. I say "land" because there is earth as on fields and roads. But there is not one tree, stem or blade of grass. Dust, dust and more dust. [...] There are no stars, no moon, no sun. The sky is empty, as the earth is empty. The former is stripped of its flowers of light; the latter, of its plant and animal life. They are two vast remains of what was. [...] As I turn my gaze over this desolate scene, for which I do not grasp the need, I see Death springing from I don't know where, standing upright in the middle of the boundless plain. A laughing skeleton, with her teeth bared and empty eye sockets. The queen of the dead world wrapped in her shroud as if in a cloak. She does not have a scythe. She has already cut *down everything*. She is turning her gaze over her harvest and leering. [...] Indeed, with her left arm she gestures, indicating to me the desolate expanse we (she, the queen, and I, the only living being) are dominating. At her silent command, given by the skeletal fingers, the earth splits into thousands and thousands of clefts, [...] and then from the furrows of earth and the furrows of sea, there arise the scattered, disconnected white objects I saw, which are being recomposed. They are millions and millions and millions of skeletons surfacing from the oceans, rising straight up from the ground. Skeletons of all heights. From the minute ones of infants with little hands like small dusty spiders to

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those of adult men, and even giant ones, whose mass brings to mind certain antediluvian beings. And they stand in astonishment, as if trembling, like those who are suddenly awakened from a deep sleep and do not grasp where they are. [...] And then around those skeletons, there slowly condenses a nebulosity like mist rising from the open ground, from the open seas; it takes on shape and opacity and becomes flesh, a body like the one we who are alive have. The eyes (rather, the eye sockets) are filled with irises; zygomas are covered with cheeks; gums extend over the exposed jaws, and lips form again, and hair appears once more on the craniums, and arms become shapely, and fingers, nimble; and the whole body becomes alive again, just the way ours is. The same, but different in appearance. There are very beautiful bodies, with a perfection in shape and color which make them resemble artistic masterpieces. There are other horrible ones, not because of any real crippling or deformity, but because of their overall appearance, which is more proper to a brute beast than a man. Grim eyes, contracted faces, a savage appearance, and, what strikes me most, a darkness emanating from their bodies and increasing the lividness of the air surrounding them. Whereas the very beautiful ones have laughing eyes, a serene visage, and a gentle appearance. They give off a luminosity which forms a halo around their being from head to foot and radiates out on all sides. If they were all like the former, the darkness would become total to the point of concealing every object. But by virtue of the latter, the luminosity not only endures but increases, to the extent that I can observe everything. The ugly ones (concerning whose destiny of accursedness I harbor no doubt, since they bear this condemnation as a mark on their brows) remain silent, casting frightened, surly glances up and down around them, and group together on one side at an inner command which I do not understand, but which must have been given by someone and perceived by the risen ones. The very beautiful ones also gather, smiling at one another and, looking at the ugly ones with pity mixed with horror. And these lovely ones are singing - they are singing a slow, sweet chorus of blessing for God. I see nothing else. I understand I have viewed the final resurrection.

[...] Jesus says: "When time is over and life is to be exclusively Life in the heavens, the universe as you thought, will again become as it was at the beginning, before being dissolved completely. This will take place when I have judged. Many think that there will be just an instant between the moment of the end and the universal Judgment. But God will be good until the end, O daughter. Good and just. Not all of those living at the final hour will be holy, and not all of them, damned. There will be some among the former who are destined to Heaven but have something to expiate. I would be unjust if for them, I annulled the expiation which, however, I had inflicted on all those preceding them who were in the same state at their death. Therefore, justice and the end come for other planets, the stars in the sky fade out one by one like torches upon which one blows, and darkness and cold progressively increase in my hours, which are your centuries. And the hour of darkness has already begun in the firmaments as in hearts. Those living in the final hour, dying in the final hour, deserving of Heaven but in need of cleansing themselves further, will go into the purifying fire. I will increase the heat of that fire so that purification will be more expeditious and the blessed will not wait too long

to take their holy flesh to glorification and rejoice in seeing its God, its Jesus, in His perfection and in His triumph. That is why you saw the earth devoid of grass and trees, animals, men and life, and the oceans devoid of sails, a still expanse of still waters. For movement will no longer be necessary for them to give life to the fish of the waters, as warmth will no longer be necessary for the earth to give life to crops and beings. That is why you saw the firmament empty of its stars, with no more fires, no more lights. Light and heat will no longer be necessary for the earth, now an enormous cadaver bearing in itself the cadavers of all the living from Adam until the last son of Adam. Death, my last handmaiden upon the earth, will perform her last task and then cease to exist as well. There will be no more Death, but only eternal Life. In blessedness or in horror. Life in God or life in Satan for yourselves, recomposed in soul and body. That is enough for now. Rest and think of Me."

(The Notebooks 1944, January 29, pp. 118-123)

LETTERS

Your last newsletter was an amazing read! I was fascinated by the write-up about Maria's novel, then there was the supplement on Gamaliel. I've always been intrigued by Gamaliel. When I saw that he was the subject of your Supplement, I knew this was going to be a good read! I'd never heard of Gamaliel before I read the *Poem*, at least I didn't think I had. Then one day at Mass, I got a surprise when his name was mentioned in Acts. He certainly got his sign! His story is just one of many in the *Poem*, but is certainly one of my favourites!

CARMEL TANNA, AUSTRALIA

That was an outstanding newsletter. I have a particular interest in Gamaliel and it was great how you pulled together all of the scenes. I respect him and was happy how he converted. We talk about a personal relationship with Jesus and it's so true but I have found out that I have a friendship with many in the *Poem* particularly John, Peter, Mary Magdalene, Martha, Lazarus, Maximinus, and many others too.

GERARD BEER, USA

Many thanks for the Supplement on Gamaliel. I had read different parts of his life in Valtorta's book but your Supplement filled in all the details and provided a wonderful lesson on not being able to receive the 'spirit' "because it is encumbered with too many things". I saw this as cultural indoctrination, almost impossible to change. It is the greatest obstacle.

MARIE FITZGERALD, AUSTRALIA

† REST IN PEACE †

Please pray for the soul of

BRYAN GLYNN

An avid MV Reader

Maria Valtorta Readers' Group

This group is an online non-profit organisation, which retails publications of Maria Valtorta's writings and offers other supporting materials to its members and to other interested persons. Newsletters are sent every three months. [The material in this publication is not intended to represent the opinion of the Church. The editor affirms submission to the official judgment of the Church regarding the information contained herein.]