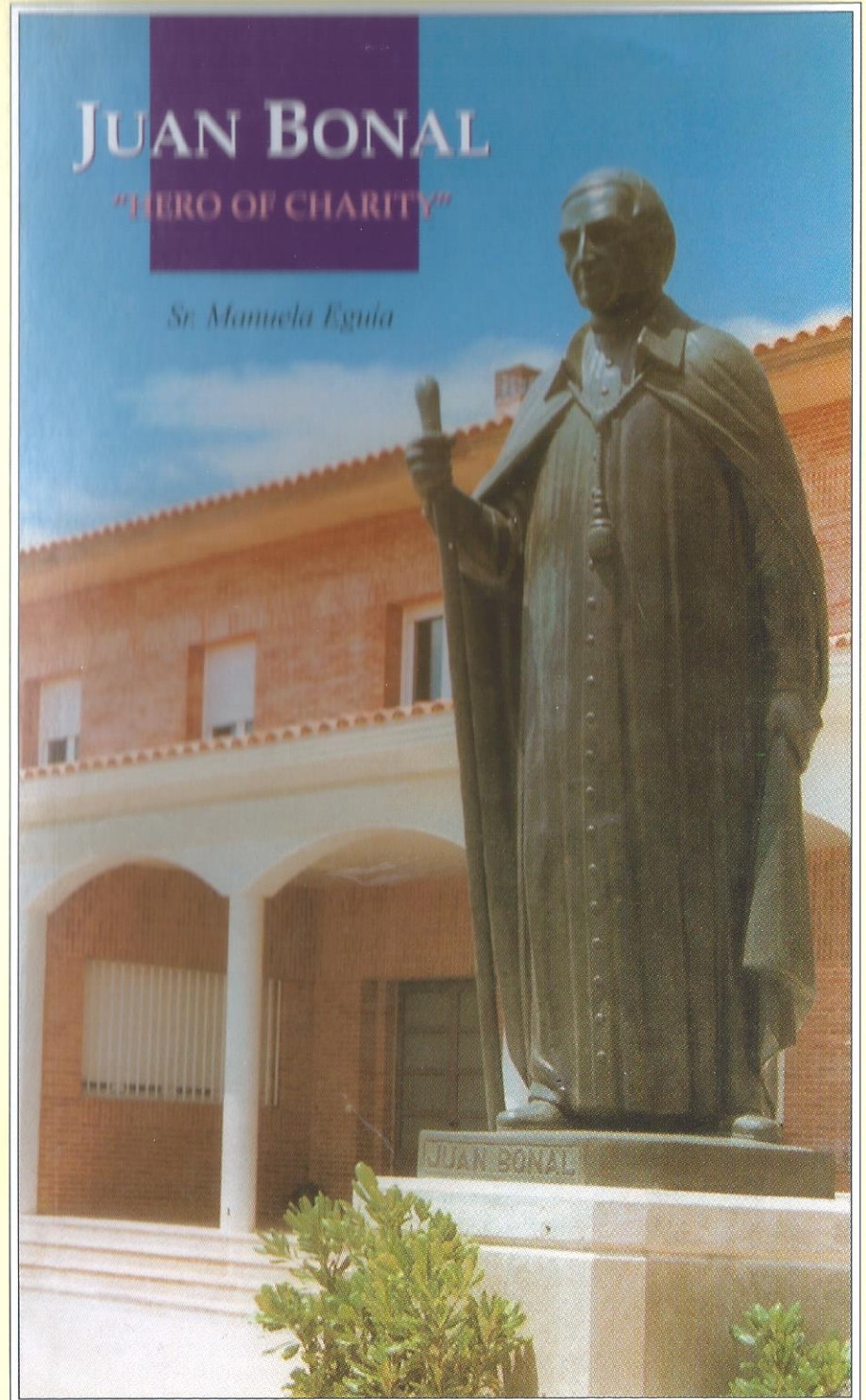




SISTERS OF CHARITY OF ST. ANNE

• JUAN BONAL "HERO OF CHARITY" •



**JUAN BONAL**  
"HERO OF CHARITY"

Sr. Manuela Eguía

Author : Sr. Manuela Eguía  
Publisher : Sisters of Charity of St. Anne,  
Zaragoza  
Printed : Imprenta TORCAL - Calle Borja,  
4 - Zaragoza  
Legal Reporter : Z-3.5515/99  
English Edition : 28.12.2003.  
Publisher : Sisters of Charity of St. Anne,  
Divya Jyoti, Andheri (E),  
Mumbai - 400 093.  
Printed : Jenaz Printers, Mumbai.

1769  
-  
1829

## FATHER JUAN BONAL



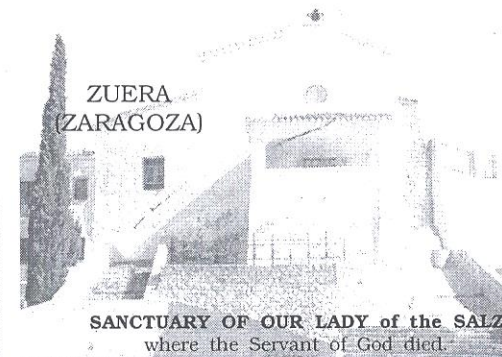
### PRAYER

*For the Novena (private use)*

*Our Lord and God,  
Who chose Your servant Juan Bonal  
to proclaim  
with his life and his word,  
that Your tenderness is immense,  
that Your mercy is always greater  
than human misery,  
and that You give Yourself with  
singular predilection  
to the poor and the little ones.  
We pray that You grant us,  
through his intercession  
and for Your glorification,  
the grace that we ask...*

*Help us to walk .  
as he did,  
taking risks and being humble,  
strong and joyous,  
totally surrendered and good,  
serving and loving  
all our brothers. Amen.*

*(Glory be to the Father and to  
the Son and to the Holy Spirit...)*



ZUERA  
(ZARAGOZA)

**SANCTUARY OF OUR LADY of the SALZ**  
where the Servant of God died.

**7th December 1999**

Date of the Closing Session of the Diocesan Process, a faithfully achieved goal, the first sure, firm and joyous step.

We thank God who knows the innermost depths of each one of His creatures and Who likes to present us with what His mercy achieves in those who allow themselves to be led by His grace.

There is still a path to be tread and new objects to be achieved in the Cause of the Priest. We entrust them to the Divine Will that seeks our good, that knows what is best for us and has fixed a year and a day for ecclesial recognition of the virtue of His Servant; this does not prevent us from desiring and asking for this time not to be delayed, for the Glory of God and the good of the Church.

These memorable days will be a better, vital experience if we retain close details of the happening; hence, we offer you the simple anthology of what till this moment has been published in the "HISTORY AND LIFE" of the monthly bulletin "Father JUAN BONAL".

Perhaps we have not known how to present him in all his grandeur of soul and nobility of intentions and attitudes; Founder, hero, almoner, server of the sick, liberator of the oppressed, friend and consoler of the poor and grieved, most zealous apostle, one who sowed peace, liberty and charity; above all, most faithful Servant of God, whom he sought to please.

The faith and affection of his devotees will make up for it. The efficacy of his prayer before God and the experience of his most valuable protection, will make us discover the work that God has carried out in His Servant, Father JUAN BONAL CORTADA.



**HISTORY AND LIFE  
OF  
FATHER JUAN BONAL CORTADA**

The municipal township of Terrades, with a surface area of 20.8 sq. kilometers, is in the northeastern sector of the region that is named "the Garrocha del Ampurdán" and comprises the municipal town of Terrades, the village of Palau Sarroca, the areas of Mas and Ricart, and other neighbourhoods of hamlets and scattered houses, like Vila de Subirás and La Guardia. Together with the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Health and the chapels or hermitages of St. Sebastian and St. Magdalene, we have a unit of about 210 houses.

Besides the Rissec, other small torrential streams drain the area, forming narrow valleys or ravines, like the stream of La Peña, the irrigation canal of Palau, or the stream of Los Valles.

The village of Terrades is at a height of 228 metres to the left of the Rissec. To the north is the rocky mountain of Santa Magdalena which with its height of 527 metres, is the highest point of the locality. From the top, one can see a beautiful panorama that comprises the upper end of the Pyrenees till the bifurcation between the High and Low Ampurdán, from the Cape of Norfeu to Montjó. The most mountainous sector is covered with pine forests, some cork trees and bushes.

Its economy was, and continues to be, basically rural. agricultural land, almost all of it not irrigated, grows cereals and there are still some extensions of vineyards, olive trees and pasture; irrigated land - vegetables and potatoes - is limited to only a few hectares. Cattle breeding and poultry farming complement the economy.

The life of the little over 400 inhabitants in the middle of the XVIIIth century was simple, hard and generous, like the land on which they settled, requiring the effort of hard work, with sweat, fatigue and constancy, rising before dawn and going to bed after the sun had already gone down.

Their customs, their decisions and their life were all governed and impregnated by sanctity. On entering the

village, the first thing one sees is the parish church of St. Cecilia, the patroness, a beautiful romanesque construction, of three naves and three semi-circular apses. It was already there in 1115 and was conserved in perfect condition - the façade was restored in 1710 - till the civil war of 1936-39 when it was destroyed by an explosion of the gunpowder installed in it, an explosion that also caused great damage in the town.

With the church, a house attached to it disappeared. One door of the patio opened on to the village cemetery next to the church, according to the custom of the epoch. This house had been the home of the "Bonal Family of the Cemetery", a nick-name by which the branch of the family in which Juan Bonal would be born, differentiated it for several generations.

In the books of the archives of the parish of St. Cecelia of Terrades the surname Bonal is found abundantly, even though in many cases, belonging to a different lineage and not linked to each other, at least from the XVIIth century.

The most remote ancestor found of Juan Bonal is his great-great-grandfather Pedro Bonal, who in 1705, being seriously ill, made his Will and left funds for a perpetual anniversary mass for his soul and for that of his son Juan. Years later, as stated by the book of Foundations, this double anniversary continued to be celebrated and it is "James of the Cemetery" who pays for the same.



Jaime Bonal and Rosa Trilla, paternal grand-parents of the servant of God had seven children. Among them, José, the eldest of the male children was destined by God to form, with Francisca Cortada, a Christian home.

Thus was the act of celebration stated, in the third book of Marriages of the Parish of St. Cecilia of Terrades. Translated from Catalan, it says: "On the twenty-second day of the month of November of the year one thousand seven hundred and sixty-eight: I, Vicente Bonacasa Priest Domero, Priest of the Parish Church of St. Cecilia of Terrades of the present Bishopric of Gerona, obtained the licence issued on the eighteenth of the said month and year, from the Illustrious Señor Don Domingo de Berenguer, Vicar General, and from the office of the Illustrious Lord Bishop of Gerona, (the marriage banns having been read out), to assist at the marriage celebrated between JOSE BONAL, young worker of the said parish, legitimate and natural son of Jaime Bonal, worker of the said parish and of Rosa Bonal y Trilla his wife, and FRANCISCA, spinster, legitimate and natural daughter of Juan Cortada and Magdalena Cortada y Moní, his deceased wife, and having interrogated them and having understood the mutual consent of the said persons contracting marriage through their words, there present in the above mentioned church of Terrades, I joined them in matrimony according to the rites of Holy Mother the Church, the following being present as witnesses: Francisco Pau, farmer from Palau Sarroca and Gregory Soler, worker, all from the said parish of Terrades. On the twenty-third of the said year and month, the Nuptial Blessing Mass was celebrated".

Francisco Cortada was inhabitant by birth of Vilademiras, of the municipal limit of Cabanellas and Archparish of Mont. The area, irrigated by the Monal, extends towards the left bank of the Ter and is undulating with a large number of hillocks and higher mountains.

The Sanctuary of the Virgin of the Mount, centre of pilgrimage of the area, is situated at 1,225 metres, on the top of one of these elevations, and has been called: the Mount.

The Sanctuary was built at this height, and from it Mary and Her Divine Son, seem to want to extend the horizon of the territory notably, and bless, protect and animate all its inhabitants and those of beyond.

Constructed in the XIVth Century, it is made of masonry and in the romanesque style; the beautiful titular image of marble is from the nearby quarries of Bleuda. The Virgin is seated on a rock with the Child Jesus standing on her left knee. The Child has in His left hand a book and with the right, gives the blessing. The sculpture seems to remind us that she, Mary, is the Throne of Wisdom.

In 1936 this image was thrown over the cliff side. The scattered pieces were carefully collected and put together, and thus restored, it was returned to the Sanctuary in 1941. Some years later, commissioned by the Lord Bishop Castañá of Gerona, the Capuchin Fathers took possession of the Sanctuary for its custody.

Vilademiras, at the end of the XVIIth Century had about twenty inhabitants, almost all of them in dispersed farm houses, characteristic of the farm or labour homes. The Farm House of Corominas is mentioned, as seemingly outstanding, with its own private Chapel, where the Baptism of some of their members was celebrated with water from the Baptismal Fonts of the parish of San Mateo, titular of the local church. Other farms were those of Veinat, Cortada del Monte and Cortada de Abajo.



The great grandparents of Juan Bonal Cortada, on the maternal side, are Isidro Cortada and Francisca Moret. Isidro is the son of Mateo, who comes from the family that was the proprietor of the Cortada de Abajo farm.

The Cortada Moret couple had at least six children. The second of them was baptised in 1715 with the names of Pedro Juan Andrés, but he must have been called Juan, as that is the way it appears in the Death Certificate of the 30th of November 1790, where this information is added: that when he died he was 75 years old. Hence, this coincides with the birth in 1715.

Juan Cortada Monet joined his life by marriage, with that of Magdalena Moní Giola, whose family, also from Gerona, came from Pins. In 1745 they receive, as a blessing of God, the first fruit of their matrimony, a daughter. The second was also a girl and was baptised with the names Francisca Teresa Magdalena. At least six children more gave joy to this Christian home, school of virtue and of work.

Juan Cortada and Magdalena Moní would be the grandparents of our Father Juan. The grandmother did not live to see this first and privileged grandson. Magdalena died in 1767, one year and several months before her daughter Francisca married José Bonal.

Magdalena made a Testament six days before her death. In it, her profound faith and her serene acceptance of death were stated, abandoning herself with confidence into the hands of her Creator; it manifested her desire to be buried in the grave of her ancestors of the Cortada House, and entrusted her descendants with having, besides the services - at which nine priests would assist - a novena of Masses to be celebrated for her soul.

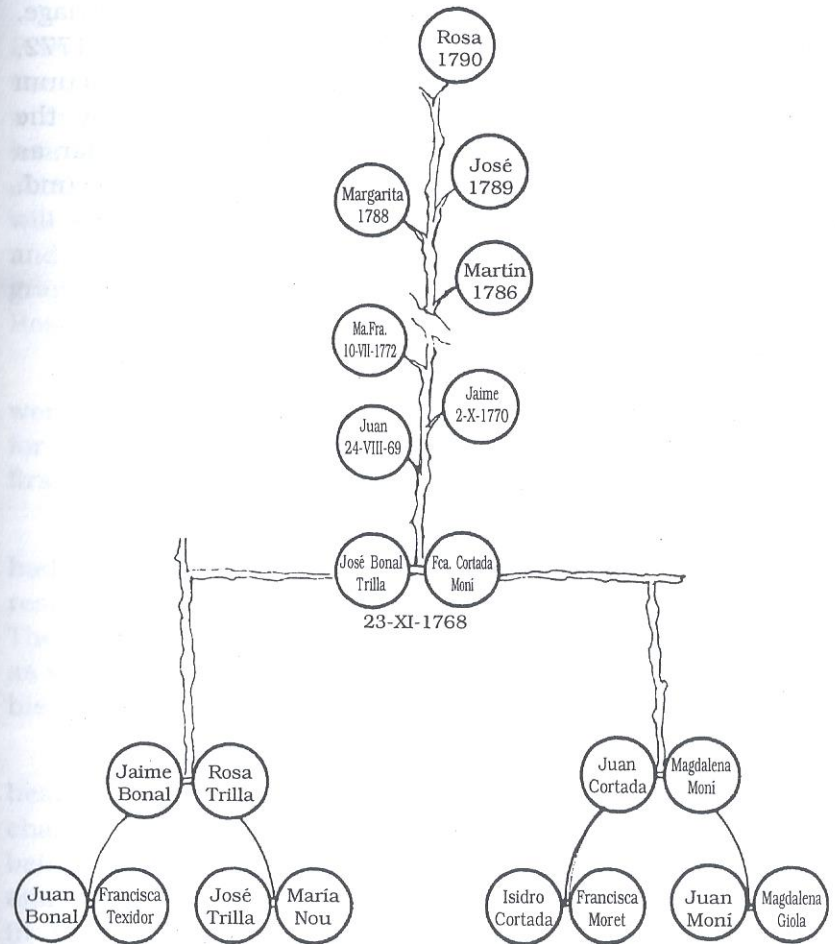
She names as universal inheritor of all her moveable and immoveable property, her son Isidro, the eldest of the male children as was the custom of the time in many regions of Spain. If he died, the other son of the couple would follow by right, and in the absence of them, one of the six girls, maintaining the order of primogeniture.

This Will confirms, with regard to the maternal ancestry, what was expressed in a fairly ancient report preserved in the archives of the General House. The author affirms, referring to the matrimony of the parents of Father Juan Bonal, whose biography we are writing, that they belonged "to families distinguished by their position and well-known among their neighbours for their piety and sanctity which, inherited from their ancestors, was also the richest patrimony of the young newlyweds."

Another fact that manifests the active participation of the Cortada family in the life of the parish of Vilademiras is, besides their assisting at all the acts of cult and receiving the Sacraments, their availability to assume the spirit and collaborate in the work of the confraternities that were instituted in them.

In the Book of Souls of the parish, in 1758, it is mentioned that Isidro Cortada together with Pedro Batlla, "give an account of the two years they administered the work". Some months later, Magdalena Moní is elected for this administration of the religious funds, and the following year, she presents the accounts with regularity.

In 1764, Isidro Cortada receives the responsibility of the Blessed Sacrament and in 1765, he is re-elected once again. In this same year, Magdalena Cortada is named the chambermaid of Our Lady. Isidro Cortada still appears in 1796, and in 1800, Rosa Cortada de Abajo and Maria Cortada de Arriba are the new "servants of the Mother of God".





The data obtained at the parish archives of St. Cecilia de Terrades and San Mateo de Vilademiras now permits us to present as a unit, the genealogical tree with its roots of ancestors and the family branch of the one that gave the meritorious fruit of Juan Bonal Cortada.

Among the descendants of the Bonal-Cortada marriage, there is a missing link between María Francisca, born in 1772, and her brother Martín, who arrived in 1786. This vacuum is due to the loss of the parish books caused by the destructive wars and the invasions. The branch, as far as the family was concerned, was actually much more fecund.



José Bonal, as the eldest of the family, established himself, with his wife, in the same house, at the side of the church and the cemetery, that his elders continued to occupy. In it, they receive in 1769, their first son, on the day of San Bartolomé, the 24th of August.

Three days later, through the ministry of the Parish Priest of Terrades, Don Vicente Bonacasa, who administers the Sacrament of Baptism to him, God communicates to him a new supernatural life, joins him to a new family, taking him into the Church and officially giving him the name of JUAN. By this name, the symbol of his own identity, his family will know him and we will know him. The names of José and Jaime are added. His godparents were his maternal grandfather, Juan Cortada, and the paternal grandmother, Rosa Trilla.

The birth of every child is a great gift of God to the world; that of Juan arrived full of unblemished joy, as much for the Bonal family as for the Cortada family, he being the first grandchild for both branches of the family.

If at that moment this lofty project that Divine Providence had fixed for this child were only known... , the admiration, respect and gratitude to God would have been even greater. The works of God usually have weak beginnings, as weak as was that infant who cried at the contact of the water with his skin.

And who later grew up playful and happy, like any other healthy child; who was marked by not only physical characteristics, but also moral and spiritual ones, that were being imprinted on him by his home, his village, his time, and above all, grace! The birth of his little brother Jaime, in 1770, when Juan could hardly do without the arms of his mother for just a little while, and who had just begun to drag himself under the table, without being able as yet to stand up freely, would undoubtedly have an influence on his character formation. He had now to stop being the only centre of attention, sharing love and care, which is a good

formative base for the future he would have to live; detachment, concern for others, self abnegation, total charity.

He was not yet three years old when he received Confirmation, together with his little brother Jaime, both having as their godfather, their uncle José Bonal. The Sacrament was administered in Figueras on the 1st of July 1772, by Don Manuel Palomero y Rallo, Bishop of Gerona.

When he reached school-going age, he went to classes given in his own village. Don Pablo Rumbau was the Master when Juan was 7 years old. Don Anton Franch is also mentioned, and some years later, Don Baldomero Caritg. All of them were dedicated to the education of children in Terrades. Basing ourselves on the concern for studies that Juan would later demonstrate, it is fitting to deduce that he would be a studious little boy, taking interest in and profiting from the lessons he would receive.

Besides home and school, there would be abundant opportunities to learn the principles of religion at the catechism classes at the parish, where he would learn and exercise, undoubtedly, the office of altar-boy. Sanctity in practice, profound piety, would keep giving life to his life, assisting at the great celebrations of the feasts of the Patron Saints, pilgrimages to the hermitage of Santa Magdalena, visits to the Sanctuary of the Mother of God of Health, where the Principal Chaplain and two more priests resided to attend to the pilgrims. And where his uncle Martin, his father's brother also worked. All this offered him beauty and enchantment; his life was serene, simple, but rich in authentic values.



The life of the young Juan continued getting enriched because he never knew to stop, he never made himself rigid, he never felt definitively satisfied with what he had achieved. As soon as he achieved one goal, he had another in perspective, and every new objective created once again a new stimulus.

After concluding his elementary studies he may have received Latin classes imparted by one of the priests who was in Terrades; these years, Don Vicente Bonacasa and Don Gregorio Durán, besides those who attended to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Health have been cited. He could also have gone to Figueras, where there were more possibilities to widen the range of his studies. We know for sure that when he was twenty years old, he was inscribed in the famous University of Huesca, successor of the "Schola" founded by the Roman General Quinto Sertorio.

At the Sertoriana, he did three courses of Philosophy. Among the Certificates of Assistance and Proficiency signed by the Professors are those relating to the years 1789 and 1790, in favour of Juan Bonal by the University Professor of Philosophy Dr. Don Andrés Villanueva. The certificate affirms that he did the course of Logic, Ethics and Metaphysics with **precision and proficiency**. The certificates are preserved today in the database of the University, at the moment taken to the Provincial Historical Archives of Huesca.

His graduation as Bachelor of Philosophy on the 30th of May 1791, together with Don Severo Andriani of Barcelona and Don Antonio Guerri of Alcolea de Cinca is recorded. The examiners were Peralta, Villanueva and Allué. The Rector presided.

The plans of God, through human doings, were taking Juan Bonal closer to Aragonese lands. Gerona had its University of ancient tradition, founded by Alfonso V of Aragon in 1446, but disappeared as such in 1717, when all the Catalan Universities were incorporated into the University of Cervera by Felipe V who upheld in this manner

to the fidelity maintained towards Cervera, in the War of Succession.

From then on, Huesca was converted into the centre of formation for the greater part of the Catalan students, who numbered approximately 50 per cent of the 600 who studied at the Sertoriana at the end of the XVIIIth Century.

During the earlier two centuries, several University College residences were being created around the University: the Imperial of Santiago, that of San Vicente Mártir or the Merced, that of San Bernardo and the Real of Santa Orosia. Few students were taken on in each of them - from thirteen to fifteen - and in the Imperial, cleanliness of blood was required. There was also that of Santa Cruz, which was at the same time a seminary, with about twenty students from humble families, who went to the University to study for a priestly career. Having gone through the inscriptions of the period, the name of Juan Bonal was not found.

Numerous lodging houses of different economic levels were open to the students. Some were taken in, in the home of a canon or a priest who they helped, receiving in exchange board and lodging. This may have been the method chosen by Juan Bonal who did not mind any effort as long as he could make progress in his studies. It was a good means for one who could not permit himself great extravagances, and at the same time offered personal and moral security. Young students often stayed at pensions for illicit games, quarrels or robbery, and this of course did not go with the personality and the ideal of Juan Bonal.



When Juan Bonal went to Huesca to study Philosophy, he left at home, besides his parents, his brother Jaime of eighteen years who frequently shared not only his work but also his ideals and projects of youth that look at the future with enthusiasm. His sister Maria was seventeen years old and Martin was three. In the first years of his absence, new fruits of life reached the home: José and Rosa. She was born in 1790.

Leaving home and village, where everything that was till now the highly valuable framework of his affective life, was a moral effort for Juan. Neither was it easy to adapt himself to this spending of hours and days dedicated exclusively to study, in a city till now unknown to him.

He arrived at an opportune moment of the Sertoriana which had from the beginning of the century its own building and was well conditioned for its function. It had also been reformed with new statutes and from 1786 presented a line of modernization, even though too slow, of the curriculum of study.

The courses were held from the middle of October to the middle of June. The opening was usually on the feast of St. Luke. Frequently, the students from further away saw it necessary to justify their late coming by the heavy rains that made the roads so bad that it was not possible to travel. They had to stay at some inn, sometimes up to ten days. In 1789, the year in which Juan Bonal was at the University, the students asked for the classes to be closed in April so that they could go home because of the failure of their crops. It was not granted to them.

At the University, the language employed for all academic activity, specially in literary acts, was Latin. It has been proved that Juan did well. There is a Certificate issued by the President of the Board of the Hospital of Zaragoza, in 1820. The manuscript and various prints of the same year and the following are preserved. In the said document, Don Vicente Ximénez affirms of Don Juan Bonal:

"That he studied Philosophy at the University of Huesca, distinguishing himself by his application and brilliance in his studies; defending and arguing several times at the public acts that took place every Saturday at the said University.

That he was worthy of defending public Disputations, taking into account his merit, the said University defrayed his expenses of printing and they decorated him 'omnino' gratis (honorary), with the Bachelor Degree of this Faculty".

In his everyday living with his numerous countrymen he would use Catalan. Some of them were from his own village: in these years, José Pons of Terrades was cited as a student of Philosophy. But in his relationship with other colleagues, in his daily social life, he would frequently have to express himself in Spanish, which meant great effort and willpower to master the official language of the nation.

Certainly, he could not then have imagined the number of sermons he would have to preach and the long hours he would spend in the Confessional attending to the needs of the faithful of Aragon, of Castille and other Spanish regions outside Cataluña. Divine Providence knew it. And we today, looking back retrospectively, can admire how God, silently and mysteriously kept preparing Juan Bonal for this and other arduous and glorious tasks that he had reserved for him.



As of then, Juan did not have his vocation well defined. Even though it is possible that he had already heard the call to a life totally consecrated to the interests of the Kingdom, he desired to make sure and to begin his response in an activity that could serve him more as the source of Apostolate than as the simple exercise of a profession.

What is certain, is that it was during these years, while he was studying Philosophy in Huesca, he appeared for public entrance examinations for the Professorship of Grammar in Ripoll y Sampedor, "performing in them the literary exercises to the satisfaction and approval of the Examiners, as also in the one in which they conferred on him the Teaching Degree, which he renounced after a few months so as not to abandon his career". This is what was stated in the earlier cited Certificate of Don Vicente Ximenéz.

No other data exists with respect to the same. This is not strange. In 1793, Ripoll y San Juan de las Abadesas suffered an unexpected invasion of French troops. They pillage both towns, leaving them almost totally destroyed, with everything signifying any value perishing, among them books and papers from its archive.

Neither does there exist any documentation of this period in the municipal archive of Sampedor. Hence, we have to be content with knowing that in this small municipality of Barcelona, depending in judicial matters on the protection of Manresa, separated from it by only seven kilometres, is where Juan Bonal gave his first official teaching lessons.

So as not to abandon his career, after a few months he renounced his Teaching Degree and went to Barcelona where he studied three years of Theology in the College of the Dominican fathers.

In the XVIIIth century in Barcelona, the Dominicans imparted classes of Philosophy and Theology and conceded grades to a large number of students in their convent of Santa Catalina, founded in the XIIIth Century, and in the

College of San Vicente Ferrer and San Raimundo de Peñafort, of a more recent foundation, 1668. In this, by disposition of the Foundress, Doña Eulalia Ferrer y Jordá, the collegians had all to be from the same Principality, paying great attention to their capacity and talent. They had to be rigourously examined twice during the course and those who were found to be not profiting, were removed from the College. Knowledge and irreproachable conduct went together on an equal footing.

But the Royal Order of 1717 prohibited graduations, and limited the studies of Philosophy and Theology in any school, convent or community to only the religious and servants residing in them; there was in the whole Principality, only the University of Cervera where there were six Chairs of Philosophy and seven of Theology, where the study of Philosophy and Theology could be undertaken.

In 1766, the Dominicans of Barcelona, in a representation directed to the King, solicited the authority to publicly teach the doctrine of Saint Thomas. This request was denied to them "because, if the hands are opened to the Dominicans, all the other Orders will then claim the same". Gravitating on this reason of the Council, the prohibition still continued in force in the last decade of the century, when Juan Bonal did his three Courses of Theology at the College of the Dominicans of Barcelona.

Did he do them, attached to the community of Santa Catalina or as a servant of the House? With a benevolent interpretation and mitigated by the law, was he admitted as a pupil there or in the College of San Vicente y San Raimundo? We do not know. The conditions of endowment were fulfilled.



Juan Bonal, after the three courses studied in Barcelona, solicited that they be incorporated in the University of Zaragoza and solicited his admission and registration to do the fourth course of Theology and Church History.

We do not know whether he got his degree on completing the course. May be he had to return later. To be a Bachelor in Theology one had to be ordained "in sacris", at least as a subdeacon, and Bonal had still not received the tonsure.

We later find Juan Bonal in the Baronal town of Reus, a town of ecclesiastical Lordship, whose natural Lord was the Archbishop of Tarragona. From 1785, Fr. Francisco Armanyá of the Order of St. Augustine occupied the See, in which he carried out successive tasks of responsibility: Novice Master, Prior of the convent of Igualada and Provincial Superior of Aragon and Cataluña. To his pastoral concerns was united the social and cultural projection of his activities: campaigns in favour of instruction, founding of free schools and contribution to public works of the city with sizeable personal contributions.

Under his direction, Reus offered itself as a model in relation to the limited education of those years. Many were the Masters who had private classes, but besides this, there were six Masters for primary education for boys and three for girls and another two of Grammar, all supported by the Municipality. By an agreement made corporately, on the 10th of September 1623, the Grammar classes were conferred through a competitive examination so as to improve their quality. With the same purpose, a room for primary teachers was granted from 1701. From 1796, six Sisters of Charity were entrusted with the public classes for girls. Negotiations for the establishment of a municipal school under the direction of the Escuelas Pias (Pious Schools) had been going on for several years.

On the 10th of September 1796, the Municipal Corporation met because "as a consequence of two posts of

Latin and Grammar teachers being vacant, edicts were issued for the competitive exams, in all the towns and villages of the Principality, indicating the first, second and third day of the current month for the execution of the same".

Seven were selected from among those who took part in the literary exercise in the presence of the five members of the tribunal named for the case, the Municipality in session and numerous individuals of the town who wished to be present at the competitive examination.

The proposal made by the Governor Dean, was attended to by the Municipality. The results presented by the examiners were scrutinised. The reports they had of the conduct and learning of those taking part were considered. On the basis of the reports, they "were recognised as apt and capable, especially Rev. Don Jaime Serratosa, Priest, a person of advanced age, characterized by the state of priesthood and experienced in teaching (he was already a Grammar teacher in Vilaseca), and Don Juan Bonal, of irreproachable conduct". Both accept their nomination and, with their signature on the Statutes, they assumed the responsibility of observing them.



Those first years when Juan Bonal exercised his teaching profession, Reus was going through a difficult economic situation.

In the counter-offensive to France, provoked by the continuous invasions of Spanish territory and after the war openly declared against Spain in 1793, Reus had contributed well-conditioned barracks and pavillions for the army that came from the north or was returning there, and supplied food and care to the same. Even more, to the army and navy in the fortified town, had to be added the men between fifteen and forty years of age, who had to enlist at the Somatén and be available for the defence of the motherland.

Those above forty years were permitted to send a substitute or if not, pay the daily amount assigned by the Board to compensate for not doing this service which was obligatory for every citizen. At first, though, volunteers were called "for the time it was possible for them, so as to not take them away from their labours".

But all of them were too few to oppose the French forces and, with their being incorporated into the fight, everything was abandoned: agriculture, thousands of jobs of craftsmanship, industry and commerce that had reached such prosperity and development in the previous years. In 1797, two years after the peace pact in Basle, it was still written: "The complete paralysis of work has put the labour class in the greatest misery, without the town having the means to deal with it".

There was no dearth of work for Juan Bonal. This year, 1797, there were 80 students assisting at the Grammar school. From the Statutes it is deduced that the most difficult task fell on the Assistant, "as it was he who had to initiate them into Latin, explain the rules, clarify their doubts and accompany them totally in their study, developing in them the art of writing, composition, interpretation, etc., and even evaluating their progress, present it to the Master, who after extensive examination, admitted them to his class if he thought them sufficiently capable".

However, they show rectitude and justice saying: "even though in these Statutes the name of Assistant is used, this does not mean that he is dependent on the Master, both being in the same circumstances; and they are very rigourously advised to be in perfect agreement and union between them in what concerns the teaching and customs of their disciples."

They should understand each other in their work, the Reverend of advanced age and the young aspirant to the priesthood. Undoubtedly, this same ideal of life and mission favoured their compenetration from the time they knew each other, because when all the contestants stamp their names accepting the bases, Juan Bonal signs for himself, and below you read: "on assignment of the Rev. Jaime Serratosa, Juan Bonal", that is to say, he has been delegated by the Presbyter, absent at this Act, to endorse his conformity.

Beautiful labour that God provides them with! The Statutes recommend that they inspire in their disciples, with gentleness, a just horror for vice and love for virtue and purity of life, and instruct them well in the doctrine and mysteries of our faith; the practice of communion every month with the assistance of both Masters, etc.

Accompanied by the presbyter Serratosa, the work of Juan Bonal in Reus could be the gateway to an elevated apostolate, the joyous preparation of the ministerial task that will later be entrusted to him by the Church.



The year after getting incorporated into the teaching profession at Reus, Juan Bonal reaches his first direct goal towards the priesthood, receiving the clerical tonsure in the diocese of his native land.

In the Book of Orders, Letters Dimissory... and other testimonies issued by the secretary of the Diocese of Gerona, from June 1790, it is recorded that on the 11th of August 1797, the Lord Bishop of Gerona, Don Santiago Pérez Arenilla, conferred special minor orders in the chapel of the Episcopal Palace, before the secretary of the Pontifical Exchequer, and conferred the first clerical tonsure to Juan Bonal Cortada.

The tonsure consisted of shaving the hair from a small part of the head, the crown of the head. In that period, it constituted a preparatory degree for the minor orders and the Bishop could only confer it to the aspirant who had the firm purpose of reaching the priesthood and who had at least begun the theological course.

In normal situations the minor orders would have taken place without much time space after the tonsure and in the same diocese. But the immediate goals of Juan Bonal were delayed more than he would have desired. The cited orders are the last conferred by Bishop Pérez Arenillas; two months later he passed away, leaving the See vacant till the end of August 1798, when Don Juan Agapito Ramirez de Arellano was recommended for it.

In 1972, because of the motu proprio "Ministeria quaedam" of Paul VI, the tonsure and the minor Orders were suppressed, and the diaconate constituted the entry to the clerical state. But with the norms in force at the end of the XVIIIth century one had to pass successively from being ordained as Ostiary (door-keeper), Reader, Exorcist and Acolyte, before receiving the major orders. When and where could Juan Bonal have received them?

The recently-tonsured would have holidays at that time as it was still summer in the month of August. Maybe he

would go to celebrate the happy event with his family, all the more so if he had not been to his village for a few years.

In his family, there were painful absences, spaces difficult to fill in affectively: his paternal grandfather had passed away on the 2nd of June 1795 in Bañolas and in February, the younger brother of the same grandfather, in Esponellá. Both areas, like all the places of Cerdeña and Fluvia were witnesses, in 1795, of fierce fights between the Spanish who defended their land, culture, monarchy and religion and the French invaders who tried to dominate and impose their politics.

Many valiant persons gave their lives in this defence. The French finally and definitively were hurled out of Spanish Cerdeña; defeated and hurt, several of their Generals lost all their positions in Cataluña, except the castles of Rosas and Figueras.

At home, his little brother José of six years, had died. Notwithstanding, faith, which is the only thing that gives true meaning to life, maintained a climate of serenity and hope in the home, where everyone lived united in a joy that transcended all loss, all pain, all work, however painful.

Juan Bonal would come back to his own life in Reus, renewed in his apostolic ideals, desiring to meet his boys whom he tried to teach much more than Latin declinations: the path of true happiness, which is that of good and of virtue.



Were the students of the grammar school surprised on the first day of class of the year 1797-98 when they saw their professor Bonal dressed with a black soutane and a circle of shaved skin on his head very clearly showing his option for the clerical state?

These boys were well-accustomed to full length clothes of cassocks and habits. For spiritual attention, the seven thousand three hundred and seven inhabitants which this town had this year, Reus could count on the Franciscans, the Carmelites and the Paulines, one hundred and twenty three in all, besides the forty six secular priests. The figure before them then was not strange.

But certainly, for them the situation was different. Now it is their professor who has apparently undergone a transformation, he does not seem the same; they will soon realise that he is! If they did not know earlier about his vocation to the priesthood, because he did not manifest it, now this peculiar conduct and personality of Juan Bonal becomes evident. In his classes and in his dealings, he showed much interest in them, in their well-being, in their formation. He dedicated time and attention, with much generosity beyond the behaviour of a responsible professional.

In a memorial dedicated to the King four years earlier, in 1793, the Municipality and other authorities of Reus manifested their preoccupation for the formation of children and youth. Concretely, "because inspite of the classes of Grammar being adjudicated to the Masters by competitive examination, it was seen that the most perfect teaching was not achieved because all the support required for the purpose of teaching the various subject was not available." As a solution, a project was proposed for which royal authorization was asked.

Permission for the whole project must not have arrived, because with Serratosa and Bonal, the same method was followed. But the notables of the town could now be at ease: the young students were in good hands and the said



authorities could check the same in the examinations that the students had to do at the Municipality when they were called upon to do so, with only two days notice. Thus there was no time to camouflage the reality with a rapid and superficial preparation.

The results, already in the first course, would be proportionate to the abnegation and continuous dedication of Bonal, motivated by a transcendent ideal. They would now continue in this same pattern. His life did not in any way change. If it did, it was in greater assiduity to the things of God, greater surrender in service, greater preoccupation for the painful situation of many of his brothers, in need of consolation and help.

Reus, which years earlier could talk of the "lucrative life proper to the town", of "the extremely great products of the people and the excesses", now expresses with pain that "the complete paralysis of work had placed the daily labourers in great misery without the town having the means to attend to it. Besides, the payment of the Basque militia had to be defrayed. Hence, all the guilds convoked, and agreed to fix a tax on meats" with which product, the most urgent needs were barely attended to.



It was not yet a month since receiving the tonsure when Juan Bonal initiated the course in Reus on the day of the Nativity of the Most Holy Virgin, as stipulated by the rules in force.

His vocation continues alive and hence he makes transactions in the diocese of his actual residence soliciting that he be conceded minor orders. But the Archbishop of Tarragona, Don Francisco Armanyá, does not foresee orders in the Ember Week of September and hands over to Juan as to the other aspirants, the dismissory letters necessary to obtain their objective in another diocese.

The dispatches to Juan express: "To our beloved Christ, Don Juan Bonal, Cleric, native of the village of Terrades of the diocese of Gerona, health in the Lord. So that you may freely and licitly receive from the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Catholic Lord Bishop, whom you choose..., the four minor Orders, with title of patrimony founded in our Archdiocese with the consent of the Ecclesiastical Judge of origin..., we grant you the licence: And to the same Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Lord Bishop, to whom we send information on your examinations and tests that you, capable and suitable in age, life, customs and birth, and in doctrine, science and other requisites of the Holy Tridentine Council and of the Apostolic Constitutions of Innocent XII and XIII... and in the spiritual exercises, you are deserving of them, we grant you the faculty so that you may concede to him the said orders legitimately, on the lines of the present ones. Given in Tarragona, on the twelfth of September of the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety seven".

Already in the beginning of August, it was communicated to the other suffragan dioceses of Tarragona that the Ecclesiastical Judge of Vic had determined to 'administer general orders' in the Ember Week following the Feast of St. Matthew.

Vic could be defined, because of its small area, as an intermediate diocese among the Catalan dioceses. With regard

to the economic resources, it was among the poorest of Spain and only Solsona was below it. On the other hand, it always maintained a character of profound spirituality, ferment of priestly vocations that amply filled the needs of parish service and the care of souls, the Chapters of the Cathedral and the Collegiates, the Residences of Beneficence and the Chaplaincies. It could even provide inhabitants to the dioceses and send a large number of missionaries to the then far away America. To this diocese, so rich spiritually, Juan Bonal went to achieve a new goal in his aspirations. He knew this area well, and was in contact with many of its ecclesiastics in those first years of the dozen in Ripoll and Sampedor, parishes of the diocese of Vic.

In the diocesan archive, much deteriorated because of a fire suffered in the war of 1936-39, five bundles of papers, are preserved, which include the ordinations of 1797 carried out by the Most Illustrious Lord Bishop Don Francisco de Veyán y Mola. On a page, burnt at the upper left corner, there appears a list of those who received the successive grades of minor orders in September and ends with the names of seventeen subjects ordained as acolytes. The name of Juan Bonal appears in the fifteenth place among these young, generous and ambitious men who aspire to carry out the greatest service that could be offered by any person: the ministerial priesthood.



At the end of the first trimester of the year 1798-99, Juan is ready to take the next step towards the priesthood.

Don Bartolomé Soler writes to the secretary of the Bishop of Lerida on the 14th of December: "Continuing, My Most Illustrious Lord, in taking the benefit of the inestimable favour continually dispensed by the goodness of this My Venerated Most Illustrious Lord Bishop, our ordained subjects named in the adjoining list will receive the sacred orders from your hands, that I will preside at the Mass, if it is to the satisfaction of Your Most Illustrious Self." The list is accompanied by the dimissory letters granted for the purpose by the Lord Bishop Don Francisco Armañá.

Don Jerónimo María de Torres, who celebrated the ordinations in the Chapel of the palace on the 21st and 22nd of December 1798, occupied the seat of Lleida from 1783. These days he had before him, 80 young men who, responding to the call of God, committed their lives to the task of the Gospel, continuing in the Church, the mission of Jesus. Of them, 12 presented themselves to the first accolade, the tonsure; 16 received minor orders, 19 the subdiaconate, 18 the diaconate and 15 the presbytership.

Among those ordained was Juan Bonal Cortada, who returned to Reus as a deacon. Only the final preparation was left and the fixing of dates for his sacerdotal ordination and the happy celebration of his First Mass. At those times, the diaconate could not be conceived without the prior ordination to the Presbytership, so linked to it, that the Bishop could not confer it except on those who demonstrated a firm intention and the qualities required to ascend towards the priesthood.

All the aspirants to the presbyterate were asked as a habitual disposition, promptness of spirit for good, an attitude that they should manifest in constant exercise of virtue, as much as a cult to God, imitation of Jesus Christ, profound devotion to the Most Blessed Mary, daily Mass,

dedication to mental prayer, as in all other works and deeds of life. In it, purity, humility, detachment, responsible dedication to their task, benignity, generosity and meekness, charity, and in a word, that they embrace all of them. Juan Bonal not only lived them, rather, with his example and his teachings, stimulated his disciples to practice them.

The grammar students and their professors formed a kind of Confraternity based at the Church of the Most Pure Blood, where, by disposition fixed by the Statutes, they had to assist monthly to participate in the Mass of General Communion.

They attended corporatively also, at the solemnities of the Church and the school feasts of inveterate tradition, specially on the day of their Patron, St. Thomas Aquinas.

In the Act of a pastoral visit of the Lord Bishop it is stated that in the said Parish Church "the grammar students possess an altar with two images of St. Thomas Aquinas..., one of them is put on the main altar on the day of his feast. The sun on his chest is of gold. They have a relic with two faces: one of St. Thomas, the other of St. Catherine. A silver globe for the communions of each month. A carriage with an image of the Virgin of Soledad with its silver crown, like the ends of the cross also covered with silver."

This tells us about the exterior aspect of the cult; Bonal inculcated in his boys, the spirit of the same: faith, adoration due to God by us, and the coherence that there must be between this faith and life itself.



With the revenue of the tax on meat, the Magnificent Municipality of Reus had established the public soup kitchen whence soup was distributed to all the needy, to a large extent to the daily labourers without work, as a consequence of the past wars.

With this resource, the most extreme misery was slightly mitigated; but the services continue to grow, reaching out to a greater number of inhabitants, and the situation reached precarious proportions; hence the minimum supply of soup could not be considered sufficient. To get more funds and improve the situation, the authorities, using the royal concession, resorted to a weekly lottery, which produced the expected results.

To penury had to be added continuous insecurity, the fragility of a situation that wanted to be called peace, but was ceaselessly not only threatened, but also broken by the attacks of true piracy. This year 1799, the crew of an English warship disembarked at the anchoring grounds of Cambrils and fell onto the defenceless dwellers, with no respect for age or sex, running them over, maltreating them, burning the launches and the poor cottages of the fishermen, sowing panic in the countryside and in the neighbouring towns. Perhaps they did not reach Reus, but the news did reach the people of the town, and with it, the fear, the anguish, the sense of defencelessness and perhaps, lamentably, even an attitude of hatred for the enemy, without being able to differentiate the person himself from his reproachable actions.

In these circumstances of impotency before their own existential problems, the people needed bread certainly, but even more, they needed understanding, closeness, respect, love and faith.

The apostolic spirit of the professor Juan Bonal found in it a good field for work. In a certification dispatched by the Secretary of the Sitiada of the Hospital in favour of Don Juan Bonal, and extended in Zaragoza in 1828, this stage of his life is mentioned. Regarding his stay in Reus it is affirmed:

"In which town, besides the complete discharge of education to youth, in the occupation of which he spent seven years with edification of the town, he also occupied himself when his work permitted, with visiting the imprisoned and the sick of the holy hospital..."

This was the old Hospital of San Juan, which by 1244 had already been constructed on the outskirts of the town on the eastern end, in an area sparsely inhabited in those past centuries. It was anchored to the City rampart on the inside of the same. In 1305 a chapel in honour of St. John the Evangelist and St. John the Baptist was erected in its Church, founding in it a benefice in favour of the Hospital.

Later, in the XVI century, in the plaza in front of the Hospital, the Congregation of the Most Pure Blood constructed a Church, the one to which Juan Bonal went with his boys.

The classes, the church and the hospital were near by. This made it possible for him to use his free time to the maximum, as much in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament as in service to his Lord in the person of the sick. The hospital only had, in its respective wards, about twenty beds for men and thirteen for women. This small number aided his care for them. What is to be admired in Bonal is the profound depth he gave to encounters with every patient or needy person: his vision of faith, his comprehension and welcome acceptance, his squandering of love-charity.



It seems logical that Juan Bonal would be ordained in 1799. It cannot be affirmed with certainty because no statement of date and place has been found, in spite of having searched for it in the archives of all the Catalan dioceses and those of Huesca.

It is very possible that he was incorporated into the priesthood in the Tarragonese Archdiocese, in which he was 'incardinated'. This archive suffered the evils of war, and as a consequence of which the greater part of the documentary base disappeared in the Civil War of thirty-six.

If he had already sung his first Mass before the beginning of the 1799-80 course, he would have celebrated, in the Church of the Most Pure Blood, the Eucharist of the commencement of the course for his old and new students. Some already knew him, others would be captivated by the unction, the fervour, the projection of transcendence, of that something supernatural that he put into all his rites, words and acts on the altar.

This celebration of the 8th September that opened the course, commemorated the Nativity of the Most Holy Virgin. The heart of Mosén Bonal would overflow with joy when he spoke of her, when he directed himself to her, when he recommended her devotion to his students. Precisely, the Eucharist and the Most Holy Virgin were the two great loves of Bonal, right from childhood.

Two days later, on the 10th of the same month of September, the "Gaceta" communicated the ill-fated news of the death of Pius VI, which took place on the 29th of August in Valence (France), at 81 years of age.

In this circumstance, in the requiem Mass, Mosén Bonal would undoubtedly use this happening to carry out a good Catechesis with his students. Pius VI, born Giannangelo Bradschi, elevated to the Pontificate in February 1775, had to face severe difficulties emanating from the anti-clericalism of the Revolution. The French troops defeated the defenders of the Pontifical State and

the Holy Father was obliged to sign the Treaty of Tolentino. The Board of Directors proclaimed the Roman Republic and José Buonaparte was named Minister in Rome.

The old Holy Father was made prisoner and condemned to exile. As he felt very ill, he asked to be allowed to die in Rome, but it was not granted to him, because "dying could be done anywhere". Badly conditioned, in a stretcher, he was made to cross the Alps and reached Valence in such a serious condition that he could not continue the journey and he had to be left there, imprisoned in the citadel. He died six weeks later, acclaimed by the simple people and victim of the secularism that, little by little, was dominating the governments.

In his illness and in the critical circumstances that surrounded him, Pius VI manifested that great serenity of spirit, fruit of solid virtue. Those who accompanied him heard nothing more than praises to the Lord, manifestations of total reverence to the dispositions of Providence, and fervent beseeching of the blessing of God for the Church.

Stripped of honours, of wealth, of prestige and even respect, the Holy Father presented himself before God. Only his good actions, what he had tried to do correctly before God, accompanied him.

At the same time, five hundred wagons transferred to Paris, the best of the art possessed by Rome, rich booty taken by Napoleon.

A lesson for those young men who could feel attracted to false ideas, false brilliance and happiness that the world offers. Only in the service of God, Bonal would repeat to them, does one find the truth.



It has already been indicated how Juan Bonal showed a special vocation for attending to the hospitalised sick with frequent visits, words of consolation and spiritual assistance when he was a priest.

Besides, he felt a great predilection for those rejected by society, those who because of their strange conduct on some occasions, with confirmed acts of delinquency and even criminality are kept away from the community, confining them to prison.

Reus had quite a large public prison, because in it were held all the prisoners of the judicial party. It had the necessary departments and services for men and women. The recluses were mainly male, mature men, but not of advanced age. In the building there was also place, separated from the rest, for the young men detained by way of prevention.

The latter were, undoubtedly, the object of the greatest preoccupation of Bonal, seeking to regenerate those who, because of lack of care and aversion of others, were most exposed to drowning themselves definitively in the muddy mire of vice or in sad loneliness that engenders corporal misfortunes and spiritual misadventure if they do not find a hand to help and lift them, a heart that would love them and animate them. He would dedicate a good proportion not only of his time and his spiritual exhortations, but also his material alms, to the reorientation of their lives.

His charity was not exhausted in the hospitals and in the prison. The misery, the hunger and the pain multiplied rapidly in the further suburbs from the city, places that society does not see, where society consciously avoids going near to, because they do not want to feel the shame of others and their own remorse.

The House of Charity, the existence of which was due specially to the generosity of Don Antonio Rovellat, called Gavacho, had not yet been instituted in Reus. This centre of beneficence had its origin in the year 1809 with the object of admitting, caring for, sustaining and instructing orphans

and needy persons of both genders, children of poor parents, old people, needy and disabled persons. But in these years of activity of Bonal, there was no place for them in the town.

Hence, he was keen on instructing, helping and defending forsaken children and abandoned young girls from so many dangers. He considered them victims of family and social atmosphere that did not facilitate their dignified insertion, the development of a decorous human life and an integral personality. He tried, with his apostolic zeal, to fill in what society denied them.

The charity unfolded by the priest Bonal to fully satisfy the exigencies of his apostolate was very intense. There was no need that he did not attend to, no labour that he refused, no cooperation that he did not extend, nor effort that belittled him.

A book of his period titled "Vocation to the Ecclesiastical State", for discernment to know whether a person is called by God to the priesthood, presents the following affirmative indication of this vocation: "If you have holy zeal for the greater good of souls, for teaching the ignorant and solicitude to get spiritual and temporal subsidy for the poor..."

In the conduct of Bonal, this potential was actualized and was the reason for his life and also his ministry.



The life that Mosén Juan Bonal lived in Reus was of such apostolic quality, so much at the level of the exigencies and evangelical pressure of a zealous soul, that he could have easily been satisfied and could have continued there, his ministry and his profession of educator which he knew how to harmonize with so much fruit, for many, many years.

But, God had other designs for him, and he showed he was willing. Certainly satisfaction and rest with what he had achieved was never typical of Bonal; his idiosyncrasies and his ideals would always manifest themselves in practice, totally opposed to installing himself into one place or activity.

On the 1st of February 1803, the professor of Grammar, Mosén Juan Bonal presented before the Magnificent Municipality of Reus, the voluntary renunciation of his classes, which he conducted from 1796, as it was incompatible with what the Most Illustrious Archbishop of Tarragona, Fr. Francisco Armanyá had presented to him by naming him Vicar of the Parish of Santa Catalina, virgin and martyr, of the town of Vinyols del Camp, where as Parish Priest, Don Francisco Monseny had the care of souls.

The transfer of Bonal must have been immediate, as on the 8th of the same month he solemnly baptises a child born that morning, with the names of Juan Joaquín. Rapid transfer and very short the stay?

We do not know the concrete date of the new appointment, but on the 22nd of February, the signature of Bonal as celebrant appears in the Acts of the Book of Baptisms of the parish of Montroig del Camp. Perhaps this was only a circumstantial act. He did though remain as Vicar of the old Parish of San Miguel Arcángel of the said town, for nine months, at least from the month of June till February of the following year.

The Church of Montroig was truly old, according to data we have taken from some interesting articles published by Don Joan Baptista Noguer, veteran lover of his land and its

history. In its origins, it dated from the end of the twelfth century. Small and narrow for the number of faithful in the XV century, works of extension were done in 1498. Once again, it was widened in the following century. At the end of the XVI century the authorities were obliged, by some common commitment, to complete the temple with the bell tower, the facade and the portal at the side, lengthening the precincts by eight meters.

In 1801 the first stone had been placed for the construction of a new church, and for which, 24 houses were destroyed; but such inconveniences came up that the work was interrupted during long years in which it was utilised for diverse purposes. The inhabitants called it the "Fort", because that is what it was used for during the successive wars of the XIX century.

In the years of peace, the building, the "Fort", frequently served for theatrical representations for which they offered an appropriate framework.

Even though the fact remains almost incomprehensible, the truth is that many years had to pass, almost a century and a half, before they could continue with the work of the new church, cover the vaulted roof, do the flooring and other finishing jobs. Finally, even without being completely finished, on the 25th of September 1943, this new Church was blessed and the Blessed Sacrament could be transferred there from the old one which had deteriorated down the years. The deterioration was increased by the Civil War of 1936-39, in which it lost, among other valuables, all the data of the parochial archive, destroyed in flames.



If the stay of Don Juan Bonal as Vicar of Montroig did not extend more than a few months, his relationship must have been intense and, given his zeal, so would be his work.

On the 27th of August 1803 he signs as witness, to a Will made by Doña Maria Robira, wife of Don Francisco Vidal. Would Don Juan Bonal have special links of friendship with the Robira family? It is curious that the first baptism in Vinyols was of a boy, son of Catalina Robira, whose godparents were Juan Robira and Maria Robira. It could have been one more of those chance situations that happen in life.

What was clear in the Will, the original of which is in the provincial Archives of Tarragona, among the protocols corresponding to Montroig, was that Don Juan Bonal resided in the said town during that time.

Maybe the friendship of Bonal was with the Notary Don Juan Bautista Ferratges, who was also the Secretary of the Municipality. Both functions remained vacant on the 14th of June 1811 when Señor Ferratges was shot dead by the French. This was a sad day for Montroig: besides the seven men executed, the town was vandalised and sacked and its hermitage set on fire.

The hermitage of the Mother of God of the Rock. Ancient hermitage that figures already in 1299, was reconstructed several times because it had been destroyed in successive wars. What could not be destroyed was the love of the faithful for their Virgin of the Rock. Even though sometimes their love for Mary was shown in more universal names like the Virgin of Carmel, of the Rosary and of the Conception, that had their respective altars in the parish.

In them and in the rest - up to eleven altars in the Church of San Miguel of Montroig - there were many beneficiary funds, sung and prayed Masses, anniversaries, responses, vespers and complines. Seventeen Rosaries had to be sung annually by the town.

Thirty-one processions of the Stations of the Cross had to be added to the fixed and traditional ones of Holy Week, the Cross of May, etc.

Life in those times was wholly soaked with religious sentiments which were manifested also at the time of death, as the desire to perpetuate themselves in pious or beneficial foundations.

In this atmosphere, almost of identification of society with the Church, Don Juan Bonal is carrying out his ministry, when we see him take another decision and another destiny: he has asked for permission to shift to and remain in Barcelona.

Tarragona was this year a vacant See, hence it is the Vicar General don Manuel de las Fuentes y de Angostina, who sends the licence to Bonal on the 24th of March 1804, to be absent from the diocese and go on to the city of Barcelona, stating that he had served as vicar in Montroig for a period of nine months "with much application, zeal and exemplary conduct" and that "he is a priest of good life, fame and customs". Phrases perhaps of a routine nature and which in no way reflect the greatness of the soul of Bonal, nor the exigency that accompanied that priest to always give more of himself and try each day to achieve greater amplitude and depth in his duties together with his faithful who come nearer to him who goes closer to those who unconsciously remain far.

With this licence Don Juan Bonal presented himself in Barcelona, without suspecting what Divine Providence had prepared for him over there.



Don Juan Bonal did not act according to his whims and fancies; we will always see an objective towards which he was going nearer through more immediate goals.

In his petition to the Bishop of Barcelona Don Pedro Díaz Valdés he states: "That having been asked to come to this city for the purpose of obtaining a Pious Foundation of Perpetual Masses that had been conferred on him... And on the other hand having been named Vicar of this General Hospital by Your Illustrious Administration... requests that he kindly be conceded equal permission to exercise the said acts in the present diocese for the greater glory of God and good of his neighbour...".

Effectively, Don Juan Bonal was the first to obtain a Chaplaincy that Pedro Baxieres, silversmith, executor of the goods of Pedro Pablo Bartolomeo, had founded in the Monastery of the Magdalenas. This was the name applied to the Augustinian religious, taken from what corresponded to the street where the Convent was situated.

Don Juan Bonal was bound to celebrate the Masses paid for by the interests of goods and some mortgage, but was dispensed from the obligation of celebrating them in the monastery, giving him the liberty to fulfill the obligation anywhere, that is to say, without obligation of residence.

The Chaplaincy, hence, assured Don Juan Bonal the income required for persons ordained for the sacred ministry, and at the same time, it left him all the free time to dedicate himself to this ideal that kept manifesting itself ever clearer: full time assistance to the sick.

In the Book of the "Resolutions of the Very Illustrious Administration of the General Hospital of the Holy Cross of Barcelona" it is stated that on the 2nd of March 1804, the Very Illustrious Administrators "Resolved to appoint Rev. Juan Bonal, Presbyter. as Vicar of this Hospital with the consent of the said gentlemen, presenting him, within a period of three months, the necessary and competent licences."



In the X Century, there already existed in Barcelona a hospital near the residence of the canons and at the Seo. It seemed they formed among them just one Institution with several dependencies. Hence it is known as the hospital of the 'Canonjia' and Hospital of the Holy Cross and of Santa Eulalia.

The Counts, the Prelates, the town council and many individuals gave abundant donations, many of them in houses, fields, vineyards, etc., the produce of which helped to sustain the patients. San Olegario and the canons, in the XII century, disposed that all the beds of the defunct clergy, with their linen, would be adjudicated to the Hospital, with no one being able to oppose the same.

In the XIII century it was joined to the Hospital of the Canon Colom that also depended on the church. In 1401 the Council of Ciento studied and presented to the Bishop and Town Council, a project of adaptation of helping centres, because "it would be very useful for the city and the poor patients if various hospitals with few means and imperfectly administered, were joined into only one, so that it may be notable and distinguished and well administered".

The project was accepted with enthusiasm and it was decided to join the four hospitals, the two which belonged to the Council of Ciento and the two depending on the Bishop and the Town Council.



In the same year 1401 the works of the new hospital began with a solemn and significant act, which resulted in the union of the four earlier hospitals and two others that were added later. However, the buildings of the old centres continued offering public service under the dependence of the Board of Administration of the Hospital of Santa Cruz.

The Administrators, who were granted full powers for everything relating to the Hospital, were four: two canons elected by the Bishop and the Town Council, and two other citizens chosen by the Council.

The Hospital of Santa Cruz inherited the many favours and privileges that the old hospitals enjoyed, and in the course of the years, obtained several other more numerous and important concessions. Besides, in 1405, the Fraternity of the Holy Cross was founded, which allotted great benefits to the charitable establishment with the valuable contribution of its regular quotas, legacies and generous donations. Thus the installations could be extended and new buildings could be constructed: house of the apothecary, hospital of convalescents, department of foundlings, etc.

The greatest benefit of the Fraternities was their presence in the Hospital. They were chosen for a week, and every day two men and two women came there to check the good treatment and care of the patients.

Because, when the Hospital of Santa Cruz was founded, the Fraternities of 'Hospitalers' who had in their charge most of the Establishments of beneficence right from the Middle Ages, were already getting extinguished; hence the Most Illustrious Administration came to lay people, taking precautions that these employees responded duly to their humanitarian office. The Board always searched for and found the best collaboration, in voluntary and disinterested charity.

In the second half of the XVI century, it was the students of the Marian Congregation and above all, the members of the Nativity of Our Lady for lay persons, both

established in the 'Colegio de Belén' of the Jesuit Fathers, who, adding works of mercy to their spiritual exercises came to the Hospital at the time of lunch and dinner to console the patients, wash their hands, serve them and help them in whatever was necessary. This Congregation of the Nativity of Our Lady lavished the Hospital of Santa Cruz with their acts of charity for more than two centuries.

In the XVIII century, they continued using the services of salaried persons, but there were many persons who maintained as a norm of life, work in hospitals: charitable priests, gentlemen and artisans of the city, individually or forming part of some pious association, went periodically to the hospital. From among them arose the group of Jaime Sairols and his companions who, renouncing their work and their home, made themselves available to the Most Illustrious Administration praying that they be admitted as Brother Nurses at the service, day and night, of the poor of Jesus Christ in the Hospital of the Holy Cross.

The good result of the conduct of the Brothers animated the Administrators to carry out the substitution of the lady nurses, of whom three remained with fixed residence in the Hospital for the continuous care of the lady patients. Other ladies and pious young women continued practicing their service to the patients for some hours daily.



Information about the Fraternities of Charity in Cataluña and their influence in the assistance of the patients hospitalized also reached Zaragoza, in whose Hospital Real y General de Nuestra Señora de Gracia, the Administrative Board was concerned with the need for improving the treatment and the personal care of the patients.

For years, the Board with this objective, had been in touch with the Deputy of the Bishop de la Rochela who resided in Madrid, as, because of the French Revolution, many priests and religious found themselves obliged to cross the frontier seeking to freely carry out their life of prayer or active apostolate in Spain. The Sitiada wanted the 'Hijas de la Sabiduria' for the Hospital of Zaragoza; furthermore, even though the discussions were very advanced, they did not reach a final agreement with these Hospitaller Sisters.

Later, in 1790, the Sitiada writes to the Administrators of the Hospital of Santa Cruz asking for reports regarding the advantages obtained by the establishment of the "Society of honest young women united together in charity" who dedicated themselves to the care and assistance of the sick. The reply said that the Society was at the initial stage and with an insufficient number to satisfy all the needs.

They also tried to establish the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, who had already begun their work in the Condal City, but it had no effect.

In 1804 the Sitiada once again is insistent with their request to the Administration of the Hospital of Barcelona. On this occasion, their call found a favourable response and the Vicar of the Centre, Mosén Juan Bonal, accompanied by a young Catalan man shifted to Zaragoza, to check the needs and their possible solution. The dialogue with the Board dealt with the conditions of transfer, installation in the Establishment, offices they should attend to and norms that would govern their dependence on the Sitiada. On the 24th of September, the PACTS with which the Brothers would come were presented and Mosén Juan Bonal was given charge of getting them and bringing them there.

Mosén Juan Bonal did not find it difficult to get together the number of young men asked for, whom he himself directed and tried to guide in their commitment of themselves to this holy exercise of charity. On the 15th of October he communicated to Zaragoza that they were prepared.

The Sitiada was pleased with the news, seeing in it the beginning of the realization of this ideal dreamed of and sought for such a long time. Curiously, one month later, at the Board meeting of the 15th of November, it was determined that Sisters would also come and it was immediately communicated to Bonal so that he could get twelve of them. He soon had them also ready and the two Fraternities, directed by Father Juan started for Zaragoza in the middle of December 1804.

So easily and spontaneously God had presented to Bonal one more new task, and had made another vocation be born in him: the Founder of Fraternities. And he, as he always did, responded - and as he would do in the future, said: Yes. With his actions even more than with his words, he was available: here am I, to do Your Will!

Easy, and joyous was the beginning, directing those young persons, who prayed, sang and laughed happily in their long, two wheeled carts while they helped the guide and driver to extricate the cart that had got stuck in the mud of the road. More difficult and thorny paths awaited Father Bonal.



On which day did Fr. Bonal leave from Barcelona with his young Sisters and Brothers: on the 15th or the 17th? We do not know. What is beyond all doubt is that they would need, as a minimum, ten days for the journey to Zaragoza. It was in December; and winter caught them on the way. A season with the most severe climate this year, very low temperatures, rains every day, storms with thunder and lightning some days; thick fog when nearing Lérida, experience of inhospitable desert when crossing the Monegros.

Day after day, they would unite themselves with Mary and Joseph going to get registered in the place of origin of the male, the head of the family, on the road to Bethlehem, so as to fulfill the edict of Augustus Caesar. Precisely, "Las Jornadas" was a devotion of the period, practiced from the 18th to the 24th of December. With the "Forty Hail Marys" and many other benedictions they honoured the Mother of Jesus who on the back of a donkey, delighted with the contemplation of the Son she was carrying, waited patiently for the moment to hold Him in her arms.

An original Advent for our travellers, pilgrims of charity. A Happy Christmas, even though a very difficult one is what Fr. Juan Bonal with his group of enthusiastic adventurers, would live this year 1804. Naturally, the Christmas Carols and Midnight Mass would not be missing wherever they would have to spend the night; adoration to the Child Jesus would not be missing, offering him the warmth of their hearts, even though exteriorly they were shivering with cold; identification with the shepherds in their own simplicity and generosity would not be missing, neither would be the emulation of The Magi in their gifts to the Child Jesus.

Did they always find inns with relative comfort to rest? They were already twenty-five persons, plus the drivers of the carts and the post-boy. Adding the stables for the animals, one would have to think in terms of a lot of necessary space. If only they had left a written diary of the journey! How many funny anecdotes we have lost of the many they must have had and experienced in their exemplary journey.

When the last ten kilometers were begun to be counted, Fr. Juan, fulfilling what was promised, sent his representative, probably a Brother, to inform the Sitiada that with the favour of God, at eventide on the day of the Holy Innocents, they would make their entry into Zaragoza.

The Board sent the Overseer on the road of the 'Gallego' to meet the Fraternities. They later ordained that the Sisters would be accommodated in the carriages of the Aldermen; the Brothers would continue in their carts till the Puerta del Angel, from where they would go on foot to the Church of Our Lady of Pilar, and wait at the door for the arrival of the Sisters, to enter all together to visit the Virgin. The carts with the poor luggage of the retinue would go straight to the Hospital. These were the dispositions and thus they were fulfilled.

After ten or more days of travelling, the Brothers and Sisters would not reach with the pomp of first timers, but this was the least part. The surprise they had experienced and the exclamation that spontaneously sprung from their lips when they saw the silhouette of the Virgin of Pilar from afar, now became living prayer at the side of Our Lady: they gave her thanks for their happy arrival, they asked her for help to carry out with fervour and ability, the mission for which they had come. Small, but devout and lovable the Virgin appeared to them. Fr. Bonal knew it well; on earlier trips, he had spent long hours before Her because he loved her profoundly.



After the filial visit to Holy Mary of Pilar, the Sisters went to the Hospital. The whole Sitiada received them at the main door of the Hospital Church and they (the travellers) were welcomed and greeted with profound respect, manifesting that they already were aware of the obligations that they had contracted and, with the grace of God, expected to carry them out: they entered the Church and prayed a little while.

In spite of the fact that it was night time and that it "poured cats and dogs" - according to the chronicles -, such was the crowd that accompanied the Fraternities in the short distance from the Pilar till the Hospital, and those who had congregated there at the entrance to the Church, that the Fraternities and the Aldermen could hardly pass.

In the middle of the general merriment of their arrival, there were some who were very much in agreement with having at the Hospital witnesses who presumably kept quiet, without getting involved in anything that was not of their competence, leaving the whole responsibility to the Sitiada, as agreed upon, who only with their presence and rectitude of conduct would convert into reproach, the disorderly actions that were the habitual norm of many of the servants. Hence, what happened is not strange: when the Sisters climbed the main staircase, from among the crowd there, a resonant voice expressing a desire was heard: 'May they break their legs before they reach upstairs!'

This insistence of "such a good friend" on leaving them lame did not go unnoticed by the Sisters. It was an indication of the difficulties that awaited them. It did not come as a surprise to them, they expected it! Fr. Juan Bonal had manifested to them with great clarity and without trying in the least to smoothen it out, the risk they would run because of the situation at the Hospital and the many obstacles they would have to overcome in order to change the circumstances of the Centre. Nothing made them desist from their enthusiasm nor made them vacillate in their object of surrender to God in service to their brother, undertaken with so much

excitement and valour. Was not perhaps the persecution and the crosses a sign that the work was of God?

With the same honesty and integrity they demonstrated on arrival, they went up to the hall where they spoke a little about the journey and other things, till they were told to go down to the Refectory of the ecclesiastics where chocolate was kept ready, which they had to their own satisfaction and that of the Aldermen who were present. The Aldermen were full of joy on seeing their desires realized, i.e., at having in the Hospital these Sisters from whom they expected the greatest progress in the spiritual assistance of the patients and the good government and economy of the House.

Always accompanied by the Sitiada, and directed and presented by Father Juan, they entered the wards of the patients of both sexes, and unthinkable were the tender expressions with which they consoled them. They had to be removed forcibly to the respective sections that were made ready for their habitation.

Even though the Brothers and Sisters, without manifesting tiredness, would have wanted to start their care for the patients immediately, the Sitiada and Fr. Bonal, who knew from experience the fatigue they were under, decided that they would not start effective service till the 1st of January, so that they could rest from the long and difficult journey, arrange their things, plan their work and in these three intermediary days, see something of the City and presented themselves to the Lord Bishop.



**F**austino Casamayor details in his DIARY: "On the 1st of January 1805 the Fraternities began the holy service of assistance to the patients, the Fraternities having taken charge of the Wards of their own gender. And very soon, their usefulness and their advantage was seen in the Infirmaries, by their greater tidiness and cleanliness, greater decency and composure, avoiding the conversations and brawls earlier experienced in them and which could not always be remedied because persons of so much respect were not seen. So also with the punctuality and zeal with which the poor patients were provided with the food and medicines ordered by the medical professionals. Also by the consolation they received from the Brothers with their good treatment and example, exercising them as far as their painful situation permitted, in exercises of devotion and inclining them towards conformity so necessary in work and affliction. Later these Fraternities were given several responsibilities that were fulfilled by them with the greatest exactitude, zeal, disinterest and economy".

The hopes of the Sitiada were fulfilled, and that was manifested so many times to Father Bonal during that month he spent at the Hospital. "Diverse meetings were held with him. The Official Record which presented the Pacts under which the Fraternities would work was examined with great care. And in order to proceed with all prudence, it was agreed by the Sitiada to prepare another, taking into account the extremes of the earlier. They would individually include what corresponded to the diverse quality of a General Hospital and was in conformity with the government of the same, as established by its Royal ordinations. This arrangement of the Sitiada was communicated to the said Don Juan, so that with frankness he could expose the grievances they laboured under and the matter was terminated with equanimity... **and it was recommended that before enlisting anyone of either gender in their respective Fraternity and with prior reports of their conduct, the Official Record of the Pacts would be read to them, that is to say, the Constitutions to which they would be subjected.** The principal and only

base on which the said Fraternities would have to be established was subordination and obedience to the Sitiada, discharging the Royal Ordinations of this Hospital and the contents suggested by the Official Record of Pacts which included whatever was convenient for the active and passive government of these new servants”.

This is what Father Juan thought about it. The enterprise he subjected himself to was too difficult and risky, to admit in the group persons without a vocation, not ready to work, not apt and not prepared for the discharge of their mission. He dialogued with those selected, on their obligations towards the Hospital and the exigencies of his commitment to God. They would learn by heart and would seriously reflect on the essence of the points of the Official Record of Pacts Notebook, preparing themselves to make it their own life.

On the 1st at daybreak, they would record: “The Sisters awakened, thinking of their singular good fortune of being nurses of Jesus Christ, being so of the poor patients, and this consideration would animate them to do any kind of work.”

With this thought, and others that the Official Record Pacts Notebook marked out for them, they fill the time of their morning getting ready for the daily routine, then immediately go to the Oratory for a personal encounter with God for an hour. The ardour of their prayer was projected later in their service with love. This interior disposition and coherent behaviour would necessarily benefit the patient.

Fr. Bonal must have enjoyed contemplating the good work of his Fraternities.



The fame of the good work of the Sisters transcended the walls of the Hospital and extended through the city and even out of it. The patients themselves were the first to make known, with satisfaction and joy, the consolation and care they received from them, the abnegated services lent by them, their disposition at all times to offer help, relief from pain or the satisfaction of a non-pernicious gesture.

The good news of the prosperity and optimal conditions of cleanliness, pleasant atmosphere and sanitary care achieved in the Hospital of Zaragoza even reached Huesca. It was high time that it happened! Because the Sitiada of the Hospital of Our Lady of Hope of Huesca had been concerned for a long time about improving the fortunes of those they had taken in.

The greatest worry arose from the abandonment of the patients on the occasion of the epidemic, which in 1803-1804 lashed some regions of Spain. At this moment, the Hospital of Huesca was with an absolute lack of servants, which was supplied in as far as it was possible, by the cloistered religious.

But, besides, not even in normal circumstances was the assistance as desired. On the 2nd of May 1805, the Book of Resolutions of the Most Illustrious Sitiada reports the complaint of the Administrator: “...taking advantage of the fact that there are so few of them, the young men, however much it was tried to prevent apathy and negligence, do not care; they do not give the medicines on time and even more, at other times they make mistakes”. There is a scarcity of personnel and those who have come there, work badly.

The initiative of taking the Sisters of Charity came from the Bishop of Huesca, Don Joaquin Sánchez de Cutanda, who “resolved in accordance and conformity with the judgement of the Directors of the Hospital and Foundling House, to solicit from the Sitiada of Zaragoza, to send a Sister capable of taking charge of the government of the

Fraternity that they wished to establish in Huesca within the Hospital of the same city for the assistance of the sick of both genders, and the care of foundling children situated in the Casa Misericordia”.

The Sitiada felt honoured because it was the respectable Prelate who made the petition, and even though they did not want to do without a single Sister, “they wanted to make a more complete gift and chose for the same, Sr. Teresa Calvet, a woman of great virtue, of much naturalness, of much charity and with a disposition very suitable for this duty”.

Getting the rest of the Sisters who would complete the number requested for - eight for the Hospital and four for the Misericordia - was the commission of Father Juan Bonal, in whose zeal and activity the President of the Board, Bishop Sánchez de Cutanada confided.

Being diligent by nature and one who collaborated with grace, the Priest presented himself in Huesca, leading the young Sisters, on the 19th of May 1807. Mother Teresa Calvet would be the president, with residence at the Hospital; Sr. Teresa Dalmau, also from the Fraternity of Zaragoza, would be the Directress of the Misericordia; Sr. Francisca Trilla belonged to the Fraternity of Valls and arrived accompanied by five other Sisters, who had taken the habit in Valls ten days earlier. Besides, there were four postulants: one of them was from Navarre, another a Castellana and two were Catalans.

All shared the joy of Father Juan when they met again in Huesca and found old friends and pleasant memories in that beloved Hospital that had changed very little from the time of their years as students!



The Hospital of Our Lady of Hope of Huesca was established in the year 1430 at the initiative of the Bishop Don Hugo de Urriés, who governed the diocese of Huesca from 1427 to 1443. It was situated at the then denominated plaza de la Zuda or del Palacio, reminiscent of the Moorish Kings who had their residence in this place, surrounded by spacious gardens and some other buildings.

The Hospital being situated in the highest part of the city, enjoyed a ventilated position without any other construction depriving it of sun and air, so healthy for the patients and, in those times, the best environment purifiers.

The Centre was administered by the Prelate, the Town Council and the City Council, who named its representatives. Very frequently, the Bishops, because of their many occupations, were substituted at the Board sessions and in other activities related to the Hospital by the Vicar General of the diocese. Notwithstanding the great interest they always showed, all of them, for the benefit of the establishment, about which they did not affect ignorance, continually tried to improve according to their means.

At the end of the XV century, it was extended by the Bishop Juan de Aragon, adding some plots, for the acquisition of which they contributed with economic aid from the city. At the beginning of the XVII century, Don Diego de Monreal bought some neighbouring patios and ordered construction of several wards. In the XVIII century, Don Lorenzo Sánchez carried out new extensions, and in the XIX century, it was notably improved, with a central courtyard.

In the XVII century, in front of the Hospital, reforms were carried out at the Colegio Mayor de Santiago and a new building was raised for the University, the architectural aspect of the zone being highlighted with it. From then on, it began to be called the plaza of the University, a name that has survived; and even though the earlier names were not completely abandoned, it was the one that predominated when Father Bonal and the Sisters arrived. Nevertheless, the

small space near the principal façade of the Hospital, encircled by a barbican that marked a separation from the rest, was usually called the plaza of the Hospital.

This gave access to the Church. On the tympanum of the door, sculptured in wood, could be seen the scene of the Resurrection of Lazarus. A good theme for catechesis for the patients and other persons who came to the Hospital, reminding them of Christ, Life and Giver of Life, opening them to hope.

For the Sisters it would also be suggestive of the value of their labour. They were fully directed towards achieving the health of the patients, improving their life, spending themselves in maintaining it even in the beings least valued socially, including giving their own life to save that of their sick or abandoned brother.

Above the Church, below the roof, were the wards for the hospitalised. Not many in normal times, reaching several hundred in times of public calamities like wars and epidemics. It will not be long before they see it full of wounded soldiers and civilians, because even in Huesca, the War of Independence was felt severely, and naturally, it would have its repercussions on the Hospital.

Father Juan Bonal would not be there to encourage them, as he had returned to Zaragoza after he saw them happily take on the reins of their work.



When Father Juan Bonal returns after accompanying the Sisters to Huesca, at the petition of the Bishop, Don Joaquín Sánchez de Cutanada, the future of the Sisters of Charity had not yet been resolved in Zaragoza; it was a topic that had caused so many tensions in the mind of the Sitiada of the Hospital of Our Lady of Grace.

The problem was taken up at the session of the 9th of April 1807 when Don Francisco Cistué, Dean of the Town Council, Director of the Sitiada of the Hospital presented a letter of Brother José Terradellas, superior of the male Fraternity. In the it Brother bid farewell to the Board as he was retiring from the Hospital without having communicated the same earlier. However, he sent in writing, the true reasons for acting thus:

*"I did not present myself before the Sitiada to say I was leaving, as I was not mortified and serene enough to give Your Excellencies the reasons you would want me to give. If the Brothers here are to benefit for their souls and those of their poor patients, I am of the opinion that Your Excellencies should not give them so many orders, which make them giddy, and at times they are contrary, one to the other; well, we have realised that you cannot tolerate each other when it is your weekly turn. So what can a poor person like me do!"*

The Brother assures them that according to his conscience, he has left the accounts well adjusted; there may be, if any, a tendency in favour of the poor and of himself. The money of the alms and the clothes, remain in the power of the Brothers-in-charge, Parramón and Subías. He ends the letter with this brief but delicate and dignified farewell:

*"Pardon my non-obedience and pray to God for me".*

This letter was the wick applied to the inflammable ill-feeling that existed against the Brothers by some Directors, like Señor Cistué, who, impeded by a long illness, had not participated in the Sitiada of 1804, in which the transactions were carried out and the arrival of the Fraternities agreed upon. Cistué did not find the slightest reason for the Brothers



to continue at the Centre, neither did he consider their admission legal and prudent; and such as he writes about them is not correct.

*"The Priest Don Juan Bonal excited the zeal of the Sitiada, proposing that some men, who would exercise the care for the sick, come to Cataluña. The Sitiada condescending to the proposal, placed prior conditions, among them that they should be admitted as Ward Assistants or Servants. They were not considered with capabilities to be included in any of the other categories. Effectively, ten of them came, accompanied by the said Bonal, who also remained in the House as a Pasionero."*

It continues recording that the Brothers, five superiors among them, left; also the incalculable number of probationers who were admitted and then sent away, with a heavy financial burden on the House and much harm to the patients.

It leaves the impression that all the fault belongs to Father Bonal, whose zeal is recognised and admitted, but the effect of which is nullified, attributing to him indiscretion and lack of talent for the direction and discernment of spirits. Cistué writes a lot negatively and silences favourable acts, without showing the least hope in the relationship with the Brothers. On the contrary, his judgement is that they should disappear, because:

*"... it does not seem just to sustain for more time a Fraternity of transient subjects, who were collected by the priest Bonal with no examination or discernment except the object of making it subsist at any point..."*



To the disconformity of Cistué regarding the continuity of the Brothers, was added that of Don Manuel de Oña, Marquis of Montemuzo, clearly expressed in the final paragraph of his written vote:

*"Taking note that the admission of the said Brothers has not filled the acute desires that the Most Illustrious Sitiada had and has for the relief of the poor patients, my vote is that the five actual Brothers do not remain for any reason in this Hospital, the Most Illustrious Sitiada taking the prudent dispositions as considered convenient regarding them".*

*"The Fraternities are harmful, observing that the admission of the said Brothers has not been useful in any way to the interests of the Hospital and good assistance to the patients..., who have been abandoned to their whims and fancies".*

With this same negative attitude, and in a letter to the Archbishop, he attacks Father Bonal in a subtle manner, and observed in his weekly report that :

*"the Chaplain and Director of the Brothers, Don Juan Bonal, in spite of the section of women of all classes being separated and having custody of only one key, the Ecclesiastic makes use of another corresponding to a reserved door, introducing himself through the same into the quarters of the Sisters at different hours. And even though I have never given an opinion against his conduct, it was becoming noticeable and I make it present to the Sitiada so that it be remedied, to resolve to collect the key with any thing else considered convenient at this point".*

Montemuzo assures them that he does not have the slightest doubt against the correct conduct of Father Juan Bonal; notwithstanding, his accusation indicates that the fact provokes in him a negative judgement, so much so that he considers it worthy of making it clear, for it to be remedied, both before the Sitiada and before the Archbishop.

In reality, for Fr. Juan, in the framework of the Hospital of Our Lady of Grace of Zaragoza, in this process against the male Fraternity was the beginning of the humiliations and crosses that would occur all through his life, accompanying his career towards sanctity and with the blood of the cross, making his apostolate fruitful.

Humiliations are the culture medium of humility and only when it is sure that they are borne up with faith, patience and love of God, can it be assured that humility is building foundations of true sanctity in a soul.

Accredited voices were also raised in favour of the Fraternities. Father Bonal could hear many eulogies, above all regarding the Fraternity of Women, for the advantages reported to the patients in the selfless care and service they received from these Sisters of Charity.

The impossibility of reaching a consensus in the Sitiada impeded the solution of the conflict arising from a draw of votes in favour and against the Brothers staying on at the Hospital. This created strong tension in the mind of the Board, for which the Count of Sástago went to the King, as principal and perpetual patron of the House, sending him a detailed note on all that was happening and a summary of documents endorsing its favourable exposition, praying that "if You consider the manner of thinking right, of those who subscribe to the charity, conduct and utility of the Brothers and Sisters, may Your Majesty order that both Fraternities subsist".

While waiting for the reply, Father Bonal would pray, animate and recommend to his own that they pray.



While a decision is awaited in Zaragoza, in Madrid, the Fiscal of his Majesty offers his criteria to the Royal Chamber. For him, the opinions of some Directors against the intentions of the Count of Sástago, and others with vote conforming to the continuation of the Fraternities in the service of the sick, "it seems more the effect of insistence than reason". The resistance is not strange, adds the Fiscal, because: "great thoughts are rarely achieved without great contradictions".

Supported by this opinion and its own, the Supreme Tribunal agrees that the Brothers and Sisters of Charity "continue" in the service of the Royal Hospital. And this is how it was communicated to the Directors of the Sitiada for their knowledge and execution.

On receipt of the disposition of the Royal Chamber, all the members of the Sitiada accepted that they would fully fulfill the same and with their signature, expressed their acceptance in the Session of the 27th of June 1807.

However, at the beginning of August, Señor Cistué transferred to Madrid, addressed an extensive expedient, accompanied by several extended certifications; at the request of the same Cistué, from the Secretary of the Hospital, to the Secretary of the Tribunal. There is no news of the revocation of the sentence, hence, logically it has to be considered that the procedure served no purpose other than Señor Cistué making his intention of doing away with the Fraternities more urgent, giving vent to his animosity on paper. The effect for the Fraternities was very positive: maintaining themselves firm, the resolution of the Royal Chamber legalized with greater force, the existence of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity.

Their joy at the happy result had to be, at the least, as great as their uncertainty regarding their future, originated by the conflict, had been. Even more, the Sisters who recorded how the "Sitiada had greater confidence and security in the fact that greater progress had to be made in this Hospital,

mainly because Sister Maria Rafols was at the helm, named Major Sister at the beginning, and which post she continues to carry out today with the greatest skill and satisfaction".

Yes, they were prepared to forget the lamentable happening and continue to give the best of themselves. Soon this is going to be demonstrated during the French attack on Zaragoza.

The Brothers on the other hand, perhaps did not have their foundation as strong, nor such wise direction. Hence, Father Juan Bonal had to add another deeper pain to the humiliations suffered to his ideal as Founder, seeing his beloved male Fraternity get fully extinguished one year later.

Several Brothers worked intensely during the war, spending their life in the service of charity to the wounded and sick. There exist references to Bro. Francisco Parzemón, one of the founders who arrived in 1804. He surrendered himself totally to the task of assistance that took him to his death between the first and second Siege, on the 31st of October 1808.

Bro. Subias entered in February 1805 and was later sent to the foundation of Huesca. Solicited by the Hospital of Zaragoza after the first Siege, because of the necessity experienced there, he returned to render selfless service. He died immediately, his life worn out by work and charity, on the 25th of October 1809. With them, Father Juan saw the last remains of his male Fraternity disappear.



In spite of the suffering, humbly accepted, with the extinction of the male Fraternity, Fr. Juan Bonal maintained his calm spirit when another painful happening takes place in the city, affecting the Hospital of Our Lady of Grace, the patients and those responsible for caring for them.

Thus it was in the shelling directed expressly towards that centre for taking in the sick of the city and the world. The bombarding prolonged from morning till dusk on the 3rd of August 1808 in an incessant rain of bombs and grenades. Many of the buildings of the Hospital that were struck by the shrapnel were reduced to rubble.

At these moments of panic, Fr. Juan, who exercised the charge of Pasionero, diligently intervened, working ceaselessly in the evacuation of the disabled. The passages and the courtyards of the Market Exchange, the Municipality and the Deputation were soon occupied as best as could be, by patients, dispensers and volunteers.

Fifteen days later they are transferred to the Casa Misericordia for the better lodging of the patients. The number of hospitalised is always greater than the capacity of the huge building. The possibility of detailed and individual attention to each of the wounded or patients, is reduced. Four months later, by order of General Palafox, the civil patients are taken to the Hospital of Convalescents. With them go the Sisters and Father Juan.

The occupation of the Hospital of Convalescents was provisional. It was soon converted into a definitive one because of difficulties encountered in reconstructing the old one or building a new one. When the French left Zaragoza on the 13th of August, they had burnt it up and there was nothing left of its greatness, only piles of embers and rubble. As the conditions of admission were the same, that is to say, the call of sickness or necessity, as the human and medical attention given to the patient was the same, the same Statutes and "Ordinances" governed the work of the centre

and the same personnel continued developing their health-giving works, the Hospital continued to be called Our Lady of Grace.

And the life of Father Juan Bonal also continued, committed to his patients, with ever more dedication and sacrifice.

In a dispatch of the Lord Bishop, Don Bernardo Francés Caballero, it is affirmed of Fr. Bonal that: "During the two Sieges, he worked with extraordinary zeal in the assistance of the poor soldiers and civilians of the said hospital. At the same time he administered the Holy Sacraments to 500 or 600 sick and wounded grenadiers who were without Chaplain and deprived of spiritual assistance in the barracks of Convalescents. Equal benefit was offered to 300 or 400 sick soldiers in the hospital erected in the house of the Duchess of Villahermosa".

In the same document, it is recorded, how during the Sieges, when there was everything lacking in the Hospital, Fr. Juan, in collaboration with the Sisters, leaves to beg in the city for everything they needed or could be given and "he received a collection of things of great importance, money, clothes and other articles, all leading to and directed to the greater good of the military and civilian patients".

The vocation of assistance of Fr. Bonal is confirmed and a new line of selfless surrender in favour of the sick is now traced.



The unconditional surrender of Father Bonal did not cease with the end of the struggle of the Sieges in Zaragoza. If from the 21st of February 1809 the hospitalised wounded diminished in the city, now the number of prisoners-of-war who began to be counted by the hundreds were also the object of his preoccupation, as possibly, at this moment, they were the most needy.

This activity is expressed thus in a document of Doctor Don Benito Fernández de Navarrete, referring to Don Juan Bonal: "This city dominated by the troops of Napoleon and the Spanish military cornered in the Convent of San Lázaro had no spiritual help given to them. In spite of the obligations of his duty and the long distance from any hospital, for a period of five months, he went there daily, to administer the Holy Sacraments to the noble Spanish patients in the said hospital. He did not fail to ask for alms to improve their food and clothing, with the help of assistance already available while they were patients. Some of those attended to died and were buried according to the rites of our Holy Mother the Church; those who got back their health got the benefit of the alms and were sent back to their Corps or to their homes".

The zeal of Bonal found no limits nor could it be contained before the most basic exigencies of human nature: an austere meal, or the necessary rest, he did not waste any time. Without being overcome by fatigue, he went from one part to another, interested only in the good of others. It was not necessary to send him any order nor make a simple recommendation; the news of a need, dereliction, or suffering was sufficient to claim his charity. Hence he also spent a lot of time hearing the confessions of the sick prisoners confined in the Military Hospital of the French.

He also attended to the prisoners isolated in the improvised hospitals in the farmhouses of Torrero. The situation there was extremely distressing: they were declared as "putrid" fevers and contagion was alarming. The Sitiada decreed that Mosén Bonal and Mosén Oliver would remain there to console them.

Not content with assisting them spiritually, Father Bonal and his colleague obtained permission from the Director General of Police to ask for alms of clothes for these unfortunate prisoners, informing in advance the Bishop, and the Decree of the General, Count of Reilla.

It stated: "From the time of entry of the troops of Napoleon into this City, till they left, he occupied himself, with all charity, in favouring the Spanish prisoners, publicly begging for them at the gates of the Churches and in the streets, and with the alms collected, some were clothed, others were given shoes, others were fed, and by these means he helped many to achieve their freedom..."

"On the other hand, he procured other charitable offerings for the benefit of the captured Spaniards, looking for persons who would speak in their favour, or doing it himself, contributing by this means to alleviate the suffering of many, and together with the Sisters of Charity got the two Spaniards sentenced to death, to be set free".

"He also redeemed several Spanish prisoners with their limited resources for which purpose he sought help that could be offered by some group". Father Bonal had given himself totally and nothing could stop him.



The Sitiada of the Hospital, over the years, could not appreciate the charity and greatness of soul of Father Juan Bonal. As administrators of empty coffers, they valued any action or conduct proportional to the income. In the Hospital what reigned were the principles of single and irrefutable authority, centralised economy and absolute control of everything. Hence, even the charitable activities freely and disinterestedly practiced by the Priest, were to be accounted for and explained.

This was habitual for him: in the Book of Controllershship of 1809, the debt of Father Bonal stands at 28 libras (ancient coins), 13 sueldos (ancient copper coins of Castille), 12 dineros (ancient Spanish silver coins) that was due to be paid for the 442 stays of a patient. In normal times his stay in the Hospital would not have been prolonged so much, but the War of Independence came up, and so did the Sieges of Zaragoza; the man could not leave till March 1809. The Father did not suffer at heart that he was expelled from the hospital; but because he had nowhere to go, he went out as a sponsor!

Claims were also made from him with reference to the alms he collected for the prisoners, as stated in the Act of the Sitiada of the 6th of September 1812. What happened was, that counting on the favourable report of the Bishop of Santander, and with a decree in the same direction of the General, Count Reilla, the Director General of Police had granted the necessary authorization to Don Juan Bonal and Don Vicente Oliver, Pasioneros of the Hospital, to ask for alms in favour of the prisoners of Torrero. The Sitiada observes that they themselves distributed what was collected, without the intervention of the Board, and they complain that nothing was given to the patients of the Hospital, who in their judgement are more needy than the healthy. Strange is the qualification of "healthy" that is applied by the Directors to the prisoners of the Hospital of Torrero, who were precisely being attended to because of the contagious fevers propagated among them. They end ruling that all the clothes collected be handed over, exactly and precisely, to the Senior Presbyter

Wardrobe Keeper and the money to the principal equerry to the King, for him to distribute and invest, according to his criteria.

When he and Don Vicente, because of their occupation as Pasioneros, could not go out to collect clothes as alms, Father Bonal entrusted the task to Don Joaquin Barros who habitually accompanied them on these excursions. Even this designation was the motive of inquiry, complaint and prohibition on the part of the Sitiada.

"The impertinence to which this untiring apostle of charity, Mosén Bonal, was submitted to, contrasts with the sad state of the ecclesiastical affairs of the Hospital", comments Don José Ignacio Tellechea. This refers to the numerous endowment Masses that were not fulfilled because of the penury of the Centre and the work of the Ecclesiastics.

Any other person in his place would have considered that this continued and humiliating attitude on the part of the Sitiada would be sufficient motive to bid farewell to such peevish aldermen. Father Juan did not lack the spirit to do it, but what he did not have was the courage, sufficient to leave the poorest, who at this moment were the prisoners, abandoned in their misfortune and affliction. They would have been the ones truly harmed if he withdrew to a more tranquil and gratifying task.

And, in spite of everything, he continued his self-sacrificing charitable labour with primordial attention to the most defenceless, fully aware that these would not be the last obstacles he would have to bear.



The activity of Father Bonal knew neither vacations nor limiting timetables; it is very unusual that in 1810 he was in Terrades for a few days. Some very important reason would have taken him there, but we do not know what it is. We know about his stay because of the notes found in the parish books. On the 23rd of November 1810, he signed as witness, at the marriage of Juan Bonal Camps with Margarita Gaspar Cortada, his cousin, which was celebrated at Santa Cecilia de Terrades.

On the 27th of the same month and year, he administered the Sacrament of Baptism in the same Church, to a little baby girl, the daughter of unknown parents. This fitted in well into the vocation and ministry of Don Juan who always sought the poorest of the poor to attend to.

Neither of the two cases could be what motivated his journey to Terrades, because family events multiplied and in none else do we find Father Juan Bonal. In 1805 when his father "Juan Bonal of the Cemetery" died, it is stated that a priest-relative assisted; he was his cousin Father Juan Cortada. Four years younger than Father Bonal, he was ordained in 1804. From then on he worked as Vicar in the parish of San Clemente de Sasebas; some years later he was the parish priest of Vilaritg. The physical nearness permitted him to participate in the family feasts and sorrows like baptisms, marriages, illnesses or burials, events that draw one so strongly.

Father Juan was too far and too busy with his poor and his sick! He did not have any more time. In February 1811 Rosa, the youngest of his sisters got married, but he did not go; however, it would be in moments of pain that his absence would cost him more.

In August of this same year 1811, his brother Martin, of about 25 years, dies, like one more hero, within the Castle of Figueras, besieged by the French.

The castle of San Fernando was the fortification that tried to defend the Ampurdán from any invasion through the

Pyrenees. It was built for this purpose. After several years of study and indecision regarding the most suitable place for the same, King Fernando VI resolved that the landed property would be bought and the old convent that the Capuchins had in Figueras would be destroyed.

Work began at this site in 1753, inaugurating it thirteen years later, even though the project was not completed. What was planned as defence, was on occasions, a strong point of attack. In the War of Independence, the French occupied it from 1808 to 1814, almost uninterruptedly. Getting back the Castle was the preoccupation of all the inhabitants of Ampurdán, but it was impossible to besiege it because the French troops filled the city and the countryside. Could it be taken by surprise?

This was what was done on the night of the 10th of April 1811 by the 2nd Legion of Infantry who, by honorific decree were called from then on, the "Tercio of San Fernando". The Catalan force was made up of four thousand men within the castle. But the Ampurdán was still dominated by the French who were ready to wait all the time necessary for the besieged to succumb to hunger and illness. After four months of blockade, they felt obliged to come to an agreement. The losses of the garrison reached 1,500 men. Among them Martin Bonal Cortada died. Father Bonal did not go there, but continued his charitable mission under the mandate and the exigencies of the government by the invaders, cause of the death of his brother.



Where Father Juan Bonal went on several occasions, was to the Hospital and the Misericordia of Huesca, whose Sisters he had led to establish them at both centres. He never forgot them and always maintained a warm relationship and a great interest in the good functioning of the service to the sick and of the life of that Fraternity.

This remains clear in a certificate which was issued, at the request of the Sister President of Huesca, Mother Teresa Calvet, by Father Bonal in December 1809: "... I certify and give true testimony that I am an eyewitness to the most special care taken of all the patients of the Hospital of Our Lady of Hope of the city of Huesca referred to. In effect, the Sisters sacrifice themselves in it to empathize with them, give them better cooked food and many times with chicken or hen, medicines, a more than decent meal, also supplying them the most perfectly clean linen. (...) This is what I experienced when I lived in it, which has been at different times, for the consolation of the said Sisters and the good of the same patients. Only what is evident is the said Hospital being so poor, sustained mainly because of the sale of goods, they do not have any secure resources."

One of these visits in 1812, is mentioned in a letter that the priest addressed the Dean Don Ramón Segura: "I came here with Sister Magdalena, and after arriving, I got so ill that I had to receive the Holy Sacraments. But, thanks be to God, I am now better; I owe it to Señor San José. Sister Magdalena is a little better, she is taking donkey's milk with the appropriate food. The doctors declared that she was getting tuberculosis and hence it was expedient that she get fresh air; and let us see if she can leave the Hospital and go to a Hermitage, half an hour away from this city. The pity is that the hospital is in utmost misery (...). With this, I have had to look for extraordinary money for milk, etc., for the expenses of the poor Sister (...). I have not yet been able to go out begging for alms of wheat for this Holy Hospital. An Alderman told me that if I recover, he would appreciate it if I went out to see if I could collect something to alleviate this situation."

What extremes of poverty provided the setting for the life of the Sisters and of Father Bonal is for all to see. He could not have the pleasure of offering assistance to the Sister from his own funds as he did not have them! His stipend always reached late and he had not received anything in the current year 1812. In the Account Book of the Hospital, there is an entry testifying that Father Juan Bonal was paid for the first six months of 1811 on the 13th of June 1813. It was always like this!

Two years earlier, at the initiative of the Bishop of Santander, he had to be helped with 6000 pesetas for the rent of the vacant See of the Bishop of Huesca. For lack of means, not only "could he not defray his specific obligations, but he could not also help the Sisters of Charity who assisted him in his assiduous work."

On account of this situation Father Juan addresses a letter to the Dean Segura, who by decree of the Marshal of the Empire, Duke of Albufera, in March of this year 1812, went on to occupy the Presidency of the Sitiada of the Hospital of Zaragoza - as Vice President - because of the many obligations the Bishop of Santander had in his charge. He and his Dean always acted in total agreement with one another and there was now hope of new help. On this occasion, we do not know whether it arrived; on the other hand it is known that Sister Magdalena passed away a few weeks later, on the 4th of November.



In the beginning of September 1812, Father Juan Bonal had already returned from Huesca and immediately got involved into the work at the Hospital of Our Lady of Grace.

He would soon inquire about the situation of the Fraternity. It had been communicated to him that Mother Tecla Canti had been elected President and from Huesca, he manifested his satisfaction in a letter addressed to Don Ramon Segura: "I am happy with the election of the Superior, in the person of Mother Tecla, as was told to me by letter. May God preserve in her thoughts, good and holy desires for sacrificing herself for the greater good of the poor and the welfare of the House, promptly obeying the dispositions of the Directors, being persuaded that their Lordships would notify her when convenient, animate her and sustain her and defend her in case it be necessary".

In response to a request received from the Canary Islands where they desired Sisters for the Hospital of the Town Council, years later Father Juan will express his mind clearly: "... If we had to go to set up a foundation on these Islands, I would like one of the three Sisters earlier named to go as Superior". At the beginning of that letter reference was made to the three who were left of the original group, saying that the Superior Sister Tecla Canti, like Sister Maria Rafols and Sister Torrellas were all shattered in health and for now, they could not be counted on.

The first Sisters were so highly valued, that when Mother Rafols presented her renunciation to be President, it was logical that the Priest was happy with the election of Mother Tecla.

But his joy suffered a hard and profound blow of pain when the state of the Fraternity was known, whose ideal and life giving breath was weakened when the strong and at the same time gentle direction of Mother Maria Rafols was lacking: a sister joined a Teaching Order, others wanted to restore their houses, Mother Rafols was sent to accompany a sick Sister, and the discontent was widespread.



Did the fact that Mother Tecla could not manage to get hold of the reins of the small group contribute to this situation? Above all, there was a basic cause: the Bishop of Santander had imposed degrading Constitutions on them, the principal basis of which was to impede all exaltation of the Sisters, ensure their absolute submission to the Sitiada and total separation from any independent management. In this statement they referred to Father Juan, who would continue finding shackles on the part of the Board because of his relationship with the Sisters, even though his influence was beneficial and even though the Sitiada itself, at the beginning, had among other ministries allowed him to take charge of the direction of the Fraternity.

Mother Tecla, stating the small number they were reduced to, asks the Sitiada for permission to admit four more Sisters. The Sitiada accedes. Father Bonal looks for them and presents a sealed letter with the earlier conditions on the basis of which the candidates would be interviewed.

The reply is categorical : "The candidates for admission to the Sisterhood and to the Fraternity should in everything follow the Constitutions, as was provided for when the permission for their admission was given; making this disposition known to the Superior of the Fraternity for her intelligence and government". Notwithstanding, four of them came from the Catalan region: one of them, de Copons, received the habit in January and the other three, from Cervera in July 1813.



Another new outrage would burden Father Juan Bonal: on the 31st of March 1813, the Bishop of Santander appointed the Presbyter Rector of the Royal priestly Seminary of San Carlos as the Spiritual Director of the Sisters.

In reality, it is another attempt against the faculties of Father Juan Bonal and against the liberty of the Sisters. According to the Constitutions, Santander submitted them totally to the Sitiada in what concerned the externals, but this could not interfere in matters of conscience. Now, in the job of appointing a Director, the Bishop and President of the Board, did not leave a single stone unturned and affirms: "checking the sufficiency, the integrity and other good qualities that are found in Don Miguel Gil, we have constituted him as your immediate Superior Director **in the direction of your consciences...** by virtue of which we hope you recognise our jurisdiction has been invested in the expressed Don Miguel Gil and he is **the only one deputed** for your interior profit."

By this decision of Santander, the Sisters could only legally ease their consciences with Don Miguel Gil, and expose their ideals, their spiritual projects and their difficulties at the transcendental level, only to him. They were now completely enslaved by intruders.

It was a strategy of Santander. The Sisters, faced as they were with difficulties placed in their relationship with Father Juan, asked the priests of San Carlos to orient them spiritually. Using his authority, Santander brought Don Miguel Gil who was an expelled Franciscan resident in Luceni, to Zaragoza, and named him President-Director of the Seminary of San Carlos and as a follow-up, entrusted him with the spiritual government of the Fraternity.

Fortunately, he could exercise this ministry only for a short time. At the beginning of July of this same year 1813, the supporters of the French had to leave Spain, concealing their identity under lay dress and safeguarded by sixteen

thousand French soldiers. Among them were the Bishop of Santander, the Dean Segura and Don Miguel Gil and other supporters who feared reprisal because of their support for the intruding government.

The total evacuation of the Plaza was carried out on the 9th with the greatest secrecy by the French. Vehicles loaded with money and ammunition, artillery equipment, staff, the police, the authorities, the functionaries who managed to go, and finally General Paris with his officials left, leaving the capital free at eleven at night, after more than four years of domination. Everything was now going to change in Zaragoza, even the Hospital, where by disposition of the Political Head, the actual Sitiada ceases in their functions and the Directors who constituted it before the invasion are reinstated.

A few days later a solemn "Te Deum" was sung at the Pilar, as thanksgiving for the happy liberation of the City. Father Bonal and the Sisters also recited it whole heartedly on seeing the valiant Aragonese people begin a new stage of serenity and normality.

They would have besides, the hope that their own situation in the Hospital would improve, with the action of the old Sitiada. Some of the members had contributed to the resolution and proceedings for their coming. They had later participated in the work and sufferings of the besieged and their immediate disastrous consequences.



One of the first actions of the reinstated Sitiada towards the Hospital was to name a Confessor for the Fraternity because "the priest who was in charge of the direction of the Sisters of Charity did not fulfill this ministry". With exquisite prudence, the Sitiada left evidence in the Act of the Session of the 12th of August 1813 of the absence of Don Miguel Gil, exiled in France.

The matter was dealt with; the Directors of the Seminary of San Carlos, very happily took charge of orienting the spiritual life of the Sisters. What is incomprehensible is that some Directors who had intervened in the coming of the Sisters and given Father Bonal the mission of Pasionero of the Hospital so that his stay in it was compatible with the follow-up of the Fraternities, and when necessary, had entrusted him with the search for new vocations, would now, accept what is written in the Act of the 22nd. "Señor Navarrete, undoubtedly understood that Mosén Juan Bonal should be prevented, who should not only abstain as he now does, from hearing the confessions of the Sisters, but also avoid as far as possible, talking to them about matters of the Fraternity, without implying that the Sitiada wants to harm him **in the good will that he deserves for his virtue, zeal and application in the assistance to the poor patients.**".

The intention of the Sitiada is clear - that of avoiding all influence of Father Juan on the Sisters who valued his authority and with whom they shared the ideals of being able to form, with the fusion of different Fraternities, a Religious Institute, approved by the Church, with its own organization and Rules. This could not fit into the plans of the Sitiada and had to be impeded, at any cost.

Probably with a view to keeping the Priest away, some days later and because of the penury in which the Wardrobe of the Establishment was, another decision was taken: "In consideration of the lack of linen in the Hospital, the Sitiada had agreed to rekindle the zeal and charity of Don Juan Bonal, so that, accompanied by the subjects he thinks fit,

see whether he can go around the City for a new Charity Collection". Father Juan accepted the commission to relieve the patients. Perhaps he also knew these second intentions by intuition and he consciously accepted them.

As soon as the priest started going through the streets and quarters of the City, begging humbly, the Sitiada sent a Representation to the King and to the Congress describing the distressing situation of the Hospital after the plundering it had suffered, of its goods and its income, result of the war.

The "Representation" had no effect. Whereas, the Charity Collection, like everything Don Juan Bonal undertook, was very productive. The following entry goes as an example : "The Senior Wardrobe Attendant takes charge of 9 arrobas (measure of weight = 11.502 kgs.), 33 pounds of hemp cloth, which it received from Don Juan Bonal, who had bought it with the money of the alms collected at the doors of the churches, at 7 duros (Spanish coin) and a half per piece".

The Sitiada was satisfied; but Father Juan did not rest on his laurels: they wanted to tarnish his action as Founder, and a new facet of the vocation to which the Lord has called him now emerges before him. From now on, the years of life that he has left, without stopping his support to the Sisters from a distance, he will be the priest-travelling preacher, ('Veredero') zealous missionary in hundreds of villages of Spain, where his word and his long hours in the confessional would produce fruits of conversion and abundant alms for the Hospital.



So productive was the Charitable Collection of Clothes in the City that Don Juan Bonal widened his horizon. In October of 1814, he makes a presentation to the Sitiada, of his project to go to the towns of the Kingdom to beg for alms, for coarse thread, linen and all other things that the faithful may give him. For this just desire of providing clothes to the patients to have effect and the dire circumstances in which the Hospital found itself, to solve such pressing needs, "the Sitiada approved the idea of the said Ecclesiastic, and the Administrator Navarrete was kept in charge of finalizing this matter with all its faculties; and he is also given a certificate expressing the motive for his departure".

Five days later, when the Accountant comes to know about the approval of the plan, he puts obstacles to the plan, in advance. He manifests that the Accountant's Office is not aware of the amount collected by Don Juan Bonal and other subjects at the doors of the churches, neither was it communicated to him in what and how the product was invested. And hence he cannot take charge of the corresponding consignments to the department that benefited from it.

The Sitiada, that participates in part in this eagerness for fiscal control of the "responsible" Accountant, agrees: "That Mosén Juan Bonal should be prepared to present a note of the yield of the alms he may collect and of the quantities allotted to the benefit of the Hospital, so that the departments to which they have been handed over are able to take charge of the same".

The Senior Wardrobe Keeper well knew how much had entered his warehouse and the patients well experienced a little more of warm clothes and cleanliness. What perhaps was not known by everyone was the severe sacrifice it had cost them. Certainly, order and transparency are qualities of a good Accountant, but so also should recognition, gratitude, magnanimity be reflected in noble hearts.

Undoubtedly, Don Juan Bonal would have presented everything correctly, because he set out on his route of travelling-preacher ('vereda'). On the 31st of October he was in Utebo, where he was given a bed-sheet, two bandages and a towel. Besides, he collected four reales (ancient coin) in cash, half a fanega (grain measure = 1.58 bushels) of beans, sixteen almudes (measure of grain = 4.625 litres) of wheat, perhaps a handful in one house, and another given by another house. But the Priest was thankful because what was truly valuable was the generosity with which it was given, frequently, of the little they had. The Regent Priest Don Pascual González and the Charity Collector Don Agustín Lorente accompanied him in his work of collection.

The entry closes with a note signed by Juan Bonal himself, making it known that "the Regent and the Charity Collector had fulfilled the recommendation of the Most Illustrious Sitalda and the Lord Governor, perfectly". Mosén Bonal loses no opportunity to praise the good done and give thanks for it.

The same day he went on to Sobradiel where he collaborated with the request of the Charity Collector (Quaestor) and the Mayor. The result was a peseta and four dineros (ancient Spanish silver coin), 8 almudes (measure of grain) of wheat and one of beans. His companions did not know how to sign so he did it for them, adding also the note: The wheat was sold at 24 dineros an almud and 12 sueldos (ancient copper coin of Castille); for the almud of beans they got another 3 sueldos and 4 dineros.

The earlier note shows us that from the beginning of the preaching trips, they were faced with the difficulty of carrying everything they collected. Hence, if a good occasion arose, what was considered convenient was sold and thus it was to the benefit of the Hospital that they did not have to pay transport costs. However, on occasions they had to pay the cost of transport to send big lots of clothes and other objects.



The untiring Mosén Bonal, on the same day, 31st, went on to Torres de Berrellén where there was no priest, nor mayor, nor quaestor. He was accompanied by a Carthusian religious, probably from one of the two Carthusian Monasteries that were in Zaragoza: Aula Dei, still existing, and La Concepción, which was in Las Fuentes.

In cash they gave him half a duro to which was added the 5 reales and 12 dineros that they obtained from the sale of the wheat collected in this place.

On the 1st of November, he begged in Figueruelas y Pedrola. In this town, the magnanimous Father Juan stated that he was accompanied by Bro. Francisco Lapetra, a person of refinement and charity, and the Vicar of the parish, Don Policarpo Muro. Both endorse the entry of what was collected.

Close to Pedrola is Alcalá de Ebro, 34 km from Zaragoza. The priest begged in Alcalá on the 3rd. A stone tablet in the Municipality records the relationship of Quijote with a singular town that served, it says, as inspiration to Miguel de Cervantes for his 'Insula Barataria' where he installed Sancho Panza as Governor. Even though the inscription existed in the last century, it is possible that Father Juan Bonal neither saw it nor was aware of the story. He was animated by only one ideal: love of God who became poor and sick in his brother. He was interested, because of love for these same brothers, to get together remedies for the sad situation of the Hospital. At the same time, he desired the alms be reinvested in gratitude for the donors. He did not think of anything but his task of travelling-preacher and missionary.

One cannot imagine that appraising his far from normal attitude as itinerant preacher, involvement in disputes and works would one day earn him the epithet "Quijote of Charity" with admiration and affection. Had he known he would have thanked them for it.

After his mission was fulfilled in Alcalá, he went back a few kilometers to enter Alagón, a more populated town,

in a plain between the Imperial canal and the Ebro. He was very well assisted by the Regent of the Parish, the Deputy Trustee and the Quaestor, who were witnesses of the handing over of 90 reales of sheepskin and 6 maravedises (old Spanish coin) that were given to him in cash, 16 almudes of wheat, 4 of oats, 1 towel, 2 bandages and 1 pillowcase full of 'hilas' (yarn). "They duly and charitably completed the task", writes the Priest.

He still had time to spend the same day at Grisén, with less than three hundred inhabitants at that time, but who merited perpetuating their generosity for history: it remains written in the Alms register : "They, the people of this village took the utmost care to help the poor patients and the Administrator, the Quaestor and the Mayor, with all charity and vigour persuaded the inhabitants". They gave money, wheat, beans and 4 hens, which appear for the first time in these preaching journeys and it will not be the last time.

On the 4th he was in Pleitas, Bárboles and Bardallur. In Pleitas, only the Quaestor was there; in Bárboles, the Priest was ill, but he had the delicacy of sending his brother to accompany them, and an Administrator substituted for the Mayor, who was absent from the village. In Badallur, Mosén Ramón Yáñez and Justo Aznar, who was the Quaestor joined Juan Bonal. "The ones referred to accompanied me with great refinement and charity in the collection of alms."

When he had to spend the night, he would be given simple accommodation. This was the function of the Quaestor, given with his appointment by the Sitiada "stating his christianity and his zeal... he is in charge of accommodating, assisting and accompanying our Committee Member when he goes to beg and collect alms".



From the time Don Juan Bonal had left Zaragoza on the 31st of October, he had passed through eleven towns. In all of them the initial rite is the same: greetings to the Authorities, Mayor, Parish Priest and Justice, presentation of the document of commission dispatched by the Sitiada of the Hospital of Zaragoza and the corresponding authorization of the Bishop or the Ecclesiastical Governor. Finally the time of commencement was programmed, the exhortation the travelling preacher would address to the people and the manner of stimulating them, as also the authorities that should accompany him.

Thus, village after village, hundreds of them did Mosén Bonal traverse, without letting himself be taken in by routine or inconsistency. Each day was a new one and so was each place.

On the 5th of November, the collection was made among the 700 inhabitants that Plasencia del Jalón would have at that period of time; and he spent the 6th in Urrea with more or less a similar population. He was accompanied "with all gentlemanliness and charity", by the Vicar and the brother or Quaestor, José Garcia y Estepa. The remains of the ancient castle of Orosa, constructed by the Arabs, which gives it its antiquity, could be recognized on the top of a plateau.

The Church is dedicated to San Salvador and has two hermitages: that of San Sebastian and that of San Bartolomé. With this name he would forget everything: Juan Bonal was born on the day of the feast of San Bartolomé; he was then his private patron. That Apostle of good will, who sought truth with simplicity, with a generous and enterprising soul, was also his model. In the spirit of his model, San Bartolomé, Juan Bonal was carrying out a plan in his dealings with people and in his attitude towards them. Yes, the 24th of August; 45 years have passed since then, but the sowing done in them is bearing fruit and will give still more.

On the same day he begged in Rueda de Jalón where the ruins of a fortress castle and watch-tower exist. In times gone by, a panorama that extended up to the Ebro opened

up. In the XIV century Perelló, the Viscount of Rueda, had it in his possession.

But we make bold to say for sure that more than the castle and its history, Don Juan Bonal had a greater and better remembrance of the church, not for its construction which is modest, nor for its antiquity, XVIth century, but because it is dedicated to St. Anne. How he would remember and pray to the holy mother of the Mother of God, for his Sisters of Charity! Separated from them by the will of men, he continued united to them in their ideal and in prayer, concerned about their difficulties and the manner of overcoming them.

In Rueda, Don Juan Bonal once again writes that the Mayor, the Priest Mosén Antonio Orga, and the Quaestor, José Martín, collaborated "with gentlemanliness and charity". The latter, to help the Hospital, kept the barley, giving in exchange, three almudes of wheat.

On the 7th, Don Juan was in Epila. In the panoramic view some notable buildings, ancient palace or convent, of the many preserved in the town, could be recognized. But what would attract him specially was the silhouette of the monumental church of Santa María. The lineage and prosperity of the town is recognized in the abundant alms detailed in the notebook. What stands out is that the authorities "took the utmost care of the poor of the Holy Hospital".

And, as a test of the poverty in which they lived and the charity and rectitude with which Don Juan Bonal proceeded, this note may be read: "reserving for us 2 pillows and one shirt to change". It is attested with his signature.



Continuing the travelling-preaching ('vereda') of 1814, Father Juan Bonal, on the 8th of November went from Epila to Berbedel, a place with about twenty inhabitants, and from there to Lucena, a village with double the population of the earlier village. This notwithstanding, the collection at Berbedel was more productive. However, Father Juan Bonal does not think so much of quantities as of attitudes. He refers to the authorities of both the villages when he writes in his note "that they accompanied him in the begging with gentlemanliness and charity".

On the same day, the 8<sup>th</sup>, he was also in Calatorao, one of the most dynamic of nuclei of Bajo Jalón, famous then for its black marble quarry. The parish priest, Don Manuel Berdejo, the Mayor, Don Mariano Poza and the commissioned Quaestor Chaplain, Don Joaquín Larena, accompanied him. He left all that was collected that day, both in Calatorao and in other places, in the house of the latter.

Don Juan was now approximately one kilometer from La Almunia and perhaps he went to the small town, but he stopped neither there nor at Ricla for the moment to beg because the Priests wanted to prepare the parishioners before, and Father acceded. He left them for some other occasion, and continued a little further along the Jalón, to take the direction towards Morata y Chodes, where he was on the 10th.

On the 11th he visits Arándiga, a small town built in a valley of beautiful vegetable gardens along the course of the river Aranda in its confluence with the Hijuela. He passes on to Nigüella, of about 40 inhabitants, three leagues from Calatayud.

On Sunday the 12th, he was busy in Mesones de Isuela. How well he used the opportunity to gather the whole village! Those moving exhortations and long hours in the Confessional, of which he would years later be accused, were freely prolonged, knowing that the faithful were not called by their work in the fields, as it was a festive day.

The Priest Mosén Antonio Navarro accompanied him, as also the gentlemen from the Municipality and Cristóbal Molinero who also signed as the Quaestor. "They took the greatest care to assist him in this small town".

The care was reflected, undoubtedly, in the rich contribution of Mesones, which notably increased the volume of what was till then accumulated. All this is the fruit of the charity of the villages, but also of the zeal and the great work of the generous and untiring almoner (collector of alms).

Let us recall, besides, that even having a very generous will, in reality it was only a few used clothes and a handful of grain that could be handed over to him by the simple people, who are his greatest collaborators. The villages had become totally impoverished with great losses with no crops for several years, and with decrease in their livestock that had to be surrendered, or taken from them by force, to feed the invading army.

Spain carried a large debt contracted during the war and was far from being alleviated by the French invasion.

With insufficient contributions to meet such a heavy burden, taxes were imposed even on bare essentials to remedy the situation. Furthermore the rights of the sale of these essentials was limited to one individual or company.

All the measures, undoubtedly necessary and compelling, made the strongest family economies vacillate and totally ruined the weak. Father Bonal knew this well, hence he accepted with gratitude and gave moral value to everything that was offered to him, however little it was.



At Mesones de Isuela, it was an intense day, but not sufficient to exhaust the forces of Mosén Juan Bonal, because on that same Sunday, he passes on to Tierga, and on the following days to Trasobares, Calcena, Aranda, Jarque, Brea, Saviñán, Embid de la Ribera, Terrer and its feudal estate, Ateca and Moros.

The annotation of what was collected in each one of these places, ends with the habitual expression of Bonal for the authorities: "They did their utmost in favour of the Hospital", or some other similar phrase of praise. But it is not a routine that makes it lose all meaning, as it goes on to concrete cases with details of real situations.

In Gotor and in Illueca he says, "the priests were in charge of the collection and they did it with great care..." In Saviñán he writes: "In this town we did not go street by street; alms were given to us separately as they thought this would be better; according to my way of thinking, we would have collected more, but we did not want to argue with the Priest and the Quaestor".

In Aranda, a town founded by the Moors and which was established on the upper part, where there are the ruins of a castle, there is a curious annotation: "What was collected and noted in this town remained in the house of the Quaestor Vicente Martínez, except the sheet, which we took so as to send it to the Hospital...". A sheet! Even though Mosén Juan Bonal does not say it, we can guess the value that was given to this donation, which in those times the majority of the patients were still without, as there were no means to allot sheets to them.

Little or much, it was a compensation for their work and fatigue, and the cold they would have experienced! It was way into the month of November, with the inclemency of the weather and difficulties of the road, that added up to the austere conditions of the accommodation where they spent the night.

Even though the fruit was small, and even though it was not the only motive for his sacrifice, what he received served as a stimulus and as a gift of God and of charity from the brothers from whom he received it.

Don Juan Bonal also had other plans in his soul. They can be guessed from a letter addressed to him, that arrived at the Hospital while he was travelling and preaching. The sender is Narciso Xifreu, a priest ordained a little after Juan Bonal, from the same village - from Gerona -, and a good friend. Both were united by the same ideals and projects. In the background, it can be glimpsed that they refer to the Sisters of Charity.

Don Narciso says : "I have received the letter of V.M. with the greatest appreciation and I appreciate even more the work that you have taken up, making a collection, from the precious books that you have cited, the most relevant and appropriate matter concerning highly placed persons... More so, when one achieves that only one soul manages to sanctify itself more in the state in which it lives, I think it is so great, that it can make any work satisfying".

"I agree with the opinion of V.M. that the present matter should be handled with some discretion; and above all here, where the actual Constitution of the Hospital as V.M. may perhaps recall, should change substantially for the new establishment... And also because of what you insinuate to me (and of which I am very pleased in the Lord) that there are some who work to consolidate such a Holy Institute to raise it to the grade of a religious Profession".

A few very expressive paragraphs remain, but with what has been already cited, we can verify that Father Juan had much more in his soul than the accounts and records of cents, clothes or wheat collected.



The statement that Mosén Francisco Tarragona and the Quaestor Bonifacio Soriano have signed regarding Moros is to be noted. It says: "The undersigned, with the whole town, took the greatest care in favour of the Holy Hospital. The Lord Vicar is a great lover of this House. He is a priest whom the people love and care for very much, and will collect a lot of alms".

From here they went successively to Villalengua, Torijo, Bijuesca, Villarroya, Cervera, Aniñón, Torralba and Calatayud, where they were on the 4th of December. They had earlier come to this city but the preaching was not done maybe because they were to be prepared, given its greater extension or because they had taken it as the centre of the region where, what was being collected, could be sent.

With respect to the money remitted from Ateca, it expresses that in Calatayud an amount equal to the alms in cash from Cervera, Aniñón and Torralba, was received, which, together with 12 duros collected in Calatayud was all left in the house of the Quaestor Juan de Pujadas, who took on the responsibility of sending the same to the Hospital, 9 arrobas (measure of weight = 11.502 kg) of hemp cloth which was paid for with it, at 31 pesetas and a half an arroba.

The days following, he begged in the valley of the Jiloca: Paracuellos, Maluenda, Velilla, Morata, Fuentes, Villafeliche, Montón and another two villages whose names have not been written, even though what was collected has been noted down, endorsed by the signature of the Regents, plus that of the Mayor and the Quaestor as on the earlier note.

He then carried out his mission in Alarba, Olves Bajo, Munébrega, another place without a name, la Vilueña, Carenas and Castejón. In Alarba it is written that the whole "Ecclesiastical Chapter" accompanied the alms collectors and that two of the priests attested to this fact. Faced with the scarcity of clergy that the Church in Spain suffers today, when the priests who exercise their ministry in rural areas have to attend to several villages, this expression is well-known. Maybe it was used in a figurative sense. However,



it can be that the reality of the times was very well interpreted: the abundance of clergy.

In the diocese of Tarazona where he was moving, besides the town council of the Cathedral and of various Collegiate Churches, there were also, in times not too long ago, town councils of priests in four Parishes: they had it in the capital itself, of San Andrés; in Agreda, that of San Juan; in a parish in Cascante and in another at Corella, before the latter three were incorporated into their present dioceses.

The other villages were well assisted, even though not equally in all the zones. Alarba, as can be deduced, had the benefit of several priests for the 450 inhabitants approximately, that it had in those years and who attended to the parish and the two hermitages of San Roque and San Sebastian.

Another annotation that is different from the normal, is made at Castejón: "57 reales of sheepskin remain in the house of Doña Benita Cardós to be sent to Don Juan Pujadas, Quaestor of Calatayud". This is the first time that the name of a lady appears helping with his activity of collection and signing the entry of alms collected, together with the Regent Mosén Mariano Mateo.

He continued his journey through Bubierca, Alhama, Cetian, Ariza, Monreal, Torrehermosa, Alconchel, Calmarza, Jaraba, Ibdes and Cobolafuente, where they were on the 23rd of December. If Father Juan had left behind a written record of his memoirs, how much pain, fatigue, humility, how much sweat, even at times blood, would we have discovered between the lines!



It was not easy, not even on the map, to follow the footprints of Father Juan Bonal: he goes forward, he returns, comes back to the same point, from there to go in another direction; there is no doubt that this would be normal and reasonable perhaps, as he searched for the most accessible road among the bad ones, through fields and orchards, that linked the small places that they must have passed through.

He would have reasons for passing near a village and not entering it sometimes and return there later to fulfill his mission. He would have his reasons, but most of them we do not know.

After Cabolafuente where he was on Friday, the 23rd of December, there is no other annotation of alms till Tuesday, the 27th of December, in Nuévalos. Did he stay at Cabolafuente for the week-end that coincided with Christmas? We cannot say for sure. It could also be possible that passing through Nuévalos, he wanted to celebrate it in retreat, prayer and living with the Cistercian religious of the Monastery of Santa María, to which, in an expression of Father Jaime Finestres, "nature renders serfdom, clothing itself with its gala dress, in front of the Monastery, to offer it a charming photo frame". Father Bonal, defender of life, would be a lover of all life, and even in the thick of winter, would enjoy the beauty of this marvel of Nature that is the Monasterio de Piedra.

After Nuévalos, he begged in Monterde, in Abanto and in Orcajo, where he ended the year. By that time, the fruit of the work and sacrifice of Father Juan would start arriving; on several occasions statements are left in the Acts of the Sitiada, like the one of the 12th of December that reads; "The Senior Wardrobe Keeper keeps for himself different clothes from the alms that were collected by the Presbyter Don Juan Bonal in the villages and towns and which were sent by him in 7 packets with the Ordinary of Calatayud.

At the beginning of the year 1815, he began begging in Manchones, where after collecting 6 reales of silver, 6 dineros and 22 pounds of cotton waste, paid a peseta to an artisan to carry a sack of cotton waste to Daroca to the house of the Quaestor. There was still something more to be sent to Fuentes. He continued his work in Villanueva and San Martin del Rio; he enters in the Province of Teruel and begs in Báguena and Burbáguena. In the latter he collected 51 reales of sheepskin, that he faithfully notes down, adding: "This money I handed over to the servant Francisco Bustos, paying him his salary at the rate of half a peseta daily". It seems that he was paying him off because he was thinking of returning to Zaragoza.

In the Sitiada of the 12th of January 1815, the Directors deal with what they should do with the alms obtained: "Father Juan having returned from his preaching travels, it was agreed: that the clothes and things of coarse thread that keep arriving would be given to the Senior Wardrobe Keeper; and the skeins collected would be given immediately to be woven. The sheets and shirts that could be made were made; and the money that they would have brought would be handed over to the Receiver and he would keep it specifically to buy linen, using all in their capacity to do it as quickly as possible".

Some rascal, a kind never lacking in the Hospital, very sagaciously took advantage of the fruit of the preaching travels, extracting sheets from the Establishment, to sell them. The Mayor was informed so that the guilty could be corrected. But there were guilty ones higher up, because while the Father, with hard work was looking after the needs of the Hospital, the Administration, bothered with asking for an exact account of product and expenses of the preaching trip, was not capable of looking after the goods contributed, for which they should also have given an account.



Two months had passed since the return of Father Bonal and already the Sitiada "agreed that whenever Mosén Juan Bonal could, he should leave to continue the preaching trips for clothes to help the urgent need there is in the Hospital for this article".

During this time, Father Juan gave himself up fully to his priestly mission at the side of the patients. If the Ministry occupied a large part of the day of the Vicar, the Chaplains and the Pasioneros, religious care was multiplied during Lent. Possibly this was the motive for which Father offered himself and remained in Zaragoza.

Lent was celebrated with great solemnity at the centre. Aurelio Baquero relates how the Hospital was considered one of the most appropriate places to sanctify oneself during this liturgical time, and the one preferred by the people of Zaragoza to piously visit the sick taken in there.

"The authorities gave example assisting... at the sermon preached every day, at a convenient time so that people could attend... and every day there were special collections, sometimes very much...".

"The titled, illustrious ladies of high society, divided the weeks of Lent among themselves to personally serve the poor patients and give them a gift as was the custom, going up to the wards of the patients with their towels and many silver trays, full of crystallized fruit and other gifts, distributing them amongst the patients, with admirable charity, according to the need of each one". All this, the result of a mentality largely absent today, gave Lent a special character within the Hospital and a little extra work for the employees.

Possibly because of this, the Sitiada let Holy Week pass and at the first meeting they had after Easter Sunday - the 26th of March, the resolution enunciated above was taken. When Mosén Bonal was notified about it, with the zeal that characterizes him, he began the preparations for the departure. This is what has been stated: that he arranged a horse for three and a half ounces of gold, and asked that

the money be handed over to close the deal. The Sitiada agreed that this amount be made available and that the Receiver should pay it, from what was handed over from the previous trip”.

On the 24th of April 1815, the Father preached and collected alms at Cadrete, María de Huerva and Botorrita, going the following day to Muel and Mezalocha, according to the notation presented of what was handed over through the charity of the faithful. In Botorrita he adds: “In this place we were lodged by the old Quaestor and he desired to continue as Quaestor. I understand that it was convenient to do so as it was a house for guests of the town and thus would be useful to the Hospital”.

Father Juan fulfilled what the Rule of 1811 asked of the Travelling Preacher; keeping accounts in each village whether there was a Quaestor or not and whether he had the appointment document; the same had to be done if there was only a Brother of the Archfraternity of Nuestra Señora de Gracia. If in some place there weren't, the number of inhabitants had to be indicated so that the Sitiada could decide whether it was worth naming a Quaestor, taking into account the person recommended by the Travelling Preacher (Veredero).

It is deduced that Father Juan, besides being a Travelling Preacher and Alms Collector and Missionary, was a true delegate of the Sitiada of the Hospital with a very wide and responsible mission that included collecting debts and practicing certain missions that were conducive to the good of the poor.



From Villanueva de Huerva, Father Bonal passes on to Longares on the 27th of April, feast of Our Lady of Montserrat. In the midst of his care for persons, and in the midst of wheat, clothes and reales, his mind and heart would go off, from time to time, to his beloved Moreneta (the dark Virgin). Maybe he took a rest, as a spiritual gift with Our Lady, because in the town of Longares, with its approximately 300 inhabitants then, he must have spent two days.

He then passed through Almonacid de la Sierra, La Almunia de Doña Godina, Cosuenda, Aguarón, Codos and Tobed, where he celebrates with the Church, the solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord.

He continues to Santa Cruz del Grío, Inoges, El Frasnó, Villalba and Belmonte, Miedes, Langa, Mainar and Anento. He was on the 12th of May in this cool place, at an elevation of 700 metres. He must have stayed there helping in the cult of Sunday the 14th, day of Pentecost.

By now, different loads of clothes that the Father had been remitting from Calatayud, Longares and Cadrete, keep reaching Zaragoza. In the Act of the Sitiada a few days later, the Steward said that he had been “informed that Mosén Juan Bonal was collecting substantial alms, as much “dinero” as hens, coarse thread and other goods. The Sitiada was aware of this and resolved that, when the said alms arrived, they would be given to the purpose proposed as the aim of the preaching traveller.”

Father Juan was never pessimistic because as we have affirmed on another occasion, he knew to value and be grateful for whatever was given to him as alms, even if it were a piece of used cloth for bandages. He was very enthusiastic in his work; the faith and profound joy that invaded his life, did not permit him to have any vision less stimulating in his difficult but always amiable service to the poor.

On this occasion there were very sufficient reasons to show himself more optimistic: he was collecting quite a lot

of alms. The place Cosuenda stands out and deserves special mention; it then had around one hundred inhabitants and the contribution note expresses a good contribution in cash: 1,045 reales in alms, 203 from the box of the Church, 20 from a Will, 140 of special alms. The total was 1,408 reales.

This is the first time that there is a final Will as alms in the Father's travelling and preaching, and it will not be the only one. In this Vereda of 1814-1815, in no other town or village, not even in the more populous and rich, because of industry or products of their agriculture, was this figure reached. In later Veredas, that continued till his death in 1829, only on eight occasions would it be surpassed in some Municipality.

It has to be stated once more, that the fact of sharing, with charity, does not depend only on having more or less possessions, more or less goods available; it is a question of generosity, of virtue, of love for the brother in need, of hope and longing for eternal goods, perceiving the present ones only as relative and perishable, that are not more than means for subsistence, never an end in themselves.

After the collection in those places of Campo Romanos, Father Juan passes the limits of the Province of Zaragoza and goes through several villages of Teruel: Villel, Segura, Villanueva del Rebollar, Torrecilla and Godos. He enters in the Archiprestazgo of Calamocha through Nueros and preaches and asks for alms in Olalla, Collados, Valverde, Lechago, Navarrete, Cutanda and Barrachina, where the Regent Mosén Manuel Saldaña enrolled as a member of the brotherhood.



Father Bonal is in Torrelasnegros on the 23rd of May, and continues his labour in the same judicial part of Segura, working in the villages of Pancrudo, Corbatón and Cosa that had a total of a thousand inhabitants.

On the 27th of the same month he reached Bañón of the district of Montalbán and, without entering the said town, alternated between the villages of the part of Albarracín: Ojosnegros, Singra, Alba and Torrelacárcel.

On the 4th of June he is in Rillo, where he makes note of new members who have enrolled themselves, in Pancrudo, Torrelasnegros, Barrachina and Olalla. As a sign and memento everybody will receive a Holy Picture of Our Lady of Grace. The alms collected in Hinojosa de la Val de Jarque are also stated, even though undated. Undoubtedly, it could be in Hinojosa de Jarque and Jarque de Val, both of the Province of Teruel, like all the earlier ones.

From these first days of June onwards, it seems that Father Bonal returned to Zaragoza. Will they have sent him a letter that reached, addressed to him, from the Canary Islands? When he came to know its contents, did he judge that his presence was urgently necessary in the Hospital?

The missive was signed by the Priest José Martínez de Escobar, member of the Board of Charity of the Hospital of Gran Canarias, who writes to Father Bonal to "participate with you and the Sisters that God seems to have heard your supplications and wishes, without doubt, to extend the charity of this Holy Institute all over the earth; may it be so for the glory and honour of the Lord".

He is reminded that in earlier letters it had been communicated what steps were being taken for the Sisters to be able to go to these Islands to carry out there the same works and follow the same rules as in Zaragoza and Huesca. He is reminded that he himself, urging the interest of the other members, expounded at the Board what he had seen and experienced for a period of one year in the Hospital of Our Lady of Grace of Zaragoza and that if these gentlemen,

wanted to inform themselves better, they should read the Constitutions of the Sisters of Huesca, that were available.

They studied the project in depth, asked the Bishop for authorization and submitted it for voting. The unanimous decision, is expressed thus: "The Board of Charity, under whose jurisdiction this Hospital and Hospice is, has convened that six Sisters come, and for which necessary measures are being taken for their lodging within the same house which is a very decent building. The principal difficulty that arose was the transport of the six sisters up to Canarias, as the house did not have excess funds for extraordinary and increased expenses, such as transport; thus it will be convenient to calculate the cost there and inform us of the resolution about their coming".

"My friend and brother in the Lord", to conclude our work in honour of God and profit of the poor, we have to work with diligence and zeal on the matter. You kindly select the ones to be sent, as they "have to serve as the nursery for others here who will apply later to take the habit". Communicate to all concerned your deliberation and decision, and let "these gentlemen address a letter to this Board where the final resolution will be proposed".

Those who inspired the project are, Don José, the Sisters and Father Bonal. Even the distrustful Sitiada who had marginalized the Fraternity, would have to recognise the weight of its prestige and the obligation of counting on it in a matter of such transcendence: he was the Founder!



Facts show that the solicitude of the Board of Charity of Las Palmas did not obtain a satisfactory reply, even though we do not know the concrete form that was used at that moment and the difficulties manifested

One of the first biographers of Mother María Rafols says that "the Sitiada refused, alleging besides, as the motive, through Mosén Bonal, the precarious state to which the Fraternity had reached, because of the limited number that had remained after the terrible and painful losses suffered in the War of Independence which had not yet been overcome".

For Father Bonal, who, as we know, dreamt of the right projects with a Congregation well settled and extending its action to new fields and places. It must have been very painful, having to recognise the precariousness of the situation, not because of lack of spirit in those who remained, but because of the circumstances in which the war left them. From the moment Mother Rafols ceased to be Superior because of voluntary resignation, several Sisters had died - three in the year 1812 - and several more had returned to their families deterred by illness that would become invincible because of the type of life they lived, of such prolonged sacrifice and so much work with no regular hours.

Several years later, the matter had still not been forgotten and they insisted on sending the Sisters. In a letter from Father Bonal to the Archdeacon Don Ramón Gregorio Gómez, he speaks of his pastoral action in the Veredas (travelling- preaching) and points out the poverty of the Hospital: "Attending to the grave necessities that oppress the poor patients of the Holy Royal and General Hospital of Our Lady of Grace and because of the losses suffered in earlier times, almost annually, I go to collect alms for the suffering of this Holy House... and besides this, as an unworthy missionary of the people of the villages, exhorting them to penance and to peace, it is understood, to true peace".

Referring to the difficulties of sending Sisters he writes: "We have seen deplorable times... and, besides, circumstances

intervened (1815) because of which the project was suspended. At the moment, it cannot be resolved by the Sisters, they being few and in some way some of them ill. The Superior Sr. Tecla Cantí is convalescing; Sr. Maria Rafols is in a village to recover her health; the third (Sr. Torrellas) has passed to the tower del Gallego of this Holy Hospital, to see if she can recover, as her health is very weak; these three are the ones who came to found this Holy Hospital, and are the only ones who survive, eight of them having died gloriously in the memorable Sieges of this city. Another of the Founders went to found the Holy Hospital of Huesca in 1807, and who died in the odour of sanctity, in the year 1812. Thus I see it very difficult to be able to please the Most Illustrious Bishop and your Most Illustrious Lordship. If I did start a foundation on these Islands, I would like if possible, one of the three earlier named Sisters to be the Superior.”.

Besides, it seems almost impossible that the Sitiada consents to the Sisters leaving to go elsewhere, because they maintain the idea that they were brought only for the Hospital of Zaragoza. They want it to remain that way, always in it and exclusively in it, so as not to lose “paternal authority”. Years passed and this project was thwarted and so were many others that were suggested. Father Juan would die without seeing his Fraternity emancipated and strong.



The efforts of Father Juan Bonal produced immediate fruit and alleviated for the moment, the most urgent needs of the Hospital; but the penury was endemic.

On Friday, the 16th of June 1815, the Act of the Sitiada expresses in real and pathetic terms the economic situation of the establishment. The Receiver makes it known that what comes in every month is reduced to 24 pounds, 10 sueldos. Of them, 12 come from voluntary alms and the rest from renting a house. With it and some alms of the church boxes, the daily expenses of the foundlings is being sustained, without being able to pay the foster mothers and other employees of the Hospital.

The debts, already considerable, had increased with the six cart loads of fire-wood, an indispensable need.

It was necessary to transfer the sheep to the hills urgently as there were no resources. Mutton had to be bought for use in the house. There is no provision of wheat or beans for more than two days and nobody wanted to give any on loan. On Monday there will be no dough; hence on Tuesday there will be no bread for the patients. There is urgent need of eggs, the cost of which is 8 jaquesa pounds per day and for what has been consumed on loan, 120 pounds are to be paid.

The wardrobe keeper cannot attend to the expenses of the washing women and the washing, the weavers and other urgent jobs of the administration.

Nobody wants to give anything on credit, and those who did it earlier, because of pity for the patients and as recognition of the assistance that the Hospital offers to the city, now continue urging payment for their increased invoices.

However much the Administrators reflect, imagine and dialogue regarding some means with which to obtain necessary resources, they find none, as in the house all have been exhausted. Faced with the extreme situation of “seeing

the poor patients deprived of their necessary sustenance and of not being able to satisfy the monthly pay of the foster mothers of the foundling children", a director proposes the sale of the Mesón de San Antón. It was agreed. Señor Arias is commissioned to take the steps he considers opportune for the purpose: authorization from superiors, evaluation of the same, search for possible buyers, etc.

As the Hospital is of Royal Patronage, they thought that if his Majesty came to know of this difficult situation in all its severity, he would come to remedy it as far as possible. Hence they request a visit that had not been made for many years.

The petition is attended to, and Fernando VII, by Royal Decree, names as Visitors Don Pedro Valero, Bishop-elect of Gerona, and Don Benito Fernández de Navarrete, Dean of the town council of Zaragoza and Director of the Sitiada of the Hospital.

On the 6th of July the Visit opens and commences with the Church and the Ecclesiastics. From the notes of the same it is known that Father Juan Bonal was absent and was called and examined on his return, about fifteen days after the other priests.

Had he re-embarked once again on a Vereda? We have no data to affirm it. From the 4th of June when we left him in Rillo, Hinojosa and Jarque we do not know of any other place visited by him till the 2nd of August when he was in Cuevas de Almudén, accompanied by the priest Joaquin Marco and they collected 4 reales in cash and 13 pounds of wool.



After the short note of Cuevas de Almudén, nothing more was done by Father Juan till the month of October when he once again continues the Vereda. There is no record of why he had to interrupt it.

The Hospital continues to benefit from the dispatches of alms collected in the towns on the 17th of August, clothes that had been passed on to the Senior Wardrobe Keeper; on the 18th of September: "Some hens have arrived and more will be brought from the Vereda of Don Juan Bonal, to which the Sitiada agreed:... that they be kept at the Hospital, to keep using three every day, putting them in the cookers and distributing them in portions, by order, in the Tuberculosis Wards...".

At this time the Royal Visit was interrupted because of the death of one of the Visitors, Don Pedro Valero, on the 28th of August, a month and a half after the start of the Visit. It will take time to be re-established because of the appointment of a substitute and the difficulties that came up. Years passed and the Visit still continued. What presumably was never had was the final report on the Visit.

On the other hand, another authority of Zaragoza had already sent to the King, through the Chamber, a report which even though it has a specific purpose, which is to enumerate the qualities of Sevil so as to appoint him or not as Secretary, in passing makes a tough reference to the state of the Hospital. The document was directed and signed by Pedro Maria Ric, Regent of the Audience of Aragon. The following paragraph was written by him:

*... the Hospital has never before been seen in such a deplorable state as it is today, because they have even cut down the scant food of the patients and are giving them an inferior quality. The Directors attribute it to the effects of the war and enormous losses that it caused the Hospital; but even though this is certain, I do not see it as sufficient reason for the unhappiness in which the patients are. The income is the same as before; besides, till very recently it enjoyed all the*

*goods of the Hospital of Convalescents and above all, it has had better income than could have been yearned for in any House, which has no expenses. Well, I have never seen less patients in the Hospital as I have today, and the same happened during the duration of the domination of the enemy”.*

Perhaps what Pedro Maria Ric obtained in a rapid visit to the Hospital and from conversations with different persons was an erroneous vision of the actual reality of the centre, or maintained a partial knowledge of what the Centre had been in the years before the War of Independence because, he commits patent errors when talking about the two extremes: he communicates that there is a big Department for the Demented and another for Foundlings, when these were looked after in one badly conditioned and poorly ventilated ward of the Convent of the Encarnación. Among the persons who attend to the patients he mentions “a Congregation of Brothers and another of Sisters”. The second term is true, but the Brothers had disappeared six years earlier.

The hard reality was experienced day after day by the Directors and personnel who administered the Hospital with funds from a cash-box that was always empty. The ones who suffered were the poor patients whose under-nourishment and destitution Father Juan tried to mitigate at the cost of hard work and sacrifice.

On the 5th of October the Sitiada says that Mosén Juan Bonal is going to leave to continue the Vereda and a copy of the certification which must have been given to him to make known his commission in the towns, can be seen.



After two months in the city, Father Juan leaves once again on the Vereda and on the 9th of October what was collected in Fuenfrida (?) was noted down. He continued in the province of Zaragoza and begs in Mediana, where, as on earlier occasions they had given him an abundance of chickens and hens. On the 22nd he notes in El Burgo (de Ebro) 129 reales and a fattened animal, besides letters to the Archfraternity.

Then there is a page with a list of the Fraternities and the last six are in Bonal's hand-writing. On the next page also, they sign with the associations of the village Maria de Huerva. And on the following, the associations of Aguarón, Alfamén, Tosos, Aguillón, Fuendetodos, Jaulín and Morata are entered.

These statements in the book of Veredas manifest the interest of Father Juan in spreading the devotion to Our Lady of Grace, getting letters to the Brotherhood. It could not be otherwise, given the interest that Father had in procuring the good of everyone; because the brotherhood benefited the Hospital with the quota that the associates gave per year and the House of Associates, and these had a part of the spiritual goods with which the same was enriched.

This was the aim of Carlos V, who, for the purpose of allotting resources to the Hospital for its very many needs, intervened with his royal influence before Pope Clement VII to authorise the foundation of a Fraternity of the Virgin of Grace, supplicating him also, to enrich the Brotherhood and the Hospital with abundant indulgences. In 1527, by a Papal Bull of Clement VII, in which the required authorization was granted, the Association was established, the Emperor himself being the first to be inscribed. Among its affiliates there are several Zaragozaan prelates like Don Bernardo Francés Caballero and Don Manuel Vicente Martinez and his family.

The Book of the “Archconfraternity of the Holy Royal and General Hospital of Our Lady of Grace of the City of



Zaragoza" that is preserved in the sacristy of its church, proves that Father Juan Bonal acted with full conviction that it was beneficial to everyone, including those in the Brotherhood. The list of members opens in 1815 with Doña Francisca Xilo and ends on the 10th of January 1867 with Don Antonio Abadias and his family. The earlier Register disappeared in the fire at the Hospital in 1808. Thousands and thousands of names are inscribed.

The second column of page 302 begins with the name of Juan Bonal. It continues with Jayme Bonal, Catalina Bonal, Josef Bonal and family, Martin Bonal and Rosa Bonal. It continues with Francisca, Josef, Martin and Margarita Bonal, all deceased; then comes José Bonal, minor, deceased. Not having material goods, the Father gifts them with the best he has available.

After another six enrolments, we find Sr. Tecla Cantí, Sr. Maria Rafols, Sr. Raymunda Torrellas and Sr. Cecilia Aparicio. The Directions of 1656 said that "the women members of the confraternity who served the sick of the Hospital gain, on the day of their entry and at the hour of death, plenary indulgence and remission of all their sins". Each day serving the poor with works of charity, they are enriched with abundant graces. Father Juan, kept away by the Sitiada from his beloved Sisters, was interested in their spiritual welfare. Immense is the value of a Mass: three times a year, Mass is celebrated for the members of the confraternity.



The small alms of the people continued to be a remedy for the urgent and great needs of the Hospital. On the 22nd of April 1816, the Majordomo to the Sitiada manifests that the expenses of the last weeks could not be covered by the sale of their baked products, and that they had to lay hands on a small quantity that there was in the cash box and of 63 libras, 15 sueldos coming from the proceeds of the charity collection of Mosén Juan Bonal.

The Father continues in the work of the Vereda and, even though after the 22nd of October 1815 when we leave him in Burgo, his itinerary is not consigned town by town, nor is the fruit of his alms-begging. We know he was in Navarre and the Basque Provinces, with a happy result: from the collection, he could buy in Bilbao, from Don Patricio de Landaluce, 6,044 varas (approx. = .836 m), or seventy two and a half pieces of Beaufort linen, 20 varas of grey cloth. On the 28th of June 1816 the first payment of 1,900 reales of sheepskin is entered for the dispatch of twelve such pieces.

I was in Portugalete: in the book of the Archconfraternity, mentioned earlier and on the same page 302 where the Sisters names are inscribed, two lines below that of Sr. Cecilia Aparicio, we read: "Villa de Portugalete, 4th September 1816". The catalogue of the members of the Fraternity continues but we do not know where it ends; they continue noting many more without determining the place of origin. There are about 13,710 names written before mentioning the name of another town, till folio number 494, where the third last of the first column is "Fraternity of Zuera", and then those of Ejea de los Caballeros, Rivas, Biota, etc.

On the 6th of July the return of Mosén Juan Bonal is announced to the Board, and the need to satisfy, on the part of the Hospital, the Royal import duty on the pieces of cloth that the Father had declared and that were detained at the Customs for the payment of customs duty, which amounted to 7.282 rs. 18 ms. (reales, maravideses)

As the said amount was at this moment, far beyond the possibilities of the half-empty coffers of the Hospital, the

Directors began a series of transactions to get them to hand over the linen/hemp and with it be able to resolve the extreme need of the Centre. During this time they tried to get arbitrators for the case.

A report and petition was dispatched to the Commandant of the Army and the Kingdom of Aragon, signed by all the Regidores, begging of him "to order that the material be sent to the Hospital, by means of a bond for the amount of the duty, suspending payment till the Sitiada made a representation to His Majesty for it to be exonerated"; or if he saw fit, that it be compensated by the exemption on sugar that the Royal Treasury paid annually to the Hospital and which the Treasury of the Army paid meticulously till 1807, and after that, till today, remained unpaid.

A lot of time was wasted in reporting the said petition, and no favourable resolution was obtained. One month later, only a part of the rich goods was released from the Customs. Another 15 pieces, that is to say, 1,086 varas remained undelivered.

On the 24th of October, the Senior Wardrobe Keeper offered an explanation for the investment that had been made of the 4,958 varas of linen that was recovered.

In spite of this action being counter productive, Father Juan did not feel frustrated; besides help for the Hospital, other motives are the foundation of his work: he acted for charity and charity is never lost.



On the same day that the Sitiada had been made to realise the great needs that were satisfied by the linen contributed by Mosén Juan Bonal, another extreme measure of contradictory content is considered by the Board, if we take into account how fruitful the activity of his earlier Vereda had been.

It is believed some benefactors of the towns do not give alms for the Hospital, or give it with distrust. They believe that the Verederos reserve some part of the benefit for themselves. The Board resolved: "that an exhortation be prepared, manifesting the great financial need the Hospital was in, and asking as a consequence for alms of all kinds. However small and of whatever type they be, everything is useful in this Holy House; and that the alms be always handed over to the holy Priests and Quæstors of the respective towns, which would be received in its entirety and without any discount. The alms will be surely used in helping the patients and foundling children who take shelter at this pious establishment."

In 1817 more goods arrive from Bilbao. They are 756 varas of linen and 53 of sack cloth. In February the Senior Wardrobe Keeper communicates that: "from the linen received recently of the alms of Fr. Juan Bonal, 30 rough sheets, 130 common sheets, 34 shirts, 36 pillows and 6 towels were made".

Finally, Don Mariano Aznárez, commissioned by the Sitiada to collect them, handed over in the Hospital, the 15 pieces that had been held back at the Customs and which they managed to retrieve on the 18th of February of this year 1817. They were only a part of the rich fruit obtained by Father Bonal.

As we see, in the Acts of the Sitiada an exact statement is left of the varas, a total of 72 pieces, its price being equivalent to the Customs duties. These are details also of the formalities carried out for its delivery and the persons who intervened, the investment of the linen, the beneficiaries

- patients, children of the Foundling Hospital, Don Vicente Oliver, etc.-. Everything was exactly calculated and recorded. And the same with the other goods that kept coming from the Veredas.

Did it ever occur to those respectable gentlemen to calculate at what price of abnegation, at what cost of work and sacrifice Father Juan got it all? Perhaps in their Offices, more or less comfortable, when they had to rub their hands to warm them because of the low temperature, would they then remember the zealous Priest who was far away travelling over bad roads, from town to town, exposed to the North winds, to storms and frost, without more covering other than what the fire of his zeal and charity gave him? The Administrators persisted in this disinterest and lack of care towards the Father. Possibly, Father Juan was the first in forgetting himself.

In February, the Veredero shows desires to carry out a new journey through the parishes of Zaragoza, its quarters and the neighbouring villages. The Administrators renew the dispatches. Mother Tecla is "the one put in charge by Father Bonal to take care of the alms collected" in Zaragoza and its suburbs (in the alms and listing of the Confraternity almost always one or two Sisters assisted). In the same way, the alms collected from the villages would be deposited.

On the 6th of May 1817, she has 20,508 reales and 16 ms. in her custody. The Sitiada, some months later, would communicate to the harassed Sister Tecla that she would not receive any assets for the Hospital. Everything would enter the Receiver's Office!



The generous projects of an extraordinary Vereda that Don Juan Bonal proposes, and which plan is being elaborated to present to the Administrators, coincides in time with the appointment of Don Juan Francisco Santolaria as Senior Accountant of the Hospital by Royal Decree of the 11th of March 1817. This decree was received at the session of the 17th of the same month, and was celebrated by the Sitiada as the appointment was made on the proposal of the same board.

The responsibilities of the Senior Accountant, as expressed in the Orders that governed the Hospital were very wide. Besides, as declared by the Sitiada: "they are all, in practice, with an increase in established formality" because with the passing of the years new methods and requirements had been updating the administrative set up of the centre.

Regarding the rights and duties of the Accountant, it is interesting to note the following: "He will keep a Book of the Sitiadas and in it he will note down all the deliberations of the Administrators in matters of finance" and for which he has to attend all the Sitiadas on Mondays, in which these matters will be exclusively dealt with.

With regard to the Verederos, they were ordered that when they returned: "accounts would be taken from them, carefully checking whether they had been to all the places that belonged to the Vereda of each one and it would be carefully examined whether they had fulfilled their obligations. From what was produced in each one of the Veredas an account would be opened in the major book, and the deficit in money will have to be paid by them in cash, without admitting any type of instalment".

Santolaria would play an important role in the life of Juan Bonal for some years, contributing to his humiliation and to his sanctity. He identified himself to such an extent with the powers that corresponded to his duty and with those he would later attribute to himself, that he became for the abnegated Veredero an unbearable inquisitor, distrustful and a betrayer.

Already on the 12th of May, the Sitiada, without disclosing the motive for their determination, resolved that "for now" Father Juan suspends his Vereda and presents the plan he had elaborated, stating the places that he proposed to visit and the means he planned to employ. In the meanwhile, he should give an account of the alms he is collecting in the city and in the neighbouring villages.

Four days later, Father Juan addresses the Sitiada in a discreet communique observing their dispositions and manifesting with clarity the high intentions from which his behaviour in favour of the poor stems: "Your Excellency has deigned to command suspension of the Vereda, for which I am very happy, as also for any other decision Your Excellency may deign to make on the matter, keeping in mind that the principal and first motive of this object has been *sacrificing oneself for the good of the poor without taking heed of the inclemency of the weather or any other tasks that can be suffered gloriously, looking only at such a sacred object*".

At the same time he presents the required accounts of the collection he is carrying out in the city for charity.

The Brief and the accounts were passed on to the Accountant's Office so that "examining everything, they may report what was offered and what they think".

Santolaria responds nine days later, that the said report cannot be elaborated because of several irregularities he found; one of them is of great importance: the alms account being signed by Sr. Tecla Cantí who, according to the literal meaning of the Royal Orders, has not been constituted as recognised to take care of the assets of the Hospital.



During this time while the Accountant Santolaria is refilling his pens to note down the inconsistencies he finds in the accounts presented by Father Juan Bonal, different pieces of clothing from the alms got from the city and the immediate neighbouring villages continue entering the Wardrobe cupboards, as also "312 varas of linen that was bought". The Sister-in-charge of this office was of the opinion that it should be used for making bedsheets. In another remittance, two consignments of linen arrive, one 'arroba' (25 lbs.) of flax for spinning and one portion of cloth.

Perhaps, remembering the stance of humility of Father Juan, ready to retire from the Hospital if it were necessary, as expressed in his recent communication, the Sitiada, fearing losing the source of these products, softens the tone of the note from the Accountant's Office. On the 29th of May, without failing to recognise the irregularities with which the accounts appear, dispose that, with respect to the good faith with which he had proceeded and the satisfaction that the Sitiada had in the person of the said Ecclesiastic.... it was decided, not without informing Mosén Juan Bonal, that in the future, in the collections he makes for charity, he should subject himself to the rules prescribed by the Accountant's Office, for which he will be given the necessary instructions.

Father Juan continued without losing heart and on the 2nd of June he presented, summarised in six articles, the plan he proposed for the collection, fruit of his experience in this occupation. In his notes he incorporates the names of several persons of confidence whom he considered competent to help him in the task. The Sitiada decrees that the project "passes on to the Accountant's Office so that examining the plan and harmonising it with the report given by the said office, the same be settled, deciding with the said Mosén Juan, what guidelines be given for this collection; and the same would apply to the others who accompany him on this charity drive".

Very conveniently, while work was going on to get the project ready, the Sitiada receives a Brief from Mariano Sanclemente praying that he be commissioned to accompany Mosén Juan Bonal in the 'Vereda'. It was agreed that the Accountant keep it in mind and act on it. The opinion of Santolaria is favourable because, "according to the information he had acquired, Don Mariano Sanclemente could be of great use" in the 'Vereda'. Agreeing, the Sitiada left him in-charge of carrying out the said office in accord with the proposal suggested.

Father Juan, to ensure the fruit of the 'Vereda', offers a petition to His Majesty unfolding the situation of the Hospital after the terrible Sieges, the remedies they had recourse to, to solve the most basic needs, the three charity drives carried out and the project of another with wider range; he solicits his support and the renewal of the favours enjoyed by the Hospital, its charity drives, etc. Mother Tecla and Srs. Rafols and Torrellas sign the request together with Father Juan.

This personal initiative of Father Bonal became known to the Administrators, with the consequent displeasure, who, ignoring the points it contained, state that "Mosén Juan present a copy of it to the Sitiada with no excuse or pretext, so as to proceed with its examination".

Besides, a period of eight days is fixed to make his earlier helpers who were begging for alms with the approval of the Father, return and present themselves at the Accountant's Office to receive further orders. If they didn't, the Sitiada would use the justice of the villages to take back money, clothes, notes and horses and remit it all and themselves to Zaragoza with the necessary security.



The Accountant Santolaria, after deleting, modifying and/or adding whatever his criteria dictated to the Plan elaborated by Father Juan, presented it to the Sitiada, who, approving it, fixed dates: the 30th of July the helpers and the servants would already be in Zaragoza. On the 15th of August, "Father Don Juan Bonal would proceed to start his charity drive, rigorously conforming with all the details of the instructions which were ordained by the Sitiada, given to him and signed by him, and that in the stipulated period of 15 days the accounts have to be rendered". In the same manner, the said Mosén Juan should present to the Sitiada, a copy of the representation he made to His Majesty. "without excuse or pretext of any kind, so as to examine it and proceed as deemed necessary. The said Mosén Juan was then summoned and was informed by the same Sitiada about the preceding dispositions".

Harsh and disrespectful appears the phrase "the said Juan Bonal was summoned"; so also seem the exigencies with respect to the representation directed to the King, to whom any citizen is free to present himself.

In the copy that is preserved, identical to the one read by the Sitiada, no sentence or petition could be found that merited censure. The proof lies in the fact that this representation was never ever mentioned again.

This zeal of an inquisitor draws greater attention when one realises, through the Acts of the meetings, that five days earlier, the Sitiada had also sent a representation to the King, not in favour of the Hospital nor of the 'Veredas' or charity drives but rather soliciting "that he deigns to concede to the Administrators of this Hospital, the distinctive use of a medal, proposing that it could be of gold, oval in shape, carrying on the obverse an image of Our Lady of Grace, titular and patron of this Holy House; on the reverse, the Arms of Your Majesty as royal establishment under your immediate protection...", and it continues going down to the minutest details, how it would be worn on the buttonhole of the dress coat with a ribbon of sea green colour.

Did the Royal Chamber study seriously the matters and petitions that reached them? If they did, they would have verified the abyss that separated the preoccupations of some persons, with a tendency to emphasize and ensure their prestige, and at a very different level, the motivation of the life and action of Father Juan Bonal, directed only towards achieving the greater good of simple souls and the well-being of the patients and of the Hospital.

With this same motivation, the Father presented to the Sitiada, as appears in the Acts of the 24th of July, some specifications regarding the ordinances for the 'Vereda', to which the Board replied with definite sternness "that it was resolved in the earlier Sitiada".

The Father also informs that the carriers of Morella had arrived with a portion of the very good linen and that it was being offered very cheap. His opinion is "that such a good occasion cannot be lost". As though they were doing the Father a favour, they resolved: "that for this one time the said linen should be accepted and if some money was short to make the payment; it should be settled with the Administrator of the week".

They did not accept the passports that the Father had obtained from the Field Marshal as "when they were asked for they did not conform with the aims of the Sitiada". They were taken away and they were asked to request for others to be issued, and in duplicate, so that each one could carry his own and the Director of the 'Vereda' would carry the passports of everybody. Each presbyter with his helper and servant had to go along separate though not distant paths. Thus, well documented, they travel on a surer footing and well-accredited for the collection.



If from the time dedicated to one event, project or theme one could deduce the importance of the same, the acts of the Sitiada would demonstrate the measure of transcendence that is buried deep in the coming 'Vereda' of Father Juan, which had been converted into an unavoidable matter in the ordinary meetings.

On the 11th of August it concerned the departure of the Father and other employees on this extraordinary 'Vereda'; all points were dealt with well and Señor Barón de la Torre was given the commission of disposing what was convenient for this purpose, in a manner best suited to the occasion. "And of course it must be made known to Sr. Tecla Cantí that she should not receive any assets whatsoever of the Hospital, as everything has to enter the Reception Office".

Some days later, the Wardrobe Keeper gives an account of the clothes he had received from Mosén Juan Bonal before his departure. This note would be passed on to the Accountant's Office. In the same Sitiada, Señor Barón de la Torre communicates to the other Administrators that on the past Saturday, the 16th, "Don Juan Bonal and the rest of the retinue left on an extraordinary 'Vereda'."

It is fitting then to think that after overcoming the difficulties and impertinence that appeared in the transactions of preparation for the 'Vereda', it would now be easy for the Director of the 'Vereda', entrusted with the mission, to carry out the assigned tasks, with the most appropriate methods. We will see that if the transactions were difficult, less gratifying would its development be and extremely painful the end; but Father Juan Bonal is prepared, for the love of God and the good of the patients, to bear it all up.

And it is not because he is optimistic, but he had no pessimism in him either; he recognised and assumed reality and when he had to expose a negative situation he did so normally; and with clarity of mind took the measures necessary to free himself, thus avoiding harmful consequences.

After only five days of the trip, he already knew the trend of the critical moments he could expect. On the 21st of August 1817 he wrote from Albalate to Señor Barón de la Torre, communicating to him that because of the bad people prowling around the roads, he had left with the charity collector of the town eighty 'duros' with the responsibility of handing them over to His Lordship and which he would receive at the end of the month. And he adds assertively "The misery is very great, but everything possible will be done so that the alms are abundant".

Mariano Sanclemente was put as Father's inseparable companion and he would maintain an assiduous correspondence with the Accountant Santolaria. Through his letters he would manifest circumstances, events, judgements and disrespectful sentiments embellished with lies, insults and even calumnies with respect to Father Juan, whose image he lowered to the level of the vile and the despicable, revealing at the same time, his own image.

Three days after the departure he was already writing from Urrea de Gaén and "innocently" put forth the first denunciation: "This land is very miserable as you are aware; we have not collected anything in any village through which we passed because, as Father Juan explains, not too long ago Serrate and Plazas had given orders to the charity collectors, not to make payment to the account books, but to collect it themselves and remit the same to Mother Tecla which I will not be surprised had been proved true by some".

We ask ourselves: when it was done, months ago, did they already know the order of the Sitiada or did they not know of it? Sanclemente did not raise the question: he accused!



Two days later, Father Juan himself writes to Zaragoza informing Señor Barón de la Torre that at the end of the month the charity collector of Albalate would hand over to him and deposit in his hands, the money collected, he being a person of confidence.

He alludes also, as did his Assistant, to the poverty that reigns in the villages they are passing through, but he does not remain with the negative side of the situation; rather, he manifests his steadfastness, his courage and disposition to carry out responsibly what he has at hand in his commitment to his mission, which depended on him: "The misery is very great, but everything possible will be done so that the alms are abundant".

Of a very different tone are all the uninterrupted bits of news that Sanclemente sends to the Accountant or to Señor Barón and through them, to the Board, as can be seen in successive letters.

Alcañiz, I-IX-1817: "It is highly regrettable to have to manifest to you that Señor Liberati has some quantity of money and we do not know where he is... both with him and with Puértolas I have had some words". The complaint is that they do not fulfill their commitments as the 'Vereda' well, they do not obey at all; they even said that they were as much or more ignorant than he.

On the rebound, the accusation falls on the Director, because "of all this I made Father Juan aware, and he replied that I should let him be". At the same time, it shows the confidence he has in the Accountant when he suggested to him with subtlety: "I hope you put a remedy to this in a prudent manner".

Don Francisco did not lose time and presented the letter to the Sitiada making eulogies towards his protégé, as "at the same time as it shows the preciseness of Sanclemente...it should excite the anger of Your Excellency, this conduct that he indicates having observed in Pablo Liberati and Lamberto Puerto". The influence of the Accountant on the

Administrators must have been notable because he dares to tell them what they should do: above all the Sitiada should "make the Priest Don Juan Bonal, Director of the Charity Drive know, by the first post, how pleasant it was to see the Statements that undoubtedly would have been remitted by his orders, by his assistant Don Mariano Sanclemente", and which is expected also of Liberati and, if he or Puerto do not in any way fulfill the Plan agreed upon, and he as Principal Head did not remedy it, it would be done by Your Excellency.

The Board wrote to Father in the terms proposed by the Accountant; but Sanclemente continued with his accusations and the same achieved their goal: the Sitiada, for just causes that it had present, ordered that Liberati be relieved of his commitment to the 'Vereda', and that he be substituted by Don Vicente Vázquez de Romay, proposed by Barón de la Torre.

He had presented to the Board the application raised by Don Vicente in which, after mentioning his knowledge of, "and also the services that he contracted in both the Sieges of Zaragoza", adds: "Well-informed that an Accountant is required to relieve the one who is in the Commission with the Collector of alms, delighted to be able to fulfill his duties, and who will in no way alter the orders of Your Excellency, with the greatest submissiveness I solicit that Your Excellency deigns to bestow on him the said title of Accountant in that commission, which he will discharge with honour".

Señor Barón de la Torre was put in charge of taking the necessary steps to direct and bring to the charity collection, the above-mentioned Vázquez and separate Liberati from it. All is done without counting on the opinion of the person responsible for the 'Vereda', Father Bonal, who, without much ado, would be informed of the order for the appointment of the new Collector.



Father Juan, even though it is against his principles and his will, sends away Liberati, respecting what the Board had ordered him to do. He writes about it from Cuevas de Vinromá, in a letter to Don Juan Francisco, Lord Baron de la Torre: "on the twelfth of this present month, Señor Liberati will appear before Your Excellency, in Castellón, as ordered by you and will go wherever God directs him. Sanclemente will be in charge of taking a receipt from him for the whole commission. I do not touch nor take care of the money, as I have other things to do, and also because the management of interests is contrary and repugnant to me". In this sentence, Father Juan clearly manifests what is the motive of his action, material interests never ever having been the force to impel his conduct: the motivation is charity.

In the same letter his rectitude and his defence of justice is discovered, a right he will never deny to anyone; on the contrary, he will foment it in whatever is within his reach and will denounce its non-fulfillment.

He says that Liberati is a good man, and, if in case the Board does not know it or has forgotten it, he adds that, if in some towns he did not collect much alms, in others, what he collected served for the care of his companion, who however, in spite of his zeal and his activity, did not collect enough even to feed himself. And he updates their memory: "In the last 'Vereda' Liberati collected for the House, ten thousand or more reales".

He laments that he was not informed in time, because in that case, he would have seen to it that Pablo Liberati was discharged when they were close to Reus, the land of his birth, so as to avoid expenses and with several days of prior information, to give him time to search for what was best for him... "This does not mean I oppose the decision of the Most Illustrious Board, I only say things clearly as God so orders".



This is the man Father Juan Bonal was, of such integrity that he made others, who harboured other ideals, very uncomfortable; more so if they moved through rough tracks of bribery, in search of personal gain, stamping on everyone else, humiliating and disparaging them.

In this last aspect, Sanclemente continues to show himself through the news he sends to the Accountant. He writes to him from Tortosa and begins by recognising an error of his in an earlier letter: he made a mistake when he said that Father Juan had ordered printing 17,000 Holy Pictures of the Virgin; it was only 7,000. But with this clarification he did what one who retracts does, so as to give an impetus to the race he is running. He continues saying that he gives him an example so that he can see that "Father Juan has deleted and added many things. He will not have any luck with the said Father Juan. He does not do anything... he is in the confessional till four, and in most of the towns, at least till twelve-thirty".

In his vanity, deceptively created by the support of the Accountant, he stooped to such vile actions like that of opening a letter addressed to Don Juan Bonal which, in his absence, he had taken from the post. He recognised the handwriting of the remittent and it seemed most opportune to him to know what was communicated to the Director of the 'Vereda'. How much would he have celebrated his triumph if he had found sentences to present as proof of offence! But it was a simple letter of a previous companion of the priest who wished to be reincorporated into the 'Veredas'. It alluded to his own merits and considered "that God did not order that he should be left abandoned".

From the content of the missive, and from his own unscrupulous act, Santolaria takes his friend the Accountant into confidence.



Extraordinary patience and great fortitude in the face of difficulties and sacrifice, were very essential for Father Juan to continue with courage that auster pilgrimage from village to village, for the love of the sick. Only charity, this sublime gift of the Spirit, that is the Spirit received by Father Juan as a charism, for the good of the suffering and the needy, only charity sustained him joyful in his humble apostolate.

The kind of life which the mission imposed on him<sup>n</sup> was hard and the means with which he had to fulfil this mission were very poor. The horses, which were indispensable for the journey, given to him by the Sitiada were old and feeble and one can imagine the continuous risk that he was faced with.

From Tortosa Mosén Vicente Oliver, the other presbyter at the 'Vereda' writes, in a letter he addresses to the Accountant of the Hospital and says that the "horses are now finished", the one mounted by Sanclemente the most exhausted of all..., the one of Father Juan getting ever weaker. He had already dropped him down three times. He changed horses and when trying to cross a water lagoon, the horse threw him down<sup>n</sup> and he almost drowned. He adds that the papers, the books, the clothes, all got wet, but the Father, "God took care of him".

Father Bonal handed over a horse to be treated in Tortosa, and to see if it could continue to be used, "the Marshall says he would take a month and a half for it to be cured, but not to be mounted". Mosén Vicente was of the opinion that it was not prudent spending more than it was worth.

Sanclemente writes to Don Francisco on the same date, and referring to the subject of horses manifests himself as usual: he smears his letter and the person of Father Juan Bonal with a tendency to run him down: "Mosén Vicente has already told you what is happening to the horses, but regarding Father Juan, it is bad because he does not know how to handle it, and I am saying this because the days I mounted it, it was the best of all."

Two days later Father Bonal himself addresses a brief note to the Lord Baron, Administrator commissioned by the 'Sitiada' for the affairs of the Vereda': "Taking note that, according to the opinion and judgement of the Chief Veterinary Surgeon of this City and Party, the horse that served for Señor Sanclemente is disabled and cannot continue the journey, and hence, even though it has been placed under treatment, it will be very expensive for the House. I have determined to send it to this Holy Hospital where it can be treated without need to pay the Veterinary doctor. If Your Excellency considers it opportune, you may send another horse; two are needed in case the Sitiada considers it worth that we continue our journey. I do not disrespect the desires that I have to serve Your Excellency, but I have risked losing my health twice."

The Father limits himself to the topic, exposes the facts with truth, communicates the opinion of the Veterinary Surgeon, adds his own opinion and respects the decision of the Sitiada. Rectitude, humility and charity are all notes of his total conduct.

In the same folder of the Father, the Lord Baron writes his reply: "The horse that you have sent will be treated well and then what can will be taken out of it". He says that he is sending two horses so that he can continue the journey "expecting much fruit of alms for the benefit of the House, which is what is needed". Not the smallest question nor showing of interest for his health, even though he knew about his falls and the danger he experienced in the lagoon.

His only preoccupation is alms, money, the horses for what they are worth and what they can get? The person? When one looks, what one finds is a coin before each of the eyes, everything else is not even noticed, it is secondary. There are many forms of slavery and humanity still considers them useful.



Sanclemente continues his accusations to the Accountant regarding the "obstinacy" of Father Juan, who remains faithful to the rights and duties of his priestly ministry: "I must tell you that he wastes his time and he will continue to waste it as Father Juan does not want to stop preaching missions. Nobody is capable of making him desist his idea". He stays on in the villages and "from here come expenses and more expenses, and this is why our needs will not be met".

In Morella, the Commissioner was away and Father Juan asked for the 1,640 rs.vn. to be handed over to Mestre, a merchant "whom I did not know. I demanded a receipt in my name... informing him before, that the said amount had to be handed over to the Commissioner... and the receipt to be remitted to me". But the receipt took a long time in arriving, and the preoccupation of Sanclemente was converted into indignation when he heard what Father Juan had said to Mestre "that the said quantity had not to be paid till the pieces of linen that the House owed the Mestre were paid for. I could not control myself, seeing the poor procedure of Father Juan, from telling him that we had not come to pay debts and that if the House owed it, Your Excellency would take care to make the payment. To which he replied to me with arrogance that he had to look after his honour and that the pieces of linen had been guaranteed by him".

Two weeks earlier, Father Juan had written to the Lord Baron regarding the same matter: Because of the absence of the Commissioner of Public Credit: "one lot of 'dinero' has been left in the house of Señor Lorenzo Mestre", who enjoys a very good reputation in this land and to whom the Commissioner hands over all the money that has to be taken to Valencia. For this purpose, he now has with him 8,000 'reales vellón'. "And even though the Holy Hospital owes the said Mestre some amount, I informed him that he could not and should not take payment without the express order of the Most Illustrious Board. I am informing you in advance, for your knowledge. The said Señor Mestre is an honest

gentleman: No person from Morella behaved as he did, offering all of us his house”.

It was impossible to combine the sentiments, - kind-hearted, honest and gratifying - of Father Juan and the tendency of his companion to see everything black and judge, always and everyone, negatively. This attitude, though not trivial, seems to arise from roots deeply embedded in the past that give it continuity and firmness.

Sanclemente notes: I have already told you, and I repeat it, that “the patience of holy Job is not sufficient to substitute at the side of Mosén Juan Bonal”. He insists on the expenses, “well, he does not know how to leave a town where he thinks his mission sermons have some effect... if he has a good attendance in the confessional, he does not think anything of staying there for six and eight days in one town”. “Regarding the villages we have passed through, you must have already been informed about the manner in which Father Juan works. Why, even the parish priests, like other subjects of some standing, tell us that the Most Illustrious Sitiada could have sent another person.”

Information does reach, but not what Sanclemente desires. The Rector of Tivenys writes to the Board about: “... the sufferings Mosén Bonal is going through meted out by one and the other, that Your Excellencies on your part have consideration and relieve him in as much as you can, of his torments. It is very sad, that after sacrificing his whole life practicing spiritual and corporal charity... as this holy man does, people still try to trample him underfoot not only with insults and bad treatment, but also with calumnies and all kinds of dishonour... I felt very sorry to see him so poorly dressed, so thin and with some wounds, the effect of bad horses... he works and he keeps awake, with abundant fruit of souls, having as he does, a special grace of God for this holy ministry”.



The continuous complaints and accusations of Sanclemente reach, through the Accountant, to the Board of the Hospital and end up having the effect that the Informer desired. On the 5th of January 1818, the Sitiada deals with the news received with respect to Mosén Bonal staying too long in the towns, harming his commission. The Lord Baron de la Torre was given the responsibility of giving written orders, that he should not stay more than three days in any town and that Mosén Vicente Oliver be asked to report if this is not observed, so as to take necessary action.

The expressions registered in the extensive letter of the Lord Baron are even harsher, from which we have taken some paragraphs:

“Your work for the benefit of this poor house would be infinitely more agreeable (to the Board) if You, adhering to the instructions given to you at the time of departure, would conform to its observance with exactitude. The Sitiada knows positively, through subjects of high character that You... animated by your special zeal, should not do anything more in the villages than a light exhortation to the faithful, exposing to them the needs of this Holy Hospital and stimulating their charity to help them... You go on to deal with other points, peculiar to each parish with its respective Priest and staying on in some places as though your responsibility was that of Apostolic Missionary. Even though it may be actually very laudable, it is not beneficial for the Hospital, as the alms are not that large, and the expenses continue on the days when you are occupied in matters alien to the commission and your responsibility is that of asking for alms. The Lord Baron, apparently on his own initiative, took the opportunity to hint to the Father, a possible renunciation of his task as Director of the ‘Vereda’. This point was not discussed at the Sitiada or at least, it is not reflected in the Act, but he, justifying himself with “his natural ingenuity”, just mentions off-handedly the suggestion, to see if it results in the desired effect. He says thus: “...I suppose you will take heed of the warning I am giving you on behalf of the Sitiada, ... and,

with my natural ingenuity I add that if by telling you what is convenient for this Holy House, you feel insulted and think of discontinuing the Charity Drive, inform us so we can determine your return with the propriety and convenience that corresponds to your character, and arrange that Mosén Vicente and his Helpers continue while some other solution is found”.

The recommendations must have reached the Father very quickly, because, on the 7th of March he writes a small note to the Secretary which will be taken up in the session of the 30th. He expresses that he received his recommendations with great delay and would try to put into practice the recommendations of the Sitiada. He manifests his intention of putting up as evidence, God willing, the reality of the facts with the confidence that the Board, desirous of the truth, will see the matter with clarity; that he had received the one from the Lord Baron and that he would reply to it when he could.

On his part, Sanclemente had already communicated to the Accountant that, “a man who has no shame, who pays no heed in spite of warning him and telling him, ... all the cautionary measures that the Lord Baron may make to Mosén Juan will be null and void. Well, he is a man who is completely closed in his opinion and that does not suit the Lord Baron”. Days later he communicates to his confidante that, if earlier he stayed long, now he stayed even longer.

One has to recognise that a strong impulse of the Spirit motivates and sustains the selfless service of Father Bonal: humanly, he would not have been able to be so steadfast in his surrender to charity, in spite of so much sacrifice and so much humiliation: even though they try to cut short his work, we will see the Father ending his life in it.



Father Juan Bonal continues his task of apostle and almoner, without losing heart, without cutting down even an iota of his commitment, without giving more weightage to the reprimands of the Board than that which merits the cause that has produced them. These insidious communications that, one after the other, had been coming to the notice of the Administrators: about his behaviour in the ‘Vereda’ that were opposed to the guidelines of his Assistant.

He writes from Alcañiz: “In spite of the great misery of this city, its inhabitants have sacrificed themselves (that is, the middle class and the poor); regarding the well-to-do, those who have contributed to something so pleasing to God has been clear”. Also in this non-participation – that does not always occur – Sanclemente puts the blame on Don Juan Bonal because he thinks that “to ask for alms, one does not have to go with the sword in the hand, but yes, it is with much cunning and winning for oneself the will of the subjects who could favour us; all this, he (Mosén Bonal) is not capable of doing, because in the villages where he is permitted to go up to the pulpit, he does not do more than speak against the rich and finally tells them that they will go to hell”.

The zealous priest knows that nothing moves true charity like a sincere return or conversion to God; nothing helps compassion more than recognising that we are privileged for the great amount that we receive from God, and that nothing impels as much as sharing with the poor and needy as recognising that we are brothers, with a common Father. Grace makes faith, hope and love, spring forth and grow in the soul and with them, generosity. How much of the alms that the Hospital will receive are a consequence of the long hours of Don Juan Bonal in the confessional! He breaks ground, sows the Word, in the name of God offers to souls pardon and grace, entrusting the result to the Lord.

Certainly, even though the economy of the towns at that moment was not buoyant, the ‘Vereda’ gives its fruit and, in Zaragoza, the Accountant goes on noting down the

collection of amounts, not at all negligible, in cash and in kind, always well received, because they always reach in time to cover some necessity.

His same betraying companion, on some occasions declares the virtues and good performance of Bonal, recognising that, apparently, his pen goes a bit too far, for which he lessens the force of what he says with a "but" that does away with his earlier praise: "This good man is very zealous for the Holy House, but at the same time very obstinate". He writes also: "I do not say that he says things that are not in the Scriptures, but that he says them without order...".

And in the twenty-three letters where he directly or indirectly accuses him, he leaves proof of actions that a few months later, will be considered meritorious and favourable for the collection. But, at the moment of writing, these give rise to negative dispositions of the Sitiada: Mosén Bonal receives the order to suspend the 'Vereda' and return to Zaragoza.

His response is simple, like himself: "We will return, God willing, as soon as possible, hoping that the return will not be a burden to the Holy House". Not a word about anybody else, not the slightest justification or self-defence with respect to what the Board had determined, obedience to God in His mediation. Everything speaks of total detachment.

The Master whom he serves, whom he desires to please at any cost, stimulates and comforts him with His loving gaze, and he is happy with it. This is sufficient for him.



Together again in Villalonga, the two priests with their Assistants and servants of the 'Vereda', agree to, and begin the journey towards Zaragoza; but, as Don Juan Bonal expressed in his reply to the Secretary, "so that the return is not costly for the Holy House", resolves to do his exhortation and begging for alms in the towns that they keep coming across on the return journey.

Sanclemente is worried because Bázquez, the newest to be added to the 'Vereda', has no documentation except what was issued to him by the Steward Foreman of the Hospital and carries the passport of Liberati; he himself is without documentation, "as the wind threw into the water the hat wherein he carried the folder with his passport". Earlier he had written that "the servants want to return to their homes". The one who wanted to get back was he himself, as his wife was about to give birth and he was worried and nervous, even though he knows that the Accountant does not forget this incident: "I give Your Excellency infinite thanks for the favours that Your Excellency shows my wife". In the same letter he adds the tail bit that had already become a habitual nightmare for him: "Mosén Juan continues as always, in his confessional and with his preaching".

With this news of the last two letters, the Sitiada resolves that the Accountant writes to Sanclemente "informing him that he should make Don Juan Bonal as also Don Vicente Oliver aware that having studied the matter at the Sitiada yesterday, it has been resolved that I tell you to come back immediately to this House by the shortest route, without stopping anywhere at all".

This is what they do, without the slightest objection, and on the 2nd of July the President gives an account of the two Presbyters having presented themselves there. No other commentary in the Minutes.

In the book on the life of Mosén Bonal all the suffering, the multiple sacrifices, the humiliations undergone, the lavishing of charity and the fruit of his priestly zeal in so

many souls who, on returning to God seeking pardon, recovered grace and peace, was well recorded for perpetuity.

When their work at the 'Vereda' ceased, the two priests returned to their occupations as 'Pasionero' in the Hospital. Obligated by need, they solicit that some of the rights of procurement corresponding to the past year and the overdue salaries be handed over to them. Time passes without receiving a favourable response from the Sitiada and a second petition was raised, in which Father Juan, trying to explain a misunderstanding of the Sitiada, clarifies what is his concept of justice with respect to others: he was ready to go without his salary, as long as they paid a guarantor what he had advanced in favour of the Hospital, esteeming more the honour and the due respect that the said subject merits, rather than all pecuniary interests.

He had his criteria well founded and was coherent in his conduct. How could he go from town to town preaching charity if he himself shattered justice? This consistency of charity and justice in all his conduct took him to conforming with frugal food, poor lodging and the deficient even though necessary means that the Sitiada provided him for his apostolate.

Living as he did, poor and austere, he could with all liberty demand alms from both the poor and the rich. People understood him well, and his sermons, and besides other superior goods, reaped benefits for the Hospital.



Quite some time had passed when the two priests of the preaching mission got the reply from the Most Illustrious Sitiada with respect to their just petition, that some of what was agreed upon before they left on the 'Vereda' would be given to them so as to pay for their urgent needs.

At the beginning of the following year the Resolution agreed upon was put down in the Minutes: With regard to Mosén Vicente, whose mother by will and petition of the same, was being attended to during the ten and a half months that the 'Vereda' lasted, it was agreed that the amount corresponding to the rations of the lady during his absence would serve him as compensation. Besides, he would get his entire endowments and the equivalent of the disbursements of the Church. Mosén Vicente is grateful for the regard they had for his mother and was satisfied with the decision.

With respect to Mosén Bonal who, "by reason of the crusades and differences there were in the accounts of the persons whose services he used in the earlier charity drives", leaves as a gift to the Hospital: 1) whatever corresponds to the compensation he could claim; 2) the amount equivalent to the distribution of the choir during the time of the last request, and 3) a share for six months of his endowment, so that having collected it till the end of 1814, he begins to receive what corresponds to the last six months of 1815.

That is, in January 1819 they will give him part of what the Hospital owed him for the past four years for his monthly assignments. Father Juan who was an enemy of discussions and who did not seek in his apostolate his own satisfaction, conformed to this arrangement.

Once more we have to say that it was neither material goods nor personal enhancement that inspired his apostolate. His aspirations flew at higher levels, infinitely superior was the satisfaction to which he aspired in his apostolate. It is possible that he was even happy thinking that what they took away from him had repercussions in favour of the well-being of the patients, whose good he desired more than his own.

The Sitiada had to recognise this detachment of the zealous priest. A few years later, with the motive of the last 'Veredas', the Board writes to the Bishop of Pamplona pondering over the necessity of the contributions of their faithful, that did not even cover the expenses incurred in the Hospital by the patients of that Diocese that were taken in it, and adds. " ... in spite of the Priest Don Juan Bonal discharging this laborious and arduous commission gratuitously and for pure zeal and charity for the poor".

He continued for a few months together with the patients, occupied in his functions of Pasionero, in which he unfurled his ministry extensively, not only with priestly responsibility, but with supererogation in his surrender, as the salvation of souls was something very dear to his heart.

They are about to have the annual lottery that the Hospital organises with a view to obtain funds, but they found great difficulty in the sale of tickets and both the President and the Steward think of Father Juan as the most adequate person to guide them with his experiences. For this purpose Pastriz is sent to him and the result is most successful. The signs of the times! The calls that come from needs that arise everyday! Bonal is always ready to respond: he will continue in this occupation for the moment, while the Board requires it, or, better still, till the will of God manifests another path to him and orients him towards another means of surrender of himself. What is essential, is to give of oneself.



In 1821 the Hospital of Our Lady of Grace of Zaragoza is in the most stringent economic situation. It has an infinity of debts and an empty cash box to attend to them, and to the multiple needs of a centre of this magnitude and condition. The liberal three years were not only impotent to solve the earlier penury, but it even increased as they were deprived of some of the benefits they earlier enjoyed; the exclusive rights of its press, the taxes of the games established in the city, of the soap that entered its doors, etc.

Every support fell, every project or work was useless. The 'Steward Foreman' presents to the Sitiada various letters from those in charge of selling the tickets communicating their impossibility to do so, and adds that "last year Don Juan Bonal having done such a wonderful job with the raffle commission, he should go accompanied by the person of his choice..."

How things have changed for the self-sacrificing priest Bonal: in his earlier 'Vereda' we see him under strict norms of the Accountant, supporting by his side an impertinent person who had been put as his companion, humiliated by the injurious interpretations that he made about his conduct, by accusations that reached the Sitiada, and the reconvening of the Board caused by the machinations of the Accountant and the assistant.

Both employees soon kept quiet. The assistant Sanclemente, on his return from his earlier charity collection pleaded with the Sitiada that he be granted the post of a supernumerary, which was vacant, alluding to the merits he had acquired. The Board, through the mediation of the Accountant requested Mosén Bonal and Mosén Vicente, the two presbyters of the charity drive, witnesses day after day, of the working of the assistant, to send in their report. The priests, who could not show themselves favourable and not wanting to harm the subject, replied: "We humbly request the Most Illustrious Sitiada to kindly exonerate us from this task". The Accountant thought the reply was "certainly quite strange, and not at all in conformity with the frankness and

naturalness with which he should have proceeded in such cases", and adds a series of praises for the person and working of his protégé. The vision of the Sitiada was clearer and their decision more neutral: Sanclemente disappears definitively from the Hospital and it will soon release the Accountant.

As for the Administrator, Señor Baron de la Torre, with whom both had their confidence and in whom they felt totally supported, he appears for the last time in the session of the Sitiada of the 22nd of October 1821.

Father Juan Bonal, who the three had hounded and humiliated so much, will continue to work for the poor of the Hospital as long as God gives him life, and will be, in this exercise of gathering resources for the needs of the Centre, the person in total confidence of the Sitiada. And of total confidence for everyone who came to deal with him and to know him. There were many who used him, as intermediary, to obtain news about some hospitalised patient; to find out the transactions required for the purpose of interning a demented person; to deposit in his care a promissory note of an amount that somebody gave as alms, and a thousand things more. In the years when new decrees were dissolving religious orders, the Father solicits authorization from the Ecclesiastical Judge/Bishop for a Trappist, a Carthusian monk, a Priest, some Brother, to accompany him on his travels for alms. His zeal is ingenious and he finds no barriers to doing good.



In the years that we are now accompanying Mosén Juan Bonal in his work for the Hospital, Spain is under a new Government. The military uprising of Riego of the 1st of January 1820 had once again put into force the Constitution of 1812, which Fernando VII was forced to swear by.

The Courts started an enthusiastic legislative labour in which the reform of the Religious Orders stood out as did the first measures of de-abolishing. However, it was recognised that: "Among the projects of great importance and of great utility that had to catch the attention of the Spanish Courts, none of them called for greater urgency than the efforts of their zeal as that of beneficence... In the bosom of abundance, in a Nation that lavished at all times immense wealth in favour of the needy classes of the State, the destitute are abandoned and subjected to ....., hunger, nakedness, absolute lack of moral and physical education... At the same time the establishments dedicated to nursing and primary education of the unfortunate, fruits of a weak humanity and of the corruption of the customs, are so innumerable, one observes in them with horror... that nine-tenths of those taken in perish, because the laws of charity, of justice and of compassion, have been forgotten".

In the first paragraphs the reality is presented as the Commission sees it, then continues with a project with solutions and norms. With its approval and its coming into force: "the Spanish Nation will experience the healthy effects of the constitutional system, which will make it shine out among the most illustrious nations of Europe". And now the Municipal Boards of Beneficence begin their labour. In June of 1822, in a solemn act, the Hospital of Zaragoza is incorporated, i.e., officially established as a corporation. This is received by the Sitiada with the greatest demonstrations of esteem and appreciation. Phrases of mutual eulogy abound and so does complacency on the part of both corporations. All this is put down in the Acts of the session.

But, some days later, other notes are also made: the confectioner realises that there are not sufficient beans for



the food of the patients, there are almost no chickpeas nor eggs; the wheat will scarcely be sufficient for about two months. The situation is agonizing.

Faced with this emergency, permission is got to have the annual lottery which had been prohibited, just as the Hospital had been deprived of other resources that it had obtained because of the privileges granted from taxes on games, on soap, etc. Don Juan Bonal was once again put in-charge of the sale of tickets, and his work was fruitful. This year the net income of the sale, and some alms received were handed over, 20,011 'reales', 21 'maravedises' of sheepskin.

Besides, in August, the overseer takes charge of the animals that arrived through the intervention of Father Bonal: from Lécera 20 goats, and from Monforte 8 sheep and one yearling. And the equivalent of one ounce of gold as alms. More productive was his work, through fatigue and sweat, than what the brains of the men of politics and economy achieved exercising their brains.

In the last act of the Board of Beneficence, in April 1823, it was stated that in the Hospital there remained only one simple efficacious resource and one had to return to it, again: well, "taking into account the need expressed by the Senior Wardrobe Keeper in the earlier session, it was agreed that they should try to get Father Juan Bonal to go on another charity drive for wool, with which to make the mattresses.



The Board of Beneficence had governed the Hospital for ten months without achieving the improvements it had dreamed about: the scarcity of resources had become even greater, the disorder and discontent was noticed on diverse occasions, both among those hospitalised and among the staff.

It is just one small echo of what was happening at the highest level in the entire motherland and which had reached the colonies. Did a desire for the implantation of true values, noble ideals, social equality, respect for each person with his rights and freedom exist? Or, were the Spanish fighting each other for the booty, for dominion and power? All that good sense and reason tried failed, because in these years, the government was not in the hands of the King, neither of the Courts, nor of the Ministries; passion and anarchy held sway. What was born in an enthusiastic pronouncement died because of internal indifference and the invasion of the French forces. The "Hundred Thousand Sons of San Luis", helped by royalist troops, enter Spain to return the power to Fernando VII.

In April 1823, the news of the proximity of the army reaches; the liberals flee and Zaragoza is left without supplies and without legitimately constituted authorities. An interim Board is formed with twelve members to attend to the order of the City; there is a day and night guard and patrol. They try to get back normalcy as quickly as possible. On the 25th the French entered. Establishing the Municipality, they order that the earlier President and Sitiada immediately meet and take charge of the Hospital. This happened on the 28th with one of the Gentlemen beginning his weekly turn.

Zaragoza was ahead of the other Spanish regions. Months later, "the lovers of liberty" oblige the King to transfer his residence to Seville with his family and the Courts. They then arrange his departure for Cádiz. Fernando refuses and is dismissed so that they can take him by force. The Duke of Angulema, at the head of the troops, reaches the south, attacks Cádiz and opens negotiations that leave the King free.

conversions. I brought to the high consideration of Your Excellency in 1821 informing you that among the many penitents who presented themselves, several needed to revalidate marriages contracted with good faith and having read out the banns, but with impediments that annul them. The corruption of customs has increased on Spanish soil".

Blasphemy, incredulity, francomasonic and jansenist doctrines, false sects and other vices and errors have taken root in the heart of many Spaniards who sincerely come in search of pardon, for which "I supplicate most humbly... that you deign to grant the faculty and licence to absolve the penitents of the sins and crimes reserved to Your Excellency. Also, that your plan of dispensing them or commuting the Vows and other acts of the same class, when need or utility so requires for the contrite who fall at the feet of the minister of Jesus Christ with courage and desire to seek absolution, to clear up their conscience and wash away their enormous sins... with the blood of the Immaculate Lamb...".

In an immediate reply, on the 28th of September. the Nuncio concedes the powers requested. On this same day, Mosén Juan leaves to continue his 'Vereda' in the line of the Gospel, to offer love and pardon in the name of God the Father. Thus he already does what the religious and political authorities see as the best remedy for so much evil: A Royal Order of Fernando VII asked the Bishops "that they organise missions so as to unite the souls of the Spanish divided as a consequence of the period gone by". Bonal, pacifying his own conscience, in his personal conversion to God and to his brother, opens the path to social reconciliation.



The stay of Juan Bonal in Zaragoza lasted approximately a month and a half. What did he dedicate himself to during this time?

Father Juan was incapable of remaining inactive. He would try to replenish physical strength lost in tiredness, and even exhaustion, that the 'Veredas' caused him; this did not impede him from immediately incorporating himself into his mission as Passionero. In this task of direct attention to the sick who were for him a need and a satisfaction, he would also try to invigorate his spirit practicing the spiritual exercises, in days of solitude, retreat and prayer.

Besides, he gave exact accounts of the goods obtained in favour of the Hospital, undiminished in the last months of his charity drive.

He used his time to prepare the next departure, getting, as we saw earlier, powers from the Nunciature that would exceed those that could normally be used by any priest for his own ministry. He equally solicited from the Bishops of the Dioceses through which he was going to pass, the necessary authorization to celebrate, preach and administer the Sacraments.

And he would have several meetings with the Sisters. Their situation had changed notably during his absence. He would have got news about it, but it was necessary for him to dialogue with them, listen to their opinions, even though it be in private, to stimulate the present and the future of these Sisters founded by him. When he left on his last trip, there was still the Fraternity of Charity at the Hospital, now they are the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity, depending on the Diocese.

The Sitiada, in June 1824, disposed that they solicit from the Archbishop, the approval of the Constitutions elaborated by the Sisters. Zaragoza was then a vacant See because of the demise, a year earlier, of its Archbishop Don Manuel Vicente Martínez y Giménez. Hence, the decision depended on the Provider and Vicar General of the City and

by a more abundant grace because God blesses the efforts and the abnegation of the servant. Father Juan, faithful follower of Christ, knows that from the cross springs true life and he never ever shirks it.

These values and virtues were well verified in the constant surrender of Father Juan, by all those who knew him, and Don Bernardo Francés Caballero, Archbishop of Zaragoza expressed it well in the letters of recommendation he issued in favour of the self-sacrificing collector of alms. He begins explaining the sad situation of the Hospital and the decision taken to solve it in this emergency, together with the Sitiada at which he presides: "... well penetrated with **disinterestedness, indefatigable zeal and the proper discharge of duties** in other similar commissions of the Presbyter Don Juan Bonal... it has been resolved to send him all over the Peninsula on a general alms collection drive...".

No other person was found by the Sitiada who could substitute him without reducing the benefits for the Hospital. The Father, with his zeal, had gained the full confidence of the Board and the Lord Archbishop.

Don Bernardo Francés Caballero understood perfectly the value of this line of conduct which was also his own: on being named Archbishop of Zaragoza. In the city they pondered on the great virtues of the new Prelate and the fact of having assumed the charge, not as an honour, but as a service to the Church; there are clear proofs about what was affirmed: Don Bernardo refused privileges like the Great Cross of Carlos III and other honours that the King granted him. He did not want any cross other than the cross of his Lord.

This is how men of God are, among whom, by gratuitous divine election, Father Juan Bonal Cortada occupies a place.



**T**ill the 5th of April 1825, when he is back again at the Hospital, Father Juan continued his charity drive of collecting wheat and alms, carrying out at the same time, his mission of pacifier of consciences and stimulating Christian life, nourished in the roots of the Gospel.

In seventy-seven towns he collected wheat, and they have been busy with its sale, taking advantage of the best opportunities. The 10,000 reales was what the wheat amounted to, added to the alms collected in cash, reached the figure of approximately 29,000 reales that gave life to the empty cash box of the Hospital.

To it has to be added, as benefit for the House, the 138 pounds of quinine bought by Father Bonal, at a special price because of the good performance record of the Hospital. With the quinine, new energy entered into the pharmacy and hope in the patients, as it was utilised to supplement the antitermic medicines, tonics, antiseptics and was utilised very much to check the spread of gangrene.

The fruit of the 'Vereda' extended even further: some days after his return, a list was presented in writing, of 291 towns and villages where several inhabitants had got inscribed in the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Grace and had promised a donation of wheat. To this extensive list the Father adds a note clarifying that the towns where people could not contribute the alms promised the previous year, because of poverty, were not despised, but he was confident that they would do it when they could.

"One grain does not make a granary, but it does help the companion", says the Spanish proverb. The priest valued not only the grain in hand but also the grain promised; in his mind no thought of lack of confidence could fit in, he could never imagine anyone could cheat him, he never doubted the word given by simple people, who were the humble benefactors of the Hospital, in the poor villages desolated by war or drought. He trusted everyone, because

before everything and above everything, he blindly trusted in Divine Providence that waited for him everywhere, and guided him in his path.

On the other hand, when he gave, he did not calculate and much less when he gave of himself; in his personal donation he could be classified as lavish: he surrendered himself to console and help others unceasingly without taking into account time, effort, fatigue. He was on the 'Vereda' for the last three and a half months of 1824 and the first trimester of 1825, the most difficult period of the year, with its rains, its snow and low temperatures. Above all, he was going through the provinces of extreme continental climate; he had toiled in the dioceses of Guadalajara, Burgos, Jaca and Cuenca, which on some occasions had registered 20 degrees below zero.

Now, in Zaragoza, he is busy soliciting licences from the other Bishops, whose Dioceses enter into his next plan. In the application he expounds his function with respect to relieving the poor patients of the Hospital and collection of alms for the same, and adds: "Besides this, as a priest who must be clothed with the zeal of salvation of souls, he proposes another object for himself and that is missionary activity and hearing confessions on the days he can remain in the towns, without detriment to his commission", for which he requests that he be conceded the pertinent licences, and enumerates those that he enjoys from other Prelates and the privileges conceded by the Nuncio.

The Sitiada accepts and values this task of Father Juan, on whom they had put shackles and severe restrictions and corrections earlier because of the accusations and calumnies that his assistant at the 'Vereda' made about the zealous priest to the Accountant.



In these last years of his life, the untiring almoner for the poor, for charity, continues his 'Veredas' well supported by documents that accredit his person and his work in the service of the Hospital:

- a) **Titles and extraordinary powers**, very wide ranging, granted by the Apostolic Nuncio of His Holiness, on different dates.
- b) **Dispatches and Letters of Recommendation** of the Lord Archbishop, as Head and Father at the Zaragoza See, directed to all his brothers in faith and in the responsibility of the ministry or authority; other times, together with the Sitiada of which he is the President, manifesting the distressing situation of the Hospital and asking the civil state and the justice of the towns, all the support possible for the charity drive that they are going to carry out.
- c) **Certifications** of the Secretary of the Hospital, expounding the "curriculum vitae" of Don Juan Bonal, widely related to his intellectual preparation and of his work and dedication to the Hospital, from 1804 when he arrived there and occupied his post as Penitentiary Pasionero.
- d) **Licences** granted to him by the Bishops of the different dioceses that he visits and without which he cannot carry out his labour of missionary.

In one of these certifiactes Don Agustín Sevil begins presenting the person of the Almoner with this paragraph:

*I certify: That the Presbyter Don Juan Bonal, native of Terrades... actual Pasionero of the Holy Hospital of Our Lady of Grace, Consulting Theologian and General Examiner of the Nunciature of Spain, obtains the perpetual licences to celebrate, hear confessions and preach in this Archbishopric of Zaragoza with extension to reserved cases and Religious women, as also of the Diocese of Barbastro, Lérida, Seo de Urgel, Tortosa, Huesca, Sigüenza, Palencia, Segovia, Osma, León, Zamora,*

*Vicariate of Medina del Campo, of the Very Illustrious Lord Abbot of Ampudia; he has also obtained them perpetually and with the same extension from the Very Illustrious Lords Vicars of Torrecillas de la Orden, Fuente de Peña, and from the Very Illustrious Lord Abbot of Gerri. Also he obtains them perpetually from Teruel, Cuenca and from the other Most Illustrious Prelates, and obtains in the same way extraordinary licences granted by the Apostolic Nunciature to absolve the cases reserved to the Holy See, during the time of the Missions that he practices, as also to dispense in the internal court of justice and annulling the secret, hidden impediments of marriage, simple perpetual vow of chastity and irregularities reserved to the Tribunal of the Apostolic Nunciature of Spain...".*

Personally, the titles and powers did not affect Padre Juan in any way, but he had to show them to carry out his work in favour of the Sick and of souls. And this was given as expressed in the Recommendation Letters extended by Don Vicente Ximénez, President of the Sitiada:

*"On the earlier trip, besides having occupied himself in the collection of alms, he has exercised his Ministry of missionary in the Bishopric of Tortosa and the Archbishopric of Valencia, achieving a more than ordinary assistance of people, concluding his sermons with an overwhelmingly tearful expression of sorrow with the result of a more crowded confessional, on days when he could remain in each town, and other good effects that divine grace produces in the hearts of those who hear with joy and simplicity, the divine Word."*

Many speak of the fruitful apostolate, his singular virtue, his inexhaustible zeal, as we will see later. The Priest knows these manifestations, but they do not affect him: he only seeks to please God.



Father Juan Bonal not only supported the Hospital with his work during its years of penury, but he was also the soul behind its restoration and extension. All his hard work at the last 'Veredas' went towards the construction of a new pavillion for the mentally ill, which would continue the tradition that the old Hospital of Our Lady of Grace enjoyed in better times, with respect to the setting up, the care and cure of these patients.

The great French psychiatrist Dr. Philippe Pinel, after a visit to the mental hospital of Zaragoza, had divulged the experience he acquired there, seeing for himself the efficacy of a new method: occupy the mentally ill persons during several hours of the day, in work that distracted them from their mental wandering at the same time as it exercised them in the useful release of their physical energies. This gave them a restful and strengthening sleep. After the knowledge obtained in Zaragoza, he himself introduced this method of occupational therapy at Bicetre (France), achieving the suppression of chains that subjected the mentally ill in their dungeons, through which therapy they recovered their human dignity and improved their health. He was so impressed with the establishment at Zaragoza that, in his treatises on the topic of dementia, he extended the fame of the Hospital of Our Lady of Grace, "first centre in Europe that used work as moral treatment of madness".

In these last years of the life of Father Bonal, it is possible that the method continued, even though with less extension and efficacy: as a consequence of the Sieges that Zaragoza suffered, the Hospital had lost large farms, cultivated land and even its magnificent building. The occupational spaces were smaller and the pavillion inhabited by the mentally ill left much to be desired. The Sitiada considered it urgent: they planned but they did not go forward with the work because, without the necessary funds, they were afraid the enterprise would fail. It is Father Bonal who, with his letters and his work as almoner, animated the Board ceaselessly so that they did not

Goodness, sincere affection, humility and delicacy are seen reflected also in his letters of friendship. He writes to Don Fausto Sáenz, Superintendent of the Hospital, congratulating him: "I have been assured, and I do not doubt it, that the King our Lord, may God protect him, has bestowed on you the canonry of Calahorra, a reward due to your labours in favour of the poor of the Holy Hospital, to whom may God concede many years of life to enjoy it with an increase of grace, meriting afterwards eternal life, as desired by this your Chaplain q.b.s.m.=Juan Bonal, Priest".

In the month of August he writes to him once again: "I took charge of the fevers that you used to suffer in your work. Offered to God as you do, they will serve as incomparable merit in the divine presence, as the object cannot be nobler nor more pleasing to God. I am also subjected to chills and fevers. This past winter, even though they have been greater, in spite of being in such cold lands and the extraordinary confessions I had in the busiest times, I have not felt them as in other years. I think it would be because I have put on more warm clothes. The fevers, yes, I have felt them. May all be for the Glory of God and may the Lord deign to receive these works to discount my many sins".

How well these lines profile the ideal that orients Father Bonal and the perfection that the action of grace keeps reaching in him!



### Translator's Note:

This book being set in a period of time almost two hundred years ago, it has not been possible to translate certain old words and terms fully. Hence, below is a list of some of these words and their dictionary meanings:

Almudes	: measure of grain = 4.625 litres
Arroba	: measure of weight = 11.502 kgs/ 25 lbs.
Canonjía	: canonry (an ecclesiastical term)
Cofradía	: Association/Brotherhood/Fraternity
Dinero	: ancient Spanish silver coin
Duro	: old Spanish coin
Fanega	: grain measure = 1.58 bushels
Jaquesa	: libra jaquesa
Libra	: ancient coins
Lienzo	: linen/hemp/cotton cloth
Limosnero	: almoner; collector of alms
Mayordomo	: Overseer/Steward
Maravideses:	(ms) old Spanish coin
Mosén	: Sir; title given to clergymen in Aragon and Catalonia
Pasionero	: chorister who sings the Passion
Priest	: distributor of alms (pobrero)
Quaestor	: charity collector
Reales	: (rs.) ancient coins
Regidores	: Aldermen/Administrator/Director
Sueldos	: ancient copper coins of Castille
Vara	: approx. .863m
Veedor	: overseer/principal equerry to the King
Veredero	: travelling preacher
Vellón	: (vn.) wool of one sheep, silver & copper alloy used for making coins, copper coin, real de vellón=small coin.





DATE OF THE CLOSING  
OF THE DIOCESAN INFORMATIVE PROCESS  
OF THE SERVANT OF GOD,  
FATHER JUAN BONAL CORTADA  
WITH WHICH MOTIVE  
THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF SAINT ANNE  
EDIT AND OFFER THIS BOOK.