



As Professore Supplente at the Sapienza

exemplary childhood sanctity seems exaggerated to the reader, he is asked to review the following facts: At age four, little Vincent's mother witnessed him stray from her side to kneel in front of a statue of the Blessed Virgin, Whom he told "Dear Mother, make me a good boy!" In succeeding years, he became so reputed for his virtue that he earned the name, *Il Santerello* ("the Little Saint"). Children who played with Vincent found themselves instructed in the catechism and in praying the Rosary by their friend. He gave away his shoes, his clothing, his food, and even his bed to the poor, always doing so out of a spirit of Christian charity. With the bed gone, sleeping on the floor satisfied

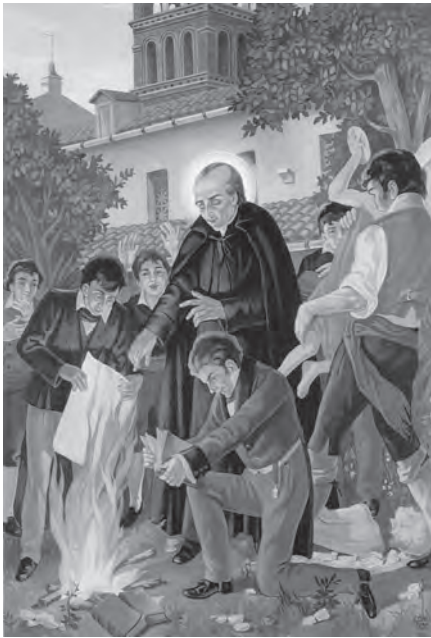
his youthful passion for asceticism, a passion which grew stronger, so that at fifteen years of age, he had acquired the habit of scourging himself to the point of drawing blood.* To Maria Maddelana's protestations against these excesses, Vincenzo's confessor replied, "Leave him alone, leave him alone; the Spirit of God is working in him."

Perhaps the one dark spot on his early years was his apparent lack of academic aptitude in the Piarist† school he attended, San Pantaleo. The Fathers thought it a pity that such a pious boy should be so dim. But a triumph of supernatural light over natural darkness was occasioned by this state of affairs. A novena to the Holy Ghost instantly settled the problem, so much so that his teachers were overwhelmed at the change in dull little Vincenzo.

Fr. Fazzini will provide us with a summary of the early sanctity of our subject: "He was a saint from childhood."

* Though the author does not fear the general outbreak of such penances among our youth as a result of his article, he still feels obliged to say that such austerities as these are recommended only under the prudent guidance of a competent priestly spiritual director.

† "The Piarists" was the popular name given to the "Canons Regular of the Mother of God of Pious Schools," the religious congregation founded by St.



Don Pallotti's "Alliance Against the Devil": "Into the fire, therefore, into the fire with these objectionable images, paintings and books!"

The Roman College

In 1807, Vincenzo left the Piarist school to pursue higher studies. He attended the Collegio Romano (Roman College), which was more like an advanced high school than it was a college in the American sense. Founded

Joseph Calasanctius. It was St. Joseph who founded San Pantaleo school. The very room where St. Vincent attended classes was where St. Joseph was gifted to receive a visitation of the Blessed Mother, and the staircase he daily ascended to go to school was the scene of St. Joseph's miraculous healing of a boy whose eye had been plucked out.

by St. Ignatius and counting among its alumni Sts. Aloysius Gonzaga, John Berchmans, Camillus de Lellis, and Leonardo a Porto Maurizio, this school had a glorious Jesuit history that made it a landmark of the Counter Reformation. However, due to Masonically engineered suppression of the Jesuits in 1773 by Pope Clement XIV, the College had fallen on hard times and was only a shadow of its former self when Vincent took classes there. He studied grammar, rhetoric, and the Latin classics at the Collegio. He became particularly adept at composing verse in Latin, and won at least one prize for this art. But this prize went where all his other academic awards had always gone, to an image of our Lady as a votive offering. His humility about his awards and outstanding academic achievement was such that Vincenzo's own father had to hear the news of his son's accomplishments from third parties.

Amidst the mental discipline of declining nouns, conjugating verbs, and parsing participles in Cicero, Ovid, and Virgil, the boy lost not a bit of his piety. The Collegio had been criticized for its overemphasis of the pagan classics, but all this seems to have left on Vincent is a fantastic aptitude in the Latin language.

Not surprisingly, his piety drew him to a religious vocation. The particular avenue that most attracted the scholastic was the Capuchin Order, the Counter Reformation branch of