

FURTHER LETTERS TO BLESSED DIANA

BY

BL. JORDAN OF SAXONY
(Translated by K. E. Pond)

XVIII

BROTHER JORDAN, useless servant of the Order of Preachers, to his dear daughters in Christ the Sisters of St Agnes at Bologna: eternal salvation and the embrace of the Lamb whom they are following.

Beloved daughters, although perhaps you do run in the fragrance of the ointments of the Beloved, see that you walk warily. So run that you may obtain: that is, let none of you be either too slow and lazy in her running, or, on the other hand, hasten too much so that her feet stumble and the purpose of her journeying is thus frustrated. For strait and narrow is the way that leads to life and it behoves us to enter upon it warily, lest we turn aside to the right hand through carelessness or to the left by an excess of austerity.

Amid these two dangers, what I fear most for you is that you afflict your bodies beyond the bounds of discretion, and thus falling into the worst possible mistake you will be hindered in the way of the Lord which leads to the city in which we shall have our dwelling, to the city of the Lord of hosts which the Lord has founded to last for ever. The foundations of that city are in the holy mountains, or rather in the holy mountain of the Lord, the mountain which his right hand has acquired, that is his Son, who is the right hand of God the Father, upon whom the foundations of this city rest for the Most High himself hath founded it. O heavenly city, care-free dwelling-place, fatherland containing everything which delights, where there is a people which hath no complaint, inhabitants who are at peace, dwellings in which there is no poverty—glorious things are said of thee, thou City of God. The way of dwelling in a city is perilous; but when it is given to us to reach that blessed Jerusalem which is built as a city, there there is no danger to be feared; there shall be no cause of ruin there, but eternal tranquillity, eternal stability, eternal security, where, speaking of the dwellers of that city, the holy citizens, 'Now', saith the Spirit, 'let them rest from their labours'. In the meantime, as long as we are in this life it

¹ See *Life of the Spirit*, March 1947.

behoves us to labour, conducting ourselves with discretion and not impetuously, until we reach this heavenly city into which Jesus Christ our Lord is leading us, he who is blessed above all things for ever. Amen.

Dear Sisters, if anything happen to you in the way of adversity or trouble, bear it all with patience and an undisturbed mind, looking forward to great glory in recompense for your small troubles, joy for your sorrow, everlasting consolation for your grief.

Goodbye, and pray for me as I do for you every day in my prayers, begging the Father of mercies and God of all consolation that he may give you all a heart with which to worship him and do his will.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

XXXI

Brother Jordan, useless servant of the Order of Preachers, to his dearest daughter in Christ, Diana, salvation and the joy of the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

You know, dear daughter, that as the Scripture says: 'Through many tribulations it behoves us to enter into the kingdom of God' and that when we have arrived there we shall be free from every tribulation.

Meanwhile your Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, will never leave you, for he says: 'I will not desert you nor leave you'; and even if by chance he should sometimes seem to have withdrawn from you, you can say: 'Why, O Lord, hast thou withdrawn afar off?' why dost thou despise me at these times, that is, when it is the right time to help me. But when is that? He can reply: 'In trouble'. Of course he will never desert you then, but will draw nearer, because 'The Lord is nigh to those who are troubled in heart'. If sometimes you are cast down and pursue your way with sadness, when the enemy is disturbing your (peace of) heart, think over what your Bridegroom, who is the joy of angels, says: 'My soul', he says, 'is sorrowful even unto death'. If you are sad, he says again: 'Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow'. For he alone really knows labour and grief. After labour, we have rest; after sorrow, eternal consolation. According to the great multitude of our sorrows, his consolations will rejoice our hearts; he your Bridegroom will grant us this, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Do not abstain too much from food, drink and sleep, but act with discretion and patience in all things. Greet all your Sisters for me and the Lady Otta senior, and Sisters Otta and Jacobina. I am so

glad that you have not been too much upset by your brother's death. Be careful that the Sisters do not practise too many penances and in everything proceed with order. I have written these things to you with my own hand. Farewell in Christ and pray for me.

I, Brother Henry, greet you, Diana, with all my heart.²

XXXVII

To his dear daughters in Christ, the Sisters of St Agnes at Bologna, Brother Jordan, useless servant of the Order of Preachers, salvation and the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

You see that by the Lord's will I have again been prevented from coming to the General Chapter. And if this were not trying for me for any other reason, on your account alone it would trouble me, chiefly because I cannot see you and take comfort in your presence. But it behoves us to take hold of the will of God with patience. He himself shows you in every possible way in this life that hope is not to be placed in man nor consolation in any mortal being: but rather he himself is to be loved with our whole heart, with our whole soul and with our whole strength, because he alone can and ought to satisfy the soul, in the present life by grace, in the future by glory. Therefore, dear daughters, show yourselves constant and joyful in all things, with discretion, so that you may be numbered not with the foolish, but with the wise virgins. At present I have not the time to write much to you: but I commend your souls and bodies to his mercy in whose hand are all the ends of the earth, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Goodbye and pray for us. Gerard greets you with all devotion and recommends himself to your prayers.

XLVI

To his dearest daughter, Diana, Brother Jordan, useless servant of the Order of Preachers, health and consolation in Christ Jesus.

When it happens to me that I am separated from you, I am not without a certain heaviness of heart, and yet you add to my sorrow. For I see that you are so inconsolably heavy-hearted that I am perforce saddened, not only because of our mutual separation, but also because of your particular desolation. But why are you thus in anguish? Am I not yours, am I not with you all: yours in labour, yours in rest, yours present, yours absent, yours in prayer, sharing in your merit and sharing, I hope, in your reward? What would you do if I were to die?

² This note was added by the secretary.

Clearly it would not be right for you to mourn so inconsolably over my death. For when I die you will not lose me but will be sending me before you to those resplendent dwellings, so that when I am there I, too, may entreat the Father for you and, living with the Lord, I shall be much more useful to you than if I were kept in this world dying (as it were) all day long. And so take comfort: and bear yourself more manfully and take fresh heart in the mercy and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Goodbye and greet the Sisters for me, especially your Prioress, Galiana, Juleta, Kardina and any others whom you know to be our friends. Christ Jesus be with your spirit. Amen.

The following letter is not included in the Berthier collection. It is probably the first written by Blessed Jordan to his spiritual daughter. She is addressed as Madame Diana, for she is not yet a member of the Dominican family. The letter is here translated from the French version by Marguerite Aron: *B. Jourdain de Saxe: Lettres à la Bse. Diane d'Andalo* (Ed. du Cerf).

To Madame Diana, his daughter in the fear of the Father, his sister in the adoption of the Son, his beloved in the love of the Holy Spirit, his (future) associate in the religious life, Brother Jordan, useless servant of the Order of Preachers, salvation, speedy liberation from present sadness and enjoyment of future bliss.

It is the greatness of your desire which has urged you to write me the letters which you have sent me. I will, then, tell you something about this heavenly desire.

Dear Sister, it was the desire of the Patriarchs which called your Bridegroom, Christ, the Son of God, to come to his pain,³ and he came. Called down by your desires to delight (i.e. the delight in union with souls), how, then, would he do otherwise than come?

Make all your desires, then, reach out towards heaven. The man who does not want to be on the side of hell consecrates himself entirely to heaven; he who lives on the plain does not dwell in security, for he is exposed to every enemy, but he who has established himself in a fortified camp and in towers is protected. Don't, then, dear Sister, pitch your tent in the plain, but flee to the Strong Place, as David did before Saul, and, through your desire, dwell behind heavenly ramparts, as he did.

I do not think you know German: that is because you have never been in a German-speaking country. In this particular region, only carnal manners of speech are used for 'he who belongs to the earth speaks from the earth'. So, dear daughter, if you want to learn a

³ The pain of his incarnation, his human life, his passion and death.

(new) language go and live by your desire in heavenly realms, but when you come down to earth again take some spiritual book which will take the place of a Friar Preacher for you: and you will hear the language of spiritual things; he who has never been in the land of pure spirits never hears it.

You are not unaware that there are two principles in man, body and soul. The body, as you know, does not perish so long as it strives to satisfy its desires in the sphere of corporal things; but the soul is above the body. Don't then, dear Sister, put your body before your spirit, but when you are in quest of nourishment for the spirit, that nourishment which is not found upon earth and which is bought with loving desire and not with money, go into spiritual regions.

What wretch would let himself die of hunger through want of nourishment which he can get by his mere desires? Say with the prophet: 'My eyes are always (turned) towards the Lord, as the eyes of the poor towards the rich from whom they eagerly expect an alms'.

Bees gather earthly honey in earthly flowers, carry it into their hive and there store it up, in foresight for the future. If your spirit is not renewed by spiritual honey, it dies; for I know it is delicate and disdains the use of coarse food; send your spirit, then, dear Sister, to cull the flowers of the heavenly meadows which never fade, so that it may gather their honey and live on it. The whole of this honey is not consumed at a single meal; one keeps a part of it in the hive of one's heart so that when desire grows faint, in oneself and in the reserves that one carries within one, one can find something with which to delight oneself.

And, dear Sister, when at last this good which you are seeking by your desires is yours, then don't forget your poor correspondent.