

**ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE ROSSI:  
TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN;  
WITH AN INTRODUCTION ON  
ECCLESIASTICAL TRAINING AND  
SACERDOTAL LIFE**

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St. John Baptist de Rossi: Translated from the Italian; With an Introduction on Ecclesiastical Training and Sacerdotal Life by Lady Herbert & Cardinal Vaughan

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**LADY HERBERT & CARDINAL VAUGHAN**

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DE ROSSI**



ST JOHN BAPTIST DE ROSSI

*From the Original Picture at the Trinità dei Pellegrini*

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St John Baptist De Rossi

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Lady Herbert

With an Introduction  
On Ecclesiastical Training  
And Sacerdotal Life

By Cardinal Vaughan

Benziger Brothers  
New York Cincinnati Chicago  
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1906

To  
The Secular Clergy  
The English Version of this Life  
Undertaken at the request of one of the  
English Bishops  
is Dedicated with great respect by the  
Translator



## THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE eighteenth century is too often considered as a cycle of universal religious ruin. People only see that terrible period which culminated in the catastrophe of the French Revolution, and this thought makes them forget the true glories of which this era was not altogether deprived.

Europe, it is true, in spite of the cultivation of letters and the progress made in physical sciences, presented everywhere a sad spectacle. Sceptic philosophy had triumphed in France; the epicurean and peaceful atheism of the seventeenth century had become a scientific, aggressive and audacious theory; the sardonic smiles and sacrilegious scorn of free-thinkers were pleasant to a debased people, who were only too ready to applaud any attacks against God and His Church. Jansenism had only a few ignorant sectarians as its leaders, who fell into ridicule at the cemetery of St Médard; but this ridicule reacted against the orthodox faith, and its promoters made it a powerful arm against the truth.

The other nations of Europe were in a deplorable state. Russia was a heap of ruins. The infamy and crimes of Catherine were reproduced by her successors, who prolonged the sanguinary tyranny of their ancestress. In England, the house of Hanover, to keep their place on the throne, persecuted the Catholics, and perpetuated the Penal Laws, which seemed destined to destroy the last remnants of the Roman Catholic faith in the kingdom. Austria for a time enjoyed a period of tranquillity under Maria Teresa; but soon she too yielded to the puerile caprices of Joseph II, who, by his fatal influence and pretended religious reforms, troubled the peace and endangered the unity of the empire of the Hapsburgs. Nevertheless Europe as a whole had not revolted against God. Italy had up to that time remained faithful. The consoling aspect of Italy offered some compensation to the Head of the Church for the outrages and the defection of other nations. Whereas, else-

where, men of learning and wit proclaimed themselves atheists, in Italy science and faith made an intimate alliance, and worked in concert. Excellent popes, both learned and pious, succeeded one another without intermission in the Chair of Peter. They protected, encouraged and directed all scientific movements. On all sides came forth eminent men, while the most humble cities in the Peninsula became centres of erudition.

At this very time fresh and enlarged editions of the great Benedictine works of a past century were produced. Other most important labours were brought to light. Every religious order could boast of a learned member: witness the Jesuit, Tiraboschi; the great Dominican Fathers, Mammachi and Orsi; the Theatine, Piazzzi; the Observantine, Bianchi; Father Mansi, of the Clerks of the Mother of God; and many more. Sacred sciences were illustrated by the great Pope Benedict XIV, by Cardinals Gerdil and Zaccaria, by the brothers Ballerini and others; profane science by Pergolese and Winckelmann. But in addition to all these great scientific names, Italy, during this eighteenth century, shone even more brightly by her saints. A few dates will suffice to prove this fact. From 1710 to 1787 there died the Blessed Valfre (the apostle of Turin), Bonaventura di Potenza (a religious of St Francis), Cardinal Tomasi, St Francesco di Girolamo, St Pacifico di San Severino, St Veronica Giuliano, the Blessed Tomaso di Cora, St Giuseppe della Croce, the Venerable Parisi, the Blessed Angelo d'Acri, the Venerable Tenderini, the Blessed Crispino di Viterbo, St Leonardo de Porto Maurizio, St Paolo della Croce, St Alfonso Liguori, and last, not least, St Giovanni Battista de Rossi. Many of these saints lived or died in Rome. This great stream of supernatural life manifested itself specially in the capital of the Christian world, and the ardent zeal of that phalanx of holy priests, of which the Blessed de Rossi was the model and the guide, produced marvels of sanctity among the people.

The life of this holy canon is not at all known in France, but it deserves to be so. Now that the Holy Father is about to place this humble priest on the altars of the Catholic

Church, his biography seems to us to be needed, and to fill up a void. "The lives of the saints," de Rossi used to say, "are like second gospels, for they show in practice the result of our Saviour's teaching." We had these words continually before our eyes while writing down, for the edification of the faithful, facts concerning him which are in themselves eloquent lessons.

In an existence so simple, so hidden, so obscure, in fact, filled up by one succession of sacrifices and acts of self-abnegation, it was difficult to follow any strict chronological order. It appeared to us preferable to group certain events under a few general heads, and to show forth his extraordinary virtues more fully than any mere incidents in his life. The principal sources from which this work has been compiled are the process of his beatification and canonization; a contemporary life of the saint published in Rome in 1768 by one of his greatest friends, John Mary Toietti; another biography of him, by Father Tavani, of the Society of Jesus, published also in Rome in 1768; and the small collection of his sermons preserved at St Galla. We have stated nothing which did not come from one or other of these sources, but we have not thought it necessary to give chapter and verse for each of our extracts.

In the work itself we have but two objects in view. To show, first of all, that sanctity may be acquired, not only by heroic actions, but especially by ordinary ones performed in a perfect manner; and next, to prove what can be effected by the devotion of a man deprived of all human advantages, but never flinching from his work, and simply relying with entire confidence on God. These two lessons stand out prominently, as it were, throughout the whole of de Rossi's life. God grant that our labour may bring forth fruit to His glory and the good of souls.

E. MOUGEOT,

*Doctor in Theology, and Secretary of  
H. E. Cardinal Pitra.*