



# HISTORY OF THE

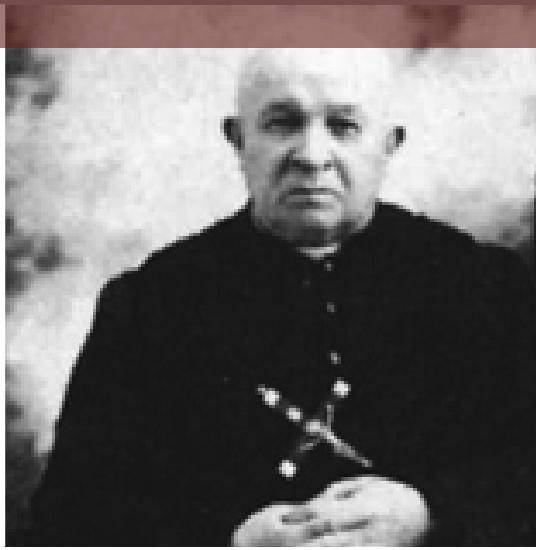
## SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATION - VOLUME IV

Internal History of the Congregation 1896-1919

Missions in North America 1895-1919

Missions in Brazil 1905-1919

Letters of Bishop Scalabrini from the United States July-November 1901



**HISTORY OF THE SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATION – VOL 4**

**HISTORY OF THE SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATION**

by Mario Francesconi, c.s.

*Translated by Martino Bortolazzo, c.s.*

**VOLUME IV<sup>1</sup>**

**Internal History of the Congregation (1896-1919)**  
**Missions in North America (1895-1919)**  
**Missions in Brazil (1905-1919)**  
**Letters of Bishop Scalabrini from the United States**  
*(July-November 1901)*

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# HISTORY OF THE SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATION – VOL 4

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#### Remarks:

1. *Father Francesco, so often referred to in the above letters, is the future Bishop of Rieti and later Archbishop of Genoa, Francesco Sidoli.*
2. *Canon Vinati is the future Bishop of Bosa in Sardinia, Giovanni Battista Vinati.*
3. *Canon Mangot, Provost of the Cathedral of Piacenza, was Bishop Scalabrini's life long secretary.*

**PART ONE**

**“INTERNAL HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATION”**

**1896 - 1919**

**CHAPTER I**

**GENERAL GOVERNMENT 1896 – 1905**

**1. Internal problems of the Congregation**

After introducing the perpetual vows in 1894 as the basis for a religious Congregation in the strict sense, Bishop Scalabrini intended to give a strong decisive impulse to its internal life, but found difficulty with men and circumstances. Interpreting the will of the Founder, Father Giuseppe Molinari, Rector of the Mother House, wrote to Father Francesco Zaboglio, Vicar General, then in the United States as visitor:

*"His Excellency the Bishop directs that you do all in your power to assign religious with perpetual vows together; should it be necessary, - he says - make changes, transfer the personnel."<sup>1</sup>*

Bishop Scalabrini wanted to start this work of transformation by joining the missionaries with perpetual vows together in the same houses so to form actual communities that by living the religious life in its integrity could become a model for all missions.

Father Zaboglio, who was in the field struggling with difficult problems of personnel, could not comply with the desires of the Founder. Father Molinari still insisted for some time:

*"I regret that circumstances made it necessary to separate the last Missionaries. It is my hope it may not happen again! I understand the present situation. As soon as you can, form a house of Missionaries with perpetual vows. Only God knows my love for the Congregation! I wish a model community be established in America, if only it were possible. Then, my dear Father, it could indeed exert an influence on all others! This way we would gain greater prestige, and be in a position to do much more good for souls."<sup>2</sup>*

Due to the needs of each mission, there was no choice but to continue on the same system; rather, on account of the frightful shortage of personnel as compared with the ever more desperate appeals of Father Zaboglio, Bishop Scalabrini allowed the practice to continue of accepting also priests who intended to commit themselves only on a temporary basis; still, even through these easy procedures it was not possible to satisfy the requests pouring in from the missions.

Father Molinari, who was even stricter than Bishop Scalabrini, wrote as follows on the matter in May and September 1896:

*"If priests would only join, Bishop Scalabrini would have no objection to admit them for a 'time'; but where can we find them? Someone applied; but we received afterwards certain information warning us that it is better to let such individuals get lost than to look for them. There was some priest who seemed willing to join; thinking that the perpetual vows were detaining him from a*

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<sup>1</sup> Letter G. Molinari to Fr. Zaboglio, Piacenza, Sept. 23, 1895 (Arch. G.S., 541/9).

<sup>2</sup> Molinari to Zaboglio, Piacenza, Nov. 7, 1895 (Arch. G.S., 541/9).

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*decision, I let him know he would be accepted also 'for a time'. However, when the time came for a decision, he still remained undecided."*<sup>3</sup>

*"The Fathers complain about the perpetual vows; let them know, however, that the proposal presented by you that when priests are concerned they be allowed to take the vows 'for a time' has been accepted; I have made use of it already. I promised the priest from Mezzana Casati to arrange that he be permitted to take the vows only for one year, just to be able to inform the Bishop of his assignment that he has vows. Yet, still many hesitations, difficulties.... I did the same with others, but.... nothing else we can do but 'pray to the Lord of the harvest to send workers...'"*<sup>4</sup>

Such difficulties explain, in part at least, the delay of Bishop Scalabrini in presenting to the Holy See the report it had requested since 1898 on his Institute, when he had applied for the approval of the Rules of 1895 which had introduced the perpetual vows.

We shall carry the document in its entirety because it offers us an overall vision of the first thirteen years of the history of the Scalabrinian Congregation and sets clear the situation as it was in 1900 before Bishop Scalabrini was to take his trips to America to see for himself the conditions of the missions, in view of drawing final decisions.

We call attention to the fact that in sending this report to the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the faith on August 10, 1900, Bishop Scalabrini was actually pointing out:

*"There is no need for me to repeat that you would do me a most pleasing favor if you should solicit the approval of the Rules, which I desire only for 'ten years', because experience has taught me that there is always something to learn and modify."*<sup>5</sup>

**REPORT ON THE CONGREGATION OF  
THE MISSIONARIES OF ST. CHARLES  
FOR ITALIAN EMIGRANTS**

Most Rev. Eminence:

At last I fulfill the promise made to you of sending a report on the Congregation of St. Charles for Italian Emigrants. I would have liked to prepare a complete and documented relation, but due to the little time at my disposal I have to be contented with the most important matters.

**Origin of the Congregation**

One of the evils I had to deplore when visiting for the first time the 386 parishes of this diocese of mine was emigration. From annotations taken I could find that 28 thousand people of my flock were then living in foreign lands. Quite often some of them were writing to me very moving letters to report on their deplorable conditions, religious especially, most insistently

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<sup>3</sup> Molinari to Zaboglio, Piacenza, May 28, 1896 (Arch. G.S., 541/9).

<sup>4</sup> Molinari to Zaboglio, Piacenza, July 29, 1896 (Arch. G.S., 541/9).

<sup>5</sup> Scalabrini to Veccia, Piacenza, August 12, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 7/5).



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imploring to go to their help. More than once I had the occasion to witness personally the departure of emigrants at the station of Piacenza, and I must confess that the sight of their misery and sorrow, the thought of the innumerable serious evils they were to be in, the idea of the privation of all religious assistance they would be left in, broke my heart: I cried over their miserable lot, and I made up my mind to do something about it.

It was then I deemed it my duty to have recourse, as I did, to the most Eminent Cardinal Simeoni, at the time Prefect of Propaganda, to find out how I could provide in a stable and effective manner for this serious need. He answered me with letter dated on February 9, 1887. Deploring that the attempts of this Sacred Congregation at founding committees of assistance for Italian emigrants had not brought forth satisfactory results, he invited me on behalf of the Holy Father (who was pleased with my initiative) to report for the most urgent spiritual needs of Italians across the Ocean. I immediately carried out the mandate to the best of my ability. This Sacred Congregation took care of this important matter, and in the audience of June 26, 1887, the Holy Father approved its deliberations. One of them, the fourth, sounded like this: "To found in Italy one or more Institutes of priests who would go to America and preach Missions to emigrants with the scope to strengthen their faith, after agreement with the local Bishops. Such Institute shall depend on the Ordinary, but its Rules shall be approved by the S.C. of Propaganda."

Following this decision I was called to Rome to be authorized to open the Institute of Missionaries in Piacenza and to provide as far as possible also for other needs of emigrants.

I shall not tarry in describing the needs of our emigration. Our fellow Italians in America are more than three million, and this Sacred Congregation is thoroughly informed about their conditions. Having done so much to spread the faith amongst those that never had the grace to possess it, it did not forget to extend its care to preserve it in those who have it, already.

**Growth of the Congregation**

Trusting in God's help and in the promise of this Sacred Congregation for a proper annual subsidy, I returned to Piacenza where, after making the project known through the press, I opened an Institute for Italian missions, especially in America. I soon received applications of priests who were asking to be admitted to be members of the new Congregation. The first ones to be accepted were: Father Giuseppe Molinari of Piacenza, and Father Domenico Mantese of Vicenza, both deceased in odor of sanctity following hard missionary work: the first when he was superior of the Mother House in Piacenza, the latter in New York.

According to the Rules approved by this Sacred Congregation the priests were to make a year of novitiate, take the usual three religious vows for five years, and place themselves totally at my disposal. There is no need to report here the number of expeditions of missionaries because the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda has certainly kept record of them since it had sent each of them the "apostolic missionary certificate" whenever they were leaving for the missions.

**St. Raphael's Association**

To better respond to the intentions of this Sacred Congregation, besides the

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Congregation of Missionaries, I formed also a lay society, naming it after St. Raphael. To make it more widely known I gave a series of lectures in the most important cities of Italy, where I took care to found committees of this society. In fact, in a short while some nineteen of them were formed, right in cities where the migratory exodus was most numerous. Even though this society, of which I include the statutes, did not bring forth all the fruits expected of it, still it has kept the idea alive and has been of great help! It is my hope that the St. Raphael's Association will be of still greater help from now on through the interest shown by the 'Congressi Cattolici' (a Lay Italian Catholic Movement). I gave a lecture on the subject at their Convention held last year in Ferrara, and right away a deliberation was adopted with the approval of all to form a section especially committed to emigration. I have been again invited to speak about it at the next convention in Rome, and I cherish the hope it will not be in vain.

*And now let me report on what the Congregation of the Missionaries in particular is accomplishing.*

**Mother House**

First of all it was necessary to have a fixed center, that is, the Mother House of the Congregation of Missionaries which I placed under the protection of St. Charles. Securing due permission from the Holy See and the Italian Government I took care of it with the acquisition from the diocesan seminary of an old convent to which a church, long closed, and a sizeable piece of land are attached. As soon as we bought the property we had to start repair and adaptation works on both convent and church; and now we have a house that without being grandiose is quite fit to keep the aspirants separate from the novices and the novices from the professed religious. The church, frequented with preference by the people, is modest but properly cared for and served by the missionaries preparing themselves for the Apostolic ministry to which they are called. With this report I include a brochure showing both house and church while pointing out that with the Government they figure as property of the Seminary. To avoid expenses (and reserving the right to draw a regular contract in due time) it would be enough for the time being to issue a decree declaring that church and house are the property of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the faith to serve as Mother House of the Institute of St. Charles. As far as the Government is concerned, we are on the safe side: the Seminary appears as the owner and we do not have to pay taxes for transfer of title or other reason. There exists the possibility of some difficulty with my successors: but the said decree would seem to me more than sufficient to prevent this occurrence.

Theology and philosophy courses are taught at the Mother House, attended also by the priests who have already completed their studies while they reside there. The aspirants, that are not through high school yet, attend classes at the diocesan seminary. Annual expenses of the Mother House, including the expeditions of Missionaries, amount to 45 or 50 thousand liras.

**The Residence of Genoa**

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One of the most urgent needs of our emigrants was to provide them with assistance, at the port of Genoa. Those poor people were treated there as cheap merchandise or worse. There too I lectured publicly on the Society of St. Raphael. The Venerable Archbishop Salvatore Magnasco and Officer Malnate, inspector of the port, entreated me with tears in their eyes to send a missionary to Genoa to take care of these unhappy people, unfairly betrayed and exploited in all ways. As soon as possible I carried out such holy desire, which was also mine, and I opened there a house. The good performed by the Missionaries exceeds all expectations.

True, in order to uproot so many abuses and deceptions, they had to run the risk of arousing the threats of the people concerned and of the masonic press; but with God's help they overcame all difficulties. Their activity is now appreciated by all, and the name of Father Maldotti, the first Missionary sent to Genoa, is blessed by everyone.

**Religious Assistance from Genoa to American ports**

As soon as the Institute of the Missionaries of St. Charles and the Society of St. Raphael for our emigrant countrymen became known, from various parts of Italy people were calling my attention to the serious need of providing assistance to emigrants during their crossing overseas. I immediately appealed to the various shipping companies asking for free passages back and forth for priests willing to offer their service in a work of such charity; but only one, "La Veloce" generously responded to my appeal. Still, the priests leaving the port of Genoa every year to accompany our unfortunate expatriates were ten or twelve. On board they said Mass, preached, heard confessions, assisted the sick. In just one crossing eighteen people died. Fortunately, there was a priest aboard who could assist the dying and comfort by word and example the living. We carried on like this for four years; but "*La Veloce*" fortunes began to decline, and this company also had unfortunately to restrict the privilege limiting it only to the Missionaries of Genoa. Oh, had we the means, how much greater good would be accomplished!

At this point I have to recall that Cardinal Simeoni had conferred on me, in the name of the Holy Father, all the faculties necessary for an apostolic delegate, with power to subdelegate them to the priests who accompanied emigrants across the sea aboard ship; these faculties would cease when the ship entered a territory under someone else's jurisdiction.

**North America**

To have an idea of the conditions of Italians in North America twelve years ago, one needs only read the letter of the most Eminent Cardinal Simeoni, dated February 9, 1887, already mentioned: 'I am quite grieved myself' - wrote that holy man - 'over the sad conditions in which they (Italian emigrants) live in North America. The reports submitted to this Sacred Congregation by the Archbishops of New York, New Orleans, and by the Fathers of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore offer a very discouraging vision of their spiritual and religious state.'

It's enough to note that in the parish of the Ascension in New York, Italians were allowed only the basement, or the lower church.

For truth's sake, however, I point out that as soon as he knew of our Institute,

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Archbishop Corrigan of New York wrote me very urgent letters asking for Missionaries and promising to protect them in the best way possible. Our Missionaries went, they opened wide, as they say, the doors of the missions to Italian expatriates, and now, with a little goodwill, these can in great part provide for their spiritual needs. Other Congregations joined forces with the Missionaries of Saint Charles; Bishops became aware of the need to come to the help of poor emigrants. This way, even though not everything that ought to be done for them was carried out, still much has been accomplished.

On the occasion of the grandiose celebration of the canonization of John Baptist LaSalle and Rita of Cascia, I had the opportunity to see quite a few Bishops from North America: all were happy and most satisfied with the work of the Missionaries of St. Charles.

I am in possession of a most flattering letter on the matter from Cardinal Satolli, former Apostolic Delegate in America, who had witnessed at close range the zeal of the same Missionaries.

Furthermore, the Archbishop of New York paid a visit to this city (Piacenza), and in answer to an address of the clergy gathered to pay him homage he gave such a laudatory speech of our Congregation that for truth's sake, though expressing my sincere thanks, I deemed it my duty to tone it down. I pointed out that it was a new congregation, still in its infancy, hardly, therefore, totally without blemish due to inexperience. I added that faults were committed indeed, and quite a few of them amongst us; it was my hope, however, that with God's help our Institute would make steady progress. I have several requests on hand from those Venerable Bishops, and I shall be happy to accommodate them as soon as I possibly can. I always remember the thought expressed in faulty Italian by Bishop Spalding of Peoria (Illinois). I report here his very words: - *'There is a special aspect to the problem of Italian emigration to the United States and to the condition of emigrants in America, and much more so because the Head of the Church is in Italy. This fact will lead the ill-intentioned to think that the state of neglect of this portion of our population is due to the negligence of their Church. Therefore, it seems proper to me that this problem be brought to the attention of the Holy Father and of the Italian bishops.'*

**Houses in North America**

So far, the following houses have been opened in North America:

1. New York - St. Joachim - Father Oreste Alussi, Superior
2. New York - Our Lady of Pompeii - Father Antonio Demo, Superior

The Port Mission deserves special mention. The Missionaries assigned to it are accredited as legal representatives for Italian Emigration with the Labor Bureau, or Secretariate of Labor. They reside at the 'Barge Office' or Immigration Office of the port, and provide ready assistance to all Italians disembarking there, especially to those that have been recommended to them, or arrive with special certificates issued by the Patronage Committee instituted in Italy.

3. Boston - Sacred Heart - Father Giacomo Gambera, Provincial Superior
4. Boston's Suburbs - St. Lazarus
5. Providence - Holy Ghost - Father Paolo Novati, Superior

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6. Providence's Suburbs - St. Ann - Father Giulio Priolo, Superior
7. New Haven, Connecticut - St. Michael - Father Luigi Lango, Superior
8. Cincinnati - St. Peter - Rev. Giuseppe Quadranti, Superior
9. Cincinnati - Chapel for the Sicilian community
10. Buffalo - St. Anthony, Rev. Ludovico Martinelli, Superior
11. Syracuse - St. Peter - Rev. Vittorio Sciolla, Superior
12. Cleveland, Ohio - Holy Rosary - Rev. Antonio Gibelli, Superior
13. Kansas City, Missouri - Holy Rosary - Rev. Pietro Lotti, Superior
14. New Orleans - Chapel for Italians - Rev. Luigi Paroli
15. Detroit, Michigan - St. Francesco - Rev. Francesco Beccherini
16. Newark - St. Giuseppe - Rev. Felice Morelli
17. Marquette, Michigan - Rev. Beniamino Bertò
18. Boston - Polish Parish - Father Giovanni Chmielinski

N.B. This young Polish priest, who made his studies here at the Mother House with regular documents from his Bishop, insistently asked me to devote himself to his fellow countrymen. Upon consultation with that worthy Archbishop, I granted him permission. He still depends, however, on the Superiors of the Congregation of St. Charles.

The Church of St. Peter in Pittsburgh, Pa., still for Italians, has been transferred to the Franciscans because the pastor had to return to Italy and there was no one to take over in his stead.

**Brazil**

As all know, our emigration is mostly directed to South America; naturally, there, too, especially to Brazil, I sent my Missionaries. At first I had a preference for the North both because it was Protestant and the need seemed greater there. However, I have always distributed the different expeditions between North and South.

As soon as they set foot on Brazilian soil, far from finding help, the Missionaries met with all kinds of difficulties and oppositions; but, for several years now, by the zeal of those saintly bishops, things have changed. I deem it helpful to quote here a passage from a letter, dated Petropolis, May 14, 1900, of His Excellency the Internuncio to the Superior of our Missionaries of St. Charles:

'With sincere pleasure, he says, I hear of the great growth the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles is undergoing in these regions; and of the much good it is accomplishing in the midst of so many abandoned colonists in places totally isolated and deprived of religious assistance. I am indeed edified, and I give grateful thanks to God and to the good religious, especially to your Most Rev. Excellency, who heads and sustains them in word and deed. All this makes it harder to have to tell you that *rem difficilem postulasti* (you asked for a difficult thing).'

So far, the Internuncio; and since I could understand what the matter was from a letter Father Consoni sent me together with that of the Internuncio, I agree with His Excellency, *rem difficilem postulasti*, satisfied with what this Sacred Congregation is doing for us already. While in the North our emigrants

are concentrated in great masses in the cities, in the South, in Brazil especially, they are scattered in small groups over immense regions. Our Missionaries, therefore, took care to build small churches, chapels, and oratories in the midst of all those communities, visiting them periodically for the exercise of the sacred ministry.

They have residences at:

1. Santa Felicidade, in the diocese of Curitiba, from where they exercise their apostolate all over Paraná. As I see from a report just in, by their initiative the following accomplishments have been achieved.
  - a) a large and beautiful church dedicated to Santa Felicidade,
  - b) a bell tower under construction to be forty meters tall,
  - c) a grandiose building to serve as convent for the sisters and as a school for girls,
  - d) a cemetery with chapel where Mass may be celebrated,
  - e) the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, the Forty Hours, and St. Anthony's Association with four hundred members,
  - f) a cemetery and a church dedicated to the Transfiguration in the colony of Ferraria,
  - g) a church to be dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes when completed at Campo Comprido,
  - h) St. Francesco Saverio Church at the colony of Gabriela,
  - i) a most beautiful church to St. Mark the Evangelist at Pilarsinho,
  - j) a wooden church dedicated to St. Peter the Apostle and bell tower, a cemetery with chapel fit for celebrating Mass at Umbará.

From July 1893 to April 1900, 1,229 Baptisms and 229 Weddings were performed in the Italian colonies.

This year a school for girls directed by Sisters was opened at Santa Felicidade. The Italian Consul of Curitiba sent a magnificent laudatory report about it to the (Foreign) Ministry.

2. Encantado, Diocese of Porto Alegre.
3. Nova Bassano, a small community founded and prospering, we may well say, thanks to the action of our Missionaries, especially of Father Peter Colbacchini, a most zealous early apostle of Brazil, a soul all on fire for his brethren, a man of great deeds. But he is unfortunately all worn out, and I doubt whether he will be able to keep charge any longer of that important mission spread over an immense territory.
4. Alfredo Chaves, a vast mission, recently entrusted to our Fathers by the Bishop of Porto Alegre.
5. Santa Teresa, but I know little of this mission. The man directing it is pious and reserved like a hermit, and he writes little.
6. São Paulo, where we have the most important mission in Brazil. At the present time there are only four priests and several brother catechists. On the 12th of this month two more priests will leave together with some catechists and six sisters to join the staff assisting the Orphanage.

The Bishop of São Paulo is currently in Rome, and the Sacred Congregation will be able to gather direct information from him much deserving of our Missionaries and emigrants. I have just mentioned the Orphanage, but it deserves a special note.

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Aboard the ship on which a missionary, Father Giuseppe Marchetti (a former seminary professor at Lucca) was travelling, a young wife died leaving behind an infant child and a husband in desperation. In order to calm down the poor desperate man threatening to jump overboard, the Missionary promised him he would take care of the baby, and he kept his promise. He arrived at Rio de Janeiro carrying the little innocent creature in his arms, and presented himself with it to the distinguished Count Pio of Savoy, then General Consul in that city. The Count could offer the young Missionary only words of encouragement, but that was enough for him to go from door to door until he succeeded in sheltering the infant at a religious institution. The incident gave him the idea of founding in São Paulo (where he had arrived) an orphanage for children of Italians, and at the cost of great sacrifices he succeeded indeed in founding one. It is six years old now, with two hundred orphans and a martyr in heaven praying for them. In fact, the hard toil cost the young Missionary his life. May his soul, ready for heaven at thirty, rest in peace.

**Sisters**

The work of Missionaries would remain incomplete, especially in Latin America, without the help of Sisters. I asked several congregations for help, but I did not succeed in obtaining any. True, the good Sisters of Codogno offered their services, and I opened the field for them in America where they do much good, but their work does not respond to the scope of our Congregation. We would need Sisters like those doing pastoral work in France, who allow small communities of four, content themselves with little, run elementary schools, teach catechism, and when possible assist the sick with all the care, prudence and experience called for.

No matter how much the Missionaries insisted and urged me to have such sisters I always resisted, as I was strongly reluctant to engage in this new undertaking: But some years back a combination of many providential circumstances made me understand such to be the Will of God, and now we have the Sister Apostles of the Sacred Heart, also devoted to the assistance of emigrants, especially in America.

In a short while, after a novitiate of two years, twelve of them will depart: six for São Paulo by the middle of this month, for Curitiba by the end of September, the others. Other Sisters will leave later on, because in a short while we have received more than a hundred requests. This program is carried on as a way of experimentation. If God favors, as I hope, also this enterprise, we shall in due time send the Rules to this Sacred Congregation.

To complete as best as possible within the little time at my disposal this report I give the list of the documents I forwarded to you on the matter:

- a) I announced a competition for a "manual" or "a spiritual guide of the Italian emigrant in America" promising a prize of 1500 liras. Twenty four eminent Ecclesiastics from various regions of Italy entered the contest. A commission presided by the late Cardinal Alimonda of Turin awarded the prize to Father Pietro Colbacchini, one of our Missionaries. This way Divine Providence, which knows our poverty did not allow the said sum to be taken out of our limited funds. I am sending a copy of this "Guide" of which a large number has been printed, to this Sacred Congregation.
- b) I myself published a pamphlet titled, "Italian Emigration to America,

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Observations, etc..."

- c) Also on the occasion of the new law on emigration in 1888, I published another booklet under the title: "A Bill on Italian Emigration. Observations and Proposals." Those proposals were then applauded but not adopted. As all know, the progress of ideas follows an exasperating slow course, especially when they touch interests and passions, but it does not cease when they are just and useful. In fact, those same proposals are the basis for the law on emigration which will soon be debated in Parliament.
- d) I send also a copy of a report prepared for the Foreign Ministry by the President of the Society of St. Raphael, Marquis Volpe-Landi, Father Maldotti, and me, after examining the draft of the law on emigration sent to me by the Ministry.
- e) Finally, I enclose a copy of a lecture I gave at the Sacred Exposition of Turin, always with the scope of drawing the attention of the authorities to the serious problem of emigration, and moving the willing to come to the help of our expatriate brothers.

I shall close with the Apostle: "I planted the seed and Apollo watered it, but God made it grow." (1 Cor. 3, 6)<sup>6</sup>

Already in 1897, following accusations against some Missionaries in the United States, Bishop Scalabrini had written to the Prefect of Propaganda Fide:

*"As of now, I may as well assure Your Eminence that I have on my part always insisted with all care that the Rule approved by this Sacred Congregation be faithfully observed in every detail. At times, the scarcity of personnel as compared with the desperate need and the requests of the Bishops compelled the Superiors to dispense with some requirement of the Rule, but always against my will, and never did I write, not even one letter to the Missionaries, without exhorting them to the exact observance of the Rule itself.*

*Besides, there is one thing I must bring to the attention of Your Eminence. Unfavorable reports on priests said to be, but who were not, members of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Piacenza were sent sometimes to the late Cardinal Simeoni. They were mostly greedy men who had gone to America to make money with all the consequences thereof. It is my hope that such reports were not repeated during the wise tenure of Your Eminence. For truth's sake, I am very satisfied with the missionaries in South America, but I cannot say the same of all those in the North. It would be my intention, therefore, to take a trip there myself, call them together for a course of Spiritual Exercises and then should the need be, demand of all of them, without exceptions, in the name of this Sacred Congregation, the simple and exact observance of the Rules or the return to Italy of the few that leave something to be desired, or whatever other provision Propaganda should intend to take in the matter. But to do this (should Your Eminence approve of the project) I would need you to obtain from the Holy Father permission for me to be absent from my diocese for at least two months. It seems to me it will not be hard to obtain from the Holy Father who at the beginning of the Institute considered sending a prelate to America to conduct*

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<sup>6</sup> Scalabrini, "Report on the Institute of the Missionaries of St. Charles for Italian Emigrants", Piacenza, August 10, 1900, rough draft (Arch. G.S., 7/5).



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*some sort of visitation to the Italian colonies. It was then decided to postpone the project, not to abandon it."*<sup>7</sup>

The Holy See raised some objections to the plan for a visit to the Missions in the United States, due, evidently, to the not too easy relations between the Papal Legation (hence, between the Secretariat of State) and the North American hierarchy:

*"As to the project for a visit to Missions directed by your Missionaries, this Sacred Congregation does not deem it opportune as it might affect the susceptibility of the American bishops.*

*Your Excellency could instead ask the Bishops for the needed information, or charge with it the Missionary that represents you in those regions, and then let the Missionaries know the provisions you should deem proper to adopt."*<sup>8</sup>

It was necessary, as we shall see, that by initiative of Father Giacomo Gambera, the American bishops in whose dioceses the Missionaries were working declare themselves explicitly in favor of the visit of Bishop Scalabrini with letter to the Holy See before permission was granted in 1900. The visitation, carried out in 1901, confirmed Bishop Scalabrini's will to continue on the road of perpetual vows, and he secured Rome's oral approval of the Rules of 1895.<sup>9</sup> His will, however, was voided in part by lack of personnel.

The Spiritual Director of the Clerics at the Mother House was pointing out in 1903 the contradictions actually still hindering the internal growth of the Institute:

*"If it is to be considered a true Religious Congregation, or formed as such at least, all its members must be bound to it by the observance of the same Rules, and above all by the perpetual profession of the usual vows. Now I am told that both in South and North America there are Missionaries not bound by a perpetual profession, but only with vows for five years or a promise under oath. I would make sure, therefore, that all made their profession, and in case this could not be achieved, that from now on, at least no one should depart from the Mother House for the Americas without making his perpetual profession first, and without a thorough formation in the true missionary spirit. What do you think, Rev. Father?"*

*Consider the Mother House! The Rector (Fr. Poggi) is not professed; Mons. Dallepiane, Administrator, does not have vows; I am the Spiritual Director, but no profession.*

*It surely would be proper for the Congregation to have a professed Superior of its own, and a professed Vice-Superior and Administrator, as well."*<sup>10</sup>

To cope with the lack of personnel, on advice of Father Masotti himself, Bishop Scalabrini decided to publish a monthly review for propaganda and promotion of vocations. It began publications in July 1903 with the title: *"Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles for Italian Emigrants in the Americas."* In 1903 it

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<sup>7</sup> Scalabrini to Ledochowski, Piacenza, December 17, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 7/3).

<sup>8</sup> Ledochowski, Rome, January 15, 1898 (Arch. G.S., 7/4).

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. M. Francesconi, "History of the Scalabrinian Congregation" (Rome, 1973)

<sup>10</sup> Masotti to Consoni, Piacenza, May 2, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 541/11).

had six issues, eleven in 1904, three in 1905. After the passing of Scalabrini, its publication was suspended for a few months, and resumed in February 1906 with the title: "L'Emigrato Italiano in America" (The Italian Emigrant in America), adopting a program that was reaching beyond the bounds of the internal chronicle of a congregation to become a small review specializing in migration studies.

"Our aim is to bring to the attention of our kindly readers whatever concerns the emigration movement both in North and South America, the news and the facts related to it or of interest to anyone who has relatives or friends in foreign lands, the decrees and laws that will be enacted on emigration, so as to provide some norms for those who may intend to migrate, the providential work carried out by the Society of St. Raphael at landing ports, to let all know especially where our Missionaries are, what they did and are doing for those thousands and thousands of our brethren living in America, and what there still remains to be done."<sup>11</sup>

To promote vocations, Bishop Scalabrini had also Father Francesco Beccherini, a Missionary in the United States, make a tour of lectures in many Italian cities, especially in seminaries. To ward off prejudices held by a section of the Italian Episcopate in a context of intransigence against the person and action of the Bishop of Piacenza, he requested and obtained for the Missionary a letter of commendation from the Pope through the Card. Secretary of State:

"Most Illustrious and Reverend Lord,

The Holy Father, to whom I made known the content of the letter addressed to me by Your Excellency on the 3rd of this month, has welcomed with pleasure your project to charge Father Francesco Beccherini with a tour of lectures in Italy to get clergy and laity interested on behalf of Italian emigrants in North America, and above all to enkindle in the hearts of seminarians the flame of zeal that may make them willing to come to the help of the grave religious and moral miseries of those poor emigrants. In view of its purpose, His Holiness could not help approving the plan of Your Excellency. He was pleased to bestow His Apostolic blessing on Father Beccherini and directed that Your Lordship grant him a letter of recommendation to your most reverend confreres in the Italian episcopate so that they help him in carrying out the task Your Excellency intends to give him. However, His Holiness wishes that in case, consequent to Father Beccherini's lectures, some seminarians should express a desire to devote themselves to the missions of America, Your Excellency may not allow them to do so without giving them sufficient time at the Institute "Cristoforo" to prove the sincerity of their vocation.

I am pleased to take this opportunity to confirm my feelings of a particular esteem.

Your Humble Servant,  
Rome, Feb. 13, 1904  
R. Card. Merry del Val"<sup>12</sup>

Besides the lack of personnel, another serious difficulty was troubling the

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<sup>11</sup> "Ai nostri amici" ("To Our Friends"), "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", February 1906, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Merry del Val to Scalabrini, Rome, February 13, 1904 (Arch. G.S., 9/5).

Congregation from within due to the fact that the Founder, all taken up with a most intense pastoral activity, could not personally assist his religious the way he would have wanted both in the missions and in the period of their formation. Neither could he find people in a position to help him effectively. Father Zaboglio was hit in 1897 by a gas explosion at Our Lady of Pompeii Church in New York, and from then on he could not offer much more than his advice. On March 10, 1900, Father Giuseppe Molinari was appointed the new Vicar General; but it was just a formality because he was seriously ill, and died three months later. The office of Vicar General remained vacant until the passing of Bishop Scalabrini. Father Zaboglio returned to Italy in May 1900 and on February 19, 1901, was named General Procurator.

The Founder had thought at one time to relinquish the office of Superior General to someone else, as we gather from a letter of Father P. Sinopoli in August 1904:

*"I remember Your Most Reverend Excellency telling me to be your intention to order the Fathers gathered for a General Chapter to present the names of three candidates from whom you would reserve the right to choose the one to be appointed to the office of Superior General."<sup>13</sup>*

The same Missionary, however, suggested the Founder to personally proceed towards the appointment of a Superior General in accord with the Holy See because the conditions of the Congregation were at that time confused for the usual reason: some religious had perpetual vows, others temporary ones, and still others were "aggregated" by simple promises; it would be difficult, therefore, to determine which ones had the right to active and passive voice. Another need pointed out by the same Missionary was the naming of a general treasurer to put a stop to abuses in administrations, and to financial irregularities through a rigorous and centralized management.

As we can see, Bishop Scalabrini was well aware of the most important deficiencies of his Institute, and from his successor Father Vicentini and others, we gather he was gradually working on placing it on more solid foundations, both spiritual and directional, but without the urgency solicited by some missionaries because he did not wish to jeopardize by hasty decisions the two top concerns mostly at heart: the personal problem of the individual missionaries who had entrusted themselves to him, and the apostolic problem of the communities over which he had assumed responsibility through their ministry.

Two were the acts of reform and consolidation he had been gradually working on: "*General Rule for the Mother House of the Congregation of St. Charles for Italian Emigrants*," promulgated on February 4, 1904; and the provisions given to the Superior Provincial of the missions in the United States in 1905.

The Rule, following the norms of St. Charles for seminaries, tended to provide a basic religious and priestly formation no longer hasty or approximate as in the preceding years, and gave a totally particular importance to the novitiate as a

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<sup>13</sup> Sinopoli to Scalabrini, New York, August 11, 1904 (Arch. G.S., 665/8).

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time of preparation both for the religious life with perpetual vows and "for acquiring the spirit demanded by the religious vocation of a Missionary."

The letter was written to the Provincial Superior on April 2, 1905, two months before his death:

*"Most Dear Father Provincial,*

*We must give thanks together to the Lord for the great good our Congregation has been accomplishing until now in spite of immense difficulties and many shortcomings.*

*Wishing, however, that it may ever more prosper to the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls, taking into account, as I have already pointed out to you by word of mouth, the solicitations of quite a few of our Missionaries and the needs of the Congregation itself, having implored the help of our heavenly Patron St. Charles, I have ordered and give orders hereby as follows:*

- 1. Every day all religious shall make their meditation and spiritual reading, and say the Rosary in common.*
- 2. Every year, or every other, (according to the practice of each diocese), all shall make their Spiritual Exercises together with the clergy of the diocese where they reside.*
- 3. Every year, a certificate of confession shall be sent to the Provincial Superior.*
- 4. Every year, upon summons of the Provincial Superior, the Superiors of the houses shall meet at the religious house by him appointed to study and suggest the means best suited for obtaining a steady progress of the missions.*
- 5. No priest shall absent himself from his respective house (except in cases of absolute necessity and great urgency) for a length of time exceeding three days without permission from the Provincial Superior.*
- 6. On their return to Italy the Fathers shall reside at the Mother House where after laying their secular suit aside they shall conform in all things to its rules, and place themselves under obedience of the Superior in charge. They shall give him right away the rest of the money for the trip together with their account's report.*
- 7. The administration of the churches shall be conducted in accord with the customs and regulations of the dioceses to which they belong.*
- 8. The administration of the house is to be kept with scrupulous care. Income and expenditures are to be registered daily, distinctly itemized, and every month a financial balance sheet is to be drawn up.*
- 9. Every month, the local treasurers shall prepare and send a financial itemized report of the house together with the balance on hand to the Provincial, who in turn shall forward it to the Superior of the Mother House. Let no one dispense himself from this grave duty no matter how small the balance may be. Together with their remittances they will send to the Provincial Superior also the number of Masses applied during the month.*
- 10. The local treasurers shall not be allowed to use the house money to buy land or build houses, churches or other buildings, or to pay off debts not contracted for the sustenance of the house without the written permission of the Provincial Superior.*

11. *No one shall be permitted to ask for loans or raise mortgages towards the acquisition of land, the construction of churches, houses, or other buildings without permission of the Provincial Superior, which must be issued in writing.*

*You are hereby asked, most dear Father, to provide that these regulations be sent to all the Missionaries of our Congregation as soon as you will reach America. You shall take care that they be exactly observed, as far as you best can. Compliant, prudent, and concerned as they are for the good of the Congregation to which they belong, I have no doubt that all of them will surely deem it their duty to observe them faithfully and with a willing heart.*

*You shall impart to them the blessing I just implored from the Holy Father who rejoiced with me in knowing them generally pious, zealous, obedient, unconcerned about gain, animated by the true spirit of Jesus Christ.*

*You shall exhort them as well to do ever better, and continue with increasing zeal in the most noble and holy work to which they were called by God.*

*You are well aware of the truth that the strength and life of every community depends on harmony and discipline. Well, then, you shall recommend to your confreres these two things in a very special way. Without them, were they even an army, they would accomplish very little; with them, though few, they will perform miracles. Furthermore, foster and nourish evermore the spirit of piety and prayer, foundation and support of all things, in each house.*

*I count on your well-known zeal, most dear Father! Restating what I already wrote in my letter on March 15, 1892, I embrace and bless you in "osculo sancto".*

*Your Most Affectionate in Christ Jesus  
+ John B. Scalabrini, Bishop of Piacenza  
Sup. Gen. of the Miss. of St. Charles*

*Piacenza Apr. 2, 1905"<sup>14</sup>*

## **2. Project for a Roman Congregation or Central Commission "for Catholic emigrants"**

The worries tormenting Bishop Scalabrini for the future of his Congregation and for the pastoral responsibility of his diocese in the last months of his life, when he was working on carrying out the experiences gained in his visitation to the missions of the United States and Brazil, and in regaining the time spent in his second missionary trip (June -December 1904), did not prevent him from devoting to the last his attention to the religious problems of emigration.

In this field we must consider as his spiritual Testament the "memorandum" he presented to the Holy See only a few days before he died with the proposal for instituting a Roman Congregation, or at least a Central Commission, for coordinating the assistance of Catholic emigrants of all nationalities, to be attached to one of the Sections of the Holy See.

The idea had been maturing all along since 1904 with the help of Father

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<sup>14</sup> Scalabrini to Novati, Piacenza, April 2, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 11/2).

Zaboglio who was thus writing to Bishop Scalabrini on April 24 of the same year:

*"Invited by Your Excellency to put in writing those few ideas I had expressed to you in private, I have written my thoughts, right or wrong as they may be, in regard to the assistance of emigrants."<sup>15</sup>*

Here we present the "pro-memoria" of Father Zaboglio:

**"Suggestions for a general provision  
for the religious assistance of emigrants."**

Hundreds of thousands of Catholics move every year from Europe, Asia, and Canada to Catholic countries such as Latin America, or to Protestant countries like the United States of America, and Australia, to live there permanently or for many years.

Often the local clergy is hardly sufficient for the natives; on the other hand, because of differences of language and other reasons, they can do very little or nothing for immigrants.

If it is true that those who migrate to Catholic countries remain generally such in name, though often in deed, so is it equally true that those who move into protestant countries, they themselves or together with their descendants, or the latter ones, lose the faith. The United States, among others, is an example. While the progress made by Catholicism in the United States is well-known and publicized, little known is the enormous loss of faith suffered in the past and continuously experienced among emigrants, even those who are thought to be more strongly rooted in it, such as the Irish. There exist statistics, approximate at least, of such losses, but they are little known and no one speaks of them.

One must add that a great part of those who have lived for a number of years in the emigration countries on returning to their hometowns are the cause of ruin of parishes either because of their laxity of morals or false ideas, or because of their loss or weakening of the faith.

And, if this holds true for many of those who emigrate to, and live several years in foreign lands, it is also the case of the very many who go there periodically for some months of the year. They return to infect their towns after scandalizing the people among whom they lived, causing Protestants and schismatics to confirm their prejudices against the Catholic religion, and contributing, as far as it depends on them, in delaying the day when the nations will form one fold under one shepherd.

To remedy these and other evils of the ever increasing emigration, something has been and is being done here and there both in countries of immigration and emigration. But what is this little when compared to the needs!?  
Moreover, while something was done for people of certain nations and languages, nothing or next to nothing has been done for others (for certain oriental nationalities, for example).

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<sup>15</sup> Zaboglio to Scalabrini, Menaggio, April 24, 1904) Arch. G.S., 11/1)

In order to provide, at least as much as is humanly possible, with energy, urgency, and everywhere, there should exist in Rome, the center of Christianity and custodian of the Faith, a general office (an "ad hoc" Congregation, or at least a special section attached to a Congregation) with the particular task of preserving the faith of emigrants of any language or nations, both in places of departure and arrival, urging, advising, guiding Bishops, religious and diocesan priests, and the faithful to move to the rescue, providing means and supervision.

This office should, first of all, gather all information as exact as possible on the state of emigration by means of statistics and other publications, and with the cooperation of the Bishops of the nations of departure and arrival of emigrants, in order to find out how many people of every nation and language migrate to a foreign country, what are the causes of their total or partial loss of faith and good morals, whether any provisions have been taken yet, and, if so, which ones. Then it should urge the Bishops themselves to discuss with their clergy in diocesan and in regional, provincial, and national meetings, and find means and ways to be eventually adapted in accord with the directives of the Congregation in charge within the Holy See.

Since the lack of qualified workers of the Gospel as to language, customs, and, the different temperaments of the various nationalities is the proximate cause of the lamented evils, the Congregation in charge could, whenever needed, promote the founding of seminaries specifically for the different languages or nations, or of Congregations like the one founded by Bishop Scalabrini of Piacenza for emigrants of Italian language, and interest the Superiors of various religious Orders and Congregations in sending Missionaries wherever the need be greater. To places where it should not be possible to send diocesan or religious priests as resident missionaries, care should be taken at least that there be priests who would periodically go wherever the different groups of emigrants may be, so that these unfortunate ones be allowed to enjoy the comfort of experiencing at least an occasional presence of God's messengers.

To obviate to the so-often lamented evils brought about by both temporary and permanent migration, the central office or Congregation in Rome could adopt these and other provisions which an accurate study of the state and conditions of emigration, and the advice of Bishops and other people well-known for their experience and piety, should suggest.

### **Observations**

Emigration does not show signs of decrease; rather, considering the population's increase and the modern means of communication that are evermore multiplying and making progress, it will continue to increase.

Already distances no longer exist. In olden days emigration was generally contained within the confines of a certain nation or of the neighboring ones. Nowadays it is easier to travel to America than it was about half a century ago to move from many towns of Lombardy, as was then the practice, to Palermo, Naples, Rome, or even to Venice or Genoa.

Should there be even a small decrease of emigration in one nation, there will

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be another one to take its place. Ordinarily more prolific, the Catholic nations will contribute greater contingents to emigration.

In nations of mixed religions we notice that Catholics have many children, while Protestants are contented with one or two, or three at the most.

These facts show that the spiritual assistance to emigrants may become a very powerful means for the propagation of the faith and for making the nations Catholic. How many million Catholics would there be in the United States, for example, instead of only the ten millions of today, without including the lands recently acquired, if an immense number of immigrants and their descendants had not lost the faith!

With great effort, expenses, and sacrifices, Missionaries are sent to preach the Gospel in pagan countries at the cost even of their lives, and why should we allow thousands upon thousands of Catholics to lose the faith every year away from their countries, while they could be saved with much lesser efforts and sacrifices, thus preventing the number of the children of God to increase on earth as would be the case if the faith of the fathers and of their descendants were safeguarded.

Neither should one object that many lose the faith also in Catholic countries, because even when father or mother, or both (which rarely happens) fall away, there is still hope for the children, while in non-Catholic nations once the parents lose the faith so also do their children.

It is my humble opinion that from these considerations the conclusion should be drawn that besides providing a remedy for such great evils, the institution of central general office charged with directing and coordinating the assistance of emigrants spoken of above would bring great benefits."<sup>16</sup>

Three months later, while in Brazil, Bishop Scalabrini mentioned the proposal to Pope Pius X for the first time:

*"And now, Most Holy Father, I dare to propose to you an idea of mine. Your Holiness has chosen to "restore all things in Christ" as your sublime and effective program. Will not the Church, which through the admirable Congregation of the Propagation of the faith employs so much money and so many priests for the spreading of the faith amongst the infidels, do something similar at this time to safeguard the faith among the emigrants? And I am speaking on behalf of the emigrants of all nations and of all Catholic regions: Italians, Germans, Spanish, Portuguese, Canadians, and so on. A special Congregation charged with this problem, the most urgent of our century, would honor the Holy Apostolic See, bring the nations closer to it as to a tender Mother, and accomplish much good.*

*Up north in the United States the losses to Catholicism are counted in the millions, surely more numerous than the conversions of infidels obtained in our missions in three centuries, and with all appearances, still continue.*

*Protestantism is hard at work there as well as here at perverting souls. A Congregation that is able to contact the Bishops wherefrom Catholic emigrants depart and whereto they arrive, and even interest their respective governments; a Congregation, that should study the difficult and complex problem of*

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<sup>16</sup> Zaboglio, Pro-memoria, April 24, 1904 (Arch. G.S., 11/1)



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*emigration in all its aspects taking advantage of old and new research on the subject, and provide opportune remedies on behalf of the Holy Father, would be a blessing for the world, enough to make your pontificate glorious."*<sup>17</sup>

On his return from Brazil, Bishop Scalabrini spoke of it personally to the Pope at the audience of the end of January 1905, when upon invitation of the Supreme Pontiff himself, he gave him a report of his trip; he was then invited to present an official formulation of his proposal to Cardinal R. Merry del Val, Secretary of State. On March 19, the same Cardinal answered to Scalabrini's letter of February 28:

*"So, a Commission "for Catholic emigrants" could also be appointed. Very well; and then? Competent personnel must be found, and then plan of action drawn up to define its field of apostolate, the means at its disposal as well as their practical use. In a word, a work of preparation is needed, otherwise we will have words, promises, a Commission, holy intentions, conflicts with other organizations of the same nature, and nothing else! See to it yourself, Your Excellency, whether it were possible for you to study the matter and get all elements ready for an effective action which I think should not begin with too much publicity and on a too wide a scale.*

*A "mustard seed" (Mt 13, 31), that in due time could progressively extend far and wide by the help of God, would be better!"*<sup>18</sup>

On May 5, 1905, Bishop Scalabrini presented the following "Memorandum" to the Holy See:

**PART I**  
**(Presentation of the Problem)**

Most Eminent Prince,

I am honored to present to your high judgment some considerations and proposals concerning the present and future conditions of Catholicism in the Americas.

They are the result of long studies conducted in place, and more so through the experiences of worthy missionaries and illustrious prelates who have devoted their whole lives in spreading religion in those countries.

I was never more greatly moved than now while writing about this problem, and never did I pray with a deeper intensity of fervor for light from Heaven and for the gift of eloquence such as springs forth from a word proven by numbers and facts in order to instill in others my inner convictions on this most important matter.

What I witnessed in my trips through the United States of the North and Brazil is before my eyes as though still present, and the emotions thereof shall never be erased from my heart.

I have visited crowded cities and young communities, fields made productive by hard work, and plains still untouched by the hand of man; I came to know emigrants that had reached the heights of riches, others that lived in comfort,

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<sup>17</sup> Scalabrini to Pius X, São Paulo, July 22, 1904 (Arch. G.S., 3019/3)

<sup>18</sup> Merry del Val to Scalabrini, Rome, March 19, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 11/1).

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besides the obscure immense crowd of the poor that struggle all alone, in absolute neglect, for their life against the perils of the desert, the dangers of unhealthy climates, and against human greed, lacking all religious and civil comforts, and everything else; I have felt their hearts beat in unison with mine when speaking to them of religion in their own language.

I have witnessed the sad reality of the faith of millions fading away for lack of spiritual nourishment and even, sad to say, because of the ministers' unworthiness.

Under the influence of a holy apostolate I have seen whole communities flourishing again in spirit like springtime in the practice of Christian living and in the ineffable hopes of religion.

In a word, I have realized that the reason why the Church of God does not enjoy in those regions a greater influence than it does at the present in directing both collective and individual life, and souls are lost by the millions, is due in great part more to the lack of a well-organized religious apostolate properly fitting the various environments, and to the want of clergy rather than to the activities, though so intense, of the enemies of the faith. I became utterly convinced that it is urgent to take provisions and it is a serious error, not to say a sin, on the part of us all in charge of the Church, to allow the continuation of a state of things which causes so great a loss of souls and belittles the social importance of the Catholic Church before the enemies of God.

One of the facts of modern history of a politico-social, and therefore religious, nature (since, in their unending variety, human events always reflect the spiritual unity to which they trace their source) is certainly the taking over on the part of the European nations of continents inhabited by races considered either uncivilized or resisting civilization, and practicing religion wise, the lowest forms of idolatry.

Continuing on the same subject of these considerations of mine, the conquest of the Americas was surely astonishing for its religious, political, and social effects on the native nations.

As all know, America is one of the largest continents in the world: it spreads forty million square kilometers in size, that is, four times the size of Europe, and it extends over the two hemispheres as if divided in halves at the Equator, reaching to the Polar Circle in the North, and stretching to the sixtieth parallel of latitude South, so that it enjoys all climates, from the torrid to the frigid, crossing, as it does, through the subtropical to the temperate zones, offering all their products and riches.

Bathed all around by three Oceans, rich in whatever the soil fertility and human industry can produce, in its configuration, its gulfs, its bays, so secure and wide, in its great rivers, navigable for thousands of kilometers, America holds the regions and the natural routes prepared for the nations by Divine Providence that wanted it reserved as the last cradle where civilized nations could go as to a common promised land, merge together, multiply, and make progress to their benefit and to the greater glory of God.

There are now eighteen independent countries in America, under republican governments, and several colonial possessions belonging to European

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countries, with a population of about .... millions; but if we were to attribute to that vast continent the population density of Italy it could host two and a half billion people, even excluding the equatorial and polar regions, that is one-third more than there are now living over the face of the earth.

All peoples have contributed in forming these nations, and based on statistics one could establish in what measure the blood of each European nation contributes in molding the American type. This way civilized peoples and large cities are now taking over the place of the earlier Incas empires, of the Aztecs, the Quichnos, the Guaranis, of the other normal Redskins of the North, and of the innumerable tribes roaming around in the South without a name or a fixed residence.

Following the short warring period of conquest, the forms of European immigration to America are quite different from all others known in history; not hordes of barbarians, slaughtering and playing havoc, but orderly crowds of peaceful workers in search of a livelihood, fortune and oblivion in a foreign land; no more the surge of a flood sweeping all things away, but the placid spreading of life giving waters; no more oppression of peoples, but fusions, and adaptations by which different nationalities meet, intermingle, strengthen, and mark the beginnings of other peoples that through their dissimilarities give rise to certain religious and civil characteristics that determine the traits common to the same nation.

Emigration of this kind reflects the laws of nature. The physical as well as the human worlds are subject to this mysterious force that stirs up and merges together the elements of life without destroying them, moves living creatures born in certain places and hurls them through space transforming and perfecting them thus renewing at all times the miracle of creation.

Seeds migrate on the wings of the wind, trees are carried downstream by the currents; animals, birds and above them all, either in groups or as individuals, humans beings move from place to place, always instruments in the hands of Divine Providence that rules over their destiny leading them through trial to the ultimate end, the perfection of man on earth and the glory of God in Heaven.

All this is told in divine revelation and proven by history and science, and it is by force of this law that America has become for the past century the melting pot of the old European nations and seems destined to exert a great influence on the destinies of mankind.

Begun in the nineteenth century, and continuing in the twentieth, this glorious economic and political event explains the great interest displayed by the European governments, each following its emigration to the different American countries, in subsidizing organizations for protection, for social and charitable assistance, and for instruction, employment offices, commercial observers, and in encouraging, to put it briefly, all those institutions that transform the emigration of a country from an amorphous mass into a living organism in which the national spirit of the expatriate throbs, and a liking for the country of their origin is kept alive in the Americanized descendants.

In virtue of its divine apostolate and centuries-old tradition the Catholic Church is called to imprint its mark on this great social movement that aims at the economic restoration and fusion of Christian nations.

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As always everywhere so also in the midst of this great conflict of interests, the Church has a beautiful and noble mission to provide first for the preservation and the propagation of the faith, and the salvation of souls, and by taking her place, later, as mother and queen, amongst the different groups to smooth edges among nationalities, to moderate the conflicts of interests of the different countries of origin; in a word, to harmonize the variety of origins by the pacifying unity of the faith.

No one can deny the Church her mission as mother and moderator of nations due to her by divine right and universal consensus as all Catholics believe and all non-Catholics in good faith admit the truth of the axiom that the work of the immortal merciful God is wherever the Church is: *"Immortale Dei miserentis opus, quod est Ecclesia."*

These considerations, facts, and statistics lead us, of course, to place the question: "What ought the Church to do to keep the religious flame alive and operative, and the Catholic faith strong in those peoples to whom such a promising future is open and the Catholic nations of Europe are annually sending such a large contingent of emigrants of different nationality?"

The question is simple, but not so the answer; which to be adequate must be varied and all embracing, at the same time, general and particular as well; that is, general on the part of the authority supplying it, particular and various as to places where to implement it, to needs to be provided for, to the laws and customs of each country, and I would say, even to each Christian community in the process of formation.

I shall be brief, expounding everything in a synthetic form.

**PART II**

**(Gravity and Urgency of the Problem)**

From the early beginnings of the discovery of America, the Church has carried out its own apostolic work restraining the greed and cruelty of the conquistadores while civilizing the natives.

Be it enough to recall the struggle engaged in by the clergy in their defense and of the Christian communities founded amongst the Guaranis in the missions of Paraguay, a vast political and religious empire, also admired by writers little inclined towards Catholicism, and rightly known as the Republic of Saints.

Due to the times, however, the action of the clergy merged later on too much with politics, and the colonial policy of Latin American countries was all one could imagine of bad government, foolishly tyrant and rapacious not only at the expense of the natives, but also of the Americanized European immigrants. The saying that a European shoemaker had a better right to rule over a colony than any though famous creole, became an axiom of those colonial governments which seemed to have been established for the specific purpose to alienate those newly born communities from their mother country, and to arouse feelings of hostility against anything European. And this moral separation kept growing till it degenerated into open rebellion. This state of ill-will and political hostility reflected upon religion because in the mind of most

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people the clergy was identified, as was indeed often the case, with the political power. To this reason one must add the scarcity of churches and clergy, and the conclusion will necessarily be that there existed in those regions Catholicism more in name than in fact, with little moral and religious gain both for governments and people.

Many priests also crossed the Ocean together with emigrants; save few exceptions, these were, however, everything that the clerical state could offer of degenerate moral behavior, and there, deprived of all restraint, they cast discredit on religion and ruined whole communities with their scandalous life and trafficking in holy things.

It is now a question of "restoring all things" there also. Much has been done to this end; but it is quite little when compared with the vast work that remains to be done. All emigrants of the different nationalities are in need of the vigilant and maternal care of the Church as regards religious dangers. But the Italian emigration deserves special consideration because amongst all those Catholic nationalities, Italians there are perfect strangers.

The Spanish and the Portuguese found in the United States vast territories where their language is spoken, the English and the Irish have there and in the British territories their second home country at least as far as religious assistance is concerned. Only the Italians live there abandoned to themselves, and there was a time not too long ago when because of intolerance they were ill assisted also by the churches. This holds also for the Polish, the Ruthenians, and the Germans.

In my recent trips through those regions - I say it once again - I have witnessed demonstrations of faith such as to cause one to shed tears, and I could gather facts and incidents such as to make me, as a Bishop, blush in shame at the thought that the neglect in which emigrants were left for so many years could ever happen, and that it still should be the case for so many of them, today! There are hundreds of thousands brother-expatriates imploring in vain for a priest that would speak to them about God in the language of their own far-off native country! Such is also the condition of the Polish torn apart by schism, of the Germans, wherever the good Jesuits are not present, as in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, of the Canadians, the Ruthenians, caught in the middle of hot disputes over the celibacy of their priests, of the Italo-Greeks, and of other new Catholic migrations spreading a little everywhere.

I shall not dwell on these evils, as they are known to all, as the desire to provide is very much alive in the heart of the Holy Father as well as in yours, Your Eminence.

**PART III**

**(Remedies and tasks of the proposed Congregation)**

And now allow me, Your Eminence, to briefly touch upon the remedies I consider likely most effective. In my judgment, the number one remedy, as I said above, lies in a wise organization for a work of apostolate right in the Americas; such structure should have its source within the Holy See, an

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authority not only undiscussed and unquestionable with the whole Catholic clergy, but by its very nature universal as well, consequently embracing all nationalities.

It must be provided that every colony or community where our emigration is intense may have its priest who residing in the urban center of the colony would be able to visit periodically at the proper time the whole territory assigned to him, which is quite often as large as some of our widest provinces.

This vast religious assistance must be integrated by the school where besides the elements of reading, writing, and arithmetic, children of emigrants may learn the language of their new country, and that of their land of origin, because the consciousness of one's extraction properly nourished in the Americanized generations is a most effective factor in preserving religion. One's language is a mysterious means to keep the faith. It is not easy to explain, but it is a fact that in losing his language, one easily loses also the faith of his fathers. What its mysterious cause may be it is hard to determine, but experience teaches us that as long as a family of migrants preserves its own language it very seldom loses the faith.

Nuns may be put in charge of schools, and I have engaged the Sister Apostles of the Sacred Heart in this task with success both in several colonies of Brazil, and in urban centers. And since amongst those new communities the good must never be disjoined from the useful, besides church and school it will be well to establish in many places of utter neglect a pharmaceutical dispensary conducted by the Sisters themselves or by the Priest who would supply patients with medicines of common use at a moderate cost. This way the manifold action of religious, civic, and material assistance will be centered around the clergy, and the Church of God would be blessed amongst those populations; and once more, as with its divine Founder, it would become true that the Church "went about doing good works and healing all..." (Acts 10, 38). This much for South America.

As to North America, the dangers of losing one's faith are even greater there, because besides the ones listed for lack of assistance we must add the proselytism of Protestant sects, more active and numerous than anywhere else. The losses suffered in the United States for lack of religious assistance are enormous. According to statistics, two-thirds of the population living in those countries, that is forty eight million, descends from emigrants of the different nations of Europe, and, sad as it may be, even though a great portion of that immigration originate from Catholic countries, Catholicism is actually represented only by ten million members. Now there is no doubt that Catholics in the United States could be more than double had the migrants remained Catholic; and these would certainly have remained so, if only they had found upon their arrival, and continued later on to have, the needed religious assistance; in fact, emigrants firmly hold on to the faith of their fathers.

Unfortunately the clergy of North and South America as well, is insufficient in number; besides, they have difficulty with the language, an added hardship for emigrants of Latin extraction especially, in learning English, and for the Anglo-Saxon clergy in grasping the Latin languages.

Now, besides the one already mentioned of sending many and well prepared

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national priests, these would be the remedies:

- 1) The founding of parishes for each nationality whenever Catholic communities are in a position to have the means for supporting such institution as it regards both the clergy and the exercise of the cult.  
The laws of the United States are very liberal and they grant the civil rights to any parochial association regardless of worship or nationality. Besides, the experience gained in several cities with the founding of Italian parishes could be enough to prove of what great value this most simple means would be in reviving the faith and the desire for the religious practices also in individuals that seem the hardest to reach.
- 2) In places where different nationalities live, each in no position to form a parish, a mixed clergy should be engaged with the strict charge to instruct adults and teach catechism to the children of each language.
- 3) The priests be possibly of the same nationality as the parishioners, or at least know the language.
- 4) Let there be here also in every parish a school where together with English and elementary instruction the national language of the parishioners be taught.

The institution of parochial schools where, in addition to English, their national language is also taught is of the greatest importance not only to make good of the love for one's country, very strong in expatriates and for their religion, but also for subtracting the young from the American school that on account of its spirit of complete indifference in regard to religion presents the character of an atheistic school....

And, so, I have outlined in great part what should form the study and the work of the proposed Central Congregation (Commission) "*Pro Emigratis Catholicis*". The need for this Congregation (Commission) and the benefits that would derive from it are evident. New phenomena call for new organisms fit to the need. Single initiatives and provisions, no matter how wise, do not suffice, because it is humanly to be expected that both be of little impact when not backed up by an organism able to enforce them and make them effective. In fact, instructions and provisions in this sense were already enacted by the Holy See, especially by the Supreme Pontiff Leo XIII, but unfortunately for many reasons needless to enumerate; their effectiveness was not what it should have been.

Migration is a universal phenomenon, and so the Congregation (Commission) in question would also be universal as to authority, and central as to its position. An action of a single Bishops, each unaware of what the others are doing, may result in a dispersion of forces. All European governments have felt the need for creating new administrative offices to control emigration at home, to follow it in the different lands it is directed to, and more so, to protect it from the numberless traps conflict of interests tends to set for unfortunate expatriates.

And much more so, as is obvious to anyone, should the Church consider directing and protecting its children that lose the faith when they migrate to Protestant countries, or totally new lands, where an adequate religious assistance is lacking.

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Only such a Congregation headed by the Holy See will be in a position to establish national parishes without arousing the jealousies of American governments and bishops, as the only means, in my estimation, that can effectively contend with the deleterious work of Protestant sects, especially in countries where these are in the majority, lead the schismatic Poles back to the Church by wise provisions, and protect the other nationalities.

How should this Congregation be set up?

In my opinion, it should be made up of representatives of the various nationalities that supply the largest contingents of emigrants; that is, two Italians, one Pole, one German, one Canadian, etc. The choice of these representatives should turn on competent people knowledgeable of the conditions and of the needs of each respective nationality, who can also speak the Italian language to facilitate communication of each member with those that are to be appointed to head the Congregation and the relations with the other similar congregations. This could be easily achieved by having recourse preferably to the religious orders that devoted themselves to the assistance of emigrants of their own nationalities.

What should the scope and the task of this Congregation be? Its scope should be that of providing spiritual assistance to emigrants especially in the Americas, thus preserving the Catholic faith and the Christian spirit in their hearts.

Its task:

- 1) To study the complex and very serious problem of emigration beginning, first of all, with a "questionnaire", and to be well informed and updated on the state of Catholic migration.
- 2) Though respecting praiseworthy private initiatives in this field, to promote the institution of Catholic committees in the most important parishes.
- 3) To arouse the zeal of pastors in their emigrants' behalf in the Bishops, and suggest to them the practical means to help the emigrants especially at departure and arrival.
- 4) To answer questions brought to its attention in regard to provisions taken or to be taken, and smooth out the difficulties that may come up concerning emigration both in one's country and abroad.
- 5) To take care especially that emigrants may have priests to accompany them on their trips back and forth, and that good and zealous missionaries be provided to the various colonies, and so on.

**PART IV**

**(Remarks on some points)**

I deem it useful to present some remarks on the last three points. Not all of the priests who devote themselves to the spiritual care of emigrants are endowed with the necessary virtues of zeal, piety, and abnegation, such as needed in a missionary. Indeed many debase their ministry seeking profit in holy things, thus behaving as true hoarders of gold rather than of souls. And this is perhaps one of the reasons why many Bishops experience a sense of



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aversion against foreign clergy seeking to enter their dioceses to take charge of their countrymen, and why some of them come to the decision to have the native priests study languages and the assign them later to the foreign communities residing in their dioceses; a decision that cannot give good practical results, both because the knowledge of national languages does not reach far when the different dialects spoken in the provinces are not also known, and with the knowledge of a language one does not acquire the traits of the nation that speaks it. Hence, it clearly appears how important is the choice of priests to whom the spiritual care of the colonies must be entrusted.

The Congregation could easily provide for this need if all priests desiring to devote themselves to the missions in the colonies and the Bishops in need of missionaries for foreigners living in their dioceses had recourse to it. It would not be hard to secure reliable information on candidates aspiring to the missions, and form an exact idea on their behavior, while the Bishops requesting them should consider themselves lucky to admit to their own dioceses priests recommended and approved by the Congregation. It should not be objected that the Congregation of the Council is already providing in part for the problem in virtue of a decree preventing American Bishops from admitting to their dioceses Italian priests unless they obtained first a special permission from the same Congregation. The Congregation of the Council does not grant this permission if the priests have not earlier secured a certificate of admission from the bishop to whom they intend to go. And this is how the suspicion of the bishops is aroused, since they cannot take into consideration requests addressed to them by priests whom they do not know at all. The Congregation could remedy all this by acting as intermediary between the priests aspiring to the missions and the bishops who should be in need of their Ministry.

It is a consoling fact to note that for a few years the bishops are now striving to provide priests for emigrants. But it is sad as well to think that many bishops should completely neglect for so long the religious interests of so many hundreds of thousands of emigrants. The generous missionaries, who offered their assistance in the colonies, know it well. How much distrust they had to cope with, how coldly they were received, how many difficulties they had to overcome, how often their work was refused with a resentful denial! And even today, should one think of how much there remains to be done, he would realize how little has been accomplished until now in spite of the holy reawakening of the Bishops.

It should be the concern of this Congregation to acquaint itself with the great emigration streams, to classify the colonies from the largest, counting hundreds of thousands members, to the smallest ones, to keep count of their churches and of the priests assisting them, to urge to provide them priests assisting them in places not cared for as yet, to come to the help of the Bishops with counsel, exhortations, and by sending the good priests, and soliciting religious orders to supply their valid cooperation with all the means this Congregation would devise upon dedicated study.

This Congregation could send its members to the colonies to ascertain on the spot how the religious needs of emigrants are provided for, and it should not content itself with the reports sent in by the Bishops which most of the times do not represent the real conditions of the colonies but only the good

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intentions of those that wrote them. As to the difficulties that so often and anywhere may come up, it must be observed that they derive almost always from diversity of language, difference of character, different ways and customs, and a hundred other causes. If not corrected on time, these difficulties give rise to friction, abuses, spite, and dissension; all to the detriment of the colonies and of the parishes, and to the advantage of the dissident sects that use them as a means for discrediting the Church and clergy. And even in such cases, by going in loco the members of the Congregation could find out with ease and certainty the causes of the disorders, report them to the Congregation, and take immediate measures.

True, there are Congregations charged with solving questions that may arise of these cases; but the habitual slow pace with which these questions are dealt with, due in part to the enormous distances, the high tone these problems assume when brought before the Congregations, the difficulties in having ready and reliable information, the lack of knowledge of the environment in which these questions unfold; all factors presenting the obstacles that very often help in maintaining for a long time a condition of things detrimental to the interests of the contending parties.

This Congregation should also examine with great care the means to hold in check the active and persistent propaganda Protestants are conducting not without success among Italians, especially in the United States. How many sad incidents could be brought into the open in this regard!

Another sorrowful fact that should draw the attention of the Congregation is the proliferation of the so-called independent churches of Polish communities. From what has been so far briefly reported, and from the much that could still be written, should one wish to study the problem in greater depth, it is easy to understand how practical and vast the field of action reserved to the proposed Congregation is.

And no one can doubt the very favorable impression the institution of a Congregation of this kind would create in the hearts of millions of emigrants in whose mind there entered already the discouraging, though untrue, conviction that their Father, the Supreme Pontiff, is not concerned with their fate.

**PART V**

**(Proposals for its operational effectiveness)**

How can this Congregation be made practically effective? Actually, it would have such effectiveness in itself already, because of the authority deriving to it from the Apostolic See, as I said before, which it could enhance by the opportunity and solicitude of its provisions, by insisting with the Bishops to carry out (with some penal sanction, should the case be) whatever shall be ordered by the Congregation; requesting every year a report on what was accomplished towards the intended scope; sending from time to time some special delegate to the place; bestowing some recognition on the most zealous and meritorious; etc.

An annual collection should be ordered in all churches of the different nations to gather funds to be used in part for the right functioning of the Commission

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or Congregation itself, devolving the rest for the assistance of emigrants. Leo XIII ordered a like-collection on behalf of the Negro slaves, and could not the reigning Pontiff order it for the white ones? Certainly all people would contribute to this cause, and give willingly, because the need is here more easily understood and felt.

In my opinion, it would also be good to assign at least part of the profits realized by the sale of the new reserved publications, such as liturgical books, catechism, etc., to this work of general interest. No one would have any reasonable objection to it. Being a question of a work intended only for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls, would not the Lord accord it His help?

I shall conclude with the following most important words by Theodore Roosevelt taken from the last issue of the "Revue" of Paris:

"The emigrant arrives here almost without any protection: as a rule, he does not know our language, he is not familiar with our institutions, ways of living and customs, and with our thinking; and, sorry to say, there are many swindlers, who hope to make a living in preying on him, and he is literally lost should no one be there on the spot to assist him. No greater work can be accomplished by any philanthropic or religious society than that of extending a friendly help to the man or woman that come to us to become citizens or the parents of citizens. If we do not take care of them, if we neglect to better his condition, then our children will surely pay for it. Either he will rise or we will fall."<sup>19</sup>

On May 17, 1905, that is fifteen days before his passing, Bishop Scalabrini, with a letter to the Cardinal Secretary of State offered the help of his Missionaries to carry out the proposal:

"Now in order to be even more practical and make the matter easier, I would propose that three missionaries of the Congregation of St. Charles (two from the North and one from the South) be called to Rome to devote themselves to the necessary groundwork of preparation putting to good use their experience and studies already made and the advice of other missionaries residing in Rome, to this end.

If in today's reordering of parishes it were possible to have a parish with a building attached, the project could be quite soon realized without much fuss and with very little expense it would be exactly that 'mustard seed as Your Eminence was writing to me lately, which with the Lord's blessing, would extend ever more later on."<sup>20</sup>

Later on we will have the occasion to see that Bishop Scalabrini's proposal, even though not admitted in vast range of all its implications, was not pushed aside. In fact, Saint Pius X established in 1912 the Special Office for Emigration dependent on the Sacred Consistorial Congregation of which, through successive changes, the present "Pontifical Commission for Migrations and Tourism" decreed on March 19, 1970 by Pope Paul VI with the "Motu Proprio '*Apostolicae Caritatis*'", was born.

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<sup>19</sup> Scalabrini, Memoriale sulla Congregazione o Commissione "Pro Emigratis Catholicis" (Memorandum on the Congregation or Commission for Catholic Emigrants), Piacenza, May 5, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 3020/1).

<sup>20</sup> Scalabrini to Merry del Val, Piacenza, May 17, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 3020/1).

### **3. Election of the Second Superior General, Father Domenico Vicentini**

On June 1, 1905, Bishop Scalabrini died and the Congregation founded by him not only was left with many problems still unresolved or not clearly defined, but even without a general government. In fact, there was no Vicar General.

Father Domenico Vicentini, Rector of the Mother House, was practically exercising his functions. He wrote to Father Paolo Novati, Superior Provincial in the United States to remain there and make preparations for the election of the new Superior General and discuss things with the other missionaries in view of "setting a base that should not need exceptions because the new Superior will not be in a position to act with 'fullness of authority' as Bishop Scalabrini, our Founder, could do, etc. I would rather propose that we make a provisional election of two years, or of a Vicar General until a concrete plan be matured, etc."<sup>21</sup>

He wrote in the same sense to Father Faustino Consoni, Superior Provincial in São Paulo, Brazil. To this Father, who had written in the meanwhile lamenting the shortage of missionaries, Father Vicentini answered with a letter that clearly reveals the internal anguish of the Congregation at that time:

"Today Mons. Mangot gave me your letter dated May 12 which you sent to the Bishop not knowing where I might be, while I am here and the Bishop is lying buried in the tomb two days already. Alas! What a sudden and terrible calamity! Let us hope that the Lord may not abandon us!

Today I received a comforting letter from His Holiness Pius X: I had written him imploring his protection and support. He answered me through Mons. Bressan that he was participating in our sorrow, and promises to take the best care so that the holy work founded by him (Scalabrini) may continue and prosper. I wrote also to Propaganda, and the next week I will go to Rome (as Mons. Bressan was also suggesting) to report on the state of our affairs, and this (as he writes) to the end of providing in an orderly manner.

You complain about those missionaries of ours who are in a position to help the Congregation, and do not do so. Sadly enough I am not surprised; I wonder, instead, why missions and missionaries are entrusted to people who (as I wrote about it in a letter of mine), after patching up their own torn clothes, will turn and kick us in the rear.

(...) It is not the money that is lacking, it is the conscience that is missing. You can say what you like, but the Bishops put pressure to have missionaries and one must hurry up and send them without preparation and without knowing them: things are bound to turn out badly when done in too much haste (even the hasty cat gives birth to blind kittens'). As to the financial report, you may oblige them to send it in several times a year; it is one of the last rules written by the Bishop (Scalabrini), and Father Novati has already begun to have it observed in North America. However, when the question came up for discussion I told the Bishop, in the presence of Father Novati:

*It is a good, appropriate and necessary provision, but first the conscience of*

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<sup>21</sup> Vicentini to Novati: Resumé from the "Diary" of Father Vicentini, Vol. IV, pp. 143-144 (Arch. G.S., 1642).

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*missionaries must be formed, and unless this is accomplished, any provision you may enact will avail nothing.'*

*(...) I may be mistaken, but up to now we wanted to grasp too much and we will end up by losing all. Let us take it easy and let us not scatter our forces. We must put our trust in Divine Providence, not tempt it.*

*As to the idea of not accepting parishes, it may be all right in places where it can be carried out, but it is not possible in many places. Your proposal would not be feasible in Rio Grande do Sul: we only need men that can stand strong in their places without weakening in the spirit of the Congregation. I do not know who will be chosen to head our Congregation, but he will surely have to stick to the rule requiring (missionaries) to make a good novitiate, and to call on qualified personnel to form the spirit of the missionaries. How many times did I speak about it these months to our late Bishop. One cannot do it alone; there must be a Directional Body.*

*Let us pray to God that He may breathe a little of His Spirit on our poor Congregation and give it a new life. I am saying all this not to detract in the least from our venerated Founder! He was a man of great heart and vast ideals (few will be equal to him), but he was too optimistic in practice; he himself was saying so and lately was giving evidence of being aware of it. Certain failures of some missionaries in whom he had placed his trust grieved him, and one of his last recommendations, indeed his very last one, was that a good cleaning be done."<sup>22</sup>*

In the letter from the Pope, conveying the sympathy and the promise of protection, Mons. G. Bressan, the Pope's personal secretary, had recommended Father Vicentini to send immediately a memorandum on the state of the Congregation to the Holy See.<sup>23</sup> In the memorandum, after outlining the essential highlights of the brief history of the Congregation, Father Vicentini added:

*"The rule, though very good in itself, will be liable to modifications because of practical difficulties to observe it, and neither has it been always followed. But, it is not my intention to concern myself about this.*

*The Congregation of St. Charles depended exclusively on Bishop Scalabrini; with him gone there is no one that may officially represent it with the Holy See, or that is provisionally charged with authority over the entire Congregation. He was both Founder and Superior General; according to the Rules, there should have been a Vicar General of the Congregation (...), but there is no one.*

*(...) For this reason, I humbly turn to Your Holiness that you may deign to urgently proceed to the appointment of a Vicar General for the Congregation granting him all the needed faculties until the new Superior General will be elected."<sup>24</sup>*

By order of the Pope, Cardinal Girolamo Gotti, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, charged Father Vicentini with the government of the Scalabrinian Congregation under the title of Pro-

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<sup>22</sup> Vicentini to Consoni, Piacenza, June 7, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 357/4).

<sup>23</sup> Bressan to Vicentini, Rome, June 6, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 12/2).

<sup>24</sup> Vicentini to Pius X, Rome, June 16, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 12/2).

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Superior General until the election of the new Superior.<sup>25</sup>

The office of Superior General was offered at first to Mons. Mangot, as we gather from a telegram of his to Father Vicentini dated on June 21, 1905, saying that many reasons prevented him from accepting this "very high responsibility, absolutely above" his strength.<sup>26</sup>

Soon after Bishop Scalabrini's death, Bishop Bonomelli felt the need of proposing the union of his Institute with the Scalabrinian Congregation. In fact, on August 1, the Bishop of Cremona wrote to Mons. Mangot:

*"Sincere thanks for your letter of July 28. On my part, I would be happy if I could reach this ideal of a union. But, I see some serious difficulties. It is necessary that I speak about it to the Cardinal of Turin and with the Council members to find out on what terms the aim could be reached. Within ten days I will be at Cremona and I will seriously study the matter. This chairmanship is too much of a burden for me."*<sup>27</sup>

Already Mons. Attilio Bianchi, a nephew of Bishop Scalabrini, and a "secret chaplain of His Holiness" had sent this communication to Mons. Mangot on the same question:

*"As to the desire of the most Venerable Bishop Bonomelli, answer him that the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda has decided to keep the institution of the lamented Bishop, my uncle, without uniting it with any other; and this is so true that it is expecting the vote of all missionaries for the appointment of the Superior (General). If you had accepted the Direction of the Institute and its Missions immediately, as Cardinal Gotti would have liked, and the Holy Father as well, it could have been possible to continue doing something more appropriate; what has been done cannot be undone."*<sup>28</sup>

On June 30, Father Vicentini sent a circular letter to the Superior Provincials announcing the election of the Superior General by secret ballot. According to the rule of 1895, the superiors of all houses enjoyed the right to vote:

*"The constant practice of our brief existence was to always consider all those in charge of parishes as superiors, and as such we have to consider them at least for this first time."*<sup>29</sup>

The election took place on September 28, 1905, in the Church of St. Charles at the Mother House, not in a General Chapter, but simply by counting the votes. Besides Father Vicentini, the Pro-Superior General, Mons. G. B. Vinati, Vicar Capitular of Piacenza, and Mons. G. Dallepiane, Mons. G. Scrivani, Father Francesco Gregori, Father Paolo Poggi, members of the Board of Consultors of the Congregation, there were also present Mons. Mangot, Secretary of Bishop Scalabrini, Father Gaetano Masotti, Spiritual Director, and the professed clerics.

There were forty ballots, but three of them were declared void because of

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<sup>25</sup> Gotti to Vicentini, Rome, June 27, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 12/2).

<sup>26</sup> Telegram Mangot to Vicentini, June 21, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 12/3).

<sup>27</sup> Bonomelli to Mangot, Lorenzago, August 1, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 3021/1,v).

<sup>28</sup> Bianchi to Mangot, Rome, July 18, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 12/3).

<sup>29</sup> Vicentini, Circular Letter, June 30, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 12/2).

conditions (they seem to have been in favor of Father Novati on condition he would take the perpetual vows). The 37 valid votes were counted with the following results: Father Vicentini, 28; Father F. Consoni, 8; Father Novati, 8. Father Domenico Vicentini was therefore proclaimed Superior General.

In informing the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith about the election, Mons. G.B. Vinati, Vicar Capitular of Piacenza, added:

*"Since in the Constitutions of the Congregation in question there is some doubt about who has the right to vote, the above-mentioned Very Rev. Father Domenico Vicentini, for the sake of his conscience, humbly requests this Sacred Congregation to ratify his election, and to validate it in case any irregularity may have occurred."*<sup>30</sup>

The Cardinal answered:

*"Should there have been any irregularity in the said election (the less unlikely for the first time to happen) this Sacred Congregation intends hereby to correct it so that the election of the above-mentioned Reverend Vicentini may be absolutely valid and ratified."*<sup>31</sup>

On October 18, 1905, the new Superior General addressed a circular letter to all Scalabrinians. In it he pointed out the important points of the internal situation and of the operational options, indirectly indicating which ones were the most crucial problems of the moment and his government's program:

*"Let us move on united and in full accord; this is my first recommendation to you for the preservation and progress of our Institution. Unity is strength; it has always been so, and so it is today as seen in innumerable societies and corporations.*

*We have unity of scope, a sublime one, and unity of means, as well, in the rules to which we vowed ourselves; let us strive at all times to preserve unity of will and hearts.*

*To keep ourselves faithful to this scope and these means, there is need of love, conviction, and esteem for our vocation. "See your calling." (1 Cor 1, 26). The day these will fade out, apathy in the ministry, selfishness, greed, and worldliness will take their place; we will cease doing good and lose ourselves. Let us also be mindful that the life of a missionary must be essentially a life of a high degree of material and physical endurance in sustaining the labors of the ministry to the end, a shining example of which was our Founder, who died standing in the breach placing the good of souls before comfort, without caring much for himself whether in the cold regions of the North or in the tropical zones of the South; of moral sacrifice in denying our selfishness, and our sensitivities for the scope of the Congregation and for obedience. Let our lives be all in our work without paying any attention to the world around us. If it is not generally appropriate for a minister of God to get involved in politics, much less is it so for us missionaries; our party be at all times Jesus Christ and the good of souls: 'we preach Christ crucified' (1 Cor. 1, 23). Let all know that we have no other aim: 'Men should regard us as.... administrators of the mysteries of Christ.' Let the saying: 'Give me souls, and take everything else to Yourself', be applied to us.*

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<sup>30</sup> Vinati to Gotti, Piacenza, Sept. 30, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 12/3).

<sup>31</sup> Gotti to Vinati, Rome, October 11, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 12/3).

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*For this reason, let our lives be in accord with the preaching of the Word of God. In our missions, also, where we often live in the midst of people struggling in a material and debased way of life, let them perceive by both our word and behavior that there is a more noble life beyond this world deserving of all our aspirations and efforts: 'Let anyone who joins the priest be imbued with the taste of eternal life.'"<sup>32</sup>*

In the same circular letter he announced the appointment of Father Paolo Novati to the office of Vicar General of the Congregation. He reminded all of the exclusive right of the Superior General to authorize the opening of new houses, and recommended them to support the Mother House upon whose good functioning the life and expansion of the missions depended.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Vicentini, "Ai Dilettissimi Confratelli della Congregazione di San Carlo per gli Emigrati Italiani" ("To the Beloved Confreres of the Congregation of St. Charles for Italian Emigrants"), Piacenza, 1905, pp. 5-6 (Arch. G.S., 12/3).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 8



## **CHAPTER II**

### **CHANGE FROM THE JURIDICAL STATUS OF CONGREGATION TO PIOUS SOCIETY**

#### **1. The problem of equality**

Immediately following his election as Superior General, Fr. Vicentini decided to conduct the visitation of the missions. He could do so in the United States between January and June 1906. He had the intention to go also to Brazil, where his presence was equally needed; but had to postpone it until 1911.

The main reason for the delay was the preparation and long procedure underway with the Holy See for the substantial change of the juridical structures of the Institute that was transformed from the status of a Religious Congregation to that of a Pious Society without vows under a new rule in 1908.

In a circular letter to the Missionaries of September 24, 1906, Fr. Vicentini stated:

*"On my return from the visitation conducted this year through our Missions of the United States of North America, my first concern has been to make all efforts in establishing perfect equality amongst confreres with respect to their obligations towards the Congregation, as justly claimed by many and acknowledged rightful by all. Without wasting time, I had recourse to His Eminence the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda to hear his opinion on a matter of such importance."<sup>1</sup>*

The problem of equality was the most conspicuous, but not the only one. Already during his visitation in the United States, the Superior General had made out a list of all the reasons that induced him to propose a change in the juridical status of the Institute:

- "Considering the nature of our missions that do not ordinarily allow for community life in our houses, thus preventing the easy observance of our present rule, as has been the practice for quite a number of years;
- Considering that the observance of the vows of poverty and religious obedience did not stand too well the test in the past years, at least according to the common law concerning religious congregations;
- Considering that trustworthy and competent people suggest us not to take vows;
- Considering that when questioned by the Prefect of Propaganda Fide whether he wanted to have his rule approved, the Founder himself did not want it because he was very doubtful in regard to its observance;
- Considering the frequent troubles caused to the Congregation by the difference in obligations to its regard among the confreres;
- Considering that at times the discontent is caused by the fact that the

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<sup>1</sup> Vicentini, Circular letter of September 24, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 130/1).

so-called assistants cannot understand how the money earned through the work of their ministry is actually used and they think that the Congregation is not being helped at all, or as much as it should be;

- Considering that not a few priests, and good ones, would join perhaps the Congregation or Institute if they were allowed to dispose of some money (some amongst us have permission for a subsidy, while others, though having poorer relatives, do not);
- Considering that due to both the circumstances of our missions as well as a deeply rooted custom, it is not easy to lead the Congregation to the full observance of the rule adopted "*ad experimentum*";

I would propose that while holding fast on to the scope of our mission wanted by the Venerated Founder and approved by the Holy See the vows be discontinued and be replaced by an oath to serve the scope intended by our Congregation, which is the spiritual welfare especially of emigrants in America; an oath from which only by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda could dispense.

How would then the support of the Mother House be provided for? Each member should pledge to give a set amount to the Congregation every month or year.

Assistants shall receive a salary, if not quite the equivalent to the salary fixed by the different dioceses, at least an adequate one, and the free Mass intentions.

The missionaries sent by us shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the Bishops to whom they are sent in line with the rules of the diocese regarding priests from foreign lands (as for instance in the United States the Plenary Council of Baltimore prescribes).

This will result in greater stability, and there will be no trouble from the unstable ones who too lightly want to be transferred from one diocese to another causing great embarrassment to their Superiors. Each one shall be more prudent in his behavior not to give cause to be reproved by the local Bishop.

The priests of the Institute, however, must be acquainted with one another, and even help each other: a priest dissatisfied in one parish may turn to another confrere to help him if possible to find another one, and an assistant unhappy with his pastor may look for another one, preferably a member of the Congregation, to be helped by him.

This way, also the pastors themselves will take care that they should treat the assistant better for fear of remaining without one, and the assistant, in turn, shall be more diligent in his work for fear of being shown the door.

Thus the offices of the General and Provincial Superiors would cease to exist; there would remain only the Superior of the Mother House of the Institute, whose appointment would be provided by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, or by another opportune manner. The Superior of the Mother House should prepare a report of his administration and send a summary of it to all the Missionaries scattered all over to let them know how their contributions are being used.

Thus, the members of the Institute would have no longer reason to worry

much (as has often been brought up) about how we will provide for our old age, because they will be able to put aside something by economizing, and more so for the fact that, being incardinated into the diocese after a certain number of years (in North America, at least) they acquire the right to the subsidy for infirm priests.

However, the Institute could accept and take care of those old or sick priests who desire to retire at the Mother House, which, however, does not assume any burden for extraordinary expenses for trips, and for outside treatments."<sup>2</sup>

On July 6, 1906, Fr. Vicentini sent a report to the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, of which we have the rough draft:

"Just returning from the visitation conducted to our Missions in North America, I deem it my duty to expound briefly and in all sincerity the impressions I received.

In the United States of the North we have some twenty missions scattered over an immense territory in several cities of the great Republic. I can assure you that our missionaries did not fail the scope intended by the late Bishop Scalabrini because they worked and are working very zealously for the spiritual care of Italians, generally with excellent results, struggling in the midst of many difficulties such as are found amongst Italians in those states; difficulties certainly known to Your Eminence.

Besides this, however, in all truth I have to say that as a Congregation our Missionaries leave much to be desired in regard to the rules, and in my opinion, I believe it to be deriving from both the imperfections of the institution and the nature and circumstances of the Mission itself.

When planning his Institute in 1887, in order to give it greater stability, Bishop Scalabrini thought it better to bind his missionaries with the religious vows for five years, first, and then, in 1895, with the perpetual ones. For eleven years now, attempts have been made in this respect, but one has to admit that the experience has brought forth negative results. The Rule speaks of religious houses or communities, but we do not have communities in our houses. In North America, out of twenty missions, we have one with four priests, three with two, the rest have only with one, very distant from one another with a little more than nominal dependence on the Superiors of the Congregation. The same is true also for South America where we have some fifteen missions. There is no need to point out how hard it is to maintain and preserve religious discipline when living so isolated. As to the vows, Bishop Scalabrini, who wrote the rule requiring perpetual vows, was making so many exceptions to it that it could be truly said he did not give them too much importance.

Concerning the missionaries who had entered before 1895, he assured them he had obtained permission from the Holy See to continue renewing their vows "for a time", if they ever did so. He did the same with those who joined as priests.

As to the Novitiate, it was not a regular one, but a very short period of preparation, and then off for the missions. In regard to the vow of poverty, its

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<sup>2</sup> D. Vicentini, A rough draft written at the time of a visit to Chicago in the first months of 1906 (Arch. G.S., 130/1).

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practice is generally unknown. Surely many are making use of the proceeds from the sacred ministry in a manner not responding to the vow of poverty.

Besides, the diversity of vows and obligations on the part of the members of the Congregation is causing too much antagonism among them: those with perpetual vows (ordinarily young priests trained in the Institute) can hardly be induced to depend on those with temporal vows, and find in this a pretext for getting away as much as possible from dependence on them, and for living by themselves. Being in a position to know the state of things (as a senior member of the Institute, and as a local and Provincial Superior for several years), I spoke about this to Bishop Scalabrini on several occasions, and on one especially, a few months before his death, I asked him how the obligations of the vows should be understood. He answered he did not intend to bind consciences too strictly, since even in Rome he had met with divergent opinions.

Still before embarking on my last trip to America, I consulted several prudent and competent people to hear their opinion concerning the vows in our Congregation, and their answer was that it would be better not to take vows and adopt, rather, another type of bond, such as other Institutes or similar Congregations have already.

On my return to Piacenza, among the papers of the late Bishop Scalabrini in our Archives I found the "*desideratum*" issued on the matter by the commission of examiners of the Rules and Constitutions of new Institutes, and made known to Bishop Scalabrini on December 15, 1900, protocol No. 41895 of Propaganda, which the Commission in the interest of the Pious Institution (I am copying the text)....

The "*desideratum*" is signed by the Most Eminent Cardinal Satolli who well knows the conditions of the missionaries in America. After receiving this response, Bishop Scalabrini did not take any steps, and he let the rules requiring perpetual vows, already printed in 1895, stand, allowing his missionaries to believe they had been approved "*ad experimentum*".

It is necessary, therefore, to decide something so as to have a rule that is practical, respondent to the circumstances of our missions, and equal for all, as generally expected by our Missionaries. I see an absolute necessity of it because things cannot be allowed to go on like this and continue as they did until now; but I would not wish to be mistaken on a matter so delicate, and it is for this reason that I turn to Your Eminence to hear your opinion and wish. If it need be, I could come to Rome to explain things in greater detail and find out from Your Eminence or other person charged with it what can best be done."<sup>3</sup>

We have already proven<sup>4</sup> how we cannot have any more doubts on the oral approval obtained from the Holy See by Bishop Scalabrini for the rule of 1895, and about his will to retain the perpetual vows. We do not know whether Fr. Vicentini was in the dark about these facts, or intentionally disregarded them. The fact is that Rome could not neglect taking into account a report based on written documents of the Holy See itself, at a time when Cardinal Ledochowski,

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<sup>3</sup> Vicentini to Card. Gotti, Piacenza, July 6, 1906 - a rough draft (Arch. G.S., 130/1).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Francesconi, "History of the Scalabrinian Congregation" Vol II (Rome, 1973)

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with whom the "oral understanding" with Bishop Scalabrini had taken place, was already dead. Cardinal G. Gotti, who had succeeded Card. Ledochowski as Prefect of Propaganda in July 1902, answered to Fr. Vicentini on July 19, 1906:

*"As to the question of your Constitutions and vows, it is the intention of the Sacred Congregation that a new draft of Rules and Constitutions be presented. They will have to be as far as possible in conformity with the first ones approved "for five years" in September, 1888, with the modifications proposed by the Most Eminent Card. Mazzella. You will be allowed to introduce other new modifications as experience may suggest. Concerning the question of the vows, in case the proposal of the Most Rev. Commission be accepted that they be replaced by a simple promise or oath of perseverance in the Institute such as found in the Mission Society, the new rules must be adapted accordingly. You shall take care, however, that this draft be sent to me as soon as possible to be submitted to the judgement of the Most Rev. Commission for examining the Rules and Constitutions of New Religious Institutes..."<sup>5</sup>*

In the above quoted circular letter of September 24, 1905, after reporting this response, Fr. Vicentini continued:

"After this, there was nothing else for me to do but to prepare and present a new draft based on the first Rules which I was able to find among our Founder's papers; unable to discover the observations of Card. Mazzella, I had them sent to me from the Archives of Propaganda. For assistance in my work I was directed by the Cardinal of Propaganda himself to Mons. Melata, a pious man well versed in the matter. I found him extremely affable and willing to help. I also had consultations with several Superiors of Missionary Institutes similar to ours that have no vows, though bound by a perpetual Promise or Oath.

I secured a copy of the book published by the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Religious titled "*Normae*" containing the norms to be followed in approving new Institutes and in presenting the Rules, with instructions as to division into sections and chapters, and to what has to be avoided for charity and brevity.

In preparing the new draft I took Cardinal Mazzella's observations, which are quite a few, of into account. I modified some things, and I added others as suggested by the experience of the different missions and by the provisions subsequently taken by our late Founder himself. For a clearer understanding of the new draft I had the modifications either printed in Italics or underlined. Many of the underlined ones are found in the first Rule, but they have been restricted or clarified. As to the "Promises", I defined them "perpetual" as required by like Institutes. However, I believe they could be for ten years and then renewed.

Before presenting the new draft to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, I consider it my duty to present it to the scrutiny of my confreres inviting them to freely express their opinion and those observations they deem most appropriate. For this reason, I am sending two copies each, one to keep, and the other to be sent back to the Mother House with or without their

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<sup>5</sup> Card. G. Gotti to Vicentini, Rome, July 19, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 130/1).

observations briefly stated on the margin, but not without making their opinion known. Should one wish to express opinions of a general nature, let him present them in a separate letter.

In regard to the vows already taken by members of the Congregation, by its own full authority the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda will replace them with the obligations of the new Rules.

I entreat all confreres for a quick answer, as both the Cardinal Prefect and the Cardinal Protector wish that the matter be soon settled for the greater good of our Institute."<sup>6</sup>

In the new draft of Rules sent to the Missionaries for examination the essential point is formulated as follows:

"In our Congregation there are no religious vows in the strict sense, though some bond is necessary if there is to be a Congregation at all and a unity that may secure solidity and strength for the Institute in the achievement of its scope.

Therefore, the Missionaries, both Priests and Lay Brothers, upon completion of their 'probation' year, before leaving for the missions, shall make the following promises:

- a) to remain in the Congregation and devote themselves to its scope no matter what their destination or work;
- b) to obey their respective Superiors and the Superiors of the Congregation;
- c) to freely exercise their ministry without appropriating any proceeds deriving from it or on occasion of it, pledging themselves to use of them within bounds of Christian moderation and frugality, while cooperating in economizing with the good of the Congregation in mind.

Understandably, these promises are meant to bind '*sub gravi in genere suo*' ('under pain of serious sin')."<sup>7</sup>

Chapter XIII, "Concerning those who cease being members of the Congregation" gives the Superior General and his Council power to dispense from the promises, adding a norm totally in contradiction with one of the points on which Bishop Scalabrini had stood pat at the cost of great sacrifices:

"Should he intend to remain in America and find a Bishop to accept him into the diocese, a missionary is bound to relinquish the mission in his charge as a member of the Congregation into the hands of the Regional Superior."<sup>8</sup>

The discarding of the perpetual bond, the setting aside of the vow of poverty, especially, and the permission to remain in America when leaving the Congregation must all be regarded as contrary to the spirit and intentions of the Founder, and to the program many a time advocated by Fr. Vicentini himself: "*Few, but good ones.*" In fact they were the cause of the decline of the Institute, even though one must give credit to Fr. Vicentini for having actually insured its existence and scope when he

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<sup>6</sup> Vicentini, Circular letter of September 24, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 130/1).

<sup>7</sup> "Regola della Congregazione dei Missionari di San Carlo per gli Italiani Emigrati" ("Rule, etc.) San Vito al Tagliamento, 1906), Chapter V. nn. 2-3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter XIII, n. 4.

decided to abandon an earlier project of reform drafted with Fr. Chenuil in Chicago, thus making it possible to revert later on in 1934 back to the form wanted by Bishop Scalabrini.<sup>9</sup>

## **2. Consulting the Missionaries**

The results of the inquiry amongst the sixty missionaries at that time are summarized this way by Fr. Vicentini.

*"Many did not answer; some acknowledged receiving it, but did not express any opinion either in favor or against. Others answered that the late Bishop Scalabrini both in words and deed had made it clear that he did not intend to found a Congregation in the strict sense, nor to impose bonds of any sort on his missionaries, that he was not much concerned with the rule, and finally, that all he wanted was just to send good priests to the assistance of Italians. Still others object that the Institute does not offer any security for old and sick Missionaries.*

*Lastly, some fifteen of them would accept the new rules on condition that certain minor changes be made."<sup>10</sup>*

From the answers kept in our Archives we learn that Fathers Demo, Brescianini, Mainardi, Marenchino, Martini, C. Morelli, Franch, Pandolfi, Maschi, Buonaiuti, accepted the replacing of the vows with the promises, perpetual or otherwise, without suggesting substantial changes to the new draft of rules; we know, however, that some of them, such as Fathers Demo and Franch, had strong reservations.

The latter wrote: *"If such is the will of Rome, so be it!"* Fathers Cansoni, Dolci, Dotto, C. Pedrazzani, Capra, Capello, Rabaioli, Carusone, and Brother Celoria placed their trust in the experience and wisdom of Fr. Vicentini though not without asking for a clearer explanation of the duration and nature of the obligations deriving from the promises. Fathers Rinaldi, Porrini, G. Morelli, and Preti asked that promises or oath be perpetual. In the words of Fr. Preti, temporary promises could not warrant the continuity of the Congregation, because the Congregation could not in turn guarantee the continuity of its institutions without a large reserve of men willing and qualified to replace those that would retire in a few years. Worse yet, no new initiatives requiring serious financial commitments and a long time to carry to completion would ever be started by missionaries who should depart for the missions with the anticipation of leaving the Congregation in a few years without a well-founded hope for successors. Besides, it would not even be that easy for certain individuals to relinquish the parish or mission in the hands of the Congregation when they leave on account of difficulties brought up by the missionaries themselves, the Bishops, and parishioners.<sup>11</sup>

Fr. G. Costanzo pointed out the disadvantage of a temporary oath by referring

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. M. Caliaro, "La Pia Società dei Missionari di San Carlo (Rome, 1956), pp. 107-108; 151-153.

<sup>10</sup> Vicentini to Card. G. Gotti, Piacenza, March 6, 1907, a rough draft (Arch. G.S., 130/1).

<sup>11</sup> E. Preti to Vicentini, s.d. (Arch. G.S., 130/1).

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to a statement written him by Fr. Vicentini himself:

*"Many are the requests of priests who wish to join our Congregation, but when they sense the obligation of the vow of poverty they fade away like fog in the sun."*

Fr. Costanzo observed that the replacement of the vows with the promises would only more easily allure those that intended to take advantage of their temporary membership in the Congregation for securing a position in America, and then leave it in the lurch. In his letter one can sense also the psychological effects resulting from the presentation of the draft of Rules prepared by Fr. Vicentini, who had the Fathers believe that the change was the will of the Holy See.<sup>12</sup>

There were not a few – even among those with perpetual vows - who expressed themselves exactly in this sense: *"Whatever our Superiors decide it is all right by me."* Fr. Alussi, who had temporary vows, wrote instead: *"In my humble opinion I say that to introduce promises for five or ten years would be the same as striking our poor Congregation at the root. The vows already are so little observed, imagine what would become of simple promises!"*<sup>13</sup>

Fathers Gembrini, Fontana, Bonomi, Barbato asked that the obligation of the promises be reduced to five years. Fr. Balangero found the rules too strict, especially in regard to the promise requiring a gratuitous ministry. Lastly, we consider of special interest the opinion of Fr. Chenuil, who was to be the third Superior General: it offers a glimpse into what will be the policy he will follow in his tenure. Reporting the ideas of Fathers Gambera and Lorenzoni as well, he refers to the draft prepared by Fr. Vicentini during his stay in America the previous year, and says:

*"The observations of Card. Satolli (who had the opportunity to witness conditions in many of our missions) are filled with deep wisdom and should serve as the basis for all our rules, especially those concerning their practical aspects.*

*While in Chicago you had prepared a draft that with a few changes would have given the best results.*

*Unfortunately, this draft fell through because of the hypocritical suggestions of certain of our colleagues, who, lax with themselves but most strict with others, pretend to be the only true members of the Congregation to which they owe everything and for which they have done very little."*

Then he goes on saying that there remained two possible solutions:

*"Either subjecting the Society to a radical reform that would give it the status of a true religious Congregation, - something I deem very hard to accomplish, - or adopting a very mild and broad rule, whose exact observance would be easy to impose and require. The proposed draft is an agglomerate of heterogeneous rules, many of which are proper of religious orders strictly so, and therefore, inadequate for the nature of our Institution."*<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> G. Costanzo to Vicentini, Nova Bassano, December 28, 1906, (Arch. G.S., 130/1).

<sup>13</sup> Alussi to Vicentini, New Haven, November 19, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 130/1).

<sup>14</sup> Chenuil to Vicentini, Chicago, January 14, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 130/1).



Fr. Vicentini's answer betrays all the uncertainty and bewilderment of a Superior who certainly could not say he was enjoying the support of the Congregation:

*"Card. Satolli, to whom I spoke also in Rome, would be exactly of the idea by me expressed to them in Chicago; but he is one of the twelve consultors, and, though president of the commission, he subscribed to the petition I had printed in the introduction to the Rules. Other consultors say that the idea of Card. Satolli is to be discarded as outright destructive and to be discarded.*

*Card. Satolli's idea would be that the Institute of Piacenza should have no responsibility other than preparing good missionaries to be sent to America leaving them in the hands of the respective Bishops. The missionaries should take an oath to devote themselves to the care of Italian immigrants, and that would be all. An easier solution could hardly be imagined! Superiors would thereby be spared an infinity of troubles. There would not be any further need of Superiors, General and Regional, and I would sing the 'Te Deum' right tonight.*

*Should this be the solution, then I would like to have the difficulties resulting from it resolved.*

1. *On this basis, not only there would not be a Congregation anymore, but not even a Society because also a Society presupposes rights and duties. What kind of rights and duties would there remain for the missionaries in regard to the Institute itself once they depart from it? (...) Who would recommend the new Missionaries to the American Bishops? (...) As you very well know, as a rule, Bishops do not accept unattached priests; they prefer those that, as members of a community, are subject to their superiors especially for the all-important reason to be free to get rid of them when dissatisfied with them. (...)*
2. *(...) How will the Mother House support itself and continue to provide Missionaries for the help of the old ones and for the new needs demanded by the scope of the Institute? This does not have funds. If with vows many now either give nothing or the least they possibly can, and even then only as a donation, how much will they give when not bound by this obligation and with no prospect of being cared for at the Mother House when old or sick.*

*The rules I proposed for observance are those first written by Bishop Scalabrini, and the Commission of Propaganda wants the new draft to be based on them. The addition was borrowed from Institutes without vows, such as Saint Calogero's of Milan, and the Mission Society of Lyons."<sup>15</sup>*

As evidence of our impression of Fr. Vicentini's Hamlet-like behavior be it enough to quote the answer of Fr. Balangero asking for "*few rules, easy to keep by good priests*" and that Superiors make their authority felt by the missionaries "*as little as possible*", while mindful instead "*of this most wise recommendation*", that is, "*the missionaries be subject to the Bishops as much as possible*". In his diary Vicentini summarized his answer this way: "*After all, this would be my idea also, but a stricter one prevails at Propaganda.*"<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, after saying he had perpetual vows and intended to stick by them,

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<sup>15</sup> Vicentini to Chenuil, Piacenza, s.d., a rough draft (Arch. G.S., 130/1).

<sup>16</sup> Vicentini, "Diario" ("Diary"), Vol. IV, December 25, 1906, p. 172 (Arch. G.S., 1642).

Fr. Faustino Consoni responded: "*As though they had never read the documents of Propaganda, some think this to be a matter for each one's whim.*"<sup>17</sup>

On March 1, 1907, he had a more lengthy reply for the same Father:

*"You wrote: 'What has been mostly noticed by all is that they (the new Rules) were somewhat premature, since they came so soon after the passing of the Founder, as though he had not been inspired by the right spirit; in other words, one should have waited a little longer before trimming the tree'. And a little further down you say the following: 'I took perpetual vows and I hope to die bound with them.'*

*No one ever said, and certainly I never did say that Bishop Scalabrini was not guided by the right spirit; neither do I think one could infer so from the revision of his rule, because it does not come from me, but from a higher authority to which Bishop Scalabrini himself had recourse.*

*Unfortunately, the good spirit is lacking in many of us (...) In any case, the Sacred Congregation did not and does not pass judgement on the nature and circumstances of the Institute itself; the same Sacred Congregation orders me to present the new draft as soon as possible, but based on the first rules, and the missionaries tell me I am rushing things, that I should wait; in a word, that I should disregard the Supreme Authority!(...)*

*Out of his good heart our beloved late Founder put up with many things, but more than once he told me he intended to change the system, and I can swear to the truth that his last words to me three days before getting sick were the following: "I exhort you, do house cleaning." They are still constantly ringing in my ears! I was no longer granted the blessing of his words afterwards! The day before he died he asked for me; they sent for me, but he was unconscious already.*

*Fr. Marco also is displeased with the doing away of the vows, and some others besides, but they are few, extremely few. Let us pray to God that He may lend us His Hand!"<sup>18</sup>*

Actually, the haste of the Holy See had been solicited by Fr. Vicentini himself to remedy abuses he looked upon with excessive pessimism, perhaps as Bishop Scalabrini did with too much optimism. Besides, he felt he did not possess either the strength and the personality the Founder enjoyed with the missionaries or the equilibrium between pastoral and institutional demands that had Bishop Scalabrini state: "*We do not want to make monks out of them*"<sup>19</sup>, though insisting, at the same time, that the essentials of the religious life be safeguarded. Indeed, the Founder had intention "*to clean house*" but not in the sense intended by Fr. Vicentini. With the right intent to reestablish any kind of order needed to save the Institute, the latter chose the easiest way out while trying to satisfy the larger number of missionaries possible; however, it seems to us as though he were somewhat forcing his interpretation of Bishop Scalabrini's intentions and manner of action, and of the will of those missionaries, whom he placed in a position that made them appear disobedient

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, January 8, 1907, p. 176.

<sup>18</sup> Vicentini to Consoni, Piacenza, March 1, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 357/6).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

to the Holy See.

### **3. The Rules of 1908**

On March 6, 1907, the Superior General sent the draft of the Rules to Card. Gotti, along with a letter disclosing the motivations for the change, the difficulties, and the uncertainties we already know.

At the same time, referring to the approval accorded by the Holy See to the Mons. Coccolo's Institute for the help of emigrants during their trips overseas, he insisted on the "*need to provide an ever better assistance for emigrants who keep enormously increasing in number*":

*"What more could be done for Emigrants departing for countries where priests are lacking or far away, whose language they ignore, and where unfortunately they live and die without religious assistance?"*

*In North America, English-speaking priests are not lacking: as far as the children of immigrants are concerned, they can be sufficiently provided for through Catholic and Sunday Schools, because they are quick in learning the language; for adults, however, it is not so! Priests care little for them either because they do not know the language or dialect, or because of other reasons which there is no need for me to tell.*

*In South America (I am referring to Brazil with which I am quite well acquainted) the need is even greater perhaps, because the colonists venture on populating those immense forests where priests are fewer yet. Archbishop Tonti, when still an Internuncio in Brazil, had prepared a project for a 25 year contract between the Bishops and the Religious Superiors. The Bishops would have committed themselves to granting parochial jurisdiction over a large territory, while the Religious Superiors would pledge themselves to providing some religious priests, two in the residence, and the others going two by two visiting the faithful scattered all around it. Though not without difficulties, the idea was good, but to my knowledge, nothing came of it. So also several years ago, at a Bishops' meeting in Brazil the establishing of a society of native clergy had been discussed; but where to find them? Who would afterwards devote himself to the care of emigrants?*

*Bishop Scalabrini founded his Institute for Emigrants, and with all his defects in organizing it, he has certainly given life to an extremely beneficial initiative as the missionaries, who ordinarily care for 250,000 (I repeat: 250 thousand!) Italians in various dioceses of North and South America can in all truth testify. I believe it to be, therefore, an institution worthy of much consideration.*

*One thing is now lacking: there is need of a man with broad views, energetic, and commanding respect, at the helm of the Institution. And the undersigned, even without humility on his part, is deeply convinced he is not such a man, and would willingly pass on to others the difficult task."<sup>20</sup>*

Together with the letter Fr. Vicentini enclosed some "*Observation, or Notes, to the Rules*" of which the second one said:

*"The Most Reverend Commission would prefer a promise or an oath instead of*

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<sup>20</sup> Vicentini to Card. G. Gotti, Piacenza, March 6, 1907, is rough draft (Arch. G.S., 130/1).

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*perpetual or temporary vows. This present draft requires a promise of perpetual membership, but it is too much, perhaps, for the same reasons the vows are being discarded: could not the promise be made to bind for ten years, and then be renewed? Five years as required by the first rules, would be few especially for the young missionaries trained at the Institute."*<sup>21</sup>

Actually, while the draft sent to the Missionaries was speaking only of a promise to remain in the Congregation, the one presented to the Holy See anticipated a promise of perpetual membership in the Society.<sup>22</sup> This change, a very important one and contrary to Fr. Vicentini's convictions, shows how well he had understood that the Holy See would find difficulty with approving a Rule which implied only a temporary commitment. On March 4, the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda Fide handed the draft on to Card. Satolli, Chairman of the Commission for examining the Rules and the Constitutions of New Religious Institutes.<sup>23</sup>

The procedures for approval were long and difficult. As Procurator General of the Scalabrinian Congregation, from 1905 to 1910, Mons. Attilio Bianchi kept steadily in contact with Mons. Melata, Secretary of the Commission, and with Fr. Oietti, S.J., who were the two main examiners of the draft. On November 14, 1904, he wrote to Fr. Vicentini as follows:

*"At last I could talk to Fr. Oietti, and the news given me concerning the approval of the rules are not good. He hopes to present them in December, but has much difficulty with the uncertainty of what we want for the good functioning of the Congregation, and with other points."*<sup>24</sup>

Two months later he tried to reassure Fr. Vicentini:

*"The Rules are in good hands; the excellent Mons. Melata (...) and Fr. Oietti will do their best to expedite matters, and well, at that."*<sup>25</sup>

Fr. Oietti must have considerably modified the draft presented by Fr. Vicentini in line with the norms enacted by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars on June 28, 1901, concerning the approval of new Institutes, and with some suggestions of Fr. Vicentini. In fact, the draft examined by the Commission for examining of the Rules of new Institutes, expressed the main point on March 11, 1908 the following way:

"This Institute is not a religious congregation in the strict sense, still, since a bond of some kind is necessary, its members shall commit themselves to it by an oath approved by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide as follows:

- a) Priests, clerics near to being ordained sub-deacons, and lay-brothers, shall take an oath to devote themselves to the scope of the Institute according to its Constitutions."<sup>26</sup>

The Commission expressed a vote favoring approval of this draft "*ad experimentum*" for an indefinite time, suggesting at the same time, that

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>22</sup> See "Regolamento, etc. (Piacenza, 1907) Chapter IV, 43, p. 5 (Arch. G.S., 130/1).

<sup>23</sup> Card. Gotti to Card. Satolli, Rome, March 14, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 13/3).

<sup>24</sup> A. Bianchi to Vicentini, Rome, November 14, 1907 Arch. G.S., 13/4).

<sup>25</sup> A. Bianchi to Vicentini, Rome, January 30, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 14/2).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Caliaro, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-96.

candidates be ordained "*titulo missionis*". But this title implied a perpetual commitment and presupposed a "*mission*" defined by territorial boundaries.<sup>27</sup> Hence, new difficulties ensued. On March 25, 1908, Fr. Vicentini noted in his diary:

*"I received a letter from Mons. Bianchi: it says that the approval of the rules has been reached; there were great difficulties, but Mons. Melata had them solved: it seems as though the solution of the difficulty concerning the "title" for Ordination was left up to Propaganda.*<sup>28</sup>

Actually, Card. Gotti invited Fr. Vicentini to modify the Rules so as to remedy the inconvenience deriving from the "*mission title*", that is, to a situation by which the missionaries leaving the Institute would remain without a title of ordination and without a diocese at the end of their ten years.<sup>29</sup>

Fr. Vicentini had the following reply for Mons. Bianchi who had asked him whether it were not more appropriate to adopt the title "*mensae communis*":

*"The title "Mensae Communis" presupposes an indefinite obligation of the Congregation towards members who on their part commit themselves to it only for ten years. In any case, I willingly and entirely abide by the decision of the Sacred Congregation."*<sup>30</sup>

On May 3, 1908, he answered to Card. Gotti saying that in replacing the vows with a promise or an oath he always had trouble with the problem of a title of ordination which could not be in accord either with a ten year oath or with the oath of Propaganda. Then he added he had no difficulty in adopting a perpetual oath in case the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda should so agree.<sup>31</sup>

Based on this answer the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith granted the title "*Mensae Communis*" in the manner of a privilege. And so in this way the remaining serious obstacle was surmounted. However, one must conclude that this, and no convinced acceptance on the part of Fr. Vicentini, was the only reason for enacting the adoption of a perpetual oath in a formulation afterwards approved:

"Members shall bind themselves to the Institute by an oath to persevere in it for their whole life. Dispensation from this oath is reserved to the Holy See."<sup>32</sup>

The "*Decree of Approval ad experimentum*" with no time limits was issued on October 5, 1908, by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith consequent to the Audience granted by Pius X to the Secretary of Propaganda on October 3, 1908.<sup>33</sup>

Still, the Rules were not immediately published because another difficulty had in the meantime arisen. By the Apostolic Constitution "*Sapienti Consilio*" of June 18, 1908, decreeing the reform of the Roman Curia, the United States

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 98/99.

<sup>28</sup> Vicentini, "Diario", Vol. V, March 25, 1908, p. 67 (Arch. G.S., 1642).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Caliaro, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>30</sup> Vicentini, "Diario", Vol. V, April 25, 1908, p. 78 (Arch. G.S., 1642).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Caliaro, *op. cit.*, p. 99-100.

<sup>32</sup> Regolamento (Rule) dell'Istituto dei Missionari di San Carlo per gli Italiani Emigrati" (Piacenza, 1909, Chapter VII, n. 3, p. 9).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4

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were subtracted from the jurisdiction of Propaganda, and the Institute's dependence on it passed to the new Sacred Congregation for Religious in matters concerning their religious discipline and life. And so, as also with all other business procedures underway, the approval of the Scalabrinians' Rule was transmitted to Card. Vives y Tuto, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Protector of the Missionaries of St. Charles.<sup>34</sup>

At the Sacred Congregation for Religious the question of the title for ordination came up again, but Mons. Melata succeeded in obtaining the approval "*ad experimentum*", "*leaving it up to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda to solve the problem concerning the title for Sacred Ordination*".<sup>35</sup> At long last the privilege for the title "*mensae communis*" was confirmed, which Bishop Scalabrini had obtained in 1893 and Fr. Vicentini had again secured in 1906. In January 1909, the Sacred Congregation for Religious decided that the Rule be published, but by the Decree already enacted by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith on October 5, 1908, due to the fact that the Constitution "*Sapienti Consilio*" was not to be in force until the November 3.<sup>36</sup> However, Fr. Vicentini did not feel as though he could immediately publish a Rule that had several references to the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, and more so when its first Article was stating that the Institute was "*dependent on the high authority of Propaganda Fide and under the immediate direction of a Superior General appointed by the same S.C. of Propaganda*." It is interesting to know that in raising this objection, Fr. Vicentini meaningfully said he did not like the Decree of approval to say the missionaries themselves had asked for the change of the Rule of 1895, while he would have preferred a statement declaring that it was all the will of the Holy See.<sup>37</sup>

Mons. Bianchi immediately answered that the Rule could be printed just the way it was<sup>38</sup>; still not satisfied, Fr. Vicentini petitioned Card. Gatti "*to have two points clarified for him: 1) how to proceed in dealings with Propaganda; 2) how the vows are replaced by the oath, etc.*"<sup>39</sup>

The Cardinal answered that nothing had to be changed in the Rule; as to the vows, recourse had to be made to the Sacred Congregation for Religious.<sup>40</sup>

Mons. Bianchi corroborated:

*"In regard to the wording, other newly approved Institutes now dependent on the Sacred Congregation for Religious were also served the instruction 'nihil innovetur' ('no change be made'); furthermore, this is also an act of benevolence on the part of Propaganda that considers it a privilege having approved an Institute devoted to Italian emigrants.*

*Concerning the vows taken, a general dispensation is to be solicited from*

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<sup>34</sup> Bianchi to Vicentini, Rome, November 9, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 14/2).

<sup>35</sup> Bianchi to Vicentini, Rome, November 24, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 14/2).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Caliaro, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-111.

<sup>37</sup> Vicentini, "Diario", Vol. V, January 17, 1909, p. 149 (Arch. G.S., 1642).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, January 20, 1909, p. 149.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, January 21, 1909, pp. 151-152.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, February 6, 1909, p. 156.

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*Propaganda.*"<sup>41</sup>

On February 27, 1909, Fr. Vicentini had recourse to the Sacred Congregation for Religious asking that "*rather than dispense the members of the Institute from the vows taken, these be commuted into the oath required by the new rules, thus providing for a uniformity without which there would be a great confusion.*"<sup>42</sup>

On March 12 the commutation so requested was granted. Finally, Fr. Vicentini decided to publish the Rule which he presented to the missionaries by means of a circular letter dated on June 1, 1909, in which he would have liked to write the whole story with the evident intention to justify himself:

*"I have decided to publish the Rule - it is not I, it is the Sacred Congregation. I wanted to give you a little history and an explanation of the procedures followed in preparing it; however, since it is not of my doing, I thought better writing only a few remarks.*"<sup>43</sup>

His circular letter went as follows:

*"After a long wait and much red tape, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith approved our Rule in line with the draft wanted by the same Sacred Congregation with letter of the Most Eminent Card. Gotti on July 19, 1906. The most important change is represented by the replacement of the religious vows with an oath of perseverance, as requested by the Most Rev. Commission of Examiners of Rules and Constitutions of the new Institutes (November 17, 1900). For the rest, the Rule, reduced to a more simple and short form, leaves the Institute of our Venerated Founder unchanged as to its substance of scope and means, all in accord with the rules approved by him "ad experimentum" for five years in 1888, and required by the same Congregation, as the basis for the new draft.*

*The delay in publishing the Rule is due to two reasons. First, before granting us the Decree of approval the Sacred Congregation wanted to settle the important article of the title for ordination of our candidates for several years accorded by a Rescript 'ad libitum' of the Bishop of Piacenza. Now this is granted by ordinary procedure and in force of the rule.*

*Second, since the Rule is not retroactive, in order to insure the desired uniformity for all members of the Institute, it became necessary to replace the bond of the vows taken in the past with the obligation of an oath of perseverance; this was accomplished by the Commutation Decree of April 26, 1909.*

*And now all I need do is to present the Rule to all confreres of the Institute just as I received it from the Sacred Congregation, and to have it observed.*

*I am not authorized to accept and admit new members to the Institute except in conformity with this Rule, which, as said expressly in the Decree itself, is liable, however, to new modifications in case they should be needed. These could be adopted, if needed, on the not-far-off occasion when the General Chapter will assemble for the election of the new Superior General.*

*In the meantime, I am confident that wholly inspired by the same spirit of unity*

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<sup>41</sup> Bianchi to Vicentini, Rome, February 2, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 14/3).

<sup>42</sup> Vicentini to Card. Vives y Tuto, Piacenza, February 27, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 130/2).

<sup>43</sup> Vicentini, "Diario", Vol. V. A summary of a letter to Fr. P. Novati of June 6, 1909, p. 179 (Arch. G.S., 1642).

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*and love for the Institute in making it stronger, better respected, and more honored, all will readily accept and observe it; and more so because it has been relaxed in several points without restricting one's conscience in the least.*

*Should one under any pretext be unwilling to conform to it, he should know that he is still bound to the vows taken, from which he can only be dispensed by the Holy See."<sup>44</sup>*

In concluding this story, while we insist that the method adopted by Fr. Vicentini in saving the Institute seems questionable to us, still we must give him credit for actually doing so.

*"Should the Commission of Examiners of Rules and Constitutions of new Institutes accede to the idea of its President (Card. Satolli) the Scalabrini Institute as such would have ceased to exist, and a most needed religious assistance would have been lacking for many Italian emigrants. By preserving its identity as a society approved by the Church, it will become possible for the Institute not only to survive and extend its activities, but also to revert at a later time to the form wanted by the Founder, as we shall see."<sup>45</sup>*

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<sup>44</sup> Vicentini, Circular letter of June 1, 1909, a rough draft (Arch. G.S., 130/2).

<sup>45</sup> M. Caliaro, op. cit., pp. 107-108.



**CHAPTER III**  
**FROM THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1910**  
**TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1919**

**1. The General Chapter of 1910**

The juridical status of the Institute had been settled by the official publication of the new Rule, but there remained still other problems for whose solution Fr. Vicentini deemed it necessary to convoke the General Chapter, and took the occasion for requesting permission from the Holy See to anticipate the election of the Superior General that would have to occur in 1911:

*"It would be most fitting, indeed necessary, for the welfare of the Institute to now hold the General Chapter in order to set up the offices required by the Rule that should form the Council of the Superior General, and come to an understanding on many things, such as on how to implement the new Rule, so that it may not remain a dead letter, and to provide for the administration of temporal goods, whichever they may be, of the Institute, etc., etc.*

*It is urgent, therefore, that the Chapter be called together: I do not feel I can assume the whole responsibility of the present state of things all alone.*

*I point out that the Chapter for the election of the Superior General should be held in the coming year 1911, when the current term is to end in force of the Rule, and while it does not make much difference to anticipate the election by one year (a right I willingly surrender), it matters much that we reach agreement about many things.*

*We should be mindful that the Capitular Fathers must come from America; and it would mean a serious inconvenience and trouble to hold a business Chapter this year, and then another one for the election of the Superior General, next year."<sup>1</sup>*

The petition was presented to the Sacred Congregation for Religious on February 7, 1910. The Congregation showed itself well-disposed to accede to it, and a Rescript was granted on February 22, but the Pope suspended it, for reasons we do not know<sup>2</sup>; then he had it forwarded on May 24.<sup>3</sup>

On May 26, Fr. Vicentini sent out the Convocation's letter listing all the reasons for anticipating the General Chapter:

- to elect the General Council;
- to provide a direction for the Mother House;
- to draw up a set of norms for the destination of missionaries and for appointing local superiors;
- to arrange for the continuation of sacred studies following priestly ordination;

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<sup>1</sup> Vicentini to Card. Vives y Tuto, Piacenza, February 7, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 14/5).

<sup>2</sup> Vicentini, Diario, May 19, 1910, Vol. V, pp. 254 (Arch. G.S., 1642).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, June 3, 1910, pg. 258.

- to rule on the Superior's visitation of the missions;
- to revise the formula of the oath;
- to deliberate on a way to insure the prosperity of temporal goods belonging to the Institute.

But, the main reason was the following:

"The new Rule, wanted and approved by the Sacred Congregation has been published, but, except for a few who openly declared themselves willing to accept and observe it, to my disappointment, most missionaries kept a respectful silence. Equality of obligations in Congregation was rightly claimed by many, and by me first among them (...).

It is time we secure religious uniformity. Without it, superiors will not enjoy stability of government; neither will the Institute survive for long! In all charity and due respect the Chapter shall deliberate on the juridical status of those missionaries who, for many years already, are members of the Institute without a perpetual bond, or only with a promise."<sup>4</sup>

The General Chapter was held on September 23, 1910 in Rome at the new General House, 75 Via Ponte Sisto. Besides the Superior General and Fr. Novati, Vicar General, the following took part in it: Fr. P. Chenuil, Superior Provincial of the Western Province, U.S.A.; Fr. M. Rinaldi, Superior Provincial of Río Grande do Sul; Fr. C. Pedrazzani, Delegate for the Province of Paraná; Fr. G. Costanzo, Delegate for the Province of Río Grande do Sul; Fr. A. Fontana, Delegate for the Eastern Province, U.S.A.; Fr. C. Stefani, Delegate for the Province of São Paulo; and Fr. F. Brescianini.

The affairs of the Institute were discussed in the first five days; amongst other decisions the following were taken:

1. In order to have a general uniformity among the members it is hereby proposed that all those who are pledged to vows or oath bind themselves with the oath according to the formula approved by the Chapter. Those who have already made perpetual or temporary vows also are bound to this same decision.
2. Provincial Superiors must present to their subjects the formula of the oath approved by the Chapter which is to be undersigned and sent back to the Provincial Superiors within a month from the date of presentation.
3. Whoever does not intend to affix his signature to the document shall not be considered a member of the Institute, and for this reason he will be obliged to have recourse to the Sacred Congregation for dispensation from the vows and for other proceedings prescribed by Canon Law (...).
8. Let Missionaries from the Institute be loaned to Bishops requesting them, but on condition that they be granted ample freedom in the exercise of the ministry for Italians, the only and fundamental scope of the Institute (...)
10. The Chapter takes notice of what has been said in the last circular letter, namely, that for the good government of the Mother House, a Rector, Vice-

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<sup>4</sup> Vicentini, Circular letter, May 26, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 14/5).

- Rector, and Spiritual Director are needed, and it expresses the desire that the offices of Rector, Vice-Rector, and possibly of Spiritual Director as well, be entrusted to members of the Institute (...).
13. The Chapter expresses the wish that the Mother House be moved out of Piacenza, leaving it up to the Council to decide on where to buy the new location, and on the sale of the present Mother House.
  14. (...) It has been decided to place all provinces under the special protection of a Saint. Accordingly, the Province of New York shall be named after St. Charles; Chicago after St. John the Baptist; the State of São Paulo after its saint; the Province of Paraná after Saint Mary; finally, Río Grande after St. Peter (...).
  16. For three consecutive years following their ordination young priests shall be required to take general exams especially on Dogmatics, Moral Theology, and languages. Examiners shall be selected by the Superior Provincial.
  17. At least once a year Regional Superiors shall conduct a visitation of all missions in their charge, and gather exact information on the conduct of the missionaries, on the state and administration of house and church, and on everything that may help towards a smooth administration of the mission. In turn, Superior Provincials shall send an exact report of the visitation to the Superior General.
  18. For a clearer understanding in regard to the ten Masses granted by the Rule to the Fathers of the Institute, the following norms have been decided upon:
    - (1) They are understood as low Masses;
    - (2) The offerings of these Masses are to be used for the small personal expenses of the Fathers because the house provides for their needs;
    - (3) It is the duty of missionaries with needy relatives to economize or deprive themselves of unnecessary expenses if they wish to come to their help;
    - (4) The offering of these Masses is meant to be the one ordinarily determined by each Diocese. Whatever exceeds it must be given to the house;
    - (5) It is taken for granted that in each house the Fathers shall apply the Mass according to the intention of the local Superior who is to keep record of it in a special register. In turn, the Superior shall give the Fathers the amount responding to the offerings of ten Masses every month;
    - (6) The Masses said by the Fathers for their devotion are to be included in the ten intentions, consented them;
    - (7) In case there should be no Mass intentions, the matter is to be brought up with the Superior Provincial who will provide (...).
  20. It is decided that a monthly allowance responding to half the amount of the offerings for the Masses accorded the Fathers (...).

22. Two motions were made to the Chapter regarding the appointment of Superior Provincials (Cfr. Rule, C. X, a. 2).

One by Fr. Costanzo suggesting that Superior Provincials be chosen by the Superior General and his Council out of three nominees presented by the body of electors of the Provinces though always free to select someone else different from them should he deem it opportune.

The other by Fr. Chenuil suggesting that for such appointments the Rule be followed without presentation of any three nominees as such procedure might give rise to partisanship or become impossible to carry out for lack of acquaintance with the candidates to present.

When the two motions were put to the vote by secret ballot the proposal of Fr. Costanzo was approved by a majority of votes.

23. From now on Missionaries shall not be allowed to take relatives into their houses to live with them not even as domestic servants.
24. As to economic social activities, it is forbidden for members of the Institute with a position of responsibility to get involved in them (...).
27. Revenues from the ministry belong by right to the Mother House, and may not be used for any other scope, whatever it may be, without permission of the Superior General.
28. Each house shall retain a small reserve fund; the rest shall be sent to the Mother House.<sup>5</sup>

On September 28 the election of the Superior General was held in the presence of Card. Vives y Tuto by scrutiny of the secret ballots sent in by the Missionaries. Of the 62 valid votes, 53 went to Fr. Vicentini, 6 to Fr. Paolo Novati, 2 to Fr. Faustino Consoni, 1 to Fr. Massimo Rinaldi.

In conformity with the Rule, Card. Vives y Tuto immediately confirmed the election of Fr. Vicentini, officially ratifying it on November 4. The naming of the General Council was held immediately after the election of the Superior. The following were elected: Fr. Massimo Rinaldi by 8 votes, Fr. Paolo Novati by 6 votes, and Fr. Giuseppe Martini 5 votes. The second one held the Office of Vicar General until his death (1913); Fr. Rinaldi was Procurator General, succeeding Fr. Novati later on as Vicar General.

In notifying the decisions of the Chapter to the Pious Society, Fr. Vicentini deemed it his duty to put his finger on the most delicate issue, the one which from the whole correspondence of that time appeared as the main source of the internal malaise of the Institute, that is discord and individualism:

*"I recommend unity and reciprocal charity which as the sign of the followers of Christ, for a greater reason must be such by his priests. Do not allow any envy, jealousy, ambition, and above all, slander, to spread the seeds of discord amongst you!*

*Let us never forget that we form one Institute, one body, that we must work in*

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<sup>5</sup> Vicentini, Circular letter, October 20, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 182/1).

*harmony "viribus unitis", otherwise we will not enjoy strength or prestige! Let us remember that we are one body in which the good of one is the good of all and the glory of the Institute, just so as the evil conduct of one is a shame for others and a dishonor for the Institute itself. Let us love our vocation, let us love our Institute! Let us strive to make it ever more worthy of praise before God and men!*<sup>6</sup>

## **2. Shifting over to Dependence from the Sacred Consistorial Congregation**

By the "*Motu Proprio Cum Omnes*" *De Catholicorum in exteris regionibus Emigratione* (=About the Emigration of Catholics to foreign lands) of August 15, 1912, St. Pius X set up at the Sacred Consistorial Congregation the Office or Section for the assistance to Catholic Emigrants which Bishop Scalabrini had proposed in 1905.

By this provision the Sacred Consistorial Congregation was given authority over whatever concerned the religious assistance to Catholic emigrants of the Latin Rite in cooperation with the Bishops and with Institutions founded for Emigrants "whose beneficial action" as the "*Motu Proprio*" pointed out "*it shall coordinate in accordance with needs*".<sup>7</sup>

On January 7, 1913, Card. De Lai, Secretary of the Consistorial Congregation sent Fr. Vicentini the questionnaire he had forwarded to all Religious Superiors to inquire how their members were devoted to the assistance of emigrants and what institutions were involved in it.

Amongst other things, Fr. Vicentini reported:

*"Our Institute, founded by the late Bishop Scalabrini and each one of its members are devoted by a special oath almost exclusively to the religious and moral assistance of Italian emigrants especially in America. I said almost exclusively, because due to circumstances and certain needs, it extends also to other nationalities and languages (...). In general, our Missionaries have charge of national parishes made up only by Italians. Jurisdiction over other nationalities is not even granted our Missionaries in the United States of North America.*

*In Brazil instead, our Missionaries are put in charge of territorial parishes with jurisdiction over all the inhabitants of their respective territories no matter what their language may be; by rule, however, they do not accept parishes where Italians are not at least the majority.*

*Preaching and Catechism are conducted in Italian. In some places, however, in Brazil especially, Catechism is taught in the local language to the natives, and frequently to the children in the United States; as a consequence, children of Italians do not know the language of their parents."*<sup>8</sup>

In his very brief report, Fr. Vicentini makes only a general mention of the activities of the Missionaries of St. Charles referring for a complete information

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, IV (1912), p. 527.

<sup>8</sup> Vicentini to Card. De Lai, Rome, January 18, 1913 (*Arch. G.S.*, 15).

to the "*Numero Unico*" (Special Issue) by him prepared "*without any exaggeration*" and published the preceding year on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Founding.<sup>9</sup>

It concerned an 80 page publication in large format with the title: "*1887-1912. On the 25th Anniversary of the Institute of the Missionaries of St. Charles for Italian emigrants founded by His Excellency John Baptist Scalabrini, Bishop of Piacenza*".

The "*Numero Unico*" opens with a letter of St. Pius X:

"Beloved Son,

Health and Apostolic Blessing.

Be it known to you that the demonstration of filial devotion with which you and your subjects are pleased to commemorate John Baptist Scalabrini, Bishop of Piacenza, from whom your Institute had its beginning and increase 25 years ago, is of our complete satisfaction.

Quite willingly do we also take the occasion offered us for recalling ourselves how much has this most lamented man merited of Church and country. With great zeal he strove to provide the comforts of religion for his emigrant fellow countrymen in the far off regions of America.

We take this opportunity also for honoring with a sign of our affectionate esteem those apostolic men whom his zeal has called together to carry out their mission in the name of Christ amongst the far away citizens of Italy. The harvest is indeed great as the number is ever increasing of those whom the need urges into foreign lands, and the dangers are multiplying for them because of the difficulties of environment and of the snares of evil men. Let your priests, then, consider how many occasions they have for merit and how great is the mission entrusted to them.

As to ourselves, it is difficult to find anything that could be of greater concern for our thoughts and solicitude. This is the reason why we now recommend to the utmost the cause of Italian emigrants to you and to your Missionaries as we did at other times whenever the occasion presented itself.

Persevere, therefore, in extending your charity on behalf of our fellow countrymen; continue in providing effectively for their welfare and salvation by your counsel, action and ministry. Be deeply convinced that you cannot do anything more agreeable to us in responding to our wishes than showing in this way your love for religion and country.

Auspicious of divine assistance and as a token of our benevolence, with a sincere heart we impart our Apostolic Blessing on you, beloved son, and on all your confreres.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter, on the fourth day of September 1912, the tenth year of our Pontificate.

Pius, PP. X"<sup>10</sup>

There followed numerous letters of participation from Cardinals, Bishops, Priests, and Lay People among whom one stood out from Giuseppe Toniolo. The

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> 1887-1912 - Nel XXV Anniversario dell'Istituto dei Missionari di San Carlo, ecc. (Roma, 1912), pp. VIII-IX.

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central section contained the history and illustration of all Scalabrinian missions complete with interesting pictures. The last part had the concluding words of Fr. Vicentini:

"Here you have our modest 'Album', and more so because incomplete as to pictures; it is a sort of summary of essential, though authentic, statistics. On this occasion of our 25th anniversary, the Brief granted by the Holy Father, the precious testimonial letters by Most Eminent Cardinals, Most Illustrious Bishops, and distinguished personalities, would have been indeed sufficient to bring honor and perennial fame. However, in order that they may not be said to be mere conventional kind of letters, our simple illustrations will help in proving and confirming their benevolent expressions of praise for the admirable Bishop Scalabrini and his work.

Our Institute is surely not at par with the need; we are few and insufficient even relatively to the institutions we have at hand! But, we are not the only ones any longer; others have praiseworthy entered the vast field opened by Bishop Scalabrini, which still remains open for more.

This, however, does not detract from the merit due to Bishop Scalabrini, who, far from being a narrow minded man, had instead a big heart and broad views. So true this is that in his precious existence he had worked on a vast project which he presented to the Holy See aiming at the formation of some kind of Sacred Roman Congregation made up of men of all nations, experts in the field, to be in charge of emigration of all nationalities. The project, well underway already, though abruptly interrupted by his premature death, was not altogether abandoned, and we believe the wise Motu Proprio of the Holy Fr. concerning emigration in general not to be unrelated to it."<sup>11</sup>

The last pages carried a chronicle of the dedication of a monument to Bishop Scalabrini at the Basilica of Saint Charles "al Corso" in Rome, which took place on November 14, 1912.

"San Carlo al Corso is one of the largest churches in Rome. It was first built by the Lombard Colony in 1471 under the Pontificate of Sixtus IV, and rebuilt from its foundations in 1712 by order of Cardinal Omodei. The heart of St. Charles Borromeo is kept there in a rich reliquary. The church belongs to the Confraternity of the Lombards of which Bishop Scalabrini was also a member. The Lombard College, of which Bishop Scalabrini was one of the foremost Founders, was attached to the same church. This was one of the main reasons why the Committee decided to have the monument built there, and the solemn commemoration celebrated in it (...).

The monument which the love of the people has erected to his memory in a crowded church in the presence of a large array of admirers and friends of the illustrious departed Bishop.

Preceded by the students of the Lombard College and followed by prelates, priests and the people, the Most Illustrious and Reverend John Baptist Nasalli-Rocca, a native of Piacenza, Bishop of Gubbio, walked in procession down to the first chapel to the left of one entering the church, where the monument honoring the Fr. of Emigrants stands.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

The beautiful piece of art comes out of the Nelli foundry of Florence, while the actual carrying out of the project is the work of Architect Commander Knight Aristide Leonori.

The monument is fashioned into an oval surmounted with a Cross; inside the niche the features of the deceased prelate are quite likely reproduced on a bronze bust. A little lower, a brief inscription by the most illustrious P. Bonavenia is carved on a stone encased within sober architectural lines (...)

Under it, a bronze crown was placed with the following inscription on it: "*To their Fr. and Shepherd John Baptist Scalabrini, his Missionaries and the Italian colonies benefitted by his zeal.*"

Bishop Nasalli ascended the altar platform and said a few, but moving beautiful words. He recalled the founding of the 'Collegio Romano' of which he is also an alumnus, and its inaugural dedication at San Carlo al Corso.

*'At that celebration, thirty five years ago' - he exclaimed - 'His Excellency Scalabrini, then a young Bishop, was present, contemplating at that very moment perhaps also the idea of a greater project on behalf of Italians far away from their fatherland. His institution was born and is now living a fruitful life.'*

*'Rome' - continued Bishop Nasalli - 'mindful of his heart and mind, tributes today, on a solemn date for the Institute of St. Charles, a well-deserved recognition to his highly religious and patriotic action. Glorious indeed is this homage given him by Rome where all greatness is centered; by Rome where the See of the Head of Christianity rests as the only beacon of that faith he strove to preserve in Italian emigrants in far off lands by the founding of his Institute. The people of Piacenza who benefitted of the most precious part of this great prelate's life; the people of Como who rightly glory in him as their fellow citizen; the Missionaries of St. Charles, with whom his memory and spirit live on forever; his admirers; the myriads of emigrants who look upon him as a Father, all are deeply grateful for this homage.'*

*'Now' - he concluded - 'this monument in his honor is to be unveiled, but a far greater one is accorded him by the voice of the Pope who by means of two important documents has just sanctioned with the authority of his word the whole action for good wrought by Bishop Scalabrini in the Church of Jesus Christ.'*

Immediately following his speech the monument was unveiled, while the choiristers from the foremost chapels of Rome, skillfully directed by Maestro Moriconi, were singing the "*Audivi vocem*" ("I heard a voice"), a masterful composition by the late Fr. of the Maestro himself.

Then Bishop Nasalli walked in procession to the main altar where he offered a pontifical Mass for the repose of the blessed soul of Bishop Scalabrini, with Mons. Sidoli, Coadjutor Archpriest of the Cathedral of Piacenza, Deacon, and Mons. Malchiodi, Vicar General of Bishop Nasalli, Sub-deacon. Mons. Caccia Dominioni, private participant Chamberlain to His Holiness, was the assisting Priest. The students of the "Collegio Lombardo" served the Mass. The choir provided a splendid performance of the music of Perosi with the "*Benedictus*" from Palestrina.

At the last blessing, Mons. Cattaneo, once a student of Bishop Scalabrini and now Pastor of Fino Mornasco (Como), his birthplace, began to speak (...).



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His Eminence Card. Joseph Calasantius Vives y Tuto, and His Excellency Dr. Bruno Chaves, Envoy Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Minister of Brazil to the Holy See assisted the celebration from a special window.

Cardinals Agliardi and Ferrata sent their representatives. His Excellency Bishop Pelizzari of Piacenza occupied a special place of honor. Bishop Casartelli, Bishop of Salford (England), a relative of Bishop Scalabrini; Mons. Tynan of the same diocese; Bishop Symonon, Titular Bishop of Atalia; Mons. Piacenza, a Protonotary Apostolic; Mons. Mangot, Mons. Mondini, Mons. Tonarelli, Mons. Coccolo; the Superior General of the Rosminians; Fr. Guanella, Mons. Count Santerano; Mons. Caroli, Rector of the "Collegio Lombardo"; Abbot Lolli, Superior General of the Canons of the Lateran; Mons. Rossetti, Auditor of the "Sacra Rota"; Mons. Mercati, a writer from the Vatican library; Fr. Callerio, Rector of the College of Saints Peter and Paul for foreign missions; Fr. Bonaventura, S.J., etc.; all had taken their places in the pews by the bier.

A group of Bishop Scalabrini's Missionaries, some from North America and Brazil, Fr. Domenico Vicentini, Superior General; Fr. Massimo Rinaldi, Procurator General of the Institute; Fathers Riccardo Lorenzoni, Marco Simoni, Vittorio Gregori, Vincenzo Iannuzzi, and Leonardo Quaglia, were also assisting from a special section.

Bishop Scalabrini's relatives, among them Mons. Attilio Bianchi, his brother and sister-in-law, Sofia Ortiz, etc., occupied reserved seats.

The Roman Committee was represented by Mons. Tonarelli, president; Prof. Costantini, secretary; and by Mons. Caccia Dominioni, Mons. Mercati, Fr. Massimo Rinaldi, Fr. Premoli, Comm. Nogara, Knight Commander Tolli, Architect Leonori, and others, all members.

Representatives from Piacenza: Mons. Mangot, Provost of the Cathedral, for the Most Reverend Chapter and for the Board of Directors of the "Collegio Alberoni"; Fr. Isengard, Procurator General of the Vincentians, for the Staff of the same college and for the periodical "*Il Catechista Cattolico*" founded by Bishop Scalabrini; Fr. Francesco Gregori, Director of "*Il Nuovo Giornale*", for the College of Pastors; Fr. Mosconi, for the two diocesan seminaries of Piacenza and Bedonia; Knight Calda, an Attorney for the Piacenza Committee; Fr. Luigi Calderoni, for the Parish of Rivergo and for the workers' society of the same.

From Piacenza were also present: Fr. Giuseppe Cardinali, Pastor of Pontenure, with ten other colleagues; Prof. Fr. Paolo Poggi, Mr. Carlo Spallazzi, once steward at the Scalabrini household; and other people of Piacenza residing in Rome.

The diocese of Como was represented by a special pilgrimage of one hundred people accompanied by their beloved Pastor, Mons. Stefano Piccinelli, Prior of St. Bartholomew's in Como, a parish once held by Bishop Scalabrini; and by the Vicar, Pastor-elect of Nesso; and by distinguished Priests.

Fino Mornasco, Bishop Scalabrini's birthplace, was represented by its pastor Mons. Cattaneo. So also several Institutes of Sisters were represented at the solemn celebration; among them the Daughters of St. Ann for the deaf and dumb girls' Institute of Piacenza, founded by Bishop Scalabrini; the

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Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Saint Mother Cabrini; the Sisters of St. Joseph, etc.

Also present were Marquis Antonio Casati, Comm. Canavelli, Prof. Ferrari, Director of the Museum of Industry; many other heads of religious orders; representatives from the following Colleges and Seminaries: Armenian, Greek, Propaganda Fide, English, South American, North American, Capranica, German, Pontifical of Rome, Vatican, Pio, Spanish, French, Leo, Ruthenian, Belgian, Polish, Bohemian, and Canadian.

We conclude these brief notes with the words of the "*Osservatore Romano*" dated November 15, 1912:

"We have diffusely written yesterday about the fine and noble personality of Bishop Scalabrini and his action on behalf of emigrants. But, all our words count very little when compared with the solemn and splendid recognition accorded this benefic institution by the Supreme Pontiff of the Church, the Holy Fr. Pius X himself with a Brief addressed to the Superior General of the Institute of the Missionaries of St. Charles, concerning the projected celebrations for an appropriate commemoration of its worthy Founder.

Together with the Supreme Authority of the Vicar of Christ a whole array of Princes of the Holy Church, of Sacred Shepherds, of eminent personalities of the Clergy and laity, Italian and foreign, enthusiastically participate in paying tribute to the memory of the illustrious Prelate of the Church of Piacenza and to his provident Institution which, by means of zealous missionaries, is now providing assistance for more than 300 thousand Italian emigrants in their moral and temporal needs.

Just and dutiful was therefore the unanimous consensus of Catholics of all countries of Italy especially in honoring the memory of this great benefactor of so many of their brethren who in the midst of the hardships of their voluntary exile are given to find assistance and comfort in the Institution founded by him."<sup>12</sup>

The publication of the "Numero Unico" served as the most effective point of reference for the report presented by Fr. Vicentini to the Sacred Consistorial Congregation on November 9, 1913. We quote the main part:

*"What fruits were wrought by the institution of Bishop Scalabrini in the past 25 years; what actually has been accomplished and is still being done, one can see for himself in the illustrated booklet published last year by the undersigned. Without inflating the numbers, as if for a publicity stunt, there is no exaggeration in it, rather some understatements. When I affirm that our Missionaries in America have ordinary charge of over 300 thousand ( -I say 300 thousand - ) Italians, I am making an understatement; if for no other reason, the fact can be verified by the number of baptisms (about 14 thousand yearly) registered in the records of our parishes in America, besides marriages and first Communions.*

*With this I do not mean to say that, although this is the first, and still, the only institution devoted to the assistance of Italian emigrants, it is sufficient to meet to the need; far from it, but this is certain that it is the main institution founded for this specific scope. The trouble is that we are few, very few as compared with the need. A good number left the Institute while a few others have died in the field of their harvest: at present, our Missionaries are seventy five, to whom we must be add several auxiliary priests and a few lay brother catechists.*

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 77-80.

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*At the Mother House of Piacenza we have our small seminary now numbering 35 students through high school, philosophy, and theology. With great sacrifices we have built in Crespano Veneto a house entitled "Scuola Apostolica Scalabrini" for the training of young boys for our missions; it will be opened for the new school year! Unfortunately, we have to limit the number for lack of financial means.*

*The activity of our Missionaries is carried out especially in the United States of North America and Brazil (States of São Paulo, Paraná, and Rio Grande do Sul), generally in parishes made up of Italians. In North America they care for many highly populated parishes in the midst of large Italian communities, while in Brazil, with a lesser number of immigrants, our parishes are very vast and demand greater sacrifices. Besides parishes, for several years we had 'flying' Missionaries devoted to the preaching of missions, especially through the 'fazendas' of the State of São Paulo until adverse circumstances prevented them from it.*

*In the city of São Paulo we also have charge of two large orphanages supported by public charity.*

*Furthermore, our Institute directs several centers of the Society of St. Raphael by the ports of Genoa, New York, Boston, and Providence. Places of parishes and residences of our Missions are described on a list apart printed in 1912 which I enclose along. To it some recently accepted missions must be added.*

*Our Institute only has ownership of the Mother House of Piacenza and of the House in Crespano, and we have no other sources to insure the support of our old and sick missionaries; however, thanks to our missionaries' help so far we have not been lacking anything necessary.*

*We have no debts because we have never done anything in excess of our resources. Other revenues and donations we do not have, and Bishop Scalabrini did not leave us any funds whatsoever.*

*The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, on which we once depended, used to send the Institute a yearly subsidy of ten thousand liras. This ceased when the United States were subtracted from its jurisdiction and our Institute was transferred over to dependence from the Sacred Congregation for Religious. I tried to look for help elsewhere, but to no avail. In recent years collections have been taken up in all dioceses throughout Italy for emigration missionaries, but we were excluded because they were destined to Mons. Coccolo. As far as I know, others have also shared in them; we never!*

*I, the humble undersigned, could never succeed in finding someone to help me financially in a practical way; but what hurts most is the fact that the Ecclesiastical Authorities themselves seemed even to ignore at times the existence of our Institution in important documents concerning emigration; this gave someone the impression that we were refused acknowledgement.*

*Fortunately, last year's celebration of the 25th anniversary of our Institute by the wonderful Brief of His Holiness was a timely help in illustrating our work, comforting, and encouraging our Missionaries."<sup>13</sup>*

The report was accompanied by a letter to Card. De Lai:

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<sup>13</sup> Vicentini, Report to Sacred Consistorial Congregation, Rome, December 9, 1913 (Arch. G.S., 15).

*"In compliance with your wishes, I am enclosing a brief report on the work of our Institute. It is my hope that it will help you in forming a general idea of the activities of our missionaries. Their work, however, though so intense, falls extremely short of the needs: many workers imbued with a good spirit are needed. I dare say that the Religious Orders in America should contribute to them in a larger measure; the field is immense. The neglect in which emigrants are left in many places as to religious assistance, the scarcity of good priests, and the less than edifying habits carried over to America by emigrants, especially from the south, ever more increase the dislike and the prejudices of the native clergy, and often of the bishops themselves, for the religion of the Italian people.*

*It is not mine, nor am I such as to be entitled to make proposals or give advice; the Holy See is seeing to it, and this is enough for me."<sup>14</sup>*

Cardinal De Lai had solicited the above-mentioned report from the Superior General following a request he had repeatedly made to the end of having the Institute transferred over to dependence from and direction of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation "deeming it in a better position to coordinate the (Institute's) activity according to the directives and other scopes of the Holy See in the spiritual care of emigrants."<sup>15</sup>

The question was discussed by the Consistorial Congregation at a plenary meeting on February 19, 1914, of whose minutes we report those passages that interest us:

"CARE OF ITALIANS MIGRATING TO FOREIGN LANDS"

Statistics worry the Most Eminent Cardinals. This evil, that threatens to become greater every day, appears enormous already. On account of so many defections of Italian emigrants and of their own countrymen at home whom they corrupt upon their return, one cannot help but justly worry about a sad future for religion in Italy.

The efforts employed until now by action of private and particular initiative are good and praiseworthy, but they are no longer sufficient.

There is need that these forces be not only strengthened but concentrated and organized as well. For this reason, the Sacred Consistorial Congregation should study a vast, serious and effective general plan to be carried out little by little in line with a clear and precise program respondent to whether emigration be permanent or temporary, European or transoceanic. Such plan must absolutely be based on a concentration of organization centered around the Holy See, from where all activities on behalf of emigrants are to take their impulse.

By it, the Institutes that in this sphere of action have taken care of emigrants so far, shall necessarily fall within, or be incorporated with those that the Sacred Consistorial Congregation will deem it opportune to found or strengthen, following their improvement and better organization.

Since their action could not all at once be substituted by a work that requires study and preparation, for the time being let the presidents or directors of these institutions be called together for a common plan of action based on advice, admonition, and exhortation, so that justly deprecated abuses be done away with or limited, those especially that are due to too much independence accorded certain missionaries, or to the total dependence of certain others on lay superiors.

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<sup>14</sup> Vicentini to Card. De Lai, Rome, October 9, 1913 (Arch. G.S., 15).

<sup>15</sup> Copy Docum. No. Prot. 2283/13 (Arch. G.S., 16/1).

To insure their proper conduct, the norm of the Sacred Congregation of the Council providing that none be allowed to be engaged as a missionary for a work of assistance except by permission of the Holy See, be also applied to priests who assist emigrants in Europe.

Such was the decision of the Most Eminent Fathers over the question: "Whether and what should be decided so that the priests who join the 'Opera di Assistenza' or the 'Italica Gens' may not be exploited for temporal or civic aims, and subtracted from the action of Church's authority."

The Most Eminent Fathers gave an 'affirmative' answer to the second question: "Whether it be opportune to give course to the petition of the Superiors of the Institute of the Missionaries of St. Charles, or Scalabrinians, to pass from the Sacred Congregation for Religious to dependence from the section of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation charged with the care of emigrants."

As a matter of fact, Scalabrinians are not religious, but priests engaged for the assistance to emigrants. Though granting that by force of a vow or even of a simple oath their dependence would more properly rest with the Sacred Congregation for Religious, the specific scope of their Congregation binds them to the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, under whose jurisdiction and direction they may become the initial seed, as it were, of the official assistants to emigrants."<sup>16</sup> (16)

In the audience to Card. De Lai on February 20, 1914, Pius X decided as follows:

"To the first question: - Have the directors of both Institutions informed that the priests they engage for assisting emigrants must, from now on, conform to the provision common to all other priests migrating to America. Nob. Bassi, Comm. Schiapparelli, and Fr. Gorla be summoned for opportune agreements.

To the second question: - Affirmative; let this be known to the Sacred Congregation for Religious to whose judgement be reserved matters of its jurisdiction so that they be subject to the Consistorial Congregation in matters concerning their social action, and to the Sacred Congregation for Religious in those involving the Congregation as such, the oath, and the vows, should there be any."<sup>17</sup>

Consequent to this decision the Scalabrinian Society passed over to dependence on the Sacred Consistorial Congregation in matters concerning its apostolic activities while remaining under the jurisdiction of the Sacred Congregation for Religious as to the discipline of the religious life.

### **3. Relations with the Institution of Mons. Cocco**

In the above quoted documents there is mention of other institutions for the welfare of Italian emigrants. Leaving the Institution of Bishop Bonomelli aside, of which we will have to speak on a wider scale later on, we report briefly the relations of the Scalabrinian Institute with the Institution of Mons. Cocco, with "*Italica Gens*" founded by E. Schiapparelli, and with the "Pontificio Collegio d'Emigrazione."

Mons. Giangiacomo Cocco, a canon of the Vatican Basilica from Turin, had

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<sup>16</sup> Copy (Arch. G.S., 16/1).

<sup>17</sup> Copy (Arch. G.S., 16/1).

founded in 1905 the "Società dei Missionari di Emigrazione di Sant'Antonio di Padova" approved by Saint Pius X with letter of the Secretary of State on October 19, 1905. Its headquarters were in Rome, and the Mother House at San Vito al Tagliamento (Pordenone).

According to its Statutes of 1908, the scope of the Society was twofold:

1. To provide an effective religious, moral and, as far as possible, material, assistance for Italian emigrants in certain determined regions where they settled in greater numbers such as Argentina, Canada, Cile, Uruguay and Paraguay.
2. To assist the same Italian emigrants aboard ships on their crossing overseas when they go to America or on their way back."<sup>18</sup>

In the beginning, relations between the Institute of Bishop Scalabrini and the Institution of Mons. Coccolo were cordial. The Scalabrinian Bulletin announced its founding in the issue of February 1906:

"Mons. Coccolo first got the idea of founding the Institution of the 'Cappellani d'Emigrazione' last summer on his trip to the United States on behalf of the 'Lega Antischivista' ('Antislavery League') of which he is the worthy chairman.

On crossing the Ocean he often descended from cabin deck to third class deck in the midst of emigrants, availing himself of their forced idleness to invite them to prayer, to instruct, and to advise them on how to hold on to their faith among the many and most serious dangers to which they would find themselves exposed in America. And to the end of gaining their trust he gave them rosaries, holy pictures, crucifixes, devotional booklets. This way he began exercising the ministry of a chaplain for emigrants, and he became convinced of the usefulness, of the need, rather, for religious assistance on behalf of the hundreds of thousand Italians crossing the Ocean every year.

When he was about to leave New York for his return to Italy, we went aboard the "Sicilia", the ship he was sailing on, to present him our respectful farewell and well wishes for a safe trip back. While standing there on deck and waiting for the bell to signal it was time to leave for visitors who had come aboard to bid their last greetings to relatives and friends, he was speaking to us with the conviction of an apostle about the "Opera di Emigrazione" he would submit to the Holy Fr. for approval as soon as he should reach Rome.

And sure enough, a telegram informed us three weeks later in New York that the Holy Fr. had enthusiastically endorsed the holy institution promoted by Mons. Coccolo. On our part, we, who have made the assistance of Italian emigrants the scope of our toil, congratulate Mons. Coccolo with all our hearts, in all admiration for having accomplished a work, by others thought out perhaps, and carried out at times, but on which no one dared set hand to give it a definite organization."<sup>19</sup>

In turn, on the first issue of the bulletin of the "Società dei Missionari di Emigrazione", "Pro Emigrante", Mons. Coccolo presented his institution as "third in order of time and merit" amongst the ones born on behalf of Italian

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<sup>18</sup> "Statuto della Societa' dei Missionari di Emigrazione" (San Vito al Tagliamento, 1908),p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> "Cappellani di Emigrazione", "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", February 1906, p. 23.

emigrants. *"The first" - he said - "is for emigrants in distant Americas, the Institute of the Missionaries of St. Charles, and the Society of St. Raphael dependent on it (...). I was given to see with my own eyes the great good wrought by these zealous and active missionaries of St. Charles for Italians. I deem it an honor to extend to them from these pages a tribute of sincere gratitude and profound admiration. The "Opera Bonomelli" for temporary emigrants in Europe takes second place. The third one - he continues - is the institution that provides an Italian priest for our brethren on their lengthy trips from Italy and back charged with assisting them in their eventual spiritual needs, comforting them in their trials, instructing them generously by means of counsel and advice that may help them in their search for work, and guard them from the snares of profiteers."*

And he concluded: *"Though distinct, these three holy institutions harmonize perfectly, and complete each other in a wonderful manner, all three cooperating in different ways and places towards the same scope: the spiritual, moral, and material assistance of our neglected emigrants."*<sup>20</sup>

According to this article dated on April 1, 1907, the distinction of the fields of the three institutions was very clear; as we have seen, however, to the primitive scope, that is, to the assistance during their trips, the 1908 Statutes of the "Opera Coccolo" had added already a scope that exactly coincided with that of the Scalabrinian Society.

Mindful that besides being an enterprising individual, Mons. Coccolo was also an intrusive type, it could very well be expected that some conflict would rise.

Fr. Maldotti informed Fr. Vicentini that Mons. Coccolo was about to open a house at Genoa, thus entering "a field not his." Fr. Vicentini responded:

*"I do not know what to say: he must have funds, l'argent fait la guerre.... (Money talks); we do not have sufficient ammunition to shoot.... I shall see."*<sup>21</sup>

Scalabrinians were somewhat startled also by the fact that in order to support this institution, the Secretariat of State had ordered on January 25, 1908 in all parishes of Italy a collection to be taken up on the first Sunday in Lent: something Bishop Scalabrini had never succeeded in obtaining with all his efforts since 1892. The proceeds of this collection were allotted for the support of board chaplains, but it was the "Missionari di Emigrazione" that were ordinarily spoken of. For this reason, writing to the Vicar General, Fr. Vicentini protested:

*"On account of this confusion I am writing to Card. Vives y Tuto....and in case he should take no provisions I shall write to the Holy Father."*<sup>22</sup>

It seems as though Card. Vives y Tuto did not answer. In the meantime, Fr. Maldotti went on complaining over the situation in Genoa:

*"Mons. Coccolo goes on with an ever increasing audacity; he established here his main center (quite a far cry from a mere foothold), and raises a lot of noise*

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<sup>20</sup> Coccolo, "La Carità Cristiana e gli Emigrati Italiani", "Pro Emigrante", Anno 1 (1907), p. 6

<sup>21</sup> Vicentini, Diario, September 6, 1908, Vol. V, p. 110 (Arch. G.S., 1642).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. September 6, 1908, p. 139.

*thus engendering confusion among local like institutions. It's urgent that you go to Rome and talk to the Pope; it is somewhat late, but who knows? Protest and claim a proportionate share in the collection of the dioceses. Tell him that we have need of it for the house, that we have suffered loss, and that it is about time the misunderstanding be cleared."*<sup>23</sup>

Fr. Vicentini again wrote to Card. Vives y Tuto, receiving the following information from Mons. Bianchi:

*"Your observations concerning Mons. Coccolo's Institution have been found just, and Card. Vives has spoken already with the Holy Father. We shall see what provisions the Holy See will adopt to avoid trouble."*<sup>24</sup>

Since provisions were slow in coming, Fr. Vicentini wrote directly to the Pope on March 1, 1912:

*"By order of higher authorities a collection is taken up in all parishes of the Italian dioceses on a Sunday in Lent for the "Missionaries of Emigration". Who are these missionaries caring for emigration, emigrants, and people in foreign lands, to benefit of an advantage so exclusive, and of such grandiose and persistent publicity as is not perhaps accorded any other religious and charitable institution in Italy? They are the missionaries of the Most Rev. Mons. Coccolo, as if they were the only ones or the foremost, to devote themselves to emigration, and the only ones to need help.*

*I, the undersigned Superior General of the Missionaries of St. Charles for Italian emigrants, ardently desire to present to Your Holiness my humble protest against this collection for the way and for the exclusive scope it is being conducted, in as much as it hurts our Institute financially, and more so morally. I repeat, financially, because many either do not know how to make distinctions between institutions (as is generally the case with the people) and considering them all one, intend to donate for emigrants in general; or they may distinguish institutions, in which case they will think that the Missionaries of St. Charles are not in need of help or worthy of it. The fact is that following the order for that collection, contributions to our Institute ceased. Furthermore, since our Institute was transferred over to dependence from the Sacred Congregation for Religious from Propaganda, the latter stopped sending us the subsidy it used to supply for many years. Our need is not the lesser than that of the "Missionaries of Emigration". If we do not have any debts, it is because we limit our sphere of action and have a limited number of students in our Seminary while we would be in extreme need for increasing it to respond to the demands of our missions. But, this collection hurts our Institute much the more morally. As I was saying, people generally do not make distinctions between different kinds of missionaries, but they can very well distinguish between Bishops, priests, and cultural lay men; no wonder, then, if upon proclaiming from all pulpits of Italy the merits and needs of the above-mentioned "Society" for emigration overseas while saying nothing about the first and main one founded by Bishop Scalabrini, our Institute should seem dead or languishing and inactive, or worse yet, not esteemed or appreciated by the Holy See. The main and essential scope of the spiritual assistance to emigrants in America thus takes second place. Be-*

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<sup>23</sup> Maldotti to Vicentini, Genoa, February 28, 1909 (Arch. G.S. 538/6).

<sup>24</sup> Bianchi to Vicentini, Rome, November 10, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 14/3).



*sides all this, Mons. Coccolo is often reported in publications and interviews as saying that he is the reviver and pursuer of the work of Bishop Scalabrini while his sons and heirs, successors and promoters of his apostolate for emigrants are pretty much alive and active. It is rumored that a commission has been set up by the Holy See in charge of emigration; if this is true, let this commission conduct a series of investigations on these institutions for emigration and tribute each its due. In order to remedy the disadvantages of the collection we object to, it was suggested by eminent persons that another one be taken up especially for our Institute; in my estimation, however, this remedy would not benefit either institution as it could arouse a quizzical attitude in the public. I would propose rather that the collection be made for emigration in general as for the Propagation of the Faith and its proceeds entrusted to the Vatican Commission that would distribute them impartially according to needs and merits of those who effectively and seriously devote themselves to the assistance of emigrants. More than once I was urged to make use of publicity drives, but I have always abhorred it because such means only arouse jealousies and disunity in the field of good work with disadvantage for the works themselves, and to the confusion and scandal of the people. I chose, rather, to have recourse to Your Holiness so that, by the impartial love you bear for all who busy themselves to do something good in the Church of God, you may adopt those provisions that in Your august counsel you deem most opportune for the case."<sup>25</sup>*

The proposal to extend the collection to all institutions for emigration was carried out by Saint Pius X with the “*Motu Proprio Iam Pridem*”, dated March 19, 1914, while the petition for clearing the field of action of the institution of Mons. Coccolo had been discussed by the general meeting of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation of February 19, 1914:

"To the fourth question whether a certain limit and a certain sphere of action should be assigned to the various institutions so that one may not enter the field of the others, the most Eminent Fathers give the following answers:

Concerning future institutions, affirmative; as to those already in existence be it enough for now to inform Mons. Coccolo that he limit the field of his action to the initial scope of his institution, 'the assistance of emigrants aboard ships', while having them get in touch with the missionaries of other institutions charged with different scopes and activities."<sup>26</sup>

At that time, the Institution of Mons. Coccolo counted 25 effective members, and 25 more, engaged yearly on a temporary basis, 12 residences for missionaries, 9 secretariats or information centers in Naples, Palermo, Genoa, Buenos Aires, Santos, São Paulo and Río de Janeiro, and "diocesan coordinators" in 96 Italian dioceses.

In 1915 the institution underwent a deep crisis and Mons. Coccolo, in poor health, presented his resignations at the close of the year. Pope Benedict XV accepted them asking him to stay on as Vice-President (Card. Vincenzo Vannutelli was President from the beginning), and on December 10, 1915 he appointed as Director Fr. Tito Crespi, provost of St. Benedict in Genoa. World

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<sup>25</sup> Vicentini to Pius X, Rome, March 1, 1912, draft copy, (Arch. G.S., 15).

<sup>26</sup> Copy (Arch. G.S., 16/1).

War I scattered the ranks of the institution in Italy, and decimated its membership; its financial situation was in even worse shape.

For this reason the Sacred Consistorial Congregation decided to aggregate the institution founded by Mons. Coccolo to the Scalabrinian Society as Fr. Tito Crespi himself reports:

"Renewal is one of the axioms on which social works depend for progress and a more vigorous life. On it we counted also when we decided to resume our activities in full strength.

Like many others, the institution of Mons. Coccolo born for a very particular scope could not exclusively hold on to this precise end for long. It has begun with the assistance aboard ship that has formed the first scope for the existence of the institution of the Missionaries of St. Anthony of Padua for emigrants. However, this assistance soon suffered from lack of centers of our own in ports such as Naples, Palermo, Buenos Aires, and Santos. As a natural development it became necessary to engage in the institution of secretariats, and then of a receiving center in Palermo later on, in coordination with our apostolate aboard ship and equal to it in importance that caused us our greatest concern and sacrifices.

While we reflect on our revival, our not brief experience has led us beyond the ports, namely to the distant centers of emigration. It made us feel the great need for a closer contact and coordination of work. As a matter of fact, such coordination seemed undoubtedly appropriate, ..., indeed, quite natural, not only to us but to many others, as well. Supported by the approval and the encouragement of the experts on migratory problems we have submitted our opinions and desires to the board of directors of the Institution, especially to its Most Eminent protector and president Cardinal Vincenzo Vannutelli. They all agreed on the best possible decision: The placing of our Society under one direction with the outstanding institution founded by Bishop Scalabrini, the unforgettable Apostle of Italian emigrants, which is conducting its vastly beneficial action among Italians in America. Just recently it elected as its Superior General a worthy priest who has spent the best years of his ministry in the midst of our fellow countrymen across the Ocean.

The goodwill of both parties, and, above all, the solicitous concern of the Most Eminent Secretary of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, Card. G. De Lai, who with his usual alacrity has speeded up the practices, by obligingly removing the obstacles, while leaving nothing undone to facilitate them, have led to a quick agreement. Consequently to it, though maintaining its own identity, our Institution is placed, as of January 1, 1920, under the direction of the Superior General of the Missionaries of St. Charles for Emigrants who is residing in Rome, on Via Ponte Sisto 75.

As already mentioned, at this moment their Superior General is Fr. Pacifico Chenuil. Since he is a man of action and dislikes anyone spending many words on him, we shall say about him briefly that as a worthy disciple and successor to him who first initiated the work for emigrants overseas, he will not fail in reaching the perfect success of the union of our institution with the larger one so as to even exceed expectations for good results.

Our collaborators and friends who appreciate the importance and usefulness

of this union shall also be his, and accord him the same loving and Christian cooperation they accorded dear Mons. Coccolo, whom the one, who somehow took his place in these last years, will remember with great gratitude."<sup>27</sup>

This union did not produce the desired fruits:

"The main objectives intended by the Holy See in bringing about this union were several:

- 1) greater stability of personnel,
- 2) the opportunity for missionaries on board to discontinue their fatiguing apostolate on ships without ceasing their action on behalf of emigrants by being engaged in ministry work in Scalabrinian parishes,
- 3) the needed coordination of activities for the assistance at ports of embarkation, on trips, and at debarkation, with existing Scalabrinian institutions in immigration countries,
- 4) greater possibility to secure good and qualified personnel.

The intended objectives could not be realized, however, due to serious problems of internal organization the Scalabrinian Congregation itself had to cope with immediately after WWI, and to the organizational disorder of Mons. Coccolo's institute.

In addition, this mission work was in dire need of rules to insure a good choice and a preparation of chaplains better suited to the difficult task; unfortunately it had been too often entrusted, instead, to unqualified and imprudent priests, who volunteered their services to enjoy a free trip.

From 1923 to 1932, the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, besides enacting a rule exclusively for Chaplains aboard ship to reorganize that institution, it also entered a number of agreements with shipping companies through the mediation of the Prelate for Italian Emigration.

On the other hand, not even the 'Collegio Pontificio' seemed to have been particularly effective in forming and preparing chaplains aboard ships, due mostly to a lack of an efficient direction of the Institution itself.

The causes for this languishing must certainly take into account the sudden decrease of Italian emigration overseas following the restrictions enacted by the American nations in the years 1923-1924."<sup>28</sup>

In 1923, Fr. Chenuil turned over the direction of the Mons. Coccolo's Institution to the Prelate for Emigration Mons. Cerrati.

#### **4. Relations with the "Italica,Gens"**

We know that the Scalabrinian Institute had from the beginning maintained contacts with the "Associazione Nazionale" supporting the "Italian Catholic Missionaries" founded at Florence by A. Conti and E. Schiapparelli, so much so that it appeared at first as though the "Association" was willing to support financially Bishop Scalabrini's Institute. In obedience to the Holy See, Bishop Scalabrini shunned any bond of dependence from it; relations, however, were

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<sup>27</sup> T. Crespi, "Noviter", "Pro Emigrante", anno XIV (1920) pp. 12-13.

<sup>28</sup> A. Perotti, "Il Pontificio Collegio per l'Emigrazione Italiana", 1920-1970 (Rome, 1971), pp. 25-26.

not only cordial, but also always inspired by a spirit of active collaboration.

Ernesto Schiapparelli, who can well be considered its cofounder, was at the same time the secretary of Bishop Bonomelli's Institute with headquarters in Turin, under the chairmanship of that Archbishop.

An internal crisis of the institution, for which Ernest Schiapparelli himself was partly responsible for "*using the institution to pursue patriotic aims*" and tending to "*give it a prevalent lay content by some undue interference with Church personnel*"<sup>29</sup>, led to the elimination of the Secretary General, and to the transfer from Turin to Milan of its ecclesiastical board of consultors charged with the control of the institution.

Mons. Peter Pisani, of Vercelli, one of the pioneers in the Bishop Bonomelli's Institute, while continuing his activity in it remained at Ernest Schiapparelli's side, as well. He reports the fact as follows:

*"In 1908 the General Secretariat and the ecclesiastical Board of Directors were transferred to Milan under the chairmanship of its Archbishop, Card. Ferrari. Unable to perform the duties of his office, that consequent to the great progress of the institution had turned into some kind of ministry, unconcerned about the change of names, Prof. Schiapparelli found himself forced to resign, only happy to see it well on its way to a sure future.*

*Actually he saw quite a wider field of activities open for his zeal; namely, emigrants overseas of which the Institute founded by his great friend Bishop Scalabrini had much merited for the past twenty years. But what were the Missionaries of St. Charles when confronted with the spiritual and material needs of no less than three million Italians in the Americas spread over a territory three times as large as Europe? His plan consisted in creating a propaganda center to act as a propelling springboard for organizing and coordinating the innumerable initiatives, now extant or to be promoted, in the main centers of our emigration, often condemned to failure for lack of direction and coordination.*

*Hence the 'Italica Gens' sprang forth, a sort of 'Federation' for assisting emigrants overseas, founded and directed by the 'Associazione Nazionale' for Italian missionaries, with headquarters in the 'Museo Egizio' in Turin. The new institution had beginnings quite similar to those of the 'Associazione Nazionale' on which it was rooted and dependent (...).*

*Though small in numbers, Italian diocesan priests and members of religious orders, such as, Franciscans, Jesuits, Servites, Salesians, Pallottines, and others, were providing assistance for our fellow countrymen in America; this was the case in the immense cities of North America, and in the boundless plains of Brazil and Argentina.*

*In the thought of Prof. Schiapparelli, every pastor, or rather, every Italian missionary, besides paying attention to the interests of souls, he should also care for to the social and economic conditions of emigrants by being at their side at ports of debarkation, in employment places, in hospitals, and in prisons, to assist them in procedures related to passports, military service, repatriation,*

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<sup>29</sup> Bellò, "Geremia Bonomelli" (Brescia, 1961), p. 165.

*insurance against sickness and labor accidents, and so on; in a word the very services once taken care of by the secretariats of Bishop Bonomelli's Institute.*

*To make this task easier for pastors, besides the central office in Turin, the 'Italica Gens' established important centers of activity and propaganda in America, one in New York and one in Buenos Aires, both directed by zealous and experienced priests who immediately began corresponding with all the Italian priests whose address they were able to obtain through their respective diocesan chanceries.*

*At the same time, Prof. Schiapparelli provided for the protection of emigrants in our ports of embarkation by opening appropriate hostels in Genoa, Naples, and Trieste, where they were assisted in validation of passports, in currency exchange, and in all difficulties they might encounter at the time of departure.*

*Neither were our emigrant countrymen neglected by the 'Italica Gens' in the Middle East and Africa where they were always finding assistance at the institutions founded by the 'National Association'. The numbers speak for themselves: 15 surgical and medical hospitals, 68 educational institutions from kindergartens to elementary schools for boys and girls, teachers colleges and technical institutes, without counting boarding and hostel schools, orphanages, foundlings' homes, and agrarian colonies, all of them still supported and directed by the 'Italica Gens' to the full satisfaction of all religious and civil authorities of each country and with the approval of all Italian governments succeeding each other since 1888 (...).*

*When the appalling catastrophe of WWI broke out, emigration overseas was interrupted for a time; when peace was restored it resumed but it was restricted to lower levels. As a consequence, the 'Italica Gens' ended up with limiting itself little by little to its initial field of action, Africa and the Middle East where Prof. Schiapparelli continued to carry on his tireless and unceasing action till the end of his long and laborious life."<sup>30</sup>*

Prof. Schiapparelli first thought about the 'Italica Gens' in 1906, and wrote of it to Fr. Vicentini who declared himself willing to cooperate as much as possible with the projected "*Ufficio Centrale Missioni Italiane all'Estero*."<sup>31</sup>

As a matter of fact he afterwards sent to all Scalabrinian Missionaries a copy of a circular letter with which Carlo Bassi, general chairman of the "Associazione Nazionale per i Missionary Italiani" was presenting in 1908 the "Federazione Italica Gens" for the protection of Italian Emigrants and the preservation of Italian culture in countries overseas:

*"Much has been and is being done by religious orders with residences in America for the religious and social assistance of Italian emigrants. In order of time, we find Italian friars of the Minor Order in various places of South America, namely in Argentina, Brazil, and Bolivia, and in several localities of North America; the Capuchins in Argentina and Brazil; the Jesuits in the Rocky Mountains, California, Alaska, at Montreal, and New York; the Salesians in Patagonia, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, in almost all the States of Central and Western America, at New York and San Francisco; the*

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<sup>30</sup> From an Article or Lecture of P. Pisani, pp. 19-23 (Arch. G.S., Fondo Pisani).

<sup>31</sup> Vicentini, Diario, January 4, 1907, Vol. IV, p. 175 (Arch. G.S., 1642).

**HISTORY OF THE SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATION - VOL 4**  
**PART ONE - INTERNAL HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATION - 1896 - 1919**

**CHAPTER 3**

Pallottines in the State of Río Grande, in Uruguay and Argentina, at Valparaiso and New York; the Missionaries of the "Cristoforo Colombo" Institute, founded by the late Bishop Scalabrini in many places of Brazil and of the United States; the Missionaries of the Roman Seminary for Foreign Missions in Mexico; the Missionaries of Genoa's Brignole Sale College in various places of the United States; the Piedmontese Missionaries of Canon Sorasio in the State of Santa Catarina; Passionists, Oblates, Redemptorists, Dominicans, Benedictines, Vicentians, etc., in isolated missions; a remarkable number of diocesan priests, engaged especially in pastoral work in parishes of the dioceses of the United States; and lastly, the Institute of the "Missionaries of Emigration", recently founded and directed by Mons. Coccolo.

A good number of these missions are supported by communities of Sisters, among whom we know the Franciscans of Gemona, the Sister Apostles of the Sacred Heart of the Institute "Cristoforo Colombo", the "Daughters of Mary, help of Christians", the "Daughters of St. Ann", and the "Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart" who are directing institutions highly honoring the Italian name in South America, and more so in the United States.

All these institutions and religious personnel, regular and secular, and others, of whom we have no information as yet, - on whose understanding we count for this involuntary omission, - are already zealously engaged in the religious assistance or in the instruction and education of Italian emigrants; however, it is not ours to judge whether anything better or more could be done also in this field. As of now, we must only point out that not all of them devote themselves specifically to the assistance, both material and social, of emigrants; and even those who, like the Missionaries of Bishop Scalabrini, do so with much zeal, operate only separately and on a local basis, without outside support, and without the effectiveness deriving from the coordination of many homogeneous forces oriented towards the same scope. And so, this Association is of the opinion that the results of their action for the material and social assistance of our emigrants is not wholly adequate as yet, when considering the number and importance of Italian Institutions and Religious personnel existing in America. On the other hand, though the Royal Commissariat for Emigration has tried for many years, and still is, to promote, with much interest and concern, the founding of "Patronati" in America, and has established some itself, one cannot say that its unceasing care has reached the results its efforts would have deserved.

By impulse of the Commissariat and through local initiative, many "Patronati" were indeed founded in the free colonies of both North and South America, but, except for a few praiseworthy cases, the greatest part gave and give inadequate practical results. The same may be said of the "Patronati" existing in Italy; first among them, no doubt, the "Patronato" of Genoa, founded by Bishop Scalabrini, and supported by our Association in cooperation with the local Committee. The Genoa office has rendered a service of the greatest importance to Italian emigration, due essentially to the apostolic zeal, the active and inexhaustible charity of Fr. Pietro Maldotti. His action, however, is limited to the port of Genoa, and only by way of exception and with little effect is it projected beyond across the Ocean, for the fact that there does not exist as yet a well-organized and coordinated network of "Patronati" there to which the Genoa Office could direct the people it would recommend.

This drawback is affecting in a particular way other "Patronage" Centers born by initiative of the diocesan committees here, especially in the venetian provinces, and elsewhere, by initiative of other associations, as at Lucca, Florence, and Rome, where the "Segretariato Femminile Permanente per la Protezione delle Donne e dei Fanciulli Emigrati" ("Ladies' Permanent Secretariat for the Protection of Children and Women Emigrants") has recently been set up. The action of these Committees is also limited by the lack of appropriate offices, a condition that dwarfs, as anyone can see, the most noble efforts and the most determined wills.

Having considered this state of things, it became clear to our Association that, in place of one complete organism for the assistance of emigrants, there are instead a number of autonomous bodies, all more or less incomplete and acting independently of each other in fields of activity ever more or less limited, without unity of direction and coordination with consequent inadequate results for the intended scope.

It seemed to us, besides, that it will not be possible to get out of this disunity without the direct and improved coordinated help of the numerous and well disciplined forces the Church can dispose of. So also we deemed it right and necessary that such coordination be carried out in direct relationship with the Royal Commissariat for Emigration. Since its formation, it has constantly showed itself free of all religious prejudice or reservation and willing to welcome the help of all with the only scope of properly assisting emigrants outside the Kingdom for their greater good and for the better name of Italy. In its twenty years of activities our Association has rendered eminent services to the missions. These, in turn, have greatly appreciated and acknowledged them with sentiments of respectful trust. Based on these considerations it appeared to us that our Association may by now be the providential instrument for gathering together and organizing all religious forces related to the desire and dream of the late Bishop Scalabrini, the pioneer and apostle of Italian emigrants overseas.

For this reason, convinced of fulfilling a duty, our Association sets out on persuing this extremely serious task, without minimizing its great difficulties, well aware that the road will be long and hard, and the results late in coming. Still, it starts out with full trust, certain of the support not only of all those who, like us, approve of the highly religious and patriotic ideals of our Association, but of those also who, though not in complete agreement with us, place the welfare of emigrants and the honor of Italy above all prejudice and discrimination.

To reach the goal, this association is promoting a Federation of the Religious Orders in charge of Italian missions with Institutes already devoted to the protection of emigrants overseas. This federation shall have its central headquarters in Turin by its General Secretariat, Via Accademia delle Scienze, 4, and be assisted by a council in which Religious Orders and all Institutes supporting it may be represented. The "*Italica Gens*" - as this Federation will be called - does not intend to found new institutions of its own, if only by exception and in cases of urgent need. Its constant norm of action shall be not to interfere in any way with the full autonomy of member Institutes; besides, it shall do its utmost to help them reach their respective goals with all the moral

and material means at its disposal, always aiming gradually at a progressive action of coordination of all the activities of its members.

The "Central Secretariat of Italica Gens", with headquarters in Turin, shall meet the expenses for its functioning with:

1. grants from our Association;
2. eventual grants from other Institutions and Corporations;
3. eventual donations from philanthropists, which shall not be solicited, however, by public appeals to national charities, to avoid depriving other institutions already active in similar work, of the necessary funds they receive from them.

Turin, December 1908.  
The General Chairman of the  
Association for Italian Emigrants,  
Carlo Bassi."<sup>32</sup>

In early 1910, Fr. Vicentini summed up the adhesion of the Scalabrinian Missionaries to the "Italica Gens" for Mons. Pisani as follows:

*"Not all our Missionaries are equally interested in "Italica Gens", not all of them are qualified to run a regular secretariat, with all the work that must be carried on in parishes; we are too short of personnel and means. A normal secretariat in downtown New York should be enough, and more so as there are also the Salesians...*

*In South America the secretariats will have very little to do because there is no need of them. Our missionaries do much for Italians; they speak and preach only in Italian; they have Italian schools that the government should support, subsidize..."<sup>33</sup>*

The fact is that by early 1910 the secretariats of "Italica Gens" run by Scalabrinians were thirteen: 3 in Chicago, 2 in New York, one in Buffalo, Kansas City, and St. Louis, in the United States; one in Hamilton, in Canada (at that time Fr. Bonomi was about to leave the Congregation); and 3 in Encantado, Santa Felicidade, and Timbotuva in Brazil.

## **5. The "Pontificio Collegio per l'Emigrazione"**

With the Motu Proprio "Iam Pridem" of March 19, 1914, Pius X gave life to the "Pontificio Collegio per l'Emigrazione Italiana" to the end of remedying the scarcity of priests in the assistance of Italian emigrants not only through restrictions (as had been done until then by preventing the departure of undesirable priests for immigration countries, especially in the Americas), but also through an initiative suited for providing properly prepared priests:

"For these reasons, wishing to provide as best as we can to this need with a remedy that may cure the evil of its roots, We have decreed the institution in this Noble City of a college of priests for the assistance of Italian emigrants which We establish with the present "Motu Proprio." To this College only those young Italian priests of the diocesan clergy shall be admitted, who apply upon consent and recommendation of their

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<sup>32</sup> Bassi, Circular Letter, Dec. 1908 (Arch. G.S., Fondo Pisani).

<sup>33</sup> Vicentini, Diario, February 3, 1910, Vol. V, pp. 228229 (Arch. G.S., 1642).



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bishops. They will reside there one or two years to learn language, customs, and culture of one of the regions where communities of Italian emigrants have settled, so that they may be better prepared to exercise their activities amongst their emigrant countrymen with greater fruit."<sup>34</sup>

The project of a seminary to be founded in Rome for the preparation of priests for Italian emigrants had already been presented to the Pope by Mons. Pietro Pisani in 1910, by Fr. Lemius, Procurator General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1912, and by Bishop Rodolfi of Vicenza in 1918. Under certain aspects, the project receives its inspiration from Bishop Bonomelli. Mons. Pisani was a member of Bonomelli's Institute's Ecclesiastical Board of Consultors, and Bishop Rodolfi had been chairman of the Institute itself since 1914, following the death of its founder.

But, it had connections also with the Scalabrinian Institute even independently of the fact that the idea of founding a seminary of priests for emigrants was first launched in 1887 by Bishop Scalabrini who in his "Memorandum" of 1905 had later on pointed out that the main purpose for the proposed Congregation, or Central Commission "Pro Emigratis Catholicis", had to be the choosing of priests to be assigned to the assistance of emigrants.

As seen above, the Scalabrinian Society had been transferred over to the jurisdiction of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation on which the "Urban College" of Priests for Italian emigrants had also to depend directly.

Fr. Vicentini had personally wondered about the intentions of the Holy See in regard to the Scalabrinian Institute:

*"In order that I may give an answer to my confreres, following the Holy Father's venerable Motu Proprio of March 19, I would wish, I would be much interested, rather, to know whether after the institution of the new 'Collegio Urbano' of priests for Italian Emigrants our Institute be allowed, or will have, to continue on the same conditions as before as regards both its internal constitution and external action and relationships. I inquired about it of the Sacred Congregation for Religious on which our Institute depends, and I was told to have recourse to the Consistorial Congregation in charge of Emigration, as I am now doing with this humble petition of mine."*<sup>35</sup>

Quite surprisingly, Cardinal De Lai answered Fr. Vicentini that it was his intention to entrust him with the direction of the "Collegio" inviting him to prepare the draft for a rule.

Shortly afterwards, however, Pius X died, and Fr. Vicentini thus wrote to Fr. Demo in August 1914:

*"We shall see now with the new Pope how it will be with the question of the 'Collegio Urbano' the late Pontiff intended to entrust us; by request of Card. De Lai, already at the end of July I had proposed several missionaries. It is my opinion that the project will for the most part fall through."*<sup>36</sup>

In early November he wrote again on the same subject:

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<sup>34</sup> Pius X, Motu Proprio "Iam Pridem", Acta Apostolicae Sedis, VI (1914), pp. 173-176.

<sup>35</sup> Vicentini to Card. De Lai, Rome, April 26, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 161).

<sup>36</sup> Vicentini to Demo, Piacenza, August 26, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 555/2).

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*"It seems as though nothing is being said any more about the new Pontifical College for Emigrants. I believe there are too many difficulties."<sup>37</sup>*

Instead, right in that month the Holy See chose Fr. Giacomo Gambera as Rector of the College. In his memoirs he writes:

*"No sooner free of the burden of being Provincial, than another unexpected surprise! A few months later, without any warning, f I receive from the Consistorial Congregation a Papal Decree appointing me Rector of the new Apostolic Institute for Italian Catholic Missions in foreign lands to be immediately opened in Rome by the will of the Holy Father.*

*There is no need to say that, considering my inability, I was terrified by this order. I did not feel I had either the strength or the qualities for accepting such a serious responsibility!*

*In order not to commit the irreverent act of a quick refusal, I entreated for time to think it over, and I requested to examine the Statutes. Except for a few disciplinary differences, the new Institute had the same identical scope as our Congregation.*

*So, to insure the future of our Institute, threatened by another more prestigious one, I was willing to take the responsibility on a temporary basis, at least, if it were only possible to have both institutions united.*

*But they wanted to remain separate and autonomous. Since I had been a Scalabrinian for many years, I deemed it a duty of delicate loyalty to decline that honorific position in order not to be a part of a strong competitor."<sup>38</sup>*

The letter of Fr. Gambera's resignation was sent by Fr. Vicentini to Cardinal De Lai on April 27, 1915<sup>39</sup>; but, for some months already, the Superior General himself had foreseen that the opening of the College would be suspended due to the poor financial conditions caused by the outbreak of WWI.<sup>40</sup>

In fact, the actual opening of the "Collegio Urbano" on Via della Scrofa 70 took place only in the month of October 1920, at the same time with the institution of the Prelate for Italian emigration.<sup>41</sup>

## **6. Antecedents of the General Chapter 1919**

The consequences of the events above reported, and especially of the situations conditioning them, are all found in a letter written by Fr. Vicentini in September 1912 to Fr. Demo, Superior of the Eastern Province in the United States, who kept insisting for missionaries, or for auxiliary priests, at least:

*"And now I come to the important question of the need for priests. Quite a few apply already, and I sincerely hope that someone may possibly be admitted; there is little chance, however, because should one look carefully into the matter, he will soon discover that they are either discarded by their diocese, or rebels, or money seekers. What can we do? I have also always been contrary to*

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<sup>37</sup> Vicentini to Demo, Piacenza, November 2, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 555/2).

<sup>38</sup> Gambera, "Memoirs", p. 65 (Arch. G.S., 1558/3).

<sup>39</sup> Vicentini to Rinaldi, Piacenza, April 27, 1915 (Arch. G.S., 17/1).

<sup>40</sup> Vicentini to Demo, Rome, January 14, 1915 (Arch. G.S., 555/3).

<sup>41</sup> The "Prelate for Italian Emigration" was instituted on October 23, 1920 by the note "Esistono in Italia" of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, (Acta Apostolicae Sedis, XII (1920), pp. 53 ss.) For more information, cfr. A. Perotti, op. cit.

*auxiliary salaried priests; but I quite understand that many a time we cannot do without them. Besides, I believe that certain local superiors treat them better, and trust them more than their confreres; and let me say it, they sometimes prefer to have a stranger who is not in a position to criticize them, than a confrere who could be a witness to their conduct and observance of the Rule. Wherefrom does the craze of many of our Missionaries for being alone and independent spring forth? If you only knew what sadness assails me when I consider the little priestly and missionary spirit of sacrifice (I do not mean for work, because much is generally being done in the ministry) but of detachment from money and one's will. How much do I have to struggle in order to sooth, calm down, satisfy this or that one! I am striving to hold high the prestige of our Institute with the Holy See, and it seems as though I have succeeded a little; the 'Brief' of the Holy Fr. proves it; but I should also complain about the little spirit of unity of many! Were it not for the need to save face for the Institute, I would not hold on to my position, which is not for me, perhaps; a lot more happily would I live in the forests of Brazil!"<sup>42</sup>*

After deploring Fr. Bonomi's leave from the Pious Society to go to Hamilton, Canada, welcomed by Bishop of that diocese, he continued:

*"Unfortunately, Bishops are too easy sometimes in admitting them among their clergy; on the other hand, they excuse themselves with saying that they do not look for them and they cannot refuse them, provided they are acceptable, when all normal procedures for their release have been duly fulfilled (...). And so, the Bishops get their priests, nice and ready at their service (...).*

*Do your utmost then, dear Father, to keep the few we have closely united; as of now, let us not consider scattering them; let us carefully hold on to what we have in the hope the Lord will send workers."<sup>43</sup>*

Already some months earlier he had lamented the lack of unity, which still persisted in spite of the equality he intended to bring about by substituting the vows:

*"It is deplorable that so many of our confreres should have such little love for the Congregation, and so much difficulty with living together. We have little unity, and in it is our weakness!"<sup>44</sup>*

And he was right when finding its cause in the lack of an adequate formation:

*"We deplore many desertions of our young priests, who, after a few years in the priesthood, soon act on their own for an excessive desire of independence, interest, and futile reasons, as though they did not depend on an Institute, or worse yet, they leave it altogether. There may be circumstances sometimes in life to justify leaving, but we must often admit that the fault lies with us who did not know how to provide a formation respondent to the scope of our Institute imbued with the spirit of sacrifice, humility, detachment, etc... Our seminarians live like students in a boarding school, provided for in all their needs, better treated than in seminaries, under a more lenient discipline, but spiritually less assisted; from time to time they see our Missionaries back from America often behaving haughtily, etc., and so they get a false idea of the life of a missionary*

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<sup>42</sup> Vicentini to Demo, Piacenza, September 29, 1912 (Arch. G.S., 555/1).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Vicentini to Demo, Rome, January 8, 1912 (Arch. G.S., 555/1).

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*which is not what it should be; neither do they consider it necessary to go there with so much spiritual preparation. As a consequence, they grow up with weak personalities that will later on show their sad results.*<sup>45</sup>

It is not known whether an article on the "specific traits" of the training of Scalabrinian seminaries printed in those same days on "L'Emigrato Italiano in America" is attributable to Fr. Vicentini, or more probably to Fr. Rinaldi. We like to report it in its entirety as evidence of the directives guiding, intentionally at least, the Scalabrinian formation, way back then:

"Choosing here as subject of our discussion the formation proper to us as future missionaries for Italian emigrants in America, we certainly presume the need of such combination of virtue and knowledge as is required of any priest who should wish to conscientiously exercise his divine ministry amongst the people.

What is wanted of young students in our Institute is a requisite of the greatest importance, that without it our mission amongst our emigrants may be impossible or fruitless. Many of our confreres who entered our ranks as priests, exercise their ministry quite well, compensating with the pastoral experience gained in their homeland and of a fine common sense for the lack of the preparation we are speaking of, which is indispensable, however, for those who are assigned for the first time to their field of work from the tranquility of the Seminary. Otherwise, they would have to accept to spend the first months of their arrival in America in the study of the new environment and language, thus depriving the mission, ordinarily so much in need of it, of the contribution of their fruitful activity. And, in the face of massive difficulties, they indeed run the risk of experiencing in their heart a decrease of the zeal for good, which has led them to reach their brethren in foreign lands at the cost of so many sacrifices.

It is necessary to point out now the specific aspects of our ministry so that we may determine the necessary requirements of virtues and knowledge it demands of those intending to prepare themselves to exercise it with dignity and success. I derive these aspects from the diversity of places, persons, and circumstances facing a missionary, as compared with a priest in his own country.

First of all he must generously leave the most beloved and adored persons; his home town where everything, perhaps, promises happiness, and the most deeply felt family memories are cherished; where, who knows how often in his happy boyhood, he had planned to spend a quiet life, filled with his dreams and hopes. Besides, he must hold in contempt the attraction of an alluring future of success and honors, and accept his vocation with a detached and generous heart.

Now, in order to do all this, there is need of generosity and character. True enough, many other people leave their hometowns, families, and loved ones to go far away across the wide Ocean without any pretense to heroism; still, these also, unless they be deprived of all noble feelings, experience deep sorrow in leaving their sweet homeland though they be led on by the mirage of a better luck, and their hearts be less sensitive in perceiving the strength and the intensity of great feelings than those who have been formed to a kinder and better educated spirit.

However, when he willingly goes to the mission his Lord is assigning him, the missionary cannot, and should not, forget the sweet beauty of those memories and kind sentiments that render his exile less sorrowful and which his vocation is calling him to keep alive and rekindle in the souls of his brethren.

Indeed, how could he comfort poor emigrants longingly thinking of their native land and loved ones left there; how is he to revive sweet and salutary feelings in the hearts of the unfortunate ones, who have forgotten everything, old parents waiting a long time in vain for news and help, their sorrowing wives, who, when asked by the children about their Fr. have often to feign a greeting and a kiss from an ingrate and unfaithful husband; how could a missionary remind these people - and there are not just a few of them - of the love of family and country if he cannot draw from the depth of his soul those good and sincere words, that yearning and penetrating force, that derive from inner conviction and give an irresistible strength and efficacy to a voice moved by tears!

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<sup>45</sup> Vicentini to Rinaldi, Piacenza, June 6, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 16/2).

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A student of Bishop Scalabrini's Institute must combine a strong love for his country with esteem and affection for the foreign lands where he will have to exercise his apostolate, where his confreres are cordially hosted, and where many emigrants of ours find work and their livelihood. In practice, he shows this love for the place that will be his voluntary exile also by studying its history, ethnography, and language, during his years of preparation. Such openness and generosity of spirit insures us that our action will be appreciated and supported also in America, and beneficial not only to Italians, but also to all those who look upon us with good will and favor. In fact, by being faithful to our genuine Italian character, and by keeping it alive in our fellow emigrants we witness well also to our religion, because the spirit of Catholicism is so much a part of the artistic, literary, and scientific glory and of the history of Italy, as to effect a more intense and fruitful union with Rome (by which Christ is Roman), of the other nations where our culture and language is told.

We mentioned, so far, what a missionary leaves behind on his departure, and with what dispositions he should arrive at the hosting nations; let us find out, now, what kind of people are the beloved sons he will find in his new family. Generally, our emigrants leave their country in their younger years in full possession of strong arms used in plowing or in the factory. These are their physical conditions, excellent and always appreciated, wherever Italians make their contribution of intelligence and work.

Concerning their souls, our young men - by the help of God now in the greatest part literate - are not without faith. Due to a very limited or non-existent religious education, however, their religion represents a vague and confused feeling that includes all the most cherished notions and affections, such as the loving care of one's mother, the memories of their beloved family, of a pious childhood, and of their hometown. Indeed, the moral effectiveness of a religious experience of this kind cannot be a deep one; but it succeeds ordinarily in keeping Italian Catholics on the right path or in leading them back to the practice of their duties should they abandoned it.

One must keep in mind these interior dispositions concerning religion and virtue if he should wish to understand the behavior of those emigrants who upon arriving in America, unable to preserve the beneficial effects of good memories and away from the action of an Italian priest to remind them of their country and beloved ones left behind, become indifferent and apathetic, or do not know how to resist the allurements of religious sectarians and politicians. These basic sentiments are useful in preserving the faith and favoring the spiritual growth of those who remain faithful to the Lord and to their family's and country's traditions.

For these reasons, religious instruction must be adapted to their initial capacity to be developed later on especially regarding moral behavior for which the basis of a genuine and strong conviction is lacking. Prepared this way, parents will be able to impart to their children an education imbued with a faith that may keep them strong in the practice of virtue.

In this way, a missionary, while accomplishing the religious and moral betterment of adults, is also preparing the new generations for God and country, which will be a great resource for Catholicism in the Americas. We must disprove the pessimistic views of those who, judging especially from the religious ignorance of Italians migrating into foreign lands, are afraid they may not remain as faithful to Mother Church as the Irish, Polish, and Germans. Such people do not know what deep and generous convictions our fellow emigrants are capable of when assisted with loving care and kept protected from the allurements of evil men.

I mentioned the sectarian action, unfortunately not always resisted to by our emigrants; it is one of the most serious dangers they encounter especially in North America; here Protestant proselytism, often by other Italians already prey to heresy, is conducted with all means, first of all, money and material help: these are irresistible temptations for a poor man who has migrated to a foreign land in search of better luck.

In the large cities of North and South America socialism and anarchism also recruit many of our poor emigrants. These, in turn, engage with amazing zeal and effectiveness in gaining others while hindering the action of the priest of God. These impious campaigns must be neutralized by the apostolate of the missionary upon whom, therefore, rests the duty of a steady vigilance, and of uncovering the snares laid down at the feet of the unaware. To this end, missionary must know the Protestant doctrines if he is to oppose them with the right Catholic doctrine; besides, he should have a commanding knowledge of the meaning and the spirit of the Bible, which, interpreted with subjective criteria, and historic and philosophical prejudices, forms the basis on which our heterodox brethren build their different and discordant systems of faith. Above all,

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we must make our own the idea and spirit of the Apostle St. Paul, so that our preaching may be 'living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword. It penetrates and divides soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the reflections and thoughts of the heart.' (Hebr. 4,12). Thus we shall disprove with the facts the old accusation, hurled by Protestants at the Catholic clergy of not appreciating the Scriptures, and especially of keeping from the faithful, as though through fear, the marvelous Letters of the Apostle of the Gentiles.

This type of polemic biblical formation is required also by our Rule, Ch. 4, 2; our Venerable Founder impressed upon our Missionaries the need of it in word and in deed by making an extensive and ingenious use of the Bible throughout all his pastoral writings.

Let's go back now to the idea expressed on the local sentiments and expressions of the faith of our people to draw some practical conclusions. It is a well-known fact that all regions of Italy contribute much, though in different degrees, to emigration overseas, while presenting, on the other hand, traits and customs quite different from each other; a missionary must keep this very much on his mind if he is ever to carry on an effective work. This is so true that several of our confreres back from the field deem it helpful to visit the places their parishioners hail from - emigrants of the same region tend generally to settle close together in the Americas - in order to know in person the towns they heard so often remembered with heartfelt longing, and to gather the information they will report with warm eloquence to their faithful when they return. And with what emotion they listen; how much more do they appreciate their priest, whom now they consider as one of their own towns. We can gain these experiences already while training in the seminary where contact with young students from different regions of Italy gives us the chance to know and evaluate better than in books these differences of temperament and customs. Furthermore, this must get us used to that sense of respect and tolerance without which not only will charity among confreres be impossible, but, worse yet, the very apostolate of the missionary will be fruitless and offensive to those of other regions who do not share with him traits and tastes.

With this we do not intend to say that the priest must give in to every odd pretense, especially, when worship is concerned; however, experience shows that, though not always in the field of liturgy, he can accede within the limits of propriety to many customs brought to America from the old country; they certainly exert some degree of effectiveness in keeping Italian sentiments alive. Besides, time, along with changes in social conditions and environment, tend to make these local traits, and unfortunately other ones as well, disappear from our emigrants in large cities. This way, a missionary will succeed through the years in getting the faithful used to more serious and devout tastes without any offensive antagonism.

We must come to this because the lofty dignity of the house of God requires it and the faithful must derive genuine devotion from the sacred liturgy, but more so because Bishop Scalabrini has precise orders on this point in his letter to the Missionaries of 1892.

He reminds them that only the Bishops of the American dioceses are the ordinary and legitimate judges on matters concerning the spiritual welfare of the faithful entrusted to their care, as well as on the most opportune time and manner for carrying them out and bringing them to an end.'

The study of social science and economics could be considered another particular feature of our education. In fact, a missionary must also busy himself as much as he can with the material welfare of our emigrants, and, wherever necessary act as the chairman of societies, cooperatives or like institutions for mutual and public assistance. In any case, he must nourish at all times a spirit of unity and charity always urging our Italian communities to preserve their own character to the end of making them strong and united in doing good.

As to relations between members of the Congregation, Bishop Scalabrini used to say that brotherly love must be their special trait, so that anyone who knows them may give witness to them being of one heart and one mind. Indeed, our confreres stand in need of reciprocal love; thus, in intimate communion of purpose and ideal they will experience a multiplying of energies; supported by the charity and prayers of all they will enjoy in their hearts an unceasing stimulus for action and sacrifice that are born of and live by love.

Brotherly love will be of comfort and encouragement especially to missionaries destined to the immense regions of South America where they have to live by themselves most of times, many miles away from their fellow priests, often in the midst of a few families around his poor house while he has to bring the comforts of his ministry at the cost of much hardship to many others widely scattered over a vast territory. Since their seminary days our young students must acquire this virtue so as to bring along to the missions the freshness of pure affections and the

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treasure of a docile will that may give new vigor to aging missionaries and a ray of hope that they will leave the precious heritage of souls, joy and crown of the priests of God, into the hands of worthy confreres. For this reason, the students of the Congregation shall be intensely interested in our work, and follow its vicissitudes with prayer and a vivid desire to make themselves ever more fit for the Scalabrinian apostolate.

In brief, the particular aspects of our education may be summed up as follows: - spirit of sacrifice by which we readily leave country and loved ones, honors and pleasures of the world; - love for the American countries whose language and culture we must study; - a theological and apologetics preparation especially regarding Protestantism; - an attitude of prudent tolerance for the traditions of our emigrants; - great charity for one's confreres and generous obedience to Superiors; - exact compliance with the discipline of the dioceses where our missions are located, and dependence on their Bishops.

We shall accomplish all this with a big heart and happy success on condition we have real love for our emigrants, and a strong desire to respond to the sublime vocation the Lord gave us. May we never be wanting in love and faith, and our work of redemption and salvation will ever be pleasing to God and men."<sup>46</sup>

Right when efforts were being made to remedy the shortages by a wider recruiting of young vocations and by the opening of the "Scuola Apostolica" (Minor Seminary) at Crespano del Grappa, World War I broke out! It drastically reduced the number of vocations, it precluded the resupplying and the rejuvenating of the missions, and it prevented the normal succession of the leadership structures.

The six year term of the Superior General was to elapse in 1916. Due to the war, it became impossible to summon a General Chapter; for this reason he petitioned the Holy See whether it would be allowed to elect his successor by a vote through the mail; he did not feel he could continue any longer, due also to sickness and age. He was almost seventy years old.<sup>47</sup>

The Sacred Congregation for Religious answered that no change of government be made, and that the Chapter be delayed a year.<sup>48</sup>

*"This provision is unfortunately too hard on me, especially considering my physical condition! Some three years ago, I had presented formal petition to the same Sacred Congregation that I be relieved of my responsibility; I was refused; reluctantly I resigned myself to wait for the end of my six years. Now, when for serious reasons of health I should have greater cause to be freed of my burden, God disposed that also the political vicissitudes contribute to increase my sorrow and to slow the progress of the Institute which would rightly expect another head and new, better ideas and energies."<sup>49</sup>*

In 1917, when the year's extension expired, Fr. Vicentini again requested instructions of the Holy See: he did not ask this time for a new election on his replacement, but suggested that Fr. Massimo Rinaldi, Vicar General of the Pious Society since July 25, 1915, be empowered to act as a provisional Superior General. Cardinal Cassetta provided that the General Chapter be delayed another year, and that Fr. Vicentini continue in his post making use of the cooperation of the Vicar General.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> "I Lati Caratteristici della Nostra Educazione", "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", anno VIII, June 15, 1914, pp. 15-20.

<sup>47</sup> Vicentini to Card. Falconio, Rome, June 6, 1916 (Arch. G.S., 17/1).

<sup>48</sup> Card. Falconio to Vicentini, Rome, June 6, 1916 (Arch. G.S., 17/1).

<sup>49</sup> Vicentini, Circular letter, June 10, 1916 (Arch. G.S., 17/1).

<sup>50</sup> Card. Cassetta to Vicentini, Rome, Aug. 11, 1917 (Arch. G.S., 17/2).

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Still another extension was granted until seen fit by the Holy See in September, 1918. In giving notice of this decision to the confreres, Fr. Vicentini exhorted them once again to unity and obedience with a strong sense of belonging to the Institute.

*"Unfortunately, the pressing needs of the institutions at hand and the scarcity of personnel require such a dispersion of the members that there hardly remains any physical resemblance of a community. By human frailty, this condition not only tends to physical dispersion, but, what is worse, also to spiritual estrangement; each is tempted to consider himself independent, to do for himself and by himself, not to need the Superiors of the Institute except in extreme cases. Anyone can see how harmful all this may be for the Institute and for its members as well! Dependence on one's Superiors must be practical and real; an account of our work must be given to the superiors, and their permission or opinion must be obtained before acting upon or engaging in matters of a certain importance, especially when they may imply present or future obligations on the part of the Institute. Our obligations towards the Institute demand all this. Its honor and preservation before God and men must form the scope of our concern no less than our own interests."<sup>51</sup>*

At the end of the war, by a decree dated February 11, 1919, at last the Sacred Congregation for Religious gave permission for the convocation of the General Chapter, which was called together with a circular letter of Fr. Vicentini on February 20.

The second General Chapter was held in Rome from August 20 to 29, 1919. Fr. Pacifico Chenuil was elected Superior General. We will deal with the discussions and deliberations of this Chapter in the next volume.

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<sup>51</sup> Vicentini, Circular letter, Sept. 22, 1918 (Arch. G.S., 17/3).



**CHAPTER IV**

**THE HOUSES OF PIACENZA, ROME, CRESpano, AND GENOA**

**1. The Mother House (1895-1919)**

Concerned over the problem of forming the missionaries, while still admitting clerical students and priests, Bishop Scalabrini thought of carrying out a radical solution by opening a minor seminary where candidates to the religious life and to the specific mission of the Institute could be gradually prepared from their early years. He appointed a commission formed by Canon Camillo Mangot, Fr. Giovanni Busi and Luigi Villa, pastors, Fr. Giuseppe Molinari, rector of the Mother House, and Fr. Giuseppe Dalle Piane, professor of theology of the same, with the scope of opening "Il Piccolo Collegio Cristoforo Colombo". At the first meeting on August 13, 1895, Fr. Giuseppe Molinari was chosen as chairman, and the commission proposed that the number of students be limited for the time being to twenty; they were to attend high school and philosophy at the diocesan seminary, and then continue on for their novitiate and theology in the Institute of the Missionaries of St. Charles.<sup>1</sup>

On August 17, 1895, the second meeting insisted above all on the following directive:

"It is absolutely necessary that a well-qualified missionary be in charge full-time of the seminary. However, in order not to separate the two communities, the Rector of the Missionaries of St. Charles shall have the general direction of the seminary."<sup>2</sup>

At the third meeting, on September 2, 1895, it was decided to immediately go ahead with the needed preparations, and to open the new minor seminary in November.<sup>3</sup> Its opening was afterwards scheduled for October 25, 1895, the date when the choice of the first fifteen seminarians was completed. More were not accepted because the new four wing building of the Institute "Cristoforo Colombo" built for this purpose had not been all finished.<sup>4</sup> Two of those fifteen reached the priesthood: Fr. Vittorio Viola, a former student of the Orphanage "Cristoforo Colombo" at São Paulo o, and Fr. Vittorio Gregori.

The first candidates began attending classes at the diocesan seminary on November 5, 1895. A few days later, Fr. Francesco Gregori, then a curate at the cathedral, was named the Spiritual Director, while the newly ordained priest Fr. Antonio Serraglia was appointed Prefect,<sup>5</sup> remaining there until August, 1896. Considering dismissals and new admissions, the report of the school year 1896-1897 shows that the students of the first two grades are still fifteen.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. "Adunanza della Commissione del Piccolo Collegio Cristoforo Colombo" (Meetings of the Commission, etc.), p. 1 (Arch. G.S., 541/2).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 7 and 9.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

However, because of financial reasons, for the school year 1897-1898 they were brought down to twelve.<sup>7</sup> In fact, economic difficulties were getting evermore pressing. Already in early 1896 Fr. Molinari was asking Fr. Zaboglio for help on behalf of Bishop Scalabrini "to relieve him this way a little of so many worries as to finding the funds necessary to carry on; we are some thirty people, daily fed and clothed, practically all at the expense of the Bishop."<sup>8</sup>

This sorry note ("*the coffers are empty*") resounds often in the successive letters. The Founder, who had spent all his personal resources, had no choice but to throw open his arms and say: "*I have nothing left; see what you can do yourselves.*"

In a letter to Fr. Demo, the rector of the Mother House wrote:

*"Our family grows and grows! There are 4 lay brothers, 14 novices, 7 students in Philosophy, 2 in Theology, 1 priest; 36 mouths in all..."*<sup>9</sup>

Bishop Scalabrini decided to write to Card. M. Ledochowski, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith with a petition that the subsidy promised at the time of the founding by his predecessor Card. Simeoni be continued:

*"When the founding of this Institution was being discussed, naturally the question of the means necessary to it also came up. I could dispose, then, of a rather considerable amount of money, more than 20 thousand liras, granted me by the generosity of the Holy Fr., and some other donations by pious persons. It is right by these funds that for the opening of the Mother House I was able to acquire a vast building with a public church attached, adapt it, divide it into three sections, one each for minor seminarians, novices, and professed religious, bring it to completion, furnish it, etc., etc. Altogether, some 146,000 liras. And how about supporting the students? I was to provide to this through free donations and the yearly ten thousand liras from the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda promised me by the late Card. Simeoni. This sum was, in fact, sent to me the first year. A check for eight thousand liras was issued to me the following year; but then?... Good Card. Simeoni died; His Excellency the Secretary was transferred elsewhere, the other subordinate officials were changed or promoted to other duties, and since then, I never received a penny from Propaganda.*

*Besides, even private donations themselves, rather considerable at first, dwindled almost to nothing later on. Then it was when I decided to take a tour of Italian cities, giving lectures on the subject: I was thus able to put something together, which helped me to be less dependent for help from Propaganda."*<sup>10</sup>

And he added:

*"In the meanwhile, I do not know how to carry on anymore. The seminary of the Institute, a community of forty by now, costs me some thirty thousand liras a year, including salaries for professors and expenses for expeditions (of missionaries), which are quite considerable. In order not to incur any debts I*

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<sup>7</sup> Cfr. Letter Molinari-Zaboglio, Piacenza, September 6, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 541/9).

<sup>8</sup> Letter Molinari to Zaboglio, Piacenza, s.d. (Arch. G.S., 541/9).

<sup>9</sup> Molinari to Demo, Piacenza, October 19, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 541/9).

<sup>10</sup> Scalabrini to Card. Ledochowski, Piacenza, December 3, 1897, draft (Arch. G.S., 7/3).

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*was forced to sell coach and horses, and to surrender all my possessions. Your Eminence will forgive me, therefore, if I dare ask you for the subsidy promised me from the beginning...."*<sup>11</sup>

The Cardinal answered with the promise that the Sacred Congregation would help the Institute as much as possible; in the meantime he was sending an extraordinary subsidy of three thousand liras from his personal funds.<sup>12</sup> At the "financial meeting" on December 28, 1897, Propaganda Fide decided on resumption of the subsidy for ten thousand liras yearly, which was regularly sent until 1908 when the Scalabrinian Congregation was subtracted from dependence from Propaganda.

Fr. Molinari continued as Rector of the Mother House, sometimes by himself, or helped along at other times by some confreres, such as Fr. Rollereri, who acted as bursar until the beginning of 1896, when he had to leave because of sickness; Fr. Giuseppe Pandolfi, who was Vice Rector in 1899; and Fr. Marco Simoni, back in Italy to recuperate: the latter was of great help to Fr. Molinari whose health kept deteriorating rapidly.

In early 1900, while informing him that he had been confined to his room for the last 35 days, Fr. Molinari writes to Fr. Demo as follows:

*"Lucky for me for Fr. Simoni, back here from Brazil, where he will return! We are forty-eight people now; we have 16 novices (...) In the past three years ten were admitted from the minor seminary."*<sup>13</sup>

Fr. Simoni had to prolong his stay in Italy because Bishop Scalabrini was forced to relieve Fr. Molinari of his responsibility as Rector in March of 1900, appointing Fr. Simoni as acting Rector, Fr. Bernardo Casassa as assistant of the clerics, and Fr. Pacifico Chenuil as assistant of the novices and of the minor seminary.

When Fr. Molinari died on May 31, 1900, he was succeeded by Fr. Bartholomew Rollereri, who then resumed the direction of the Mother House for two years until his death which occurred on June 21, 1902. Fr. Francesco Morassi was acting Rector for two months to be succeeded by Fr. Oreste Alussi, who then sent a circular letter to the missionaries asking for financial support. This letter was dated August 5, 1905.

From the few remaining records we find that in 1901 in the Mother House there were 14 students of Theology, and 9 of Philosophy, and at the beginning of the school year 1902-1903 there were 8 priests (7 of whom were about to leave for North America), 5 lay brothers, 25 in Theology, 15 in Philosophy, and 15 in the minor seminary.<sup>14</sup>

According to Fr. Carlo Porrini, who was recalling the memories of his seminary days thirty years later, in 1902, when Fr. Rollereri, described by Bishop Scalabrini as "an apple with a bitter skin, but with an excellent pulp" was still

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Card. Ledochowski to Scalabrini, Rome, December 13, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 7/3).

<sup>13</sup> Molinari to Demo, Piacenza, January 3, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 541/9).

<sup>14</sup> Alussi to Demo, Piacenza, October 20, 1902 (Arch. G.S., 541/10).

living, there were 20 students of Theology, 25 of Philosophy, and 30 "little ones" (minor seminarians).

At that time not only was Theology taught in the house, but Philosophy, as well. Fr. Dalle Plane taught Dogmatics; Fr. Scrivani, Moral Theology; Fr. Francesco Gregori, Philosophy; Fr. Paolo Poggi, Literature. The Founder - recalls Fr. Porrini - visited the community often, on Sundays especially: he arrived usually at three in the afternoon, when the clerics were practicing sacred eloquence by explaining the Gospel to their fellow students.

He loved to come in unobserved from behind the altar, and then he would afterwards go and present his congratulations to the young budding orator.<sup>15</sup>

In an article published in the "*Fiamma*" (The Flame) in 1934 the same Fr. Porrini describes his perpetual profession this way:

"February 1903

31 years ago

Personal Memories

In the humble church of the "Istituto Cristoforo Colombo" in Piacenza.... That church, however, on that February 15 was radiant with lights and flowers....it was rejoicing in draperies and ornaments. Many people were crowding by the railing....common people, and high ranking dignitaries, counts, barons, lawyers, architects, doctors, public officials.

Ten young men ready for the holy immolation of their vows are kneeling on the altar steps.

Bishop Scalabrini, majestic in countenance, with sparkling eyes....turns around. His eyes are red with tears. He can hardly hide the holy emotions inspiring him.

The clerics were kneeling at the altar: Pietro Maschi, Giuseppe Chiappa, Ludovico Toma, Giacomo Garzaro, (Flaminio) Parenti, Luigi Stefanello, Pietro Negri, Giovanni Capello, Carlo Porrini.

This is the way the saintly man spoke to the young missionaries:

Before Mass: "Most beloved young men, I am speaking to you on the most important moment of your lives. In a while you will perform the most sublime act, the greatest miracle of the Evangelical teachings.

Dear Sons, my sons in the sweet prime of your lives, bid a generous farewell to the fleeting goods, the vile pleasures, and the vain honors of the world by the three perpetual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Glory! Glory to God in the highest for choosing you....

Reflect deep in your hearts.... Consider the divine step you are about to take! Let the faint-hearted withdraw now, while there is still time...., and the generous ones come forward.... Do not be afraid to ascend the high mountain. Humble, and aware of your nothingness, repeat with confidence, rather: 'In Him, Who is the source of my strength, I have strength for everything.' (Phil. 4,

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<sup>15</sup> Porrini, "Ricordi" (Memories) - (Arch. G.S., 541/12).

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13).”

At the Gospel: “Most beloved sons, in the catacombs and in the bloody arenas of Roman circuses early Christians used to sing the Creed. With eyes upward to the open to heaven, their reward, those heroic champions of the faith courageously proclaimed their beliefs before a pagan world that was preparing for them torments, swords, and burning irons. So, likewise, you also, in the presence of God your inheritance, sing the symbol of our faith before the world.”

Before Communion: “Most beloved sons, behold, the moment for your holy vows has come. 'I have greatly desired to eat this Passover with you.' (Lk 22, 15) See these tears clouding my eyes! They are tears of joy...of unbounded rejoicing! I have most ardently desired this day, this Communion, these vows; to surrender to Jesus, all those sons of mine, to Jesus, who will bring light and comfort to our brother emigrants; to nail them to His Holy Cross with the mystical nails of the vows! O gladness divine! O my sons! The heavens are open; the adorable Trinity is looking down on you! Jesus present on this altar is all afire with a burning desire to accept your profession. Mary most holy is gazing on you with deepest contentment, the Angels are weaving crowns of glory. The faithful here present can hardly hold back their tears! Generous souls, take your vows! I shall accept them...I shall put them together with my tears, and the Angels of Heaven will present them to the Throne of the Most High.”

After Mass 'Sons, my sons, all come to me that I may take you to my heart. Come! As a loving Fr., I desire to bestow a kiss on you whom the Lord has touched. You are my glory and my crown; forever bound to Jesus, live of Jesus, with Him, and for Him. Let your vows be your comfort and strength. I give you this little book: you have in it the Rules of our Institute. They will help you to observe the sacred duties of the religious life. They represent the living Word of God and of your Superiors. Love them. They will point out to you, sure and clear, the way to perfection which you vowed to achieve by your profession.

God bless you, my most beloved sons!"

During the solemn rite Bishop Scalabrini could not help crying! His countenance, all aflame, was inspired! A holy emotion was getting hold of his whole noble person! When he kissed one by one the newly professed, and took them to his heart, it looked as though it were to erupt from his chest.

Thirty-one years have gone by! The spell of that rite still casts its hold on me, still moves my heart! That embrace, that kiss by Bishop Scalabrini! I still experience it! Gentle, most kind... The kiss of a saint!

Fr. Carlo Porrini"<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Porrini, "February 1903" La Fiamma, (Sao Paulo), April 1934.

This story contradicts in part what the same author affirms in his "Memories": "Never at any time did Bishop Scalabrini have an idea of founding a true Religious Congregation. *“There are too many congregations - he used to say*

In the beginning of 1903, Fr. Paolo Poggi, a diocesan priest, was appointed to succeed Fr. Alussi, only on a temporary basis, because it was the intention of Bishop Scalabrini that the Mother House be directed by a missionary, and indeed he had set his eyes on Fr. Vicentini:

*"At the Mother House all is well. I have placed its direction in the hands of Prof. Paolo Poggi, who does his job with great care, and its administration in Mons. Giuseppe Dalle Piane's, professor of theology, who could very well be the Finance Minister of the kingdom. However, this has all been done on a provisional basis. When you will feel like coming to take things over yourself, that shall be a day of rejoicing for me, a most solemn occasion!"<sup>17</sup>*

In September of the same year when there were five deacons, five subdeacons, 20 theology students, and 15 minor seminarians<sup>18</sup> at the Mother House, the Founder repeated his request to Fr. Vicentini:

*"With this note of mine I come to ask that you accept the office of Rector of the Mother House. It is the desire of all that you be here. Fr. Novati, who just left for North America, was telling me to be the strong desire of the Fathers there that you take over the direction. With your good knowledge of both Americas, you could contribute very much to our missions. I would be very happy if you should write: 'Yes, I come in the name of the Lord.' We surely need a qualified man, and you are the one."<sup>19</sup>*

We know that Fr. Vicentini went to Italy only at the end of 1904, following Bishop Scalabrini on his return from Brazil, and he was Rector of the Mother House until September 1905, when he was elected Superior General. He was succeeded by Fr. Novati who held the post until death, which occurred on April 21, 1913. However, as he was also the Vicar General, he spent much time in the missions of North America, especially in the period from 1906 to 1910. In his absence, the Superior General himself acted as rector, helped for a certain period of time (1907-1908) by Fr. Antonio Serraglia. Assisting Fr. Novati from 1910 to 1913 was Fr. Bernardo Agnese, who left the Congregation in November 1913.

Due in part to the climate, in view of the fact that the aging and sick missionaries were retiring to the Mother House, and partly to the disputes with the Curia of Piacenza over the property of the Institute, Fr. Vicentini and some other missionaries considered for a while the idea of moving the Mother House to Rome.

Mons. Attilio Bianchi thus wrote in fact to Fr. Vicentini:

*"Fr. Novati will have reported to you about the project of moving the Institute to Rome, and both the Pope and Card. De Lai have kindly consented. What do you think? Is it feasible financially? I understand the serious difficulties; take care*

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- and I am not Saint Vincent De Paul. Rather than with a three year oath, he intended to bring good priests together, and prepare new ones, by binding them to the love for the glory of God and to the welfare of poor emigrants, this was the genuine idea of the Bishop of Piacenza! However, experience forced Bishop Scalabrini to give his institute the form of a true and proper Congregation. Father Rondina, a Jesuit, together with a Carmelite Priest, he wrote the new Rule... where the perpetual vows were introduced." (Arch. G.S., 541/12).

<sup>17</sup> Scalabrini to Vicentini, Piacenza, March 10, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 3023/2).

<sup>18</sup> Gregori to Demo, Piacenza, September 29, 1903 (Arch. Prov. C.S., New York).

<sup>19</sup> Scalabrini to Vicentini, Piacenza, September 30, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 3023/2).

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*that you discuss it with the Bishop. The Rosminian Fathers , now charged with the church of 'San Carlo al Corso are willing to surrender their house, suitable for a small community. All things well considered, see that you do what you deem best in the Lord."*<sup>20</sup>

Even after settling the dispute with Bishop Pellizzari of Piacenza, the idea of moving the Mother House out of Piacenza was still being considered, so much so that the General Chapter of 1910 put to the vote a motion on the matter. Long negotiations for the acquisition of a house at Chiavari were underway at that time, but then, due to financial difficulties and to an obvious sense of loyalty to the place of origin, the project was abandoned.<sup>21</sup>

Consequent financial difficulties brought about a reduction, if not the extinction, of the "Piccolo Collegio" (Minor Seminary). It began with refusing admission of young men that had not completed high school, and it ran the risk of being discontinued altogether:

*"At this rate, we will have to shut down in a couple of years. I have started to cut down on the number of students, already. If we did not have up to now the help of our missionaries of South America, we would have gone bankrupt. Let us hope our confreres may somewhat shake off their sorry apathy for the Institute."*<sup>22</sup>

A revival of vocational recruiting took place in 1912 in connection with the construction of the "Scuola Apostolica" in Crespano del Grappa that was to open in the fall of the same year.

For the school year 1912-1913 the boys were brought to Piacenza.

*"For the time being the new candidates will stay at Piacenza. Good Fr. Pietro Costalunga has rounded up ten of them already from the vicinity (of Verona). We could have many more if we had sent out the Circular with the Program for the admission of young aspirants; but it is better this way as long as the house is not ready."*<sup>23</sup>

Mons. Sisto Mezzetti, a priest from Piacenza and the Archpriest of the Cathedral of Montefiascone, was Rector from March 23, 1914, to October, 1917. The great war disrupted the young aspirants from remaining at Crespano, where they had been for two school years, from 1914 to 1916. Some of the students were sent home; the others, among whom the Italo-Brazilians and those hailing from the regions under Austrian domination, went to Piacenza. A good number of clerics were called to arms.

In 1917, following the departure of Mons. Mezzetti, Fr. Vicentini continued to act as Rector with the help of Fr. Domenico Canestrini, Vice-Rector from July 1917 to November 1919. Acceding to the proposal of Fr. Vicentini, the General Chapter of August 1919 named Fr. Giuseppe Martini Rector of the Mother House:

*"The Chapter will have to take care of another business, that is, of settling the*

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<sup>20</sup> Bianchi to Vicentini, Rome, July 8, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 541/2).

<sup>21</sup> Vicentini, "Diario" August 10 and 12, 1907, Vol. V, pp. 12-13 (Arch. G.S., 1642).

<sup>22</sup> Vicentini to Demo, Piacenza, November 20, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 554/7).

<sup>23</sup> Vicentini to Demo, Piacenza, September 29, 1912 (Arch. G.S., 15).

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*Mother House according to the provisions of the last General Chapter. It's useless for me to tell the reasons why I did not succeed; but the main one has been the lack of personnel. Unfortunately, some confreres have died, others withdrew, not all are qualified, others still do not feel like being tied down to the monotonous life of a seminary. On the other hand, if there were another young priest ready, the pressing needs of the different missions would claim him to their help like the poor souls in Purgatory. Still, the most important need of the Institute rests in the formation of missionaries, as much as the seminary represents the first concern of every Bishop. We must provide for this need even at the risk of restricting our field of action.*

*I do not deem it a norm of prudent zeal that we take in too much, as I said other times, separated from each other, and split up; it would mean our weakening."<sup>24</sup>*

As to the Mother House we cannot neglect clarifying, though briefly, the conduct of Bishop Scalabrini and Fr. Vicentini concerning two disputes arisen between the Scalabrinians on one side, and the Seminary and the Curia of Piacenza, on the other, in order to dispel some doubts still persisting as of this writing in the mind of some priests of Piacenza; doubts based on a pretended ambiguous administration of Bishop Scalabrini. We limit ourselves to quoting the most important documents.

The dispute with the Seminary administration is summarized this way by Fr. Vicentini in a "memorandum" presented to the Holy See:

"The administration of the Seminary of Piacenza requests of the 'Istituto Cristoforo Colombo' the refund of liras 2,237.57 paid by the same Seminary to Bishop Scalabrini, or through him to the 'Istituto Cristoforo Colombo'. The administration maintains that the sum was unduly paid on a false presupposition; on the contrary, the 'Istituto Cristoforo Colombo' asserts that it does not owe anything to the Seminary because that payment or refund of the Seminary to Bishop Scalabrini was due to him on title of justice as affirmed by the Commission of the Seminary itself. In order to pass judgment on it one must establish and know the facts.

The Seminary entered an exchange contract with the 'Istituto Cristoforo Colombo' represented by its Superior the Rev. Fr. Bartolomeo Rolleri. Upon due authorization, the Seminary surrendered to the Institute an ex-convent of Capuchin nuns, owned by the Seminary; on his part, Fr. Rolleri, as representative of the Institute, pledged himself to build a new wing of the Seminary. The ex-convent was valued at 42,727.30 liras, and the estimate for the enlargement of the seminary was budgeted by experts at 44.598.00 liras. Fr. Rolleri agreed to pay this sum. As is ordinarily the case for buildings, the previous estimate was much exceeded because of new additions wanted by the administration of the Seminary so that instead of L. 44,580.00 there resulted L. 58,304.57 in the final settlement, all paid by Fr. Rolleri, or by Bishop Scalabrini for him, as is shown by the receipts at hand, that is, with an excess of L. 13,706.57.

Of course, as the project was being updated from time to time, the Commission of the Seminary Administration met to take its decisions on

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<sup>24</sup> Vicentini, Circular Letter, February 20, 1919 (Arch. G.S., 182/2).



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whether to admit or reject the new additions and related appraisals. At a meeting held on May 20, 1892, it approved a second expertise on the basements, kitchens, etc., for an estimate of L.7,000, one-half to be paid by the Bishop, and the other by the Seminary itself (this deliberation does not carry the signature of the Bishop). Upon completion, it was found that the works referred to in this deliberation amounted to eight thousand liras, and at a meeting on March 3, 1893, the Commission of the Seminary Administration had agreed that the Seminary would surrender the small house with courtyard contiguous to the Church of St. Charles as a compensation for this added expense of L. 8,000.

On March 2, 1898, at a meeting of the Seminary Commission, when the accounts of the exchange contract were discussed, it came out (I do not know how; as far as I am concerned, it has not been proven) that the 'Istituto Cristoforo Colombo' had paid only an added sum of 8,500 liras (and why no longer 13.706.57 liras?). For this reason, with the intent to free itself from all obligations, the Commission cancelled all claims of the Institute over the house contiguous with the Church of St. Charles as had been granted already on March 3, 1893. All this in view of the service the seminary accords the 'Istituto Cristoforo Colombo' by gratuitously providing for the education of the high school students of the same Institute.

At a meeting of the same Commission of the Seminary Administration held on December 22, 1900, and solicited I do not know by whom, following an examination of an expert on the final inspection, it was discovered that Bishop Scalabrini had spent L. 2,237.57 for works not included in those previously estimated. For this reason it decided that this sum had in all justice to be refunded to the Institute, as in fact it was.

After the death of Bishop Scalabrini, and six years after that refund, the Commission of the Seminary Administration at first judged to have the title to the house ceded by virtue of the deliberation on March 3, 1893, and requested the Institute for its return; but then it changed its mind also in regard to the sum of L. 2,237.57, and thought to have a right to it because it was given to Bishop Scalabrini by error incurred by the commission in the deliberation of December 22, 1900, which had not taken into consideration the decision of March 2, 1898; it asked the Institute, therefore, for the restitution of said L. 2,237.57. The Institute answered it did not see any reason for making restitution of what the Seminary Commission itself had declared, six years earlier, should be by all means given or refunded to the same Institute.

The fact cannot be denied that the exchange contract was for L. 44,598.00 while the total end expense came to L. 58,304.57. The present Administration of the Seminary feels free to give the deliberations of the past Administration interpretations that, according to my view, are not convincing, and neither could be intended by those who first took them. Should they be made the subject of serious discussions, we would get into unending and disgusting questions in which I do not like to be involved, especially when the diocesan authorities are concerned; consequently, I ask Your Eminence to authorize me for a friendly settlement that would return the little house in question. It is wholly separated from the Institute, and we do not need it, while it could be of use to the Seminary that is now putting up the new wing.

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I would agree on condition that: 1) the Bishop take all legal steps for the formal transfer of the former Convent's property ceded to the Institute; 2) the Seminary will pledge, as in the past, to continue teaching our minor seminarians and clerics both high school and theology courses."<sup>25</sup>

The dispute was settled on friendly terms in November 1908, with the following agreement between Bishop Pellizzari of Piacenza and Fr. Vicentini, personally approved by Pius X:

"In view of removing all differences between Seminary and Institute Cristoforo Colombo and of determining once and for all the respective properties of each institution, in accord with the requests made by Civil Authorities, with decree dated on March 19, 1892, His Excellency the Most Rev. John Mary Pellizzari, Bishop of Piacenza, so authorized by the approval of the Tridentine Commission for Seminaries, and the Most Rev. Fr. Domenico Vicentini, Superior General of the Missionaries of St. Charles for Italian Emigrants, representing the Istituto Cristoforo Colombo, have agreed as follows:

'His Excellency the Bishop of Piacenza, pledges himself - (1) to legally carry out the above Royal decree by an exchange contract to be stipulated by a notary public as soon as a reprieve from the said decree has been obtained; (2) to give the students of the Istituto Cristoforo Colombo free access to the schools of his Episcopal Seminary; (3) to have a brick wall built at the Seminary expense that may delimit the premises of both Seminary and Istituto; such wall will remain the exclusive property of the Seminary.

The said Most Rev. Superior General pledges himself - (1) to return the small house with its premises located on Via San Paolo (now Giuseppe Nicolini) 34, to the Seminary; (2) in case the 'Istituto Cristoforo Colombo' be moved somewhere else, before going ahead with the sale of the building of St. Charles he shall make it known to the actual Bishop of Piacenza so that he may be given the preference should he intend to buy it; (3) in case the Bishop decided against buying the said building, and the buyer were not a religious community, the above-mentioned Superior General pledges himself to surrender the Church of St. Charles, its respective sacristy, and the adjacent hall on the north side of the Church to the Seminary; should the Institute present claims for improvements made in the church, the Seminary shall wholly abide by the decision of the Sacred Congregation of the Council; (4) in this case, that is, if the building were not to return to the Seminary or to be sold to a religious community, the said Superior pledges himself to have windows made on its north wall looking into the courtyard of the seminary in accord with the conditions set down by Art. 584 of the Civil Code concerning services; (5) The Istituto Cristoforo Colombo and all concerned in the future, shall never be allowed to build in the garden except at a distance of 20 meters from the dividing wall of the Seminary. By the stipulation of the above said exchange contract all disputes between the Seminary and the Istituto Cristoforo Colombo are hereby ended. All expenses to be incurred for the said exchange shall be wholly charged to the Istituto Cristoforo Colombo.

Signed: Giovanni Maria, Bishop and  
Fr.Domenico Vicentini, Superior General.

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<sup>25</sup> Vicentini to Card. De Lai, Piacenza, draft s.d., probably on December 11, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 541/71).

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We are happy to see this contract stipulated in justice and good harmony, which we wholly approve. November 19, 1908.

Pius, PP. X

Having examined the present approval, we declare it in conformity with the original entirely hand written by His Holiness.

In faith: Piacenza, Nov. 23, 1908

D. G. Pinazzi, Episcopal Chancellor."<sup>26</sup>

The second dispute lasted much longer and was more difficult. We shall touch on the essential points by reporting the copy of the question proposed to the Sacred Congregation for Religious and settled with sentence issued at a general meeting of the same Office on January 29, 1909:

"The documents, presented to this Sacred Assembly by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda because no longer of its jurisdiction, concern two disputes: the one between the Bishop of Piacenza and the Missionary Fathers of St. Charles for Italian Emigrants of the Istituto Cristoforo Colombo; and the other between the same Fathers and the Seminary of Piacenza,.

Since the latter (dispute) had been settled on friendly terms with the approval of His Holiness, only the first one has been submitted to the most Eminent Cardinals. The facts in it reported may be briefly summarized as follows:

(1) Bishop Scalabrini, of Piacenza, Founder of the Missionary Fathers of St. Carlo for Italian Emigrants, spent 60 thousand liras for restoration and adaptation of an old building for the same Missionaries, surrendered by the Seminary in Piacenza through the normal process of law.

His Excellency Giovanni Pellizzari, present Bishop of Piacenza, while making an inventory of the intricate administration of his Predecessor, discovered among other things, a 10 thousand liras deficit, and asked Mons. Antonio Saletti, Bishop Scalabrini's General Administrator, for an explanation. As his justification, Mons. Saletti produced a 10,000 liras receipt from the contractor of the works of adaptation of the house for the missionaries, dated on August 30, 1897, saying that, instead of with funds of the missionaries, 7110 liras had been paid out of the Bishop's revenues (bequests for the poor), and 2890 with money from fees due as a source of the Bishop's benefice himself. The receipt carries also the signature of Bishop Scalabrini who left a purchase voucher of it in the hands of Mons. Saletti. Bishop Pellizzari had Mons. Saletti refund of his own 7,110 liras, which according to the State Property Office, had to appear coming from the funds of the Bishop's benefice, and invited the Missionaries to give them back to Mons. Saletti, and the remaining 2890 liras to the Bishop.

The Missionaries of St. Charles, and, in their name, the present Superior General, Fr. Domenico Vicentini, have no intention of giving back these 10,000 liras, for the following reason:

- a) Bishop Scalabrini received sums of money on behalf of the Missionaries of St. Charles from various donors, among whom Pope Leo XIII and Propaganda. For this reason what the Missionaries received from Bishop Scalabrini must be thought to have been given by his and others'

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<sup>26</sup> Copy of the "Agreement" between the Bishop of Piacenza and the Scalabrinians, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 541/71).

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generosity.

- b) If, by order of his Bishop, Mons. Saletti, who was the general administrator of Bishop Scalabrini, paid the said sum, it must be presumed that it was all a part of the normal general plan of funds for the Administration of the Missionaries of St. Charles.
- c) Should this general plan have not been in existence, and Bishop Scalabrini and Mons. Saletti have paid bills without their corresponding funds, this undue diversion of funds must be wholly refunded either out of Bishop Scalabrini's estate or out of this and by Mons. Saletti.
- d) On the back of a payment receipt for 9,000 liras of the contractor himself, Mons. Saletti declares in his own writing to have received a check for 5,000 liras from Bishop Scalabrini on January 25, 1899. If the sum of 10,000 liras had been taken from the revenues of the Bishop's benefice, Bishop Scalabrini was certainly making this check for 5,000 liras towards the paying off of the 10,000 liras appropriated two years before from the Bishop's benefice.
- e) The fund indicated as the source from where Canon Saletti would have taken the 10,000 liras is based only on the word of Mons. Saletti himself. Since, according to many and to Bishop Pellizzari himself, the administration of Mons. Saletti has left much to be desired, his word cannot be the only basis for making the Missionaries pay these 10,000 liras.
- f) In his public "last will" Bishop Scalabrini ordered his heirs to fulfill all his obligations. Of these he made an itemized list for his main heir, and while he singled out many other commitments of much lesser importance, he did not mention at all the 10,000 liras taken from the Bishop's benefice.

Bishop Pellizzari, informed about the content of the letter of the Missionaries with which they stated considerations a) b) c) to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, gave them these answers:

- a) From the facts it appears that Bishop Scalabrini took care of the various administrations on entirely personal criteria, and was using all sources of revenues without higher authorization, and without provision for future settlements that were never carried out.
- b) Based on this premise he gives a like answer also to the second point of the Missionaries, that is, this payment had to find its place in some source of the Administration of the Missionaries themselves. Many bills had been paid by Mons. Saletti without any normal specification of sources, so much so that "a substantial deficit and a marked confusion" have been ascertained "in the Church's funds".
- c) The inheritance of Bishop Scalabrini was only apparent because all the institutions left behind represent but the investments of pious bequest "which he administered under his own private name so that we paid 40,000 liras for rights of succession."

On Mons. Saletti's clear declaration that these 10,000 liras taken from the Bishop's benefice have not been refunded, and for the stated fact that Bishop Scalabrini made easy use of various security funds of different pious institutions, though with the intention to remedy the transactions later on,

something he could not do anymore, by all circumstances the Institute of Missionaries is morally bound to acknowledge this debt of 10,000 liras to Mons. Saletti and to the Bishop's benefice.

This Sacred Congregation of Propaganda submitted the question to Comm. Philip Pacelli for a legal opinion, who decided all in favor of the Missionaries. It is up to the present Bishop, now, to prove that those 10,000 liras came from the Bishop's funds.

As of now, he does not give any other evidence but the word of Mons. Saletti (against which stand important facts), and the irregularities of the Diocesan Administration of his Predecessor, from which one generally cannot at all infer that the Institute of the Missionaries in particular did avail itself of the funds of others.

To the Most Eminent Fathers is presented the following

QUESTION

whether in the case under consideration the Missionary Fathers of St. Charles for Italian Emigrants should refund the sum of 7,110 liras to Mons. Antonino Saletti, and 2,890 liras to the Bishop's benefice of Piacenza.

In the general meeting of the January 29, 1909 the Most Eminent Fathers answered:

"Upon serious consideration over the arguments presented by each party, from the material so far on hand, there does not appear to be any evidence of the rights of the Curia of Piacenza."<sup>27</sup>

The dispute did not end with this response, however. On September 15, 1909, Fr. Vicentini wrote to the Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Religious:

*"Your Eminence:*

*As to the dispute between the Most Reverend Bishop of Piacenza and the Istituto Cristoforo Colombo of the Missionaries of St. Charles concerning payment of ten thousand liras, the Sacred Congregation for Religious informed the same most Rev. Bishop of Piacenza that: 'Upon serious consideration over the arguments presented by each party, from the material so far on hand, there does not appear to be any evidence of the rights of the Curia of Piacenza.'*

*The Bishop himself, he told me so, highly protested such response giving as main reason the fact that a decision was taken without in the least consulting and questioning the interested party, that is, Mons. Antonino Saletti, former administrator of the Bishop's estate under the late Bishop Scalabrini; and he said he (the present Bishop) had nothing to do with it.*

*I am sorry, but I have to produce a document wholly disproving his statement. When over two years ago the check for 10,000 liras was discovered, and the Istituto Cristoforo Colombo was made to understand it had to pay it, I asked Mons. Canon Giuseppe Dalle Piane, then a Bishop's Delegate, to allow me to question Mons. Saletti in his presence on that check, as indeed I did afterwards and so mentioned in my report to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda on September 22, 1907. In that meeting I did not ask Mons. Saletti whether he had*

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<sup>27</sup> Copy in Arch. G.S., 541/71.

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*any claims on the matter, and neither did he even remotely hint at wanting a refund. Mons. Dallepiane was only a passive witness.*

*Quite a few days later, precisely by evening on August 22, 1907, I received the following note:*

*Most Rev. Father,*

*I shall be grateful if you will give me an answer on the matter that was the subject of a conversation between me, your Lordship, and Mons. Saletti. You understand (me) without the need for me to explain any further by letter.*

*In faith, as ever yours,*

*Most Devoted*

*Canon Giuseppe Dallepiane, D.V.*

*The following morning, August 23, I presented myself to Mons. Dalle Piane in person at the Curia, and I told him that, before giving an answer, I needed first to know the question, since none had been asked of me either by word of mouth, and much the less in writing; and I expressed the desire to know who was doing the asking and what was being asked, requesting at the same time a copy of the check for ten thousand liras.*

*Six days afterwards I received the following letter:*

*Piacenza, August 29, 1909*

*Most Rev. Fr. Vicentini:*

*I have reported on our last conversation to His Excellency. The Bishop authorized me to make out the copy to you which I hereby enclose (the copy of the 10 thousand liras check). He told me that he himself, the Bishop, is the one who is asking on behalf of his diocese; and on evidence of the above said document he asks for restitution of the sum thereby expressed.*

*As ever your*

*Most Devoted Servant,*

*Canon D.G. Dallepiane, D.V.*

*One should take notice that the words "the one who is asking" were underlined by Mons. Dallepiane. After such letter could I still believe that the Bishop has nothing to do with it? How could I convince myself that I was mistaken when I wrote in my report to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda that the Bishop of Piacenza had asked me for the refund of the sum in question? Was it not the Bishop the person to whom the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda had recourse on November 21, 1907, for obtaining information on the matter? In his answer on the 29th of the same month, did not the Bishop show he was answering as or for the person involved? Then, why the change? When questioned later on whether he had anything else to say, why did he not suggest consulting Mons. Saletti and listen to his reasons?*

*Long after the sentence issued by the Sacred Congregation on January 9, 1908 was made known to the Bishop of Piacenza, I was summoned to the Curia by Mons. Dallepiane, Vicar General, who read to me a letter from the Most Eminent Card. Prefect for Religious, dated on May 20, I believe, with which he was asking the Bishop of Piacenza to mediate between Mons. Saletti and Fr. Vicentini to reach a settlement or an agreement. It was only by accident that I came to know then that the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda had responded*

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*that "there does not appear to be any evidence of the rights of the Curia of Piacenza" concerning this matter.*

*Though reluctant to the transaction, and I deemed it safer for my conscience and responsibility to have a decision from the Sacred Roman Congregation, still, especially after my trip to Rome, I decided to come to an understanding, provided it were, in my opinion, reasonable and approved by the Sacred Congregation for Religious. I had an audience with His Excellency the Bishop on the matter. He told me that the settlement with Mons. Saletti would concern the sum of 7,000 liras because he had been authorized by the Holy Father to make a cut in the remaining three thousand, etc.*

*A few days later, Mons. Dallepiane called me to the Chancery Office and told me that Mons. Saletti had charged him for conducting the settlement with me if it were alright with me, as he would propose the minimum he wanted. In case I should be satisfied with that minimum, Mons. Saletti would then have recourse to the Sacred Congregation for Religious or to the Sacred Rota. I agreed.*

*And this is the way negotiations were carried out.*

Letter of Mons. Dallepiane to Fr. Vicentini:

*Piacenza, July 19, 1909*

*Most Rev. Fr. Domenico Vicentini,  
Superior General of the Missionaries of St. Charles,*

*Mons. Saletti formally charged me to inform you about the minimum he is contented with to settle all disputes on the total sum of ten thousand liras, disputes well known to you, of which the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda and for Religious have recently dealt with.*

*Of these 10,000 liras, 7,110 liras form a bequest for the poor, registered with the government and entered as subject to mortmain, and the remaining 2,890 liras belong to the Bishop's benefice. Since His Excellency the Bishop has been paid in full in two different installments, the settlement, if reached, is to be worked out on the entire sum of 10,000 liras.*

*Having said this, the minimum I formally propose on behalf of Mons. Saletti is half of the entire sum, that is, 5,000 liras. Should Your Most Rev. Lordship accept this proposal and pay 5,000 liras to Mons. Saletti, His Excellency the Bishop will take 1,000 liras off from what has been refunded him by Mons. Saletti for the Bishop's endowment, and will give 500 liras each to Mons. Saletti and to Your Most Rev. Lordship.*

*However, the fee of 110 liras due for the sentence of the Sacred Congregation for Religious shall remain charged to Your Most Rev. Lordship.*

*With esteem and respect, Most Devoted*

*Canon Giuseppe Dallepiane,  
Vicar General*

Fr. Vicentini's Reply:

*Most Rev. Mons. Dallepiane,  
Vicar General,*

*From your most esteemed letter of the 19th of this month I gather that, on the question of the settlement over the 10,000 liras receipt involved in the dispute,*

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*and with the intent to settle the dispute itself, Mons. Antonino Saletti presents through Your Most Reverence, by him with this task specially charged, formal request to the undersigned, as representing the Istituto Cristoforo Colombo, for 5,000 liras, besides the payment of the fee of 110 liras due to the Sacred Congregation for Religious for the sentence.*

*Without going back on the subject of the dispute, after thoroughly considering the proposal, the undersigned states that he is not satisfied. Instead, though declaring that he does not come to a settlement except for the sake of peace and out of respect for His Excellency, the Bishop, who always took an interest, and still does to a certain extent, in the dispute, to the end of settling the quarrel itself, the undersigned makes to Mons. Saletti an offer of 3,500 liras on the entire sum of ten thousand, indistinctly of their source, including the fee due to the Sacred Congregation for Religious for issuing the sentence, and he renounces the free offer of His Excellency, the Bishop, which will then be wholly turned over to Mons. Saletti.*

*The undersigned offers and shall give the said sum on the following conditions, that*

- 1) A copy be made out to the undersigned of the letter of Card. Vives y Tuto with which he asks the Bishop to help in reaching this settlement as evidence for the undersigned before the Institute.*
- 2) The receipt for the 3,500 liras be signed and approved by the Bishop, and lastly,*
- 3) The purchase voucher of those 10,000 liras be handed over to the undersigned.*

*In case he should accept my proposal, let Mons. Saletti inform me about it as soon as possible, and I shall take care that the approval be granted by the Sacred Congregation. However, should Mons. Saletti not deem the offer acceptable, I state that I do not intend to proceed further in private negotiations, but he shall rather hold his peace and wait for the new sentence of the Sacred Congregation for Religious or of whoever is responsible.*

*With sincere thanks to Your Reverence for your services and trouble, and deep respect, I remain,*

*Your most devoted servant,*

*Fr. Domenico Vicentini Piacenza,*

*July 20, 1909*

Answer of Mons. Dallepiane:

Piacenza, July 23, 1909

*Most Rev. Fr. Vicentini,*

*I received your letter of the 20th of this month. Either there was perhaps a misunderstanding or a lapse of memory on my part, but in our last meeting at the chancery we agreed as follows:*

- 1) - that on behalf of Mons. Saletti I would propose the minimum he were to be contented with;*
- 2) that in case you should not be satisfied with the proposal you would send it to the Holy See to secure its approval;*
- 3) that if the proposal should not seem acceptable to you, there would not be*



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*any further negotiations, save for the right of Mons. Saletti to have recourse as plaintiff of the Sacred Congregation for Religious or to the Sacred Rota.*

*With this understanding I have proposed the minimum. I do not see how I could possibly refer now to your new proposal to Mons. Saletti, since it falls below the minimum by him requested. I have concluded my task; neither could I play favorites to either party without committing an incorrect deed.*

*For this reason I do not report a thing to Mons. Saletti with whom you may deal through others but not through me because I cannot accept.*

*As ever Your Most Devoted,*

*G. Dallepiane, Vicar General*

Reply of Fr. Vicentini:

*Piacenza, July 23, 1909*

*Most Rev. Monsignor:*

*I have your most appreciated letter dated as of today in my hands. Your Most Rev. Lordship did not fall victim to any misunderstanding, but I could never believe that the mandate received from Mons. Saletti were so strictly limited, and, I admit my ignorance, it never occurred to me that your Most Rev. Lordship should do anything incorrect. On the contrary, it seemed to me quite a serious fault on my part if I had curtly answered with a flat "I do not accept."*

*However, should your Most Rev. Lordship see it differently, I humbly ask your pardon. As to Mons. Saletti, he shall do what he thinks best in the Lord.*

*With deep respect I profess myself of Your Most Rev. Lordship,  
Most Devoted Servant,*

*Fr. Domenico Vicentini*

*I had never heard from them since that day, when the other day, the 13<sup>th</sup> of this month, Mons. Dallepiane came to me, sent by the Bishop to show me a letter which the Sacred Congregation for Religious had written in answer to the Bishop himself to assure him that the Sacred Congregation had not changed its mind in regard to the proposed and recommended settlement.*

*I do not know what intention the Bishop had in consulting the Sacred Congregation, while in compliance with that first letter I had begun negotiations, asking as a condition that in case of agreement, a copy of the Most Eminent Card. Prefect be made out to me as evidence before the Institute.*

*As to the opinion of the Holy Fr. on the matter as it is mentioned in the letter of the 9<sup>th</sup> of this month, I do not deem it proper for me to write the impression I received on the question in the audience the Holy Fr. was pleased to accord me.*

*He was the first one to ask me how the dispute with the Bishop was being worked out, but then, almost jokingly he passed over to other matters. This much is certain that in no way did he manifest any desire that a settlement be reached or not.*

*With deep respect, prostrated to kiss the Sacred Purple, I profess myself of Your Most Reverend Eminence...." <sup>28</sup>*

The dispute was settled on October 26, 1909, with the agreement proposed and

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<sup>28</sup> Vicentini to Card. Vives y Tuto, Piacenza, September 15, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 541/71).

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accepted for the sake of peace by Fr. Vicentini:

"Bishop's Chancery Piacenza

October 26, 1909

Gathered together in the Office of the Vicar General, and in the presence of the same Vicar General, the Most Rev. Canon Mons. Antonino Saletti and the Most Rev. and Illustrious Fr. Domenico Vicentini, Superior General of the Missionaries of St. Charles agreed to the following settlement:

Premise one: on the dispute over a payment voucher for ten thousand liras written by the late Bishop Scalabrini at the foot of a receipt by Rovelli for works done on behalf of the Institute of the Missionaries of St. Charles, the Sacred Congregation for Religious on January 29, 1909, passed the following sentence: "There does not appear to be any evidence of the rights of the Curia of Piacenza from the material so far on hand."

Premise two: Mons. Saletti presented a petition for a new discussion of the matter (trial).

Premise three: the said venerable Sacred Congregation, having considered all circumstances and facts, proposed a settlement on friendly terms to both parties with letters dated on May 20, 1909, and September 10, 1909.

Premise four: in order to comply with the desire of the Sacred Congregation, the parties agreed to the hereby settlement, which was approved with letter of October 18 by the Most Eminent Card. Prefect, provided it were to the full satisfaction of His Most Rev. Lordship the Bishop of Piacenza, to whom this letter itself has been addressed.

Canon Mons. Giuseppe Dallepiane, Vicar General, declares that His Most Rev. Lordship the Bishop approves the settlement reached by both parties (agreed upon), and so in carrying it out:

The Most Rev. Fr. Domenico Vicentini pays the sum of 3,500 to Mons. Saletti, who verifies and cashes it leaving a handwritten receipt note on the back side of the payment voucher of 10,000 liras which he hands over to Fr. Domenico Vicentini.

Fr. Domenico Vicentini took the payment voucher given him by the Most Rev. Saletti, who takes it upon himself to pay of his own packet the sum of 110 liras, the fee due for the above-mentioned sentence of January 29, 1909.

Having done this, the parties declare all disputes between themselves over this matter closed.

Carried out at Piacenza  
at the place and time above indicated.

The original signed by: Fr. Domenico Vicentini, Canon Antonino Saletti, Canon Giuseppe Dallepiane, Vicar General.

Certified copy:

Piacenza, October 27, 1909:  
Canon Giuseppe Dallepiane"<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Certified Copy of Agreement between Saletti and Vicentini, Piacenza, October 26, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 541/71).

## **2. The General House is moved to Rome**

Together with the presentation of the project for setting up a central Congregation or Commission "for Catholic Emigrants", Bishop Scalabrini in 1905 had expressed to the Cardinal Vicar of Rome the desire to have a house and a church in the Eternal City.<sup>30</sup>

His successor Fr. Vicentini returned to the idea in 1906, as we have seen, with the intention of moving the Mother House to Rome. Early negotiations with the Rosminians, who would have readily rented out their rectory next to the basilica of St. Charles "al Corso"<sup>31</sup>, fell through because the asking price was too high.<sup>32</sup>

Mons. Attilio Bianchi continued the search in Rome, until Don Orione, to whom a house in Genoa had been offered, unable to accept it, turned the offer over to the Scalabrinians<sup>33</sup>. Fr. Vicentini declined this also because the donor had set down conditions too restrictive of its free use.

In October 1907 some negotiations had been conducted with the "Filippini Fathers" for the Church of St. Celsus, later on; and lastly, for the purchase of a small villa "Prati" district.<sup>34</sup>

In 1908 and 1909 there was thought of a church of St. Lucy, and of that of "St. Nicolino ai Prefetti". Finally, in early 1910 negotiations were begun with the Superior General of the Camillians who was willing to surrender the Church of "St. Giovannino della Malva" and the rectory attached to it on Via San Sisto, 75.<sup>35</sup>

On April 9, 1910 the following agreement was signed by the Prefect General of the Camillians and by the Superior General of the Scalabrinians:

"The Prefect General of the Order of the Ministers to the Sick, by decision of the Provincial Chapter held in Rome on March 2nd of this year, and with full consent of his Consultors, declares by this agreement to surrender the use of the Church and the attached house at "San Giovanni della Malva" in Rome to the Most Reverend Fr. Domenico Vicentini, Superior General of the Institute of the Missionaries of St. Charles for Italian Emigrants on behalf of the same Institute - a use the Camillian Order now has following the law of suppression by which the Government had deprived it of its rightful ownership.

This transfer shall be valid for three years beginning on July 1st of this year with authority to renew it by consent of both parties upon a reciprocal six month notice previous to the expiration date.

As payment for this transfer the Institute of the said Missionaries pledges itself to give a yearly sum of one thousand and four hundred liras, payable (with a) six month in advance, to the Superior General of the Camillians. On its part the Order binds itself to surrendering to the same Institute the quota it

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<sup>30</sup> Scalabrini to Card. Respighi, Piacenza, March 27, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 3020/4).

<sup>31</sup> Bianchi to Vicentini, Rome, July 11, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 13/2).

<sup>32</sup> Bianchi to Vicentini, Rome, October 8, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 13/2).

<sup>33</sup> Bianchi to Vicentini, Rome, December 13, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 13/2), and Maldotti to Vicentini, Genoa, December 5, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 13/1).

<sup>34</sup> Bianchi to Vicentini, Rome, October 2, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 13/4).

<sup>35</sup> Bianchi to Vicentini, Rome, March 30, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 168).

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receives from the Cult Fund for the rectory of the said Church which amounts to six hundred liras a year.

At the taking over, the Camillian Order shall proceed to the regular handing over of furniture and vestments for Church use, according to the inventory made by the Royal Cult Fund, and the Institute shall remain responsible for the articles that will be entrusted to it.

It is understood that this hereby agreement shall not take effect without the approval of Church authorities.

Having read and approved this fiduciary contract made out in two copies, is subsigned by both parties.

Rome, from our house of St. Mary Magdalene,  
April 9, 1910.

Fr.Vido, Prefect General of the Ministers to the Sick  
Fr. D. Vicentini, Superior General of the Society of St.  
Charles."<sup>36</sup>

This contract was renewed for four years on June 21, 1913, with the reduction of the yearly payment down to eight hundred liras; and for an indefinite time on January 29, 1917.<sup>37</sup>

The new residence set aside as the seat of the Superior and Procurator General, and as living quarters for some young Scalabrinians frequenting Roman universities, was inaugurated on June 29, 1909; the First General Chapter was held there in September.

For a few months Fr. Francesco Brescianini served as its local Superior. He was succeeded by Fr. Massimo Rinaldi, who besides serving as Procurator General, and then from 1915 as Vicar General, had the opportunity to carry on his apostolic activity in the small church of "San Giovannino", that became the center of intense spiritual life both for the many people who went to confession there, and for a good group of boys of "Trastevere" who gathered to form a sort of oratory.

In this activity Fr. Rinaldi had as coadjutor Mons. Marmaggi, then an official at the Secretariat of State, who would later become Nuncio in Poland, and finally was made Cardinal.

Furthermore, almost all by himself, Fr. Rinaldi edited the publication of the monthly periodical "*L'Emigrato Italiano in America*", extended his ministry to the daughters of Mary of Trastevere at the Sisters of the Seven Sorrows on Via Garibaldi, and to the Sisters of Don Guanella and their charges. During the First World War he collected offerings for the orphans and the poor from the missions of America by means of the periodical; he opened a small information office for the missing and the prisoners of war, especially on behalf of the relatives of emigrants; he kept the Congregation in contact with the Scalabrinian clerics doing military service.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Agreement Vido-Vicentini, Rome, April 9, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 168).

<sup>37</sup> Cfr. *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Sofia, "Massimo Rinaldi, Vescovo e Missionario" (Rome, 1960), pp. 89-106.

In August 1919, the second General Chapter was held at the house on Via Ponte Sisto. It was decided then to buy a piece of land on Via Calandrelli, where to build the residence for the General Administration. The land was bought in December 1920; a new building was built in 1921, and by the end of the same year the General Government moved in.

### **3. The "Scuola Apostolica Scalabrini" in Crespano del Grappa**

The early origins of the "Scuola Apostolica Scalabrini" of Crespano del Grappa (Treviso) must be traced back in the contacts between the Scalabrinian Congregation and Canon Giovanni Battista Mander of Treviso, who had founded in that town the "Istituto Mander, Scuola Apostolica" for poor students desiring to become priests and missionaries, which had a separate section in Oné di Fonte, only a few kilometers from Crespano, where he gathered especially the so-called "late" vocations.

Mons. Mander was present at the lecture on emigration given by Bishop Scalabrini at Treviso on October 23, 1892, and on that very day he wrote to the Bishop's secretary asking him to tender his respects to His Excellency, and give his regards to Fr. Rolleri, and charging him also with presenting his greetings to "the six students whom in a little over than a year" he had sent to the "Istituto Cristoforo Colombo" taking them out of his small and poor Institute."<sup>39</sup>

The following entered the "Istituto Cristoforo Colombo" from Oné' di Fonte: Frs. Faustino Consoni, Francesco Brescianini, Antonio Seganfreddo, Antonio Serraglia, Riccardo Lorenzoni, Natale Pigato, Marco Simoni, Pietro Dotto, Antonio Demo. It seems as though they left the "Scuola Apostolica" because of poor food, lodging, and schooling, in spite of the good intentions of its founder. For these very reasons Mons. Mander was probably not well accepted by church authorities; because of his awkward position he repeatedly asked that his Institute be taken over by the Scalabrinians.

In 1897 Fr. Molinari informed Bishop Scalabrini that Mons. Mander had written:

*"Mons. Mander writes to me from Treviso to solicit negotiations for giving start to the filial house. 'Don't you think' - he says - 'that to wait till next fall would mean letting the most favorable time go by for recruiting vocations? I would like to start something, were it only on a provisional basis, with the new school year; but how can this be possible without the needed negotiations? Make sure that His Excellency expresses his opinion on the matter.'"*<sup>40</sup>

The project did not materialize for the time being; perhaps because Bishop Scalabrini had difficulty, as we have seen, with supporting the minor seminary he had opened at the Mother House.

Mons. Mander tried it again with Fr. Vicentini in 1908; the Superior General of the Scalabrinians wrote to Mons. Attilio Bianchi asking him to obtain a

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<sup>39</sup> Mander to Mangot, Treviso, October 23, 1892 (Arch. G.S., 534/1).

<sup>40</sup> Molinari to Scalabrini, Piacenza, June 30, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 541/9).

favorable response from the Pope, but he was advised not to meddle in the disputes of Mons. Mander and to have recourse to the Bishop of Treviso, without whose consent it would be useless to embark on any initiative. Fr. Vicentini, however, understood that nothing could be done with a Bishop opposed to Mons. Mander. In 1911, when the Canon again made the offer to him of a church and a piece of land for a "Scuola Apostolica" (Minor Seminary), Fr. Vicentini answered that he did not want any trouble with diocesan authorities.<sup>41</sup>

Soon afterwards, in the first months of 1912, the Scalabrinians decided to build a "Scuola Apostolica" at Crespano del Grappa:

*"The land for the new 'Scuola Apostolica' has been purchased here at Crespano Veneto on a beautiful position (...). The pastor is a dear person; he is very happy about it, and helped me much in finding the land and in concluding the contract. His assistants also are good priests, and will certainly help us with teaching the students.*

*The Bishop of Padua, for whom I had received a letter of recommendation from the Holy Fr., is glad, too.*

*There remains only that the boys may come: some have already expressed the desire to be admitted as soon as the school will be opened.*

*On this very day I have signed a legal contract and, in agreement with Fr. Novati, I have bought the land on behalf of Your Reverence and of Fr. Massimo Rinaldi (...).*

*Work has been started, already; good weather permitting, the building will soon be ready."<sup>42</sup>*

On June 1, 1912, the seventh anniversary of the Founder's passing, the foundation stone, blessed by the Archpriest Giovanni Battista Ziliotto, was laid at the presence of Fr. Novati and of various personalities.

Upon completion of the building, in the summer of 1913, the clerics of Piacenza spent their vacation at Crespano for the first time. In 1914 Fr. Francesco Brescianini was made rector, and with the help of Fr. John Capella and two priests from the parish, he initiated the first school year for 22 students, four in the fourth elementary grade, and 18 in first year of high school.<sup>43</sup>

The school year 1915-1916 could be completed in spite of the war, but then, as we have seen, some of the students had to be sent home, and the remaining ones were transferred to Piacenza. The building was requisitioned by military authorities who turned it into "Field Hospital 0157".

In November, 1917, following the Caporetto defeat, the hospital was evacuated and moved to Carpi d'Adige. While the operation was being carried out, patients and Sisters were provisionally accommodated in the basement because Crespano had become the target of Austrian artillery; a grenade hit the building and tore the wall of the room where the Sister-nurses (Sisters of

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<sup>41</sup> Vicentini, "Diario" Vol. V, pp. 132, 136, 136, 155, 284, 286, (Arch. G.S., 1642).

<sup>42</sup> Vicentini to Demo, Crespano, April 30, 1912 (Arch. G.S., 555/1).

<sup>43</sup> Vicentini to Demo, Crespano, October 23, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 555/2), and Brescianini to Vicentini, Crespano, September 28, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 534/2).

Charity founded by Saint Bartolomea Capitanio) had packed up to leave just a few minutes earlier. The evacuation decree was revoked in July 1918, and the "Scuola Apostolica" was turned into "Hospital No. 34, C.R.I.", until November 1918. At the end of the war Frs. Brescianini and Capello returned to take charge of the building, which remained practically unused until 1924.

#### **4. The mission at the port of Genoa**

We refer the reader to Fr. Antonio Perotti's writings on the activity of the Saint Raphael Society, and especially of Fr. Maldotti, in Genoa, in his book "La Società Italiana di fronte alle prime migrazioni di Massa" (Italian Society and the Early Mass Migrations). Here we intend to mention only some elements to help complete the historical process, especially from 1921 on.

The earliest Scalabrinian presence in Genoa goes back to 1888, when, surely for a very short time, Fr. Francesco Zaboglio took residence there. He jokingly reported to Bishop Scalabrini: "Today, at the port, I have begun to act as the assistance committee."<sup>44</sup>

In 1889 a committee of the Patronage Association founded by Bishop Scalabrini, to be known later as the St. Raphael Society, was formed at Genoa; the committee grew in number and strengthened after a conference on emigration given there by Bishop Scalabrini on January 25, 1891.

In 1892 it opened an assistance and information office in "Piazza della Commenda" at S. Giovanni di Pré, 9, and it launched an appeal to the city and the authorities to open a shelter or a hostel for emigrants with the following scopes:

"To give them a place where to go, take a rest, dispatch the procedures needed before departure, and where emigrants may be in touch with friendly people that through loving care may render the last moments spent on their motherland, less painful (...).

The institution of a shelter is pressingly demanded by reasons of humanity, because it is indeed a sad sight to witness so many poor people abandoned in the midst of an strange large city, often prey to dishonest and greedy speculators, not infrequently forced to sleep in the open, exposed to seasonal inclement weather, deprived of all assistance and information. Morality and health reasons claim the founding of such shelter, because much too often we happen to witness men, women and children, the healthy and the sick promiscuously cramped together in small rooms with detriment of decency and with no means to provide for personal hygiene and good health."<sup>45</sup>

We point out, first of all, that all efforts made by Marquis Carretto di Balestrino, by Fr. Maldotti and, by Bishop Scalabrini himself towards the founding of this shelter were in vain.

In 1915 "*Il Cittadino*" of Genoa published an article, signed "Nemo" in which

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<sup>44</sup> Zaboglio to Scalabrini, Genoa, April 23, 1888 (Arch. G.S., 536/1).

<sup>45</sup> "Pubblico Appello" signed Balestrino, Chairman Patronage Committee; Gavotti, treasurer; Viani, Secretary (Genoa, 1902) (Arch. G.S., 536/1).

one could read:

"Marquis Vittorio del Carretto di Balestrino was the first Chairman of the Genoa's Patronage Committee. He had Francesco Viani, a lawyer, as his secretary. By means of an elaborate lecture at the "Cristoforo Colombo's", the young lawyer convinced the citizens of the need for supporting the Patronage Committee and helping it in the protection of emigrants. Chairman del Carretto left nothing undone to make this protection come to life in the most with active and genuine effectiveness. His constant aim was to build by the port a vast shelter or hostel for emigrants where to lodge them, keep them clean, feed, instruct them, and assist them in their needs, all for free or for such a small fee as to make it accessible to everyone.

Should the Good Lord have given him only a few more years of life, Marquis Balestrino would have certainly succeeded in reaching his goal. Life failed him, not his commitment, his tenacity of purpose, the prestige of his name, or his action!

His talent was well-known on highest levels: when still a young man, prime minister Camillo Cavour had named him prefect of Turin, but the famous Marquis had refused the appointment out of humility, contented with doing works of charity which he preferred to positions of authority.

Only the death of the first chairman of the Genoa Patronage Committee of Emigrants prevented building the shelter in Genoa. Under the direction of Balestrino conspicuous sums had been raised already in a few months for its construction; the portion of them that could be saved (over 20 thousand liras) still lie deposited at the Royal Treasury of Genoa ready for use on the projected Shelter for Emigrants.

Neither do we have to put the blame on the successors of Marquis Balestrino as chairman of the Patronage if this Institute abandoned the project to build the shelter!

When Balestrino died, Bishop Scalabrini and the Patronage Committee obtained that, as a perennial memorial to the action initiated by the Marquis, a new law on emigration of 1901 should provide for the institution of shelters at embarkation ports.

The law has indeed solemnly stated this obligation. However, even though by means of the known tax paid by emigrants, the Royal Commissar soon had at his disposal over ten millions for fulfilling the obligation of the law, nothing has been done so far at Genoa.

There does not remain anything else for us to do but to deplore that the will of Balestrino and the authority of the law should have been to this day ineffective."<sup>46</sup>

By the end of 1893 Bishop Scalabrini was able to give way to concrete negotiations for sending one or two missionaries to Genoa. On November 18, 1893, Archbishop Tommaso Reggio wrote him he had two sites in view for the missionary: the chaplaincy of St. Teodoro, or that of the Cabrini Sisters, close by. In the meantime, Bishop Scalabrini should anyway send a missionary because the Patronage Committee had been working already to prepare the

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<sup>46</sup> Nemo, "Il Patronato Genovese per gli Emigrati", "Il Cittadino", Genoa, May 18, 1915.



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field of activity for him.<sup>47</sup>

Bishop Scalabrini sent Fr. Zagoblio temporarily to get the place ready to be taken over definitely later on by Fr. Maldotti. The two missionaries worked together in 1894 and in 1895, taking turns in the most needed activity as chaplains aboard ships that carried emigrants to Latin America. Fr. Teofilo Glesaz was added in 1895.

In the beginning the missionaries resided for a time at St. Sabina and St. Teodoro; by the end of 1894 Fr. Maldotti wrote to Bishop Scalabrini that the Prior of Saint Sabina had evicted him because, due to the enormous work he had to carry on at the port, he could not attend all the liturgical services in the church.<sup>48</sup>

At the close of 1895 the missionaries left also St. Teodoro and accepted another chaplaincy at St. Giovanni del Pré, closer to the port and by the site of the Patronage Committee Office. Frs. Maldotti and Glesaz took residence there together on January 1, 1896. From the first of October they began living in a small rented four room apartment at Salita Montebello 7-8.

In October 1894, when the missionaries began their steady activity, the Archbishop of Genoa sent the following circular letter to the Bishops of northern Italy:

"As Your Excellency well knows, Genoa is the port from where the most part of migrating families take sail for America. Almost daily we witness here the sight of the numberless miseries accompanying most of these poor wretched ones forced by hunger to leave Italy.

Previous to, and at the moment of embarkation, one understands how pressing is the need here for any pious assistance of charity on behalf of these poor unfortunate people.

For this reason it is here especially that the work of assisting emigrants is carried on by the Association that has its headquarters at Piacenza.

The Patronage Society's Committee of Genoa, effectively supported by two Missionaries of the Istituto Cristoforo Colombo, gives help and counsel, provides opportune information to emigrants who turn to it, and offers them the comforts of religious assistance before they venture on the dangers of their voyage.

Your Excellency will, therefore, readily understand how important it would be that the emigrants who arrive from my Provinces to take the ship here were all provided with letters of recommendation supplied by the local Committees of the Society with which they may present themselves to the Committee of Genoa in order to obtain its protection.

A recent general Assembly of Delegates of the Committees already extant has decided that the Society be titled from now on after St. Raphael, like similar societies founded in other countries of Europe. At the same meeting it was also decided that the Society direct its action especially towards carrying out religious and moral aims by the cooperation of missionaries, and to achieve

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<sup>47</sup> Marchesi Reggio to Scalabrini, Genoa, November 18, 1893 (Arch. G.S., 536/2).

<sup>48</sup> Maldotti to Scalabrini, Genoa, December 19, 1894 (Arch. G.S., 535/2).

this end by placing the society under the jurisdiction of the Bishops, especially of those whose Dioceses contribute the most to emigration, with faculty to name an ecclesiastical representative of their own as member of the Committees.

By solicitation of the Bishop of Piacenza, I was invited to make these deliberations known to the Bishops of Northern Italy, to urge them, at the same time, to take the Society under their protection, and to form, wherever they may deem it opportune, local committees in their dioceses by assigning people they consider most qualified to compose it and providing them with the enlightened and zealous cooperation of the parish priests, in the countryside, especially.

Before recommending it, I wanted to have a proven experience of the effectiveness of the Society's action in the past. But, having realized its usefulness especially for the salvation of souls, quite willingly I have this time accepted the invitation, and while I feel honored to convey to Your Excellency the said information, I earnestly pray that you be pleased to accept my proposal for establishing the said Society in your Diocese by getting in direct contact to this end with the Chairman of that Central Committee the illustrious lawyer Marquis Giovanni Battista Volpelandi.

I am convinced that the Society of St. Raphael will do much good for emigrants provided it be wisely organized under a central direction, and it operate under the guidance of the Bishop and in perfect accord with the parish priests, who, better than anyone else, are in a position to know their miseries and needs.

This is, therefore, the reason why I took the liberty to recommend this Society to Your Excellency in the hope that you will welcome it as one that is destined to provide for one of the most serious needs of present day society in line with the laws of Christian charity."<sup>49</sup>

The activities of the mission at the port of Genoa until 1909 are this way summarized by Fr. Maldotti:

*"Our Patronage Committee for Emigrants (which for convenience sake changed its title in 1895 into that of St. Raphael, as it returned in 1901 to its former one in compliance with the law) was amongst the first ones founded in Italy by Bishop Scalabrini.*

*Until 1894 it limited itself to launch protests rather than to exert a direct action; its activity directly on behalf of emigrants consisted in sending out in the province recommendation cards as identification in the midst of the whole mass of people. They were very few, and their assistance even more hypothetical.*

*In 1894 I did away with the cards and began to protect all emigrants, standing guard in the breach without regard for anyone against all exploiters, big and small, by all means possible. I made the protection of emigrants a national cause that needed to be immediately resolved by preventing the illegal market on human flesh with the abolition of emigration agents and of intermediaries between shipping companies and emigrants. And while the dispute was being waged by the press, provision was taken that such abuses were stopped by means of police agencies.*

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<sup>49</sup> Marchesi Reggio, "Circular to Bishops of Northern Italy", Genoa, October 1894 (Arch. G.S., 536/2).

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*After putting things in order, I resumed the Mission on ships ceded by Bishop Scalabrini (where was Coccolo?), but I had to discontinue it for lack of means and personnel. Fr. Marchetti was sent three times by me. However, to the end of finding out abuses and denouncing them, I myself took several trips; and all the present Royal Commissar of the ships does, though certainly with means and powers quite different from mine, is to continue my modest initiative.*

*Exactly following my first trip to Brazil the Government began showing an interest (1896) in changing the 1888 Law on the basis suggested by me and Malnate (see report to the Minister Venosta). The law was voted down ten times, but it was finally passed. The Patronage Committee had won the battle at last giving me moral strength and partially improving my finances. With the passing of this law, our activity was much reduced, but there was very soon a vaster field opened in Brazil in the protection of emigrants affected by misfortune; you will see from the Report I am sending you, and more so from the statistics attached to it, how much good is being done with the help of the Commissariat.*

*The clothing department is an accomplished fact. The ladies gather all Saturdays at the sewing room to make clothes that represent a truly god sent gift for the unfortunate ones in need."<sup>50</sup>*

Quite interesting is the change of the sense of direction in the assistance following 1901, due not so much to improved legislation on emigration, but, rather, to the crisis that hit immigration countries, especially those of South America. Many emigrants were forced to return to Italy, quite a few of them deprived of everything, in conditions of extreme poverty, so that the assistance previously accorded to departing emigrants had to be given to the returnees.

On this matter we can consult the statistics "of the 'Riepilogo' (or Summary) of the needy emigrants who landed at the port of Genoa from 1906 to 1914, assisted and helped by the Patronage Committee for Emigrants of Genoa." <sup>51</sup> All together 40,806 returning emigrants were assisted, of whom 10,778 below the age of ten, 20,429 men, and 9,599 women; 20,785 were returning from Argentina, 18,435 from Brazil, 1,306 from Central America, 318 from the United States, 162 from other countries; 10,605 were heading for Northern Italy, 6,646 for the center, 19,380 for the South; another 4,181 had no sure destination. Expenses amounted to 56,220 liras.

In 1909, Fr. Maldotti tells us, *Italica Gens* "joined forces with us and entrusted us with its 'Port Secretariat'. It provided us with a decorous office and a generous money grant for other expenses."<sup>52</sup>

Fr. Maldotti continued his work at Genoa more on behalf of *Italica Gens* than in the name of the Scalabrinian Congregation.

Of his action until 1920, we have this report on the "state of service" (activities):

"Fr. Pietro Maldotti, a priest from the diocese of Borgo San Donnino was a professor of literature at that Diocesan Seminary for twelve years. Called in 1893 by the late Bishop Scalabrini of Piacenza to join the new Institute of

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<sup>50</sup> Maldotti to Vicentini, Genoa, January 28, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 536/8).

<sup>51</sup> "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", IX, September 15, 1915, p. 18.

<sup>52</sup> Maldotti Report, "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", X, June 15, 1916, p. 16.

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Missionaries for Emigrants, was assigned the following year to Genoa upon request from that Archbishop, with the difficult task of opposing all shady operations, high and low, that despoiled the poor emigrants in their own province first, and then at the port and on ships. The battle was fierce: well-planned campaigns in the press, propaganda lectures in all important cities of Italy, all led to a complete victory.

Having this way insured their protection in their home country, he took pains to obtain it abroad as well and so he took two trips to Brazil where he visited all twenty states to know the moral and economic conditions of our brothers pleading their cause with the local governments and the land owners ("fazendeiros"). On his return he presented first a Memorandum to Minister Visconti-Venosta followed by a first draft of a Law, which, in its general lines, was later adapted by the government; he presented another draft to his Superior General, Bishop Scalabrini.

In consideration of his merits, the Government, by the King's "motu proprio" had him named Knight of the Crown of Italy on January 20, 1900, and then a Knight of Saints Maurice and Lazarus. In 1905 Pius X, of holy memory, conferred on him the "*Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*".

Following enactment of the Law on Emigration, he took two more trips to the Americas visiting all Italian communities of Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Equador, Colombia, and the United States. He returned on July 5, 1904.

In all this time of struggle and toil he did not have any salary from any source, except for a miserly grant of a few liras from the Association of Italian missionaries; he made up for it with his personal self-denial depending for his livelihood on Mass offerings and on the generosity of friends. The late Bishop Scalabrini was about to provide him with a steady and appropriate salary and with a moral recognition adequate to his merits and hard work when death unexpectedly overtook him. Afterwards no one cared for the poor missionary at the port of Genoa: but he continued all alone his work of mercy, without asking anything of anyone.

However, in order that he might not be denied all means of support, the Minister of Justice, who personally knew his financial difficulties and his merits, of his own initiative and without even previously consulting him appointed him by a Royal Decree dated on February 20, 1910, a Palatine Canon of 'Monte Sant'Angelo on the Gargano', with a yearly dispensation to be at the port of Genoa to continue assisting emigrants. But due partly to arthritic pains, and to impossibility to fulfill the duties of a canon, right from the beginning he deemed it proper to tender his resignation, that was accepted. Besides, following protests from the Chapter, he was told this past year to resign because the Sacred Congregation of the Council had not granted canonical dispensation in spite of the provisions of Canon 420, No. 5, on which it had been requested.

In this period of time, that is, from 1910 to 1918, he was able to assist fifty thousand poor, old, orphans, widows, and sick people, returning from America, and provided them with food, lodging, clothing, travelling papers; he took care of the expedition of their baggage, 18 thousand pieces by now, spending on it more than a hundred thousand liras.

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Neither was his action at the port less helpful to Bishops and Apostolic Nuncios returning from, or departing for, America, and especially to thousands of Missionaries and Sisters directed also to America or to the Orient. He assisted them at embarkation and debarkation, securing for them reduction on travel tickets, and many a time free trips.

August 4 of this year (1920) marked twenty-five years of charitable activities on behalf of poor emigrants."<sup>53</sup>

To complete the picture of Fr. Maldotti's apostolic and social action we deem it opportune to report an apology of himself against accusations aimed against him by "competitors" (rivals). The importance of this document is proven by the fact that the Archbishop of Genoa and the Sacred Consistorial Congregation took note of this memorandum presented to the Emigration prelate Mons. Michael Cerrati, and they confirmed their satisfaction and benevolence for his work.

"The Most Reverend Archbishop of this city read to me some passages of a letter from the Sacred Consistorial Congregation. In clear terms it is said there that, although some good has been accomplished here at this port (how kind of them!) in the past, nothing at all is now being done by this old Patronage of ours, and by the undersigned in particular.

In conscience, I myself would indeed jump aboard the first ship about to sail, if I should realize that I am not doing anything anymore, and I would go down there amongst my beloved emigrants, as I had decided to do in 1904 already, at the conclusion of the battle for the law (on Emigration) and its application, provided I were not detained here by the "new fact" of the needy ones returning from America (some 52 thousand from 1906 to 1921), who called for all my energies by decision of the Commissariat and the desire of Bishop Scalabrini.

But I can assure Your Lordship that the Consistorial Congregation was misinformed; neither am I surprised by it! In the 28 years I have been treading on the stones of this port I have never seen the hat of a Genoese priest, for instance, who would ask me, for curiosity sake at least, what kind of merchandise was the trade articles called emigrants. People judge and pass haphazard sentences! Used for years to having amongst them the missionary at the piers and on ships, should they see him perhaps wasting his time in idle talk on a courtesy visit, they say that he is working; but if they do not see him around because unable to cut himself in two he has to be busy with something else more important and worthwhile at the office, or on the go in the performance of his duties, they say he is idle. The truth is that from the first of January of this year to this day, I have given food, assisted a good 1,602 needy people, repatriated them with free travelling papers from the police, and sent their baggage along spending a sum of money scraped together aboard ships that will exceed ten thousand liras.

Besides assisting poor emigrants (only a few, fortunately) waiting embarkation, freely supported here for several weeks, almost every day I have the most unfortunate Italo-Russian refugees at the office besieging me with requests

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<sup>53</sup> "Stato di Servizio, etc., (Activities Report)" Maldotti, (Arch. Storico, C.S.E.R., Rome)

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while charged by the local "*Italica Gens*" with the instruction and education of their children in city institutions. I do all the paper work between police and emigrants entirely myself, sometimes walking from office to office the whole day long.

And what makes it worse is that this local "*Italica Gens*" has reportedly confirmed the accusation of inactivity. But what does it ever know about emigrants and the port of Genoa, intent as it is only on its ex-servicemen?

My annual reports are forwarded only to Your Excellency, my direct Superior, to the Commissariat, which subsidizes me with 3,000 liras (for the Patronage not for me), and to the Hon. E. Schiapparelli, Head of the Central Office in Turin. It (the "*Italica Gens*") does not know anything of all this; if it kept quiet at least!

For these reasons Your Excellency may very well assure the Consistorial Congregation that "*WHAT HAD TO BE DONE* at the port of Genoa has indeed been abundantly accomplished by us in the past; that *WHATEVER IS POSSIBLE TO DO* is being done; *WHAT SHOULD BE DONE* does not depend on us, at least for the time being.

For a better understanding of this last point, the most important one, it must be pointed out that even before 1900 I was in charge of police supervision inside the big hall in front of the control offices of emigrants. Besides chasing suspicious characters and vendors of spoiled food and obscene literature out of it with the forces at my disposal, I prevented excessive crowding at the gates, keeping families separate from men travelling alone, to the immense gain for morality and to the avoidance of trouble. This supervision has been confirmed on me also after publication of the law by force of Art. 38 of the By-laws, and I held it until 1916. At about this time, for reasons of economy, the Commissariat had done away with the brigade of guards assigned to the Inspector's Office, and so I was deprived of the strong arm by which I might have things my way. Having inquired whether the Inspectorate were in a position at least to insure the respect due to my dignity as a priest in the task I had been entrusted with, I was told it did not have the means. For this reason, I served it notice that I would withdraw in good order to my office.

However, in compliance with the desire of the Consistorial Congregation and of this Most Venerable Archbishop, yesterday I went to visit the ships P. of Udine and Battisti, passing through the big hall, where I found the Inspector dealing with just about everyone, to prevent a disorderly crowding at the gates with danger of trouble. When he spotted me, he came over asking me to resume the direction as before also on behalf of the Commissariat, with assurance that the creation of a body of guards will soon be an accomplished fact, and neither will I have to fear for the respect due to my person. And so, I will go back; but if I should be accused of never being at the office, I would hope that Your Excellency will side with me. Actually, should there be practical projects on hand - besides a probable provisional hostel where to host women and children away from these dreadful hotels - let them tell me, and I will be happy to cooperate: I do not (intend to) shrink (away) from work.

In closing, I shall mention one accusation, aimed at me, of not doing anything for emigrants denied departure at the control's station, while, they say, there are homes for them, especially for those sick with trachoma, in Naples and Pa-

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lermo. I do not know what they do down there; this I know, that emigrants sailing from those ports are exclusively directly to North America, and I also know that a law, or a provision, whatever, of that Republic, allows entrance to New York only a year later for those rejected by the ports of Europe.

As far as our ports are concerned, I am also informed that, besides being refunded the whole ticket paid to shipping companies, they are compensated for all expenses incurred for themselves and their baggage on the trip back and forth, and that they may return, at no risk for themselves, except for the inconveniences of travelling to their own home towns to get cured if sick and hopefully to get better; and having a whole year wait ahead they are in this way given the opportunity to straighten things out in line with the provisions of the law neglected beforehand. Why (should we) waste money and personnel on them?

As to the port of Genoa, look here the precise statistics on the matter, gathered this past year of 1921 of those that departed for the two Americas:

Departures: 63,388; Denials: 236, due to sickness and other causes.

And, does Your Excellency know how much these 236 persons who were refused passage received as compensation before going back to their homes? Precisely, 28,900 liras and 65 cents! (Tell me,) should I present the "*Italica Gens*" and the Consistorial Congregation with such an astronomical budget for rentals, food, sisters, personnel, doctors, medicines, etc., on behalf of these people, unfortunate if you will, though they have increased by a hundred percent?

If and when Your Excellency will be pleased to grant me an audience I shall be able to tell more.

I conclude saying that one must blame only the Emigration Commissariat for whatever remains still to be done here at this port! In its 22 years it could not or did not want as yet to carry out the law in all its extension and spirit! It abused its autonomy to meddle in politics, shamefully neglecting transoceanic emigration, the poorest one and still the only one contributing to the Emigration fund, while busying itself only with continental emigration, which does not bring anything in, and like a veritable parasite, uses up all resources."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Maldotti to Cerrati, Genoa, September 16, 1922 (Arch. Storico, C.S.E.R., Rome).

## CHAPTER V

### GOVERNMENT OF SCALABRINIAN MISSIONS IN THE UNITED STATES 1895 - 1919

#### **1. Fr. Francesco Zaboglio (1895-1897)**

Fr. Domenico Vicentini, who had been appointed Superior Provincial of all Scalabrinian missionaries of the United States in December of 1892, resigned his post at the end of 1894. Bishop Scalabrini asked him to continue as his delegate until he named Fr. Francesco Zaboglio as visitator of the missions of North America on April 5, 1895. In this capacity, he was practically the Superior Provincial until 1897.

In the minutes of a meeting of the Provincial Councilors held in Providence, Rhode Island, in February 1896, we read:

"Today, the eleventh of February 1896, the Rev. Frs. Zaboglio, Strumia, Gambera, and Novati, assembled at Providence, deliberated as follows:

"(...) - 4) To oblige all Superiors of the various houses to introduce the following practices of piety to be performed daily in common:

- a) A half hour meditation.
  - b) Morning and night prayers.
  - c) Ten minutes of spiritual reading.
  - d) The Holy Rosary.
5. In compliance with the proposal of the Most Rev. Fr. Zaboglio that provisions be taken for the appointment of the Provincial, the Consultors unanimously decided against taking any as they do not deem either necessary or opportune naming a Superior Provincial while there is still the Office of (the) Visitator, who, in virtue of the faculties received from the Superior General, may very well take upon himself also the responsibility of a Superior Provincial (...).
7. To earnestly plead with the Superior General to send new missionaries, as we find ourselves in dire need to call upon diocesan priests who if there are any to be found, may help us in the performance of our duties."<sup>1</sup>

The big problem of Fr. Zaboglio, as with all the other Provincial Superiors for that matter, was the scarcity of personnel. His concern over providing for the truly pressing needs caused him to oppose the plan of Bishop Scalabrini who intended to replace little by little the missionaries with temporary vows with those bound to perpetual ones, or to put the latter together; so also, he did not approve of the opening of a "Piccolo Collegio" or minor seminary in Piacenza in 1896. In May of that year he wrote as follows to the Rector of the Mother

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<sup>1</sup>Minutes, undersigned by Fathers F. Zaboglio, J. Gambera, J. Strumia, Fr. Novati, Providence, February 11, 1896 (Arch. G.S., 550/4).



House:

*"When priests ask for the "Rules", or, rather, for the summary of the "Rules", I would suggest that it be accompanied by a letter saying that priests are also admitted "for a time."*

*Priests have completed their studies and do not need to be kept there at the expense of the Institute as we have to do with the students. We may very well let our seminarians take perpetual vows, but concerning priests, I think it is a big mistake to refuse them admission if they do not want to make perpetual profession. Priests may be admitted also for only two or three years, considering our present circumstances, especially.*

*Our Missions are now doing well and promising a better future! Why should we not make sacrifices to support them? And should some priest want a hundred dollars a year to join us, we shall give them to him; actually, he brings in more than that!"<sup>2</sup>*

Two months later, at the news of the opening of the "Piccolo Collegio", Fr. Zaboglio was still writing to Fr. Molinari:

*"The missionaries are quite irritated because after denying admission to already formed priests, whose training does not cost us anything, the money sent from here must be spent in supporting a bunch of freeloading boys out of whom, at the end of ten to twelve years of expenses, there will remain maybe one or two Missionaries in ten.*

*And even if they told these considerations to me first, and not I to them, (and I know a little, though by no merit of mine, how things are in our missions), still they are not altogether wrong! The priests so far admitted have worked miracles, many told me, and truly so. But, now priests are denied admission! And I will tell you that in order to keep our churches in New Haven open we have to support in the meantime a secular priest, albeit learned and pious, at thirty dollars a month; thirty, I say!*

*We could send you this money from here if priests were sent to us from there who would bind themselves even if only for 5 years, or three, perhaps.*

*I approve of the perpetual vows for those whom the Institute has to train, but let those who are priests already be admitted "for a time", and have them stay at the Institute only for the time needed to get to know them, and take care that the Rules, or the summary of the Rules, that is sent to this or other when requested, be corrected to suit the need.*

*The desire for the perfect often prevents accomplishing what is good."<sup>3</sup>*

At the new insistence of Bishop Scalabrini Fr. Zaboglio responded in early 1897:

*"It is my strong desire to put missionaries with perpetual vows together. But, Your Excellency must keep in mind that these are very difficult Missions, and that the new Missionaries need an older, experienced missionary as their Superior and Pastor. On this matter I ask Your Excellency to take my word that I will try setting up one or two houses, all for missionaries with perpetual vows, as soon as possible; and it will be possible to do so when there will be those*

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<sup>2</sup> Zaboglio to Molinari, New York, May 8, 1896 (Arch. G.S., 550/4).

<sup>3</sup> Zaboglio to Molinari, New Haven, July 17, 1896 (Arch. G.S., 550/4).

*amongst the new ones who may be entrusted with the direction (...).*

*I plead with Your Excellency not to insist with the new and future arrivals on this matter of houses of missionaries all with perpetual vows, as rather to recommend them also to get along in good harmony with the old ones. If we cause dissensions between young and old missionaries, it will not be possible to continue. And I have had some trouble, already, on the part of certain ones of the new missionaries who pretend to have charge of parishes when not fit for it."<sup>4</sup>*

In July of that same year, Fr. Zaboglio was struck down by a gas explosion in the basement of Our Lady of Pompeii Church in New York; his health was seriously impaired by it. For this reason he repeatedly asked to be relieved of his responsibility:

*"It is necessary that you personally come to pay a visit to these missions. Discipline needs reforming, piety strengthening; better harmony must be insured in the midst of the missionaries, especially between those of the new law and those of the old one. There are missionaries who did not renew their vows but are willing to do so "for a time" should Your Excellency come to visit us. Devotion to Your Excellency must be revived. Only you can accomplish all these things and many more! As you can see, it is necessary that you come, and at the earliest.*

*If you do not come I do not foresee a very bright future ahead (...). I am now bereft of all energy.... My sight is fading evermore. My head cannot take it (...). Because of these reasons also, I plead with Your Excellency that you will relieve me of the responsibility as visitor or Superior Provincial, whatever it be called. My only ambition now is to bring this church for which I have suffered so much already to a good finish."<sup>5</sup>*

## **2. Fr. Giacomo Gambera (1897-1901)**

Bishop Scalabrini accepted Fr. Zaboglio's resignation and named as Superior Provincial the missionary he had suggested, that is, Fr. Giacomo Gambera. When informing him of his appointment, he recommended him to give immediate start to certain reforms in particular:

*"Twice before I notified you of the responsibility I would have charged you with. I hope you will accept it in the name of God and do your best to carry it out with charity and firmness, removing the serious disorders that cause me great sorrows! Missionaries in South America made themselves beloved of the Bishops and are worshipped by our communities because they keep the rules, love one another, and form a true religious body. You are not united there, and I suffer very much for it.*

*I understand the circumstances, I acknowledge the extenuating excuses, but we must arrive to this. Here are the directives:*

- 1. The rules must be absolutely observed.*
- 2. Summon the older ones whose vows have expired, and enjoin on them either the renewal of their profession or the reentry to Italy.*

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<sup>4</sup> Zaboglio to Scalabrini, New York, January 12, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 550/5).

<sup>5</sup> Zaboglio to Scalabrini, New York, September 25, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 550/5).

3. *Dismiss hired priests who were not to be accepted without my permission (....).*
4. *Put those who have perpetual vows together; they are young but good, as a whole.*"<sup>6</sup>

On January 4, 1898, Fr. Gambera informed (the) confreres about his appointment reminding them of the duty for harmony, and he conveyed to them the orders and recommendations of the Founder: religious observance according to the spirit of the Congregation, discretion and prudence, respect of secrecy especially for the protection of the good name of confreres, regularity of administration concerning both diocese and Institute, observance of poverty, duty to support the Mother House with a contribution fixed to a minimum of six dollars a month.

As to the "auxiliary" priests, and to the renewal of the vows, he set down the following directives:

*"Priests not members of our Congregation must not be admitted to the ordinary ministry in our parishes. Let us have for them such charity as is demanded by their present needs and our conditions allow, and no more. For particular and exceptional cases now extant let them discuss matters with the Bishops, and then immediately inform the Provincial Superior (....).*

*The Superior of each house must inform me in earnest where there are Priests or Brothers without vows, or when they are due to expire, because the Superior General orders those to renew them who intend to continue serving our Missions. As to the duration of the vows, I shall ask for special instructions."*<sup>7</sup>

Concerning the duration, while insisting on keeping of the Rules as recommended and warranted by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, which had pledged itself to intervene against the non-observant, Bishop Scalabrini decided precisely as follows:

*"The vows be renewed for five years, at least, and anyone who should not want to continue the Apostolic Life shall absolutely repatriate."*<sup>8</sup>

But difficulties persisted:

*"If the Institute does not send us missionaries we are forced to take our assistants from emigrant priests here, of whom quite rare are those that deserve our trust. These are the ones who use up the savings due to the Mother House."*<sup>9</sup>

This, one might say, is the complaint recurring through all letters to Piacenza:

*"Besides, the scarcity of priests is the most serious impediment in properly running our missions; necessity prevents me from acting the way I would like to and weakens my position, while certain Frs.s who should need correction take advantage of it."*<sup>10</sup>

In 1899 Fr. Zaboglio made a description of the religious assistance to Italian Emigrants in the United States. We report it here because it gives us an idea of

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<sup>6</sup> Scalabrini to Gambera, draft s.d. (Arch. G.S., 553/1).

<sup>7</sup> Gambera, Circular Letter, January 4, 1898 (Arch. G.S., 553/1).

<sup>8</sup> Gambera, Circular Letter, February 23, 1898 (Arch. G.S., 553/1).

<sup>9</sup> Gambera to Molinari, Boston, s.d. (Arch. G.S., 553/1).

<sup>10</sup> Gambera to Molinari, Boston, June 24, 1898 (Arch. G.S., 553/1).

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the proportion of the Scalabrinian presence as a whole, compared to all other diocesan and religious missionaries who at that time were expressly devoted to Italians:

**STATE OF NEW YORK**

New York City:

- Two churches, one of which with a mixed congregation, run by the Franciscans, with seven Italian priests and three non-Italian.
- Two churches, serviced by the Missionaries of St. Charles, with six Italian priests.
- One church, by the Jesuits, with four Italian priests.
- One chapel, by the Salesians, with three Italian priests.
- Three churches or chapels served by diocesan priests, five Italian, and one non-Italian (Transfiguration, Bedford Park, Ferrina[?])

Brooklyn:

- One chapel, by the Vincentians, with three Italian priests.
- One church, by the Pallottines, with three Italian priests.
- Three churches, served by six Italian diocesan priests.

Syracuse:

- One church, by the Missionaries of St. Charles, with one Italian priest.

Mt. Vernon:

- One church, by the Franciscans, with one Italian priest.

Buffalo:

- One church, by the Missionaries of St. Charles, with one priest.

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT**

New Haven:

- One church, by the Missionaries of St. Charles, with two priests.

Hartford;

- One church served by one Italian diocesan priest.

Meriden:

- One church served by one Italian diocesan priest.

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

Providence:

- Two churches, by the Missionaries of St. Charles, with two priests.

**STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS**

Boston:

- One church, by the Missionaries of St. Charles, with four priests.

Orient Heights:

- One church, served by the Missionaries of St. Charles of Boston.

**STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA**

Philadelphia:

- One church served by two Italian diocesan priests.
- One church, by the Augustinians (New).

Scranton:

- Two churches, served by two Italian diocesan priests.

Hayleton[?]:

- One church, served by one Italian diocesan priest.

Erie:

- One church, served by one non-Italian diocesan priest.

Pittsburgh:

- Two churches, by the Franciscans, with five Italian priests.

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

Newark:

- Three churches, served by six Italian diocesan priests.

Passaic:

- One church, served by two Italian diocesan priests.

Orange:

- One church, served by one non-Italian diocesan priest.

Paterson:

- One church, with a mixed congregation, served by one non-Italian diocesan priest.

W. Hoboken:

- One church, by the Passionists, with one non-Italian priest.

W. New York:

- One church, served by the Franciscans, with one Italian priest.

Hoboken:

- One church, by the Franciscans, with one Italian priest.

Jersey City:

- One church, served by a non-Italian diocesan priest.

Elizabeth:

- One church, served by one Italian diocesan priest.

Vineland:

- One church, served by one Italian diocesan priest.

Hammonton:

- One church, with a mixed congregation, served by one non-Italian diocesan

priest.

### **STATE OF OHIO**

Cincinnati:

- One church and a chapel, by the Missionaries of St. Charles, with one priest.

Cleveland:

- One church, by the Missionaries of St. Charles, with one priest.
- One church, served by one Italian diocesan priest.

Columbus:

- One church, served by one Italian diocesan priest.

### **STATE OF ILLINOIS**

Chicago:

- One church, by the Servites, with four Italian priests.
- One church, served by one non-Italian diocesan priest.

Coal City:

- One church, served by one Italian diocesan priest.

### **STATE OF MICHIGAN**

Detroit:

- One church, served by one Italian diocesan priest.

Calumet:

- One church, served by one Italian diocesan priest.

Iron Mountain:

- One church, served by one Italian diocesan priest.

Vulcan:

- One church, served by one Italian diocesan priest.

### **STATE OF WISCONSIN**

Genoa:

- One church, with a mixed congregation, served by a non-Italian diocesan priest.

Milwaukee:

- One church, served by one Italian diocesan priest.

### **STATE OF MINNESOTA**

St. Paul:

- One chapel, served by one Italian diocesan priest.

### **STATE OF MISSOURI**

St. Louis:

- One church, by the Missionaries of St. Charles, with two priests.

Kansas City:

- One church, by the Missionaries of St. Charles, with one priest.

### **STATE OF ARKANSAS**

Fayetteville:

- One church, with a mixed congregation, served by one Italian diocesan priest.

### **STATE OF LOUISIANA**

New Orleans;

- Two churches, served by four Italian diocesan priests.

### **STATE OF COLORADO**

Denver:

- One church, served by one Italian diocesan priest.

### **STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

San Francisco:

- Two churches, by the Salesians, with two Italian priests and one non-Italian<sup>11</sup>.

In all, seventy churches and 117 priests. Of these churches 39 were run by 52 diocesan priests, (some were ex-Scalabrinians, such as Frs. Morelli, Beccherini, Bandini, etc.), and 31 by religious priests. As a whole, the Scalabrinian Congregation is represented by 21 priests, equal to almost 18 percent, with fourteen churches, (equal to) 20 percent.

We have three other reports, respectively of March, 1900, February, 1903, and 1913, regarding more precisely the Scalabrinians. In the first one, Fr. Gambera sends to Bishop Scalabrini "a list of the places where our Frs. reside and those that were ours and of the churches surrendered to others but still remaining Italian."

Boston, Massachusetts: Rev. Frs. Giacomo Gambera, Ermenegildo Battaglia, Stefano Franco, Roberto Biasotti.

Two churches: Sacred Heart of Jesus, in the city; St. Lazarus, in suburbs.

Residence: Two North Square

Providence, Rhode Island: Rev. Fr. Paolo Novati

Two churches: Holy Ghost, in the city; St. Ann, in suburbs, served by Rev. Giulio Triolo, a diocesan priest.

Residence: 472 Atwells Avenue

New Haven, Connecticut: Rev. Frs. Luigi Lango, Giuseppe Formia

One church: St. Michael

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<sup>11</sup> Zaboglio, "Missioni Italiane negli Stati Uniti di America" (Arch. G.S., 553/3).

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Residence: Wooster Place

New York City, N.Y.: Rev. Frs. Oreste Alussi, Bartolomeo Marenchino, P. Ostino, diocesan.

Church of: St. Joachim

Residence: 26 Roosevelt Street

New York City, N.Y.: Rev. Frs. Antonio Demo, Riccardo Lorenzoni

Church of: Blessed Virgin of the Rosary of Pompeii

Residence: 217 Bleecker Street

Cincinnati, Ohio: Rev. Fr. Giuseppe Quadranti

Church: Saint Peter, with another chapel in the Sicilian community.

Residence: 510 Broadway

Buffalo, New York: Rev. Fr. Luigi Martinelli

Church: Saint Antonio

Residence: 50 Franklin Street

Syracuse, New York: Rev. Fr. Vittorio Sovilla

Church: Saint Peter

Residence: St. Peter's Catholic Church

Cleveland, Ohio: Rev. Fr. Antonio Gibelli

Church: Our Lady of the Rosary

Residence: 145 East End Avenue

Kansas City, Mo.: Rev. Fr. Pietro Lotti

Church: Rosary

Residence: 910 Missouri Avenue

Saint Louis, Mo. Rev. Fr. Cesare Spigardi, a diocesan priest

Church: Mary, Help of Christians

Residence: Corner 19th and Morgan Streets

New Orleans, LA.: Rev. Fr. Luigi Paroli

Chapel: for Italians

Residence: 817 Philip Street

Detroit, Mich.: Rev. Fr. Francesco Beccherini

Church: San Francesco

Residence: 226 Alfred Street

The priests sent from Piacenza to North America as professed religious who later left the Congregation and now work on their own, are the following:

Rev. Fr. Felice Morelli - 12 Grove Street, Newark, N.J.

Rev. Fr. Pietro Bandini - Springdale, Little Rock Arkansas

Rev. Fr. Felice Sandri - Corpus Christi Church, Passaic, New Jersey

Rev. Fr. Luigi Paroli - 817 St. Philip St., New Orleans, La.

Rev. Fr. Giovanni Gastaldi - 549 Fifth St., Louisville, Kentucky

Rev. Fr. Beniamino Bertò - Marquette, Iron Mountain, Mich.

Rev. Fr. Vincenzo Sciolla - Passaic, N.J.

Rev. Fr. Antonio Gibelli - 145 East End Ave., Cleveland, Ohio



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Rev. Fr. Angelo Chiariglione - Mobile, Daphne, Alabama

Rev. Fr. Giovanni Chmielinski - South Boston, Massachusetts

Rev. Fr. Francesco Beccherini - 226 Alfred St., Detroit, Mich.

There are other priests whose five-year vows have expired, but they faithfully serve their missions and depend on the religious obedience to the Superiors of the Congregation. They are:

Rev. Frs.: Giacomo Gambera, 2nd five-year term; Oreste Alussi, 2nd five-year term; Paolo Novati, 1st term; Ludovico Martinelli, 1st term.

Two are the churches surrendered to other institutions:

a) Precious Blood on Baxter Street, New York.

But, this church was taken from us by the Archbishop even though Fr. Vicentini, Superior Provincial, had given his word he would assume whole responsibility for its direction and administration.

b) Saint Peter in Pittsburgh, PA.

This church has also been passed over to the Franciscans because the Congregation had no priests to send, as had been repeatedly requested by the Bishop."<sup>12</sup>

The other list was drawn up by Fr. Oreste Alussi on February 17, 1903:

- 1) St. Joachim's Church, 26 Roosevelt St., New York; Rev. Frs. L. Martinelli, Domenico Ricci, Modesto Gembrini.
- 2) Church of Our Lady of Pompeii, New York; Frs. A. Demo, Pio Parolin, Giuseppe D'Andrea.
- 3) Society of Saint Raphael, 219 Bleecker St., New York; Fr. G. Gambera.
- 4) Church of the Sacred Heart, 2 North Square, Boston, Ma.; Rev. Frs. Roberto Biasotti, G.B. Balangero, Salvatore Barbato, Teofilo Glesaz, and ten sister Apostles of the Sacred Heart.
- 5) St. Anthony Church, 156 Court St., Buffalo, New York; Rev. Frs. Casassa and Chenuil.
- 6) Holy Rosary Italian Church, 911 East Missouri Ave., Kansas City, Mo.; Rev. Carlo Delbecchi.
- 7) Sacred Heart Italian Church, 510 Broadway, Cincinnati, Ohio; Rev. Frs. Amos V. Astorri, Giuseppe Quadranti.
- 8) St. John Baptist Italian Church, 720 Hamlet Street, Columbus, Ohio; Rev. Fr. Vittorio Sovilla.
- 9) Church of Holy Ghost, 472 Atwell Avenue, Providence, R.I., Rev. Frs. Francesco Morassi, Antonio Bove, Domenico Belliotti.
- 10) St. Francis Church, 201 Brewster Street, Detroit, Mich., Rev. Fr. Francesco Beccherini.
- 11) St. Michael Church, 229 Wooster Place, New Haven, Connecticut, Rev. Frs. Bartolomeo Marenchino, Oreste Alussi.

Fr. Gaetano Bishop Michael Tierney of Hartford wants to have an additional church opened in the city of New Haven, Connecticut, for many Italians that live too far from the parish church. Negotiations are now in progress for the purchase of the land.

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<sup>12</sup> Gambera to Scalabrini, Boston, March 22, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 553/3).

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- 12) Cerruti is in Bridgeport, Connecticut, with permission from the Bishop of Hartford, Conn., to open a new Italian church there. I am informed he has collected a thousand dollars already. His address: 320 Brook Street, Bridgeport, Connecticut.
- 13) Fr. Antonio Gibelli, Church of Our Lady of the Rosary, 145 East End Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio.
- 14) Fr. Eugenio Ostino, St. Peter Italian Church, 402 State Street, Syracuse, N.Y.
- 15) Fr. Felice Morelli, St. Philip's Church, 14 Grove St., Newark, N.J.
- 16) Fr. Pietro Sinopoli di Giunta, 609 Vulcan Street, Iron Mountain, Michigan.
- 17) In St. Louis, Missouri, two most beautiful churches have been opened already, and a third one about to be opened. One is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, the other to Saint Ambrose, and the last one to St. Charles. Rev. Frs. Cesare Spigardi, Luigi Lango. Fr. Spigardi would want another priest, but there is none available.
- 18) Fr. Riccardo Lorenzoni went to West Virginia in Pennsylvania (sic) to open a new mission (Monongah).
- 19) Fr. Amos Vincenzo Astorri moved to Washington (Capital of the United States), summoned by Archbishop Falconio, Apostolic Delegate, to preach a mission to the Italians, with possibility of opening an Italian church.
- 20) Fr. A. Gibelli would like to have a missionary to open a new mission at Ashtabula in Pennsylvania."<sup>13</sup>

The third list was presented by Fr. Vicentini to the Sacred Consistorial Congregation in 1913. (Within parentheses, statistics of people, average yearly baptisms, weddings, and first Communions, in that order):

- 1) St. Joachim (New York) (20,000; 1,150; 300; 300 to 400).
- 2) Our Lady of Pompeii (New York) (22,000; 1,350; 450; 500).
- 3) Sacred Heart of Jesus (Boston) (25,000; 1,500; 400; 400).
- 4) St. Lazarus (East Boston) (1,200; 60; 10; 50).
- 5) Holy Ghost (Providence) (15,000; 750; 120; 200).
- 6) St. Bartholomew (Providence) (4,000; 232; 44; 132).
- 7) St. Michael, the Archangel (New Haven) (15,000; 900; 180; 300).
- 8) St. Anthony of Padua (New Haven) (10,000; 500; 100; 250).
- 9) St. Ann (New Haven) (1,200).
- 10) St. Anthony (Buffalo) (10,000; 500; 100; 250).
- 11) St. Anthony (Fredonia) (2,500; 150; 16; 80).
- 12) Sacred Heart of Jesus (Cincinnati) (5,000; 190; 35; 150).
- 13) Our Lady of Pompeii (Monongah) (2,000; 170; 25; 100).
- 14) St. Mary of Mt. Carmel (Utica) (10,000; 500; 50; 200).
- 15) Holy Guardian Angel (Chicago) (18,000; 1,000; 130; 400).
- 16) Our Lady of Sorrows (Addolorata) (Chicago) (10,000; 1,000; 130; 400).
- 17) Our Lady of Pompeii (Chicago) (no data as just recently opened).
- 18) Incoronata Church (Chicago) (2,000; 80; 100; 200).

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<sup>13</sup> O. Alussi to Scalabrini, New Haven, February 17, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 554/3).

- 19) Our Lady of Mt. Carmel (Melrose Park) (6,000; 80; 20; 40).
- 20) St. Anthony (Joliet) (10,000; 130; 30; 120).
- 21) Immaculate Conception (Iron Mountain) (1,500; 60; 81; 50).
- 22) St. John Baptist (Columbus)(6,000; 200; 80; 80).
- 23) Our Lady of Rosary (Kansas City) (10,000; 400; 150; 150).<sup>14</sup>

In the summer of 1900, Fr. Gambera took a trip to Italy for consultations with Bishop Scalabrini, to report on the state of the missions to the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, to obtain permission for the visitation by the Founder to emigrants and missions of the United States, to present a report to the Card. Secretary of State, and to have an audience with Leo XIII, who charged him with bringing his apostolic blessing to all Italian emigrants. In the circular letter with which he informed the confreres on the results of his mission, he ordered them to send to Piacenza the monthly report of the Masses applied and of the offerings of each mission for the benefit of the Mother House.<sup>15</sup>

In a succeeding circular letter he conveyed to them Bishop Scalabrini's mind on the matter:

*"The idea for the forms of the monthly financial report was most appropriate.*

*Let all missionaries know that, besides approving of them, I order them 'in virtue of holy obedience' - and that no one dare delay from day to day the performance of this duty.*

*These forms shall be adopted also by the houses of South America. No one is to remain in America who does not have vows. Older missionaries will be allowed to renew them every five years, even though it would be my ardent desire that the generous ones took simple, but perpetual vows, to insure a fixed future goal for themselves, and grow fond of their apostolate. All missionaries ordained at the Institute belong to the Diocese of Piacenza. Their Bishops of origin have entrusted them to me; to me they belong, and I have a serious responsibility over them before God and the Church. As a consequence, either they take vows, or I will immediately recall them; in case of disobedience they would be suspended, but then they will have to deal with the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, which is daily taking on ever greater interest in our affairs. Let them know about this!"<sup>16</sup>*

Fr. Gambera made the following report on his three year tenure:

*"I have told in part what has been accomplished in Boston when I was the Superior, with the willing cooperation of my confreres. But, I was at the same time the Superior Provincial, a task also demanding attention, time, and nuisance.*

*Besides the usual circular letter exhorting to discipline and unity, my first act was the following: I had two registers printed, one for the administration of the Church, the other for the house, so as to provide for a separate, regular, easy*

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<sup>14</sup> Copy in Arch. G.S., 15.

<sup>15</sup> Gambera, Circular Letter, November 6, 1900 (Arch. G.S. 553/3).

<sup>16</sup> Gambera, Circular s.d. (Archives, New York Province).

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*and uniform registration and have the financial monthly accounts always ready for presenting the annual reports to the Bishops who consider a correct administration as the first requirement and merit, and the most practical evidence of the ability of a responsible superior.*

*Either because of inexperience or of negligence, some priests acted somewhat by approximation in this matter, and I wanted to remind them of a diligent performance of this duty.*

*Respondent to its resources, I fixed for each house a modest monthly contribution to the Mother House, where young students were being trained for the missions.*

*Few answered with regularity; others forgot about this duty of justice and gratitude. For five years I sent a hundred dollars every month to Piacenza, a considerable sum in those days!*

*Within the early ten years we already had seventeen churches in the United States, in New York City, New Haven, Providence, Boston, Utica, Syracuse, Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Kansas City, and the Bandini colony in Arkansas.*

*The seven parishes of Chicago, as many others in various States, came later. I visited all these missions at one time or another!*

*If we had a greater number of good laborers in those early years, I would have missions in all centers, because requests were pouring in from everywhere. The scarcity of priests was our most serious and damaging problem.*

*At the time of my poor tenure as a provincial, we bought the beautiful church of St. Michael, and built the new church of St. Anthony in New Haven, Connecticut; I gave the inaugural sermons there, and appointed the good Fr. Marenchino as pastor, who remained until 1925. At the present time he has charge of another mission. I do not intend to talk about the dissensions and annoyances I met with in those missions because of the jealousy and vanity of certain people.*

*Following long negotiations, I obtained permission from that Archbishop of St. Louis, Missouri to preach a mission to the Italian community there, in the Irish church of St. Patrick, with the hope of founding a permanent one for our emigrants. It was such a success that the mission was concluded in our church purchased two days earlier to the immense enthusiasm of the people and to the great amazement of clergy and citizens.*

*Some prominent and well-to-do families were its most zealous promoters and benefactors. I appointed Fr. Cesare Spigardi as its pastor; he is still there attending to two other churches and schools of that community. I will not go into the many details.*

*There was a gas explosion at the Church of Our Lady of Pompeii on Sullivan Street, New York. Three were injured, the young sacristan, the Agent of St. Raphael's Society, Mr. Isola; and Fr. Zaboglio. The first two died; the priest upon receiving the Last Rites survived, but he died a few years later. The church was abandoned, and we bought the one on Bleecker Street that belonged to a Catholic Black congregation. I preached the inaugural sermon with Delegate Satolli present.*

*Some serious trouble happened in New York in our first parish of St. Joachim; a new pastor had to be appointed in a hurry because the people demanded a*

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*priest stationed at the mission of Cincinnati. I immediately took off for that city to negotiate his transfer and substitution with the Archbishop. Within a week the two parishes were taken care of to the satisfaction of all.*

*In Kansas City I assisted at the dedication of the church, restored after a fire.*

*On my way back I passed the night at the Servite Frs., who had founded there the first Italian church dedicated to the Assumption, and were then building the school.*

*Their Superior, Fr. Tomaso Moreschini, wanted to have Italian Sisters as teachers. At that time, there were no others in America but the Sisters of Mother Cabrini, and I volunteered to present her his request on my return to New York. The good Mother immediately accepted the offer. That school is still in operation, while two grandiose hospitals were also built since then, with the sisters serving them.*

*Twice I was in Philadelphia to obtain permission from that Archbishop to open a mission for our Italian community, already a very large one. The answer was always that there was one already, and that it was more than enough. The old pastor and the good faith of the Ordinary were convinced that two churches would be detrimental to each other.*

*The doors that had been closed on us were opened by the Delegate, who called in the Augustinians, instead. Churches and schools are making good strides in that city to the benefit and honor of all.*

*At the International Exposition of Turin in 1898, I had our Congregation represented in the Missions' Department with a large painting on which our churches were painted in water colors, illustrated by a historical and moral report of each. It was accorded a diploma of honor. I had this painting made into a book which I sent to our houses and to several people of importance (...).*

*Twelve years had passed already since our Congregation had started its apostolate in the United States with a consoling success and a promising future, and strong was the desire of the missionaries and of the colonies to have a visit of the One who was the first Father to Emigrants in order to render him their homage of gratitude and honor so that he might also see for himself the fruits and the needs of his Institution.*

*The Bishop himself had twice asked permission of the Prefect of Propaganda Fide, but this was not granted for the delicate reason that it was thought that the sending of an Italian Bishop to visit parishes in their dioceses might offend the American Episcopate.*

*Having realized the difficulty, I thought of resolving it by consultation with the Bishops in whose dioceses we had parishes. All answered, without exception, that a personal visit of Bishop Scalabrini to his Italian missions was opportune, desirable, necessary, and all of them offered him generous hospitality at their residences.*

*With the advice and approval of the Apostolic Delegate, following an absence of 12 years from my home country, in August of 1900, I went to Rome bringing along twelve of these letters (...). When I arrived at Piacenza the Bishop was out for the Pastoral Visitation. I reached him at a parish high in the mountains; we agreed on a plan of action, and I took off for Rome.*

*At Propaganda I met with the Secretary Mons. Veccia who knew the scope of my*

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*visit: he kept the letters and dismissed me saying I would be notified the day and the hour of the audience. However, he made this observation: Bishop Scalabrini and Mother Cabrini ask Propaganda for subsidies, and for the last few years we accord them ten thousand liras, but they have never sent us a report on their Institutions. I pointed out to him that the Superior General had all the information, and should he desire so, I would have supplied him with a complete report in a few days. I had an album of those spoken of before sent in, and my report was most welcome.*

*On the following day, I was called in by His Eminence Card. Ledochowski, who, obviously moved, outstretched his arms over my shoulders, exclaiming: I thank you for what you have done. I myself desired this visit more than you and Bishop Scalabrini, but special considerations did not allow it. Now all difficulties have been taken out of the way, and at the next meeting it shall be granted following my proposal. Within three days Bishop Scalabrini had been granted the faculty, and I sent out the good news to the Fathers. by telegram (...).*

*The Bishop came to the United States the following year 1901 (...). Also at the urging of the Bishop, I took care of another important matter in Rome. Right in those very days the American Government was excluding from the Port of New York the Officers of foreign Governments in charge of the assistance to their immigrants, the Italian one included. All our emigrants could rely on was the Society of St. Raphael, founded eight years earlier by Fr. Bandini, as I mentioned before; being considered a "Benevolent Society" independent of all government agencies, it was free to operate, and the General Consul New York Mr. Bianchi had already expressed to me the desire that the Saint Raphael take over the whole burden.*

*With this in mind, I presented myself to the Italian Foreign Minister Visconti-Venosta to lay down clear and precise terms. I was assured a salary for one or two Agents, and a subsidy for the institution, later on. I promised that on my return to New York I would rent a house, furnish it right away with twenty or more beds for sheltering families, minors, and the most urgent cases, while continuing our daily assistance at the Battery. Fr. Bandini had gone to found a colony at Tontitown, Arkansas, and so Agent Lombardini, and a Priest whenever requested for the exercise of his ministry, were assisting every day at the disembarking station.*

*After settling these matters, I returned to Piacenza to report to the Bishop; and then I spent the last ten days in my diocese of Brescia, where I was anxiously expected by relatives and friends (...).*

*I arrived at New York without serious incidents with a delay of 20 hours. My first concern was finding a building for emigrants, providing it with all things needed, furnishings, supervision, and services.*

*The rather heavy expenses were met by my house of Boston and partly by that on Bleecker Street, New York. There remained the problem of finding a priest available, qualified, willing to daily carry out the delicate and responsible task at Ellis Island. No one wanted to accept it, so that I had to take upon myself this task as well. Every Sunday night, after performing all parish duties, I used to leave by train from Boston to be at the landing island on Monday morning, and every Saturday morning I was on my way back to my mission. I carried this hard task from October 1900 to December 1901, and the expenses for trips,*

*rentals, kitchen and services, except for the Agent, were being met by me, helped by the Pastor of Bleecker Street when in extreme need."*<sup>17</sup>

### **3. Fr. Paolo Novati (1901-1905)**

Busy as he was at the same time with the parish of the Sacred Heart in Boston and with the Society of St. Raphael in New York, which alone was sufficient to engage all the energies of a missionary, Fr. Gambera asked to be relieved of the responsibility of Provincial Superior.

During the Spiritual Retreat preached to Italian priests by Bishop Scalabrini in August 1901 at New York, a successor was chosen:

*"In one of the Seminary chapels there took place the appointment of the new Superior Provincial, as Fr. Gambera had insisted that I should accept his resignation. Fr. Paolo Novati (who is) residing in Providence was almost unanimously chosen by secret ballots. Not only does he enjoy the love and esteem of his confreres, but he is held in high consideration by the Bishops, as well. The Archbishop presented him to me as the most eminent ornament of the Congregation. He is full of talent, knows English to perfection, he is all heart (...). I was the one who admitted him to First Holy Communion at St. Bartholomew."*<sup>18</sup>

Frs. Oreste Alussi and Giacomo Gambera were chosen as Councilors.

Fr. Paolo attempted to establish "the mission band", advocated by Bishop Scalabrini from the initial project of the founding of his Institute. To the urgent solicitations of the Founder, he answered in early 1902 that he had not bought an appropriate house as yet because he did not have...the missionaries to put in it.<sup>19</sup>

By the end of 1903, he announced having bought one and receiving a subsidy of one thousand dollars for this scope from the Bishop of Providence.<sup>20</sup>

Regarding, however, this équipe or "mission band", headed by Frs. Francesco Beccherini and Roberto Biasotti, we only know it was short-lived because of the usual reason of the scarcity of personnel.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Gambera, "Memorie", pp. 42-47 (Arch. G.S., 1558/3).

<sup>18</sup> Scalabrini to Mangot, New York, August 25, 1901 (Arch. G.S., 3022/22).

<sup>19</sup> Novati to Scalabrini, Providence, January 22, 1902 (Arch. G.S., 554/4).

<sup>20</sup> Novati to Scalabrini, Providence, November 4, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 554/4).

<sup>21</sup> We find mention of a "Mission Band" in a letter by Mons. Lavelle to Father Biasotti of 1913.

Mons. Lavelle, Vicar General of New York had been charged with the supervision of emigrants in the Archdiocese.

Besides English and German parishes, we have here twenty-four Italian churches, ten Polish, five Rutenian, two Slovakian, one Bohemian, one English-Bohemian, one Greco-Albanian, one Hungarian, one Lithuanian, one Slavo-Bohemian, one Maronite, one Syrian.

To ensure an accurate and systematic supervision over the moral and material conditions of these various nationalities of the Archdiocese, in order to foster full unity in their life, activities, and problems, and to summon their cooperation in all things concerning them, it is hereby proposed that:

1. The Italian churches and Clergy be placed under the immediate dependence and direction of one of the Vicars General (Mons. Lavelle). There will be a committee formed by a dean and a secretary (Mons. Ferrante), and of other five members (Dr. Burke, a Franciscan, a Salesian, a member of the Congregation of St. Charles and a member of the Society of Pious Missions) that shall function under his direction (...).
2. The Committee's duty be to discuss and provide indications on the credentials, background, ability, and on whatever concerns the ministry of Italian clergy of the Archdiocese, on their participation in retreats, conferences, and monthly meetings.

Fr. Novati did not enjoy good health which had been seriously impaired in the course of an epidemic when he expended himself beyond the limits of his energies in assisting the sick. In February 1903 he returned to Italy to recuperate; he returned in August, but had to be hospitalized immediately, though for a short while. During the months of his absence Fr. Oreste Alussi substituted for him.

In 1904, Fr. Novati found himself in need of requesting to be relieved of his responsibility. Bishop Scalabrini, who was visiting Brazil at that time, wrote (to) him:

*"You can very well imagine with what sorrow I received the sad news. Here I was all taken up in much work, surrounded by our missionaries who are esteemed and respected here by all; in good health and happy I was spending my days at a fast pace, when I was reached by your letter.*

*I was interpreting your long silence as a sinister omen. There must be something wrong; Fr. Paolo is not writing, bad sign! And indeed it was so! Your decision to send S. back to Italy is a good one; it looks as though that individual is not all there. M. is absent from St. Joachim and I do not intend to keep him any longer in the Congregation. He has been dispensed from all obligations and is free to go anywhere he wants. We need men of spirit, not minstrels. Let him know all this.*

*You place me in great difficulty concerning the appointment of the Provincial. I was at peace, and at the conclusion of your term I had already confirmed you in your responsibility again with a Decree dated from Nichteroy: but, what shall I do now!? Think it over for a while longer; if it only be possible, carry on for some time yet; if not, point out whom I should appoint as the new Superior."<sup>22</sup>*

Shortly afterwards, Bishop Scalabrini himself wrote to Fr. Antonio Demo:

*"This time the appointment of the Superior Provincial must be made in accordance with the Rules. Three years ago I wanted to grant permission for a vote amongst the missionaries present as an indication. This time the appointment shall come from Piacenza."<sup>23</sup>*

Fr. Novati remained in America until September 1905 when he was named Vicar General. By provision of October 24, 1905, Fr. Vicentini appointed Fr. Antonio Demo as Pro-Superior Provincial, reserving the right to a final appointment for the time of the visitation he intended to conduct in a short while through the missions of the United States.

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3. The Committee inspect and gain information on the financial and spiritual administration of Italian parishes in the Archdiocese.

4. The Committee study the need for new parishes, the location, inside or outside the city, where they should be opened, the social conditions and the particular circumstances of Italian Catholics in the Archdiocese. In a word, it shall foster a sense of solidarity between them(selves) and other Catholics. ("Nationalities in the Archdiocese of New York." May 24, 1912, (Arch. G.S., 555/1).

Mons. Lavelle wrote to Father Biasotti (who by then was no longer a Scalabrinian) on July 1, 1913: "In September of last year the mission band of Italian diocesan priests has been organized and put to work. Its success has been great (...). A program must now be worked out for the next year (...). I am writing to ask you whether you wish to make use of these missionaries in the course of next year." (Letter Mons. J. Lavelle to Rev. R. Biasotti, New York, July 1, 1913). (Arch. G.S., 555/2).

<sup>22</sup> Scalabrini to Novati, Curitiba, draft s.d. (Arch. G.S., 555/2).

<sup>23</sup> Scalabrini to Demo, draft s.d. (Arch. G.S., 3023/2).



#### **4. Separation into two Provinces.**

On the occasion of this visitation, precisely on May 19 1906, it was decided to group the missions in two provinces, and their respective Superiors and Councilors were also appointed:

"In consideration of the number of our houses or missions in these United States widely spread over a vast territory, and in line with our rules, Chapter II, n. 12, concerning the number of residences needed to form a province, I have deemed it necessary to separate our missions in North America into two provinces as I intend to do by this my decree.

The following houses or missions shall belong to the Eastern Province:

1. St. Joachim, New York;
2. Our Lady of Pompeii, New York;
3. Sacred Heart, Boston;
4. St. Michael, New Haven;
5. St. Anthony, New Haven;
6. Holy Ghost, Providence;
7. St. Anthony , Buffalo;
8. St. Peter, Syracuse;
9. St. Mary, Utica;
10. Our Lady of Pompeii, Monongah, West Virginia;
11. Our Lady of Pompeii, Bridgeport;
12. St. Raphael, New York.

The following houses or missions shall belong to the Western Province:

1. Our Lady of Rosary, Cleveland;
2. Our Lady of Rosary, Kansas City;
3. St. Charles, St. Louis;
4. Sacred Heart, Cincinnati;
5. Our Lady of Lourdes, Iron Mountain;
6. Addolorata, Chicago;
7. Guardian Angel, Chicago;
8. Madonna Incoronata, Chicago;
9. St. Michael, Chicago.

I have appointed the Very Rev. Paolo Poggi as Superior Provincial of the Eastern Province; and the Very Rev. Pacifico Chenuil as Superior Provincial of the Western Province. As councilors to the Superior of the Eastern Province I have assigned the Rev. Fr. Antonio Demo and Bartolomeo Marenchino; and the Rev. Frs. Giacomo Gambera and Riccardo Lorenzoni as councilors to the Superior of the Western Province."<sup>24</sup>

Fr. Paolo Poggi, who had been Rector of the Mother House and had recently arrived in America, was a man of studies, used to a minutely orderly life; for this reason he could not get used to a life style totally different of a missionary in the United States and to the unceasing moving around demanded of a Superior Provincial. Consequently, he did not wait long before presenting his resignation:

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<sup>24</sup> Vicentini, Circular Letter, May 20, 1906 (Provincial Archives of New York).

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*"I have asked and I do ask by legal means for my complete release of my obligations to the Congregation, not because of difficulties I may have encountered, or of lack of hope at conditions, but only because on account of my physical ailments and nervous breakdown, I feel that I cannot absolutely live in a foreign land, away from my native climate, bound for a lifetime to the Congregation."*<sup>25</sup>

Fr. Poggi left for Italy on March 6, 1907. Without an official appointment, Fr. Paolo Novati acted as provisional Superior Provincial. On October 15, 1907, Fr. Vicentini named Fr. Antonio Demo as Superior of the Eastern Province. Like Fr. Chenuil of the Western Province, he held that office until the General Chapter of 1919.

When his three year term expired, in compliance with a provision of the 1910 General Chapter, on January 25, 1911, the Provincial Assembly gathered in New York to choose the three names to present to the General Administration for the appointment of the Superior Provincial. The votes converged only on two candidates: Fr. Gambera, 12 votes, and Fr. Demo, 7 votes.<sup>26</sup> Fr. Gambera refused acceptance based on reasons that, though manifesting his polemic attitude, still were revealing the presence of certain difficulties which were extant at that time, as we have seen, in the internal life of the Institute. After declaring himself unworthy of, and reluctant to, accept the responsibility of a superior, and having pointed out that the Provincial Superior was not given the autonomy, also financial, needed to be free and independent of the other missionaries in carrying out his duties, he added:

*"In third place, the Office of a Superior demands in conscience the fulfillment of his duties through the practical application of the Rules (...). It is, however, my deeply rooted personal conviction that these duties are difficult to perform in our Congregation due to lack of brotherly concord, of spirit of discipline and solid unity both as to the religious and common good, and to the financial and administration. I do not intend to put the blame on any of the priests in particular, as rather to point out a certain predominant defect of organization, that engenders divisions and selfishness, and some kind of independence and autonomy, a defect that could lead little by little to the dissolution of the great institution of our great and holy Founder."*<sup>27</sup>

In spite of these defects, generally the apostolic activity continued to flourish so well that Card. Farley, Archbishop of New York, who had been for many years a witness to the Scalabrinians' work could so declare in 1912:

*"I am exceedingly happy to state my most sincere appreciation for the service rendered to the Italians in this city by the Missionaries of St. Charles, ever since they arrived in New York in 1888.*

*Indeed, it would have been a matter of great concern for the authorities of this diocese to effectively provide for the spiritual needs of Italians who by the thousands and in ever increasing numbers are every year landing in New York if it were not for the zealous work of the Missionary priests of the lamented*

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<sup>25</sup> Poggi to Vicentini, New York, November 9, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 554/5).

<sup>26</sup> Minutes, St. Charles Province's Meeting, January 25, 1911 (Arch. G.S., 555/1).

<sup>27</sup> Gambera to Confreses, Chicago, February 22, 1911 (Arch. G.S., 555/1).

*Bishop Scalabrini.*"<sup>28</sup>

Following a tour through the various missions for Italian emigrants in the United States, Fr. Giuseppe Capra, of the *Italica Gens*, published his impressions in 1916:

"Every Italian who arrives in America either in New York or in Boston, is much impressed by the sight of the grandiose American buildings, some of which, reaching up to forty stories, seem to challenge the skies; and immediately a feeling of wonder, of great things, of something new, takes possession of his soul.

But when the new arrival ventures through the thickly inhabited streets of the large cities of America, that feeling of wonder and of the new, soon disappears; little by little he discovers that there also throbs a share of Italian life, he finds fellow Italians all over, he sees and admires the institutions founded to assist and help them. Such institutions are, in fact, quite numerous in America, among which the praiseworthy Institute of Bishop Scalabrini and of his Missionaries of St. Charles stand out.

Humble amongst the humble, available for all and the most varied needs of the Italians, these pioneers of Italian culture in foreign countries, true apostles filled with the same spirit of their lamented Founder, have accomplished, and still do, deeds that command the admiration of the indifferent themselves and even of those contrary to any idea of religion. For many years an admirer of the Scalabrinian Frs., by now scattered all over the two Americas – and it would be desirable that they go also to other continents, such as Australia - during my stay in the United States I was able to see for myself the untiring and manifold action they carry on for the good of our fellow countrymen (...). In all, twenty parishes, with an Italian population of some three hundred thousand parishioners.

These numbers should be enough to prove the importance of these missionaries; but they offer also an idea of the hardships they have to undergo, especially considering that the Scalabrinian missionaries in North America do not yet reach one hundred. Such small number of them is also the main reason why the Missionaries of Bishop Scalabrini have not been in a position yet to develop their action in the States of the West as they did in the Eastern and Central ones.

It is to be pointed out, however, that the Western States, except for California, which only recently started on their way to a progressive and extensive development, were attracting, until a few years ago, a lesser number of Italians.

Life in the United States is quite different from that of Italy. There the parish and the pastor have functions very hard to understand for anyone who has lived in Italy all his life. The parish is not only just a more or less graceful and comfortable church, where religious life evolves., The parish, besides the church, often embraces the school, where together with religion, Italian and love for the mother country are also taught. The school includes a kindergarten thus ensuring that mothers may earn a good daily salary and better attend to their many house chores. It has a hall for the meetings of the numerous societies which are one way or another linked with the church; in it Sunday classes are held, and night celebrations and entertainments for families and their children are offered. The parish is the center of various institutions for assisting Italians.

The parish house is everybody's home. From morning till evening there is a steady coming and going of Italians who have recourse to the pastor in all their needs, so that the pastor and missionary is not only the counselor of the doubtful, the comforter of the afflicted, the almoner that should have dollars by the loads to adequately respond to all requests, but he is also the lawyer that must listen to their cases and be available in their litigations; he acts as their notary public to assist them in the

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<sup>28</sup> Card. Farley to Demo, New York, July 9, 1912 (Arch. G.S., 15).

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drawing of contracts; the defender against abuses wrought them; he is the protector who looks around to find them a job, work, and salary increases; he is the official that must secure a reduction of punishment, freedom from prison.

It is the pastor's responsibility to have patients admitted to hospitals, the aged and derelict retire in shelters, the poor and orphan children accepted in foster or education homes. A pastor is often the intermediary with the Consul concerning the relations and interests with their home country and Government.

Even to me, a much travelled man, it became a source of admiration, while a guest of Rev. Fr. Iannuzzi, Pastor in New York, Rev. Chenuil in Chicago, Rev. Fr. Beccherini in Detroit, and of other pastors, to witness the unceasing succession of men and women, people of all walks of life, who come to present their needs for which only the pastor could or was to provide.

Office hours, though clearly indicated so as to allow the pastor an hour free for his meals, are in no way respected by Italians; and woe to the priest who does not show himself always solicitous for them, or makes himself all things to everyone.

A pastor does enjoy in the United States an extraordinary authority, which acknowledged by civil and government authorities themselves.

Scalabrinian pastors are most popular and much loved by our fellow countrymen. They were the first to ally with the "Italica Gens", and carry on an unceasing beneficial assistance to emigrants. Besides, they have whole responsibility over the Society of St. Raphael, a highly humanitarian institution with the scope of protecting and assisting Italian emigrants for both their material and economic welfare, by guiding them, keeping them from exploiters, helping them before departure until embarkation time, finding them jobs in locations with good and healthy climate in countries overseas; and for their moral and religious needs, by counselling them in their necessities, and especially by providing that they are never deprived of religious assistance. Fr. Moretto's name, the Institution's exponent in New York, is very well known to all those who take an interest in emigration and emigrants. His name is often mentioned as that of a dear friend by the commanders and officers of the ship carrying emigrants; it is pronounced with love by the crew, the port employees, and American authorities charged with assisting emigrants; it is particularly blessed by thousands upon thousands of people he helps and shelters at Ellis Island. No one who does not have an idea of all miseries of mankind of the malice, deceits, and maliciousness of men, is in a position to appreciate the vastness, the difficulties, the importance, the manifold aspects of the beneficent action that a priest with a big heart, affable ways, an unceasingly smiling countenance, and eyes kindly piercing to the very depth of the emigrant's soul, can, and does, perform on behalf of the masses of Italians that steadily stream to and stop at Ellis Island.

There is in the compartments of those immense barracks, where immigrants are kept for examination before being allowed to land, a severity singularly contrasting with the perky elegance of their exterior; how many pitiful and sorry cases did, and does, Fr. Moretto take care of in prison cells, at the close-by hospital, in the wide halls of the segregation area! How many intricate cases have been disentangled, shameful deeds prevented or opposed, crimes foiled, moral and material sufferings alleviated, families saved!

I went with him several times, always a witness to new cases that filled my heart with compassion for so many unfortunate people and with indignation for so much human treachery! A very strict law, even unjust in many respects, controls Italian and non-Italian emigrants' entry to the United States, especially in regard to their moral, social, sanitary, and financial conditions. Once in, they are completely free, and it is easy to elude any control, and commit any crime with impunity! However, being allowed to enter is the problem!

Ignorant of this law, through their own fault, because the opportunity to know about it

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is not lacking, when they arrive in New York, our emigrants are due for unpleasant surprises, harmful mishaps and refusals. Such is the case especially for those affected by sickness; women on their way to join their boyfriends, husbands, relatives; children and numbers of families trying to get to their dear ones, who are not present or represented at the time of landing; workers allured by work engagements; subscribers to illegal contracts.

By this prompt and able action in attending to all these cases, Fr. Moretto has deservedly earned the respect of authorities, and the gratitude of emigrants who address him with the endearing title of "Fr."

Had he the time, I believe he could write several most interesting volumes, true-to-life novels, only by telling the story of a few of the cases he had to deal with in the fourteen years he has been in charge of this mission. He has the efficient help of a secretary, Mr. Bragagnolo, a very solicitous, courteous, and kind man.

Close to the residence of Fr. Moretto, at 10 Charlton Street, there are also a kindergarten, and a shelter for women, boys and girls, run by Italian Sisters, known as Pallottine nuns, veritable loving mothers. This way they are spared the loneliness for their home country left behind. These Sisters take care also of the education of a number of orphan girls who seem to respond very well to their maternal attentions. Let my fervent wish go to them through these lines of mine that they may grow into real women, pious and strong, to the honor of Italy and society.

The affable kindness, the all-embracing and friendly charity of the Scalabrinian priests, together with their deep Italian and patriotic feelings that inspire all their action, have earned them a great influence on Italian and non-Italian people and on the local American authorities; and they make good use of it in assisting our fellow countrymen.

To avoid being too long, I do not wish to report statistics, but this is certain: the number of those assisted reaches several hundred for each parish every year, with a total average of fifteen thousand cases. An imposing figure, if one considers that the registered cases represent only a part of them due to the fact that only the most important ones are listed as some feel they would offend against humility in recording the good they accomplished.

In the registers accurately kept by Fr. Demo, Pastor of Our Lady of Pompeii in the densely populated neighborhood of Bleecker Street, I found some 750 cases of various types of assistance to our fellow nationals listed from June 1914 to 1915.

The Most Rev. Fr. Iannuzzi, Pastor of Saint Joachim and Saint Joseph, took care of only two hundred cases of repatriates, in the same period of time.

Inspired by their Founder, who in the same spirit of the great Borromeo died in the breach consumed by his zeal for the faith and his country, often forgetful of their daily heavy work and of the scarcity of workers, these missionaries give start to ever new charitable institutions. In New York, at the cost of constant sacrifices, Fr. Iannuzzi and his six assistants care also for the administration of a new parish named after Saint Joseph, subsidiary to the main one. It was founded a few years ago in the midst of a most populated Italian neighborhood. In the parish of Our Lady of Pompeii, Fr. Demo was finishing the kindergarten which he inaugurated several weeks ago for Italian children abandoned by their working parents, alone at home or wandering in the streets. In New Haven, St. Michael's basement is being enlarged, because the number of young people - out on a picnic at the conclusion of a successful year of religious instruction, is in a steady and comforting increase. At St. Anthony, a splendid club was being readied for older boys, with attached Sunday and night school, reading and recreation halls, and other assistance facilities. In Detroit, Fr. Beccherini was giving new impulse to his school through a renovation project; in Chicago, the temporary standstill of all initiatives because of the unexpected passing of the Archbishop, did not prevent Fr. Chenuil from completing his project for a school

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that will be soon started; Fr. Gambera, deserving of so much already, from giving greater impulse and a start to the long awaited enlargement of the recently opened kindergarten; Frs. Lorenzoni and Barabino from expanding the school area, and increasing its efficiency by enlarging and improving its premises, already so beautiful. Also he pastor in Kansas City was intent in enlarging the school.

A pleasing characteristic of many Scalabrinian churches is found in the Italian title on them, for example: "Chiesa Italiana di San Gioacchino, dell'Addolorata, di Nostra Signora di Pompei, dell'Incoronata, ecc."

Many of their churches were built almost entirely from their foundations by them, though they are in America only since 1888, such as one by Fr. Beccherini in Detroit, of Santa Maria in Chicago, of the Sacred Heart in Boston; and they bear witness to what Italian priests are doing in order to build artistic churches reminiscent of those of our Italy. However sad it may be, we must admit that Italian churches in America are generally less beautiful than those of other nationalities. American, German, Polish, Austrian, French churches, and even the Lithuanian and Rutenian ones, almost all of them, though not always responding to artistic demands, are certainly majestic, in a clear architectural style that reminds them of the churches of their home countries or of some monumental basilica of Rome. Except for a few praiseworthy exceptions, Italian churches, instead, are not different from the buildings around them; they are rather small and plain; many of them are still made of wood; and as I said, too few of them can compare with the greater majority of other churches.

And why all this? If, on one side, a good excuse in favor of our fellow nationals can be found in the lack of material means, on the other we cannot help admitting that they have not understood as yet how important churches are to the people of foreign nations.

If the church is miserly, such is also considered the people it serves; but when the church is beautiful, artistic, imposing, then also its people deserve respect and consideration, and is, therefore, preferred in jobs, occupations trades (...).

There are three Scalabrinian schools in Chicago, all of them very flourishing as are all others in their parishes. The progress of Italian schools in Chicago is due to Archbishop Quigley, too soon taken away by death. He was a true Fr. to all the faithful of his immense Archdiocese, no matter what their nationality! In fact, Italians kept telling me that the Archbishop had a special affection for them; and people of other nationalities said the same.

One day, in a conversation with the Apostolic Delegate and other personalities, when still there was no sign of the impending end, the Archbishop had uttered the following words:

*'Should the Lord call me now, I would die happy, because I have tried to provide for the religious needs of the twenty-seven nationalities to which my faithful belong, always mindful of their national feelings!'*

Still, it is worthwhile pointing out that the Archbishop showed a special consideration for Italians with whom he always spoke in Italian. There were one hundred and fifty thousand of them under his jurisdiction at that time.

When he was the Bishop of Buffalo, at the cost of no small financial sacrifices and with a faith and enthusiasm much appreciated by our fellow nationals, he founded numerous Italian parishes which he entrusted in part to the Scalabrinians whose unrelenting zeal and amazing activity he admired.

Transferred to the Archdiocese of Chicago, he entrusted other churches to the Scalabrinian Frs., among which the immense parish of Guardian Angel was assigned to Fr. Chenuil, expressly called from Buffalo. It had been founded for Italians by the present Bishop of Peoria, Mons. Dunne.

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He bought a large piece of land in front of the church which he had already planned with Fr. Chenuil to enlarge and improve; but right when the foundations of a vast school was about to be laid down, death took him away!

Considering that more than 1,200 children frequent Sunday school, all crowded up in uncomfortable and small basement rooms, together with Fr. Chenuil let us wish that Archbishop George Mundelein be a worthy successor in continuing Archbishop Quigley's institutions on behalf of Italians.

Many more things should still be said on the action of the Scalabrinian Frs., especially with the schools, like those of Kansas City, Detroit, Boston; with the halls and libraries for the young; the societies by which they hold their fellow nationals and the new generations united among themselves and to their home country; the charitable institutions and associations such as the Society of St. Vincent, to which they give an active life. My readers can very well figure out for themselves what I have tried to tell them.

Be it enough to say that they are missionaries of St. Charles, whose most active and zealous action they try to imitate. We must be proud of them, help them in all ways, and pray that they may increase in numbers, so that their institutions on behalf of civil society, country, and religion be also multiplied."<sup>29</sup>

### **5. Precapitular Meetings of 1919.**

On April 29, 1919, Frs. Demo, Alussi, Marenchino, Iannuzzi, Gregori, Belliotti, Formia, Toma, Quaglia, Cangiano, Strazzoni, Parenti, Properzi, Moretto, Maschi, Ginocchio, assembled to elect the delegates and to arrange the presentation of the proposals of the Eastern Province to the General Chapter. Fr. Iannuzzi was elected. Among the proposals most worthy of notice are the following:

19. Following a proposal by several capitular Frs., the attention of the priests gathered here is called to the necessity of providing for the small personal needs of confreres (...).

All of the various proposals agree on the need for an increase of the allowance. However, the proposal of Fr. Strazzoni received almost all the votes:

The Chapter expresses the desire that all Missionaries be given the amount of offerings respondent to no less than twenty-five Masses to be computed in line with the Article of the General Chapter of 1910.

20. The Chapter Frs. endorse the proposal formulated by the Rev. Fr. A. Strazzoni stating that in order to insure the existence and progress of the Institute in the United States of North America, the founding here of a preparatory seminary is necessary to recruit new members from among our colonies. It is also the desire of the Chapter that these students complete their theological studies in Rome.

21. It is the desire of the Chapter Frs. that the Provincial Superior not have the immediate care of souls so that he may be free to attend to the duties of his office; and to insure a greater unity of action and direction, it is hereby moved that our two provinces of North America be united into one."<sup>30</sup>

Considering the presence of Fr. Pacifico Chenuil, the future Superior General, even more interesting are the proposals of the assembly of the Eastern Province

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<sup>29</sup> J. Capra, "I Padri Scalabriniani nell'America del Nord". Excerpted from the "Italica Gens", issue January-June 1916. (San Benigno Canavese, 1916)

<sup>30</sup> "Minutes of the Assembly of the Fathers of St. Charles Borromeo Province", held at the Provincial House, 210 Bleecker Street, New York City, on April 29, 1919. (Arch. G.S., 555/4).

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held on April 23, 1919. The following priests were also present: Frs. Ciufolletti, Delbecchi, Fani, Davide Angeli, Riccardo Lorenzoni, Gambera, Quadranti, Franch, Gembrini, D'Alfonso. Fr. Riccardo was chosen as delegate. The assembly unanimously approved a memorandum to be presented to the General Chapter:

"Considering that especially at this decisive moment, the most urgent needs of our Institute are:

- a) Recruiting new able and willing members both in Italy and America among the Italian clergy;
- b) Stronger internal unity and discipline and dependence from Superiors;
- c) More just uniformity in the remuneration of each Fr.; urged by great love for the Institute and its holy and most opportune scope, such as were intended and willed by our Founder, all of us, the members of the Province of Chicago, respectfully submit the following proposals to the next General Chapter with the desire to see them approved:
  - I. In each mission of ours, non-community priests must be gradually replaced by members of the Institute; the acceptance of new places must be ordinarily conditioned to this provision.
  - II. Let the offices of Pastor and Local Superior automatically elapse every six years without the need for a private or a formal notification. It will be the duty of the General Chapter either to confirm or to change pastors and local Superiors (...): all members of the Institute shall be officially notified (...).
  - III. Equally and, no one excepted, each priest, though sick, be accorded the offering of his daily low Mass, for his small needs, and for helping his relatives in need, should this be the case. However, whatever he will receive from his ministry or thereof shall be handed in to the community as property of the Institute.
  - IV. Each priest be also allowed two hundred dollars in North America, and the equivalent in South America and Italy, for clothing.
  - V. An annual contribution be fixed for each house to be sent to the General House by the Provincial Superior."<sup>31</sup>

It was proposed, furthermore, that a new house be opened for the students of theology and for the aged and the handicapped; (that) the house of Crespano del Grappa be immediately sold, and two houses of studies be opened, one in North America, and the other in South America.

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<sup>31</sup> "Proposals made by the Rev. Fathers of the Province of St. John Baptist (Chicago) assembled for the Provincial Chapter on April 23, 1919. (Arch. G.S., 605/6).



## CHAPTER VI

### MISSIONS IN NEW YORK CITY & STATE 1895-1919

#### **1. The Parish of St. Joachim in New York**

Leaving out the temporary and brief administrations of Frs. Paolo Novati and Francesco Beccherini, the third Pastor of the Church of St. Joachim was Fr. Giuseppe Strumia from 1894 to 1898.

After finally settling the disputes with the most persistent creditors of Fr. Felice Morelli<sup>1</sup>, Fr. Strumia succeeded in obtaining a three year reprieve from the others, and began negotiations for the sale of part of the church's property to reduce the debt; it would then be possible to start thinking also about building a school for children roaming the streets by the thousands.<sup>2</sup>

In 1896 the missionaries moved to 26 Roosevelt Street. The church was painted by painter Luigi Capello. Fr. Strumia could get away for a period of rest in Italy at the end of year. He was replaced first by Fr. Donati, and then by Fr. Francesco Beccherini, while Fr. Bartolomeo Marenchino continued on as assistant pastor. Following his return in September of 1897, Fr. Strumia obtained the help of a priest from Turin, Fr. Eugenio Ostino: actually, with its twenty thousand souls, the parish needed the presence of at least three priests.<sup>3</sup>

Overwhelmed by fatigue and by the opposition of many of his parishioners, and burdened with serious accusations, some of which not without cause, Fr. Strumia resigned, and on February 4, 1898, he returned to Italy.<sup>4</sup>

The better founded accusations concerned his financial administration, so much so as to cause Bishop Scalabrini to wonder how Fr. Strumia could possibly contract so many debts without the Chancery noticing it since the church belonged to the diocese.<sup>5</sup>

Fr. Oreste Alussi, his successor (March 1898-April 1902), was confronted therefore, by a heavy situation, which he faced with determination:

*"Here things are not so bad, after all! One must deplore, however, that few men go to Church! The Church of St. Joachim may very well be called the women's church (...).*

*I am satisfied with the Catechism for children. It is frequented by many boys and girls with twenty-four teachers, all daughters of Mary, under the direction of the Christian Brothers founded by Blessed De La Salle.*

*Christian Doctrine is taught both in Italian and English. The Societies of the Christian Mothers and of the Daughters of Mary are doing well, and they edify*

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. M. Francesconi, "History of the Scalabrinian Congregation" Vol. II (Rome, 1973)

<sup>2</sup> Strumia-Scalabrini, New York, June 4, 1895 (Arch. G.S., 665/4).

<sup>3</sup> Alussi-Scalabrini, New York, July 3, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 665/4).

<sup>4</sup> Strumia-Gambera, New York, February 4, 1898 (Arch. G.S., 665/4).

<sup>5</sup> Scalabrini-Alussi, Piacenza, February 12, 1899 (Arch. G.S., 3023/2).

*with their frequency to the sacraments (...).*

*I have a colossal debt of 185 thousand dollars, without counting some other little ones, besides. Every six months I have to pay a five thousand dollar interest."*<sup>6</sup>

Rather than selling, as planned, the piece of the church's property, Fr. Strumia had three houses built on it with hopes for a good profit from the rentals, but it was not a good investment:

*"The putting up of those houses turned out a total loss for the Church. If, rather than building, Fr. Strumia had sold that area on which he put up that house (as the Archbishop himself had suggested), the Parish of St. Joachim would now be one of the parishes financially better off in the city of New York."*<sup>7</sup>

Fr. Alussi made good of all means available in American parishes to collect funds: lotteries, stage shows, raffles, collections. His efforts were not in vain, and Archbishop Corrigan encouraged him:

*"I have received your 1898 financial report. I am glad to note that you have paid a little on the debt, and I am confident that the current year will be even better."*<sup>8</sup>

In fact, by the end of 1899, Fr. Alussi was at least able to pay the long overdue taxes on the houses. The parish administration ran on an impressive budget:

*"We gross in more than 106.835.35 gold liras a year, .... but the expenditures amount to about the same."*<sup>9</sup>

The growth of religious life was equally spectacular, reflecting the most typical customs of "Little Italy" of New York. The celebrations for the Assumption in 1900 were "most solemn":

*"The music band played its selections on a platform before the church from seven to eleven p.m. on the fifteenth and the sixteenth of August, and then illumination, etc., etc. Besides, there took place also a three hour parade in honor of St. Rocco through the streets of New York City. The Society of St. Rocco must have spent on it more than five hundred dollars."*<sup>10</sup>

On the days of All Saints and All Souls of the same year, Fr. Bernardo Casassa, assistant there since August, had this to write:

*"In the evening of All Saints, I preached the sermon on All Souls. The church was full, crowded, packed with people, and many had to be contented with a place in the basement, on the steps, and on the sidewalk (...). And then, at five, on All Souls morning, there was a solemn High Mass, with a greater crowd than the night before; the basement was also crammed with people. We sold fifteen cases of candles that took in one hundred and six dollars with a net profit of eighty dollars for the church. More than three hundred people received Holy Communion."*<sup>11</sup>

By the end of 1900, Fr. Pacifico Chenuil came in to replace the assistant Fr. Marenchino, who had been transferred to New Haven, Connecticut; at the close

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<sup>6</sup> Alussi-Scalabrini, New York, December 13, 1898 (Arch. G.S., 665/5).

<sup>7</sup> Alussi-Scalabrini, New York, January 26, 1899 (Arch. G.S., 665/5).

<sup>8</sup> Corrigan-Alussi, New York, s.d. (Arch. G.S., 665/5).

<sup>9</sup> Alussi-Scalabrini, New York, January 11, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 665/5).

<sup>10</sup> Alussi-Roller, New York, August 13, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 665/5).

<sup>11</sup> Casassa-Roller, New York, November 5, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 665/5).

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of 1901 there were the following assistants: Fathers Luigi Lango, Pio Parolin, Andrea Garau, and Gian Pietro Sinopoli di Giunta; some of them, however, remained only for a short while, because, as we have pointed out already, St. Joachim was the sorting place of the missionaries coming in from Italy. During the three year term of Fr. Alussi, for instance, there figure present for some time also the Scalabrinian Fathers S. Franco, R. Lorenzoni, C. Delbecchi, and other so-called "aggregated", or "auxiliaries" such as Fathers Vitali, Sansone, Nalla, Valenti, Zuccarelli, Albendi, Bove, Maronna, Fiorucci, Ricci.<sup>12</sup>

By the beginning of 1892, Fr. Alussi was making plans for a new organ, the remaking of the roof, a fire escape, and the repainting of the church<sup>13</sup>; but he had to return to Italy in May for reasons of health and also because of the existence of currents opposed to him among the people, especially the "curators" (trustees) of the church, who had expressed their "veto" against his return and against the presence of Fr. Luigi Lango who was provisionally in charge of the parish from May to September 1892.<sup>14</sup>

The trustees wanted as Pastor Fr. Ludovico Martinelli who had once been an assistant at St. Joachim in 1889; and what is more, they demanded his appointment as a condition for paying the most pressing debts.<sup>15</sup>

Fr. Martinelli had charge of the parish from September 1902 to July 1904. The debt was slow in being reduced, as the same priest wrote to Bishop Scalabrini:

*"Yes, I would be willing to send Your Excellency not just six hundred, but thousands upon thousands of dollars; but you certainly know the financial straits the church and the house on Roosevelt Street are in, and much more so now when we have on our back the Church of the Salesians that is cutting down on baptisms, funerals, masses, etc. The church, with a two thousand dollar organ, (a gross mistake of the holy, but stupid, as well, Oreste) is one hundred and eighty thousand dollars in debt."<sup>16</sup>*

Fr. Martinelli assured Bishop Scalabrini that Archbishop Farley's desire was that he remain at St. Joachim because the 1903 administration had been good<sup>17</sup>: income amounted to \$16,976.62 dollars, and expenditures to \$13,976.62. Apparently, however, that was not the archbishop's mind.

In fact, Fr. Sinopoli, successor, as Pastor, of Fr. Martinelli from June 1904 to April 1905, had to inform the Founder that he had found the parish demoralized, the church poorly attended, some religious confraternities in dissolution, and the Genoese families unwilling to go to church. On September 9, 1904, he called on the Archbishop who told him:

*"I had decided to close the church and entrust it to another religious Congregation, but I want to give it another last try; I expect of you a spiritual revival of the parish and the restoration of its finances."<sup>18</sup>*

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<sup>12</sup> Ciufoletti, "Storia della Parrocchia Italiana di San Gioacchino in New York" (New York, 1938), p. 31.

<sup>13</sup> Alussi-Scalabrini, New York, February 14, 1902 (Arch. G.S., 665/5).

<sup>14</sup> Novati-Scalabrini, Providence, November 28, 1902 (Arch. G.S., 554/2).

<sup>15</sup> Cfr, *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> Martinelli-Scalabrini, New York, February 2, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 665/7).

<sup>17</sup> Martinelli-Scalabrini, New York, January 22, 1904 (Arch. G.S., 665/7).

<sup>18</sup> Sinopoli-Scalabrini, New York, November 16, 1904 (Arch. G.S., 665/8).

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Fr. Sinopoli tried organizing, first of all, the Catholic associations, gave new impulse to preaching, had missions preached to the people; at the same time he restored the church having it cleaned, redecorated, and providing it with a water heating system; he was able to begin paying interest on the debt:

*"I have succeeded in gaining the esteem and love of the people who come to church in such numbers as to cause one to say that the church is too small to hold all of them. In the while since I am here I performed 457 baptisms and 92 weddings."*<sup>19</sup>

From May, 1905, to May, 1906, the parish came under the responsibility of Fr. Giovanni Battista Cuneo, but its financial administration was placed in the hands of Fr. Anthony Demo, Pastor of Our Lady of Pompeii, who continued in this capacity also during the few months, when Fr. Paolo Poggi was the Pastor, that is, from May 22, 1906, to the beginning of 1907. We know already that he returned to Italy in March, 1907, having resigned in December, 1906.

The Superior Provincial, Fr. Paolo Novati, then wrote to Fr. Vicentini:

*"I have not spoken to the Archbishop of New York about it, yet; but I expect serious objections from him. This is the fourth pastor in three years to leave Roosevelt Street. And what about the people? Whom are we to entrust this most unfortunate church to?"*<sup>20</sup>

Fr. Novati was of the opinion that the church be returned to the Archbishop; Fr. Demo maintained, instead, that the church had to be held on to, and he pledged himself to take care of it for life. The superior provincial consented the experiment to take place though foreseeing that it would turn out to be a shaft into which all savings of the missionaries of St. Joachim, and also those of Our Lady of Pompeii, perhaps, would sink!<sup>21</sup>

In June of 1907, with the assent of the Archbishop, Fr. Novati appointed Fr. Vincenzo Iannuzzi as Pastor of Saint Joachim entrusting him also with the financial administration.<sup>22</sup> In the first months of his administration, that is from June 4 to December 31, 1907, the income amounted to \$11,322.41, and the expenditures to \$13,280.19.

*"There is, therefore, a deficit of \$1,958.78 that the Missionaries, besides waiving all salaries, lend to the church. We have this way a precise total of \$13,280.19 representing all expenditures. In the same period (June 4 to December 31), the old \$4,000 debt, claimed from the church by Mr. Giuseppe Lippi, was paid off."*<sup>23</sup>

In 1908 he opened a subsidiary chapel in the farthest section of the parish:

*"In order to better provide for the spiritual needs of parishioners far from the church, Fr. Iannuzzi bought a four story building on Catherine Slip Street, adapting the two lower floors as a chapel with accommodations for three hundred people. Named after St. Rocco, the chapel was blessed on June 24, 1908, by Mons. Edwards, as the Delegate of the Cardinal Archbishop. The total*

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<sup>19</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>20</sup> Novati-Vicentini, New York, November 22, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 554/6).

<sup>21</sup> Novati-Vicentini, Boston, January 22, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 554/7).

<sup>22</sup> Demo-Vicentini, New York, July 29, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 583/4).

<sup>23</sup> Iannuzzi, "Financial Report of the Church of St. Joachim, New York", January 26, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 665/11).

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*cost amounted to \$15,000.00 of which \$8,000.00 had already been paid.*"<sup>24</sup>

This chapel, that marked the beginnings of the future parish of St. Joseph, replaced the basement of the church of Saint James, previously served by a certain Fr. A. Deponete, put there, some say, by Fr. Curry, Pastor of St. James, probably to spite Fr. Martinelli. In fact, the basement was attended by more than two thousand Italians, to the detriment of the parish of St. Joachim. The Archbishop broke off Fr. Curry's maneuverings by ordering Fr. Deponete out and entrusted the basement to the Pastor of St. Joachim, who served it from March 8, 1908, until the chapel of St. Rocco was opened.<sup>25</sup>

Fr. Vicentini looked upon all these initiatives, to which must be added the restoration of the church and rectory, with a certain perplexity, afraid of a repetition of the financial difficulties caused by Fr. Morelli in the beginning.<sup>26</sup>

But, Fr. Iannuzzi, perhaps a little too sure of himself, kept going his own way. He did not neglect, however, the religious and social life of the parish.

*"We are going through a frightening financial crisis. A table is always ready noon and evenings for 12 or 15 people in need of nourishment. I do not mention the beds I must supply for the many homeless. I have formed the Society of St. Vincent to obviate all cases.*

*The holy missions were greatly successful. I have founded the Society of St. Joseph with 125 members, all heads of family; I increased the Holy Rosary Society by more than a hundred new members, and the Daughters of Mary by sixty.*"<sup>27</sup>

The book commemorating the 25th anniversary of the parish carries a summary of Fr. Iannuzzi's activities until 1913, describing the celebrations in eulogizing, though without exaggerations, as is naturally the case on such occasion:

"Building or restoring churches, bell towers, houses, mean very little for a parish if religious and moral action be not going along hand in hand with material activity! Convinced of this, Fr. Iannuzzi employed a great deal of his time in the moral and religious education of his parishioners, founding and supporting institutions devoted to this scope.

And so, on February 2, 1908, he officially established the Society of Saint Vincent De Paolo to help the poor of the parish. Having realized the need for providing for so many children who were practically neglected during the day, in 1911 he prevailed upon His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop to entrust to the Sisters of Christian Doctrine the direction of the Institute located at 173 Cherry Street. In 1913, he turned the church basement into a recreation hall and made it a movie house where moral and educational shows are offered every Sunday, freely to children frequenting Catechism classes, and for a fee to all others. He endorsed a theatrical circle whose young actors entertain and instruct the people by means of moral and educational stage performances. He took special care of catechism classes on Sunday, and is planning on a parochial school which he will carry through within not too long a time with the help of God and the support of his parishioners.

As to church societies, he has quite a few of them:

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<sup>24</sup> "Il 25mo della prima chiesa Italiana sorta per Mons. Scalabrini su terra de l'Unione" (25th anniversary of first Italian church by Bishop Scalabrini in the U.S.A.)(New York, 1913, p. 38).

<sup>25</sup> Strazzoni-Vicentini, New York, April 27, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 665/11).

<sup>26</sup> Vicentini "Diary", Vol. V, p. 13 (Arch. G.S., 1642).

<sup>27</sup> Iannuzzi-Vicentini, New York, February 15, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 665/11).

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1. Christian Mothers: a flourishing confraternity, of great help to the Church.
2. Daughters of Mary: ever progressing.
3. St. Agnes Sodality: of First Communion girls.
4. Little Angels Union: of girls preparing for First Communion.
5. St. Joseph's Sodality: of Christian Fathers.
6. St. Aloysius' Sodality: of First Communion boys.
7. Circle of St. Joachim: of young men.
8. Pious Union of the Suffrage: of men and women. Card. Farley granted the indulgences of a privileged Altar to the altar of this union on September 13, 1913.
9. The Apostleship of Prayer: given to devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and His Holy Name; a very active society whose members receive Holy Communion on every First Friday and Sunday of the month.
10. The Eucharistic League; devoted to the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Its members receive Communion on every second Thursday of the month.
11. Confraternity of St. Rocco; only of men.

Though not of a specifically religious character, there exist the following mutual societies that taking their titles from Our Lady or a Saint celebrate their annual feast in church:

1. St. Michael the Archangel.
2. St. Vincent of Craco, martyr.
3. St. George, martyr.
4. Our Lady of Portosale Cannitellese.
5. St. Joseph.
6. Most Holy Mary of the Letter.
7. St. Pellegrine, martyr.
8. Our Lady of Perpetual Help.
9. Most Holy Mary of the Star.
10. Our Lady of Miracles, a particular devotion of the Genoese.

Through many different ways is therefore Catholic education imparted and the light of faith kept burning in the heart of parishioners!

There is no need to point out, besides, that Fr. Iannuzzi had and is having in this truly priestly ministry the cooperation of able and willing assistants, amongst whom Fr. Cangiano."<sup>28</sup>

The Chapel of St. Rocco was serviced for six years; but then the ever increasing numbers of Italians required a larger and more suitable place. The missionaries, then, turned a movie house on Catherine Street into a chapel which was blessed on July 2, 1914:

“Last July 2, the Most Reverend Mons. Lavelle, Vicar General of this Archdiocese, solemnly dedicated the new Church of St. Joseph just opened at 64 Catherine Street.

Since that blessed day, the concourse of people kept increasing evermore, leading one to think that not too long from now this church will have to be enlarged, or a new greater one built, so as to obviate to the inconvenience, repeated every Sunday, of witnessing a good number of the faithful stand

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<sup>28</sup> "The 25th, etc., pp. 39-41"

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outside of the church at every one of the four Masses for lack of room and at vespers.

Besides, the frequency of our fellow countrymen to the Sacraments is consoling, indeed; from July to December the number of Communion received in this subsidiary church comfortably amounted to 5,500 (...).

To provide a civic and cultural education for men, the St. Joseph Lyceum was opened on Catherine Street, already host to many young men, ages 18 to 30 (...).

So also, Catechism classes are very flourishing, and every Sunday we are surrounded by more than 500 boys and many girls."<sup>29</sup>

By the end of the period we are dealing with, serious accusations were made to the Holy See against Fr. Iannuzzi. Card. De Lai, Secretary of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation sought information of the Archbishop of New York who supplied the following answer:

*"With letter of June 11th, 1920, Your Eminence called my attention to Fr. V. Iannuzzi, Pastor of the Church of St. Joachim.*

*In compliance, I inform Your Eminence that the said priest is a member of the Missionaries of St. Charles. For many years he has been in charge of St. Joachim's Church as Pastor, and there was never any accusation or complaint against him as to his priestly character.*

*Furthermore, I must point out that Fr. Iannuzzi took charge of the said church at a moment when it was feared to be on the verge of financial collapse! By his energy and activity not only did he revive the moral and spiritual life of that congregation, but he also saved the parish from financial ruin! And more yet, he purchased another property where he opened a chapel that would give the people distant from the church the opportunity to fulfill their religious duties.*

*He bought also other properties with the intent to build a parochial school; however, unable, because of present conditions, to carry out this project, he is forced to rent them out in order to meet the heavy expenses he is naturally faced with. Someone has taken this situation as an excuse, perhaps, for accusing Fr. Iannuzzi as a man craving for money.*

*Besides, my suspicion is that these accusations have their source in those priests who are being hosted for charity's sake by Fr. Iannuzzi. As a general rule, he accords them room and board, a monthly salary of \$30.00 and \$0.30 as Mass offerings. As long as these priests do not find better salaries, Fr. Iannuzzi is generous and good-hearted, but as soon as they get something more remunerative, Fr. is then an avaricious and greedy man, and worse.*

*I consulted with the Superior of the Missionaries of St. Charles. His answer was that there was no serious reservation in regard to Fr. Iannuzzi; the only drawback is his quick temper; besides, the Superior informed me that he will be changed perhaps, in due time.*

*Finally, I want you to know that Fr. Iannuzzi is responsible for a parish burdened with a \$200,000 debt, and he cannot therefore be too prodigal with his priests; he must try his best rather, in order to save the penny, not just to*

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<sup>29</sup> Mastropiero-Rinaldi, New York, January 15, 1915, "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. IX, March 15, 1915, p. 33.

*pay interest but to redeem the mortgage, as well.*"<sup>30</sup>

## **2. The Parish of Our Lady of Pompeii, New York City**

We have already seen how Fr. Zaboglio with the help of Miss Leary's generosity succeeded in forestalling the danger that the Church of Our Lady of Pompeii might be surrendered because of the debts created by Fr. Bandini<sup>31</sup>.

*"Were it not for her help, this Our Lady of the Rosary of Pompeii would now be standing closed. She gave me of her own purse, had a concert organized for the Church, offered another entertainment program last Sunday, had the facade redone over, the staircases of the Church and of the rectory repaired, has sent for a painting of Our Lady of Pompeii from Italy, is fixing up and furnishing all the rooms of a handicraft school she is conducting for Italian girls. But more yet, she also intends to found trade schools for boys, and buy other buildings."*<sup>32</sup>

On July 14, 1897, a serious misfortune befell the mission on Sullivan Street:

*"On the 14th, last, at two in the afternoon, at the Church of Our Lady of Pompeii, a strong odor of gas was coming up from the rooms under the church itself.*

*The sacristan, a certain Sam Vincenti (...) hurried to inform Fr. Zaboglio, who was at table talking to Mr. Isola, our faithful agent at the St. Raphael Society; both got up, and all three began looking for the gas leak; reaching to the door of a blind room, Fr. Zaboglio told Mr. Vincenti: "Open because the gas must be coming from here." Mr. Vincenti opened, and he instinctively, as he usually did whenever he entered that room (...), before anyone could see, or warn him of the risk he was running, rubbed a match against his pants, with consequent immediate big flames and explosion."*<sup>33</sup>

Vicenti and Isola died shortly afterwards at the hospital. Fr. Zaboglio seemed to be at his last while the funeral of the second victim was in process, and was given the last rites by Fr. James Gambera; but he pulled through! Within a few weeks he could resume the direction of the parish, but never again in sufficient health.

Two months after the accident, his assistant Fr. Luigi Lango was reassuring:

*"Our Parish progresses very well even in this time of need; and, except for some heavy debts, we can generally make ends meet with our ordinary expenses....Besides, attracted by the frequent religious services, people steadily stream to church in ever increasing numbers."*<sup>34</sup>

At that time, Fr. Zaboglio also had Fr. Anthony Demo as his assistant, because the Archbishop wanted that a missionary should visit more often the emigrants at their arrival at the port; a task previously attended to in turns by Fathers Zaboglio and Lorenzoni. Fr. Demo wrote as follows in November 1897 to Bishop Scalabrini:

*"The house on Sullivan Street, where I still am at, is the poorest of all and the*

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<sup>30</sup> Hayes-DeLai, New York, August 3, 1920 (Arch. G.S., 665/11).

<sup>31</sup> Francesconi, op. cit.

<sup>32</sup> Zaboglio-Satolli, New York, s.d., draft (Arch. G.S., 583/3).

<sup>33</sup> Beccherini-Scalabrini, New York, July 29, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 583/3).

<sup>34</sup> Lango-Zaboglio, New York, September 15, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 583/3).



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*most in need of money for the support of the Church. The Church and the house have not been purchased, as yet, and there is an enormous monthly rent payment on them. In my opinion, eighty thousand dollars is needed to buy them, - and when bought, many more thousands are necessary to restore them, as they are rather in disrepair. With all this Fr. Zaboglio carries on without running into debt though complaining of some old ones. If well taken care of, the community of Sullivan Street is well established, and doing much."*<sup>35</sup>

In 1897-1898, the Parish of Our Lady of Pompeii had some ten thousand people, while the Italian population kept steadily increasing. For this reason, plans were being made for another church building, and more so because the owner of the building on Sullivan Street did not intend either to sell or grant a new lease, since the old one was to expire in April of 1898. The Vicar General Mons. Farley suggested buying a church built by Protestants in 1836, and bought later by a Catholic Black community, who had it dedicated to St. Benedict the Moor. The building located at 210-214 Bleecker Street, in Greenwich Village, was bought by the Scalabrinians in May of the same year.<sup>36</sup>

A year later, in May 1898, Fr. Zaboglio, by now unable to hear confessions, preach, or say Mass in public, resigned the parish.<sup>37</sup> At first, the Provincial Superior Fr. Gambera was thinking of assigning the administration of the house to Fr. Vincent Sciolla, and the church to Fr. Riccardo Lorenzoni with the assistance of Fr. Demo, reserving to himself immediate supervision and responsibility. But this solution was not accepted, and in accord with Mons. Farley, Fr. Demo was appointed provisional superior.<sup>38</sup> Thus began the long parish tenure of Fr. Demo that was to last thirty-five years.

In August, 1901, Bishop Scalabrini blessed the large painting of Our Lady of Pompeii, work by painter DePyro, and on November 3 of the same year he ordained priests the four deacons Gaetano Cerruti, Andrea Garau, Stephen Duda, and Pio Parolin.

The initiatives of Fr. Demo were manifold:

"His first project was turning the basement, where the heating system was located, into a hall suitable for meetings of the various societies.

His plans for the cultural program of the parish included the formation of theatrical and lyric groups. Special mention must be made of the Passion play given for many years during Lent (...).

By 1900 the Christian Brothers contributed very much in organizing and directing Sunday schools of catechism of many Italian parishes (...). One of the first organizers and directors of this program in the parish of Our Lady of Pompeii for twenty years was Brother Victor Eliphus (John Mc Connel), assisted by Brothers Beccelin William (Wilfred Boutin), and Chronian James (Thomas Flynn). Other members worth mentioning for their dedication to this apostolate are Brothers Austin Julian (John Byrne), Cyril William (James

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<sup>35</sup> Demo-Roller, New York, November 17, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 583/3).

<sup>36</sup> Zaboglio-Scalabrini, New York, December 15, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 550/5). Gambera-Scalabrini, Boston, June 14, 1898 (Arch. G.S., 553/1).

<sup>37</sup> Gambera-Scalabrini, Boston, May 30, 1899 (Arch. G.S., 553/2).

<sup>38</sup> Gambera-Scalabrini, Boston, July 21, 1899 (Arch. G.S., 553/2).

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Murray), and Amick George (Thomas Ward).

While the Brothers were taking care of the boys, the girls were being instructed by Mother Cabrini and her Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart. In frequenting Our Lady of Pompeii for confession and for the performance of her devotions the holy nun made many friends (....). Fr. Demo was Pastor for 35 years (....), but his greatest honor was to have been the confessor of a future Saint, Mother Cabrini.

In 1917, when its silver jubilee was celebrated, the parish of Our Lady of Pompeii was a community of more than 20 thousand souls."<sup>39</sup>

An idea of the activity of the parish is given us by the spiritual report of 1915, which registered 1,453 baptisms, 500 confirmations, 394 weddings (with a decrease of 35% as compared with 1914, caused by the call to war of many young Italians), 36,500 Communions, 204 funerals, 306 sick calls. Catechism classes were frequented by 1,575 children attended by 65 teachers. The Holy Rosary Society counted 750 members, the Children of Mary Sodality 550, the Saint Aloysius Association 200, the Society of St. Joseph 100 men, and the mixed Society of the Sacred Heart had 200. In October of the same year, in a building by the church on Downing St. the "Scalabrini" kindergarten was dedicated, that was also used in the evenings as a gathering place for the young, and for lectures and meetings.

At the time we are describing, among other things, the rectory was also built and inaugurated in March 1907, and the roof and the floor of the Church were rebuilt. We report here a description of the religious life of the parish as an example of the pastoral methods employed for many years by the Scalabrinian missionaries, and other priests, in charge of Italian parishes in the United States, in an effort to adapt American customs to the traditions and way of thinking of emigrants:

"The visitation of the Ven. Founder to our houses in America had left everywhere a loving and grateful memory; and it had occasioned in the missionaries a revival of greater action on behalf of emigrants.

Fr. Demo, who was then at the first trials in the performance of his office, had the good fortune of finding a well-organized and thriving parish. His two predecessors, Fathers Bandini and Zaboglio, in their eight years as pastors of Our Lady of Pompeii, had left in the best possible state.

Church societies were numerous and well organized; catechism classes, flourishing; the preaching of Divine Word was frequent; religious services were conducted with devout propriety. Such state of parish life made it easier for the new pastor to carry out the duties of the ministry on the footsteps of his confreres. In fact, anyone who came in touch with Fr. Demo, can testify to his strong attachment to the customs and traditions of the past.

To give an idea of how well the religious life of our parish was organized, I am pleased to point out the way the Sunday activity was then carried out; as a matter of fact, to this day it has not been changed; and this so that it may be known in foreign lands, where American customs are not common knowledge, as I seem to realize that, also in the religious field, America is leading the way.

Sunday activities begin on Sunday afternoon. At three the priests take their place in

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<sup>39</sup> Cosenza, "Our Lady of Pompeii in Greenwich Village" (New York, 1967) pp. 7-8.

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the confessionals, where they remain for three hours until six o'clock in the evening. Following an hour rest, when they have their supper, at fifteen after seven they return to hear confessions until nine and over, as demanded by people's concourse.

This unchanged regularity encouraged very much the frequency to the Sacraments; and it also gave the opportunity to members of the societies to receive them, when they intended to do so.

Our Church, as we have pointed out on other occasions, has a variety of associations for every walk and condition of life of the parishioners (...). There hardly exists any institution more appropriate for a good organization of a parish than its religious societies that reach out to the largest majority of parishioners ever possible. Each society has a priest as its spiritual director who presides at meetings and exercises other duties. It is formed and organized by members with different offices: Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, Councilmen; election of officers is held every year to choose the new or confirm the old ones. It has its Sunday each month set aside for receiving Communion and holding its meeting. Each member is given a book in which he finds the By-laws; the privileges, and the suffrages, to which he is entitled in the society; there is in it also specified the amount he has to contribute each month.

When societies are many and well conducted the people are bound to the practice of Christian life, frequent the Sacraments and the church, set a good example for others, are attached to their pastor on whom they call very often. Furthermore, societies represent a good source of income for the church and are a credit to the parish as on certain occasions, especially of processions or solemn celebrations, they take part in them with their flags and banners.

Societies are the life and soul of the parish.

As to church services on Sunday, things do not differ from what is the custom in any other American parish. Since every priest in America enjoys the faculty to binate on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation, our parish has always had seven Masses every Sunday: at first, five of them were said in the upper church, and two in the lower church: one at six, and the other sung at 11. The last Mass is now said at 12:30. It is the custom of priests in America that the celebrant should ascend the pulpit after the Gospel for the reading of the Sunday announcements to inform the people about feasts, days of fast and abstinence, meetings of societies, the dates of the monthly communion. Following the exhortation prompted by the occasion, the priest reads the Gospel to the people standing before him, and then preaches a sermon of some ten minutes, ordinarily on the Gospel itself. The work of the priests in our parish was extenuating for the fact that there were three high Masses every Sunday morning at 8, 10, and 11; besides, it became customary to sing a nocturne with the blessing for the dead before each Mass, as was the custom in the towns of Southern Italy. Such custom was at variance when the liturgy took too much time, and did not meet with the approval of many. It was discontinued later on to the satisfaction of all.

As of that time it could not dispose of a school, the Church of Our Lady of Pompeii had to hold catechism classes at two in the afternoon for the many children of the parish.

As we have said before, the Christian Brothers had charge of the religious instruction of the boys; as to the girls, when Mother Cabrini and her Sisters had ceased teaching Catechism, qualified teachers began to take care of it regularly. After a one hour instruction, classes were gathered in Church where one of the priests would give a brief exhortation to the children, and then conclude with benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Every Sunday afternoon, about ten to twenty baptisms were administered, amounting to about 1,200 by the end of the year; and up to four hundred weddings annually. Then, there came the eventual sick calls at hospitals, or homes, to administer the last rites.

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Sunday work ended in the evening with an important service. Rather than reciting the Rosary, as is customary on the other nights, it was always the custom in our church to sing Vespers. A choir of children's voices was appreciated at all times, and even now the singing of Vespers still remains a tradition of this church. Then the catechesis follows given by one of the priests. On special feast days of the Blessed Mother and of the Saints, a panegyric or a sermon inspired to the occasion, is preached.

The benediction with the Blessed Sacrament concludes the laborious day of the priests, a day all spent in the exercise of the holy ministry.

The frequency of the people at Mass in the morning, and at evening services, is a clear proof that the religious life of the parish is alive and sincere in the heart of the people."<sup>40</sup>

### **3. The Parish of Saint Anthony in Buffalo, New York**

As the first pastor of St. Anthony at Buffalo, New York, Fr. Antonio Gibelli, so also the second one continued living at the rectory of the Cathedral even when His Excellency Quigley, a great patron of the Italians, was appointed Bishop:

*"The Italian Community of this city is poor, and it cannot afford supporting two priests, at all. Some time in the future, perhaps, it will be able to do so, but not now, for certain!*

*As you know, I do not have a salary, and I live on odd resources; I have room and board at the Cathedral for \$300.00 a year. For the rest I live on free offerings."<sup>41</sup>*

In 1898 the same Bishop put pressure on obtaining another priest because the Italian community kept growing by leaps and bounds:

*"Bishop Quigley of Buffalo orders me to write Your Excellency asking that you would provide a good priest because he intends to open a new church and school for Italians. However, it would indeed be proper that Your Excellency send here a priest who be a religious, and not one greedy for money; one willing to work for souls and the Congregation. In fact, I suspect that the Bishop may turn elsewhere if the priest requested of the Congregation does not come!"<sup>42</sup>*

But as yet a solution could not be found to the practical problem concerning the support of another priest, or even of a third one:

*"Italians of this community, in great majority Sicilians and Neapolitans, have nothing, and the rich ones do not come to Church. I have 431 students in the school with four teachers and a total expense of \$700.00 a year. When Fr. Gibelli left, the debt pending on the Church amounted to \$6,000, and in my six years in Buffalo I paid \$4,000 of it by sweating blood (...). Some 12,000 Italians, (8,000 of them Sicilians, the rest mixed) live in Buffalo. They surely need assistance; there is certainly work for three priests, but how are they to be supported? On what resources?"<sup>43</sup>*

Beginning with 1889, Fr. Martinelli was grieved by the presence of a priest from Sicily, whose standing was not too clear, called to Buffalo by his relatives; after enduring a series of intrigues and plots for two years, which he used to define

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<sup>40</sup> Sassi, "Parrocchia della Madonna di Pompei in New York" (Marino, 1942), pp. 52-54.

<sup>41</sup> Martinelli-Rolleri, Buffalo, December 28, 1896 (Arch. G.S., 575/2).

<sup>42</sup> Martinelli-Scalabrini, Buffalo, July 15, 1898 (Arch. G.S., 575/2).

<sup>43</sup> Martinelli-Scalabrini, Buffalo, January 2, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 575/2).

"mafialike", he found himself forced to abandon the field:

*"The reasons forcing me to leave Buffalo are:*

1. *No one wants to see me around here anymore! I am getting on everybody's nerves.*
2. *Since when called in by his blood relatives, a priest from Sicily has raised a storm against me that compels me to leave, if I am not to succumb.*
3. *The Bishop of this diocese does not care for the Missionaries of Bishop Scalabrini, and after using them, he drops them flat.*
4. *There is no organization in this congregation: we are "like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew IX. 36). I had repeatedly pleaded with Fr. Gambera to be transferred as I did not intend to be a superior but just an assistant of another priest in any parish. Fr. Gambera did not listen, and now we may consider the mission of Buffalo as good as lost.*
5. *I lack all sustenance; the priest that is here with me takes whatever was meant for my support and for the Mother House; I am forced, therefore, to leave.<sup>44</sup>*

A month earlier Fr. Gambera had written to Bishop Scalabrini:

*"The Bishop of Buffalo, present at Baltimore for the imposition of the Cardinal hat on Martinelli (Nuncio), said to me in the presence of high ranking religious that the mission of Buffalo has absolute need of two priests as he had repeatedly requested. Should not the Congregation provide them at the earliest possible, he would take care of thing himself. Needless to repeat that we have no priests available here!"<sup>45</sup>*

Things were straightened out at the time of Bishop Scalabrini's visit to America. Fr. Martinelli went to Cincinnati, Ohio, in October 1901, and his place was taken over by Frs. Bernardo Casassa and Pacifico Chenuil, well received by the people and by the Bishop, who had words of praise for the ministry of Fr. Martinelli as having given solid basis to the Italian parish by his firmness of character and by his qualities as a preacher.<sup>46</sup>

The annual report of 1901 on the state of the parish registered 555 baptisms, 105 confirmations, 101 First Communions, 11 weddings, and 396 children in the parochial school. Rather modest figures, when compared with the number of Italians. The two new missionaries got down to work in earnest on the revival of the parish life:

*"We waited until after completing the building of the house before supplying you with an overall report on this mission.*

*Church: When we arrived in Buffalo on October 29, 1901, the Rev. Fr. Martinelli had left us with \$154.99 on hand and with a \$446.00 debt. We got down to work in earnest on the difficult task, and by the end of 1901 we had a net balance of \$191.21. During the following year, with the consent of Bishop Quigley, we made a few changes, rebuilt the roof of the Church, and had other necessary work done.*

*On December 31, 1902, after paying \$17,000.00 in interest, the salaries to three*

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<sup>44</sup> Martinelli-Scalabrini, Buffalo, July 2, 1901 (Arch. G.S., 575/2).

<sup>45</sup> Gambera-Scalabrini, Boston, June 7, 1901 (Arch.G.S., 553/4).

<sup>46</sup> Quigley-Scalabrini, Buffalo, October 31, 1901 (Arch. G.S., 575/3).

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*school teachers, to the sacristan, and to the organist, etc. .... we remained with a \$2,050.52 balance.*

*On October 28 of the same year we laid the foundation stone of the new house for the missionaries, which was dedicated on Easter Sunday. It is a beautiful and comfortable building with room for four resident priests. It cost \$6,000 of which \$3,000 has been already paid.*

*The people are glad, contented, enthusiastic about it, and they frequent the church in ever increasing numbers, so that we are now forced to enlarge it, that is, move it to the ground floor, buy the house behind it (\$6,000), and lengthen it. We will also build the new school by the Church. For this we have already collected \$2,260, and we will reach the goal of \$3,000 by the end of the year. Besides, the Church also will have a net balance of \$2,500, so that we will start work by spring of 1904. And so the Mission of Buffalo shall be completed without adding much at all to the existing debt. And to think that in his eight years Fr. Martinelli did not do anything but pay interest (....)!*

*As work increased so also we needed a third priest, and now we have him in the person of good, laborious, zealous, and well-intentioned Fr. Garau, who will gain experience here with us, thus preparing himself to do much good, we are sure, as soon as the Superiors will appoint him to a mission of his own.*

*Before leaving for Chicago as Archbishop of that City, Bishop Quigley paid a visit to the new rectory and was very satisfied with it, and when we called to bid him farewell, he offered us a post in that city. We did not accept because we have given body and soul to this mission.*

*In 1902 we took care of 600 sick calls, and have given 12,000 Communion; there were 115 confirmations, 120 first Communion; 606 baptisms, 123 weddings, etc.*

*Rectory: When we moved out of Roosevelt Street. Fr. Oreste hardly supplied us with what we needed for our trip. Upon our arrival here, we expected as His Excellency had assured us that Fr. Martinelli would give us \$200.00, but instead it was only \$90.00. We rented a small apartment (\$18.00 a month); and we furnished it little by little. We had room and board in a hotel for five months."<sup>47</sup>*

After building the rectory, necessary for their autonomy from the Cathedral and to freely take close care of the community, the missionaries began work on enlarging the church.

*"To this end several committees were set up composed of members representing the different regions of Italy with the task of soliciting contributions. These funds were used to buy a house behind the Church that was thus lengthened by 25 feet.*

*The two floors of the building were made into one which together with the new sanctuary now form a spacious Church with sitting capacity for one thousand people.*

*The side walls of the church were divided into sections with large arched and artistically stained windows. They were paid for by the various Societies of the Church and by several families as shown by the inscription on each of them; so*

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<sup>47</sup> Casassa-Scalabrini, Buffalo, June 9, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 575/3).

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*as the Stations of the Cross, a work by Da Prato's Co. of Chicago, Illinois, were also the gift of pious persons. Confraternities and private people contributed in decorating the Church with the Statues of Patron Saints placed at each column on appropriate brackets. The ceiling was shaped into large panels with a large rose each in the center, framed in moldings rich with friezes, dentils, and wreaths of leaves. The altars were built in harmony with the style of the Church by the back wall of the new sanctuary adjoining the nave, but separated from it by three arches; the main altar is dedicated to the titular saint, the one to the right side to Our Lady of the Rosary, and the other to the Assumption of Pierno. The front of the Church also was modified by building a slender bell tower at one side, equipped with a clock by initiative of Mr. Alfonso Bellanca. Mostly responsible for building Church and Rectory were Croce Parisi for masonry, Giuseppe Bellanca for the woodwork, and Virgilio Pieri for stuccos and decorations.*

*After five months of hard work the Church was solemnly reopened to the public on October 23, 1904. Fr. Novati preached the sermon (for the occasion)."<sup>48</sup>*

In the first four years of Fr. Casassa's pastorate, assisted by Fr. Chenuil, and by Fr. Garau, replaced afterwards by Fr. Teofilo Glesaz, the conditions of the parish improved considerably. Fr. Casassa stressed the fact in an interview published by the "Momento", and reported by the periodical of the Scalabrinian Congregation in 1905:

"With its 25,000 people, the Italian parish of Buffalo has still to this day only one church, dedicated to Saint Anthony, at 160 Court Street. A church of good artistic taste (Renaissance style) with sitting room for one thousand people, and three wide aisles for those who do not find seats. It stands on the same spot where the old chapel used to be; this one was so small to be hardly sufficient for 600 people. Rather, the present church is an enlargement of the chapel, but in such a way as to be considered an entirely new building. The chapel was in use since 1891; transformation work was started on May 16, 1904 and was completed with North American rapidity, so that the blessing and dedication of the new church could be celebrated on October 23 of the same year. The total cost amounted to \$28,000.00; but the mortgage on the church due to the bank that loaned the money is now down to only \$3,000.00; within a year the debt will be paid off entirely.

Besides, we did not, nor do, need count on the impressive donations on which one generally depends here. In North America all parishioners contribute their offerings on Sunday: a minimum of five cents for a "seat tax" multiplied proportionally to the means of each parishioner; even the devout standing in the aisles give something out of their billfolds. This way some \$100 to \$130 and more are collected every Sunday. "My colleague in the ministry writes - Fr. Bernardino told me - that the total takings for the month of January amounted to \$740.90.

Besides, it must be pointed out that seats are free on week days and on Sundays for the early morning 6:00 o'clock Masses, mostly attended by mothers of family, otherwise workers who on this day are to be busy with house chores.

The sum of \$7,000 was spent on the rectory; these also were supplied by the people.

Plans are now underway for the construction of a building aimed at enlarging the parochial school frequented by 400 students (150 boys & 250 girls) with three teachers, Sisters of the Sacred Heart; for a hospital especially for Italians; and for a

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<sup>48</sup> Chiesa di Sant'Antonio da Padova, Buffalo, N.Y., 1891-1921 (Buffalo, 1921), pp. 13-14.

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cemetery only for them. And not too long from now work must be started still on another church because the Italian community is well keeping pace with the general population increase of Buffalo. In 1901 there were some fifteen to sixteen thousand souls; in two or three years they will be thirty thousand.

- *What region of Italy do most emigrants to Buffalo come from?*

From Basilicata. And so, one of the two beautiful side altars of the church is a gift of the people from San Fela who wanted it dedicated to Our Lady of Pierno, a shrine held in great devotion in that town. Very many families hail also from Sicily, followed in decreasing order, by Tuscany, Liguria, Lombardy, and the Veneto; I know only of seven families from Piedmont in Buffalo. However, we have good cause to be very satisfied with all of them. Moral rectitude and laboriousness are the two traits of Italian emigrants in Buffalo, widely acknowledged by Americans themselves. In April, a great part of them work as day-laborers in the surrounding fields: the whole family, all its members, from Father down to the child hardly able to clean out pod, earn money. They remain until October when they re-enter the city where any job is welcome. Italians are found in all jobs, snow plowing, included. A great many work in factories; numerous Italians are engaged as shop keepers of all kinds, as hotel managers, bartenders, and in breweries; many are employed in different firms as highly esteemed workers. Neither is there lack of professional people: four doctors and a lawyer, all very able. Some ten young Italians are University students. There is also a vocation to the priesthood, and there is good hope for more, because the need of priests for a congregation, where faith is not only strongly rooted but lived as well, is ever more pressing.

And to prove the strength of the religious faith of Italians in Buffalo, Fr. Bernardino added:

In our church we say five Masses, each with a sermon at Gospel; almost always a full crowd, which overflows at the 10:30 Mass when the Solemn Office is recited. Communion amounts to a monthly average of two thousand. Last year we ministered 800 baptisms and 126 weddings; no Italian wedding took place in court, even though the Council of Trent has not been promulgated in the State of New York (sic) to which Buffalo belongs: no funeral was conducted without religious services. All the 21 Italian mutual societies make provisions in their by-laws that Masses be offered for deceased members. Besides, they take part in religious services and request the priest to bless their banners. When Bishop Colton, successor of Bishop Quigley, promoted to Archbishop of Chicago, made his entrance in Buffalo in August of 1903, he was welcome by an immense procession with torches; well then, our twenty-one societies took part in it with their bands and flags, and with three thousand members; and I, who was on the podium with the Bishops, could proudly hear all praise them for their order and bearing.

Is there need of funds for the Church or the School?

A picnic is soon organized by a society, all the others take part in it; and there you are, the money is immediately available.

- *Concerning the school, to me 400 pupils frequenting it seem rather few when compared with a community of 25 thousand people!*

Do not misunderstand! The parochial school is *private*, and is entirely supported by the parish. However, more than two thousand Italian children frequent the public schools supervised by an able man, Mr. Ryan, who quite thoroughly understands the spirit of the school legislation of North America. Though avoiding all confessional leanings, still it does not intend to make the public school a den of irreligion. For this reason, these two thousand children are gathered three times a week at our church, for an hour of catechism each, imparted under the direction of the pastor by 22 teachers, fourteen of which coming from as far as 29th Street



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where they teach in the public school. You will understand, then, how the need for Catholics to have their schools be lessened. In any case, as we said before, we plan on enlarging and extending our present school.

– *Are children taught in Italian at the school?*

No. The United States always accepts with outstretched arms all emigrants from any nation on condition that they work at becoming North Americans; and the school in English is the main pledge of this serious intention. But this law, otherwise quite natural, - so much so that all nationalities obey it, - does not prevent us from opening also a special school for the teaching of Italian. Furthermore, we are working towards obtaining that Italian be listed side by side with French as a required subject in the High Schools of Buffalo (...).

– *You spoke to me about Italian weddings, but what about divorces?*

And with this, should I say it does not exist? Unfortunately, it is true that the laws of North America allow divorce; but, I do not know of anyone in the parish of Saint Anthony in Buffalo taking, or intending to take, advantage of them. Neither are mixed marriages frequent. Anyway, in the few cases that these take place, the non-Catholic partner always keeps faithful to the promise of raising children in our religion.

Then Fr. Bernardino started talking again about the attachment of Italians to their church. All windows have artistic stained glass, all of them donated. So also the organ was donated. The singing at the services is rendered by the "Saint Anthony Quartet" - a choir association composed of amateurs, men and women, who perform like accomplished artists. They offer their service free of charge, and their church repertory consists only of liturgical music. I ventured on a delicate question.

– *Are pastors generously salaried?*

At Buffalo I (as pastor) have a salary of \$800.00, my confrere Fr. Pacifico \$700.00. Of course, it should be taken out of the Church funds, of which we, the pastors, in the United States, give always a regular report to the faithful. This helps in explaining why they give so willingly and generously.

However, we have decided not to take "one penny" of this salary until the debt weighing down on the church is paid off to the last cent.

After that - he said smiling - we shall see!"<sup>49</sup>

In 1905, Fr. Cenuil was sent to Chicago at the request of Archbishop Quigley, and Fr. Glesaz was appointed to the new Italian parish of Fredonia, New York. Fr. Vincenzo Iannuzzi replaced them for two years. In 1906, painter Cesare Antozzi redecorated the church. Hard work undermined Fr. Casassa's health, who was forced to return to Pont St. Martin in Aosta Valley in February 1909, where he died on May 2. He was succeeded in the government of the parish by Fr. Angelo L. Strazzoni.

"Fr. Strazzoni had been named administrator on January 17, 1909 and pastor on May 17. As his assistants he had Fathers Leonardo Quaglia (1909), Lino Merlo (1910), Luigi Forlani (1911-1914), Arnolfo Vanoli (1911-1915), Giovanni Ginocchio (1914-1915), and Giuseppe D'Andrea (1915-1920).

Innumerable are the merits of Fr. Strazzoni: in 1910 he had a new roof made of slate slabs put on the church, and he endowed it with a magnificent organ on forced air. In 1915 he had the church's interior cleaned, adding beautiful color and stucco embellishments to the existing decorations; he provided it with new electric lighting and water heating systems and with a graceful pulpit in 1916. Besides, he had singers

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<sup>49</sup> "Gli Italiani a Buffalo" - Congregazione dei Missionari di San Carlo - a. III, n. 3 (May 1905), pp. 35-38.

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trained for the church choir that is now rated as one of the best in the city. However, the deed that will keep his memory forever alive in the colony of Buffalo is the parochial school named after Bishop Scalabrini, Founder of the Missionaries of St. Charles. This elegant and spacious building stands on land purchased for this scope by Fr. Casassa in the Terrace neighborhood, and was solemnly dedicated on January 11, 1912, in the presence of the local civil and religious authorities, and of the representatives of Italian societies and colony. The school is a three story building with fifteen large and bright rooms for the different grades, and for male and female associations that use them for their meetings, entertainments, and social celebrations. The spacious academic hall, bright, high ceilinged, elegant in its simple lines, but well harmonized, is endowed at one end with a stage on which the youth groups, boys and girls, provide entertainments and shows.

School year's openings and graduations, catechism awarding sessions, sport competitions, gymnastics, and solemn celebrations, all took place in that hall."<sup>50</sup>

The most important pastoral directive given by Bishop Scalabrini to the missionaries on his visit to the United States was that of gearing all their action around two hinges: church and school. The school of Buffalo, like many other missions for emigrants, responded to this concept.

"Fr. Strazzoni has thus solved one of the most serious problems reflecting the progressively better conditions of our colonies: that is, the education of the young, fostered by a wise civil and religious instruction.

Primary schools in the United States are certainly amongst the best for what concerns the development of intelligence and physical strength of the child, but they leave much to be desired in regards to the education of heart and will, because they neglect its most essential element, which is the teaching of the great moral principles that cause the desire for a virtuous life, wholly informed to the law of God, to be born in the soul of the student.

But we will not reach this goal if we neglect the religious education of youth: in fact, the teaching of good morals becomes impossible without the inner conviction of our dependence on God and of our responsibility before our Creator.

This is why Catholics in the United States have built and support parochial schools at the cost of great sacrifices. For these reasons we must add another all special one for us Italians, which is, the teaching of our language.

When our late Founder Bishop Scalabrini visited our colonies in the United States, he never ceased insisting with his missionaries on the need for founding Italian schools in all our missions, convinced as he was that the teaching of the language of one's country would serve in preserving in the heart of emigrants and of their children a strong love for their fatherland and for the religion of their fathers. Now we begin to reap the fruits of this persuasive insistence and deep conviction of his, which he succeeded in transfusing into the heart of his missionaries by means of his fervent word.

And it was indeed a noble gesture that the beautiful school of Buffalo should be dedicated to the memory of the great Bishop, the Apostle of Italian emigrants.

These were the considerations that induced Fr. Strazzoni to set out on an institution that could not be carried through without overcoming enormous difficulties as only those who know our colonies in the United States can appreciate."<sup>51</sup>

Dynamic Fr. Strazzoni resolutely took issue also with the problem of the

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<sup>50</sup> Chiesa di S. Antonio da Padova, etc., *cit.* pp. 15-16.

<sup>51</sup> "Una Nuova Scuola sorta negli Stati Uniti e dedicata a Mons. G.B. Scalabrini", "L'Emigrato Italiano in America" a. VI, n. 3 (1912), pp. 35-38.

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Societies or "Congreghe", cross and delight of all Italian parishes in the United States:

*"I had to take harsh measures with regard to some of these Societies because found insubordinate and admitting unworthy persons who live with wives and husbands that are not theirs, to the great scandal of the good people.*

*I forbade them also to deal in business in church, as they used to do on occasion of feasts they organize every year, not out of devotion but for shameful and dishonest gain. Under the pretext that they were sponsoring the feast they took over the church and pretended to give orders to the priests, and to appropriate the offerings given in by the faithful in cash, gold, and for candles. These measures got the worst and the most involved of their members into a fury, and they thought to avenge themselves by discrediting the "Parrinu" (the priest) of St. Anthony on a Socialist newspaper of this city. It is one of the usual reactions of the socialists, a bluff of the moment. I am told that the ladies of some "Congreghe" have ripped poor Fr. Casassa's cassock a few times; they have not done this to me as yet, but they heaped insults on me, when I was occasionally called in to their meeting to restore the peace."<sup>52</sup>*

After outlining this way the functions of the societies, Fr. Strazzoni could thus determine their finality and strength in 1912:

*"Italians want to live as they did in their towns also when in foreign lands. They give life here to the same institutions to which their forefathers used to belong, and whose members they were before crossing the Ocean. However, there flourished and prospered at all times in our parishes the so-called "Congreghe" which had three scopes. They keep the torch of faith alive by having their members receive the Sacraments a few times a year, support the church generously responding to any appeal of the missionary, and provide members with a decorous funeral. Such is the custom here in America that a funeral may cost no less than \$80.00 (400 liras). On the occasion of the death of dear ones, families living off their work must face the hard alternative: either to have recourse to local authorities for a funeral free of charge and so be disgraced in a humiliating manner, or to get into heavy debt. The "Congreghe" take upon themselves the burden of paying for it out of their funds with equal contribution from all members.*

*The popularity of these societies is eloquently proven by the list of the "Congreghe" existing in our parish:*

<u>Title</u>	<u>Founding Date</u>	<u>Membership</u>
Holy Family	Feb. 18, 1882	124
Assumption of Mary, of Pierno	May 17, 1894	82
Our Lady of Mt. Carmel	May 1, 1895	90
Our Lady of the Rosary (Women)	April 4, 1897	315
Our Lady of the Rosary (Men)	June 1897	91
Sacred Heart of Jesus	June 23, 1902	250
Our Lady of Sorrows	April 12, 1903	135
Immaculate Conception	January 29, 1905	196
St. Rosalia	May 7, 1905	230
Our Lady of Loreto	Nov. 26, 1905	150
Blessed Sacrament	June 24, 1906	85
St. Lucy	March 12, 1907	128
Annunciation	March 25, 1910	57
Most Holy Crucifix (Women)	January 3, 1909	127

<sup>52</sup> Strazzoni-Vicentini, Buffalo, October 23, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 575/4).

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Most Holy Crucifix (Men) Altar Society	September 1, 1908 October 1, 1910	93 54. <sup>53</sup> (53)
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To all these "*Congreghe*" Fr. Strazzoni added the Parish Club of Saint Anthony for young men, founded on September 25, 1910, that gained a certain degree of notoriety for sport in the region; the Holy Name Society for men, with a purely religious scope, founded about 1911; the children of Mary, with club and embroidery and tailoring classes; the Society of Saint Agnes for girls who had received First Holy Communion; and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, founded on January 6, 1910 for assisting the poor.

On the eve of WWI the organization of the Italian colony of Buffalo could finally be said to have been completed.

"As Mrs. Luca M.E. Van Zandt, a wise and active contributor to the city's daily, the "Express" was here in Rome at the Quirinal Hotel from Buffalo, I wanted to ask of her, whom I know to have a great love for Italians and our country, some information about our fellow nationals in her hospitable city.

Not an interview, to be sure; just a conversation on some impressions and recollections of the kind lady; with warm words of fondness and affection for our colony of Buffalo she assured me that her fellow citizens, as in fact all Americans, esteem and love Italian immigrants whom they appreciate for their lively intelligence, almost innate artistic sense, and love for work and thrift. Italians in Buffalo, a city of more than four hundred thousand people, 65% of them Catholics, are some 40 thousand, mostly Sicilians or from the South of Italy.

Their colony's origin dates back to 1886, and it grew ever since in great strides, due also to similarities of the climate of Buffalo and surrounding countryside with that of Italy, especially because immigrants have here the opportunity to work the land, normally their occupation in their own country.

However, Italians do not work in the fields all year long, but only from April to October, when they move out along the shores of beautiful lake Erie (where they) live in the house built for them by the owner of the land. Here in the midst of the open country and luxuriant vegetation, which give them the illusion of being in their homeland, emigrants resume their favorite work, tilling the fields. They are engaged in the cultivation of the vines and fruit trees, supplying American cities with excellent and much sought after produce.

The farmers return to the city for the winter, and there they turn into laborers, busy especially in keeping the wide asphalt streets of the city clean, and in clearing them of much snow. As soon as they re-enter Buffalo, the family takes care that the children be registered at the elementary schools which they assiduously and diligently frequent until April, when once again they will have to go along with their parents to the farms. Unfortunately, they must this way interrupt the school year to their great loss, though not altogether compensated by the better health and strength they gain in the clean air of the countryside.

On the other hand, many Italian children, especially of those who remain to work in the city, continue their schooling; and so, some of them are given the opportunity of a good preparation for higher schools, from where have already successfully been graduated teachers, lawyers, dentists and doctors. By the way, as to doctors, kind Mrs. Van Zandt mentions the beautiful "Columbus" Hospital at 298 Niagara Street, founded by an Italian and staffed by Italian doctors and orderlies.

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<sup>53</sup> "Scuola Scalabrini", 317-321 Terrace, Buffalo, N.Y. (Buffalo, 1912).

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Concerning the economic conditions of Italians in Buffalo they are rather good, even though salaries today are not what they used to be. There are also mutual societies, entirely with Italian membership, ready to help their members, especially in case of sickness or accidents.

Turning, then, to the moral and religious state of the colony, Mrs. Van Zandt, who devotes herself to its welfare with loving zeal, has furnished me with even more interesting and specific details. Italians of the city and diocese of Buffalo have always been the object of special and provident care on the part of the local Bishops. Already Bishop Ryan, and then Bishop Quigley, - present Archbishop of Chicago - at all times a great patron and Fr. of our emigrants, had provided all means for a better religious and civic education of Italians, especially with founding Italian churches generally staffed with Italian priests. And now, the actual Bishop, His Excellency, Charles Henry Colton, brought the action of his illustrious predecessors to a glorious completion. In fact, there are five Italian churches at the present time in Buffalo, and 25 Italian priests all over the diocese.

First amongst these churches is certainly that of St. Anthony of Padua (Court and Morgan St.) built by initiative of the deserving missionaries of Bishop Scalabrini, who also in Buffalo devote all their energies for the welfare of poor emigrants, giving proof of great love for their fellow nationals and of a truly priestly spirit; Americans, laity and clergy, all have a deep and fond admiration for these generous apostles, who are carrying on their great mission in active silence.

This Church of St. Anthony, dedicated in 1891, is now directed by Fr. Angelo Strazzoni, assisted by other remarkable confreres. Well over ten thousand people are entrusted to their fatherly care; they perform more than 600 baptisms and 150 weddings a year, direct seventeen religious societies of men and women with 2,327 members; a veritable army of apostles in the midst of families and of Italians, bound together not only by a common faith but also for mutual assistance. And here I am pleased to point out the particular character of these truly Christian associations; in Italy a member of a society may often content himself with registering his name, and may often content himself to pay his annual dues; but as to the religious practices requested of him by the bylaws, he does not pay much attention to them. In America, instead, Bishops and pastors strictly require that the members practice their Christian faith, otherwise they are refused membership in, or expelled from, the confraternity. This way the pastor can count on their cooperation in making his ministry far more embracing and effective. In general, the people respond to the care of their pastors, and still referring to the parish of St. Anthony by her better known, Mrs. Van Zandt said that the Church was always crowded on Sunday at all eight Masses.

By initiative of Fr. Strazzoni, a beautiful parochial school named after Bishop Scalabrini was also dedicated in 1912, where between some five to six hundred children receive their elementary education and instruction from Italian nuns. However, the fruitful action of the clergy on behalf of Italians threatens to be neutralized in part by protestant proselyting, unfortunately not altogether ineffective.

Close by the Church of St. Anthony a protestant one has been built for Italians and its pastor does all he can to gain proselytes, especially by capturing children's trust with small gifts, toys, and sweets. Then the parents, who unaware and unknowing of their trickery, follow and end up abandoning little by little the Catholic Church, against which the protestant minister has insinuated much distrust for the neglect they were left in in Italy, so that, not finding there either work or food, they were forced to go into exile in foreign lands, rich with opportunities and gold just because they are protestant! Besides, these ministers often hide the fact of having been once Catholic

priests."<sup>54</sup>

In December 1919, Fr. Strazzoni was appointed Provincial Superior, and was succeeded by Fr. Arnolfo Vanoli.

#### **4. The Parish of St. Anthony in Fredonia, New York**

The parish of St. Anthony, Fredonia, N.Y., may be considered as to its origin, an off-shoot of the parish of St. Anthony of Buffalo. In fact, right from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Scalabrinian missionaries of Buffalo began visiting from time to time the Italian community of Fredonia, mostly composed of emigrants from Valle d'Alma, Palermo. There was no church before 1902, while Protestants were conducting an active propaganda. In that year, under the direction of Fr. Clark, the Catholic community built a church; however, due both to nationalistic difficulties and to the increase of their colony, Italians decided to construct a church of their own with the intent of obtaining an Italian-speaking resident priest.

On September 10, 1905, the foundation stone of the Italian church of St. Anthony was laid, entrusted by Bishop Colton of Buffalo to the Scalabrinians who had directed the people in collecting the first funds. On December 2 the Catholic Society of St. Anthony was officially formed with Fr. Casassa as its chairman. This society took upon itself the task of building the church basement: its members, organized into groups, devoted their free time to this work, donated the organ, and conducted a two week bazaar shortly before the dedication of the church, completed in 1905.<sup>55</sup>

The first resident priest was Fr. Teofilo Glesaz, who directed the parish from 1906 to 1910. Little by little he organized the rather difficult and lazy community:

*"This mission progresses at a slow pace. The debt (...), church and rectory, amounts to \$11,000.00. The church has now a fairly nice sacristy. The rectory is fairly comfortable for one priest. As of now, the church offers a welcoming sight, admired also by Americans. A beautiful "Way of the Cross" around the walls, and four altars, all in the gothic style (...). But, what lifts my heart the most is seeing the church crowded on Sunday."<sup>56</sup>*

In 1910, following an assault on the part of a Sicilian, Fr. Glesaz had to leave Fredonia, and was transferred to Chicago, Illinois. His place was taken for five years by Fr. Giovanni Prosseda, the "auxiliary" of the Scalabrinians. From a letter by Fr. Strazzoni in 1913 we gather the following information:

*"In Fredonia things are not going too well; the Bishop called me in a number of times as he has always been under the impression that I am responsible also for that parish; but the Superiors never told me anything about it. I requested the presence of the Provincial who left things as they were.*

*I have suggested that he send Fr. Forlani to Fredonia, and call Fr. Prosseda to Buffalo, but no provisions have been taken. In the eyes of the Bishop, Fr.*

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<sup>54</sup> "La Colonia Italiana di Buffalo", L'Emigrato Italiano in America, a. VIII, September 15, 1914, pp. 16-20.

<sup>55</sup> Cfr. "Golden Jubilee - 1906-1956 - St. Anthony's Church" (Fredonia, 1956), p. 22.

<sup>56</sup> Glesaz-Vicentini, Fredonia, N.Y., May 7, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 580/2).

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*Prosseda is a member of our Congregation, and, unable to direct a parish, he should resign himself to be an assistant. All along these few years he did not do anything else but to get deeper into debt, and the more he will stay the worse it will be!*

*It would be necessary that Your Reverence intervene and put things in order. In fact, it is not right for the Congregation that certain missions, that cost us so much sacrifice, be exploited and ill-directed by individuals, who have no love, no attachment, and no interest for it, and then end up with discrediting us before the Bishops."<sup>57</sup>*

The Superior General gave this answer:

*"As to Fr. Prosseda, he was accepted as a helper under the responsibility of that pastor. I have always opposed accepting such priests, and I have granted permission to admit them only in case of necessity. It is wrong to present to the Bishops as members individuals who are not; either they acknowledge them as "helpers" or we give up the parishes; few of them, but well directed, etc."<sup>58</sup>*

Fr. Arnold Vanoli was pastor at Fredonia from March 1915 to April 1920. From statistics of 1908 we gather that the parish had 2,120 souls, with an annual average of 70 baptisms, 15 weddings, and 50 First Communions.

### **5. The Parish of Saint Peter, Syracuse, New York**

The first Italians to arrive at Syracuse were those working on the railroad from Weehawken to Buffalo. In 1884 there were already a good number of them. About 1890 the church authorities of Syracuse petitioned the Apostolic Delegate for an Italian priest. Mons. Ferrante sent from New York Fr. Nicholas Mennella, a priest from Casamicciola, whom Archbishop Satolli, the Apostolic Delegate, had brought along from Italy. Fr. Mennella, 52 years old, ministered at first in the church basement of St. John the Evangelist parish whose pastor was Fr. Michael Dunne, the Vicar General of the diocese. On May 19, 1895, invited by the Bishop, Fr. Vicentini visited Syracuse to assess the Italian community, which had shortly before been deprived of Fr. Mennella, and decided to send on an experimental basis, Fr. Francesco Beccherini, who arrived on June 3, 1895.<sup>59</sup> A month and a half later Fr. Beccherini informed Fr. Zaboglio:

*"I am in such difficulties here as would make it hard for anyone to overcome them unhurt. The Bishop is absent on a trip to Europe, and will be back next week. There is an Italian "boss" here who intends to turn the church into a business of his own, or not to let it function. The pastor of the Cathedral (loaded with money) is said to do likewise; for sure he is not a man to trust. I would like you to pay a short visit here before I decide whether I should stay on or leave (...). There is a good number of Italians that seem to increase considerably from year to year. Their future well-being will depend on good beginnings!"<sup>60</sup>*

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<sup>57</sup> Strazzoni-Vicentini, Boston, December 12, 1913 (Arch. G.S., 580/3).

<sup>58</sup> Vicentini-Strazzoni, Piacenza, December 31, 1913 (draft, Arch. G.S., 580/3).

<sup>59</sup> Parolin, "Ricordo del Venticinquesimo Anno della Fondazione della Chiesa di San Pietro in Syracuse, N.Y." (Syracuse, 1920), pp. 12-23.

<sup>60</sup> Beccherini-Zaboglio, Syracuse, July 18, 1895 (Arch. G.S., 593/2).

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In spite of the difficulties, Fr. Beccherini sought to coordinate the efforts of Italians towards collecting the first funds with the intent of acquiring a church; to this end he organized a picnic on August 15. This was the first parish outing of the Italian community of Syracuse. Twelve hundred Italians took part in it:

"With all this crowd, and foiling an opinion common amongst the people that any Italian who comes to America is a member of the mafia, quick to furiously run with dagger in hand searching for revenge should he drink a glass or two of wine or beer, this picnic was one of the most orderly amongst all those that were held this year by lake Onondaga.

They were patrolling it themselves. They drank a lot, and someone went back home quite loaded perhaps, but there was no disorder of any kind, and no complaint could be brought up not even by the most observing detective."<sup>61</sup>

With the proceeds of the common efforts of people and missionary, the church of St. Mark, formerly used by German Lutherans, was purchased.

*"Yesterday we celebrated the first Mass in the former Lutheran church, which has now been renamed the Italian Catholic church of St. Peter. There was a simple blessing, because Fr. Beccherini intends to have a more solemn one with Archbishop Satolli or by the Bishop later on after completing some needed restoration work. It is an all brick building, isolated, beautiful. It cost \$12,000.00 with \$1,000 down at the signing of the contract."*<sup>62</sup>

Fr. Beccherini was succeeded from September 20, 1896 to August 1, 1899 by Fr. Gaetano Orlando, a priest from Sicily, who was not a member of the Congregation but just a "helper". The Scalabrinian Fr. Vittorio Sovilla was the third pastor from August 1899 to July 21, 1900. Several times he sided in defense of Italian workers at that period when unions' agitations were frequent. As an example, the fourth pastor marked the date of his entry on the parish registers with the following note:

*"On July 21, 1900. Entry of Fr. Eugenio Ostino to Syracuse, NY, where he found a general strike of Italians in progress, many debts, and no funds. 'To the greater Glory of God:'"*<sup>63</sup>

Fr. Ostino, also a "helper", had this to write of his parish in 1903:

*"Now I can say that I am somewhat satisfied of the good which by God's help is being accomplished in this colony. On witnessing the works, spiritual and material as well, done this year, such as the new organ, the twelve new stained glass windows, the decoration and white painting of the main altar, the painting of the church's exterior, the new beautiful and richly embroidered canopy purchased two weeks ago and first used last Sunday, Corpus Christi, people come to Church happy and show their full satisfaction. Add to this the noble gravity of the liturgy, the singing of Italian compositions, all new, I myself teach the choir....the installment of electric lighting not only in Church, but in the basement as well, that serves as meeting hall for the new Club for young Italians, etc."*<sup>64</sup>

To Fr. Ostino is due the rectory, built in 1904 at the cost of \$4,000.00, and

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<sup>61</sup> "The Italian Picnic", "The Syracuse Standard", August 16, 1895.

<sup>62</sup> Zaboglio-Scalabrini, Syracuse, October 7, 1895 (Arch. G.S., 593/2).

<sup>63</sup> Cfr. Parolin, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>64</sup> Ostino-Scalabrini, Syracuse, June 26, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 593/5).



dedicated by the Bishop in September. Before then, the pastors were living in a room adapted from the base of the bell tower.

The fifth pastor, the Scalabrinian Fr. Francesco Morassi (December 1904 - November 1907) met serious difficulties at first with both the chairmen of societies and the local clergy, as also with the church debt, on which he could hardly pay interest<sup>65</sup>; not even afterwards did he ever quite succeed in getting along with the people, above all because of a persecution complex affecting him, though not altogether without cause. In fact, when he was given the brilliant "helper", Fr. Giuseppe De Nicola, as assistant, the people split into two factions, of which one claimed Fr. De Nicola as pastor in place of Morassi. The Bishop himself had to intervene once to calm down the people attempting Fr. Morassi's life, and, to avoid taking sides, he requested that both priests be removed.<sup>66</sup>

Fr. Giovanni Battista Cuneo was then assigned to Syracuse (November 1907 - October 1914). Assisted by Fr. E. Rovai till 1910, and by Fr. Geremia, afterwards, he took care of the young, opened a sewing school, and the kindergarten, and cut the debt down to one-half.

Fr. Pio Parolin made his entry on October 17, 1914. He devoted himself especially to the spiritual revival of the parish, but he was also successful in totally extinguishing the debt of the church in 1916. On February 6, the mortgage was "officially" burnt, as is customary with American traditions. In the presence of Bishop J. Grimes, the mortgage-deed was given publicly to the flames, and the event was celebrated with a parade through the city streets, a literary and musical show, and, finally with a speech by the Bishop and the singing of the "*Te Deum*".<sup>67</sup>

In 1915 Fr. Parolin was charged with taking the census of Italians in Oswego, New York, a city 30 miles from Syracuse; the Bishop requested the Provincial Superior for another priest to take care of that colony. As a result, the assistant of Fr. Parolin, Fr. Filomeno Geremia, was later sent there.<sup>68</sup>

Besides Oswego, Fr. Parolin periodically visited also the Italian groups scattered all over the diocese, especially those living in the parishes of Our Lady of Pompeii in Syracuse, and of St. Bartholomew in Norwich.<sup>69</sup>

In 1909 the Italian parish of Syracuse ministered to a congregation of 10,000 souls, including 3,000 in the neighboring area, and it registered an annual average of 300 baptisms, 80 weddings, and 100 First Communions.

## **6. The Parish of St. Mary of Mt. Carmel, Utica, New York**

The Italian colony of Utica, New York, traces also its origin to emigrants working in the construction of the West Shore railroad. In 1875 there were a

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<sup>65</sup> Morassi-Demo, Syracuse, October 15, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 593/6).

<sup>66</sup> Cfr. Parolin, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-38.

<sup>67</sup> Cfr. "L'Emigrato Italiano in America" A.X., June 15, 1916, pp. 39-40.

<sup>68</sup> Parolin-Demo, Syracuse, January 28, 1915 (Arch. G.S., 555/3).

<sup>69</sup> Cfr. "Tu es Petrus" (Syracuse, 1955), pp. 16-19.

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few resident Genoese families; it was, however, the substantial contingent of emigrants from Caserta and Laurenzana in 1883 that contributed the most in creating the Italian community of Utica and brought along its devotion to St. Mary of Mt. Carmel.

In 1893 there were 200 Italian families. Mons. Lynch, pastor of St. John church, began collecting funds for the construction of an Italian church. Fr. Griffin from Oswego, NY, first, and then Fr. Doyle, a Franciscan from St. Joseph's church in Utica, were called to assist emigrants here. The difficult task was very soon left by the latter in the hands of Fr. Antonio Castelli, who must be regarded as founder and first pastor of the Church of St. Mary of Mt. Carmel. He hailed from Ansonia, Caserta, and was 47 when he arrived in 1886 in Utica to assist the emigrants from his own towns. At first he was an assistant to Mons. Lynch, and then to Fr. Toomey at the parish of Saint Agnes, and again to Mons. Lynch until the decree for his incardination was signed either in 1894 or 1895 by Bishop Ludden of Syracuse. On August 3 a piece of land was bought at Catherine and Jay Streets, work began in April, and on December 20 of the same year the church basement was opened for religious worship. In 1901 it was decided to continue the works, and when the walls were about to reach the roof, Bishop Scalabrini blessed the cornerstone on September 15 of the same year. The Church was completed and opened for public worship on June 29, 1902.

In his visit to Utica, Bishop Scalabrini had promised Fr. Castelli to send one of his missionaries to assist him. In fact, he sent Fr. Giuseppe Formia in early 1902. Soon afterwards Fr. Castelli fell sick, and after alternating periods of improvement, he died on October 23, 1903. He was succeeded by Fr. Formia who kept charge of the parish of St. Mary of Mt. Carmel until 1921.

Fr. Formia's first concern was the construction of the parochial school. They got along as best as they could with three or four small classrooms for four years providing schooling for 175 students; sitting room was supplied in part with fruit boxes. Finally, when all six classrooms were opened, a small house was rented in 1909 for the Conventual Franciscan Sisters, who were charged with the teaching.

In his eighteen years as Pastor, Fr. Formia had to contend with financial and moral difficulties. His action and sacrifices, that undermined his health, were not always appreciated, and were many times misinterpreted.<sup>70</sup>

We report here an article from an Italian anti-clerical newspaper of Utica as one of the most moderate of the very frequent defamatory campaigns conducted by the lay press of that time against religion and the Church amongst the Italian colonies:

"I find it an obsession with many parishioners of the church of Mt. Carmel to have Fr. Joseph removed at all costs, and sent off... about his business somewhere else. It gets to be a long boring story by now, as it is quite some years they insist to no avail, while Fr. Joseph in the meanwhile passes money under the table and the Bishop secretly

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<sup>70</sup> Pizzoglio, "St. Mary of Mt. Carmel Church" - Utica, N.Y. - "Its History and Progress from the Beginnings to the Present" (Utica, 1936), p. 5-22.

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cashes in!

What's the use of wearing out our shoes going around to solicit signatures, when the Bishop is turning a deaf ear so often? By us there goes the proverb: 'lardo e lardo non si ungono' (there is honor among thieves), that is, priests stick together, and therefore, you waste your energies, beloved parishioners of a pastor you do not care very much for! When I hear you talking you seem to be right, but some accusations remain pure gossip if they cannot be proven. If a girl, strong on her good name, takes off for other places loaded with honor and gold, it does not make for anything extraordinary as long as name, last name, paternity, and material evidence are not known. The fact that the Italian church did not take a step forward in the past ten years does not prove anything against the pastor. As I have my political convictions and am a socialist, so does he have his faith and is a "conservative". This is why he cashes in so much from making a good business of his church! It is rumored that he refused the assistance of unemployed priests who happened to land in Utica! To tell the truth, he is not altogether wrong! His business shop does not need many employees! There is not too much work to do, and two priests are sufficient to run it. After all, it is only question of a Mass, some blessings, and a dressing down of unruly kids. As anyone can see, this job does not keep a man busy more than an hour or two a day! They say also that he could very well hire an Italian organist who resides here, a professor of music, while he continues instead to have an American lady for that job. And, indeed, how could I blame him for this? If that young lady knows how to play the organ, and was doing it before the said professor came to live in this city, how could he possibly fire her without a good reason?

People say that the church is always cold, while he solicits them for money to buy coal for himself! Faith is a fiery business, far more than any 'spirit'; it inflames the heart of any Catholic absorbed in prayer! Well aware of this, Fr. Joseph is afraid that a warm heart may burst open in a church where the heat is too much! The poor devil, he is so provident, and no one appreciates him!

It is being insinuated that because of him (unable to command the trust of all Italians) another priest had a basement turned into a church with poor St. Anthony of Padua running the risk of catching rheumatism. And what can he do, if his American colleague, as long as it means money, begins speaking and preaching in Italian, something he himself, as one who hails, after all, from Northern Italy, could hardly attempt to do?

They blame him for neglecting to call in a good preacher for Lent who could strengthen the faith of the devout! From what I know, Fr. Joseph is a great philosopher and logician! With so many people out of work for so long, anyone with a stomach would rather have a warm soup than the blabbing of a preacher, and it would be out of tune, therefore, to make him shed tears over the bad luck befallen only to Christ of having to die every year. There are those who accuse him of this or that! Some find fault with every little thing about him, and others make a big thing out of nothing! Dear parishioners, Fr. Joseph is only a priest, and as such he does what any other priest would do in his place. He, or any other, is just the same! Should you wish, however, that your scheme may reach its scope, there remains for you only one thing to do! Desert the church, forbid your families to give this or that Saint offerings that end up into the pockets of Fr. Joseph. He will then be forced to pack up and find a job some other place where there are plenty of other fools like you!

This is the only way you can carry out your miserable revenge as pious and devout Catholics of Holy Mother Church Universal. Amen.

La Zanzara (The Mosquito)"<sup>71</sup>

According to statistics of 1908 by Fr. Vicentini, more than once quoted, the

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<sup>71</sup> From a Socialist Newspaper of Utica, April 4, 1914, a cutting (Arch. G.S., 595/3).

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parish of St. Mary of Mt. Carme in Utica, was caring for 10,000 souls, with an annual average of 400 baptisms, 100 weddings, and 150 First Communions; the parochial school was attended by three hundred students.

**CHAPTER VII  
MISSIONS IN NEW ENGLAND**

**1. The Parish of Sacred Heart, Boston, Massachusetts**

As already mentioned before<sup>1</sup>, Fr. Giacomo Gambera had been pastor of the Church of the Sacred Heart in Boston, Massachusetts, since January 17, 1895. In the first months he was opposed by a small clik that wanted Fr. Astorri as pastor; but already in October, Fr. Gambera could write:

*"By God's grace and mercy, this mission has returned to the right track and makes good progress. With our peaceful but relentless action we have gained their trust and public satisfaction."*<sup>2</sup>

Church attendance was fast growing both by a return to normalcy - though disturbed, at times, by the pretenses of the directors of Saint Mark's Society, who wanted to do things as they pleased without even consulting the pastor - and by the steady growth of the population. Naturally, this situation gave rise to the problem of enlarging the church, or building a new one.<sup>3</sup>

During Lent 1896 a two week mission was preached with four sermons every day:

*"Its fruits exceeded all expectations; the church could not hold one more two hours in advance, so that several thousand Italians had to go home. There were genuine conversions; many marriages were blessed; letters were also sent to the different towns of Italy by repentant sinners offering peace to enemies, or reparation for injustices. On the day of the 'General Communion', four thousand parishioners received it."*<sup>4</sup>

The Genoese, that is, the members of the Society of St. Mark, looked unfavorably on this intrusion of southerners, or the 'Neapolitans':

*"The church is all too small, and it is crowded with Neapolitans ahead of time at all services. The Genoese, unable to find room, are very angry, so that many families, known as our best contributors, quit coming to our church."*<sup>5</sup>

In 1897 also, only one-fifth of the congregation could attend the missions, even though there were two separate sessions for men and women. Fr. Gambera had to ask the pastor of St. Stephen, close by, for the use of his church, and the Archbishop gave instructions to suspend there the Lenten services for one week so that Italians might be given the opportunity to attend the missions.<sup>6</sup> It was during these missions that a meeting was held to discuss building a new church<sup>7</sup>, and the following year Fr. Gambera seemed all set on doing so.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Francesconi, "Storia della Congregazione Scalabriniana" (History of the Scalabrinian Congregation) Vol. II, (Rome, 1973)

<sup>2</sup> Gambera-Scalabrini, Boston, October 8, 1895 (Arch. G.S., 573/2a).

<sup>3</sup> Zaboglio-Molinari, New York, May 8, 1896 (Arch. G.S., 550/4).

<sup>4</sup> Gambera-Scalabrini, Boston, January 3, 1896 (Arch. G.S., 573/2a).

<sup>5</sup> Gambera-Molinari, Boston, May 18, 1896 (Arch. G.S., 573/2a).

<sup>6</sup> Gambera-Molinari, Boston, March 26, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 573/2a).

<sup>7</sup> Gambera-Zaboglio, Boston, March 7, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 573/2a).

<sup>8</sup> Gambera-Scalabrini, Boston, September 14, 1898 (Arch. G.S., 553/1).

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However, he had to be contented, instead, with some needed repairs and a general clean up (March 1900-April 1901). Only in November 1909 could the pastor, Fr. Vittorio Gregori, start work on a radical transformation with the enlargement of church and basement and with construction of a new façade. The inauguration of the upper Church was held on April 10, 1910; the new façade was dedicated on November 26, 1911.

Following his second visit to the mission of Boston, on October 27, 1901, Bishop Scalabrini had written as follows to the Italians of that community:

*"I will pray for you because I desire that your colony of Boston may become the most flourishing and pious in the United States. But that you may obtain this grace, you must keep strong in your minds the idea of an Italian school, and of Sisters."*<sup>9</sup>

Already in March 1889, the chairman of the Society of St. Mark had been invited by the Italian Consul to take part in a committee for founding a school for Emigrants. He answered that the Society had made plans for one already; and, as a matter of fact, part of its proceeds, though not sufficient, were destined to this end.

In 1901, the missionaries decided to solve the problem in a most thorough manner, beginning with the kindergarten, extending it to the elementary school under the direction of the Sisters, and completing it with night classes for the young! <sup>10</sup>

Already in September of that year, Fr. Roberto Biasotti, Pastor since November 1, 1901, had agreed with the Society of St. Mark on founding an Italian kindergarten, provisionally using the church basement as a school, and renting a house for the Sisters and petitioned Bishop Scalabrini to send them. Fr. Biasotti and the Committee of Society of St. Mark wanted Catechism to be taught in Italian, while Fr. Gambera had already introduced the teaching in English two years earlier.

Fr. Biasotti was afraid the young would cease attending the Italian church if they ceased teaching in Italian:

*"They will end up frequenting American churches, and, perhaps, quitting the church altogether."*<sup>11</sup>

By the end of December, at the cost of \$30,000.00, an old protestant mission was considered adequate as a school and a convent for the Sisters; <sup>12</sup> but, they were forced to abandon the plan due to the heavy burdens in transferring the title:

*"In any case, we did not give up our plan for a school; as of now, we are all too definitely set on it to be discouraged by such little drawback! We shall find a building within a month; if we should not succeed, we shall adapt our church basement as a school, and the Sisters shall live at the house we rented three months ago for them. Yes, within this very month, the Lord will provide that this*

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<sup>9</sup> V. Gregori - "Venticinque Anni di Missione fra gli Italiani Emigrati di Boston, Mass." (Milan, 1913), p. 246.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 158-159.

<sup>11</sup> Biasotti-Scalabrini, Boston, September 21, 1901 (Arch. G.S., 573/2b).

<sup>12</sup> Biasotti-Scalabrini, Boston, December 27, 1901 (Arch. G.S., 573/2b).

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*plan so useful to our parish be a reality. In the meanwhile, Your Excellency, pray for us all, because we need Sisters here as much as we need our daily bread. Upon reaching the age of 12 or 14, children are not seen any longer in Church or for the Sacraments, and 90% of them turn into real "pests" of family and society."<sup>13</sup>*

In February 1902, it was decided to build the Sisters' Convent on a piece of land near the Church, property of the parish, and to conduct classes for the time being in the basement.<sup>14</sup> On March 17, Fr. Biasotti wrote to Bishop Scalabrini:

*"Here we are kept very busy with the large attendance of Italians to perform their Easter duty, many of them directly from Italy, on the new Dominion Line. 1,401 of them arrived on March 3, and seven of them, some without an address, and minors, the others, were entrusted to us. We have found them all a job. Tomorrow 1,894 more will arrive, with 1,673 of them in tourist class.*

*We are in the process of building the new convent for the Sisters and I hope to have it ready by May. In due time I shall send you the tickets for the trip of six Sisters.*

*A great strike involving 30 thousand workers broke out; some thousand Italians took the place of strikers. I had advised against it because it would be impossible for them to continue with their jobs once the strike was over. I succeeded in getting many of them to remain neutral; within three days the strike was over, and the Italians who did not want to stop working, were fired."<sup>15</sup>*

On June 1, 1902, the first six Sisters Apostles of the Sacred Heart arrived in Boston, sent by Bishop Scalabrini. They took residence at a house on Prescott Street in East Boston. In the months of July and August they began teaching Catechism and religion in the basement of the Church of the Sacred Heart. They had some 200 children then on school vacation, thus taking them off the streets.

Beginning with September, they limited themselves to teaching Catechism in Italian while waiting for the parochial school of the Italian mission to open.<sup>16</sup>

In the same month, the missionaries bought the "North End Mission House" at 199-207 North Street for \$35,000.00. Another \$22,177.00 was spent for works of restoration, adaptation, and construction of a new floor as living quarters for the Sisters.

*"After completing and furnishing the school building as required, I immediately began plans on organizing the Italian school, availing myself of the untiring and intelligent action of my assistant Fr. Salvatore Barbato, of the other confreres of mine, and of the Sisters Apostles of the Sacred Heart.*

*The building, restructured in line with the provisions for schools of the city of Boston, besides benefitting Italian children and families, was fit for such*

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<sup>13</sup> Biasotti-Scalabrini, Boston, January 3, 1902 (Arch. G.S., 573/2b).

<sup>14</sup> Biasotti-Gambera, Boston, February 10, 1902 (Arch. G.S., 573/2b).

<sup>15</sup> Biasotti-Scalabrini, Boston, March 17, 1902 (Arch. G.S., 573/2b).

<sup>16</sup> Cenni Storici delle Istituzioni Educative delle Suore Missionarie Zelatrici del Sacro Cuore Nell'America del Nord, Stati Uniti (New Haven, 1925), pp. 5-7. (Historical Notes on the Educational Institutions of the Sister Apostles of the Sacred Heart in the U.S.A.).

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*programs of education as were suitable to attract also students frequenting protestant (public) schools, where Religion and Italian language were distorted or neglected. And, I took advantage of it in pursuing my two aims: the teaching of religion and of the Italian language, by giving life to several institutions involving all Italians from childhood to old age.*

*Therefore we instituted:*

- 1) a kindergarten for children, ages 3 to 6;*
- 2) after school programs for the teaching of catechism and Italian to boys and girls frequenting public schools;*
- 3) a night school for adults;*
- 4) evening work classes for girls;*
- 5) Saturday sewing classes for teen girls, and on Thursday for young ladies;*
- 6) a society for boys, 10 to 16 years old;*
- 7) a second one for young men, 16 to 25;*
- 8) a theatre for comedy, dramatic and comic shows in Italian;*
- 9) a library with reading room open daily to all."<sup>17</sup>*

In 1904, the kindergarten played host to 300 children, who were also served breakfast in the morning, and lunch at noon. Families that could afford it, less than half of them, paid the full quota of \$.05 every day; all other children were admitted free or at a reduced fee.

The night school of Italian for young men had 129 students; for adults, 28. The night work school for women was daily frequented by 13 girls; eighty five women, and 225 girls attended the weekly sewing classes. The Society of St. John Berchman, founded on August 2, 1903, had a membership of 100 boys, ages 12 to 16; the Society of St. Louis had still 84 members between the ages of 16 and 25, but it hardly continued, because the young could not speak Italian anymore.<sup>18</sup>

The Sisters had in the meantime increased in number; between 1903 and the beginning of 1904 another nine had arrived.

Nine Boston girls joined the Order in the years 1904-1905: it was, therefore, necessary to open a Novitiate, which, on January 5, 1905, was transferred to a house set aside for this purpose on a vast property bought at Orient Heights.<sup>19</sup> Speaking of himself in the third person, Fr. Biasotti had this to say in regard to this property:

*"Already since December 1902, together with some Italians of Boston he engaged in negotiations for the purchase of a vast property at Orient Heights, East Boston, where to open an Italian hospital or an old people's home. I had already made a \$500.00 down payment on the deal, but it was called off because of the difficulties that came up.*

*By the end of 1904 a favorable occasion came along for buying that property for*

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<sup>17</sup> Biasotti, Rapporto della Scuola Italiana 'San Carlo Borromeo' in Boston, Mass., U.S.A. (1903-1904) (Report on 'St. Carlo Borromeo Italian School) referred to by V. Gregori, op. cit., pp. 166-169

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 169-170.

<sup>19</sup> Cfr. Cenni Storici, etc., op. cit., pp. 7-9.



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*a very low price; however, the pastor convinced the Apostles of the Sacred Heart to acquire it as a sanatorium for children there, wholly dependent on the kindergarten founded at 207 North Street (...).*

*The bill of purchase was signed on January 3, 1905, and the sanatorium was opened on June 3. Shortly afterwards, the same Sisters bought the land around it. The whole deal amounted to \$9,650.00. Restoration and adaptation work should not have exceeded \$3,000.00; actually, it reached to over \$20,000.00, so as to jeopardize the progress of the school and its existence because the Sisters could not pay the bills on the due date set by the creditors."<sup>20</sup>*

This drawback, and the fact that no one was able to find out what use was made of the collections taken up by the Sisters from the people for the support of the school, gave rise to a painful dispute between Sisters and Missionaries. The Archbishop of Boston intervened and charged Fr. Paolo Novati, Vicar General of the Scalabrinians, with the administration. With decree of July 23, 1907, the Apostolic Delegate Diomede Falconio appointed, "*motu proprio ad suum beneplacitum* (of his own authority and discretion)", Sister Elisa Pederzini Superior Provincial of the Sisters in place of Sister Domenica Geminiani, whom Mother Clelia Merloni had named after having dismissed the former, guilty of having obeyed the provisions of the Archbishop of Boston, in regard to the collections. The Archbishop himself "went over to Orient Heights to make the "decree" known to the dissident Sisters, and to demand of them full compliance with the orders of the Delegate."<sup>21</sup>

In October, the Apostolic Delegate together with the Auditor Mons. Cerretti, was in Boston four days studying the dispute on the spot <sup>22</sup> and on the 9th of the same month he signed the decree that settled the dispute in favor of the missionaries. <sup>23</sup>

The group of Sisters headed by Sister Elisa Pederzini separated from the Congregation of the Sisters Apostles of the Sacred Heart to join another Institute; the others returned to Italy. After the solution of this question, on October 7, 1907, Fr. Novati removed from his post Fr. Biasotti, a man of great initiatives, but a most inefficient administrator, assigning him to "the mission band", that had always been the dream of his life. Fr. Vittorio Gregori was appointed pastor there on March 28, 1908.

In the meantime, the Archbishop expressed to Fr. Novati his desire to entrust the Scalabrinians with the Church of Saint Stephen, much larger than that of the Sacred Heart.

*"The change, should there be one, must take place later on. It will be necessary first to gradually prepare these old Genoese who are attached to the Church of North Square like leeches to the skin. With current sky-high construction materials and work costs, it would be madness to plan on building a new*

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<sup>20</sup> Biasotti, Memoriale sulla Vertenza sorta tra le Suore Apostole del Sacro Cuore e Parroco Roberto Biasotti della C. S. C.B., Boston. (Memorandum on the Dispute between the Sisters Apostles of the Sacred Heart and Pastor Fr. Roberto Biasotti, CSCB), May 21, 1907, draft (Arch. G.S., 104/9).

<sup>21</sup> Novati-Vicentini, Boston, July 26, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 573/3).

<sup>22</sup> Novati-Vicentini, Boston, November 1, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 573/3).

<sup>23</sup> Falconio-Novati, Washington, October 9, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 104/9).

church."<sup>24</sup>

Since Fr. Novati had paid off a good amount on the debt contracted by Fr. Biasotti, and the Society of St. Mark was once again on good terms with the missionaries, the attendance of Italians at Church was increasing. Fr. Gregori had thought at first to set aside a fund for the construction of a new church or for the purchase of St. Stephen's;<sup>25</sup> but, then, as we have seen before, he had to be contented with the restoration and the enlargement of the old one of North Square. After completing work on the Church, Fr. Gregori could restructure the school by securing from Card O'Connell the use of the classrooms on Moon Street, alongside Sacred Heart Church, that belonged to St. Stephen's. The school was entrusted to the Sisters of St. Joseph de Puy. They began in 1911 with two classes, one with fifty boys, and the other with fifty girls. Another class was added in 1912, and so on from class to class.<sup>26</sup> We are pleased to report some impressions of Americans on the parish life of the Church of the Sacred Heart, extracted from an article published on the periodical "The Lamp" of Garrison in October 1910:<sup>27</sup>

"The beauty of the Catholic Church appears radiant in poor churches; in the parish of the Sacred Heart of North Square Boston, Massachusetts, for instance, directed by the Missionaries of St. Charles Borromeo (...).

North Square is a plaza in the shape of a square. This is perhaps why this neighborhood is called North End, in line with the well-known principle: '*Lucus a non lucendo*' (nouns express the nature of things). However, North Square is rather an ill-shaped triangle. It is the heart of the Italian community of Boston. The small square is crowded with people from early morning until late into the night. Generally there is tranquility at night, but the sound of human voices never ceases during the day.

There is always a crowd of children playing, and shouting of course, in their games. There are hotels, banks, stores of all kinds. And last, but not least, a church: the Church of the Sacred Heart, with the humble residence of the Missionaries at its side. The Church was originally Protestant, and one would still think it to be so, were it not for a big cross on top of its façade, and for the steady going in and out of Italians of all walks of life, proclaiming it Catholic.

Thanks to the zeal and action of the present missionaries, the interior of both church and basement has been put anew. Above the main altar there stands a magnificent high-relief group representing the Sacred Heart appearing to Blessed Margaret Alacocque. Eight beautiful stained glass windows were donated to the church by different generous members of the parish. The church is richly lit up by electricity; always open and people go in and out as they please (...).

During his stay in Boston, I had the honor to play host to the famous convert Fr. Hugh Benson on his visit to this interesting Italian neighborhood. The illustrious novelist paid a visit to the Scalabrinian Fathers, and he declared to them that he had not seen anything more interesting during his visit to Boston than this church, the humble abode of the Missionary Fathers, and their truly edifying modest life. We had just arrived from the Adventist church, which, except for a young lady playing the piano, was totally empty. There were, instead, a large number of worshippers in the Church of the Sacred Heart; some were making the Stations of the Cross, others

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<sup>24</sup> Novati-Vicentini, Boston, November 1, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 573/3).

<sup>25</sup> V. Gregori-Vicentini, Boston, April 22, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 573/4).

<sup>26</sup> V. Gregori, op. cit., pp. 174-175.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 249-251.

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saying the Rosary, and still others absorbed in profound adoration before the Altar. What a difference, I said! What a difference between this (church) and the Protestant Church of the Adventists! Fr. Benson Ex-claimed: *'This parish church is indeed a living church, but that was a dead one.'*

Here you have the secret of the sacred charm of this exemplary parish so full of life and spiritual activity. The church is almost never empty from early in the morning until well late into the night! Four Masses are said every day, and seven on Sunday! Attendance is quite good at all Masses; some five to six thousand Italians attend Mass on days of obligation. Every evening of the year the Rosary is said with singing of the Litanies, followed by benediction of the people with the Blessed Sacrament. There are triduums, novenas, and special services with frequent preaching in every month of the year.

Moving and magnificent is the solemn service in honor of the Sacred Heart. This splendid religious celebration takes place on every First Friday of the month. Many sickly people come to receive the blessing of a priest at the altar, while another one leads the prayers from the pulpit with the entire congregation responding by the impulse of a deep faith with the scriptural invocations: *'Lord, we adore You! Lord, we believe, but increase our faith! You are Christ, the Son of the Living God! You are my Lord and my God! You are the resurrection and the life! Save us, Jesus, we are perishing! Lord, if You will, You can cure me! Lord, say but a word and I shall be healed! Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us!'*

This devout and moving service is concluded with the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, preceded by the *'Tantum Ergo'* and followed by the *'Vi adoro'* sung together by the missionaries, the altar boys, and by the people crowding the church.

As to the life style of the priests in charge of this parish, be it enough to say that it is a life of steady activity prompted by an unceasing giving of themselves. They spend their lives, poor among a poor people whom they serve in every hour of day and night with love. They are indeed aware of being the shepherds charged with the custody of their flock; this is why in that church baptisms, weddings and funerals are administered at any time! There are no set days or hour for them! In the course of the past year they performed 1,517 baptisms, and 389 weddings. Amazing is the material assistance given to the poor, considering the poverty of means! The Society of St. Vincent de Paolo, directed with intelligent love by Fr. Vittorio Gregori, has so far contributed \$800.00. Some 12 to 14 families were assisted weekly by the priests and by the Society with money and groceries, providing them with coal, clothing, medicines, etc. Indeed because: *'The poor are always with us.'*

In only one year the priests gained admittance to various institutions for sixty orphans; of these, 23 were admitted to the "home for Destitute Children" by their good services. Besides all this activity in church, the missionaries provide steady assistance for the sick in various hospitals, some of them quite distant from North Square. It is almost always the missionaries of North Square to be called in whenever an Italian patient desires the sacraments! No need to say how willing and solicitous they are to immediately go to their help. Though not bound exactly by the religious vows of obedience, and poverty, these priests live as true and sincere apostles and religious. The little they have is shared by all, and they live under strict and willing obedience to their superior even though the word "*authority*" be seldom pronounced, and never with emphasis, among them. (The Lamp, Garrison, October, 1910, pp. 555-556.)<sup>28</sup>

Fr. Vittorio Gregori, pastor until 1919, could go ahead with the traditional ritual burning of the mortgage on March 20, 1917. He had been able to pay \$30,112.00 in eight years! Sacred Heart was the first Italian parish of New

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<sup>28</sup> "Le Impressioni di Frederic Orosz sulla nostra Missione di Boston", (F. Orosz Impressions on our Mission of Boston) "L'Emigrato Italiano in America" a. VI, February 1912, pp. 24-27.

England to succeed in totally paying off the debt on land and buildings.<sup>29</sup>

As to the mission for Polish immigrants in South Boston, started by Fr. Chmielinski in 1893<sup>30</sup>, assisted by Fr. Stephen Duda, also Polish and a Scalabrinian, we read the following letter written ten years later:

*"By God's help, my things here are going well. The new church at Salem will be blessed on July 5. The young priest you met at my rectory will be named a pastor. This week I also bought a piece of land in Lawrence where by permission of the Archbishop I will build a church for the Polish. It is my hope that Fr. Duda, who has forgotten about his leaving for Piacenza, will be made a pastor"*<sup>31</sup>

As we see, Fr. Chmielinski, besides the mission of Our Lady of Czestochowa in South Boston, was taking care of other two missions around Boston: each with more than 800 Polish immigrants.<sup>32</sup>

In 1909, both Frs. Chmielinski and Duda asked to be dispensed from the oath binding them to the Scalabrinian Congregation; the former continued his ministry in Boston through incardination in that Archdiocese; the latter moved to the Diocese of Newark, N.J.<sup>33</sup>

## **2. The Parish of St. Lazarus, East Boston, Massachusetts**

Since early in the first years of the parish of the Sacred Heart in Boston, the missionaries had been taking care of a group of Italians residing a half-hour away by streetcar at Orient Heights, in Winthrop County, East Boston. The first colony of emigrants had obtained from Archbishop J. Williams permission to have a Mass said on Sunday in the house of the De Marchi Family, at 35 Leyden Street.

In May of 1892 a meeting was held for the first time by a group of Italians who began negotiations with the Society of St. Mark for opening in East Boston a church subsidiary to that of the Sacred Heart.

A wooden chapel was completed within a few months at 121 Leyden Street. It was blessed under the title of St. Lazarus by Auxiliary Bishop Brady of Boston. This chapel continued to be served on days of obligation by a missionary from Sacred Heart church until 1903.

In its early years the community of Orient Heights was not large enough to afford building a new church and supporting a priest. When by an increase of population and revenues it became possible for the community to carry the burden for the support of a missionary, the church was made a parish, with Fr. Francesco Morassi as its first pastor from 1904 to 1911, except for six months between 1906 and 1907 when Fr. Giovanni Battista Cuneo was the acting

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<sup>29</sup> Cfr. "L'Emigrato Italiano in America" a. XI, n. 2 (1917), p. 17.

<sup>30</sup> Francesconi, *op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> Chmielinski-Scalabrini, Boston, May 1, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 573/5).

<sup>32</sup> Chmielinski-Scalabrini, Boston, April 6, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 573/5).

<sup>33</sup> Chmielinski-Vicentini, Boston, May 19, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 573/5). Vicentini-Diario, Vol. V. July 12, 1909, p. 185 (Arch. G.S., 1642).

pastor. Fr. Morassi built the basement and a wooden rectory.<sup>34</sup>

Fr. Ludovico Toma was appointed pastor on September 22, 1911. He directed that parish until the day of his death on July 9, 1961. Right in the first years, to his satisfaction he witnessed an increase of membership in the Society of St. Lazarus founded by his predecessor; he gave life to the Sodalities of the Christian Mothers, the Children of Mary, St. Aloysius for young men, to the Holy Name Society for men, and to the League of the Sacred Heart. In 1914 he restored and decorated the modest church with sitting capacity for some three hundred people; then he set out on a person to person campaign for collecting the funds needed for the construction of the new church by then indispensable; in 1919 he bought the land for church, school, and rectory, at the cost of \$18,000.00.

### **3. The Parish of St. Tarcisius, Framingham, Massachusetts**

Amongst the Italian communities around Boston assisted periodically by the Scalabrinian missionaries we must remember that of Framingham, which was usually cared for by Fr. Pietro Maschi, assistant at the parish of the Sacred Heart.

On the July 23, 1906, the Amsden Building, a large building under construction, on which more than forty workers, some of them Italians, were working, suddenly collapsed. Fr. Maschi was summoned immediately by telephone to minister the last rites to the victims. He arrived while a dead body was being extracted from the debris; he went over and uncovered it to give the absolution. He was seen turning pale; in that victim he had recognized his brother Romualdo. He pulled his strength together and continued absolving or blessing the other unfortunate ones and giving comfort to their families. On his return to Boston he made a promise to himself that he would do all possible to have a church built in his brothers' adopted city; and more so for the reason that Fr. Novati had already expressed to him the desire to found a mission in that town some twenty miles from Boston. There were at that time only a hundred Italian families in Framingham, but another seventy-five lived in close-by Natick, two hundred at Marlboro, and 25 at Wellesley.<sup>35</sup>

The Archbishop also showed his satisfaction at this project:

*"I call on Archbishop J. Joseph Williams - July 1907 - asking to try gathering the scattered sheep in the South Framingham neighborhood; his answer is that he has no objection; I rent a hall right away, but he dies a month later! He is succeeded - August 1907 - by W.H. O'Connell who was contented to ask me how the mission begun by me was progressing! In July 1908, I buy nine thousand square feet of land and a small six-room house. I begin to say Mass on Easter 1909; by July 1909 the hall is no longer sufficient; Sunday collection amounts to \$20.00. I feel the need to build a church and have a larger place. I call on Fr. Novati, who had to clear a misunderstanding for me: the Bishops of Boston had not consulted him about my position. Whatever is being carried on depends on*

<sup>34</sup> V. Gregori, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-203; "Diamond Jubilee of St. Lazarus Church, East Boston (Boston, 1967), pp. 12- 15).

<sup>35</sup> 50th Anniversary - 1907-1957 - St. Tarcisius Church, Framingham, Mass. (Framingham, 1957), pp. 11-15.

*the Superior General, not on the Vicar General of the Congregation.*

*However, one must keep in mind that last year I could pay \$700.00 on the debt in spite of the financial crisis, and an additional \$175.00 for rent. I work out of an apartment on the third floor, but by the compensation of a greater income in a better place things will clear the way for opening a church (...). It must also be pointed out that while the community of St. Tarcisius counted 40 people in 1907, it now has 300. Some 3,000 Italians are scattered around this countryside and they must travel twenty miles before reaching Boston or Worchester (...). I am now being offered a beautiful building, 70 feet long by 30 wide, and 40 high for only \$4,000.00 at 5% interest."<sup>36</sup>*

Two months after writing this letter, Fr. Maschi moved from the third floor of the Tribune Building he had rented at Irving Square, to the building he had mentioned in the letter on Waverly Street, in the location where the church was to be built. After duly restructuring it, Mass was celebrated there for the first time on Christmas 1909. The church was dedicated to Saint Tarcisius. This was the fourth Catholic Church to be built in the district of Framingham.

In 1904, Fr. Maschi succeeded in buying a piece of land for a cemetery that was opened in 1920. On January 4, a fire broke out in the basement leaving only the walls standing. Without letting himself be discouraged by the misfortune, the pastor decided against suspending religious services by adapting a window as an entrance, because the main entrance had been blocked, and then gave immediate start to restoration works.<sup>37</sup>

#### **4. The Parish of Saint Anthony, Somerville, Massachusetts**

The Italian colony of Somerville, a suburb of Boston, was also assisted by the missionaries of Sacred Heart Church. Solicited by Cardinal O'Connell, Fr. Gregori, in 1915, took the census of all Italians residing in the city; they were already 3,000, and they wished to have a resident priest. Fr. Gregori laid his eyes on a building on Elm Street to be provisionally adapted as a chapel.<sup>38</sup> Upon suggestion of the Cardinal a building was bought instead close to Union Square, at the corner of Somerville Avenue and School Street.<sup>39</sup> In the meanwhile, however, the Mass had been said for the first time at Elm Street on June 9, 1915. Fr. Nazareno Properzi used to minister there in the beginning only on Sundays and days of obligation. The transfer to the new building took place in August of the same year, and by the end of it, the missionary wrote the following report:

"Too often crowded up in populated centers, or sadly scattered around over the boundless American countryside, our colonies are very seldom granted the good luck of living along-side the shady boulevards of a modern little town where proper hygienic conditions may go hand in hand with the artistic traits of our Italian genius and their social life be planned and lived in its loftiest ideals, without the danger of it reverting to the wild state because of too much isolation, or of having it stifled by overcrowding.

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<sup>36</sup> Maschi-Vicentini, Framingham, June 2, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 579/2).

<sup>37</sup> Cfr. 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, ecc. cit., p. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Gregori-O'Connell, Boston, May 19, 1915 (Arch. Scal. New York).

<sup>39</sup> V. Gregori-O'Connell, Boston, June 18, 1915 - July 1, 1915) (Arch. Scal. New York).

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Somerville! Here is a gracious little town in Massachusetts, which affords us this rare and pleasing surprise of playing host to an Italian community of some 6,000 people by the shade of the young horse-chestnuts along its new avenues.

Used, perhaps, to busying ourselves with overcrowded colonial centers such as are found in large American cities, we discard minor communities as of little interest, and we are generally inclined to bundle them up with the city close-by from which they mostly trace their origin.

In my opinion, this is a mistake! This writer, who previously to taking care of this colony had the opportunity to minister for some time to our great community of Boson, readily admits that the number may very well be a factor in the industrial and commercial development for the life of the colony itself; but this is not the case at all! Very often, due to the changing conditions of our working classes, it is rather fleeting!

Furthermore, this mistake becomes more evident when we consider that these separate communities not only form distinct and autonomous units, so to speak, in respect to the great masses from which they originate, but these, by their integration in the new milieu, present essentially different characteristics. Besides, by their exuberant activity they insure for themselves a promising future such as the old colony in the crowded city cannot hope for itself.

Somerville is located three miles North-West of Boston, the Athens of the United States, to which it is connected by no less than twelve bus lines, and five railways that go through it in all directions. Besides, it benefits from its closeness to Cambridge, rightly considered one of the most important centers of learning in the United States on account of its Harvard University. Its population is made up of people of different nationalities. The early English community is still the most numerous. The Irish contingent of 20,000 competes with it in industry and politics. With its 6,000 units the French community equals ours, but precedes ours in time and accomplishments. Besides its national parish and school it has organized a center of institutions for social and philanthropic studies.

Other nationalities such as the Portuguese, Scottish and Polish, are well represented in Somerville.

This city was listed as a town until 1842 as it counted only about 1,000 people; but by 1872 it was known as a city, as it had increased to 1,500 inhabitants. Fifteen years later, its population had doubled: it had reached 52,200 units by 1895, and about 100,000 at the last count.

It has a large number of grammar schools, and with a vast high school next to the public library. It is commonly believed that the school system is highly qualified here. There are also many churches of all denominations. No Catholic church existed here until 1865; there was, besides, a strong feeling against Catholicism and Catholics. On their part, these did not allow themselves to be intimidated by such hatred too often exploding in vehement diatribes from sectarian pulpits; they became more resolute, rather, in making their influence more strongly felt in the city of their new residence. A young priest, Fr. Christopher McFrath, inspired by a most ardent zeal, went to live with them; he soon began gathering them in a rented big hall in the midst of the colony, where by receiving their faith and their love for their unfortunate and great Ireland, he prepared them for the prosperous future they deservedly enjoy today. Still at the helm of the first parish of Somerville, that apostolic priest, now old but still young at heart, has had the good luck of enjoying the abundant fruits of his youthful enterprise. So far, the Irish have already five truly monumental churches and they run numerous schools, recreation centers, associations, clubs, and mutual societies.

The Italian colony had its beginnings some thirty years ago, but it began assuming some importance only in the last seven or eight years. It embraces quite a variety of origins: one may well say that all provinces of our peninsula are represented. It did

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not limit itself, as elsewhere, to a definite neighborhood of the city; it is scattered, rather, in different neighborhoods well over three miles around, separated in groups of fifty or a hundred families generally hailing from the same region.

The new Italian mission of Somerville traces back to June 6, 1915. It began in a modest place located in the midst of a group of Italian families on Elm Street. I had improvised a small altar; a Crucifix, an image of the Blessed Mother, four candlesticks: and that made up the whole furnishing of the new Italian church. Here only faith - I thought to myself - and their sense of national identity can lead them to preferring this humble hall to the magnificent Catholic churches of the Irish! Here I was to prove to myself whether there was still any faith and love for their country left in their heart. To my great surprise and deep emotion they crowded up both hall and adjoining rooms! The opening for public worship of this hall was welcomed by my good fellow countrymen with an enthusiasm the more sincere as nothing external and spectacular was there that could prompt a fake one. The first step had been taken! Should only those of the many Italians residing in Somerville who had come to the first services have intended responding to my insistent appeal to gather together, if only in a provisional hall, to fulfill their religious duties, revive in the love of God their love for one another as fellow nationals, and promote works for the common good, that only unity of principles and ideals can help prosper, I could consider myself well rewarded!

Of course, I must admit that a more complete acquaintance with my field of action uncovered the existence of not a few and not so easy difficulties I had to face. But the worthiness of the cause, the encouragement and support of good friends, the proven good-will of many and of new parishioners, provided courage and strength!

In order to provide service in a more central and spacious place, and in obedience to the desire of my diocesan superiors, two months later I took residence by the hall I now still use as a church, which the people wanted named after Saint Anthony of Padua. It is endowed with whatever is needed for any parochial function.

Last October, I presented an evening program almost entirely of Italian Music to collect funds for a new church! The event could not have a better success both as to people's attendance and to perfection of performance.

This occasion made it easier for me to organize the first three associations and begin gathering the children for Catechism on Sunday. At this point, things may be said just beginning. The need to plan ahead, and intensify our religious and social action is now urgent more than ever!

Besides people asking for the sacraments, there are also those needing financial and social assistance, who add to my work in my little office above the hall, used as the provisional church!

For both the priest should be a welcome sight. Unfortunately, however, too often he lacks the smile he is expected to inspire in hearts that need it?! Yet it would not take too much for any colony of ours, and less so for those in small cities, to have a fellow national priest to whom the unfortunate ones may not have recourse in vain. But to reach this goal it is necessary that all hearts be united in one in the love for God and one's country.

This, for the time being, is my task."<sup>40</sup>

In 1916, Fr. Properzi was pointing out the first difficulties and achievements:

*"So far only nominally a parish, our community is beginning at last to look and grow like one. The most serious difficulties lie with the people who either do not want to come to church, or are not willing to attend at such humble place as is*

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<sup>40</sup> Properzi, "Una Nuova Missione Italiana tra le Colonie del Massachusetts (Somerville)" - *Italica Gens*, a. VII, No. 1-6 (January-June 1916), pp. 78/82.



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*the one I provisionally direct. However, not a few people come here also from neighboring parishes that do not look favorably on the new competitor (the curse of money!), or are afraid we may take away their parishioners, or what else! Certainly, they did not always show themselves too helpful! In spite of it all, little by little, the people continue to rally around me, and we try in the meantime to make some money until we have the necessary funds to build our modest church as soon as possible."<sup>41</sup>*

The chapel was small indeed; it could hold 200 people at the most. The people themselves felt the need for an adequate church:

*"My colony appears to be slowly getting out of a deep spiritual slumber, it seems to recover from, though so haltingly and not on a general scale. This last Lent, I did my best to draw the people to special services and instructions on weekdays; and now in May, I conduct the devotions in honor of Mary three nights a week!*

*I notice someone increasingly frequenting the church, and by God's Grace, I have now and then some big one coming to the confessional!*

*On Easter Sunday I had special collections taken up for the purchase of new sacred furnishings and better candle sticks for the altar. All things considered, the people of Somerville are not amongst the least generous, and I am confident they will soon respond very well to the care of the priest, as I will be able to provide them with a more fitting place for worship. Our funds for the new church amount now to \$1,000.00.*

*Headed by an Italian minister, a group of apostates is now hard at work for many years already at the spiritual ruin of this colony. By God's help, Catholicism has won back quite a few families, which had declared themselves Protestant because of poverty! Informed about their deplorable defection, certain American Catholics supplied me with the means to help them. This way, subtracted from the temptation of want, they have been rescued also from the evil intentions of those sectarians!"<sup>42</sup>*

In June 1916, the pastor could afford to buy a small piece of land on Vice Street for \$1,300; and then he immediately got down to work again going around and visiting one by one, all of his one thousand Italian families. With much difficulty, he succeeded in collecting sufficient funds to have work started for the foundations of the rectory and of the church basement on November 8, 1916.<sup>43</sup> The basement was opened for public worship on February 11, 1917.

Nothing new worth noticing took place there until 1919:

*"Nothing new here! Due to its persistent length, the war has deprived all other things of any importance (...). Every week we stand witnesses to long lines of recruits, sorted out of all nationalities, going to war; anyone can imagine with what enthusiasm! Our Italians, many of whom had turned a deaf ear to the call of their country, now promptly respond to the summons of this nation! One hundred and sixty Italians have been called to arms from this small colony of*

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<sup>41</sup> Properzi-Rinaldi, Somerville, March 22, 1916 (Arch. G.S., 592/2).

<sup>42</sup> Properzi-Rinaldi, Somerville, May 18, 1916 (Arch. G.S., 592/2).

<sup>43</sup> Properzi-Vicentini, Somerville, June 20, 1916 - Properzi-Rinaldi, Somerville, November 9, 1916 (Arch. G.S., 592/2).

Somerville."<sup>44</sup>

In 1919 Somerville also was disturbed by the social unrest consequent to the war:

*"The uneasiness experienced here as much as in Europe, assumes a special character of greater danger amongst emigrants. Here much is said in newspapers and periodicals about emigrants, and in disparaging terms, of course. All strikes are attributed to foreign elements! To Americans, Bolsheviks are recruited from alien communities. It's a pity that in this number our poor Italians should also be included: though somewhat too talkative, indifferent to religion, and rough in their manners, they still are the most congenial people in the world, harmless to society, faithful to their jobs even when others are on strike, loving their families in spite of the immoral American influence beginning to erode not a few Catholics of other nationalities."*<sup>45</sup>

### **5. The Parish of Holy Ghost, Providence, R.I.**

Following the early five years (1889-1904) that could well be described as the settling period, with the appointment of Fr. Paolo Novati, the parish of Holy Ghost in Providence, R.I., began making encouraging progress in spite of the difficulties encountered in the beginning by the new pastor, especially with Mr. Thomas Mancini, chairman of the church committee,<sup>46</sup> and with the impossibility of attending by himself to all needs of the parish.

*"The only step forward is represented by the purchase of a new lot of land. Since there is, apparently at least, a strong desire for a larger church, in accord with the trustees and with permission from the Bishop, I bought this lot for \$1,480.72. I had hopes to pay this debt off with a collection that was to be taken up from door to door. Well, this collection is underway now, but even before completing it we foresee that it will be impossible for us to reach the quota represented by the value of the lot. We must, then, have recourse to a bank, even if we should mortgage the lot itself.*

*Spiritually, the project for a parish mission cannot materialize for lack of help! To pretend that one priest alone give impulse and momentum to a mission of this kind is simply ridiculous! In a colony of some 6,000 people scattered around on a radius of more than thirty miles, there does not remain anything else for the priest to do but stay all day at home to be available for the calls pouring in from the city and the countryside. The Bishop himself has more than once complained urging to have here another priest if any spiritual progress is to be made. Many are the unfortunate ones who die without the Sacraments. True, the main fault lies with their relatives that do not take any pain in calling a priest on time; but could he only pay a weekly visit to these small communities of Italians so far distant from the church, a priest would easily take care also of the sick. And who is going to provide for the religious instruction of the children? Parents in general do not give it a thought. And so, ten percent of the children born here cannot go to church because of distances and will hardly learn how to make the sign of the cross and the Hail Mary. ...*

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<sup>44</sup> Properzi-Rinaldi, Somerville, September 29, 1917 (Arch. G.S., 592/2).

<sup>45</sup> Properzi-Rinaldi, Somerville, August 8, 1919 (Arch. G.S., 592/2).

<sup>46</sup> Novati-Zaboglio, Providence, October 20, 1895 (Arch. G.S., 591/4).

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*In the two Lents I already spent here, I can say that a great many people, though coming from afar, must return home without an opportunity to go to confession, because of an absolute lack of time and help."<sup>47</sup>*

The rectory was built between the months of May/December 1897. In February 1901 the projects were approved for a new church, in the Romanic style, prepared by Architect Ambrose Murphy, and Bishop Scalabrini blessed its basement on October 20, 1901. On November 14, 1903, Fr. Novati bought a new house for the missionaries.

Fr. Dominic Belliotti was appointed pastor in January 1905. In the latter part of the year he took the census of the parish visiting some 2,000 families. Italians resulted to be over 10,000, but only 3,000 of them frequented the church regularly. Sunday catechism classes were attended by 800 children, assisted by the Christian Brothers and by some 40 Italian and American young ladies!<sup>48</sup>

The Catholic Youth Club was founded in the spring of 1906. On the very first day it enlisted a hundred members, reaching 270 quickly by August. To give them the opportunity to get together for religious instruction and entertainment a hall was built. A kindergarten was also opened on Penn Street. Finally, Fr. Belliotti could secure a loan for \$40,000.00 from the Industrial Trust Co., and in 1908 started work on the construction of an upper church; the corner stone was blessed by Bishop Harkins on October 25. The new church, with sitting capacity for 900, was solemnly dedicated by the Apostolic Delegate Archbishop Diomedede Falconio and by the Bishop on April 6, 1910.

As we have been able to understand in Fr. Novati's previous report, from the very beginning the missionaries of Holy Ghost Parish were also taking care of the Italian groups in Thornton, Manton, Cranston, Warren, Barrington, and Bristol. In September 1895, Fr. Novati had obtained permission from the Bishop to open a small chapel on Charles Street. The church, dedicated to St. Ann, bought on the fourth of August, 1898. It was an old building that had served as city hall and prison for North Providence. Still directly responsible for the parish, in accord with the Bishop, Fr. Novati assigned his assistant Fr. Triolo as acting pastor, who remained there until 1901. In December of the same year, Fr. Novati sent Fr. Bove who was received with ill-will and had to leave for a while. To restore the peace, Fr. Novati then sent Fr. Belliotti, who settled down at St. Ann's as acting pastor.

In spite of the denials from the Bishop and Fr. Novati, consequently to a slanderous campaign conducted against Fr. Bove in the years 1905-1906, the Apostolic Delegate advised the Scalabrinians to remove him. Consulted by Fr. Demo, the Superior General Fr. Vicentini answered he had called on the Bishop who spoke to him about the advice received from the Apostolic Delegate:

*"I cleared with the Bishop that Fr. Bove does not belong to our Congregation at*

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<sup>47</sup> Novati, *Relazione sull'Andamento e Progressi di questa Missione di Providence, R.I., Providence, January 20, 1896.* (Report on the State and Progress of Providence Mission). (Arch. G.S., 591/4).

<sup>48</sup> Gregori, "Dagli Stati Uniti", "L'Emigrato Italian° in America" - April 1906, pp. 51-53.

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*all, and therefore we have no authority over him. True, that church was opened by our priests as a subsidiary chapel dependent on the parish of the Holy Spirit under the responsibility of the Pastor himself, but two years ago it was made a parish by the Bishop and entrusted to Fr. Bove, without any bond with us. Consequently we have nothing to do with this! The Bishop told me he knew all this. He had the accusations reported against Fr. Bove examined, but he was not made aware of any definite guilt on the part of the priest, especially on account of the poor credibility of the accusers! Between us, the Bishop of Providence is indignant at the unwarranted meddling of the Apostolic Delegate in the affairs of his diocese."<sup>49</sup>*

Fr. Bove was officially appointed Pastor of St. Ann church in 1907. He began constructing the new church in 1909, which was dedicated by Bishop Harkins in 1910. He died on December 14, 1931.<sup>50</sup>

### **6. The Parish of St. Rocco, Thornton, R.I.**

The parish of St. Rocco in Thornton, Rhode Island, traces also its origins to the Church of Holy Ghost. Many Italian farmers lived there, engaged in growing vegetables, especially peppers and corn, and in the cultivation of vines.<sup>51</sup> By authority of the Bishop and of Fr. Novati, the first steps towards forming a parish were taken by Fr. Bove who called all Italians to a meeting in 1901. They decided to buy a piece of land at Clemence and Transit Streets. In that location was built the first Church of St. Rocco that was to serve the small Italian communities of Thornton, Knightsville, and Silver Lake.<sup>52</sup>

The Church was opened on May 10, 1903, and blessed by Bishop Harkins on June 21.<sup>53</sup> Fr. Dominic Belliotti took up residence there on May 10 of the same year, and remained until January 1905, when he was succeeded by Fr. Giuseppe Gotti. Fr. Belliotti lived with a family on Fletcher Street, and had his parochial office in the sitting room of the Farillo family, on the same street. Fr. Gotti purchased a small lot at Clemence Street and had the rectory built there. On April 29, 1913, he had the parish recognized as a corporation and made the last payment on the debt of the church.<sup>54</sup>

He was succeeded on May 2, 1918, by Fr. Francesco Berti, who paid off also the debt of the rectory in 1919.<sup>55</sup>

The parish had then 500 families with an annual average of 40 weddings and 200 baptisms.

### **7. The Parish of St. Bartholomew in Silver Lake, Providence, R.I.**

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<sup>49</sup> Vicentini-Demo, Boston, February 12, 1906 (Arch. Scal. New York).

<sup>50</sup> U. Pesaturo, "Italo Americans of Rhode Island (Providence, 1940), p. 18. Cfr. also "Golden Jubilee of the Holy Ghost Church" (Providence, 1939).

<sup>51</sup> Pisani, "Gli Italiani nel Rhode Island" - *Italica Gens*, a. 1, No. 9-10 (October-November 1910), pp. 360-362.

<sup>52</sup> Cfr. 50th Anniversary. 1903-1953, Saint Rocco's Church (Thornton, 1953), p. 9: "Saint Rocco's Parish in Thorn-ton", *The Providence Visitor*, April 26, 1968.

<sup>53</sup> Morassi-Scalabrini, Providence, June 11, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 594/2).

<sup>54</sup> Cfr. *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Berti-Rinaldi, Thornton, May 20, 1920 (Arch. G.S., 594/4).

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Dismembered from the Church of St. Rocco, the parish of Saint Bartholomew was born in 1907 in Silver Lake, also on the outskirts of Providence.

As early as 1902 some representatives of the 1,500 Italians living in that neighborhood called on Fr. Belliotti, then pastor of Holy Ghost, to express their desire and need for a church of their own. Fr. Belliotti petitioned and secured approval from the Bishop. The first campaign for funds, to which Bishop Harkins himself, one of the most benevolent Bishops with Italians, had contributed \$100.00, brought in less than \$1,000.00, because the community was rather poor. However, they succeeded in buying a property at the crossing of Moorfield and Murray Streets with Silver Lake Avenue.

While contractor Mr. Famiglietti was building the church on a project by S. Murphy, the faithful attended religious services in Saint Liberato Hall at 621 Union Street. Named after St. Bartholomew, patron of the large number of immigrants hailing from Vairano, Caserta, the church was dedicated by Bishop Harkins on September 22, 1907.<sup>56</sup>

At first St. Bartholomew served just as a branch of the parish of Holy Ghost, and was served especially by Fr. Vittorio Gregori, who in April 1908 reported as follows to the Superior General:

*"I had been living four months by the small church of Silver Lake, R.I. and in a short while I had matured excellent fruits amongst those good people so attached to me; however, the Italians were rather few, not over 1,800, so that there was practically nothing to do on week days (...). Fr. Belliotti had reserved for himself the administration, which was somewhat difficult because of its meager income and heavy debt of \$13,000."*<sup>57</sup>

In a letter of June 1909 the same Fr. Gregori reported having returned to Silver Lake for a few months, and he added:

*"The Italian community increases in numbers by the day, and revenues would now be sufficient for the support of a priest. From January to this date we ministered 100 baptisms, while Mass intentions are never lacking; the debt is not heavy. Fr. Belliotti founded that mission and I was the first to serve it; but now we run the risk of losing it because a Neapolitan priest, supported by Fr. Bove, has set his eager eyes on it."*<sup>58</sup>

On this matter we read this in a letter of Fr. Novati written the following October:

*"I have received just now a letter from the good Bishop of Providence informing me of his decision to make the mission of Silver Lake a parish independent of the one in Providence, and of his intention to divide the parish of Holy Ghost and erect a new one. He inquires of me whether I have any priests available; in case I did not, he would take care of the problem, himself.*

*We have lost two churches already at Charles Street and in Thornton, at this date two very flourishing parishes. Now it's Silver Lake's turn, steadily increasing in population and with a bright future ahead. Then there will follow*

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<sup>56</sup> Almagno, "St. Bartholomew's: Heritage and Vision within a Parish", Saint Bartholomew's Church (Providence, 1969), pp. 8-9.

<sup>57</sup> V. Gregori-Vicentini, Boston, April 22, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 573/4).

<sup>58</sup> Gregori-Vicentini, Boston, June 16, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 589/3).

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*the problem of Holy Ghost parish to be decimated by the erection of a new one! And we have no other besides Fr. Belliotti who is assisted by three diocesan priests! And to think that the Bishop of Providence is the only one in the United States who truly loves our Congregation and shows an effective interest in Italians."*<sup>59</sup>

Fortunately some help came, and in December 1910 and Fr. Leonardo Quaglia could thus write to the Superior General:

*"Next week I will move to Silver Lake in compliance with your instructions to the Superior Provincial, and I will take over as pastor of that parish on the 18th of this month."*<sup>60</sup>

Fr. Quaglia was, then, the first pastor of St. Bartholomew from 1910 to 1916. The rectory was built in 1912. His predecessors, Frs. Gregori and Nicolino Armento (1908-1910) had been occupying a room in the house of the sacristan, Luigi D'Arezzo on Moorfield Street. In September 1914, the "Scalabrini" kindergarten, opened three months earlier, was dedicated. The newspaper, "L'Italiano in America" has thus recorded the occasion:

"On an area of some 900 square meters on Murray Street, Providence, R.I., there stands the Italian "Scalabrini" kindergarten. The building covers some 120 square meters. The remaining is used partly as recreation grounds and as a garden. Rev. Leonardo Quaglia, a priest of the Institute of St. Charles Borromeo, for the past four years Pastor of St. Bartholomew, founded it. Prompted by the need for a place where the sons of Italy residing in the parish could be gathered and instructed according to the religious and civic traditions of their country, he bought for no less than 25,000 liras the above-mentioned piece of land, and at the cost of some sacrifices he restored and furnished the building.

The kindergarten was opened on June 22, 1914, under the direction of the Pallottine Sisters, Italian by birth and sentiments, and on September 13 of the same year it was solemnly dedicated in the presence of nearly all family heads of the colony and of the most illustrious "Consular Agent".

Only Italian children, ages 2½ to 6, are admitted. For the convenience of the mothers, the kindergarten opens at six in the morning. At that hour parents, or somebody else for them, entrust their children to the Sisters, sure to have them back healthy, clean, and good, when they will return to take them home at the end of the day. Closing time is always at six in the afternoon.

For lunch at noon they eat a warm soup prepared by the Sisters, and what they bring along from home.

The educational system is wholly modelled upon the Italian teaching principles. Even the instruction method is the same as that used in the kindergartens of Italy. At the "Scalabrini" kindergarten they speak Italian and are taught the elementary notions of this language, and eventually, the fundamentals of sewing, embroidery and music.

The average daily attendance for July and August has been 100, including in this number also many boys and girls age seven to ten. In September, with the opening of the school year, attendance averaged fifty to sixty each day. This is due to the obligation of attending public schools for children past the age of six.

Our little students occupy three classrooms: utterly clean and airy, they are provided with good heating, and with proper furnishings of desks and chairs!

Many are the advantages enjoyed from this institution by the parents of the colony of

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<sup>59</sup> Novati-Vicentini, Boston, October 4, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 573/4).

<sup>60</sup> Quaglia-Vicentini, New York, December 7, 1910 (Arch. 589/4).

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Silver Lake, as this section of Providence is popularly known, where 4,000 Italians live, all parishioners of St. Bartholomew church.

First of all, by leaving their children in a safe place, they can attend to their jobs with greater freedom and profit; and then they are given sure hope that, off the streets, their children, so dear to their hearts, will grow up well behaved to be one day the pride of their distant fatherland."<sup>61</sup>

The parish hall adjoining the "Scalabrini" kindergarten, was dedicated on the September 5, 1915. In the Fall of 1916, Fr. Quaglia was succeeded by Fr. Francesco Berti, who resigned only seven months later for reasons of health, to be replaced by Fr. Vittorio Cangiano, who directed the parish from 1917 to 1920.<sup>62</sup>

### **8. The Parish of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Bristol, R.I.**

On May 26, 1916, a committee of Italians, residing in Bristol, R.I., got together at the Columbia Hall on Wood Street to formulate a petition to the Bishop of Providence to obtain permission to establish an Italian parish for that community made up in great part of immigrants from Manfredonia (Foggia). The community had grown considerably, and very few Italians frequented the Church because they did not understand English. Bishop Harkins granted his consent, and the committee began collecting funds in September. On November 10, Fr. Giuseppe Poia was appointed to head the new mission<sup>63</sup> and he had this to say in his first report:

*"I gave start to this mission all by myself, and alone I carried on sufficiently well until now. On December 16, 1916, I purchased a small protestant church in ruins at a public auction. I had it restored and I said Mass in it for the first time on January 7, 1917. I took up residence here in early January in the house of a Portuguese priest, first, and then in a rented miserable little abode.*

*On March 30, 1917, I bought (contracting a debt, of course, titled to the Bishop of Providence) a beautiful property, with a house I now live in, and a piece of land on which the new church will be built for \$10,000.00. My Italians are close to 3,000, mostly employed in rubber shoe factories. All are working, making adequate salaries, buy land, and tend towards a remarkable increase. There has not been an Italian priest here for a long time, and for the last ten years, at least, there was the need for one and for a church! Now everything is well underway, and in spite of the serious difficulties of the present war, it is my hope that it will not take many months for work on the new church to start."<sup>64</sup>*

The former Adventist church on High Street had been acquired for \$75.00. The Altar Society was erected in February 1917. The property, purchased in 1917 for \$10,000.00 was located on the nearby State Street, where the small church was later moved. Sunday school of catechism began classes in September of the same year. Work on the new church after a project by Architect A. Murphy, with sitting room for 600 hundred people, was started in May 1918.

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<sup>61</sup> D'Alfonso "Asilo Infantile Italiano Scalabrini nella Colonia di Silver Lake" - L'Italiano in America (New York), September 20, 1914.

<sup>62</sup> Belliotti-Rinaldi, Providence, March 30, 1917 (Arch. G.S., 589/6).

<sup>63</sup> Cfr. "Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Golden Jubilee"(Providence, 1967), p. 13.

<sup>64</sup> Poja-Rinaldi, s.d. (Arch. G.S., 574/1).

It was blessed by the new Bishop of Providence, William A. Hickey, on May 4, 1919.<sup>65</sup>

### **9. The Parish of St. Michael, New Haven, Connecticut**

Fr. Francesco Zaboglio officially continued to be the pastor of St. Michael in New Haven, Connecticut, also when Fr. Oreste Alussi had returned following the calming down of the disturbances caused by the removal of Fr. Francesco Beccherini.<sup>66</sup> During the latter's tenure the sitting capacity of the old church had been doubled. Its enlargement had begun with the blessing of the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Satolli, on February 3, 1895.

Its 400 seats turned out sufficient, because the church was distant from the center of the colony, and little frequented.

In November of 1896, Fr. Ermenegildo Battaglia, the assistant, complained that attendance at the octave's services of All Souls had been scarce for this very reason; and he pointed out:

*"The parish of New Haven goes on sufficiently well; Communion and confessions are frequent, relatively, of course, to the state of the parish, that, due to certain Italian press and to Protestants, including recently converted Italians, has somewhat gone astray."*<sup>67</sup>

Fr. Zaboglio left for New York in 1896 to take charge of the parish of Our Lady of Pompeii. In 1897 the Bishop of Hartford again appointed him pastor of St. Michael<sup>68</sup>; but right at that time the missionary was struck down by a gas explosion. To succeed him, Fr. Zaboglio had appointed Fr. Vincenzo Sciolla, his assistant since January 1896; and in September 1896 he had sent him Fr. Ermenegildo Battaglia to assist him.<sup>69</sup>

Fr. Alussi continued to be strongly opposed by a faction of the people, and Fr. Zaboglio deemed it better to replace him in September 1897 with Fr. Peter Lotti, who immediately received a threatening letter from the party favoring Fr. Alussi:

*"We have already informed you that we do not want you in this parish of New Haven, and more so because it has been known that, you have been cast out Cincinnati. Here we want Fr. Oreste or the one we have now."*<sup>70</sup>

The priest they had then was Fr. Riccardo Lorenzoni, who left New Haven as soon as Fr. Lotti arrived, because he was in favor of Fr. Alussi.<sup>71</sup> Not even Fr. Lotti could face up to such a situation for long; in fact, on September 2, 1898, he left New Haven and returned to Italy.

He was replaced by Fr. Luigi Lango<sup>72</sup> who was given immediate permission by

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<sup>65</sup> Cfr. *"Our Lady, etc. op. cit.*, pp. 14-16; and report of Poja, November, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 574/1).

<sup>66</sup> Francesconi, *op. cit.*

<sup>67</sup> Battaglia-Scalabrini, New Haven, November 5, 1896 (Arch. G.S., 582/5).

<sup>68</sup> Tierney-Zaboglio, Hartford, June 7, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 582/6).

<sup>69</sup> Zaboglio-Scalabrini, New Haven, January 12, 1896; New York, September 4, 1896. (Arch. Gen. S., 550/4).

<sup>70</sup> Anonymous letter to Lotti, New Haven, September 20, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 582/6).

<sup>71</sup> Zaboglio-Scalabrini, New York, September 25, 1897, with P.S. of September 29, 1897. (Arch. G.S., 550/5).

<sup>72</sup> Gambera-Scalabrini, New York, September 2, 1898 (Arch. G.S., 582/7).



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the Bishop to sign a contract of \$25,000.00 for the purchase of a Baptist church on Wooster Place with seating capacity for 1,000 people.<sup>73</sup> Immediately restored and adapted, it was dedicated on April 13, 1899, by the new Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Sebastiano Martinelli.

Both Fr. Lango, and his assistant, Fr. Giuseppe Formia, also had a hard time in New Haven. The continued appeals of the Italians convinced the Bishop to order the removal of both priests. Fr. Gambera, the Provincial Superior, could barely prevent the parish from passing to the diocesan clergy, and in December 1900 he sent in Frs. Bartolomeo Marenchino and Stefano Franco.<sup>74</sup>

Fr. Franco had to return to Italy in June of 1901 because of sickness, and there he died on July 22, on the very day in which Bishop Scalabrini was visiting the parish of St. Michael.<sup>75</sup>

Fr. Marenchino was first assisted by Fr. Vittorio Gregori, and then by Fr. Giuseppe D'Andrea, a diocesan priest. Appointed assistant by Fr. Novati, Fr. Alussi returned in 1903 with the task of restoring the peace between factions.<sup>76</sup> We can have an idea of how terribly touchy the Italians were in New Haven from a clipping of an Italian-American newspaper, probably "The New Haven Union":

"The traditional palms distribution attracted yesterday an enormous crowd of Italians, men, women, and children to St. Michael's church, but the usual differences gave rise to one of those horrible and sad scenes hard to forget in a long time.

Fr. Oreste Alussi, the celebrant, was about to give Holy Communion when two Italians got into an angry dispute over one of the palms. The sacred place did not serve as a deterrent from extracting firearms, and a gunshot had all people turn around in terror. Two other unfortunate circumstances added to their fear: the passing out of two girls, and a fire alarm warning shouted out by someone in the back of the church (...). No matter how much Fr. Alussi tried to tell all to stay calm, doing everything possible to reassure them, the crowd in fear of being burnt alive, rushed to the exits, pushing and trampling down women and children, only anxious to reach for the doors (...). Mr. Grant, the first policeman to arrive at the scene, reports finding boys and girls piled up ten feet high at the exit! A similar situation was taking place at the side windows of the church as the bleeding faces of those emerging from broken glass showed that they had been pushed through from behind (...). When the policemen began disentangling the pile of people trodden upon, many of them seemed even to be dead. Fortunately, however, most had only fainted, and their wounds came down to more or less serious simple contusions (...). Some thirty people were wounded, most of them sent home following emergency treatment on the spot."<sup>77</sup>

Still another misfortune befell the Church of St. Michael on January 4, 1904. Fr. Alussi sent news of it to Bishop Scalabrini on January 9:

*"Our beautiful Church of New Haven, Connecticut, has burnt down. The fire started at 9:30 AM and lasted until 4 PM of January 4, 1904. Damages are estimated at \$50,000.00 and we are insured only for \$25,000.00. And now we are back at the old little church at 190 Wooster Street where I used to live*

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<sup>73</sup> Gambera-Scalabrini, Boston, September 14, 1898 (Arch. G.S., 553/1).

<sup>74</sup> Gambera-Roller, Boston, December 19, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 553/3).

<sup>75</sup> Marenchino-Roller, New Haven, August 5, 1901 (Arch. G.S., 582/8).

<sup>76</sup> Novati-Alussi, Providence, September 9, 1904 (Arch. G.S., 582/8).

<sup>77</sup> "Rissa in una Chiesa", The New Haven Union (Arch. G.S., 582/1).

*thirteen years ago (...).*

*Three days before we had the solemn closure of a most successful mission preached by two zealous priests, with some 3,000 Communions. Six hundred men had applied for membership in the antiblasphemous Society of the Holy Name of Jesus! And then, after such marvelous fruits, our most beautiful church goes up in flames!*

*The bell-tower fell down; the bell, weighing four tons, broke in three pieces; the beautiful organ was a total loss. What a miserable sight! I could hardly save the Blessed Sacrament."<sup>78</sup>*

Restoration work was immediately started. From the invitation leaflet to the blessing of the restored church, dated on October 15, 1904, we discover that in the meanwhile the Pastor had been changed. Fr. Bartolomeo Marenchino had been assigned to directing the new Italian church of St. Anthony in New Haven, opened right in that year; Fr. Francesco Moretti took his place. The church was blessed on December 21, 1904.

On that same night, Fr. Alussi reported to Bishop Scalabrini:

*"This mission of ours is presently going through quite a sad crisis. Very few people come to church on Sunday. We are burdened with heavy debts; St. Michael's church only is \$30,000.00 in debt, while our weekly receipts hardly reach \$20.00.*

*All kinds of things are said against our missionaries. The most wicked slanders are hurled at them; a fierce campaign is being waged against us! Many prevent our good faithful to come to the Italian church (...). There are people who receive the Sacraments secretly (...).*

*A few Sundays ago, a great meeting, attended by some 2,000 Italians, was called together to elect a Committee charged with submitting either to the Bishop of Hartford, Connecticut, or to the Apostolic Delegate the request for approval of the following requests of theirs:*

- 1) the church be titled to the Italian colony represented by a committee;*
- 2) the church be administered by two trustees together with the whole committee, with no obligation to give an account to the pastor;*
- 3) the committee shall respect all the rights customarily in use enjoyed by the clergy;*
- 4) the church be served by a priest from Southern Italy, and by another one from Northern Italy;*
- 5) Fr. Marenchino be immediately removed.*

In case these requests should be refused approval either by the Bishop or by the Apostolic Delegate, they will establish an independent church of their own.<sup>79</sup> In such milieu one can imagine why certain rumors were going around about the death of Fr. Francesco Moretti on November 2, 1904. Fr. Gaspare Moretto reports as follows to Bishop Scalabrini:

*"With the deepest sad emotion I wish to describe to Your Excellency a few details concerning the tragic end of our dear and ever beloved Fr. Moretti. I had*

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<sup>78</sup> Alussi-Scalabrini, New Haven, January 9, 1904 (Arch. G.S., 582/8).

<sup>79</sup> Alussi-Scalabrini, New Haven, December 21, 1904 (Arch. G.S., 582/8).

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*the sorrowful task of assisting that exemplary priest in his last moments!*

*On October 31, the Provincial Superior brings to Boston the sad news that Fr. Moretti was in very serious condition with asphyxia by carbon monoxide. By order of the Superior, I immediately left for New Haven, Connecticut, and on arrival, I hurry to the bedside of the good young man who, still showing a rosy complexion and lying serenely composed in bed, had only a few hours to live (...). There I was, unable to tell him a comforting word, to whisper in his ear the sweet name of Jesus in the hope he might be aware of it! On Tuesday, November 2, at 1:05 A.M., he peacefully passed on, a victim to his duty, to receive the reward for his virtuous life (...). All newspapers carried long articles on this event. Several investigations were conducted by officials, and after much inquiring, Coroner Eli Mix declared that death was due to a simple accident. In his official report he stated, however, that it "is and will be" a mystery. Other columns speak of certain indications for suspecting a terrible crime under the appearances of a simple accident (...).*

*The funeral was impressive; a large number of our confreres and all the pastors of the city attended it; the Bishop was also present; he pronounced a brief eulogy and had words of praise for the tireless action of the sons of Bishop Scalabrini (...).*

*Great numbers of Irish and Americans came to pray for the repose of Fr. Moretti; as though possessed with the cruel savage heart, only the Italians, only these hyenas, remained indifferent! American newspapers pointed this out very strongly in clear terms: 'At the news of the young pastor's death the people showed a cynical indifference!' The poor man, he was much loved by strangers, people who owed him nothing!"<sup>80</sup>*

Bishop Tierney attributed the Italians' attitude to the fact that being mostly from Southern Italy they were agitating to have a priest from their regions, and was reporting that Domenico Ricci stood accused as instigator of this unrest. Without passing judgment on this point, the Bishop had requested Fr. Novati to remove Fr. Ricci; something that had been carried out. "*The present pastor*" the Bishop continued - "*was not strong enough.*" No less than four priests were needed for the two Italian churches of New Haven.<sup>81</sup>

Conditions remained difficult for some time, yet:

*"The two churches of St. Michael and St. Anthony have a combined debt of \$70,000.00. Many Italians come to church, but they do not want to give anything. This is the slogan repeated by the 'Revolutionary Committee': 'Fellow Italians! do not go to the Italian church; if you do so, give no offering.'"<sup>82</sup>*

Fr. Alussi, always inclined to be pessimistic, kept questioning Bishop Scalabrini on whether it would be the case to abandon Saint Michael before he and his assistant Fr. Gregori would risk dying of a broken heart.<sup>83</sup> With the help of Fr. Salvatore Barbato, founder of the charity association of the Sacred Heart, things began getting better in 1906; attendance to the Sacraments

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<sup>80</sup> Moretto-Scalabrini, Boston, November 5, 1904 (Arch. G.S., 1587).

<sup>81</sup> Tierney-Scalabrini, Hartford, November 1904 (Arch. G.S., 1587).

<sup>82</sup> Alussi-Scalabrini, January 18, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 582/9).

<sup>83</sup> Cfr. Ibid.

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increased, and people became more generous.<sup>84</sup> Fr. Alussi could affirm at last that peace had returned and the parish was going well.<sup>85</sup>

The charity association of the Sacred Heart had been formed to forestall a Protestant supported society of charity; for the same reason two kindergartens were opened in 1906, because many children attended the Baptist one, and women had begun to have themselves baptized into the Baptist church.<sup>86</sup>

The Sister Apostles of the Sacred Heart were called in to direct them:

'At a general meeting held on June 14, 1906, in the presence of His Most Rev. Excellency the Archbishop of Hartford, the Charity Association, founded and directed in New Haven by Fr. S. Barbato, of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles, presented formal petition to the same to call in the Sisters to open a kindergarten for the welfare of many Italians and young people.

His Excellency readily granted his permission, and charged Fr. S. Barbato with providing the Sisters. With his thorough insight into the spirit of our Institute, he proposed our Sisters to His Excellency, who gave his official approval.

In accordance with Fr. Oreste Alussi, the Pastor of St. Michael's, Fr. S. Barbato asked Mother Elisa Pederzini, Provincial Superior of Boston, for six Sisters. Together with her secretary, on June 29 she called on the Most Rev. Michael Tierney, Bishop of Hartford, who received them with true fatherly kindness and he gave permission to the Sister Apostles of the Sacred Heart for collecting funds for the founding of the institution, encouraging them to work for the spiritual and material welfare of Italian immigrants.

Upon her return to Boston, Mother Elisa Pederzini picked six Sisters and assigned them to founding the house of New Haven, Connecticut (...). These were their names: Sisters Berchmans Oliva, Celestina Rigo, Beniamina Ferrero, Emerenziana Maffeo, Adeotata Uva, and Sister Filomena. All of these Sisters left Boston, Massachusetts, on July 6, 1906, in the morning, and were received at the station of New Haven by Fr. Barbato. On that day they had dinner with the priests of St. Michael where Fr. O. Alussi gave them a sincere welcome. But there was nothing ready! No house to live in, no bed to sleep on! They were taken in, therefore, by the French Sisters of the Holy Spirit (...)

In the morning of July 7, the six Sisters soon began collecting funds for the kindergarten, and went about in the hot sun through the streets of the city and neighboring towns. After some two months of this work, they were finally in a position to rent a small and old wooden house at 81 Olive Street for \$30.00 a month, and began provisionally furnishing it with second-hand items, except for the six beds they bought new for \$6.00 each, and for a new set of dishes donated by Mrs. Verdi.

This house was indeed old and poor, but they did not lack what was strictly needed. There were five rooms on the first floor, so divided: two for the children of the kindergarten; one as the kitchen; one as the dining room, and the last one, 7 feet by 10 feet, as the entrance and office. On the second floor, three bedrooms for the Sisters, and a fourth one, adapted into a chapel (...). Fr. Barbato said Mass in it for the first time on September 4, 1908 (...).

On the following day, September 5, a kindergarten was opened where mothers could leave their children every morning to be kept and educated while many of them were at work in factories for their livelihood. The first Superior at New Haven was the Rev. Sister Aloysius (Ludovica) Montagna (...).

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<sup>84</sup> Barbato-Vicentini, New Haven, May 16, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 582/9).

<sup>85</sup> Alussi-Vicentini, New Haven, September 3, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 582/9).

<sup>86</sup> Cfr. Barbato-Vicentini, New Haven, May 16, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 582/9).

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However, the house on Olive Street was soon found too small for carrying out all projects, and a decision was taken to buy a four story building on 134 Chestnut Street. It was purchased on a \$3,750.00 mortgage, and the balance was supplied by a life annuity of \$4,100.00 at 5% interest contracted by the Sister Apostles of the Sacred Heart with Mr. Giovanni Accabbo. This annuity was signed on August 26, 1910. By God's help, activities and projects kept growing, and behold, classes of Italian were started on Chestnut Street for boys and girls attending them in large numbers. A sewing and embroidery school was also opened. And right here is the big advantage, too often little appreciated, for children to learn easily correct Italian, when they cannot do so from their parents, all speaking their different dialects.

The Club of the Sacred Heart was formed later on for young ladies who used to meet once a week at the Sisters' convent for catechism and embroidery classes. It had a membership of sixty, all working on beautiful embroidery products, thus setting the basis of good future for the parish of St. Michael.

When the Sisters arrived, there were about thirty children attending catechism, but by 1907 we had over 500, and 143 of them received First Communion. When Sister Ludovica was re-called to Boston, she was succeeded by Sister Berchmans Oliva. Under her tenure, a small orphanage was opened in the early months of 1908 at the house on 134 Chestnut Street. It was to be the most important institution of the Sister Apostles of the Sacred Heart in New Haven (...). In 1909 Mother Marcellina Viganò arrived from Italy together with Sister Ildegarda Campodonico and the late Sister Costantina Borsini (...). In the meanwhile, there were several girls in the parish desiring to enter our Institute.

After securing permission from His Excellency the Bishop of Hartford, Mother Marcellina Viganò accepted them, and a Novitiate was thus opened in New Haven (...).

By this time, the house on Chestnut Street had also grown too small. Mother M. Campodonico, with due permission from the Bishop and from the Superior General, purchased the beautiful building facing "Columbus Park" at 125 Greene Street, that was immediately occupied, precisely in September 1909, by the novices and their Mother Mistress Sister Ildegarda Campodonico.<sup>87</sup>

In this way these Sisters became the precious instruments that carried out the various initiatives of Fr. Barbato, quite important as to their significance as they were modest in their dimensions. The Italian-American School, with the same programs as those in public schools, was opened in 1909, while classes began functioning for the teaching of religion, Italian, sewing, and embroidery both to the thirteen boarders at the school for girls and to the seven orphans supported free of charge, and to outsiders, as well. In the school year 1908-1909 daily classes of Italian were attended by 340 students, the weekly sewing and embroidery session by 101 girls, piano lessons by 33 pupils; summer classes of Italian, sewing, and embroidery by 240 young people. There were, besides, the Society of St. Aloysius with 77 members, the Sacred Heart Club with 57 Italian young ladies, the "Little Club" with 90 little girls; another 39 girls attended the St. Anthony's Club for works of embroidery; the Club of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart had 21 teen girls. 600 children attended St. Michael's Sunday school of Catechism; another 60 were receiving religious instruction at the suburban school of North Haven.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> "Cenni Storici", etc., op. cit., pp. 14-23.

<sup>88</sup> Cfr. "Statistiche e Resoconto Annuale della Associazione di Carita' del Sacro Cuore" (Statistics and Report, etc.) New Haven, 1909, pp. 12-17.

No events of any particular importance were registered in the following years. In 1914 about 40,000 Italians were making New Haven their home, while in the previous year the two Italian churches had registered 1,750 baptisms. In September, 1916, Fr. Alussi was succeeded by Fr. Leonardo Quaglia who directed Saint Michael until 1949.

### **10. The Parish of St. Anthony, New Haven, Connecticut**

As mentioned before, another church for Italians, dedicated to Saint Anthony, was opened in New Haven in 1904.

"In 1903, when New Haven, already a destination of a large movement of our fellow nationals, had only one church, responding to the need to gather our immigrants, scattered through the more remote districts of the city, under the shadow of a place of worship where they might cherish the most consoling comforts of the true religion together with the sweet memories of their distant home country.

Fr. Marenchino, Pastor of St. Michael, our first church in this state, was given the task to build the new house of God by the late Bishop Tierney of Hartford, and at the urging of exemplary Catholics.<sup>89</sup> Deprived of financial means, alone with no encouragement on the part of those who should have strengthened his zeal and supported his work, Fr. Marenchino faced up to the challenge. With the money he was able to collect on short notice and with the help of the local Committee, on April 20, 1903, he bought the land at the corner of Gold Street and Washington Avenue for \$8,000.00. The little house with its front on the sidewalk was moved towards the back end of the lot, and it became and still is, the modest rectory of the Missionaries.

Moved by the urgency of someone expecting fulfilment of dream, the Mattia Rubino Contracting Co. laid the foundation under the careful direction of Mr. William Richards, a most renowned architect of this city. In the presence of a large crowd of people, Bishop Tierney laid down the foundation stone on April 30, 1904 (....). The basement or lower church was completed on October 30 of the same year. Fr. Marenchino blessed it early in the morning, and then attended by a modest gathering of the faithful, he said the first Mass, glad to be able to give thanks to the Most High for his most ineffable Providence by which he had so far assisted his faithful servant. On March 5, 1905, before a year could elapse from the opening of the basement, Bishop Tierney, with all the solemnity of the Catholic ritual, blessed the new church, and the new bell, a gift of Mr. Poli.

Fr. Alussi celebrated the Solemn High Mass, and Fr. Gambera, then Superior of the "St. Raphael's Society" in New York, preached the sermon for the occasion. In the evening of the same day, Fr. Marenchino erected the Stations of the Cross, all in bass-relief, a gracious gift of Mr. Angelo Porto."<sup>90</sup>

The church, 70 feet by 45, with seating capacity for 700, was to serve the 7,000 Italians of the district delimited by Hill Street, Minor Street, Howard Avenue, and Congress Avenue, in the Southwest region of the city. On June 14, 1906, Bishop Tierney administered Confirmation there for the first time to 146 boys and 209 girls. In 1910, the new Bishop, J.J. Nilan, authorized the parish of Saint Anthony to buy a building on Morse Street, in Hamden, Connecticut, where to open a chapel for the Italians of that district. Fr. Marenchino had the

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<sup>89</sup> Alussi-Vicentini, New Haven, July 28, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 582/9).

<sup>90</sup> "Missione di S. Antonio di Padova in New Haven, Conn." *L'Emigrato Italiano in America*, - a. IX, June 15, 1915, pp. 20-21.

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building properly fitted, and he said the first Mass in it on November 6, 1910. This chapel, dedicated to Saint Ann, became independent on March 20, 1919, thus giving origin to the actual parish of Saint Ann in Hamden, Connecticut.<sup>91</sup>

In the period between 1914 and 1915 Fr. Marenchino could decorate the church and buy the land on which was built the rectory used until 1918.

"In the course of last year, more prosperous than this one, the small and old organ was replaced with a beautiful new one, made by the renowned "Hall Company" of New Haven, and with the help of generous people it was possible to decorate the church's interior. Our fellow nationals Biondi and D'Andrea carried out the rich work, harmonized with the general style of the church, and by all admired and considered a very fine product of Italian art. Painter Barone of Naples is the author of the two paintings: the Passing of St. Joseph and the Apparition of the Sacred Heart to Saint Margaret, adorning the sides of the Altar; and the grandiose one in the middle of the central vault of the church, an admirable reproduction of Murillo's painting of Saint Anthony.

By these last works the church has gained decorum and magnificence. It had been endowed already with main and side marble altars; many statues of the finest taste, the work of the best firms in Lecce; richness and splendor of electric lighting, and numerous sacred furnishings; but all this did not completely satisfy Fr. Marenchino, who always mindful of the greater glory of God, has steadily desired to enrich His church with ever new works of art. This is why the Church of Saint Anthony receives generous contributions from the Italo-Americans allowing him to buy the property adjoining the church for the rather modest sum of \$12,500.00. It is hoped that on this property may soon be built a much needed rectory, sufficient for several priests.

To the material accomplishments so far described, we must add Fr. Marenchino's spiritual activity; in this respect he shines for his relentless zeal both as a priest and as a citizen. Sacred services always crowned by many Communion, are conducted in unending succession, one more solemn than the other. Holy Thursday, so sad and endearing in this church, attracts every year large crowds of people that come visiting with devotion and recollection the "Sepolcro" (Repository), ever mystically so fused with many colored lights, ever rich with rare and costly flowers donated by the most religious people of the Italo-American community attending this church.

Good Friday, a holiday in this State, gathers every year our fellow nationals together in a moving and unending procession back to the church to visit the "Calvario" (Calvary Scene) erected with truly intelligent love in the sanctuary of the Church, transformed for the occasion into a sea of flowers.

The "Desolata" (The Sorrowful One), as our fellow nationals call the afternoon services, makes always for a moving experience, especially when followed as is normally the case by the procession with the "Cristo Morto" (a statue of the "Dead Christ"). The sad notes of the organ and the heartrending singing of adults and children honoring on Good Friday the Sacred Host in the repository leave sadness and conversion in the hearts of all present already moved to piety by the fiery voice of a sacred orator. Easter is followed by the "Madonna dei Fiori" (Our Lady of Flowers). During the month of May the most ardent prayers, interwoven with the moving exhortations of the missionary, rise up to heaven like odor of incense, filling the hearts with the gentle serenity which only the Mother of God can give.

June comes along with other celebrations: Corpus Christi, Sacred Heart, St. Anthony. Above all, the "tredicina" (thirteen days) of our Patron and Titular Saint is celebrated with all solemnity, and particularly attended by the Italo-American people.

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<sup>91</sup> Di Cenzo, "History of the Church of St. Anthony from 1905 to 1954", 50th Anniversary, 1904-1954 (New Haven, 1954), pp. 10-13.

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On every Tuesday of the year, the relic of the Saint is exposed for the veneration of the faithful. The church becomes this way the center of attraction where the parishioners are given to celebrate the devotional feasts of their choice in the course of summer and fall. In the dead of winter, often so cruel, they exchange greetings for a "Merry Christmas" here where the crib, fashioned every year at the right side of the sanctuary, reminds one of their parishes in Italy.

Such patient and hard action in the care of souls is often rewarded with excellent results. Assistance of the sick in hospitals is a consoling mission. People go to confession in great numbers, and Communion reach up to the 9,000 mark every year. Americans, priests and laymen, also, come to our confessionals for their weekly confession, and sincerely love our flourishing mission for which, on due occasions, they show their benevolent good-will in deeds.

Ample opportunity is given the children of the parish for attending Sunday school. Catechism classes, held with true motherly concern by the Sister Apostles of the Sacred Heart, who have replaced the deserving Sisters of Mercy, are followed by the Holy Mass (...). Twenty-five young ladies, chosen from amongst the best ones in the parish, validly assist the Sisters in teaching Catechism. Once a month, all children, indeed a large number of them, are treated to a moving picture.

Some 150 children receive First Communion every year. There are about 279 Confirmations, and 750 Baptisms, responding to an average of no more than 170 weddings a year.

Among adults, numbers are no less consoling: For Christian mothers there is the "Holy Rosary Society" with more than 200 members, founded by Fr. D'Alfonso, and for teenagers the Society of Saint Aloysius. Neither is the parish denied the existence of two beautiful associations for young women: "The Children of Mary" with 80 members, and the "Children of St. Agnes" with 40. And, finally, the young men, whose moral education is so difficult here on earth, have been gathered together by Fr. P. D'Alfonso, and now they form the Club of St. Anthony, with promise of good fruits of sincere Christian piety, too often endangered, if not altogether spent, by the serious temptations to which our young find themselves exposed.

The solemn confession of faith made in the past March by the 90 members of the S.A.C. Club, and by the 200 members of the Holy Name Society, when they all received Holy Communion in a body, following a triduum of preaching held on purpose for them by Fr. D'Alfonso, Chaplain of the Club, and Spiritual Director of the Holy Name Society, has revived in many families the seed of faith and of the religious practice, stifled by the indifferentism holding sway in our parish community.

Ten years ago there appeared before Fr. Marenchino's eyes the new field of his apostolate bristling with difficulties. At the sight of the present luxuriant growth of a rich harvest of souls made ready with their tears and cares by him and his assistants, (first Frs Ferrara and Fontana, and then Frs Merlo and D'Alfonso) he rejoiced now in holy gladness, though aware that his work is not completed, and with an ever increasing ardor he faces up to the difficulties with which a priestly life in exile is unfortunately filled."<sup>92</sup>

## **11. The Mission of Bridgeport, Connecticut**

On January 23, 1903, a Provisional Committee distributed a short notice to the Italians of Bridgeport, Connecticut, announcing normal resumption of religious services after a period of suspension.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> "Missione di S. Antonio di Padova in New Haven, Conn." *L'Emigrato Italiano in America*, a. IX, June 15, 1915, pp. 20-25.

<sup>93</sup> Francesconi, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-116.



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"The Rev. Fr. Gaetano Cerruti, a Missionary of the Congregation of Bishop Scalabrini, by authority of Bishop Tierney of Hartford, celebrated Mass for Italians, last Sunday the 18th of this month, in the basement of St. Mary's church, marking this way the beginning of a happy future towards establishing a Catholic church for Italians (...).

In response to the strong desire of so many people for such a church, an Executive Committee will be formed next Sunday, the 25th of this month, 4:00 p.m., at 176 Fairfield Avenue.

All Italian men, 21 and over, may take part in the voting. For the time being the worthy Fr. Gaetano will say Mass every Sunday and Monday at 8:00 A.M. at the usual basement of St. Mary. For sick calls, baptisms, weddings, in a word, for any religious service, have recourse to his residence, by the church of St. John, 320 Brooks Street."<sup>94</sup>

On April 25, 1903, Fr. Cerruti was in a position to report the following to Bishop Scalabrini:

*"At last, today I can call on his Excellency the Bishop to give him positive news concerning the formation of this parish. A contract for \$12,000.00, \$300.00 down, to be paid in two months, was signed on Saturday, the 18th of this month. The property is 150 feet long by 100 wide, with a two story, eighteen room house. One floor will be made into a church, the other will serve as living quarters for the priest. We can have a \$6,000.00 loan from a bank, and the remaining \$6,000.00 from the generosity of our Italians, some 5,000 strong."*<sup>95</sup>

The church, obtained from the building and dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, was seriously damaged by a fire on January 9, 1904.<sup>96</sup> It was immediately restored and by Bishop Tierney on March 26, 1905.<sup>97</sup>

Involved in polemics with the press, by order of the Bishop, Fr. Cerruti was asked by Fr. Novati to ask for a dispensation from his vows at the end of 1906.<sup>98</sup>

Fr. Angelo DeToro, assistant of St. Anthony in New Haven, was sent in to take his place in 1907. The Superior General Fr. Vicentini had the following to write in 1908 about him and his mission:

*"Fr. Angelo De Toro (...) does not belong to the Congregation (...). He was sent to Bridgeport on behalf of the Congregation, but the Bishop's desire was that he should depend on our Superiors. The mission of Bridgeport could belong to us because we founded it, and it was always in our hands one way or another; unfortunately, however, both for lack of personnel, and for the fact that our Fathers (some of them at least) began acting on their own independently of the Institute, when they became pastors, we end up with leaving our churches in the hands of the Bishops and of other priests; and so the church of Bridgeport (as said in a letter of Fr. Salvatore to Fr. Alussi) has now been given by the Bishop to a priest who had been living with Fr. Barbato; and, of course, he now acts independently."*<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> "Manifesto del Comitato Provvisorio", Bridgeport, January 23, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 648).

<sup>95</sup> Ceruti-Scalabrini, Bridgeport, April 25, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 648).

<sup>96</sup> "Fire Ruins Interior of Church of Holy Rosary", Morning Telegram Union (Bridgeport, Conn.), January 10, 1904.

<sup>97</sup> Tierney-Scalabrini, Hartford, March 28, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 648).

<sup>98</sup> Novati-Vicentini, Boston, December 6, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 554/6).

<sup>99</sup> Vicentini-Demo, Piacenza, September 13, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 554/8).

## CHAPTER VIII

### OUR MISSIONS IN THE STATES OF OHIO, MISSOURI, MICHIGAN, AND WEST VIRGINIA

#### 1. The Parish of Sacred Heart, Cincinnati, Ohio

Assigned to the assistance of southern Italians, as we have seen above,<sup>1</sup> Fr. Giuseppe Quadranti arrived in Cincinnati on October 20, 1895. Fr. Pietro Lotti, Pastor of Sacred Heart Parish had called on the Vicar General of the diocese a few days earlier:

*"I paid a visit to the pastor of Holy Trinity Church, who is also the Vicar General, and I told him: 'Well, we have a priest for the Sicilians; on your part you should favor me with that rundown chapel for my sole use, as you promised me.' He said in turn: 'Not just the chapel, but the vestments and whatever you may need, as well.' I let the Genoese in on the news a little, and it seems as though someone is not too happy about it especially concerning the debt that from \$9,000.00 had to be increased to \$11,000.00 because of the unfortunate dispute with 'Società Unione e Fratellanza.'" (Unity and Brotherhood).<sup>2</sup>*

In August 1897, Fr. Lotti was succeeded by Fr. Oreste Alussi, who had immediately opened a school for Italian children, of whom many frequented Protestant schools.<sup>3</sup> Fr. Alussi was not too happy in Cincinnati and so he was replaced in March, 1898, by Fr. Giuseppe Quadranti, assisted by Fr. Riccardo Lorenzoni,<sup>4</sup> who was, however, transferred almost right after, with the result that Fr. Quadranti remained alone until 1901 when he was assigned elsewhere by Bishop Scalabrini during his visit there. Under his administration the church was restored, a new organ installed,<sup>5</sup> and the Sisters of Charity of Mt. St. Joseph opened a school named "The Santa Maria Educational and Industrial Institute". We gather this information from a letter to Bishop Scalabrini:

*"Your stay with us has been too short for us to have the opportunity to explain to Your Excellency the reason for founding our Institute (...). Italian Methodists had already established in this city an Italian school with religious services on Sunday, and were making all efforts to gain proselytes from amongst our Catholic countrymen.*

*A good many Italian children were frequenting that Protestant school, where both minister and teachers were exerting a strong pressure aimed at converting not only children, but adults, as well. Under the pretext of providing a meeting place and protection for Italians there was also an attempt at founding a center as a means to have them change the religion of their fathers.*

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<sup>1</sup> Francesconi, "History of the Scalabrinian Congregation" Vol. II (Rome, 1973).

<sup>2</sup> Lotti to Zaboglio, Cincinnati, October 16, 1895 (Arch. G.S., 625/2).

<sup>3</sup> Alussi to Zaboglio, Cincinnati, September 3, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 625/3).

<sup>4</sup> Alussi to Molinari, New York, March 29, 1898 (Arch. G.S., 625/3).

<sup>5</sup> Quadranti to Scalabrini, Cincinnati, October 23, 1901 (Arch. G.S., 625/5).

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*It was to oppose such a deleterious influence on our holy Religion that this "Santa Maria" Institute was opened (...). We now have two schools: "Santa Maria" and "Sacred Heart". Italian and the language of the adoptive country are taught in both schools. A great difficulty for the teaching of Italian is presented by the lack of Italian text books. As soon as we receive these books Your Excellency promised to send us from Italy, we shall teach our beautiful and sweet language with still greater ardor. It would be our desire to have, if possible, also a small Italian library for the use of our countrymen."*<sup>6</sup>

*The first two Sisters of Charity to staff the "Santa Maria" Institute were Sr. Blandina and Sr. Giustina Segale, both born in Italy at Cicagna, Genova. The school became also a center for recreational groups, employment offices, the visitation of the sick and prison inmates, and a kindergarten."*<sup>7</sup>

Fr. Quadranti was succeeded in October 1901, by Fr. Ludovico Martinelli, pastor until July 1902; and then by Fr. Vincenzo Astorri under whose tenure the frequency of Italians to the church decreased notably, while the Irish were flocking to it in large numbers thus supporting the parish with their offerings.<sup>8</sup> In September 1903 Fr. Giovanni Battista Balangero became pastor of "this small but difficult and most unfortunate mission of Cincinnati that had witnessed his missionaries steadily succeeding one another to its great detriment."<sup>9</sup>

He was soon happy with the parish, however, and the Italians were glad to have him<sup>10</sup>; a few months later he could write to Bishop Scalabrini:

*"Thanks to God, we are getting along fine to the satisfaction of the Archbishop and his Auxiliary, of the people, and mine. Certainly, thorns and difficulties are not lacking, the saddest of them all is to witness that many Italians do not frequent the Church. All say, however, that their attendance to the Church has much increased as did its revenues, so that it became possible to pay a few days ago one thousand dollars on the debt, even though the number of Italians in this city be very small and with no visible sign of increase."*<sup>11</sup>

Fr. Balangero succeeded in paying off the Church's debt, and in 1909 he had a new mosaic floor made, a gift of Fedele Del Signore. Among others, he had as his assistants Fr. Paolo Mainardi, who was soon forced to return to Italy because sick with tuberculosis, and Fr. Giovanni Chiotti, who succeeded Fr. Balangero as pastor when he died on January 9, 1919.

In 1916 the "*Italica Gens*" reported the following brief information on the Italian parish of Cincinnati:

"There is in Cincinnati a small center to which many Italian workers turn for help or a job. We would like to commend it to the goodwill and admiration of all Italians.

The center we are speaking of is the "Santa Maria Institute", founded in 1897 by the Sisters of Charity of Mount Saint Joseph.

The Congregation is American, but the Sisters assigned to it are Italian. One cannot

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<sup>6</sup> Segale to Scalabrini, Cincinnati, October 14, 1901 (Arch. G.S., 625/6).

<sup>7</sup> "Diamond Jubilee - 1893-1968 - Sacred Heart Italian Church" (Cincinnati, 1968), pp. 18-20.

<sup>8</sup> Astorri to Alussi, Cincinnati, January 28, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 625/6).

<sup>9</sup> Balangero to Scalabrini, Cincinnati, September 23, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 625/7).

<sup>10</sup> Novati to Scalabrini, Providence, November 4, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 554/4).

<sup>11</sup> Balangero to Scalabrini, Cincinnati, April 16, 1904 (Arch. G.S., 625/7).

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tribute a better praise to this Institute than presenting an account on the good accomplished by it in the course of 1915. From a recently published report on this year we gather that the Sisters found jobs for 429 men, and 617 women; gave help to 424 families; dispensed 24,434 clothing articles; donated or had 1,334 pairs of shoes repaired; and, in some exceptional cases, distributed even money in the amount of \$420.00. We must point out that even though the assisted ones were not all Italians, no needy Italian in Cincinnati had recourse in vain to this Institute: all needy Italians, regardless of faith or party! Such is the material assistance, so to speak, given by the "Santa Maria Institute."

The humble sisters did something else, however, besides the statistics which appear from month-to-month, and year-to-year. Putting to good use the influence they enjoy in the city, and the esteem they are held in by authorities, they have steadily contributed in placing Italians in a better light with Americans, in discrediting many existing prejudices against Italian workers; briefly, in making Italians better known. Furthermore, by initiative of these Sisters, on behalf of the young Italian generations there were born several institutions: a free school on home economics, that is, cooking, sewing, and embroidery; and classes and youth groups. Even Her Majesty Queen Margherita of Italy was pleased a short while ago to send her praise and contribution to the patriotic and charitable institution of these able sisters.

Italians in Cincinnati are not grouped in just one neighborhood, but scattered in various sections of the city, one of the fairest cities of America. However, they have a nice church almost in downtown Cincinnati entrusted to the care of the famed Fr. Balangero, also much esteemed and loved by Italians. Attached to the parish there is the secretariat of the "Italica Gens" under the direction of the Rev. Chiotti. A good initiative has been recently taken up by this able correspondence of ours. Due to the fact our countrymen do not live together in one neighborhood, it was not possible to build a parish school right for them. For this reason, Fr. Chiotti spends a few hours each week in teaching Italian in the various American parish-schools more frequented by the children of our migrants."<sup>12</sup>

## **2. The Parish of Our Lady of the Rosary, Cleveland, Ohio**

In 1901, Fr. Antonio Gibelli<sup>13</sup> acquired for \$4,000.00 a piece of land on which to build a school and the church.<sup>14</sup> The Italian community was rapidly growing, and catechism classes were attended by 400 children; but only in 1905 work began on the basement, while the old church had to be used as a school.<sup>15</sup> Fr. Gibelli died suddenly of a heart attack on March 13, 1907. Rectory and school were under construction, the debt was heavy, and there were outstanding bills with architects and contractors. Fr. Gibelli, not a very shrewd administrator, and had been conned by almost everybody.<sup>16</sup> The Bishop of Cleveland, who never had much use for the Scalabrinians, took the occasion to remove them from the parish, and to entrust it to Fr. Angelico Idone, a former Franciscan. Fr. Chenuil thus commented the fact:

*"The loss of the Mission of Cleveland reminds me of a most opportune consideration by a prominent Polish monk to me one day: 'Your Founder should*

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<sup>12</sup> E.B. "Da Cincinnati", "Italica Gens", a. VII, no. 7-12, (July/December 1916), pp. 232-233.

<sup>13</sup> Francesconi, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> Gibelli to Scalabrini, Cleveland, December 17, 1901 (Arch. G.S., 651/4).

<sup>15</sup> Gibelli to Scalabrini, Cleveland, August 6, 1902, and November 1903 to Father Demo, Cleveland, May 6, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 651/4).

<sup>16</sup> Demo to Vicentini, New York, March 21, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 651/4).

*have started stipulating from the very beginning a regular contract with each American bishop, to be renewed with his successor. You run serious risks in carrying on in such an informal way of simply trusting the word of these bishops; time will come when they will not need you, and will dismiss you without your being able to do anything about it. Your objections will be useless, and even ridiculous, because not substantiated by good legal documents."*<sup>17</sup>

Fr. Vicentini replied as follows:

*"This is my answer to Fr. Pacifico: 'As much as I regret the action of the Bishop of Cleveland, as you will have understood from my letter, still he is right, after all, and we had better not contest it if we do not wish to uncover any sores. There is no reason to fear for Bishops to dismiss us if only our Missionaries would do their duty: this is the way I see it.'"*<sup>18</sup>

### **3. The Mission of Columbus, Ohio**

In 1895, Bishop H. Moeller of Columbus, Ohio, asked the Scalabrinians for an Italian priest. Fr. Pietro Lotti, then Pastor in Cincinnati, went there in November to preach a mission to the people: but the attendance was poor.<sup>19</sup>

In 1898, one Fr. Alessandro Cestelli had the Church of St. John the Baptist built for Italians. On February 9, 1901, he was succeeded by Fr. Vittorio Sovilla, a Scalabrinian, who found the church under a \$16,000.00 mortgage; indeed a heavy burden for a small community, so widely scattered. In 1903 it numbered 1,408 souls, of whom only one-half were making their Easter Duty.<sup>20</sup> The colony enjoyed afterwards a certain growth: marriages, 2 in 1902, increased to 20 in 1911; and baptisms from 20 to 200.

Five families pledged themselves for five years beginning with March 1902, to contribute \$500.00 to the Church; the Bishop ordered a special collection and financed some initiatives of Fr. Sovilla, so that the Italian parish could make some progress:

*"It is about a year I am here, and the Church kept going ever better (...). I found a chaotic situation on both the spiritual and material levels; today I can say that things have changed in either respect. People attend church in increasing numbers and now at Easter I am very satisfied with the proportion of Italians, many of them also from afar, making their duty.*

*As to finances, there are no words with which I may render worthy thanks to God! Considering how I found things on my arrival, how discouraged, indifferent, and disunited all were! As you can gather from the press, people cannot get over how, besides the ordinary expenditures of Church and pastor, and many other pending debts of Fr. Cestelli, I could still pay \$1,400.00 on the principal. Even the neighboring pastors themselves, who because of the situation I was in earlier, were counting the days of my going under, were amazed!"*<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Chenuil to Vicentini, Chicago, s.d. (Arch. G.S., 651/4).

<sup>18</sup> Vicentini, Diary, Vol. IV, May 7, 1907, pp. 206-207 (Arch. G.S., 1642).

<sup>19</sup> Lotti to Zaboglio, Cincinnati, November 14, and November 22, 1895 (Arch. G.S., 625/2).

<sup>20</sup> Report of January 1903, Columbus (Arch. G.S., 651/5).

<sup>21</sup> Sovilla to Scalabrini, Columbus, April 1, 1902 (Arch. G.S., 651/5).

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In the summer of 1902, a public transportation service was initiated between the city and a locality some seven miles away, where 200 Italians were engaged in stone quarries, and so these also could attend church.

So far for the information given by Fr. Sovilla.<sup>22</sup> The Bishop instead was not too happy about him and asked to have him replaced because there was need of a more active and better experienced man who could pay the debts.<sup>23</sup>

To secure financial support for the church, Fr. Sovilla extended his religious assistance also to the English-speaking people<sup>24</sup> but, this decision provoked the resentment of other pastors, especially of that of the Cathedral who was to become Bishop of Columbus in 1903. The situation got worse in 1904 because the stone quarries and many factories were closed down,<sup>25</sup> so that almost all income was now coming from the American faithful; the church of Saint John the Baptist had practically become a mixed parish. To prevent any possible loss for the neighboring parishes, Bishop Hartley deprived Fr. Sovilla of all faculties over English-speaking people. The latter protested with the Apostolic Delegate saying he had accepted the parish from Bishop Moeller, Hartley's predecessor, only because he had been granted the faculties also over non-Italians, to which his successor had never objected until 1908. Deprived of these faculties the missionary would not be in a position to direct the parish any longer.<sup>26</sup>

Delegate Archbishop Falconio answered:

*"From information received on the matter you brought to my attention on November 25th last, it clearly appears that, by force of a document undersigned by you, not only have you not been 'incardinated' in the diocese of Columbus, but also that you may not pretend to be in the future. Besides, it is clear that it was and is the intention of the Bishop that the Church of Saint John the Baptist should only serve Italians, because Americans are assisted in their religious needs by the neighboring parish. After all, should the church even serve Americans due to your scanty knowledge of the English language, still you could not adequately take care of them. Lastly, we are informed that the Italians are not as well assisted as they should; by duty of conscience you must therefore turn all your attention to their care. Consequently, should you intend to remain in Columbus, it is necessary that you faithfully obey the instructions given you by the Bishop."<sup>27</sup>*

In March 1909, Bishop Hartley renewed Fr. Sovilla's faculties over the Italians for only two months inviting him to seek another diocese because he had unjustly accused him with the Apostolic Delegate of not taking care of the Italians and was disobeying him in continuing to minister to Americans; furthermore, Italians were complaining that he charged too much for baptisms and weddings and they could not understand his sermons. For these and other reasons, he had in mind to entrust the church to the Franciscans.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Sovilla to Alussi, Columbus, July 9, 1902 (Arch. G.S., 651/5).

<sup>23</sup> Moeller to Novati, Columbus, January 31, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 651/5).

<sup>24</sup> Sovilla to Scalabrini, Columbus, February 18, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 651/5).

<sup>25</sup> Sovilla to Scalabrini, Columbus, January 18, 1904 (Arch. G.S., 651/5).

<sup>26</sup> Sovilla to Falconio, Columbus, November 25, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 651/5).

<sup>27</sup> Falconio to Sovilla, Washington, December 8, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 651/5).

<sup>28</sup> Sovilla to Vicentini, Columbus, March 5, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 651/5).

Fr. Vicentini, informed by Fr. Sovilla himself of the Bishop's complaints, thus wrote to Bishop Hartley:

*"For some months now, Fr. Sovilla has been writing to me about his difficulties so well known to Your Excellency. I constantly answered him that a solution could be found either in perfectly obeying you or in leaving the diocese; that he depends on the Congregation only to a certain extent, because, though ordained for it, still he does not behave as a member of it (...). However, there is no reason for doubting his good morals, while is certain, that he did much for Italians in Columbus. For this reason, he deserves understanding and consideration."<sup>29</sup>*

Fr. Sovilla remained in Columbus till September 1913, at least, when the bishop removed him from the parish.<sup>30</sup> A few months later, Fr. Balangero thus wrote to the Superior General:

*"I am informed by people coming in from Columbus, Ohio, that Fr. Sovilla is presently stationed in New Haven, Connecticut. In that city, all people, bishop included, testify to the untiring activity of Fr. Sovilla in the twelve years spent at Columbus, and to the good he did for the parish in collecting money to pay the debts. Fr. Sovilla's drawback is that no one can understand him either in Italian or in English, and so people had ceased going to church. But, it was not his fault; in fact, no one could doubt his goodwill; it was a natural defect, which unfortunately made his position as pastor of that church impossible."<sup>31</sup>*

#### **4. The Parish of Our Lady of the Rosary, Kansas City, Mo.**

Following earlier construction of a small wooden church,<sup>32</sup> the pastor, Fr. Santipolo, had the rectory built in 1906: the upper floor served as residence for the missionary while the ground floor was hosting several school classes. The Sisters of Mercy, who had been teaching Catechism till 1892, began holding classes in the same year. A large proportion of children, however, still kept frequenting the school of Saint John on 534 Tracy Street, directed by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Corondelet.

Old and sickly, Fr. Santipolo retired in November 1897.<sup>33</sup> Appointed to succeed him, Fr. Francesco Beccherini had arrived at Kansas City in September of the same year, but he remained only for a few days.<sup>34</sup> Fr. Cesare Spigardi, "a helper" of the Scalabrinians, was then sent to take his place. He arrived in the latter half of October, and on the following Sunday he could thus write to Bishop Scalabrini:

"I am hard at work since last Sunday. I am sitting as on a power keg! People here are hot tempered, but I like them better this way than if they were indifferent. In fact, there are two awful factions up in arms against each other! If only to meet the people and present myself to them, on Sunday night we had

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<sup>29</sup> Vicentini, "Diary" Vol. V, April 4, 1909, p. 168 (Arch. G.S., 1642).

<sup>30</sup> Vicentini to Sovilla, Piacenza, September 10, 1913 (Arch. G.S., 2074).

<sup>31</sup> Balangero to Vicentini, Cincinnati, January 18, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 561/5).

<sup>32</sup> Francesconi, *op. cit.*

<sup>33</sup> "Holy Rosary Church Golden Jubilee" (Kansas City, 1942), P. 12.

<sup>34</sup> Santipolo to Scalabrini, Kansas City, September 28, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 628/3).

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a get-together in Church, but they nearly had a real fight. Thanks to God, it all ended well, and I believe I solved the hardest of my difficulties because I had the leaders make the peace. Fr. Santipolo left me with a \$4,000 debt, half of which is soon due. Many are willing to help me out, but next Sunday will I know to what extent their promises will be kept."<sup>35</sup>

Fr. Spigardi was in fact helped by the people, and he was able to restore the Church which was blessed in early 1899.<sup>36</sup> In February 1900 Fr. Pietro Lotti took the place of Fr. Spigardi who had been transferred to Saint Louis, Missouri, but he kept complaining because of distance and solitude, and repeatedly asked to be changed, His request was accepted and he was replaced by Fr. Carlo Delbecchi on November 30, 1901.<sup>37</sup>

In the early hours of April 12, 1903, the church was almost totally destroyed by a fire:

*"At 1:30 in the morning of the 12th of this month a fire broke out in the Protestant church near ours; carried by the wind the flames set fire also to our church, and that devastating element gave completion to its destructive fury! Awakened by the firemen and scantily dressed, I had hardly enough time to rush to the Church in flames and filled with smoke, take the Sacred Ciborium, and jump through the window to safety! Flames extinguished on one side flaring up on the other, shouting firemen, crying women and children, lamenting men, and then, when, last of all, also the cross fell down and the walls crumbled, our hearts sank likewise to be buried in those smoldering ruins! The church a total loss; damaged pews, altars and statues; cope, surplices, stoles, all consumed by fire; O my God, what a disaster!*

*On that very afternoon I called the people together and tried to stir them up! The good Lord heard me, and \$500.00 was right there and then collected for a new church! People are now burning with the desire to have another church, and give generous contributions, while I am all caught up with the construction of a new building."<sup>38</sup>*

The total loss of \$10,000.00 was covered by the insurance only for \$5,000.<sup>39</sup> While a classroom was being used as a chapel, reconstruction was soon begun; though interrupted for a while in July by a flood, it was practically completed before Christmas; in fact, the new Church was dedicated on December 20, 1903. It remained bare and plain until 1909 when it was decorated. The heating system was installed in 1912, the new organ in 1913.<sup>40</sup>

In 1906 the Apostolic Delegate requested the removal of Fr. C. Delbecchi, but the Provincial Superior rushed to Washington to the defense of the missionary, and succeeded in having the impending measure revoked. It seems as though the cause was to be traced to the maneuverings of a former Passionist opposed

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<sup>35</sup> Spigardi to Zaboglio, Kansas City, October 26, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 628/4).

<sup>36</sup> Gambera to Scalabrini, Boston, February 10, 1899 (Arch. G.S., 553/2).

<sup>37</sup> Alussi to Molinari, Boston, February 12, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 665/5); Gambera to Scalabrini, Boston, March 22, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 553/3); Delbecchi to Scalabrini, Kansas City, December 6, 1901 (Arch. G.S., 628/6).

<sup>38</sup> Delbecchi to Scalabrini, Kansas City, April 15, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 628/6).

<sup>39</sup> Delbecchi to Alussi, Kansas City, April 18, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 628/6).

<sup>40</sup> "Holy Rosary Church Golden Jubilee"(Kansas City, 1942), p. 14.



to Fr. Delbecchi on points of interest.<sup>41</sup> In 1907, the Bishop of Kansas City again asked that Fr. Delbecchi be replaced, but Fr. Chenuil could have things settled for the best also on this occasion especially by calling the Bishop's attention to the fact that the missionary was about to start construction on a new school for which a piece of land had already been bought.<sup>42</sup> The school was opened in the beginning of the school year 1907-1908 with 75 students. Fr. Chenuil had to intervene also in 1909 because of disorders stirred up against Fr. Delbecchi by a Sicilian priest:

*"At last that old Bishop declared himself satisfied, but he decidedly wants another priest with the intent of opening a new church in that city. I do not believe it possible to establish another parish there. Surely, however, Fr. Delbecchi would need of an assistant to help him and also to satisfy the Bishop."<sup>43</sup>*

Help came to Fr. Delbecchi only in 1912 in the person of Fr. Giovanni Beccaria, an "auxiliary" priest, and later on, with Fr. Giuseppe Poja, a Scalabrinian. Fr. Delbecchi was transferred to Chicago by the end of 1918, and replaced for a little over a year by Fr. Raffaele D'Alfonso, who was succeeded by Fr. Prospero Angeli in January 1920.

## **5. The Parish of Saint Charles, Saint Louis, Mo.**

Fr. Zaboglio had been sending information about the Italians of St. Louis to Bishop Scalabrini since 1889:

*"On my way north I came to the city of St. Louis, and there I stopped for a while. From what I could gather, there are between five and six thousand Italians in this city, members of a parish directed first by some friars, and then by a secular priest. A few years back, the Italian priest left the parish, and the church was sold out. Whose fault was it? It seems as though the Archbishop, a very old man, had suffered much on account of the Italians. I called on him to have my "celebret" (faculties) renewed; he welcomed me with great kindness, but when I touched in a roundabout way upon the question of the Italians, he withdrew into silence, and I did not say anything further (...). Fr. Orfei, the last pastor, and present assistant in another parish, (whom I also visited) had left the administration of the church totally in the hands of laymen, and it was sold with complete disregard for all church authorities."<sup>44</sup>*

Fr. Zaboglio returned to St. Louis in 1891:

*"At the end of November I have been in Saint Louis with Fr. Ascheri, who presented me to one of the most influential pastors of the city. In turn, the latter introduced me to the Vicar General who wholeheartedly welcomed the proposal for establishing an Italian mission in the city, and promised his support with the Archbishop (...). And so, I called on the Archbishop who gave me quite a different welcome than that of two years ago, a very cold one indeed! He*

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<sup>41</sup> Chenuil to Vicentini, Chicago, November 7, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 605/1); Novati to Vicentini, Boston, December 14, 1906, and January 22, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 554/6).

<sup>42</sup> Chenuil to Vicentini, Chicago, July 31, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 605/1); Delbecchi to Vicentini, Kansas City, January 30, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 628/6).

<sup>43</sup> Chenuil to Vicentini, Chicago, September 17, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 628/6).

<sup>44</sup> Zaboglio to Scalabrini, Genoa, Wis., June 29, 1889 (Arch. G.S., 549/3).

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*declared himself just happy if we would establish an Italian mission in his city! On behalf of Your Excellency, I promised we would send him a priest in about two or four months, (...). Then I went visiting many of the prominent families in the city, and they pledged their support and cooperation.*

*I must confess that I found better dispositions than I expected because of the sad happenings that took place in the city the past years!"<sup>45</sup>*

Still in 1894 we find a letter by Fr. Domenico Vicentini pleading with the auxiliary bishop of St. Louis for permission to have a mission preached to the Italians;<sup>46</sup> and in 1896 one by Fr. Cesare Spigardi volunteering to go to that city.<sup>47</sup> But things kept dragging along for a long time.

In 1898 Fr. Gambera asked to preach a mission with the intent of finding out whether it were possible to open a church, but the Archbishop answered that he had already provided for the Italians with the Jesuits.<sup>48</sup>

In February of 1899, Fr. Francesco Beccherini transcribed for Fr. Gambera a letter he had received from Fr. Spigardi:

*"I do not recall whether I told you that, when passing through St. Louis on my way back home, I took the opportunity between trains to call on the Jesuit Frs. in order to find out if they had actually taken charge of the care of Italians. It is true that the Archbishop had offered it to them, as he had done with the Servites of Chicago before, but the Jesuits have not accepted it as yet, and they content themselves only with sending an Italian priest coming in from the West to the assistance of Italians at Eastertime. This is what they did last year, and intend to do this year!*

*Eighteen thousand Italians live totally neglected in St. Louis! The Archbishop has a Mass said for them in the basement of three American churches where a priest has some knowledge of Italian, and that is all. He does not want any secular priest; should Fr. Gambera still wait, there will not be any time left for him to do anything about it. Would it not be opportune that you ask full faculties of Fr. Gambera, and go there to try it out? Of course, without giving up Detroit!"<sup>49</sup>*

In the following November, Fr. Gambera explained to Bishop Scalabrini how he had been insisting for a whole year with the Archbishop of St. Louis to open a mission there, but was told that he could take care of the matter with the Jesuits or other priests; in reality, nothing had been done. This time, however, Archbishop J.J. Kain himself had invited him to a meeting that took place in Washington, and it was decided that the Scalabrinians would go to preach a solemn mission.<sup>50</sup>

The missions were preached in February and March of 1900 by Fr. Spigardi, and by Fr. Biasotti who sent this report of them to Fr. Demo:

*"We began the Missions last Sunday and all is well, so far. This Italian colony is divided into three groups very far apart from each other: the largest of them is made up of Sicilians and a few Neapolitans, one of Genoese, and the third of*

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<sup>45</sup> Zaboglio to Scalabrini, New Orleans, December 21, 1891 (Arch. G.S., 550/1).

<sup>46</sup> Vicentini to Kain, New York, May 12, 1894 (Arch. G.S., 669).

<sup>47</sup> Spigardi to Zaboglio, Hammonton, N.J., July 29, 1896 (Arch. G.S., 669).

<sup>48</sup> Gambera to Scalabrini, Boston, July 12, 1898 and October 11, 1898 (Arch. G.S., 553/1).

<sup>49</sup> Beccherini to Gambera, Detroit, February 25, 1899 (Arch. G.S., 669).

<sup>50</sup> Gambera to Scalabrini, Boston, November 23, 1899 (Arch. G.S., 553/2).

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*Lombards, both outside of the city. We are now preaching to the first group, with great numbers in attendance together with some Genoese and Lombards, about a thousand, altogether. Later on we shall preach the missions also to these ones in two churches close by the places where they live."*<sup>51</sup>

In another letter to Bishop Scalabrini Fr. Biasotti added:

*"The Missions were closed last night with great success; many received Communion, the church was full all along with people, though many of them had to come a long way and the weather was so bitterly cold for all. The Archbishop of this city was very happy with the results, and more so Fr. Gambera, who arrived here last Saturday, so that by common desire of all Italians a church has already been rented that will be solemnly blessed by the Archbishop next Sunday; it is beautiful, big, and in very good condition though left unused for the past seven years by the Presbyterians. This week Fr. Cesare will do his utmost to provide all things needed for Catholic worship, while I will be outside of the city to preach the Missions to a Lombard community of 800 people, and on Sunday evening the last Mission shall be then given a start in the new church!"*<sup>52</sup>

Fr. Gambera, Provincial Superior, decided against asking any contribution of the Italians for the time being, and therefore, against calling any meeting or setting up of committees, in consideration of the past history of the colony<sup>53</sup> and then he informed Bishop Scalabrini of it:

*"I had no choice but to appoint Fr. Spigardi to this new mission of St. Louis not so much in response to the request of the Archbishop as to provide rather for the situation and for the most urgent current needs.*

*The large colony of St. Louis was completely discouraged because so many attempts at founding a church had all failed; even the Jesuits had to give up in frustration. Some Italian priests went away leaving behind a poor memory of themselves. Furthermore, the colony, scattered in distant places from each other, could never agree on the locality where to build the church.*

*In view of past and present difficulties, no one had any hope even in our attempt, and both Archbishop and local priests kept telling us we would not accomplish anything. That colony needed a lifting up of its morale, and a little renewed trust in the missionary. All this was possible to obtain only by means of a good and solemn mission preached by two able and zealous priests with absolute prohibition to solicit collections, to speak about a church, to hold meetings, all things that would have served no other purpose but the reviving of old rivalries. Meditations, instructions, pious practices had to convince those compatriots of ours that the missionaries were there only for the good of their souls.*

*And the Word of God wrought miracles: in order to accommodate all of them we preached three missions in three different churches, Irish, German, and Italian. Lombards, Genoese, Sicilians, all attended. The event was such a success as to amaze everyone (...).*

*To our good luck it was possible to rent a beautiful Protestant church located in*

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<sup>51</sup> Biasotti to Demo, St. Louis, January 25, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 669).

<sup>52</sup> Biasotti to Scalabrini, St. Louis, February 5, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 669).

<sup>53</sup> Gambera to Demo, St. Louis, February 7, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 669).

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*a convenient position. With the approval of the Archbishop, a contract was signed; people were informed of it after all things had been said and done when we invited them to the new Italian Church on the following Sunday on which it would be solemnly blessed by the Archbishop.*

*I have no words to describe the moving impression of the Italians crowding the church upon hearing the unexpected and so much desired news, and the edifying sight of the day on which the Church was dedicated."<sup>54</sup>*

From the 1901 report we find that in the first year 139 baptisms, 40 weddings, and 39 funerals were registered at the early church on Morgan Street, titled to Our Lady Help of Christians. Four associations were already quite active: Sacred Heart with 156 members, Christian Mothers 158, St. Aloysius 65, and Children of Mary 61.

In August 1902, a new church was bought at 2901 Locust St., meant to be the parish of Italians with the title of St. Charles. The Church of Our Lady Help of Christians kept serving the Sicilian community of downtown. The two churches cost \$40,000.00, and \$23,000.00 had already been collected.<sup>55</sup>

Another church, the third one, dedicated to St. Ambrose, was opened on August 1, 1903, for the Lombards.<sup>56</sup>

Fr. Spigardi had to seek the help of two non-Scalabrinian priests. They lived with him and had the care of the two Sicilian and Lombard churches. The priest serving the church of the Sicilians tended to make it independent<sup>57</sup> so that in 1907 Fr. Spigardi had to dismiss him in accord with the Archbishop. This provision aroused the anger of the Sicilian community that protested to the Pope himself<sup>58</sup>, and spread defamatory rumors on the conduct of the pastor.

In December, 1908, Fr. Spigardi served public notice that the trial was over and his innocence had been openly proven.<sup>59</sup>

From the very beginning, one of the main concerns of Fr. Spigardi was the school. He succeeded in opening one by the Sicilian church, and another by St. Ambrose; so we read in a report of 1916:

"The free school for the children of poor Italians has so far given encouraging results. More than 300 children are now receiving a free education and instruction, and they could exceed 800 if we only had sufficient means. I am working now on an appeal to the generosity of the colony inviting it to help me in this project. If I could only find 250 people willing to pledge one dollar a month, it would be easy then to open the school to other Italian children, and so many more of them could be freed of their miserable conditions, and become good Christians and honest citizens, deserving of our country and civilization. This is the main problem to be presently solved on behalf of the Italian community of St. Louis."

This much was told me by Fr. Spigardi while driving me to visit some of the institutions he had founded. His automobile serves him beautifully in his mission, and

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<sup>54</sup> Gambera to Scalabrini, St. Louis, March 22, 1900 (Arch. G.S. 553/3).

<sup>55</sup> Spigardi to Scalabrini, St. Louis, August 16, 1902 (Arch. G.S., 669).

<sup>56</sup> Spigardi to Scalabrini, St. Louis, September 16, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 669).

<sup>57</sup> Spigardi to Novati, St. Louis, December 1905 (Arch. G.S., 669).

<sup>58</sup> Sicilian Catholic Committee of O.L. Help of Christians to Vicentini, St. Louis, July 8, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 669).

<sup>59</sup> Sicilian Catholic Committee of O.L. Help of Christians to Vicentini, St. Louis, July 8, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 669).

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takes him anywhere there is some good to do for the Italians. The school he opened by the so-called Sicilian church was the first one, and has always had a special place in the heart of this zealous missionary; I am confident that this Italian colony will generously respond to the appeal for its enlargement.

Fr. Spigardi had three beautiful buildings put up for worship in three different locations where the Italians live (some 15,000 in a population of 850,000). Another school was also built by the Church of St. Ambrose, now in the care of Fr. Carotti. Within a few months it will be transferred to new and larger quarters. We shall give a report on this to our readers at a later date.

Besides being a very active Italian missionary, Fr. Spigardi is also a man of rare culture. He values highly his varied and well-endowed library, rich especially with books on Italian history and literature; and this is even more remarkable and praiseworthy if one considers that it looks as though, once in the States, Italians usually abandon all interest in Italian culture, or they do not keep in touch any longer, at least, with the intellectuals of their fatherland. Of course, I am speaking of people with a certain degree of education who very often tell me that they have not found time in their many years here to open an Italian book."<sup>60</sup>

As to the personal position of Fr. Spigardi in regard to the Scalabrinian Congregation, in a note of the Archives of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation we find that he was admitted to the Scalabrinians with a simple promise in 1901; in 1910 he did not subscribe to the oath introduced with the Rule of 1908, and in 1919 he was officially declared free of all bonds with the Congregation. He died as Pastor of St. Charles in St. Louis, Mo., on May 8, 1931.

## **6. The Parish of St. Francis, Detroit, Michigan**

It seems quite proper to us to furnish here some information on the parish of St. Francis in Detroit, Michigan, founded by Fr. Francesco Beccherini in 1897, and by him directed until his death in 1935. As with Fr. Spigardi, so also we do not have sure information as to the membership of Fr. Beccherini to the Scalabrinian Congregation right from the time when he moved to Detroit of his own decision. From then on, Fr. Zaboglio ceased considering him a member of the Congregation;<sup>61</sup> on the other hand, we know that Bishop Scalabrini considered him as one of his own, and he presented him as such to the Holy See in 1904, when, as we have seen, he petitioned approval for a tour of lectures the missionary was to hold at various Italian seminaries,<sup>62</sup> and he wanted him as his companion in the visitation of the missions in the United States.

Soon after his arrival in Detroit on November 1, 1897, Fr. Beccherini began work on the construction of a church for the 2,500 Italians then living in that city. Titled to Saint Francis, the new church was inaugurated by Card. Sebastiano Martinelli, Apostolic Delegate, on November 20, 1898.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> E.B. "Da St. Louis, Mo.", "Italica Gens", a. VII, no. 7-12 (July-December 1916), pp. 246-249.

<sup>61</sup> Zaboglio to Scalabrini, New York, December 15, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 550/5).

<sup>62</sup> Cfr. above, pp. 13-14.

<sup>63</sup> Zaboglio to Scalabrini, New York, December 15, 1897 (Arch. G.S., 550/5); Beccherini to Scalabrini, Detroit, November 9, 1898 (Arch. G.S., 653/1).

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In his absence, he was often substituted by Scalabrinians, such as Frs. Gaspare Moretto, and Cesare Molinari. We were not able to gather much information on the parish from his many letters except for some brief comments on the steady progress of the colony, and on the consequent need for more priests. In 1940, at the age of 74, he was still pastor. We have this information in the following letter of Fr. Beniamino Franch to Card. R.C. Rossi:

*"There is in Detroit, Michigan, the Italian parish of St. Francis directed on behalf of the Pious Society by Fr. Beccherini, a former Scalabrinian. The church is at 1935 Brewster Street.*

*He took charge of the parish as a member of the Congregation, but then he disassociated himself from us. In 1920 or 1921, or thereabout, the same Fr. Beccherini, then in poor health, invited Fr. Cesare Molinari to be his assistant in view of becoming his successor as pastor.*

*And Fr. Molinari tells me that he was presented at that time to His Excellency Michael J. Gallagher, then Bishop of that Diocese, who readily acknowledged the good rights of the Pious Society. But Fr. Beccherini recovered and dismissed Fr. Molinari as he had previously done with some other Frs. of ours. There is mention of this parish, perhaps, in the report of the Apostolic Visitor Mons. A. Cicognani who was in the United States in 1924.*

*On suggestion of Bishop W.D. O'Brien, Auxiliary of Chicago and a dear friend of ours, I would wish to have a letter from Your Eminence, if possible, restating the rights of the Pious Society, and presenting me to His Excellency Edward Mooney the present Archbishop."<sup>64</sup>*

The Apostolic Delegate to the United States, Archbishop A.G. Cicognani wrote on the matter to Cardinal R.C. Rossi on November 17, 1941:

*"Concerning the Parish of St. Francis in Detroit, His Excellency the Archbishop Edward Mooney wrote me on October 31 last the letter of which I am enclosing a copy. Recapitulating in a few words what the Archbishop has been expounding, there is no evidence in the Curia of Detroit that the parish was ever entrusted to the Scalabrinian Fathers, and Fr. Beccherini was appointed pastor independently of his membership in the Pious Society. The parish has a heavy debt of \$60,000, and for many years now it has difficulty with paying interest and principal. Besides, Italians formerly living around the parish church, have been moving elsewhere for the last few years leaving that neighborhood to the Negroes. The city administration has currently under study a project of low-income tenement houses for Negroes right in the locality around the Church of St. Francis, and its future will depend on the results of this study as it either will be demolished or be made a center of apostolate for the Negroes. Such being the case, the Archbishop deems it inopportune and harmful to entrust the Scalabrinians with the parish of St. Francis whose future is so uncertain. He points out, besides, that some twenty percent of the parishes in Detroit are in the hands of religious priests, and in consideration of the remarkable number of diocesan priests he thinks he cannot increase this proportion. Now up in years and sickly, Fr. Beccherini should need an assistant, but he has made it hard for anyone who had been assigned to him. Some time back, he asked the chancery for permission to have from Somerville, Massachusetts, Fr. Poja, a member of*

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<sup>64</sup> Franch to Card. Rossi, Melrose Park, Illinois, May 8, 1940 (Arch. G.S., 653/3).

*the Missionaries of St. Charles; His Excellency the Archbishop gave his consent without realizing that the said priest was a Scalabrinian."*<sup>65</sup>

### **7. The Parish of Iron Mountain, Michigan**

The same Fr. Beccherini had opened negotiations with Bishop Frederick Eis of Marquette, Michigan, to start a mission for Italian miners at Iron Mountain. Fr. Paolo Novati assigned to it Fr. Pietro Sinopoli di Giunta, who arrived there on March 28, 1902:

*"This past Holy Wednesday, at six in the afternoon, I left Marquette and following a good four-hour trip in the midst of a violent storm and thick fog I arrived at the station of Iron Mountain. I had with me a letter of presentation and recommendation to a prominent Italian businessman, but on such a night at that late hour with falling snow and (a) raging winds, I decided to lodge at the hotel by the rail station, the only one in town. To my unpleasant surprise I am told that there is no room, the hotel has no vacancy! What am I to do? I was allowed to spend the night seated on a bench in the hotel lobby (...).*

*By morning the weather had subsided, and I went in the direction of the place indicated in the letter. I was given an exceedingly good welcome by the able businessman. He is a certain Mr. Gaudio Carmine del Napolitano. With him I called on the Rector of the Church, who was supposed to yield his place to me, but he received me in a brusque manner. There was need of the Chancellor of the Diocese to have him leave. The poor dear! I felt sorry for him! I do not know why, but he was left without an assignment.*

*Yesterday, at last, I took possession of the church dedicated to the Holy Rosary. Iron Mountain, its very name tells the story, is a city with 15,000 people, a mixture of Swedes, Slavs, French and Italians. The town itself is located some two miles from the iron mines around which are seen about 500 wooden small houses, dark and miserable to look at, separated by roads, or paths, as you like, filthy with trash and mud (...).*

*The Italian community counts some 3,000 people, all home-loving and wise, mostly from Piedmont, Veneto, and South Tyrol, and a few from Abruzzi, Molise, and Romagna. The great majority carries thick pocketbooks, but enjoys poor health due to the humidity of the places they work in. Most of them, however, are ruined by vices they acquire to the detriment of body and soul in the filth of bars, veritable dens of corruption!"*

*There is something here you might call a church, but it is crumbling down on all sides, still dirty with smoke and in disrepair, with extinguished brands, visible all around, left by the fire it suffered some years back! There is no rectory! It is sad that there are no decent houses to rent except luxurious ones! And so, I am forced to stay in a rented room."*<sup>66</sup>

On Easter Sunday, April 1, 1902, the mission was officially opened. From April 6 to 27 a Mission was preached to the people; on the last day 1,422 people received Communion. On May 20 Fr. Sinopoli wrote:

*"The month of May helped me reap the fruits of the seed sowed in the spiritual*

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<sup>65</sup> Cicognani to Rossi, Washington, November 17, 1941 (Arch. G.S., 607/11).

<sup>66</sup> Sinopoli to Alussi, Iron Mountain, April 3, 1902 (Arch. G.S., 658/2).

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*exercises I initiated here with my ministry. There is at night a steady streaming of people to the Church to attend the services and to hear the sermon. Plenty of confessions and Communion, between 50 and 70 Communion every morning; every night I can return home only by midnight because I am kept busy with confessions till then (...). I could find already the Association of Christian Mothers under the protection of the Holy Family with 175 members, and the Children of Mary Sodality with 98 Italian girls (...). I hold Catechism classes on Saturday, and it is quite a consolation to witness two hundred and more children to enjoy learning the eternal truths with me (...). The present church is furnished only with benches (...). I have fixed a little tax for a seat in Church, so that anyone wishing so has his own insured by contributing 25 cents a month (...), and this makes for a steady source of income for the church that has a seating capacity for 450 people. All seats have been sold (...). It is two weeks since I quit boarding; the trustees have rented a house by the church and it has been furnished with new furniture bought with cash (...).*

*This most Excellent Bishop would wish that the colony should start thinking about building a new church, more beautiful and larger than the present one. No sooner did I manifest his hard desire to the people than, as though by magic, over \$5,000.00 was collected in six days, while many others kept adding to the list of those who pledge their contribution (...).*

*I do not have intention to build a new church on another site (...). I would rather restore, lengthen, and decorate the present one."<sup>67</sup>*

The Chancellor of the Diocese had this to say about Fr. Sinopoli to Bishop Scalabrini:

*"He has been here at Iron Mountain taking care of Italians two months already. There are some 300 families of them.*

*On behalf of Bishop Eis of Marquette, I give Your Excellency our sincere thanks for sending us such an able and zealous priest who, with God's Grace, has already succeeded in having so many souls return to the church and the Sacraments."<sup>68</sup>*

With the money raised from the pledges the land where the old chapel stood was bought for \$1,000.00 and on June 24, 1902, they started digging for the construction of a new Church. The cornerstone was blessed on July 6. In November, when work on the walls was completed, Fr. Sinopoli himself, a fairly good artist in his own right, made the decorations and the paintings in oil on laminated iron over the vault. On December 8 Feast of the Immaculate Conception, the church was dedicated, all work completed!

In March of 1903, Fr. Luigi Lango arrived at Iron Mountain to replace Fr. Sinopoli, who left on April 20 for reasons of health.<sup>69</sup> In the same year the Italian community suffered a bad crisis due to the closing down of a mine employing 400 workers. Only the heads of families remained on at a reduced salary. The census just conducted by Fr. Lango showed 1,635 Italians, who began immediately decreasing because of unemployment. Of course, the

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<sup>67</sup> Sinopoli to Alussi, Iron Mountain, May 25, 1902 (Arch. 658/2).

<sup>68</sup> Pinten to Scalabrini, Marquette, June 7, 1902 (Arch. G.S., 658/2).

<sup>69</sup> Sinopoli to Scalabrini, Iron Mountain, March 31, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 658/2); Lango to Scalabrini, Iron Mountain, April 22, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 658/3).



finances of the church, weighed down with a \$6,000.00 debt, also suffered by it.<sup>70</sup>

We have only very scant information of the following years. There are hints to contrasts with the Bishop so that Fr. Lango had to be replaced with Fr. Vittorio Cangiano in 1911; in turn, the latter had also to leave in 1912 because of conflicts with the Bishop; his successor, Fr. Giovanni Ferrara left the parish in February 1914.<sup>71</sup> Thus ended the Scalabrinians' presence in Iron Mountain.

### **8. The Mission of Monongah, West Virginia**

Another mining center was provisionally assisted by the Scalabrinians: Monongah, in the state of West Virginia.

On October 4, 1902, Bishop Patrick James Donahue of Wheeling, West Virginia, requested Fr. Paolo Novati for a priest for Italians working in the coal mines of Monongah. Fr. Riccardo Lorenzoni was appointed there. He was presented to the community on February 3, 1903, by the Bishop himself, who promised to contribute \$500.00 for the acquisition of a small Polish church on sale for \$1,900.00.

In the first census Fr. Lorenzoni listed some 450 Italians, all very poor, natives of the Province of Cosenza. There was a Polish priest who took care of his 200 compatriots and had also knowledge of the Italian language.<sup>72</sup>

In spite of the scarcity of financial resources, Fr. Lorenzoni began construction on a small wooden church in May, 1903. It was dedicated to Our Lady of Pompeii, and open for public worship on July 26 of the same year.<sup>73</sup> Fr. Lorenzoni was soon after replaced by Fr. Giuseppe D'Andrea "an auxiliary priest" to whom the Bishop recommended not to contract too many debts, and to establish another residence in the close by community of Fairmont.<sup>74</sup>

The two years 1904-1905 were characterized by bitter disputes between Fr. D'Andrea and Fr. A. Boutlon, the French pastor of St. Peter in Fairmont, and Fr. Joseph Lekston, pastor of St. Anthony in Monongah, over each other's territorial jurisdiction. At last, the Bishop decided that the Italian Missionary should limit himself to the assistance of Italians, though with parochial rights over all the neighboring territory.<sup>75</sup>

In the following year the colony enjoyed a certain degree of growth. In 1907, Fr. D'Andrea was asking Fr. Demo for the help of another priest:

*"It is absolutely impossible for me to attend to everything. A priest cannot celebrate three Masses on Sunday. For the time being it is the Polish priest who gives me a hand with one Mass, but he had to suspend the first mass in his church in order to do it, and it cannot continue this way! Besides, the Bishop*

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<sup>70</sup> Lango to Scalabrini, Iron Mountain, December 3, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 658/3).

<sup>71</sup> Chenuil to Vicentini, November 28, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 605/4).

<sup>72</sup> Lorenzoni to Demo, Monongah, February 13, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 662/1).

<sup>73</sup> Parolin, "Fatica e Corona", Congregazione dei Missionari di San Carlo, a. I, no. 6 (December 1903), pp. 44-45.

<sup>74</sup> Donahue to D'Andrea, Wheeling, September 20, 1904 and December 21, 1904 (Arch. G.S., 662/1).

<sup>75</sup> D'Andrea to Demo, Monongah, May 16, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 662/1).

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*insists that we take good care of these people. What can I do all by myself!*

*This is not an insignificant mission! In four years it climbed from 500 to some 1,000 souls without counting the Italians living in the territory 60 miles around. The mission of Fairmont, where a new church has been built for Italians, the second one in the State of the care of the missionaries of St. Charles, deserves a special attention as the center of many Italians."*<sup>76</sup>

The mission of Fairmont had to be abandoned a few years later right for lack of personnel. In 1912 the parish of Monongah still figured in the list of the Scalabrinian missions, with Fr. D'Andrea as pastor; it was said to have 2,000 Italians of whom 700 in Monongah, the others scattered down the valley. Statistics showed an annual average of 170 baptisms, 25 weddings, 100 first Communions.

As we gather from a report of his, the parish was abandoned by Fr. D'Andrea himself:

*"Confined for thirteen years to the mining fields of the state of West Virginia, where I had been doing my utmost to provide the Italians scattered over a region some fifty miles around with two churches, a school, and a cemetery of their own, leaving but a \$1,200.00 debt, due to an unbroken series of afflictions and work, my health began declining and I had a breakdown in 1908 when an explosion in one of the mines almost utterly destroyed the parish and the work of so many years!*

*In 1913 I requested to be taken out twice, but to no avail, until, convinced I could no longer carry on the burden of these missions because afflicted with acute neurasthenia, I left everything in 1914, and went to New York, where I was successively an assistant first to Fr. Demo, then the Provincial, and to Fr. Strazzoni, the present Superior."*<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> D'Andrea to Demo, Monongah, May 16, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 662/1).

<sup>77</sup> D'Andrea to Cimino, New York, August 30, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 22/10).

## **CHAPTER IX**

### **MISSIONS IN THE STATE OF ILLINOIS**

#### **1. Italians in Chicago, Illinois**

Before speaking of each Scalabrinian parish opened in the Chicago area since 1903, we deem it opportune to provide a general description of the Italian community of this city by means of an article by Mons. Pietro Pisani published in the review, "*Italica Gens*" in 1901:

"Second to New York, the most important center of our immigration to the United States is Chicago, where now about 100,000 Italians live.

Chicago is predominantly a German city, essentially cosmopolitan.

According to a recent semi-official report presently in Chicago there are 600,000 Germans, 280,000 Irish, 250,000 Scandinavians, 180,000 Poles, 100,000 to 130,000 Italians, 100,000 English and Scots, 65,000 Canadians, and not more than 360,000 of American extraction.

Italian immigration dates back to 1860 when Chicago had only 150,000 inhabitants. Between 1865 and 1900 the Italian contingent strengthened its position with the importation and the sale of fruit; in which the Genoese and the Neapolitans, especially, compete with the largest firms of any other nationality, above all by merit of the companies headed by R. Lino, De Lucas, Mattei, Garibaldi and Cuneo, Alcese and Martini, and many others, found listed in the first issue of the Bulletin of Chicago's Chamber of Commerce.

The stunning growth of the city, which now numbers 2,800,000 people over an area of 325 square kilometers, attracts from all parts of the United States and directly from Italy, Italian workers, and small businessmen of all categories, brick-layers, manual workers, stone cutters, plasterers, etc...., coming in every year to increase the number of residents, thus contributing to form new "Little Italies" or in increasing old ones. The main Italian neighborhoods are concentrated around the churches of "Guardian Angel" on Forquer St., "the Assumption" on Illinois Street, "the Incoronata" on Alexander Street, "the Addolorata" on Grand Avenue at the corner of Peoria Street, and "Saint Philip Benizi" on on Oak Street.

The financial conditions of Italians in Chicago seems generally better than in New York, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh, though the usual drawbacks, characteristic of "Little Italies" consequent to excessive crowding, are not lacking. To those who should wish for statistics on the subject that would be of interest to a review on Migration and Social Sciences, I suggest consulting the report published by the Labor Department under the title "The Italians in Chicago" from the Government Press in Washington.

#### **Characteristics of the Italian Colony of Chicago**

They are much like those of New York, Philadelphia, Buffalo, or Boston, mostly composed of emigrants from Southern Italy, from Sicily, Calabria, Abruzzo, Basilicata, and a not small contingent from Tuscany and Genoese (Liguria), who, being the earliest arrivals, are also the better off.

The same personal and small town rivalries, the same apathy in regard to the common improvement of the Italian people, the so-called "Italian Identity"; the same exploitation of the illiterate masses on the part of labor agents and of all kinds of speculators; the same distrust for any official and bureaucratic interference of the

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Italian government; the same negligence of parents for an Italian education of their children, the same eagerness of children to have their English prevail on account of a certain inferiority complex to appear "Italian boys", children of Italian parents! Anyone visiting the public schools frequented by some 8,500 Italian children can easily convince himself of all this, if only he would consult the report by the Board of Education we published in the first issue of our Bulletin.

For my purpose it will be useful to recall here that hardly 2,500 of the 12,000 children of Italians frequenting the schools of Chicago attend the parochial schools because there are not enough of them in the neighborhood they live in. With its intense and dizzy traffic that makes it an ordinary scene of accidents, Chicago can hardly allow Catholic parents, wishing to keep their children Catholic, to send them to parochial schools distant from home, to which they would be admitted with difficulty for being both Italian and non-parishioners. Besides, they would have to pay a fixed tuition (\$2.50 a month), their textbooks, and school supplies, when they can have all of this free in the public schools.

I found Archbishop Quigley of Chicago to be of the same opinion. When Vicar General, and then Bishop of Buffalo, he had helped in founding the first Italian school there, resolutely opposing its closing down when it had appeared inevitable because of financial difficulties. Archbishop Quigley is one of the very few Americans whom I heard speaking perfect Italian with a Roman accent, hardly betraying a foreign diction.

To my question why none of the eleven Italian parishes of Chicago had a school connected with it he gave the following answer: "In this diocese every pastor is bound to build the parochial school within two years of the founding of a new parish. If within the period of two years, and by the end of the following two years, he cannot supply a good excuse for not doing so, he is removed. If, then, none of the Italian pastors in Chicago have not been removed by the Ordinary on this count, it is clear that I realize the ongoing impossibility of such enterprise."

And, since I did not seem quite convinced of this "a priori" reasoning, the Archbishop added: "A parochial school sufficient for the people of each of our 'Little Italies', which average 20,000 Italians each, would cost \$140,000.00, that is, \$100,000.00 for the land and \$40,000 the building, if it must be built with all modern requirements in competition with any public school nearby. Unless someone supplies the money, in order to have it, we would have to apply for a mortgage loan from a bank at 5% interest amounting to \$7,000.00, something like 35,000 liras per year. Another \$5,000 is needed to run the school, bringing the total to \$12,000, without counting payment quotas on the principal.... Could anybody think it possible for the Italian community to meet all these expenses? If not, on what sources could we depend for a serious attempt? In new city parishes or colonies success would look more likely in view of the cooperation of the Italians by an increasing number of students and by the successes obtained by the school. But, in places where public schools are built expressly in consideration of the Italian population and to be frequented exclusively by Italian children one cannot speak of parochial schools without counting on sure funds, on qualified personnel, and especially on the open support of the people, that cannot always be presumed when Italians are concerned."

I veered off the question of the school, but His Excellency casually returned to it when we came to speaking about the Germans and the Poles.

In the Polish elementary schools, the Archbishop observed, in the lower grades at least, Polish is the only language spoken and taught; the Germans are less particular, but the teaching of their national tongue always assumes a very great importance, so that their parochial schools become veritable seed beds for their respective nationality.

Only the Italians of all nations in the world do not feel the need of it, do not show any interest in preserving and in having their children learn their mother tongue, happy and eager as they are to hear them babbling in English as though all hope for the

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future would rest on this first display. One cannot say that they are totally wrong, but....

I do not quite correctly recall what followed this most meaningful "but" of his, because while His Excellency was speaking my mind was wandering about in New York, Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Denver, and in many other places I had visited in the United States, where all efforts of deserving promoters of Italian schools, or at least, of teaching Italian in the American ones, have to contend with the indifference or open opposition of parents who had only to ask for it. Mr. Francolini should know something about it. He has, in fact, done very much to have Italian taught on an optional basis in the public schools of New York frequented by Italians: The same could be said of the Italian Vice-Consul Mr. Bianchetti who certainly did not neglect the problem in Buffalo, where French, German, and Spanish are taught in high school but not Italian, even though Italians attending them are in greater number than the Spanish and the French.

I am informed that the Royal Consul Sabetta has taken similar steps with the "Board of Education" in Chicago with the support of a certain Architect Spagiari of Turin and of other prominent personalities. The cooperation of the clergy is also sought out as necessary, not so much to secure this concession as rather to obtain the signatures of the heads of family as has happened in Milwaukee (Wisconsin), where the procedures initiated by the local Vice Consul, Mr. Conti, have achieved good results, thanks to the cooperation of all good energies of the colony (...).

As to mutual societies, Chicago has plenty of all kinds, some 70 of them perhaps, mostly after the pattern typical of all Italian societies in North America whose characteristics may be summed up as follows:

- a) A patron Saint from whom the Society takes its name, in whose honor its members celebrate every year the titular feast day. When it is not named after a Saint, a society is then titled after one of the foremost leaders of the national "Risorgimento" from the ever present Garibaldi, to Victor Emmanuel and to members of the Royal house!
- b) The mutual fund obtained through fixed monthly dues, the same as most anywhere in North America, and through a weekly subsidy for sickness and accidents.
- c) Charity, as consented by the net proceeds from routine dinner-dances, and picnics.
- d) The regular election of officers followed by the usual aftermath of resignations, the leaving of old members and the recruiting of new ones.
- e) The participation of all Italian Societies in the grand parade of "Columbus Day" regarded as the Italian-American national holiday of almost all the States.

This manifestation of Italian pride and of fraternal solidarity of our communities on "Columbus Day" has marked last year in Chicago a veritable event that merited our compatriots the admiration of all citizens. Consisting of more than a hundred Societies and representations, divided into ten sections, each headed by a "deputy marshal", the parade marched through the main streets of Chicago with over a hundred American and Italian flags at the sound of 40 music bands in the midst of applauding and admiring people. All the press of the city echoed this approval, of which Mr. Urbano Urbani, chairman of the committee, is one of the most deserving.

Such success, we recall here as praiseworthy, enkindled in many elders of the community the desire to see all Italian societies of Chicago united together at last by the strong bonds of a federation. It inspired Mr. Giuseppe Malato, director of "Armonia" to write a sensible article describing in clear terms all the advantages the prestige of the Italian name, and each member, would derive from the union of so many small and separate forces towards reaching more successfully the two goals

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common to all mutual societies, that is, life insurance and contribution in funeral expenses.

Well-known is the often crazy prodigality with which funerals and weddings are celebrated in our urban communities, on which some families spend the savings of many long months of work! Besides, one must remember that to be legally constituted or accredited as an insurance fraternity a mutual society must have 500 members, almost impossible to reach in the fractioning brought about by the miserly rivalries of regions and towns through which so many energies of our colonial life are being wasted away (...).

There are nine Italian parishes in Chicago; four of them directed by the Scalabrinians, two by the Precious Blood Frs., two by the Servites, and one by a diocesan priest.

I report here their respective title with addresses and names of their pastors:

1. Guardian Angel: 717 Forquer St., Fr. Pacifico Chenuil, Congregation of St. Charles Borromeo (Scalabrinians).
2. Santa Maria Addolorata: Grand Ave., and Peoria Street; Rev. Gambera, Congregation of St. Charles Borromeo.
3. Santa Maria Incoronata: 218 Alexander St., Rev. Barabino, Congregation of St. Charles Borromeo.
4. Our Lady of Mt. Carmel: Melrose Park; Rev. Franch, Congregation of St. Charles Borromeo,
5. Holy Rosary: North Western Ave.; Rev. Muller, Congregation of the Precious Blood.
6. Our Lady of Mt. Carmel: 67th & Page Street; Rev. Ricciardelli, Congregation of the Precious Blood.
7. St. Philip Benizi: Oak Street & Gault Court, Rev. Giangrande, Servants of Mary (Servites).
8. Assumption: 64 Illinois Street, Rev. S. Angeluzzi, Servants of Mary.
9. St. Anthony: 246 Kensington Ave.; Rev. D'Andrea, Diocesan.

There are other Italian parishes in the diocese:

1. Joliet, Illinois: St. Anthony, Rev. Gembrini, C.S.C.B.
2. Pullman, Illinois; St. Anthony (Grundey Co.),
3. So. Wilmington, Illinois: St. Lawrence (Grundey Co.), Rev. L. Donna.
4. Coal Hill, Illinois (Grundey Co.), Assumption: Rev. M. Bowen, who has charge also of an Italian Mission in Braceville, Illinois.

The most important of these parishes is Guardian Angel with 20,000 Italians in 5,000 families, and with an annual average of 1,200 baptisms and 160 weddings.<sup>1</sup>

We conclude our description with some, though not exhaustive, remarks of the social order, still necessary and sufficient to give us a clearer idea of the milieu in which the missionaries of Bishop Scalabrini were sent to work! Though not pertinent to the confines of this publication, they will help us better understand the particular type of pastoral action employed by the first missionaries:

"Few were the Italians forming the initial colony of Chicago, but these few knew quite well how to open a way for themselves, and by the end of many years of hard and steady work they found themselves possessing considerable fortunes. Later on, many, many more came to increase the Italian colony carrying along two strong arms as their only capital. Some of these succeeded in rising above their average companions, while

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<sup>1</sup> Pisani, "La Colonia Italiana di Chicago, Illinois e la nuova iniziativa di Marconville", "Italica Gens", a.I, n. 4. (May 1910), pp. 156-168. ("The Italian Colony of Chicago and new Initiative of Marconville").

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the great mass remained on the same level. Official statistics of 1896 list 1,200 Italian families, totaling 5,685 people, as residents of Chicago, thus distributed: 18% from Campania, 17% from Basilicata, 12% from Calabria, 8% from Sicily, 6% from Abruzzi, and the remaining from other provinces of Italy.

Only in the last ten years has Italian immigration, in greater part from Sicily, made a remarkable increase so as to reach 100,000 units.

And now let us discuss in greater detail this Italian colony of ours (...).

The most miserable tendency of our people to concentrate in large cities presents certainly a great problem. While on the part of Americans it serves only the exorbitant interests of owners of factories, and of dealers in real estate, on our part we could obviate such evil only by establishing many rural communities. It is a tendency that hinders the potential good qualities while emphasizing the worst shortcomings of our emigrants. All this is all old and often confirmed knowledge, but for the love of our country we must never tire repeating whenever an occasion presents itself. We cannot turn our attention away from the fact that the jealous contempt against us by foreigners, imbued with malice and often with ignorance, was born and spread through direct and close contact with the miserable conditions of our overcrowded colonies as compared with all others.

We cannot content ourselves with defending our good name, the sure success of a minority of our immigrants, Italian fruit and grocery merchants, or professionals, who are carrying on their activities within their own communities; these fortunate activities are too few and much too specialized to succeed in redeeming us from the hard judgment passed on us because of our enormous disorganized masses. One would have to linger on too long in trying to explain why so many, the great majority rather, of our migrants did not succeed! Be it enough to mention the difficulties with the language, the commercial and industrial practices so completely different from ours, the objections raised here more than anywhere else against small industries, and a certain degree of bias against educated people of the South East? Besides, the press, theatres, and motion pictures, always or most of the times purporting Italians in the most treacherous and unfavorable light, also contribute to reinforce this contempt of Italians. To Americans, Italians are ideal for the most humiliating and least paid jobs!

A short while ago I recommended an Italian well qualified in his work as a piano tuner, to the director of a music instruments' firm. However, as soon as he understood that my protégé' was Italian, he opened his eyes wide, and in total astonishment gave this answer: "You recommend an Italian for this kind of work?" "Yes" - I replied - "I do recommend an Italian for this kind of job because I know he can do it right!" "But we do not give this job to Italians!" he replied.

For some time now, official statistics make distinctions between more and less noble races; I am hinting at the distinction between Northern and Southern Italians, as though they were considered two different peoples.

In any case, Americans are inclined to see in every Italian a representative of the "black hand" using it as the trademark for innumerable crimes of dubious origin, something like the short-circuit as the cause of unexplainable fires. They forget, perhaps, that justice was unable to lay hands as yet on anybody who could be found guilty of any of the many crimes attributed to the "black hand". Unfortunately, the awful behavior of some Italians reflects on the whole mass, and this explains why Americans and other people experience a certain horror of Italians.

Among the many real estate publicity brochures in my hands I have one concerning properties in the state of Texas. One of the main reasons given by the author for attracting readers to fix their residence there is the total absence of Chinese, Italians, and Negroes. I was told that in a factory in California washrooms were segregated by signs over them indicating which ones were reserved to whites, as against those for Italians and Negroes. I do not mention how much homes lose value whenever Italians

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enter to live in them, or other little encouraging facts.

I regret allowing myself to be taken in on such digression that hurts so much our national pride as Italians; on the other hand, we had better not delude ourselves over the conditions of Italians in America. Let us not forget that the remittances sent to Italy from America represent not only the sweat and blood of the Italian workers, but to a certain extent also the price of their national pride.

How do these 100,000 Italians in Chicago live?

Let's begin with the children. I would say that many of them are in a hurry to pass on to the next world as soon as they came into this one!

In fact, due to ignorance of parents, lack of pure air, or other causes, mortality among children is high. After spending the first years of their childhood in homes that horrify Americans, and in streets left dirty to suit the environment, many of the survivors are sent to school because in America, they know how to have certain vital laws strictly observed.

The school, mandatory until the age of 16, succeeds in producing individuals that speak fluent English but who cannot express themselves in their own native language, who are not ashamed as much of the poverty of their parents as of their dirt and ignorance, and who certainly are not eager to look for occasions to be known as Italians. In order to avoid such an irreparable loss, all other nationalities take care that by means of private schools the awareness of their country of origin to which they still belong, may not die out in the good American citizens they are educating; and if it is true that what really counts for any race is its history, then this should be so above all for us! One comes to the realization, instead, that while 120,000 children are being educated in the Catholic parochial schools of Chicago, only 17% of them out of 700,000 foreign children share in that number. In the schools of our parishes we have only some 800 pupils, amounting to less than 8% of our Italian children! What a shame when compared with other nationalities! The Germans, for instance, teach some 14,000 students and the Polish about 20,000 in their parochial schools. True these two groups are much more numerous than ours, but still the proportion is quite discouraging. Besides, one should remember that many German families belong to the Protestant religion. Consider the Lithuanians, themselves only some 10,000 in number; still they have about 1,000 pupils in their schools!

Only God knows how many sacrifices the poor heads of families have to do in founding and supporting such expensive schools, but they do so with enthusiasm. To them the school is on the same level with the church the fireplace of their religion, of their country, of their language; consequently a school of their own is worth any sacrifice they may undergo to have it.

I must add that the schools are beautiful and constructed with the most modern criteria, and the classrooms are furnished with the most up-to-date equipment.

Schools, hospitals, orphanages, and other charitable and educational institutions represent the spirit of a community and its common efforts. We have very little to show on this level!

Only two schools: one with 500 students in the parish of Fr. Angelucci, a Servite; and about 300 students in Fr. Barabino's parish, a missionary of Bishop Scalabrini.

We have two hospitals, or one rather divided into two separate sections, with a capacity for 200 beds; but even so, it does not represent a common effort of the colony, because it contributed very little to the founding of these hospitals. A donation of \$1,000.00 was made to "Christopher Columbus" hospital, and only a few people signed pledges amounting to \$11,000.00 for the building of another branch of it. The Sisters of Mother Cabrini, who own them, worked miracles in bringing their works of charity to completion. In appreciation for the mission of these sisters, the Italian government allocates a generous annual subsidy so that they can be in a position to



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admit free of charge quite a good number of Italian patients to their hospital.

Let us now come to the working conditions of our compatriots: the law allows employment at the age of 16. It is easy for girls to find a job with manufacturers of gloves, shoes, clothing, etc., in working conditions and with salaries considered absolutely unacceptable for Americans. Boys form the crowd of paper boys, shoe shiners, and messengers of all kinds. Passing on to older ages, we find right away all the municipality cleaners, fruit retailers in the open markets, the unskilled workers engaged in the heaviest and dirtiest jobs of all kinds, to be followed afterwards by the workers in the great companies such as Pullman's train cars' factory, McCormick's agricultural machinery, and Western Electric telephone and electronics, etc. To all these our emigrants come daily in droves to be employed in the least skilled and worst paid jobs. We can place in the privileged class also the tailors, the barbers, and the crowd of those who own fruit shops. We don't even wish to mention the "loan sharks" and the monkey tamers, ....of whom some still exist! I said before that the lucky merchants and professionals are few! In good times there is work for even depriving themselves of all comforts in order to realize some savings. It is a fact that this way of living can be considered better than the one they left behind, but it is equally true that in the midst of so much well-being, the sacrifices needed to save on salaries held to be less than sufficient, end up with presenting quite a miserable spectacle. Our masses, endowed with so many good qualities that would surpass those of all others put together, are unfortunately affected by the vices that strike the eyes the most! Easy irritability, unawareness of others cleanliness, intolerance of any kind of discipline; these are all serious vices in countries where the opposite qualities are distinctive habits and high ideals to be achieved. Long experienced in free general elections, still we give the spectacle of a mass of 100,000 Italians unable to force their way into the city council with a representative that may attempt to begin defending their interests."<sup>2</sup>

## **2. The Parish of Guardian Angel, Chicago, Illinois**

The Scalabrinians were invited to Chicago by Archbishop Edward Quigley who had known them in Buffalo, New York, when he was Pastor of that Cathedral first, and then Bishop of the Diocese. Transferred to the Archdiocese of Chicago in 1903, he had continued to show his great concern for emigrants, Italian especially, so as to risk criticism on the part of priests of other nationalities. To him are credited the Scalabrinian parishes of Guardian Angel, Incoronata, Addolorata, Our Lady of Pompeii, Saint Anthony, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Melrose Park, and other five entrusted to other religious Congregations.

The first parish assigned to the Scalabrinian missionaries was Guardian Angel, which traces its origin and name to a modest school founded in 1892 by the Jesuit Fr. Paolo Ponziglione, for Italians beginning to grow in number on the West Side of the city! The Jesuit was a teacher at "Saint Ignatius College", later on "Saint Ignatius High School", attached to the parish Church of the Holy Family. The Italian children frequenting it must have not been too many at that time because the Italian community was just beginning, and the population of that neighborhood was made up in great part of Irish and Bohemians. But the Italians grew so much in a short while that a zealous Irish priest, Fr. Edmund Dunne, later Bishop of Peoria, Ill., organized catechism classes for them in the

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<sup>2</sup> Valetto, "Chicago e la sua Colonia Italiana", "Italica Gens", a. IV, n. 3-4 (March-April 1913), pp. 101-107.

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same school building, and turned a classroom into a chapel where he gathered the Italians for the religious services on Sunday.

Very soon the need was felt for an Italian church, which was opened in 1889 on Forquer Street. Fr. Dunne also built the rectory and enlarged the church in 1900-1901. In 1903 he left the parish because he had been appointed Chancellor of the diocese; it was then that Archbishop Quigley called in Fr. Pacifico Chenuil to replace him.

Unfortunately, we have only scant information on the early years of this parish. In December 1905 Fr. Chenuil asked Fr. Demo for the help of another missionary because the Archbishop did not want to incardinate, or even only accredit, other priests in the diocese:

*"I do not want to incardinate Italian priests anymore. Have your priests sent to me, but I want them good."*<sup>3</sup>

In 1907 the Archbishop decided to split the parish in two. Many priests had offered themselves for the new parish, but Archbishop Quigley remained firm in his decision to entrust it to the Scalabrinians: and so the parish of Our Lady of Pompeii was born, which, however, was made independent from Guardian Angel only in 1911.<sup>4</sup> Only in 1913 did the Archbishop, who had provided a location for the other six Italian parishes, succeed in solving all difficulties in the way to opening the so desperately needed school:

*"The Very Rev. Pacifico Chenuil, Provincial Superior of our Missionaries, writes us soliciting new priests to help him in his large parish, whose Institutions keep ever multiplying. Now - says he - we are planning a large parochial school. The Archbishop had me buy seven lots of land in front of our church for \$40,000.00. On it we shall construct three buildings. In the middle there will stand a three story school with 18 classrooms, six to each floor, without counting the basement, that will be used as a recreation hall, where the heating system is also to be, etc. The basement of the second building will be supplied with all kinds of gymnastic and sport equipment for the various clubs of the parish, with baths, showers, etc. Over it we will have a large hall to be used for stage presentations and moving pictures, etc.; and above it on the front side of the building there will be meeting rooms for the ladies. The third building is to be the convent for the Sisters. All this construction will cost us no less than \$100,000. The Archbishop, that is, the diocese, will bear most of the expenses; we will pay the rest.*

*This is the fourth school that will be built for Italians in Chicago. And let this be said in special gratitude to Archbishop Quigley! I do not think there is another bishop in the United States who did such works on behalf of Italians."*<sup>5</sup>

However, many years went by before this dream could become true, because it was only with the report of 1918 that Fr. Chenuil was able to show that the church could bear the expenses of the construction which was actually started in 1919 by his successor Fr. Manlio Ciufoletti.

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<sup>3</sup> Chenuil to Demo, Chicago, December 6, 1905 (Arch. Seal. Prov. St. Charles, N.Y.).

<sup>4</sup> Chenuil to Vicentini, Chicago, September 4, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 605/1).

<sup>5</sup> "Emigrato Italiano in America" a. VII, December, 1913, pp. 35-36.

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From the annual report of 1915-1916 we gather interesting facts concerning the "Guardian Angel Club" founded by Fr. Chenuil in 1911:

"The activities of the Club are the following:

1. Providing religious, instructional, and honestly entertaining books, free of charge. Last year, some 8,800 volumes were distributed to 786 readers, while the library received more than 500 other new books as gifts;
2. supplying reviews, periodicals and newspapers, in both English and Italian, for those frequenting the reading room, some 4,526 this year;
3. holding practical sewing and cooking classes for the 367 girls attending them;
4. teaching girls, 267 this past year, gymnastics, acting and singing;
5. organizing and directing two clubs for boys and girls, where besides receiving proper religious instruction they are also offered the opportunity for entertainment, recreation, social gatherings, etc.

These clubs were attended by 704 girls, 203 boys, and 283 teenagers of both sexes. The boys' club has also a large "Boy Scouts" troop and a 25-member music band.

Many frequent a special school of singing twice a week where those who sing the beautiful religious hymns at the Sunday Mass for the young are trained.

Furthermore, the members of Guardian Angel Clubs were given Italian classes twice a week by Fr. Fani; a course of elementary English was also opened for older boys forced by necessity to leave school as soon as they can have a certificate of habilitation for work, so that they may have the opportunity to acquire a more commanding knowledge than they could get in the short school classes.

The young, in America especially, love entertainment beyond measure, and even though this inclination should be moderated and controlled still no one wishing to gain their trust and heart can disregard it in forming them to the practice of virtue. With this end in view our "Guardian Clubs" offer the boys and girls of the parish the most loved games and entertainments: billiard, football, basketball, sport events, parties, plays, and outings.

The able supervisors of the clubs do not neglect visiting the families of the mission to find out whether anyone did not receive the Sacraments; and so we baptized one adult last year, and two children, whose parents were not too anxious to make them Christians and gave First Communion to seventeen young men.

Neither did they neglect taking an interest in the financial conditions of the families! Only in 1916 they conducted 1,115 friendly visits and investigations to provide assistance which they obtained also by direct contact with the various charitable organizations, labor agencies, etc.

But all this external and social work is above all directed towards making the direct scope of the Clubs of Guardian Angel easier, which is to give the young a good and effective religious instruction and a Catholic education. To achieve this, immediately following the two masses with sermon said simultaneously for the youngsters on Sunday in the upper and lower church, catechism classes are held for the more than 1,000 children who attend them. The teachers, women and men, number 100, all coming of their free will from many parts of the city.

On Christmas morning last, over 2,300 packages of sweets were given out as a rewarding token to the children attending catechism; a few days later they were treated to an entertaining program of songs, stage, and to a live representation of the Nativity.

Besides the normal course of catechism, the Christian Brothers hold a special one in the spring, which lasts for six weeks, for those preparing to receive either First Communion or Confirmation.

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The funds that enable the Guardian Angel's Clubs to carry on such an extended apostolate of religious and social assistance are collected by means of pledges made by the members of the Clubs' Board of Directors themselves, and by sympathizers interested in their work; in 1916 these pledges amounted to a total of \$2,398.00. To this sum we must add several other receipts totaling \$1,696.00 and proceeds of \$1,382.60 from a Christmas appeal. Last year's total income amounts therefore to \$5,476.60, with \$5,043.46 expenditures, leaving a balance of \$433.14.

Chairlady of Guardian Angel's Clubs is the deserving Miss Agnes Amberg, with the interested cooperation of all members, amongst whom we must mention Countess Lady Rose Bolognesi, nee Garibaldi, consort of our illustrious Consul."<sup>6</sup>

On August 21, 1919, Fr. Pacifico Chenuil was elected Superior General of the Scalabrinians, and the direction of Guardian Angel's parish was entrusted to Fr. Manlio Ciufoletti. In 1919 we have the following statistics: 686 baptisms, 135 weddings, 350 first Communions, 370 Confirmations, 280 funerals.

### **3. The Parish of Santa Maria Incoronata, Chicago, Illinois**

The second mission entrusted to the Scalabrinians in Chicago in 1903 was the parish of "Santa Maria Incoronata". Fr. Novati sent information of it to Bishop Scalabrini on November 4, 1903:

*"We have opened a new mission in Chicago, and I appointed Fr. Riccardo to direct it."*<sup>7</sup>

The origin of the parish goes back to 1899 when Fr. Orazio Mangone opened a chapel for Italians in the school attached to the old church of St. John. A native of Ricigliano, Salerno, with the help of many fellow immigrants to Chicago, he had a wooden statue of "Maria Santissima Incoronata", patroness of Ricigliano, sent over from Italy, and placed it in a niche on the altar of the provisional chapel. Fr. Mangone died on January 18, 1903. Fr. Edward Keough was appointed as his successor. He did not respond to the expectations of the community in spite of his knowledge of Italian. A delegation of immigrants petitioned the Archbishop for an Italian priest, and Archbishop Quigley invited the Scalabrinians.

Fr. Riccardo Lorenzoni immediately began construction of a new church on West Alexander Street: its dedication took place on December 8, 1904. The parish extended from 22nd to 33rd Streets, South, with boundaries at Wentworth to the East, and at Stuart Street to the West.

Fr. Lorenzoni directed the parish of "Incoronata" till 1919, but with more or less long periods of absence, due to his poor health and strange character: he was substituted twice by Fr. Barabino<sup>8</sup> in 1907 and 1909, and once by Fr. Giuseppe Poja in 1912.

In 1914 Archbishop Quigley assigned to the parish the school at 262 West 25th Place, that used to belong to the German church of St. Anthony. The building included five classrooms and the quarters for the Sisters, who had been the

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<sup>6</sup> "Emigrato Ialiano in America", a. XI, n. 1 (1917), pp. 24-25.

<sup>7</sup> Novati to Scalabrini, Providence, November 4, 1903 (Arch. G.S., 554/4).

<sup>8</sup> Chenuil to Vicentini, Chicago, July 23, 1907; March 20, 1909; October 18, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 605/3).

School Sisters of Notre Dame from its very beginnings.

The Archbishop took it upon himself to pay the Sisters' salaries so as to make it possible to admit the students free of charge, thus avoiding the usual danger of seeing the Italian school empty because the families could not or refused to pay any modest tuition.

In the summer of 1919, Fr. Riccardo Lorenzoni took part in the General Chapter and was succeeded by Fr. Carlo Delbecchi.<sup>9</sup>

#### **4. The Parish of the "Addolorata", Chicago, Illinois**

For the Italians of the near Northwest of Chicago, Archbishop Quigley bought an abandoned Swedish Lutheran church, at Grand Avenue and Peoria Street; the brick building was one of the few saved from the famed fire of 1871. Cleaned up and adapted, the church was consecrated and opened for public service in August 1903, under the title of "Santa Maria Addolorata".

Fr. Antonio D'Ercole was its first pastor. We possess little information about him, and the little we know is not good. This is so true that the Archbishop was forced to remove him in 1905, and he entrusted the parish to the Scalabrinians inviting Fr. James Gambera to take it over.

In need to provide someone to succeed him as head of the Society of St. Raphael in New York, the latter requested Fr. Riccardo Lorenzoni to take his place for a while. Fr. Lorenzoni presented himself to the church accompanied by the Archbishop; Fr. D'Ercole, even though accepting to be replaced by the new missionaries, asked to remain in the house for a few more days. On the following Sunday, April 30, 1905, however, Fr. Lorenzoni's assistant found the doors of the church barred, and he needed police intervention.<sup>10</sup>

Fr. Gambera had this to write in his "Memoirs" in early May:

"Not knowing the situation altogether, I arrived in Chicago in the midst of those troubled moments. The people were angry at the priests, the church neglected and lacking many necessary supplies, benefactors returning to claim back their gifts and, woe to me, if they should not be found! Neither could any word lead them to better senses! The rectory was not uninhabitable and had been condemned by the Bureau of Public Health.

Conditions were so disastrous that on several occasions I told the Archbishop I did not feel like facing them and I wished to turn back! But that holy man entreated with me so that I accepted to bear this new cross on my shoulders!

To my good luck, Mother Cabrini was in Chicago in those very days; I rushed to her at "Columbus Hospital" and without much ado I made the rather pretentious proposal the following day: *'Either you, Mother, supply me next Sunday with at least four Sisters for the instruction of the young, or I'll leave the parish!'*

Well aware of the situation, the zealous Mother took two of them out of other churches, and together we began the work of reconstruction. I was thinking to myself: if these disoriented brethren of ours will only see the Priest and Sisters so willing to sacrifice themselves for them and their children, they will experience the rebirth of some degree of trust, and find their way back to the Church. It worked, but it took a

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<sup>9</sup> 75th Anniversary of Missionary Fathers of St. Charles (Chicago, 1972), p. 52.

<sup>10</sup> "Il Progresso Italo-Americano" (New York), May 13, 1905.

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long time (...).

On the first Sunday only two old men and ten or twelve elderly women attended Mass. I did not say anything besides the following: *'Pray for this parish.'* I gave out the announcement that I would hold the May devotions with Rosary, sermon and benediction, every evening. After a few nights I was able to number some fifty people, and I noticed that only a few knew how to answer the common prayers. At the first baptisms, the godparents could say neither *Our Father* nor *Creed*, and young people preparing for marriage had not yet made first Communion.

Such ignorance was mostly the result of long neglect. I saw the need to instruct the people, and I began having them repeat every Sunday at Mass the sign of the cross, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Creed, the Commandments, etc., and I continued so for a long time. In four or five months I saw the church half filled, and continuing to increase. Within two years it was regularly attended. Catechism classes reached up to 700 children, and by means of Solemn Missions, and after many prayers, tears, and much perseverance, the parish became, once again, devoted and exemplary!

If the moral state of that community was pitiful, no less miserable was its material and economic condition (...)!

The old building was in deplorable disrepair. The roof was leaking on all sides; the glass in almost all windows had been shattered; the two basements had nothing solid left but the walls, doors and floors were broken down, the lower one just a muddy stream; water gushed out from an underground pipe; the warm air heating system was unusable; the stairs and the wooden sidewalks on the outside were shredded; and then the house! As I said, it had been condemned by the Bureau of Public Health, and it could not be lived in or rented out.

Consequently, I had to rent two small rooms, and since I could not afford any salaries, I had to take care of the cleaning and cooking, and acted as sexton and bell ringer (...).

The roof was redone, the windows repaired, a basement turned into a chapel for the Mass and the instruction of children, while the lower one adapted for use of entertainment and meetings! As to the rest, a new plumbing system was laid out, the stairs and sidewalks were rebuilt in concrete, a new steam heating system was installed, and the electricity was reactivated with new equipment. Furthermore, the church was provided with new confessionals, liturgical vestments, Stations of the Cross, pulpit, crib, organ, rubber carpets on stairs and halls, sacristy equipment, candelabra, and statues, and painted over inside and out. A new comfortable and decent rectory was also built and furnished.

I had the Missions preached every year. Though physically heavy on me, they were ever the bearers of abundant spiritual fruits (...).

I organized the Societies of Saint Joseph, St. Vincent de Paul, Christian Mothers, St. Agnes, St. Aloysius, and Holy Name. If these societies helped little as far as contributions were concerned, they served as good examples of church attendance and approaching the Sacraments, and represented a valid support in preparing entertaining programs.

Catechism classes grew so crowded that our Church premises were no longer sufficient! I had to rent several rooms of a nearby public school. First Communion and Confirmations reached an annual average of between 300 and 400 each. The Archbishop was so pleased with this school that he would drop in unexpectedly sometimes on Sunday, and affably talk with our children for a while. For Christmas he used to give them costly presents at his own expense.

I opened also a kindergarten operating daily, except Saturdays and Sundays. I allowed it free use of the two basements and of the newly paved courtyard as classrooms, kitchen, refectory, and for sports and recreation. It was frequented every day by some

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one hundred children two to six years old, all kept busy with various educational games and entertainments (...). I entrusted the kindergarten to the Daughters of Divine Providence founded by Fr. Guanella.

You may ask how I could meet such expenses in the beginning. First of all, I applied for a loan from the Diocese, which I paid off little by little through a strict administration and the usual activities of music programs, bazaars, parties, etc. There remained only the debt on the rectory, amounting to \$13,000.00 (about \$30,000.00 at the current rate), which it was not possible to extinguish or reduce."<sup>11</sup>

In January of 1913, Fr. Luigi Guanella was a guest of Fr. Gambera, with whom he called on the Archbishop to ask permission for opening one of his shelters for the disabled and incurables. The Archbishop, instead, requested him to open a sanatorium for mentally ill priests and nuns. Fr. Guanella accepted, promised to send his first sisters, and asked Fr. Gambera to provisionally host them as a compensation for any small service on their part, until they would find a residence of their own.

It was right on that occasion that Fr. Gambera opened the kindergarten placing it in their care. This hospitality benefitted the parish, and was providential as well for the first six sisters, who had arrived in America without any knowledge of the English language. Since six sisters were too many for the kindergarten of the "Addolorata", in 1914 the Archbishop sent three of them to the parish of the "Incoronata" giving them a house belonging to the diocese, for their use. Sometime later, Fr. Guanella also sent a priest, who lived with Fr. Gambera. He had much to complain about the pastor, as well as about the first superior of the sisters concerning financial matters.<sup>12</sup>

In 1914, Fr. Gambera wrote a report on the Catechism classes:

"I have this year such a numerous and well attended Sunday School as I never had in my seven years here. 800 are the Italian boys and girls who every Sunday at 9:00 in the morning frequent the Church, where they have Mass and Catechism in convenient and spacious premises; what consoles me most is that there are as many boys as girls; in the past we could hardly have one third of them, because the boys had always shown themselves more negligent and unwilling to attend religious instruction. Twenty distinguished American Catholic ladies and six Scholastics from Loyola University came to teach at this school. Imbued with zeal and love, they gave an admirable example by regularly arriving here from distant places to attend to the most noble and holy work of charity for the salvation of our young generations. They view with a sympathetic eye the youngsters' liveliness and brightness, while these, in turn, give evident signs of affection and gratitude for their teachers.

Due to ever increasing numbers, our rooms are not sufficient any longer for separating them into classes and groups. For this reason, these last days we have extended a petition to the Superintendent of Public Schools of this city that he may grant us every Sunday the use of the nearby public school! There is hope it will be granted!

Besides, we have succeeded in securing the following excellent provision. Within the territory of my parish there are three large public schools frequented by almost 2,000 Italian children, six to fourteen years old. There are in these schools eight Catholic teachers, who, due to the strict religious neutrality imposed by the law, cannot, however, utter a word about religion. Well then, when asked about it, these teachers showed themselves willing to take, once a week at least, our Catholic students to my

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<sup>11</sup> Gambera, "Memorie" ("Memoirs") pp. 56-58 (Arch. G.S., 1558/3).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

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church after school, and teach them Catechism for one hour. Tomorrow, Wednesday afternoon, will be the first time. With this precious help, we will give religious instruction to the hundreds of children who because of their own carelessness or the deplorable negligence or ignorance of their parents never show up in Church.

I say negligence or ignorance, because there can hardly be found any Italian parents in this parish who would deliberately neglect the Christian education of their children. If any are present, however, with great sorrow we would respect their antichristian decision."<sup>13</sup>

Fr. Gambera had also to contend much with the societies and their entertainment committees. He was determined not to allow the worldly and disorderly rackets of their processions and parades on the feasts of the patron saints to be introduced in the parish.

"One day a committee came to me saying that it wanted to carry in procession the Crucifix of the church, a gift of pious persons. I promised a solemn rite in church free of charge, but they did not accept it. I asked them whether they were ready to give an account of the proceeds to the pastor, and give the balance to the church. They refused. Then I opposed them with all firmness, but in order to intimidate me, besides other evils, they had recourse to the usual threats of death and destruction (...).

It was the first time I found myself in a predicament like this. In order to avoid worse disorders, I let them take the Crucifix from the church on condition it was never to be returned to it. After going through with that unworthy parade and taking in the proceeds, they prevailed upon the old pastor to have the Crucifix placed in the nearby Church of St. Stephen, frightening his poor assistant to the point of insanity, so that he had to be taken to Columbus Hospital where he jumped off the window one night in a fit of persecution mania; but he was saved.

There is no need to add that no prayers were said and no religious hymns were sung in those parades, but only shouts and unbecoming exclamations! In their simple ignorance, some women were carrying candles and walking barefooted. Eager collectors passed from door to door, and many, who would refuse the church even the smallest offering, gave generous contributions.

The statues were carried around only as bait, and they pretended to have a priest along in view of better gains (...).

Other societies and private devotees also celebrated the feasts of their hometown patron saints, but they did so in church, and should there be a balance left of the proceeds they would turn them in for the needs of the parish.

In order to weed out such serious and shameful indecencies, Italian pastors decided to petition the Archbishop for a formal prohibition to be read in our churches; but it is believed that, in order to avoid trouble with these dangerous fanatics, nothing has been done about it; and so in such painful conflicts, we are being left to our own wits."<sup>14</sup>

The sacrifices made by the parish during World War One in order to send aid overseas is worthy of admiration, as were to a higher or lesser degree all other Scalabrinian parishes and missions:

"The four years of the "Great War" represented an unceasing activity of demonstrations for victory, for the fallen, and for peace. And then a steady stream of pledges, loans, donations for the Allied, for widows, orphans, the mutilated, the Red, Green, White Crosses, etc., solicited by religious and civil authorities, the United States and Italy. Our parish has contributed more than \$300,000.00. In those years,

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<sup>13</sup> "Da Chicago" ("From Chicago") "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. VIII. March 1914, pp. 25-26.

<sup>14</sup> Gambera, "Memorie", pp. 61-62 (Arch. G.S., 1558/3).



the particular interests of the parish were almost completely forgotten."<sup>15</sup>

Decorated with the medal "*Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*" and made a "*Knight of the Crown of Italy*", Fr. Gambera directed the parish of the Addolorata until 1921.

### **5. The Parish of Saint Michael, Chicago, Illinois**

We are not in possession of documents concerning the first twenty years of the Italian parish of Saint Michael in Chicago, Illinois. We must limit ourselves, therefore, to reporting the information found in the 50th Anniversary Book published in 1953.

As early as 1880, a small group of Italians, almost all natives of the provinces of Lucca and Pistoia, began working at the International Harvester Company, then called McCormick Works. The neighboring parishes were those of Saint Pius, American, Saint Paul, German, and Saint Stephen, Slovenian: all speaking languages unknown to the Italians, some of whom had even to go eight kilometers through the city in order to hear a word in their tongue at the old church of the Assumption directed by the Italian Servites. A few years later, Fr. Edmund Dunne, the Founder of Guardian Angel parish, began taking care of them with a Mass for Italians on Sundays and days of obligation in a branch chapel of the parish of Saint Pius on 24th and Leavitt Streets.

Sometime around 1906, the district was infiltrated by a group of anticlerical unbelieving socialists, who succeeded in taking away many Italians from the Church partly through acceptance of Marxism, and partly through human respect. In fact, those who frequented the Church were exposed to typically Tuscan ferocious ridicule. Considering, in addition, the severe financial limitations, one can very well imagine how difficult and hard the life of the parish must have been in the early years!

Fr. Gembrini worked at Saint Michael till September 1908. Fr. Giuseppe Tonello was pastor from October of that year to July of 1909. He also took an interest in the social problems of the Italians finding a job for some of them with the stock yards. From July 1909 to February 1913, he was succeeded by Fr. Perardi, who made all efforts to rekindle the faith in the hearts of many. He was followed as pastor for two years by Fr. Antonio Teta, who founded the association of Saint Michael, with some 30 members pledged to collect funds for the construction of the church.

These four pastors were not members of the Scalabrinian Congregation, but they depended on it as "auxiliaries".

Fr. Davide Angeli, a Scalabrinian, was appointed Pastor in 1919.<sup>16</sup>

### **6. The Parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Melrose Park, Illinois**

The parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Melrose Park, a suburb of Chicago, owes its early origin to a vow of Mrs. Emanuela Di Stefano. She had promised

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>16</sup> Golden Anniversary - Saint Michael Church (Chicago, 1953), pp. 7-10.

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to introduce the annual celebration of the Feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel if she were granted the recovery of her husband's health. He recovered, and with the contributions of friends, in 1894 she had the statue of the Blessed Mother sent over from her home town of Laurenzana, in the province of Potenza. The celebration was first held in that same year, presided over by Fr. Moreschini, a Servite. Sometime later a small wooden chapel was built at 900 North 24th Avenue. Fr. Moreschini continued assisting the Italian community of Melrose Park, and kept going there every feast day to say Mass, administer the sacraments, and teach catechism. With the proceeds of the feasts, he succeeded also in collecting \$1,000.00 which he used to buy the land where later the parish buildings were to stand.

The parish was officially erected in May 1903. Its first pastor was Fr. Antonio Petillo, who left two years later because the parish could not afford his support. In September 1905, Archbishop Quigley appointed as pastor the young Scalabrinian Fr. Beniamino Franch, who remained in charge of the parish till his death in 1954. At first he met with much distrust on the part of the people; on the first Sunday he had twelve persons at Mass and a collection of .75¢. But, through patience and kindness he succeeded little by little in gaining back a great part of his parishioners. It became possible, then, for him to carry out in 1906 the project for transporting the church to the piece of land purchased by Fr. Moreschini in a more central position on 23rd Avenue. In overcoming the opposition of many he was helped much by Fr. Burbach, pastor of the nearby church of the Sacred Heart, by C. J. Wolf, Village President, by Mr. L. Senese, and by the Archbishop.<sup>17</sup>

The rectory was inaugurated on August 14, 1907. On September 20, 1908, the cornerstone was laid for a new church because the first one had become insufficient for the population.<sup>18</sup> The work started in February and was brought to completion by the end of the same year. The inauguration was done by Archbishop Quigley on May 2, 1909. This enterprise gained Fr. Franch the trust of the whole parish and a few days later he could write:

*"When I arrived here, there existed only a small abandoned chapel all falling apart, squeezed the middle of a few huts, without any living quarters for the priest.*

*Everyone was saying that it was impossible to live in Melrose Park; and hopes were poor indeed. Still, by the help of God, as of now I have not yet died of hunger, and the parish owns a large property 260 feet wide, a new church which all people say to be beautiful, a rectory which is modest, if you wish, but gracious nonetheless! It is also true that a \$13,000.00 mortgage is heavy on the property, but it is equally true that it is now valued at \$25,000.00."<sup>19</sup>*

The parish school was built in 1913 at the cost of \$20,000.00 and entrusted to

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<sup>17</sup> 1903-1953. Golden Jubilee (Melrose Park, 1953), pp. 9-12. Our Lady of Mt. Carmel (Melrose Park, 1968) pp. 12-20.

<sup>18</sup> Chenuil to Vicentini, Chicago, July 31, 1907; October 6, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 605/1-2).

<sup>19</sup> Franch to Vicentini, Melrose Park, May 19, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 631/2).

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the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Lagrange, Illinois. It began to be attended in September by 300 pupils, which increased to 400 in 1914, when Fr. Franch built the convent for the Sisters who had been living on the second floor of the school. In the same year the parochial hall to be used for meetings, socials, and as a chapel for the students, was constructed.<sup>20</sup>

At the end of the first ten years he was summarizing the situation as follows:

"Last year I took the census of this mission and I found out that some two thousand people live in it.

In 1914 I administered 100 baptisms, celebrated 20 weddings, admitted 150 children to First Communion, and 120 to Confirmation.

Kindergarten and school are so efficient as to cause the Archbishop, who was visiting them, show all his comforting satisfaction, and he uttered words of high praise.

The kindergarten is attended by more than a hundred children, who, under the loving care of the good Sisters, learn love, respect, obedience, religion, and civic living. They are taught Italian, singing, and gymnastics. The kindergarten is to them an effective training place for virtue, good behavior, and entertainment.

In his apostolic zeal, not only has the Archbishop granted me permission to construct a building for 500 people, but he has also helped support it with the contribution of his charity, and still continues to financially help the school.

In this new building we have a night school, a reading club, a small stage, a movie room, a gymnasium, and a recreation hall for the young!

Last year we founded the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul to provide for the needs of the poor, and is now functioning well to the great advantage of the needy, more numerous these months than in the past year.

Most Reverend Superior, may this brief report be of comfort to you, and may it draw you to give grateful thanks to the Lord for assisting me so abundantly in providing for the needs of this mission."<sup>21</sup>

There resided in Melrose Park also a Lithuanian community of 200 families. Fr. Franch took care of them, gave them the free use of the church, learned enough of their language as allowed him to hear their confessions and read the Gospel, and provided them with the assistance of Lithuanian priests. With his encouragement the Lithuanians founded the Society of Saint John the Baptist for men in 1914 and of Saint Ann for women in 1915.<sup>22</sup>

### **7. The Italian parish of Saint Anthony, Joliet, Illinois**

Already in 1906 the Archbishop of Chicago wanted to entrust to the Scalabrinians the parish of Saint Anthony in the city of Joliet, Illinois, directed by Fr. Giuseppe Tonello whom we have met in Chicago as Pastor of Saint Michael from 1908 to 1909.

The Superior Provincial, Fr. Chenuil, wrote to Fr. Vicentini in October of 1906:

*"Joliet is indeed a beautiful mission. Due to the fact that Fr. Tonello did not pay interest regularly, the Company wants to sell the church to recuperate its*

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<sup>20</sup> Franch to Vicentini, Melrose Park, January 27, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 631/2).

<sup>21</sup> Franch to Vicentini, Melrose Park, February 20, 1915, (published in "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. IX, June 15, 1915, p. 32).

<sup>22</sup> Our Lady of Mount Carmel (Melrose Park, 1968), pp. 17-18.

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*principal. Now, the Archbishop does not intend to do anything for Fr. Tonello anymore, while he is ready to pay off the first mortgage for us, and raise another one, provided we send a priest of ours."*<sup>23</sup>

The exchange of Frs. Tonello and Gembrini had been planned at that time, but it could be carried out only in November, 1908. Fr. Gembrini sent news of it to the Superior General:

*"Having been transferred from the parish of St. Michael in Chicago to this much larger one of Saint Anthony in Joliet, Illinois, I deemed it my duty to inform you of the whole matter. And so my new address is:*

*Saint Anthony's Italian Church  
Scott and Van Buren Streets  
Joliet, Illinois*

*The new parish is far more important than the other because instead of 200 Italian families I will have more than 500 of them here. The parish is very poor, however, so that I have to be very busy with Americans as well, holding religious services also in English.*

*I was entrusted with this new parish as a promotion, but I find myself actually in greater financial difficulties here than before due to the bad administration of my predecessor, and to the former assistant who has started an Italian schismatic church."*<sup>24</sup>

Four months later, Fr. Gembrini again wrote:

*"With great satisfaction I inform you that things are spiritually and financially progressing better every day in my new parish.*

*Fr. Emilio Fiore, the former assistant failed miserably, and had to get out of the city raging like a lion (...).*

*Church attendance keeps ever increasing, and the Sunday collection is up from \$12.00 to \$22.00 or even to \$24.00. Besides paying interest on a \$23,000.00 loan, now I have to go through further expenses to furnish the rectory from which even the nails have been removed from the wall."*<sup>25</sup>

In 1919, Fr. Gembrini left the parish of Joliet without notifying the Superiors; he was dismissed from the Congregation, and returned to Italy.

## **8. The Parish of Our Lady of Pompeii, Chicago, Illinois**

As seen above, already in 1907 the Archbishop of Chicago had planned the division of the Parish of Guardian Angel in two. In 1908, Fr. Chenuil, Provincial Superior and Pastor of Guardian Angel had in mind assigning Fr. Vittorio Gregori to the new church, and he had been looking around for the most convenient location already:

*"As to our plan concerning Fr. Gregori, I believe that Divine Providence had much to do with it. I had sought a location, and found a beautiful one some fifteen blocks from this church. On one corner of it there was standing a building, 100 feet long that could be easily turned into a church. The needed repairs would*

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<sup>23</sup> Chenuil to Vicentini, Chicago, October 6, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 605/2).

<sup>24</sup> Gembrini to Vicentini, Joliet, November 30, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 659).

<sup>25</sup> Gembrini to Vicentini, Joliet, March 16, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 659).

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*have left us with a debt not exceeding \$15,000.00. Fr. Gregori could have attended it and still live here with me. I had two or three audiences on the matter with the Archbishop. He expressed the desire for another plan, that is, a three story 'combination building' that would include church, rectory, school, convent, all in one. We needed, then, a larger property, and the building alone would have cost \$45,000.00.*

*I thanked the Archbishop for his trust in us, but I told him frankly that the project seemed superior to our resources. With debts smaller than this, Fr. Gambera and Riccardo have a hard time paying interest on them; how could Fr. Gregori possibly do so? We do not intend to repeat here in Chicago the mistakes of New York and Boston. Let us, therefore, take still some time to think it over.*

*Sometime later, the Archbishop called me in saying that there would be no further talk about it for at least another year. By then, a great financial crisis had broken out which we still suffer from, and who knows for how long yet! To give you an idea, some 1,500 Italians have gone back to Italy from this parish alone! Most all unmarried workers have been laid off; only those who have a family have jobs, and even then, just for two days a week."<sup>26</sup>*

Talks were resumed in 1910 when the new parish of Our Lady of Pompeii had in fact its beginning. Fr. Pietro Barabino was the first pastor. Writes Fr. Chenuil:

*"Showing his high esteem for us, the Archbishop came over to see me to make plans for another parish to be cut out of mine. Together we toured through various locations, and now we have finally purchased a piece of land. It is in a beautiful position by the park. Only the property, that includes three houses, costs \$32,000. Besides these buildings, there is also a very wide space on which the new church can be built. I presented Fr. Barabino as the new pastor, and the Archbishop was happy to accept him. Of course, another priest will be needed to go with him. Besides, two more months are necessary to prepare before beginning the work!"<sup>27</sup>*

The property was located at the crossing of Lexington with Little Street, very close to the French parish of Notre Dame. Fr. Chenuil had some objection in this regard, but Archbishop Quigley assured him that Notre Dame would remain for the exclusive use of the French. The house, formerly owned by a certain Mr. Brady, was turned into the rectory; on the other two lots the church was built and it was ready by April, 1911. The first baptisms were registered on April 11. It was a 'combination building' which included the three nave church, the basement for parish activities, the rectory, and four classrooms.

The school was ready in 1912 and entrusted to the care of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. At first they were the guests of the Little Sisters of the Poor on Harrison Street, until 1914 or thereabout, when Fr. Barabino purchased two houses by the Church and made them their convent.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Chenuil to Vicentini, Chicago, February 27, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 605/2).

<sup>27</sup> Chenuil to Vicentini, Chicago, May 10, 1910 (Arch. 605/4).

<sup>28</sup> Golden Jubilee - 1911-1961. Our Lady of Pompeii Church (Chicago, 1961), pp. 17-19.

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The parish grew fast. Already in the school year 1913-1914 the school had proven insufficient, and the reception of the Sacraments increased. Some disorders broke out in 1918, caused by cliques of parishioners siding with this or that missionary, so as to force Fr. Chenuil to change all the priests of the parish in one week. Fr. Barabino went to Italy for a period of vacation; on his return he was assigned to St. Louis, Missouri, and there he left the Congregation in 1919; Fr. Enrico Preti was sent to Buffalo, N.Y., and a little later Fr. Giovanni Ginocchio was also removed.<sup>29</sup>

In July 1918, Fr. Carlo Fani was chosen as the second pastor, with Fr. Davide Angeli as his assistant. The latter reported that on May 10, 1919, 600 children had received First Communion and Confirmation, and the receipts had increased so much that they hoped to pay \$5,000.00 on the debt of church and property.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Chenuil to Demo, Chicago, July 22, 1918 (Arch. G.S., 605/6).

<sup>30</sup> Angeli to Rinaldi, Chicago, September 21, 1919 (Arch. G.S., 618/3).

**PART THREE**

**SCALABRINIAN MISSIONS IN BRAZIL**

**1905 - 1919**

**CHAPTER X**

**THE GOVERNMENT OF SCALABRINIAN MISSIONS IN BRAZIL**

**1. Superiors of the Province of São Paulo**

In 1888 Bishop Scalabrini had entrusted the supervision of his Missionaries in Brazil in the hands of Fr. Pietro Colbacchini.<sup>1</sup> On November 19, 1898, he had appointed Fr. Domenico Vicentini as Superior Provincial of all Missionaries of Brazil and on August 4, 1904, he assigned Fr. Faustino Consoni as his successor.<sup>2</sup>

On November 15, 1908, the Brazilian province was officially divided into three regions: São Paulo, Paraná, and Rio Grande do Sul. We find this in a circular letter of Fr. Vicentini, Superior General:

"Considering how much the number of our confreres in Brazil has grown these last years; considering the distances and the difficulties for mutual communication; considering that among our confreres those, who, by their wisdom, experience, and love for our Institute are quite capable to be superiors, are not lacking; after mature deliberation, as has been done already with North America, I took the decision to divide the Province of our Mission in Brazil into three regions, dependent each on a Superior immediately responsible to the Superior General, as follows:

- 1) Region of the State of São Paulo: Very Rev. Fr. Faustino Consoni, Superior
- 2) Region of the State of Paraná: Very Rev. Fr. Giuseppe Martini, Superior
- 3) Region of the State of Rio Grande do Sul: Very Rev. Fr. Massimo Rinaldi, Superior

This way each Superior will be in a position to keep easier and more effective vigilance over the missions entrusted to him, to make the visitation of each house and individual, to know and provide for their needs, to spurn their zeal and holy emulation, and to maintain the sacred bond of charity that renders our vocation precious and sweet, and our action more fruitful and consoling.

These Regional Superiors shall continue in office until the election of the new Superior General will have been made."<sup>3</sup>

Consequent to this decision, at a meeting held on December 9, 1908, at the Christopher Columbus orphanage, Frs. Leandro Dell'Uomo and Pietro Dotto were elected councilors for the region of São Paulo.<sup>4</sup> Upon receiving the minutes of the meeting, Fr. Vicentini deemed it his duty to make several observations:

"I read the minutes of the election to Offices in our Province of São Paulo held

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Francesconi, "Initial Stages of the Scalabrinian Congregation", Vol I (Rome 1969)

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Francesconi, "History of the Scalabrinian Congregation", Vol. III (Rome, 1973)

<sup>3</sup> Vicentini, "Circular Letter" of November 15, 1908 (Arch. Gen. S., 357/8).

<sup>4</sup> "Registro annuario dei Missionari Scalabriniani Provincia di San Pãolo", pp. 12-13 (Arch. Scal. Province of São Paulo).



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by its members according to my instructions; I am glad it was all done in harmony, and I approve your choices. As to Fr. Pedrazzani, chosen to head the Orphanages, I doubt whether he will accept, as would also be my desire. In any case, until this doubt is cleared, let the Provincial himself hold this responsibility.

Comparing my instructions read at the Chapter with the minutes of the same, which only report only the election to the offices, and in consideration of some observations and suggestions written to me afterwards by some members of the same Chapter, it clearly appears that the problems I had indicated have not been discussed in it; neither did the members express all they would have deemed necessary for the good of the mission, as I had stated in that document. In fact, some of the Chapter Fathers wrote to me about matters that should have been treated at the Chapter itself and entered in the minutes.

Some time ago you were insistently speaking and writing to me about offers for new missions. I expected information on these offers: but, in spite my insisting requests, I received none. I thought that, at least, you would treat the matter at the Chapter and decide whether and which ones it would be possible to accept. It seems, however, as though nothing was done about it because someone wrote to me about it as unresolved issue. Besides, one, two rather, wrote about the need for a good administrator and bookkeeper at the Orphanage. This also could have been discussed at the "meeting"; and since it has not been done, I accept the proposal and fully agree with it, because with so many other concerns the Superior cannot attend properly to it (the Orphanage), since the institution is so large and vast! For this reason, without delay, I proceed to the appointment of the "administrator" based in part on a considerate judgment. From the votes I notice, in fact, that Fr. Leandro Dell'Uomo enjoys the esteem of the Chapter Fathers; I hear also that he showed himself quite capable in the affairs of the Church of Cordeiro; he is young and in good health; all reasons to hope that he will respond to the expectations of the Chapter Fathers and mine. Though not intending to detract from the merits of others, I appoint him, Fr. Leandro Dell'Uomo, as the "Administrator" of our Orphanages of Ipiranga and Vila Prudente, and of the house of the Missionaries in Ipiranga. It shall be his task to provide for the ordinary needs of the Orphanages and of the house, in line with the means at hand, taking care to provide for what is needed and avoid waste. He shall do all this always dependently on the Director of the Orphanages and of the house, and, therefore, he shall proceed in accord with him especially concerning extraordinary matters. He must see to it that no debt be contracted and that any existing one be extinguished as soon as possible. For any extraordinary expenditure, he shall seek and expect orders from the Superiors.

Moneys for the orphans must be scrupulously registered to their name, while the offerings for Masses and all receipts from any activity of the ministry shall be entered for the house. In order to avoid the inconveniences of the past and give the Missionaries a deserved recognition, when it be the case of a certain sum, they shall be given a receipt of the money they bring in, especially when they return from preaching some mission.

As to Mass offerings, the Superior or Vice Director, who has charge of keeping

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records of them, shall give an account of the Masses applied to the "administrator" at the end of each month.

Concerning the other priests stationed in the houses of the province, each Superior shall remit on time the balance remaining after their needs have been provided for to the Provincial Superior, who, in turn, shall report the sum to the "administrator", who will enter it in the register, and write out a receipt for it to the Superior who sent the money. From time to time, the "administrator" must supply a financial report of his administration, and verify whether it balances well with the available funds. To avoid the multiplying of offices, the Superior shall be the "treasurer" and for any expenditure the "administrator" shall go to him. Fr. Dell'Uomo will have to leave the mission of Cordeiro and assume the office of "administrator". The Superior shall proceed to his replacement. However, if it is true that the mission of St. Gertrude needs the priest ordinarily only on Sundays and Holy Days, Fr. Dell'Uomo could be entrusted with this chaplaincy. It seems as though someone there has spread the rumor of having received from me permission to apply ten Masses a month for their own intention, and keep the offering. You had better know that such permission does not at all respond to the truth.

Such provision would be found in the new Rules which are still with the Sacred Congregation (of Propaganda), and have not been approved yet, and neither did I give this permission to anyone in advance. If anyone says he has received such permission, let him show a writ of mine! Otherwise his statement has no validity! Should I decide to grant such permissions, I would notify the Provincial! Let this be said once and for all in the course of my tenure. I have enough of those who say to have received special permission from the late Bishop Scalabrini without the evidence of any documents. Someone has expressed the desire to know what are the juridical stand and the attributions of the local houses! Not wishing to view it as a tendentious question, it is difficult to answer with a few words, due to the simplicity of the matter itself! Our Rules serve as our guide. Within the realm of his responsibility, the local Superior is a true Superior in his own right and on him rests above all the responsibility of the good order and administration of his mission and house. He, however, is not free of the control of the Provincial Superior, who has the duty and the right to supervise whether and how he is fulfilling his task, and to correct him whenever necessary. As to the internal discipline, the local Superior has to obey the rules like anyone else, and to have them observed by his subjects, if he has any. Concerning the jurisdiction of the ministry, he must conform to the laws of the diocese. If the local Superior is pastor by appointment of the Bishop, he must exercise the rights of a pastor: neither Provincial, nor Superior General, may consider themselves to be the pastor of that parish, and much less, exercise any jurisdiction over it without permission from the Bishop or the Pastor. But, someone may ask perhaps what is the duty of the local superior with regard to receipts from the ministry or "by reason thereof"? The rule is the same for all, and it does not need any explanation! Besides what is needed and proper for the house, he cannot dispose of sums of a certain amount without permission of his Provincial Superior. Neither is the Provincial Superior allowed to dispose of important sums from the funds of the Congregation, even for worthy causes, without permission from the Superior General.

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Finally, I deem it necessary to remind all of the divine precept: "*Unicuique mandavit Deus de proximo suo*", each of us must seek after the welfare of our confreres and of the Congregation and of our own good name, so important for an effective exercise of the sacred ministry. Each one of us, should he come to know of disorders amongst the confreres, is bound to correct them, either directly himself by good example, prudence, and fraternal admonition, or by means of the Superiors. In making recourse to Superiors vague reports and scrupulosity are altogether useless, because, besides not indicating anything positive, they end up engendering suspicions that are worse the reality, thus providing no ground for the Superior to proceed to the remedies."<sup>5</sup>

We have reported this long Circular because it reveals the internal situation of the Province or Region of São Paulo during the tenure of Fr. Consoni. He is a highly deserving man especially for what concerns the "Christopher Columbus" Orphanage as the one who knew how to direct and develop it much more so in the midst of numberless difficulties. But his concern for the orphanage excessively conditioned his action as Provincial Superior, so as to stand accused always and almost by all of channeling the whole government of the Province to the interest of the orphanage and in subordination to its administration. In other words, it seemed as though the presence of the Scalabrinian missionaries in the state of São Paulo was only to benefit the Institutes of Ipiranga and Vila Prudente, giving the impression of a personal and unsupervised administration, and causing brusque and undue interferences with the rights of the pastors. The naming of a "administrator" for the orphanage and of a new director in 1908 while at the same time retaining Fr. Consoni as its "curator", and even the appointment of other Superior Provincials in 1911 and 1913, could not detract from the his moral authority, because since the time he had been its director the whole Province of São Paulo existed and lived practically in function of the orphanage. He had been its savior, having guaranteed its continuation following the premature death of Fr. Marchetti. As a consequence, Church, and civil authorities especially, as well as the most influential people of the aristocracy and finances, who were its benefactors, were viewing the Scalabrinian Congregation impersonated in Fr. Consoni.

Such situation had its good points because this man's integrity, evangelical poverty, exemplary dedication to the poor and the derelict, aura of a martyr to masonic persecutions, afforded him the means for helping the Congregation overcome its serious difficulties in that State. However, it had also its drawbacks such as discord and distrust on the part of some confreres suspicious of his administration, and certain deviations and relenting at times, of the specific work of the Congregation.

To prove these statements point by point we should make public a long series of letters from various of our missionaries, though not always free of personal recriminations; but this is the overall impression one receives from the reading of all the documents in our possession on the part of both those who favor and

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<sup>5</sup> Vicentini, "Circular" of January 8, 1909 (Arch. Scal. Province of São Paulo).

accuse Fr. Consoni.

One of the most serious difficulties encountered by the Scalabrinians in the State of São Paulo came up in 1909 when the Bishops forbade the missionaries to visit the "plantations", thereby endangering, perhaps, the whole pastoral methodology and economic plan adopted right from the start.

Fr. Consoni sounded the warning to the Superior General:

*"In my last letter I told you I would write to you at great length in regard to our missions, and more particularly about the prohibition made by the Bishops to visit the "fazendas" (plantations) as we have always done in the past, giving reasons that are untenable and are detrimental to our poor colonists. For this reason, I have decided to consult first with the Apostolic Nuncio, and then report to you.*

*By the new division of the Dioceses, our Mission has lost much, not to say all, at least as far as the welfare of our poor countrymen is concerned. I am convinced that if things are to continue on such a strict rigor as has never happened before, it will be necessary that in all humility, but with due firmness, you report the matter to the Holy Father, otherwise our poor colonists will end up with becoming uncivilized brutes, or leaving Brazil for good.*

*Forgive my expression, but the Bishops have taken strong measures without knowing the needs of our poor migrants engaged in coffee plantations, far from inhabited centers, and very seldom in contact with their respective pastors, who, excepting for a few, only seek "quae sua sunt".*

*Already I have presented my complaints to the Archbishop, and I will do so again to the Cardinal who is to be in São Paulo on the 20th, but I am convinced that if they persist in this prohibition, Brazil, and São Paulo in particular, will suffer much from it, because it denies our poor colonists the only source of comfort in the midst of so many vicissitudes they have to face in the plantations."<sup>6</sup>*

In fact, Fr. Consoni presented the following memorandum to the Archbishop of Rio de Janeiro, His Eminence Card. Joaquin Arcoverde de Albuquerque Cavalcanti, formerly the Bishop of São Paulo:

"Be pleased to bear with me, Your Most Illustrious Eminence, if mindful of the unceasing and generous protection you have always shown on behalf of this home for orphaned boys and girls, I dare implore it also in these difficult times when the existence of the two Institutions, of Ipiranga and Vila Prudente is seriously endangered.

What I entrust to your high and holy patronage is indeed a matter of life and death, so that it may be provided for by the greater wisdom and justice of a zealous Prince of our Holy Catholic Church!

The Rules of the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles, just ratified by "Propaganda Fide" and approved by His Holiness Pius X, clearly state the scope and duties of the Missionaries residing overseas for the spiritual care of Italian migrants. One of these duties stands on the immediate need to conduct our missions by visiting them and spreading the Christian faith for the salvation of souls in places inhabited by Italian workers and colonists and

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<sup>6</sup> Consoni to Vicentini, São Paulo, July 8, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 357/9).

developed by their work.

For fourteen years, that is since 1895, when Your Eminence was the beloved Shepherd of this great diocese, until the creation of the new dioceses of this State, our missions have uninterruptedly proceeded with the Lord's blessings and under the protection of our Superiors. As though by necessity, these missions opened the way to the creation of the "Christopher Columbus" orphanage, on which you generously bestowed your high and most precious protection (...).

Naturally, the division into six archdioceses and dioceses of what used to be once only one, has also given rise to new needs in the Church. It is quite obvious, therefore, that the Most Reverend Bishops should have recourse to all the financial means possible to build their respective cathedral and seminaries. The Missionaries of St. Charles are the first to comply with such demands; therefore, since they do not intend to oppose in the least the provisions of the Bishops, including the quasi-prohibition for Missionaries in general to visit the "plantations" of this State, the sons of St. Charles submit the following points for consideration by Your Most Reverend Eminence:

1. The Congregation of St. Charles was founded by the late Bishop Scalabrini for the only scope of bringing the comfort of our Religion to Italian emigrants in the Americas. The first rules of this Congregation have been reconfirmed by the Holy See last year.
2. As the State of São Paulo is a place where greater is the inflow of the Italian migration, so also the presence among them of the Missionaries becomes more necessary.
3. As a result of this assistance the "Christopher Columbus" Orphanage was built at São Paulo to provide shelter for orphaned boys and girls, the children of colonists miserably perished in the plantations. It is supported mostly by the offerings solicited from among the aforesaid migrants.
4. Unlikely any other Congregation that does not have any obligation, the Congregation of St. Charles has to provide in both locations for the support of 300 orphans, who, deprived of their parents, have been entrusted to the care of this institution from all parts of the State, and its main resource depends on the offerings coming in from the missions.
5. The existence of the Congregation presenting this entreaty is also conditioned by the exodus of Italian migrants from the state. Among the other reasons they give for leaving is the neglect in which they are left in regard to the salvation of their souls, and to the religious services of which the single families are in need. It is indeed sad to see every day ships leaving the harbor of Santos loaded with strong people willing to work, that were so much needed for the agricultural and commercial progress of this country.

It is necessary, therefore, that the Most Reverend Bishops of this State take into consideration all the above reasons towards reaching a special "modus vivendi" with this Congregation, without any prejudice to diocesan chanceries or to the vicars of the parishes. Such accord could be achieved by fixing a tax either for each mission authorized in the districts of the State, or for each

Mass said in places where no officially recognized chapel exists.

The interests of the Vicars could be safeguarded through the "*servatis de jure servandis*" system adopted in the past concerning the priests that used to grant to the Missionaries the authorization to perform baptisms and weddings.

May the Lord grant that this appeal should find a sympathetic hearing in the heart of Your Most Reverend Eminence, so that, by your good and influential services, the life of an institution that does so much for hundreds of innocent derelict be spared, and a Congregation necessary for the assistance to Italian migration may assured of remaining in Brazil."<sup>7</sup>

Fr. Corrado Stefani, one of Fr. Consoni's assistants, accused the Brazilian Bishops of "Jacobinism", that is, of excessive nationalism:

*"I do not recall whether to you or to Fr. Brescianini, I had written recently that the new Brazilian bishops had made us beautiful promises; the reality, however, is quite different. Rather than favoring more our missions, the new division of the dioceses seems to have paralyzed them. Already some bishops have sent out circulars repealing or limiting some faculties, such as the most essential one of the portable altar, with the pretext of forcing owners to build chapels in all their "plantations". We are not permitted to say Mass outside chapels opened for public worship; these, on the other hand are very few; they may be counted on the fingers of one hand. And so, our way to the plantations of some dioceses has been precluded! The land owners must be entreated, at times, in order to obtain permission for a missionary to set foot on their property! This way, our colonists will die without seeing a priest way before the landowners will ever build a chapel, take the trouble to do so, or any chapel will be found standing in their numberless plantations. True, some Bishops have called us to take charge of parishes, and we have two pastors already, one at Dourado, and the other at Ribeirão Bonito; but they are not important. The fact remains that our colonists, the most abandoned and distant of all from the inhabited centers, cannot benefit from our assistance as much as they did when our missionaries were able to act freely, because by becoming pastors our priests lose the faculties they had as missionaries. What's the use of having our rules approved in Rome, when the main scope of our mission is here being paralyzed? In my poor opinion, and in the judgment of the others as well, it all derives from the deplorable evil of a boundless "Jacobinism" (nationalism) unfortunately affecting also the clergy, who, above any distorted love for one's country, should instead place the care of the souls entrusted to them and over which, like or not, they carry a heavy responsibility.*

*I do not know whether this is true or not, but we are told that a certain Bishop was claiming that the "carcamanos" (cheaters) pastors have almost disappeared from his diocese. Forgive me my frankness in writing to you; talking to you about this is none of my business, perhaps, but I am doing it to give vent to the feelings of my heart! You must bring the matter up with the Holy See, otherwise it will turn real bad!*

*Why is it that, after benefiting from the sweat of the poor colonists, who, while gaining riches for themselves, still contribute so much to the progress of this*

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<sup>7</sup> Consoni to Arcoverde, São Paulo, s.d. (Arch. Scal. Prov. of São Paulo).

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*immense uncultivated country, the comforts of religion are denied them?"<sup>8</sup>*

Fr. Vicentini gives the following answer to Fr. Consoni:

*"As to the prohibition made by the Bishops to visit the plantations, it surely is, as of now at least, a distasteful and harmful thing to the colonists' spiritual and moral interests; but I deem it better to take it in stride. I think it will be well to report with serenity the matter to the Apostolic Nuncio, but without reference to the harm deriving from it to the Orphanages that would then be deprived of a substantial help.*

*I am convinced, however, that this measure of the Bishops does not directly concern Italian colonists, and less so, the missionaries. In my opinion, the aim of the Bishops is that of forcing the land owners to build chapels, to be divided later on and so the number of parishes may increase. To be honest, the vast territory of the parishes in the state of São Paulo does not allow for an adequate care of the spiritual life of the people living far away, and the extremely short visits of the missionaries bring only scant fruits! But how many will be the landowners who will comply with this provision of the Bishops? Many, rather, will be glad not to have the missionary around at all!*

*Actually, were you given any notification about this prohibition by the Bishops, or does it concern only one Bishop? How come then that Bishop Alberto manifested to you his intention to establish a regular religious assistance for Italian colonists in his diocese? How do you explain the fact that Bishop Nery of Campinas wanted also our missionaries to fix in Campinas a center from which they could attend to the care of Italian immigrants?"<sup>9</sup>*

From what we gather from a letter sent by Fr. Vicentini to Dr. Ranieri Venerosi, who had taken a research tour through the Italian colonies of Brazil on behalf of "Italica Gens" group, in quite a few places, at least, this prohibition was actually in force.

*"I was pleased to hear about the desire expressed by the Committee of São Paulo's "Italica Gens" concerning the visitations to the plantations of that State on the part of Italian missionaries, as they had used to conduct for many years with permission from the bishops of São Paulo, then the only one for the whole State.*

*On the occasion of my next visit to Rome, I will see to it that I may bring the matter up with the Consistorial Congregation, but I do not entertain much hope as to the results. I do not know whether the Committee was aware of the reasons given by the Bishops for revoking the permission for our missionaries to visit the plantations; so also, I am not informed whether the Committee knew that our Provincial of São Paulo (then Fr. Faustino Consoni) had recourse to the Pro Nuncio to obtain the repeal of the prohibition, but that he had sided with the Bishops. These did not intend to prohibit the visitations, but they would have wanted that they were conducted with another system, in their opinion more fruitful for the colonists.*

*My idea would have been that the Committee should have seen whether it were possible to accede to the desires of the Bishops. Besides, though pleased with the trust of the Committee in the work and zeal of our missionaries, still it did*

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<sup>8</sup> Stefani to Vicentini, São Paulo, June 28, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 396/9).

<sup>9</sup> Vicentini to Consoni, Piacenza, July 30, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 357/9).

*not have to content itself with entrusting this important task only to our priests, who on account of their small number could not visit, even if only briefly, but one tenth of the plantations in the course of a year; it should be the work of all; and indeed all those Superiors there have provided, or could provide, Italian priests: Jesuits, Capuchins, Passionists, Salesians, etc*

*Finally, I do not believe the Consistorial Congregation to be the most effective channel; made up of so many influential people, the Committee would have done better perhaps to present their petition to the bishops of the State themselves generally more willing to do things on their own than to accept an order from Rome. How many times has the Holy Father recommended to the Bishops the care of Italian migrants either through exhortations on occasion of pilgrimages from Brazil, or by means of official documents!*

*In any case, it does not hurt to try; I shall do so."<sup>10</sup>*

We have reported the above draft of Fr. Vicentini's letter; true to his temperament, on the same he annotates having changed its conclusion. His concern not so much about numbers, but rather over the qualitative scarcity of missionaries had created in him, if we can say so, a sense of vulnerability, conscious as he was of the weakness of his position:

*"I ended it by saying, instead, that, if we had many priests inspired by a spirit of sacrifice, we could reach an understanding with the Bishops. The Consistorial Congregation may well offer recommendations, but priests...!"*

In 1916, as a conclusion to his survey on the intellectual, social, and religious life of Italians in the State of São Paulo, Eugenio Bonardelli, another representative of "*Italica Gens*" had the following to say:

"The Catholic religion plays an important part in the life of our agricultural communities, in great majority composed of deeply religious Venetians. Local and Italian priests have charge of their religious assistance: a large proportion of the Italian clergy, inspired by sentiments of true Christian charity, exercise the ministry to the advantage of the community, and they are generally good patriots. As a whole, the best ones are those sent by the competent church authorities with the task to take charge of a parish for the spiritual assistance of their fellow-countrymen. The religious orders, however, enjoy in the cities much greater importance than the secular clergy, first amongst them the Salesians. These direct several schools in the State, of which a very flourishing one in the capital. Besides elementary and technical classes, the latter offers also courses in the arts and crafts.

Salesian institutions are not open only to children of Italians as such; still Italian is taught for a few hours each week; most of the teachers are Italian, and though not all engaged in teaching our language, still they contribute much in giving a strong foundation of Italian culture, thus helping in having also the Brazilians to love Italy with all its natural and artistic beauties. "*Italica Gens*" has an accredited representative at each Salesian Institution.

A religious congregation particularly devoted to the religious assistance of migrants is that of the missionaries of Saint Charles, founded by Bishop Scalabrini. In suburban São Paulo they direct an institution for orphan children of Italian colonists and have charge of several parishes in the countryside. In the past they have also been the especially well-deserving assistants to the colonists of the plantations, presently left in complete moral, religious, and intellectual neglect.

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<sup>10</sup> Vicentini to Venorosi, Piacenza, November 23, 1913 (draft), (Arch. G.S., 357/12).



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The plantations are very far from the parochial centers, sometimes, days on horse-back!

Pastors of Italian nationality form the minority. At one time the above-mentioned missionaries were allowed to freely visit the plantations, and thus to attend to the religious and moral assistance of our compatriots.

As a rule, this permission has been revoked in the last few years by the bishops, and conditioned, in single cases, to so much red tape as to render practically impossible any systematic action."<sup>11</sup>

Relations between the Superior General and Fr. Faustino Consoni were always inspired by a sincerely religious and fraternal spirit; but Fr. Vicentini had to make recourse more than once to the force of authority to hold Fr. Consoni within the bounds of a correct administration and the pursuit of the specific scope of the Congregation. Back from Italy, Fr. Antonio Serraglia had been charged, among other things, with making known to the Provincial meeting of December 1908, the mind of the Superior General on the second point:

*"I, myself, made clear to them your desire that in compliance with your provisions no new residence be opened, but Fr. Faustino had committed himself only a few days before to the Bishop of São Paulo with accepting an exclusively Brazilian parish (St. Sebastian's by Santos) at the seashore. He had agreed to it, though, only on a temporary basis, and so he sent right then Fr. Garzaro."<sup>12</sup>*

The parish in question (Ilha Bela?) was in São Sebastião do Litoral. It passed later on under the jurisdiction of the new diocese of Taubaté. Since he saw that Fr. Consoni continued to keep Fr. Garzaro there because he was sending some help to the Orphanage, Fr. Vicentini ordered him to take the missionary back:

*"Our scope is the care of Italians, and as long as they claim our action (and there are plenty of them both in São Paulo and in Rio Grande, and many more in North America) we owe our missionaries to them.*

*I believe the bishops of Brazil will understand our position. Let them entrust to us parishes with a good number of Italians, and we shall accept them, equally attending to both Italians and Brazilians."<sup>13</sup>*

This was the practical solution adopted following the prohibition to visit the plantations. It was an important shift to a pastoral method that opened the way to accepting territorial parishes also in the state of São Paulo, as was being done already in Rio Grande do Sul, with the difference that the proportion of Italians was much higher in this state than in the parishes of the former.

On September 5, 1911, Fr. Giovanni Rabaioli was elected Provincial Superior in the presence of Fr. Vicentini, on his visit to the missions of Brazil; Frs. Pietro Dotto and Luigi Capra were chosen as Provincial Councilors. Fr. Rabaioli's brief tenure does not seem to have left a mark in the history of the Province of São Paulo, especially since he continued to reside about 500 kilometers from the capital, in the remote mission of Ribeirão Preto, where he died, at 37, on March 29, 1913, following a serious illness that had been tormenting him for several

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<sup>11</sup> Bonardelli, "Vita intellettuale, sociale, religiosa, degli Italiani nello Stato di São Paulo", "Italica Gens", a. VI, No. 1-2 (Jan./Feb. 1915), pp. 106-107. ("Intellectual, social, religious life of Italians in the State of São Paulo").

<sup>12</sup> Serraglia to Vicentini, Anta Gorda, March 26, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 435/1).

<sup>13</sup> Vicentini to Consoni, Piacenza, January 7, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 657/10).

months.

His successor, Fr. Carlo Pedrazzani, appointed "ad interim", but remaining the actual Superior till the General Chapter of 1919, continued also to reside at Ribeirão Preto. As a whole one gets the impression that the Province or Region of São Paulo had remained practically without government or directives from 1911 to 1919. As a proof of this situation be it enough to report two documents of Fr. Pedrazzani. The first one concerns the government:

*"I am sending you only my own report of 1916 because I have no information from the others, either because being all alone I cannot absent myself or because the Confreres do not let me hear a thing from them. Therefore, in consideration of their independent way of doing things, as of this date I decline all authority and responsibility of a Superior. Let Your Paternity choose another Superior upon presentation of three names, in conformity with the decision of the Chapter. This is demanded by the good name of the Congregation."<sup>14</sup>*

The other document can provide us with an idea of what kind of directives could be offered by Fr. Pedrazzani concerning the specific apostolate of the Scalabrinians:

*"By July 31, the Rev. Fathers of this Province were supposed to send in their reports so that I might afterwards transmit them to you. The dates on their sheets tell which ones of them kept their word. I trust that Fr. Luigi Capra has directly sent it to you on his own.*

*In your Circular Letter you warn us not to detract from the essentials of the Institute; in my opinion (at least as far as the Province of São Paulo is concerned) this is right what we should do! The scope of our Institute was considered right from the beginning to be an anomaly, an absurdity, in the State of São Paulo. Fr. Marchetti had to modify it practically after a three week experience!*

*The bishops of São Paulo look upon our Institute, as it were, with eyes of compassion. In these last years when the parishes have been divided and multiplied, the pastors vindicate for themselves the honor of the total care of all their parishioners.*

*If he is appointed a pastor, a Scalabrinian missionary must take care of all and speak the language of the country; in case he not be one, he is then condemned to live a life of vain hopes and platonic dreams, with even no right to anoint the forehead of a child or of a dying person!*

*Therefore, I say this: should all the Provinces of our Institute be faced with conditions such as those encountered in São Paulo, it is necessary that we modify our scope.*

*And what kind of modification should it be given? Here it is: our Institute's scope is to provide the bishops, especially in America, with good priests whom they can dispose of in the manner they deem more conducive to the religious progress of their dioceses!"<sup>15</sup>*

We do not quite understand how these ideas could be attuned to a fact he himself pointed out a few months later:

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<sup>14</sup> Pedrazzani to Vicentini, Ribeirão Preto, January 20, 1917 (Arch. G.S., 1599/2).

<sup>15</sup> Pedrazzani to Vicentini, Ribeirão Preto, September 19, 1918 (Arch. G.S., 1599/2).

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*"The foremost work of the Apostolate of Ribeirão Preto consists in preaching missions throughout the plantations of this vast diocese (...). The parishes are more than forty. It takes a missionary three years to go through them just once without interruptions. This is a mission where one can do a lot of good!*

*It may well be presumed that the number of Italians here amounts to some 200,000."<sup>16</sup>*

In view of what we just said, one may very well understand why Frs. E. Preti, A. Rizzi, L. Guglieri, G. Costanzo, and C. Porrini could request, also on behalf of the other Missionaries of Rio Grande do Sul, that the General Chapter of 1919 suppress the Province of São Paulo:

"Aware of and considering that from what one gathers from trustworthy witnesses our missions in the State of São Paulo (Brazil) do not have any more reason to exist because the scope and charism of our Institute is not being pursued, as the bearer of this letter shall explain in detail, we, the undersigned missionaries of St. Charles propose that the General Chapter decree the suppression of these missions, which, besides, are frowned upon by the somewhat nationalistic Archbishop of São Paulo. The missionaries thus disengaged from São Paulo will be of great help to our missions of Rio Grande do Sul where our action is much sought after and highly appreciated, and our program of assistance to Italian migrants can be carried out with very abundant fruits. The only institutions we must retain in São Paulo by reason of the good they accomplish and of the prestige they bring upon our Congregation with both Italian and Brazilian government authorities are the two orphanages for boys and girls, to which we must pledge all our support and assistance, also by the help the Sisters of St. Charles can offer and give our missionaries.

Likewise, there should be discussion on whether it be the case or not that we hold on to the mission in Paraná, and on the affirmative, whether it be opportune or not to reduce the number of the missionaries of such a limited mission.

This way the sad situation shall be removed of having to witness that while some missionaries have very little to do, others are ruining their health in excessive work.

The undersigned propose to the members of the General Chapter also the naming of only one Superior Provincial for the whole of Brazil, with a Vice-Provincial in Rio Grande, and a Councilor for each of the present regions, should these be continued. In this case, or even if the three provinces were to be retained, let the provincials be free of the pastoral care of souls so that they may better attend to the common and individual interests of our missions."<sup>17</sup>

The proposal for only one Province was approved by the General Chapter, and Fr. Enrico Preti was elected Superior Provincial.

## **2. The Government of the Region of Paraná**

In 1908, when the Scalabrinian Province of Brazil was divided into three

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<sup>16</sup> Pedrazzani to Vicentini, Ribeirão Preto, February 26, 1919 (Arch. G.S., 1599/2).

<sup>17</sup> Preti, Rizzi, Guglieri, Costanzo, Porrini, to Capitular Fathers, Monte Belo, June 2, 1919 (Arch. G.S., 182/2).

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Regions, Fr. Giuseppe Martini was named Superior of the "Region" of Paraná, titled after Saint Mary; he was re-elected afterwards in 1911, remaining in office until the General Chapter of 1919.

The situation of the missions in Paraná is recapitulated as follows in 1908 in a report of Fr. Martini "*On the Italian Colonies once and presently under the care of the Missionaries of Saint Charles*":

Vila Colombo (formerly "Alfredo Chaves").

This colony has been in the hands of the Missionaries until November 1895. About 1887, Fr. Colbacchini had a chapel built there made of wood and mud, a rectory, also made of wood, and a cemetery. The church was dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary.

Capivary.

This colony also remained with the missionaries until November 1895. Fr. Colbacchini had a wooden chapel put up in honor of Saint Pietro the Apostle, and a cemetery.

Canguery and Faria.

These also passed under the jurisdiction of Vila Colombo in 1895. The same Fr. Colbacchini ordered a chapel to be built there titled to the Presentation of Mary, and a cemetery.

Pilarzinho.

The colony depends on Santa Felicidade. The stone church is dedicated to St. Mark the Evangelist, and was built during Fr. Brescianini's pastorate; there is also the cemetery.

Gabriella or Colonia Nova.

It is dependent on Santa Felicidade. The same Fr. Brescianini had a stone church built there named after St. Francis Xavier.

Ferraria.

It is a colony dependent from Santa Felicidade. The same missionary built here a stone chapel with two belfries and dedicated it to N.S. Bom Jesus.

Campo Comprido.

It depends on the missionaries of Santa Felicidade. Fr. Brescianini put up in it a beautiful brick chapel in honor of Our Lady of Lourdes, and lately a walled-in cemetery was also blessed.

Timbutuva.

Our missionaries residing there have charge of it. The stone church, dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, was built by Fr. Colbacchini. It has a wooden rectory, a wooden building used as a school, and the cemetery (....).

Rondinha.

It depends on the Missionaries of Timbutuva. Fr. Colbacchini had built a wooden chapel, but other missionaries either started or finished building a beautiful stone church dedicated to the martyr Saint Sebastian. It has a rectory, another house, and a walled-in cemetery.

Río Verde.

A dependency from the missionaries of Timbutuva. The wooden church built

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by Fr. Colbacchini is dedicated to the Annunciation of Mary. It is endowed with rectory and cemetery.

Campina.

It depends on the missionaries of Timbutuva. Fr. Colbacchini constructed a wooden chapel in honor of St. John the Baptist. It has a rectory and a cemetery.

Santa Maria Novo Tirol.

It belonged to Santa Felicidade until about 1900. The wooden church, dedicated to the Assumption, was built by Fr. Colbacchini. Sometime later, Fr. Brescianini had the sanctuary made of stone. It has its own cemetery. The Fathers visit it several times a year.

Umbará.

It used to depend on Santa Felicidade until 1904. The wooden church, constructed by Fr. Colbacchini and dedicated to St. Peter the Apostle was replaced with a stone structure. It has its own walled-in cemetery.

Zaccaria.

It belonged to Santa Felicidade until about 1900. The stone church was built by Fr. Brescianini and named after St. Ann. It has its own cemetery.

Agua Verde.

This was the first residence of the Missionaries from 1886 to 1888. The stone church was built by Fr. Colbacchini and dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In about 1904 it passed into the hands of other priests (...).

São Carlos da Lapa.

This colony was always dependent on the parish of Lapa, but the missionaries who often visited it (as they still do) with the consent of the pastor, urged the colonists to build a church in honor of St. Charles Borromeo and the cemetery.

Daldin.

The colony was subject to Santa Felicidade until about 1900. The church, dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, was built by a private person also for use by the public.

Bella Vista.

This colony has always belonged to the parish of Imbituva or Cupím. However, the missionaries, who were often visiting it, convinced the colonists to put up for themselves a church in honor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, and a cemetery.

Colonia Angelina.

It depended from the missionaries of Santa Felicidade until about 1898. It had its own church, but it was closed down when the colony was incorporated into the city.

Antonio Prado.

It is a mixed colony of Italians and Poles, who built the church under the pastorate of Fr. Colbacchini. In 1895 it passed to Vila Colombo, and it was united this year with the parish of Saint Ann (or Lebrança). It has its own

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cemetery. The missionaries visit it several times a year."<sup>18</sup>

As we have seen, the presence of the Scalabrinians in the parish and mission for Indios along the Tibagi was being questioned in 1909.<sup>19</sup> His Excellency Bishop Duarte Leopoldo e Silva, the second bishop of Curitiba, had been transferred to São Paulo the previous year. In February 1908, Bishop João Francisco Braga had taken possession of the diocese. He was more favorable to the Italians than his predecessor, "*who tried to force foreigners to become Brazilians overnight*"<sup>20</sup> and had openly stated that "*the Sister Apostles of the Sacred Heart and the Missionaries of Saint Charles would never again be given his support in whatever place he may be assigned.*"<sup>21</sup>

To better understand the attitude of Archbishop Duarte Leopoldo e Silva we must go back to the time when the government of missions of Paran  passed from Fr. Brescianini to Fr. Francesco Dolci in 1906, and then, a few months later, to Fr. Giuseppe Martini.

In agreement with Bishop Leopoldo e Silva, on December 12, 1905, the Provincial Council of S o Paulo had appointed Fr. Dolci to succeed Fr. Brescianini with jurisdiction, in addition to Santa Felicidade, also over Campo Largo, Campo Comprido, Ferraria, Timbutuva, R o Verde, Rondinha, Campina, Gabriela and Pilarzinho. Fr. Natale Pigato was supposed to be assisting Fr. Dolci. The parish of Campo Largo continued to be under the charge of Fr. Giovanni Battista Bergia, while Frs. Claudio Morelli and Andrea Garau were to depend directly on Fr. Dolci. Frs. Marco Simoni and Alfredo Bonaiuti remained on their own at Tibagi.<sup>22</sup>

Fr. Dolci arrived with Fr. Claudio by the end of January 1906. He was accompanied by Fr. Faustino Consoni, then conducting his first canonical visitation to the missions of Paran :

*"On January 21, 1906, together with the Rev. Frs. Francesco Dolci, the Vice Provincial, and Claudio Morelli, I embarked on the steamship 'Vittoria' at Santos for Paran , arriving at Curitiba on the 23rd of the same month, welcomed at the station by our confrere Fr. Natale Pigato, by Fr. Francesco Bonato, an old companion of Frs. Pietro Colbacchini, Giuseppe Molinari, and Domenico Mantese, and by Mr. Francesco Zardo, a teacher at the elementary school of the colony of Santa Felicidade.*

*We spent the night in Curitiba so to be ready in the morning to call on Bishop Duarte Leopoldo e Silva for the needed faculties, as indeed we did after all three of us celebrated Mass in the Cathedral of Curitiba.*

*By cart we left for Santa Felicidade where we were fraternally welcomed by our good confreres Frs. Francesco Brescianini, Natale Pigato and Francesco Bonato, and by the heads of the colonies. Once again after nine years I saw those cherished places and people who had done so much for the Congregation; after*

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<sup>18</sup> Martini, "Relazione sulle Colonie Italiane che furono e sono alla cura dei Missionari di San Carlo" ("Report on the Italian Colonies formerly and presently in the care of the Missionaries of St. Charles"), Santa Felicidade, September 15, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 390/6).

<sup>19</sup> Francesconi, "History of the Scalabrinian Congregation" Vol. III (Rome, 1973).

<sup>20</sup> Martini to Vicentini, Santa Felicidade, June 1, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 408).

<sup>21</sup> Consoni to Vicentini, S o Paulo, April 17, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 357/6).

<sup>22</sup> Cfr. "Registro Annuario, etc." pp. 4-5 (cf. note 4).

*the ritual thanks to the Blessed Lord, we rested at our residence.*

*Having properly arranged all things in common accord with the heads of the colonies, I gave start to the visitation of the missions beginning with Campo Largo, where Fr. Claudio Morelli has been appointed coadjutor to Fr. Giovanni Bergia. I celebrated a Solemn High Mass at Campo Largo and in the sermon in the native language I presented the new missionary. The rite was concluded with the consecration of the parish to the Sacred Heart, followed by the benediction. All this took place on February 11, 1906, the current year.*

*Taking our confrere Fr. Claudio along with me, we began preaching the missions at the colony of Campinas, staying there for three days. All those good colonists came to confession and received Holy Communion. Leaving Campinas I went with Fr. Andrea Garau to Rondinha, Timbituva, Rio Verde, Ferrara, and Campo Comprido, preaching the Word of God in all colonies, teaching catechism, and hearing confessions. Everywhere all faithfully responded to the Grace of God.*

*After a few days' rest, I resumed my tour through the colonies dependent on Santa Felicidade, and lastly, by invitation of Fr. Francesco Bonato, to Vila Colombo also, where the fruits were more abundant and I had the consolation of seeing almost completed the magnificent church Fr. Francesco Bonato had started by means of a subscription ten years before. Lastly, I was invited to preach at the Church of the Franciscans in Curitiba, and by permission of the Bishop, I imparted for nine days in Italian instructions in the morning, and meditations at night, helped for two days by Fr. Francesco Brescianini. Thanks to the blessed Lord, the good people of Curitiba also responded to my poor preaching. Should not more pressing matters have forced me back to São Paulo, another eight days would have not hurt at all! But let us hope for a better occasion.*

*On my return to Santa Felicidade, matters concerning our Congregation were discussed and we made out the deed of purchase of the land on which to build the new house for the missionaries. We paid 850 milreis in cash, part of the money given me by Fr. Giovanni Bergia, Vicar of Campo Largo, and his assistant Fr. Morelli. Soon afterwards, a relapse of the brain cancer of the new Superior, Fr. Francesco Dolci, reappeared. This gave rise to a series of crosses and tribulations that led to the point of being threatened with expulsion from the Province of Paraná where we shed so much sweat for more than 22 years of mission work! We had a long written correspondence with the Vicar General Mons. Alberto Gonçalves, and telegraphic communications with His Excellency, until all disputes between Congregation and Diocese were settled at last in a conference I had with the Bishop two months later in São Paulo.*

*Let us hope it all ended!"<sup>23</sup>*

Let us now hear the accusations brought up against Fr. Consoni and the Scalabrinians by the Vicar General Mons. Albert Gonçalves in a long letter of his on June 4, 1906. Fr. Consoni - so he says - had appointed Fr. Dolci as Superior of the missionaries in Paraná, and then during the following May he assigned Fr. Martini to succeed him, because Fr. Dolci had to return to São Paulo on account of sickness. However, a delegation from the colonists had called on the Chancery Office to protest against the removal of Fr. Dolci; for

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p. 7 (cf. note 4).

this reason the Vicar General had requested that the missionary be left at Santa Felicidade until Fr. Martini might meet with the liking of the people. Fr. Consoni had answered the telegram of the Vicar General on July 10, indirectly accusing Fr. Dolci of disobedience. On May 15 he had written again to add that the other missionaries could not get along with Fr. Dolci, but he left it up to Mons. Gonçalves to decide according to his conscience, and the latter decided to let Fr. Martini be the Superior, but Fr. Dolci was still to remain at Santa Felicidade.

On his return after an absence, the Bishop had disapproved of the replacement of Fr. Dolci. Besides, Fr. Natale Pigato did not want to move to Campo Largo but to remain at Santa Felicidade instead. There was a sense of disagreement amongst the missionaries. On May 19, when the Vicar General believed all difficulties had been solved, an "ultimatum" reached him from Fr. Consoni: Fr. Dolci must come to São Paulo on the first steamboat. The order was promptly transmitted and carried out.

The letter had this conclusion:

*"From all this one must conclude that the Church authorities of the diocese did not deserve the consideration one had the right to hope for on the part of a Congregation which had always been welcomed and kindly treated by it.*

*As was my duty, I reported all these facts to the Bishop and he charged me to inform you that as of six months from this date he will dispense the Congregation of Saint Charles from all services in this Diocese."<sup>24</sup>*

Some misunderstandings had aggravated the dispute, such as a mistaken notion, for instance, on the part of the Chancery, of the temperament and sickness of Fr. Dolci. One must also remember that trustworthy persons, such as Fr. Martini, were saying that Fr. Dolci had gained favor with the Chancery with a promise to "*brazilianize*" the Italian parishes, and that he was the one who had encouraged the protests against his removal. All this explains in part the hasty decision of Fr. Consoni, who was wrong, on the other hand, for interfering in the direction of the parishes without consulting first with the Bishop.<sup>25</sup>

The dispute was finally settled in July following a conference with the Bishop, as we have gathered from Fr. Consoni, thanks also to the good services of the Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Giulio Tonti.<sup>26</sup>

We have mentioned the attempt at "*brazilianizing*" quickly the Italian parishes or quasi-parishes. This defect of Bishop Leopoldo e Silva, observed both at Curitiba and São Paulo, was pointed out also to the Holy See. His anti-Italian feelings were notorious, so much so as to obscure in the minds of Italians an otherwise substantially positive evaluation he must be given both as a man and as a bishop.

By the end of 1906, when Frs. Martini and Pigato called on him to pay homage,

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<sup>24</sup> Gonçalves to Consoni, Curitiba, June 4, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 357/5).

<sup>25</sup> Deschaud to Consoni, Curitiba, June 23, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 357/5).

<sup>26</sup> Consoni to Vicentini, São Paulo, July 18, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 357/5).



and he did not fail touching on this subject:

*"Very soon he turned the conversation on the need for preaching in Portuguese in our churches, not knowing that only five or six non-Italian people are frequenting them.*

*There may be hardly ten or eleven families amongst our migrants, but they could not care less about church and sermons. In regard to children, we are considering to teach them catechism apart in their own small chapel. We would be willing to go one Sunday a month to the same chapel, but because the church owns some property they do not want to contribute anything as they could and should. On the other hand, we do not intend to play favorites with people over whom we have no jurisdiction differently than with the other colonies of ours that contribute so much in defraying the expenses of the priests."<sup>27</sup>*

Relations were more cordial with Bishop Braga, who right from his entry showed himself so well inclined towards the Scalabrinians that Fr. Martini deemed it his duty to invite Fr. Consoni immediately to Curitiba in the hope to have back the lost parishes.<sup>28</sup> This took place actually in the years 1909 to 1911 with the return of the quasi-parishes of Agua Verde and Umbará.

### **3. The Direction of the Region of Río Grande do Sul**

From 1904 until 1908 the missionaries of Río Grande do Sul depended on Fr. Faustino Consoni, though only in most important matters. The ordinary administration rested in the hands of Fr. Massimo Rinaldi, who was actually a quasi-delegate of the Superior Provincial.<sup>29</sup>

As we know, the region of Río Grande do Sul was created on November 15, 1908, and the same Fr. Rinaldi was its superior from this date until 1910.

To have an understanding of the future Bishop of Rieti's method of government which can be characterized as "Gospel-inspired", we quote some passages from his letters to the Superior General:

*"I do not write you about the frailties of the confreres - human and of little consequence - because we are too far apart, and I deem it better to bear patiently, suffer a little, and give them good example and friendly advice.*

*I only remind you to form missionaries fit for these places, imbued with deep piety, great patience, spirit of sacrifice, and easily contented as to their personal needs."<sup>30</sup>*

*"I should write you about other not so pleasant things happening to poor little me, placed in a position I would have never dreamed of, and repaid with ingratitude, besides, by those I benefitted the most. However, by God's help, I bear with them, I keep busy on behalf of both myself and others, happy (should I succeed) not to betray my vocation, and by good example to cause others to receive it who do not have it...."*

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<sup>27</sup> Martini to Vicentini, Santa Felicidade, January 4, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 390/6).

<sup>28</sup> Martini to Consoni, Santa Felicidade, February 14, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 374/1).

<sup>29</sup> Rinaldi to Vicentini, Encantado, January 3, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 413/1).

<sup>30</sup> Rinaldi to Vicentini, Encantado, April 14, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 413/4).

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*Do not feel sorry for myself because I have offered, and do offer, it all up to God, always responding with silence to offenses, though broken hearted, without ever writing you about it.*

*I only regret having been too trusting until a few months ago; thus, not giving much importance to the letters of confreres, I have destroyed them as they were coming in; but in consideration of their way of doing things I save them now, in the hope they will sufficiently testify to the truth of my reports. And as a proof of this, let me tell you what happened to me these days! The Bishop writes to me wondering about my silence with him in regard to the poor health conditions of P.S., etc., etc. In all humility and sincerity, I have answered him that I have been waiting for more than a year now for a definite answer from the said Missionary so that I may convey it to him, that I had made to that priest all the most generous offers for his own good, and that to this day I have still to receive a clear response from him, etc."<sup>31</sup>*

In reference to his assistant, a typical hypochondriac, he says:

*"On my part I assure him that I do not bother him. I love him and I let him do as he pleases (it is not the case to say why in a letter).*

*The trouble is that the confreres are complaining because - they say - he is living like a king while they are slaving in their assignments.*

*But, I do not even make much of this, either. As far as I am concerned you can well leave him where he is, if he so desires. I add, in fact, that I could not assure you whether I would remain here myself if he should move away from here not of his own free will but by decision of the Superiors. God willing, I will tell you the reason by word of mouth either on earth or in heaven! And so in my forbearing way I take care to keep him at peace in the hope he may learn at his own expense how to set himself free of his obsession about being sick, to become more aware of his priestly duties, to abandon a life of too much comfort and refinement, in these places especially, not to worry about everything and everybody, to get a better knowledge of the ways of the world, etc. Things are beginning to look up (if you only knew at what cost of mine), and we are getting along in good harmony."<sup>32</sup>*

The old colonists of Encantado still remember to this day the man who devoted himself to the humble service of all, but especially of the poor and the sick:

*"Nearly all mornings some sick person comes searching for his soul's salvation in the sacrament of Penance. How blessed I would be if I only could do more! And they also bring some mass request. I would wish that the young priests could only understand that this is the true good the priest should be doing, to gain the trust of the people. They should be patient, therefore, well-mannered and solicitous with them. I have noticed one thing: it looks as though young priests consider it below their dignity to approach the physically and morally poor! And so they make fun of Fr. Massimo because he makes himself always available, and on his travels he greets people, exchanges a few words with them, and gets off his horse perhaps to render them a service. Poor young priests (some of them, at least), how greatly they are deceiving themselves!"<sup>33</sup>*

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<sup>31</sup> Rinaldi to Vicentini, Encantado, December 27, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 413/4).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Rinaldi to Vicentini, Encantado, January 18, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 413/5).

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He accorded the same humble and obliging goodness also to his confreres, especially those who made him suffer the most with their independence and lack of zeal:

*"Once again I come to you for help: and I entreat you not to grieve over this sad news. All things considered, it seems to me that the Lord allows these things to happen to make the young learn something better by experience and to help me in understanding more clearly the human vicissitudes and the ways priests act. Even though I am accused by most of excessive compassion, it seems to me (and this is certain) that it did help me much to keep these young priests docile and to have them make good progress. Given these circumstances, it is a fact that it could not happen otherwise.*

*The young, a little proud, a little capricious, a little loving of their well-being; the old, or the vicars rather, did not know how to take them (...). And above all, because of the pressing need of them - due to the fact of the vastness of the territory, and of the scarcity of personnel - I could not use, even if I wanted to, the severity others would have expected. Besides, the Bishop has supported P.S., is ready to favor P.S., and P.P. tomorrow, if he should have recourse to him. This way, am I not perhaps morally hindered by the Bishop himself, and forced to make a virtue of necessity?*

*In the meanwhile, I repeat, I am at peace as to my way of acting, and by my patience the rather capricious ones have improved (...).*

*I shall continue to sacrifice myself, therefore, to be resigned, to hope for the better in all and of all."<sup>34</sup>*

On September 28, 1910, the General Chapter elected Fr. Rinaldi as General Councilor and Treasurer. On July 22, 1911, in the presence of Fr. Vicentini, the Provincial Chapter was celebrated at Monte Vêneto (now Cotiporá) that elected Fr. Enrico Preti as Superior Provincial, and Frs. Giovanni Costanzo and Eugenio Medicheschi as Councilors.<sup>35</sup>

In regard to Fr. Preti we must point out, above all, his effort, initially employed by Fr. Rinaldi, in taking care that the Scalabrinian parishes be all united among themselves in territorial continuity so as to avoid the unending disputes over parochial limits with the other priests, diocesan or otherwise; in 1914, Guaporé was chosen as the center of these missions; here, the first cooperatives began developing in support of the agricultural activities of the colonists. The missionaries took over the direction of the weekly "*Il Corriere d'Italia*", gave a start to a Scalabrinian presence in Bento Gonçalves, attempted to open a center for the religious and social assistance to arriving immigrants in Porto Alegre, capital of the State and nerve-center of the migratory movement. Unfortunately, this attempt twice met with failure, first in 1916 for reasons independent of the will of the missionaries,<sup>36</sup> and then in 1919, when the General Chapter decided against a proposal presented in this respect by Fr. Rinaldi:

*"And so, the Chapter Fathers have rejected your proposal of a Center for the*

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<sup>34</sup> Rinaldi to Vicentini, Encantado, March 1, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 413/5).

<sup>35</sup> Vicentini to Rinaldi, Monte Veneto, June 23, 1911 (Arch. G.S., 413/5).

<sup>36</sup> Preti to Rinaldi, Esperança, June 29, 1913 (Arch. Gen. S., 414/1).

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*assistance to Italians in Brazil. Well, they are wrong! There is indeed the need of an institution of ours for Italians in Porto Alegre. The (Masonic) "Dante Alighieri" of Porto Alegre is organizing it.... while, we, the clergy, have miserably abandoned our poor Italians, with the complicity of the Bishop and company!*

*It is our fault if Italians in Porto Alegre do not practice their religion! What's the purpose of me remaining pastor of a colony where so very little still subsists that is Italian? Our mission in colonial outposts is ended ... our mission must be in the ports, at landing places, in populated centers, where the migratory inflow and reflow is ever real....*

*The fourteen missionaries of Saint Charles in R o Grande are just 14 pastors, and nothing else! And so, the true scope of our Congregation does not exist anymore! One can very well be a pastor also....in Italy!"<sup>37</sup>*

The action conducted by Fr. Preti to secure a better arrangement for the Scalabrinian positions in the colonial region inhabited by Italians is given validity in a report he wrote in 1915, when Archbishop D. Jo o Becker of Porto Alegre wanted him along as a companion on the pastoral visitation:

*"During the Easter season of last year a telegram from the Archbishop called me to accompany him on his pastoral visitation. When I arrived at Porto Alegre to arrange preparations, I wrote, though in a hurry, to the Superior General about the order I had received, and without being given time even to return home, I began the pastoral tour, which was generally a triumph indeed for our missions where the Archbishop gave much praise. However, my deepest satisfactions came from the new posts, which had to go through terrible crises, such as Anta Gorda and Bella Vista.*

*In regard to the first place, after taking all things into account, even the famous "Pared o" of the most notorious Grande (the last and most dangerous enemy), where he had administered quite a few confirmations, in spite of all solicitations, flattery, and gifts, even the Archbishop listened to the long sad story of that place and to the parties concerned, and ended up with approving in full the resolution passed in favor of the place where now stands the parish, discarding altogether the so-called Grande project and of all others. Besides, he accepted the new proposal of a Committee for a future parish in faraway Putinga, a territory six to eight hour horse ride from Anta Gorda, now gradually being intensely populated by Italians. In fact, he manifested the desire that we take care of it as has been done for Anta Gorda.*

*Furthermore, he had words of special praise for the work and zeal of Fr. Erminio (Catelli) who is untiringly caring for the good of that immense population, where were 2,000 confirmations administered, the largest number in the Italian colonies.*

*As to Bella Vista, in the presence of the Capuchin pastor of A. Chaves (Veran polis), not only did he approve, but he even encouraged publicly in church and from the Altar, committee, people, and pastor to work all together for the enterprise he himself had ordered saying that he intended not only to preserve it, but also to improve it evermore with the help of all those who make up the parish without divisions and distinction of parties. A certain party, instigated by the Capuchins, which had dared to protest, was quickly*

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<sup>37</sup> Porrini to Rinaldi, Bento Gonalves, s.d. (Arch. G.S. 467/2).

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*reprimanded by the Archbishop himself in the very church of Chaves, and treated as a group of rebels and protesters because they refused obedience to his orders. And so, also in this parish order and peace were almost fully restored!*

*When still along with him on the Pastoral Visitation, upon repeated entreaties and insistence from the people of Nova Brescia, considering the recommendation of the priests of Lageado and the considerable distance from Encantado, the Archbishop had decided to make it a parish, and I was in favor of it especially because, besides the above reasons, I could this way assign a place to Fr. Giuseppe (Pandolfi) who was wandering for some time now in search of a parish fitting his temperament (the seriousness of Fr. Costanzo's sickness had not manifested itself) as I thought it would be indeed on account of the basic goodness and simplicity of its people. But then, the report of the doctor on Fr. Costanzo's health came in a short while after the taking of this decision on the part of the Archbishop, mine, and of Fr. Giuseppe, who was happy already to have found his nest, while a still happier people was enthusiastically making preparations in that place. With all our commitments on hand, what was I to do? Should we have Nova Brescia alone in the hands of the Archbishop or save (Nova) Bassano at all costs? And this is exactly what we did. In fact, Fr. Giuseppe passed right away to Bassano, where he still resides as an assistant, as I said before; and since he is there already following the provision taken in regard to Fr. Costanzo, it was also decided to name him to succeed Fr. Costanzo as Pastor beginning next month, when the latter shall leave the parish for good. Actually, Fr. Serraglia was also considered as a successor to Fr. Costanzo at Bassano, but he is so much committed to the work done and still underway, with consequent debts, at Turvo (Protasio Alves) to make it impossible, for the time being and who knows for how long yet, to remove him from there. Besides, Fr. Giuseppe begs the superiors not to change him anymore because he is sick and tired of changes.*

*The famous new parish of Sesta (Linha VI) (in spite of being honored to be made a "district" under the title of "Vista Alegre") is now left without a priest, and nobody knows when it will have one. As you probably know already, by insistence of the people there and of Cardinal De Lai, the Archbishop had finally appointed to that place a certain priest, but in a short while his conduct deteriorated so as to call upon himself the suspension precisely on the occasion of the pastoral visitation; but he persisted in remaining there against orders from the Archbishop so that, in order to avoid greater evils and possible schism among the faithful, the latter begged me to send there one of our missionaries to force that "certain one" out, or the people to chase him away. And so I did in obedience to the Archbishop and to spare our missions a scandal. I assigned Fr. Serraglia as one who best knew those places, and he succeeded in the task. The people tried, besides, to have him remain there as their pastor, but he returned to his Turvo instead, after completing his mission (...).*

*Already about two years at Muçum, Fr. Morelli had been lamenting for some time now the little or no spiritual and material response of those people, who had maneuvered so much to have it made a parish. I did all possible, especially during the pastoral visitation, to encourage and advise the priest on how to exhort and stir up those people, but to no avail, until finally a worse trouble was added to the other ones by a most temerarious imprudence of that missionary.*

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*He dared blame Italy publicly from the altar of the church of Muçum and of the chapels for getting involved in the present war, etc. Imagine the furor, especially amongst our fellow countrymen of Muçum in these moments of ferments....it was the end of the world, insults.... it came close to lynching him. I wrote fiery letters, even threatening to have him immediately suspended; I obtained some good results, but the harm had been done, and upon the strong protest of a delegation from that place inviting me to take provisions in order to avoid I do not know what disorders. I had to try to remove him from there as soon as possible. And since, by happy combination, another strong protest had come to me at that very time from the people of Nova Brescia over the failure of being faithful to the promises made by the Archbishop, me, and Fr. Giuseppe, who had committed themselves, instead, in other enterprises, etc.,...I seized the opportunity, and I immediately called on the Archbishop. Though reluctantly, he ended up with accepting my proposal; so he decided to join Muçum and Esperança (Vespasiano Correa) together until a new priest could be available, and to assign Fr. Morelli to Nova Brescia, where he has been residing a short while now; there, in a new environment, we hope he will not give us any trouble, especially after the admonitions we gave him.*

*This way I was able to satisfy also Fr. Giorgio (Cavigiolo) who was beginning to complain to me for the unceasing nuisances of the new priest, and the good Jesuit Fathers who kept writing me to have an Italian missionary there on account of the great closeness of their parish to the territories where they have so many Italians whom they cannot take care of for lack of knowledge of their language. Besides, Nova Brescia is now a place of importance for its location, its sufficiently populated center, and for the number of families in the district; so much so that the Archbishop purposely decided to go there also for the Pastoral Visitation, and he remained two days administering the same number of confirmations as in Encantado. In fact, he chose to visit it ahead of Encantado. In view of all this and of the great distance (almost a four hour horse ride) from Encantado, without considering even more distant localities, not only did he approved, but he encouraged, as well, the desire of those people promising all his support and a chasuble of which he made a gift, shortly later, for the religious services in the future new parish.*

*As Fr. Giorgio says, Encantado has still a sufficient number of families for the life of his parish. I must add, however, that, following the disappointment of Muçum and to avoid any definitive commitment, I have agreed with the Archbishop and those people that the priest will go and stay there to carry out all religious services, with boundaries, rights, etc.... of a parish - but "on a trial basis" - and he will not be appointed by an official final decree until the people will have given serious proof of keeping all their promises. With this reservation I hope that things will go on more safely for all, provided Fr. Morelli may know how to behave, But only just last night, together with a letter filled with thanks from those good people, I received another one from Fr. Morelli so well impressed as to believe he can accomplish who knows what there, such as calling in the Sisters, building a convent for them, for which he is collecting money, already, etc. I will have to inundate him with letters again, therefore, to induce him to moderation.*

*But, let us pass on to our Fathers for once! Fr. Giorgio (Cavigiolo) is getting along better and better, now especially when Encantado has become a "municipality",*

*for which he is said to be proud of having been somewhat its promoter and a supporter of the new authorities. Fr. Negri is also continuing well, in fact he works full force (not to be the less than his neighbor, perhaps) to obtain for his "Santa Teresa", if not the "municipality, the "district", at least.*

*I have spoken already of Fr. Carchia; I only must add that as he is good and talented so also he takes care that everyone knows about it, and so, even as the Archbishop himself remarked, he always makes sure to point out for all to become aware that he, Fr. Francesco Carchia, a missionary of the Congregation of St. Charles, and no other, is the author of his frequent articles in our newspaper ("Il Corriere d'Italia") ...*

*So also I spoke already of Fr. Serraglia. To my invitation concerning that certain mission at the "Sesta" (Linha VI), for fear I might have him leave his "Turvo", he answered with much lament as to his commitments, health, even referring to the desire of the Superior General, all things that would not allow him to leave the parish. I immediately answered that he would be shortly sent back to Turvo, as was indeed done, as soon as I should have carried out my commitments with the Archbishop. As Fr. Costanzo tells me, Fr. Giuseppe (Pandolfi) has always sufficiently satisfied the people of Bassano. They love him especially for his goodness and simplicity, except for a few little oddities I recommended him to correct.*

*Fr. Guglieri, as usual..., and so also Fr. Medicheschi... I am doing fairly well and busy about the construction of the parish church (of Guaporé). By the help of God, and of Saint Anthony, to whom it is dedicated, I hope to have it covered by next year. However, more than of the parish, I am extremely weary of the duties of a Superior that seem to become heavier every day and over which I do not find any other comfort but in seeing the time approach when I will be very happy to relinquish this heavy burden on someone else's shoulders. And by the way since I believe that in conformity with the rules the assembly will take place next year in Italy, as of now I plead with you that only one missionary be appointed to be there so as to inconvenience as little as possible the residences of our confreres."<sup>38</sup>*

As we have seen, Fr. Preti served as regional Superior of Rio Grande do Sul until the General Chapter of 1919, which approved the proposal of unifying the three regions into only one Province, naming Fr. Preti himself as the new Provincial Superior.

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<sup>38</sup> Preti to Rinaldi, Guaporé, December 1, 1915 (Arch. G.S., 414/3).

## **CHAPTER XI**

### **THE MISSIONS IN THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO**

#### **1. "Cristoforo Colombo" ("Christopher Columbus") Orphanage**

In August, 1906, construction was started on a chapel dedicated to Saint Joseph in the boys section of the "Christopher Columbus" Orphanage. It was dedicated in March 1907 by Mons. Francisco de Paola Rodrigues de Carvalho, Capitular Vicar of São Paulo.<sup>1</sup>

We have already pointed out how Fr. Faustino Consoni could not continue to hold at the same time the offices of Superior Provincial and Rector of the Orphanage with all the problems, financial especially, entailing the support of the Institution. For this reason, on December 9, 1908, he was assigned to the care of the Church of St. Anthony in downtown São Paulo with the task of provider for the Orphanage: something he could do with the proceeds from the church and especially by his contacts with authorities and benefactors. On the same date, Fr. Pedrazzani was appointed Rector of the Orphanage, and Fr. Giovanni Capello its Vice-Rector. On February 7, 1913, Fr. Pedrazzani became the Superior Provincial, and he fixed his residence at Ribeirão Preto. The direction of the Orphanage returned into the hands of Fr. Consoni.

This Institute's existence was threatened by two events in the years 1909-1911. We have spoken already about one, that is, the prohibition to the missionaries to visit the "plantations". The other concerns the so-called "Idalina Case", which blow up in 1910 provoking one of the most ferocious scandal-mongering campaigns, quite typical of the time, waged by freemasonry against the clergy.

We recall the facts translating to the letter the results of the first inquest conducted in 1909 by the police deputy Dr. Teofilo Nobrega:

"On October 1, 1905, Mr. Dominic Stamato presented himself to the "Christopher Columbus" Orphanage, bringing along the two orphan minors, Socrates, eight years old, and Idalina, six; asking for the Director of the Institute, Fr. Faustino. He gave him a letter of recommendation from Canon Nunzio Greco, Pastor of Jaboticabal, in favor of the said youngsters petitioning that they be admitted to the orphanage. Since there were openings available at that time, the minors were accepted (...). Socrates entered the Institute of Ipiranga, where the boys' section is, and Idalina was sent to the girls' section located at Vila Prudente, under the responsibility of the Sister of Charity, Sr. Cristina.

These minors were visited several times at these institutions by Mr. Stamato and their mother without anything new happening. But when in July of the last year (1907) Dominic Stamato went as usual to visit Idalina at Vila Prudente, he was surprised to hear Sister Cristina say that the said girl had been taken out by her mother. He went, therefore, to Ipiranga, to the boys' section, to clear things up with Fr. Consoni. The latter, much surprised at the case, said he was in the dark about it, walked over to the girls' quarters with Socrates. On his return from there he said that the girl was not

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. "Registro Annuario dei Missionari Scalabriniani -Province of São Paulo" (São Paulo's Provincial Archives).



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there indeed. He referred that Sister Cristina had informed him that:

- in his absence, while at the São Martinho's plantation, a woman presented herself to the section under her direction saying she was Idalina's mother, and requested that the girl be released;
- Sister Cristina had told the lady, who had never been there before, that the girl would be entrusted to her only upon presentation of a note from the director or from the one taking his place, and advised her to go and get it at the boys' section;
- the following day the same lady called on Fr. Capello, who was then the director of the orphanage at Ipiranga, and after telling him what she had already said to Sister Cristina, she requested of him the written permission to take out the minor Idalina; the priest, however, refused because he did not know her and had no proof she was the mother of the minor, the lady asked him to call in Socrates, who would have cleared the matter;
- when the little boy was summoned in, he recognized the woman immediately running into her arms while calling her "mama"; upon witnessing this, Fr. Capello gave her the requested written permission;
- when she saw this document, Sister Cristina entrusted the girl to her though with some reluctance, as she suspected that Fr. Capello had been deceived by his good faith;
- the following day, the same woman returned to the orphanage of Ipiranga to take her leave from Socrates saying she would depart on the day after for the interior of the State, certainly for Monte Alto, near Jaboticabal, and she promised to come back to take the boy out of the Institution.

Confronted with these facts, a much saddened Fr. Faustino Consoni told Stamato to be at peace promising he would give him the girl in two weeks. On that occasion the priest asked whether Mr. Stamato had any hint as to who could have taken the girl out. He answered that only Arthur Nobre, the girl's father, could have done it. About a month later, Mr. Stamato again went back to the orphanage to get news about the minor, looking for her all over both sections of the Institute but with no better results than on the first time. And so he reported the fact to the police magistrate of the second district for orphans, requesting an investigation to ascertain whether there could be found a crime in the fact he had described in his petition presented to this magistrate."<sup>2</sup>

The inquest's result was that the woman who had taken Idalina had identified herself as Itala Fonte or Maria Luisa, and that little Socrates had behaved with her as with his mother because, when his true mother, Itala Fonte, killed herself, Dominic Stamato had gone to live with Maria Luisa, and so, both Socrates and Idalina had gotten used to calling her "mama". All other details were confirmed by the depositions of Fr. Consoni, of his secretary, Giuseppe Santanello, of Fr. Capello, of the boys and girls of the orphanage, of Sister Cristina, and of the janitor. It was ascertained that the little Idalina had been handed over on June 28, 1907.

Dominic Stamato declared that Socrates and Idalina were the natural children of Francesca Candida de Oliveira with whom he had lived until she committed suicide, and that he had done nothing else but legitimize Idalina on advice of a certain Antonio Crisostomo, who had the intention to name her his heir. In his opinion, the true parents of the two orphans should have been respectively Arthur Nobre and João de Cerqueira, something that the investigation could

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<sup>2</sup> Cfr. "O caso da menor Idalina retirada do Orphanato Christóvão Colombo." (The case of the minor Idalina abducted from Christopher Columbus Orphanage). (São Paulo, 1911, pp. 4-6).

not ascertain.

In the conclusions of his investigations, Dr. Teofilo Nobrega judged Arthur Nobre to be the most responsible for the abduction of the minor as the only one, who, being the father, would be interested in the goods the girl was to inherit from Antonio Crisostomo; but he was attributing a certain legal responsibility also to Fr. Capello for having surrendered the little girl without complying with the requirements of the law. And, lastly, he was stating as certain that Idalina was at Monte Alto, where she had been seen by several people.<sup>3</sup>

The judge of the second criminal court district, Dr. Luiz Ayres de Almeida Freitas, by a sentence on July 20, 1909, declared Maria Luisa (or Itala Fonte) guilty of abduction of a minor, and issued an arrest warrant against her; he set Arthur Nobre do Godoy free of all guilt as wholly alien to the crime, and arraigned Fr. Capello to stand trial as an accomplice in the kidnapping.<sup>4</sup>

The trial against Fr. Capello was not held due to expiration of time. One must point out that Fr. Capello stated, a few years later, he let this rendering of the facts stand in order to avoid worse evils, but it had actually been the fault of Giuseppe Santanello:

*"On the 28th of the same month, being Fr. Faustino and Capello absent from the orphanage, Itala Fonte again presented herself to obtain the release of Idalina (...). She had recourse then to the secretary Giuseppe Santanello (...), who, perhaps under bribery, of his own authority, making abusive use of Fr. Capello's name, immediately (...) wrote out a note empowering the Superior of the girls' section to entrust the daughter Idalina to Itala Fonte."*<sup>5</sup>

In a quasi-testament made out on February 9, 1914, Fr. Faustino Consoni declared:

*"In my absence (while on a mission at the plantation of São Martinho) a woman presented herself to my confrere acting as Vice Rector, Fr. Giovanni Capello, and by tricks and arguments that seemed to him most credible, she succeeded in securing from him an order written out by my late secretary, Giuseppe A. Santanello, to take Idalina out of Vila Prudente"*<sup>6</sup>

It looked as though it had all subsided with the sentence of July 20, 1909; but the woman had disappeared, and the fact of the two names revealed by her and the contradictory news on the finding of Idalina offered a good pretext to the freemasonic press for keeping alive the scandal that came into the open on October 1910, after staging notorious "black masses" and similar libelous lies staged by freemasons at that time. Fr. Capra sent news of it to the Superior General on November 1, 1910:

*"Following the massive demonstration against the Bishops assembled in São Paulo after the events of Portugal, the local anticlericals (all Italian) gained in audacity and they engaged in merciless and ferocious campaign against*

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<sup>3</sup> Cfr. *Ibid.* pp. 6-12.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. *Ibid.* pp. 13-15.

<sup>5</sup> Capello to Card. De Lai, Crespano del Grappa, Nov. 4, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 396/10).

<sup>6</sup> "Testamento" (Last Will). Fr. Consoni, São Paulo, February 9, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 396/10).

*Catholics. They took aim at the Orphanage and Fr. Faustino, reenacting here the disgraceful events of Varazze! For three days now, all newspapers, even the most serious ones, repeat horrible accusations made by a former orphan girl of Vila Prudente solicited by the directors of two anticlerical newspapers. Our Frs are accused of rapes, murders, etc. Poor Fr. Stefani is singled out as the rapist, and Fr. Faustino as the murderer.*

*These defamatory calumnies are repeated by now in all newspapers and telegraphed to all places! In São Paulo we are insulted by the populace. Fortunately the accusations are much too enormous and badly plotted; following the police inquest it will be very easy, therefore, to bring the detractors to trial, and more so because the Archbishop is all set on a decisive action. We hope that the most virulent anticlerical, Oreste Ristori, the principal author of these lies, will be expelled from Brazil.*

*Countess Prates offered us the services of her own lawyer; charged by Fr. Faustino (sick in bed for several days, now) to represent him with full faculties, I have initiated our defense on the "Fanfulla". By order of the Archbishop a single issue will be published against our accusers! Together with Archbishop Duarte, the Superior of the Jesuits is also all busy to see that justice be rendered to us. In the meantime, however, these lies have been publicized all over, and poor Fr. Faustino is depicted as the brutal murderer of girls.*

*The "Battaglia", besides, publishes new calumnies: it speaks also of a certain "Girolamo", etc. But compared with the detailed description of the first two accusations (that is, the rapes and murders of some non-existent Josephine, and of the notorious yet-to-be-found Idalina), the new lies do not make any impression, and they are not even reported by the other newspapers. This violent storm will certainly fade out, but it will leave sad scars behind on its wake, though Divine Providence may very well draw good on behalf of the Orphanage even from this evil.*

*On your part, write words of comfort to Fr. Faustino; and do not allow Fr. Stefani to depart from Italy, even though (needless to say it) totally innocent. I would have many things to tell you about these lies. This would imply sad revelations, but this is not the right time! Sticking closely together is what we now need most. Fr. Marco is busy at the church of Saint Anthony; I have interrupted my work (which have cost me in the past so much trouble and worry), and I have courageously taken my place by the side of Fr. Faustino. I shall do everything possible so that good may derive to him from this struggle and his name may shine even more greatly with a most bright light before the whole of São Paulo, and the reparatory process be solemn."<sup>7</sup>*

Probably on October 28, 1910, or a little earlier, the directors of two anticlerical newspapers of São Paulo, "La Battaglia" and "La Lanterna", respectively Oreste Ristori and Edgar Leuenroth, had brought suit with Judge Luis Ayres de Almeida Freitas against Frs. Faustino Consoni and Corrado Stefani, charging that Idalina would have been raped by Fr. Stefani and murdered by Fr. Consoni. The latter, besides, would have been guilty of raping and killing

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<sup>7</sup> Capra to Vicentini, São Paulo, November 1, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 396/10). The "sad experiences" alluded to by Fr. Capra, in our opinion, refer to the already mentioned fact that the author of the imprudence in surrendering Idalina was not Fr. Capello, but the secretary of Fr. Consoni, Joseph Santanello, for whose protection Fr. Capello was made to appear the responsible one, as the latter testifies.

another orphan girl, a certain Giuseppina.

The Secretary of Justice and Public Safety charged Dr. Arthur Xavier Pinheiro e Prado with conducting a new and thorough investigation. Ristori and Leuenroth stated having gathered their information from America Ferraresi, a girl of 14, and a former resident of the Orphanage. She had attributed them to certain Aniello Paciullo, Angelina Paciullo, and Amelia Moreira. It was not difficult for the delegate to prove the absurdity of the "revelations" of America Ferraresi. At the time of Idalina's disappearance Fr. Stefani was in Italy; there was no doubt of the fact that Idalina had been surrendered alive to the self-proclaimed Mary Luigie or Itala Fonte; the only two girls named Giuseppina, who had been residents of the Orphanage, were still alive....

America Ferraresi had even pointed out the burial place of Idalina in the soccer field of the Orphanage at Ipiranga. The whole field was dug out, but nothing was found except an ass bone.... At last, the Ferraresi girl decided to confess that she had lied induced by Aniello Paciullo and his daughters, Nanina and Angelina. The delegate stressed that Aniello Paciullo was an anticlerical.<sup>8</sup>

The report of delegate Pinheiro e Prado was signed on April 5, 1911. There still remained a question mark: Where was Idalina? Based on this fact, the defamatory campaign was carried on for some time yet, until it all subsided little by little. We can easily imagine, however, the moral martyrdom of the Missionaries.

On November 7, 1910, Fr. Faustino wrote to the Superior General:

*"I had been writing you in my last letters that I did not feel like coming to Italy because I had forebodings of something dreadful against our Institute. This has been proven true by the fact of the infamous calumny aimed at my humble person by anarchists and masons, a calumny that morally destroyed me and Frs. Capello and Stefani.*

*As you shall gather from the press, I stand accused of nothing less than of the rape and murder of a minor, Giuseppina, a girl that has never existed, and of killing Idalina, a girl released more than three years ago into the custody of her supposed mother, while I was absent in São Martinho's plantation.*

*Soldiers were here digging and searching for the bodies of the two girls supposedly killed by me and who even intended to set the Institute on fire.*

*Under insistent questioning, the young lady America has three times retracted her whole confession accusing a certain Paciullo, an avowed anarchist, as responsible for inducing her to defame the priests and the sisters with promises to make her become a celebrity. They chose me as their target because once the head is dishonored the whole unit would fall!*

*Hell has broken loose! Though not guilty of even a venial sin in this matter, still it is several nights I do not sleep a wink! My heart is filled with sorrow and now and then I find comfort in my tears. Woe to us all, should I have been absent in this decisive moment! The Bishop of Paraná was here to share tears with me, with Archbishop Duarte Leopoldo, the prelates, the vicars, Count and Countess De Prates, with all Ministers and good Catholics. Letters and telegrams come in*

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<sup>8</sup> Cfr. "O caso de menor Idalina, etc., cit. pp. 15-20.

*all detesting with one voice the infamous plot woven against me!*

*The whole Brazilian press has proven with incontestable evidence the devilish slyness of these worms, a veritable disgrace to mankind! Three able lawyers, hired by Count and Countess De Prates, by Mr. Lara, and Archbishop Duarte, have filed suit against them, but our enemies are putting the blame on others already, claiming not to be the ones responsible: the infamous cowards!*

*I have also received a letter from an anarchist telling that within a month I will have to pay the penalty for my crimes: but what crimes?*

*Rest assured, Your Reverence, my beloved Superior, that in case I should be treacherously murdered by this infamous sect, rest assured, I repeat, that in my fifteen or almost sixteen years in Brazil I have never committed or even said a word which could in the least render my dignity as a priest and missionary less resplendent (...). Authorities are closely following this dark case of that sect. They sense and well understand it to be a war-cry against the Religious Congregations and the Church, aimed, later on, when made bolder, also at the rulers.*

*Our accusers are two individuals of the worst kind; one, a certain Oreste Ristori of Empoli (Florence), already under house arrest, an anarchist and an infamous homosexual, and the other, another "Oreste", the notorious director of "The Lanterna". People, ignorant as they are, still cling to their prejudices and are not yet convinced! Who knows whether they will ever be!*

*Yesterday, beginning with the Archbishop in his Cathedral, in all churches the priests, omitting the homily, had words of condemnation against these detractors; and to say that they are Italian, especially the newspaper "Il Fanfulla", which is the organ of the Colony, but of the Masonic colony, that is!"<sup>9</sup>*

In his just quoted Spiritual Testament, Fr. Faustino points out:

*"It would be too long to recall here the persecutions I suffered (...). All Brazil lined up in two opposing fronts: on one side the good people, in our defense because the evidence of our innocence was more than metaphysical; on the opposite the others, of the worst kind, and more so (and let this be said to the shame of my Italy) because they were Italian. Many of them, benefitted by me, wanted the elimination of the two orphanages and cried out for my death at all costs, and called for it like that of Jesus at an infamous rally held at night in São Paulo, in which an innocent soldier lost his life in the fulfillment of his duty."<sup>10</sup>*

Fr. Capello supplies us with some more details:

*"The offensive of freemasonry against the Missionaries of St. Charles was well conducted, and right from the first moves even the well-meaning people of the city, including native and foreign clergy, were afraid that the accusations might not be groundless, such was the insistence with which they were repeated on high and believed by the public. But when the press of the opposite field began interweaving illogical absurdities with more likely hypotheses and better reasoned arguments on which to base their accusations; and when the people began opening their eyes on the impudent and shameful freedom accorded all those wicked ones by authorities upon whom rests the duty of defending truth and justice, the light was not late in shining (...) While both Brazilian and foreign Catholic newspapers, together with the report on*

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<sup>9</sup> Consoni to Vicentini, São Paulo, November 7, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 396/10).

<sup>10</sup> "Testamento" of Fr. Consoni, São Paulo, February 9, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 396/10).

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the fact were reproving at first also the Missionaries of Saint Charles, ostracizing them as unworthy of the hospitality accorded them on account of the abuse they had made of it by the martyrdom of the poor girl, they rose up with one voice, later on, decrying the infamous calumny and unjust offense against virtue, and raising hymns and praises to the zeal and activity of the Missionaries (...)

They could well understand by now that the masonic attack was aimed at the destruction of religion, and indirectly at the whole clergy (...). Consequently, a counterattack was devised to rebut the accusations by means of newspapers with a large circulation.

Brilliant writers published flaming articles in the Catholic newspapers of the city! And since there did not exist an Italian Catholic newspaper that could stand up to the notorious "Fanfulla" and "Avanti", a zealous and holy Capuchin from the Province of Trent, Fr. Silverio, founded the "Squilla" which was being circulated widely amongst the greatly numerous Italian colony!"<sup>11</sup>

Still, with the most sickening lies discredited, the masons did not give up their campaign:

"They set everything in motion to induce the Italian consul to suspend the subsidy our government was granting that institution of charity (...). And the consul fell into the trap set before him more because of weakness and fear of intimidations than of conviction. And so the hostile newspapers grabbed also this occasion for publishing articles under such cubital headings as: "Having ascertained the guilt of the Missionaries of Saint Charles, Italian Consul suspends subsidy to the "Orphanage". What subsidy? Could ten thousand Italian liras granted for the support and education of some thirty little orphans recommended by the various consular authorities be called a subsidy? It cost them sixty reis contos (120 thousand liras) to support and educate 30 children in Brazil, and they dared deprive those poor little orphans of their bread to please the rabble-rousers! But, Divine Providence did not fail us, and their attempt resulted in a miserable failure, because, faced with such a fact, the Government of São Paulo doubled the subsidy it used to grant the Orphanage in the past, as a protest against it. It is even said that the consul, who through weakness had sided with the rabble of Italy who had taken refuge in those distant regions, had to be removed by the Italian government, under pressure and protest from the press, especially from the clamor created by an article inspired by Fr. Capello titled, "Italian Consul plays the part of Pilate". More furious than ever, the masons were all set, however, on winning the war waged against religion. Inconclusive polemics in the press were not enough any longer. They decided to resort to public demonstrations through the streets of the city, promptly repressed by the police of São Paulo; and it was right on the occasion of one of these demonstrations that the death of one man and the wounding of many others had to be lamented on a Sunday of November 1911 in a brawl of the rebels with the police. More than that, on the same day, dispersed by the police, some one hundred of those rogues staged a tragicomic assault on the boys' orphanage (...). Having secured two soldiers (one, a negro, and a Portuguese the other), we had the smallest ones locked up in the chapel to pray for help and protection before the Blessed Sacrament solemnly exposed, and armed the older ones with the few weapons we could find around the building. Thus prepared, we were ready to resist those infamous people cursing at and insulting the Missionary. Everything had been set in such a way as would not provoke those lunatics, but having come too close and realizing for sure what their shameful plan was, the two Brazilian soldiers were ordered to the windows and given the sign to fire a volley. A confusion was seen amongst the rebels, followed by a general flight, in the conviction that numerous soldiers were there to defend the Orphanage (...).

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<sup>11</sup> Capello to Card. De Lai, Crespano del Grappa, Nov. 14, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 396/10).

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Following the bloody episode on the streets of the city, the name and case of Idalina fell little by little into oblivion, and for many years it was never spoken of except by some newspapers to announce from time to time her appearance (...). Finally, on October 2, 1923, all newspapers of São Paulo were unanimous in reporting that Idalina had indeed appeared in the city and was under the custody of the General Delegate of Police, who intended to avail himself of her in tracing the persons truly guilty of her abduction, etc. By then Idalina must have been 25. Eluding the surveillance of those who had been keeping her for 16 years from contact with the world, she had succeeded in fleeing, thus arriving at the city where she was presented to the authorities by trusted people. The secret and discreet inquest lasted a long time, until, at last, they could have the wicked lady that had abducted her in their hands. But (...) the masons must have used all their power also on this occasion not to meet with a humiliating defeat! In fact, this is exactly what happened. Under pressure of obscure threats and demands from Lodges and Grand Lodges, the woman abductor was made to go into secure freedom!

In any case, the people, so often cheated in their good faith, are now sure of the innocence of the Missionaries of Saint Charles and of the martyrdom they were subjected to for so many years!"<sup>12</sup>

We cannot neglect pointing out the fact that, though little sympathetic with Italians, Archbishop D. Duarte Leopoldo e Silva was the first one to urge Catholics to wake up and defend themselves.

The following personalities distinguished themselves in defending the missionaries and the clergy in general: Mons. Sebastian Leme, future Auxiliary Bishop of Rio de Janeiro; Mons. Benedito de Souza, Vicar General; Fr. Giustino Lombardi, a Jesuit, who was the soul of the reaction; the President of the State; the Chief of Police; Count and Countess Prates, who paid for the trial and offered the services of their own lawyer, who, unfortunately, proved to be utterly unfit for the task!

Among the very many testimonials of protest and comfort offered to the Missionaries be it enough to quote an autograph of St. Pius X dated on June 10, 1911:

*"With heartfelt congratulations and invoking heavenly comforts from the Lord on him in trial we lovingly impart the Apostolic blessing on our beloved son Fr. Faustino Consoni as a token of our benevolence."*<sup>13</sup>

As the storm faded out, the Orphanage continued its life, supported by the tireless charity of Fr. Consoni, of the other Missionaries, and of the Missionary Sisters of Saint Charles (Scalabrinians), who were caring especially for the orphaned girls of Vila Prudente.

By the end of 1919, one of them, a niece of Fr. Faustino, wrote the following report on the girls' section:

"The recently constructed section of the girls is one of the largest architectural buildings extant in São Paulo. Its rooms are spacious, airy, and full of light.

Its many units, its truly enchanting topographic position, its comforts as demanded by good hygienic, and its vast garden surrounding and beautifying it, are all effective factors for the health and joy of these orphans who are spending their years here in much happiness and full of zest for life. The educational program, up-to-date and

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Photocopy of Pius X Autograph, June 10, 1911 (Arch. G.S., 396/10).

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fitting the girls' conditions, is carried out by the Missionary Sisters of Saint Charles who perform their work with untiring and loving alacrity! The young orphans are presently 200, separated into units according to age, study, and courses. Good and intelligent, they are united in one heart and soul, though so different in origin and nationality; they live a life of peace, joy, and work, each in her respective group!

Department One: Kindergarten

Any visitor crossing the threshold into this department will find himself in a simple room indeed, but a spacious and airy one. On his first step inside it he sees seventy-two little girls all lined up in good order, with a happy face on which is impressed an attitude of serious curiosity transpiring clear from their wide and expressive eyes (...).

The older ones of this room already attending the upper first elementary grade, know how to correctly read any book, compose phrases, write under dictation on special portable blackboards, and do arithmetic. They speedily recite the elementary names of the human body, and the first geographic notions of America, Europe, especially of Brazil and Italy. With much diligence they practice exercises of penmanship in special copybooks, learn a variety of other information, and the arts of music and singing, as well.

As is the duty with all schools, so also with ours, one of the main subjects taught here is Catechism, that whole of religious and civic truth that make up the basis for a good education and forming of one's character,

Department Two:

After this quick look through the kindergarten, let us pass on to the other units.

But, first, we want you to know that as there are girls whose age is on the level with their studies and brilliant results, we have also others who, though of a younger age, still give praiseworthy proof of their progress in work and study because of their alert and precocious intelligence that distinguishes them.

We do not deem it necessary, therefore, to give evidence of the ability and of the results obtained by the girls in the study of the various subjects they follow, such as the Italian and Portuguese languages, arithmetic, geometry, higher calculus, geography, natural sciences, and physics.

Many of them make good progress in geometric and ornamental drawing in a variety of patterns and designs (...).

What we described so far is, in one word, the very profitable program of study and work of this second department in which younger and teenage girls are living together (...).

Due to their modest social condition and to the limited means of the Institute, our orphan girls do not take studies higher than the ones we just described (...). More than of higher studies they stand in need of learning how to work, and they accomplish this when still young and proportionally to their age, capacity, and strength, by the example and teachings of the Sisters.

Lower Section:

Instead of pens, in this unit one sees small knitting needles shining at the tranquil tic-tic of the kindly hands of more or less skilled girls, giving their work the serious attention proper of childhood to laborious gravity. Other girls are learning crochet work (...).

Vocational School:

Here we find the girls of the middle course busy at their sewing machines working on dresses, lingerie pieces, stockings, crochet, simple sewing and mending of any type of clothing, all done to perfection: besides, there is no lack of alphabet samples which the orphans copy very skillfully from the various patterns.

Upper Section:



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This section offers added courses on the basic elements of hand-sewing and hem-stitching. Here are made all kinds of lingerie needlework by hand: hem-stitching on any linen item, white and colored silk embroidery, crocheting of babies' clothing and house pieces, stitch-mending of fine cloth material and tulle, purl stitching and various needle patterns of feminine inspiration: anything, in a word, that is useful and conducive to the growth of their intelligence and to the degree of education fitting the conditions of each orphan (...).

Exhibition of their finished works

The display many visitors admire every year is always such a success as to make it seem impossible for some to believe that poor orphans like these may be able to produce such fine works. More than once, many of the visitors were so impressed as to vie with each other in buying certain items of real artistic value at any price.

We are happy to report also that all the girls sheltered here are being trained in whatever they need to learn about keeping a house clean, orderly, and well organized.

Dropping in at any hour of each day, visitors could see some girls working in the laundry and ironing rooms, in the wardrobe, kitchen, wine cellar, and others busy at cleaning the house in dormitories, staircases, halls, courtyards, gardens, helped along by the Sisters who direct them and supervise their discipline."<sup>14</sup>

On November 24, 1919, Fr. Marco Simoni was named Director of the Orphanage, while Fr. Consoni continued to act as "*the provider*". On the same year, Fr. Consoni sent a report on the state of the Institution to the President of the State of São Paulo:

"The great majority of the pupils in the orphanage "Christopher Columbus" are orphans and very poor, and so this institution lives by the support of Divine Providence.

In force of the present subsidy laws, the Institute is granted a sum of 23 contos by the Most Excellent State Government, with which it provides for the fifty children it supports, and another 8 contos by the Municipal Chamber, also sponsoring 16 other children.

According to the questionnaires returned annually to the State's Department of Statistics and Archives in the last four years, the expenses for the care of 250 children in clothing, board, maintenance, medical care, personnel, etc.... amount to a yearly average of 100 contos.

With admirable dedication, the Most Excellent Government of this State did not spare efforts to put an end to the general epidemics which had spread all over the city and the interior in October of last year. Furthermore, to the end of providing proper shelter for the poor orphans of the Spanish flu, in agreement with the Metropolitan Archbishop, it made arrangements to have 101 children admitted to this Orphanage; most of them were taken in only with the clothing they had on.

More than 150 orphans of the 320 presently sheltered in both sections of this Orphanage are now the charge of the Government. The subsidies we received at the time paid only for the initial expenses of clothing and board, etc.

The boys' section of Ipiranga built only for 140 orphans cannot provide proper room for 210 of them. For this reason, I took provisions that a new section, housed in a rented building, be functioning shortly at Vila Prudente for the exceeding number of orphans under the age of eight now living at the Orphanage of Ipiranga. This section shall be entrusted to the care of the Sisters in charge of the girls' section.

From this report one can very well conclude for himself that an Institution of Charity

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<sup>14</sup> V. Consoni, "Orfanatrofio Cristoforo Colombo in Villa Prudente" - São Paulo, Brazil. "L'Emigrato Italiano in America". A.X., March 15, 1916, pp. 43-47.

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without resources of its own and dependent on public generosity cannot continue if it does not reduce and limit the number of its charges.

However, since the great majority of these are poor and without protection, the undersigned does not see any other way but to solicit that, when they will debate the welfare law for next year, the Public Authorities of the State deign to consider increasing the subsidy to be granted the "Christopher Columbus Orphanage" proportionally to the number of orphans it takes care of, in consideration of the benefits this Institution is bringing to abandoned children."<sup>15</sup>

This account (of the facts) to the Government of the State of São Paulo had begun with the reminder that the time was close for the 25th anniversary of the founding of the "Christopher Columbus Orphanage". On that occasion, Cardinal Gasparri, Secretary of State of Pope Benedict XV, sent the following letter to Fr. Consoni:

"It is my solicitous pleasure to inform you that the August Pontiff has received with deep satisfaction the news from the letter of Your Most Illustrious Reverence that on February 15th next, the 25th anniversary of the founding of "Christopher Columbus Orphanage" will be celebrated, by you directed for so many years with wisdom and love. His Holiness is pleased that at the same time on this happy occasion the venerable memory of the pious Founder of the Missionaries of Saint Charles is also celebrated, with one of his most worthy sons, the late Fr. Marchetti, an emulator of his fruitful and active zeal in the field of charity and in the apostolate. His Holiness well knows, in fact, how the deserving Fr. Marchetti conceived the idea of that charitable institution when faced with the moving episode of a dying Italian mother who had recommended to him the education of her poor orphan child, and how that providential institute has afterwards gradually developed to presently caring for several hundred derelicts of all nationalities, the innocent victims of misfortune. For this reason, our Holy Father quite willingly assents to sharing in this happy commemoration, which stands as a glorification of Christian charity on the historic hill of Ipiranga. And while he tributes his praise first of all to a work highly deserving of religion and civilization, he calls for public acknowledgment of and gratitude to the memory of the illustrious Prelate, who has been rightly called the Apostle to migrants. He formulates good wishes that by the generous help of all people the well deserving Scalabrinian Congregation may evermore extend each day in those regions for the salvation of souls and for the welfare of abandoned children. To this end, the Holy Father invokes an abundance of heavenly graces on it and on all those who contribute to its growth, and as a good auspice for them he bestows the Apostolic Blessing with paternal benevolence on you, on your collaborators, benefactors, and on all your little orphans."<sup>16</sup>

We have mentioned several times Count and Countess De Prates (who were) the most generous benefactors of the "Christopher Columbus Orphanage". Close by Río Claro, some 200 kilometers from São Paulo, they owned the "Santa Gertrudes" model plantation, in whose central location they had built a chapel.

It was the plantation most visited by the Scalabrinians, who in time began serving it every Sunday.

In 1905, the confraternity of St. Benedict of Río Claro had consented also to providing a fixed residence for two missionaries, one of whom was to serve the

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<sup>15</sup> F. Consoni, "Petizione al Presidente del Congresso dello Stato di São Paulo", Sept. 19, 1919 (Arch. G.S., 396/10).

<sup>16</sup> Card. Gasparri to Consoni, Rome, December 1, 1919, printed copy (Arch. G.S., 396/10).

church of Saint Benedict, while the other would have acted as Chaplain of Saint Gertrudes. <sup>17</sup>

In 1905, Fr. Luigi Capra wrote as follows from this plantation:

"There are 950,000 coffee plants, cared for by some 200 families in six colonies, and by many seasonal hired hands paid 60 milreis a month. The colonists receive 70 milreis for each 1,000 plants they care for. They are allowed to sow 2,000 plants of corn to each 4,000 ones of coffee. Children also may work in the coffee plantation. At harvest time they receive 500 reis per each 50 measures. The harvest season lasts four months, because an only plant can produce as much as 30 or 40 measures of coffee. Each colonist has a piece of land for his own use."<sup>18</sup>

An agreement between Fr. Leandro Dell'Uomo and Fr. Batti, Pastor of Rio Claro, was reached only in 1909. The Bishop of Campinas granted his approval for the residence of the missionaries<sup>19</sup>. In 1910, the agreement was actually finalized in a way different than was formerly expected. In Rio Claro, Count De Prates bought a house for 10,000 contos in which to host an "Apostolic School" (Minor Seminary) and an Orphanage titled after "Dona Antonietta De Prates."<sup>20</sup> We do not know how long the Apostolic School lasted; the orphanage, instead, remained opened three years for some 30 or 40 children as an autonomous branch of "Christopher Columbus Orphanage", supported partly by it and by proceeds from Saint Gertrude's chaplaincy.<sup>21</sup>

It looks as though the first resident missionary of Rio Claro and chaplain, at the same time, of Saint Gertrude was Fr. Andrea Garau, who left unexpectedly for Italy on November 9, 1911.<sup>22</sup> He was succeeded by Fr. Giovanni Capello who returned to Italy because of poor health on July 22, 1912, and then by Fr. Carlo Pedrazzani. By the end of 1913 the house was closed and sold.<sup>23</sup>

Fr. Vicentini's sad comment was:

*"It is useless to attempt new enterprises when we do not have trustworthy personnel. If we only had the qualified people we could depend on, I would be the first one to say: let us open an Apostolic School for the Congregation, but what can we do without personnel! A certain individual gives start to something, but then the following year he does not want to have anything to do with it; we do not have anyone to replace him, and so, to our shame, we must close it down!"<sup>24</sup>*

## **2. The Parish of Saint Bernardo**

Back in good health, Fr. Francesco Dolci, first Scalabrinian pastor of São Bernardo do Campo, could return to his parish in September 1907. Fr. Silvio

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<sup>17</sup> C. Martins Lemenche to Consoni, Rio Claro, November 8, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 357/4).

<sup>18</sup> L. Capra, "Diario", November 18, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 1520).

<sup>19</sup> L. Capra to Vicentini, São Paulo, January 20, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 1520). Consoni to Vicentini, São Paulo, October 21, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 357/9).

<sup>20</sup> Fr. Consoni to Vicentini, São Paulo, July 19, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 357/10).

<sup>21</sup> Cfr. "Registro Annuario, et. cit. pp. 18-19 (São Paulo's Prov. Archives).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>23</sup> Simoni to Vicentini, São Paulo, October 10, 1913 (Arch. G.S., 305/1). C. Pedrazzani to Vicentini, Ribeirao Preto, December 23, 1913 (Arch. G.S., 406).

<sup>24</sup> Vicentini to Simoni, Piacenza, November 10, 1913 (Arch. G.S., 357/12).

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Lorenzoni was his assistant, but Fr. Dolci was complaining that this priest was being sent too often around by Fr. Consoni on tours of the plantations, and that the parish was too close to the "Christopher Columbus Orphanage". Fr. Consoni was availing himself of his position to exert an undue interference in the running of the parish; in fact, the most extensive portion of it, the one along the Santos-São Paulo railroad, was administered directly by him.<sup>25</sup> Difficulties came also from Archbishop Duarte Leopoldo e Silva:

*"They took away from me my assistant Fr. Viola and replaced him with Fr. Capra: the Archbishop who seems all bent on finding means to get rid of us, Italian pastors, is not yet planning to do the same with Saint Bernardo. Let us hope, then, that things here may remain in the "status quo" (as they are) for the good of our fellow countrymen. The creation of new dioceses has improved in part the conditions of our confreres here in São Paulo. While they were curtailed before in their work up there at Ipiranga, now each one of them is carrying on his steady work either in this or that diocese. One cannot say that also the conditions of our countrymen have improved by this innovation, due to the obstinate opposition of the Bishops to permit us to tour the plantations."*<sup>26</sup>

In 1910, Fr. Dolci pointed out that the population kept increasing rapidly at the "Station of São Bernardo", the present Santo André, and that there were plans to transfer the residence to that locality, unless the Archbishop should decide otherwise.<sup>27</sup> In fact, on December 21, 1911, the Archbishop divided the parish of São Bernardo in three:

São Bernardo Vila, Santo André, Ribeirão Pires. To Santo André was attached the chapel of Saint Cajetan, until then a part of the parish of Braz.

Fr. Dolci fell sick again in 1913, and was replaced by the "associate" priest Fr. Tarcisio Zanotti. The first died in 1915 and the latter in 1917. Fr. Francesco Navarro took possession of the parish on October 17, 1917, and directed it till 1934.

Fr. Corrado Stefani describes for us a typical Good Friday procession in 1918:

*"I have spent Holy Week at São Bernardo, helping the pastor Fr. Francesco. The services turned out very successful; the church was always overcrowded with people. We had 1,150 communicants. As you already well know, the parish of São Bernardo is made up mostly of Italians, in majority Venetians and Bergamasque. On Good Friday night, after the singing of Vespers, the pious procession of the "Dead Christ" followed. It was a moving and edifying pageantry! Some people came from as far as a three or four hour walk; there were even some from Ipiranga. A special feature of this procession here in Brazil is the wailing song of Veronica. A young lady dressed in black walks ahead of the statue of the "Dead Christ"; the procession pauses from time to time at fixed places, the "Veronica" ascends a chair and slowly displaying a painting of the "Sacred Face" (of Jesus), she sings the words of the Scriptures: 'Come, all you who pass by the way, look and see whether there is any suffering like my suffering.'*

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<sup>25</sup> Dolci to Vicentini, São Bernardo, October 3, 1907, and May 25, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 392/1).

<sup>26</sup> Dolci to Vicentini, São Bernardo, June 3, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 392/1).

<sup>27</sup> Dolci to Vicentini, São Bernardo, April 22, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 392/1).

*In the silence of the night, within the religious attention of hundreds of people in procession, before the image of the "Dead Christ", these inspired words penetrate deep into one's soul to strike directly at the heart, they stir up its innermost cords, and kindle the most tender and delicate sentiments."<sup>28</sup>*

### **3. Cascalho (Parish of the Assumption)**

We have seen how Fr. Giovanni Capello had been sent in 1908 to Cascalho to the help of Fr. Pietro Dotto<sup>29</sup>, who took care of the parish of the Assumption from 1904 to 1911. Fr. Capello was afterwards named Vice Director of "Christopher Columbus Orphanage" in 1908.

His Excellency J.B. Nery, the first Bishop of Campinas, a diocese since June 7, 1908, conducted the pastoral visitation at Cascalho in October 1909, and this is what he left written at the close of it in the parish register:

"Chapel of Our Lady of the Assumption at Cascalho.

On October 12, 1909, I visited this chapel, located at three kilometers from the parish of Cordeiro to which it belongs. Cascalho was granted the privilege of a resident chaplain with the faculties of a quasi-pastor by the late Bishop of São Paulo. In virtue of a yearly provision of May 2, 1901, he is empowered to administer solemn baptisms and perform marriages with obligation to send half of the stole offerings to the pastor of Cordeiro, as prescribed by the laws of the diocese."<sup>30</sup>

Fr. Dotto had to take care at that time of both Cascalho and Cordeiro, because Fr. Leandro Dell'Uomo was staying at Rio Claro. The population was not too large, but it was difficult to carry out all parish functions either in Cascalho or at Cordeiro. Besides, the people of Cordeiro did not want to contribute to the support of the priest because he was not residing in their parish. And so, Fr. Dotto could not even afford a sexton.<sup>31</sup> On October 1, 1918, Fr. Dotto was transferred to "Christopher Columbus Orphanage" and was succeeded by Fr. Luigi Stefanello, who directed that parish for a good 44 years!

The canonical erection of the parish, officially separated from that of Cordeiro, took place on August 2, 1914, in the presence of the diocesan visitor Mons. Joaquim Manede de Silva Leite, who confirmed over a hundred persons and granted to the pastor the faculty to celebrate a Mass every month at each of the six plantations, also in private homes. In fact, there was only one chapel, and it was in the plantation of Santa Teresa. Statistics reported there were then 3,500 people. The parish had a confraternity of the Sacred Heart with 56 members.<sup>32</sup>

The same diocesan visitor made the pastoral visitation at Cascalho on April 24-26, 1915, administering 215 communions and 64 confirmations. He wrote in the register:

"I have found all things in perfect order, and there was no need for any observation.

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<sup>28</sup> Stefani to Rinaldi, São Paulo, April 4, 1918 (Arch. G.S., 696/14).

<sup>29</sup> Francesconi, "History of the Scalabrinian Congregation" Vol. III (Rome, 1973), p. 170 (original).

<sup>30</sup> "Termo" (Report) First Pastoral Visitation by Bishop Nery, Cascalho, October 12, 1909, copy (Arch. G.S., 410/2).

<sup>31</sup> Dotto to Consoni, Cascalho, February 24, 1910, and to Vicentini, Cascalho, April 29, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 403).

<sup>32</sup> Cfr. Copy of documents on inauguration of Assumption parish at Cascalho, (Arch. G.S., 403).

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The Most Rev. Pastor deserves sincere praise. With truly apostolic zeal he has directed the religious life of this fine and dear parish.

The religious spirit prevailing here and the diligent care of vestments, sacred images, and all that is necessary for divine worship, are worth noticing and very comforting. Everything is kept in good condition, in plentiful supply, and in accord with the liturgical norms; it has become a model parish! There exist a well organized group of the Apostleship of Prayer for men and women, a catechism program, and the Association of St. Giuseppe."<sup>33</sup>

Eugenio Bonardelli of "*Italica Gens*", visited the Italian community of Cascalho in 1914, and reported:

"Cascalho is an old colonial nucleus, now a township, a half-hour trolley ride from Cordeiro, an important station along the São Paulo railroad. It was my desire to visit this small center of Italian colonial life, where I knew were living some 200 fellow countrymen, most of them small landowners.

The boy conducting the trolley is the son of colonists from the Veneto and speaks a mixed dialect of Portuguese and Venetian. He does not know how to read or write, as is unfortunately the case with the majority of the children of our colonists. As to education, a process of reversal and regression is now taking place among them. Due to the beneficial Italian laws on compulsory education, parents who emigrated from Italy in the last fifteen years, generally knew reading and writing, but their children do not.

Cascalho stands on a pleasant location. On its vast square are found the church directed by Rev. Luigi Stefanello, a missionary of the Congregation of Bishop Scalabrini, and the general stores. The most important one of these is the property of Mr. Piscitelli, who fixed here his residence some 30 years ago. His fortune is a proof of what the Italian worker can do for the economy.

Accompanied by Rev. Stefanello and Mr. Piscitelli, I visited the town, and then the lands of Mr. Piscitelli himself. His apple orchard is amazing for the variety and excellent quality of its fruits; his coffee plantation is very carefully cared for.

The owner tells me that a small and carefully cultivated plantation yields better returns than a large one conducted according to systems presently in use all over the state. Vast plantations require much money for the treating of plants and for their care, expenses not necessarily proportionate to a greater yield. This is a valid consideration for one that favors the breaking down of large estates into small properties that would result in a great prosperity for the State of São Paulo.

The visit of Bishop Scalabrini of Piacenza, Founder of the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles for Italian migrants, is much remembered here. On his stay at Cascalho, he left in all a great admiration for his humility and affability.

On feast days, the town's vast square fills up with people; they are Italians coming in on horseback or on trollies from the countryside.

However, there is no Italian school at Cascalho. This is a thorn for all the good people who have the interests of our people at heart. After a few hours, I left Cascalho with sincere thanks for the exquisite hospitality, wishing the town's notables to soon see a school rise up in it, as is their desire. Mr. Piscitelli is in possession of a house close by his important warehouse which he is willing to offer free of charge for use as a school. Rev. Stefanello also shows himself quite available, I have no doubt, therefore, that they will succeed."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> "Termo" Pastoral Visitation by Bishop Leite, Cascalho, April 26, 1915, Copy (Arch. G.S., 403).

<sup>34</sup> E.B. "Da Cascalho", "*Italica Gens*", a.V. n. 3-8 (March-August, 1914), pp. 148-150.

#### **4. Cordeiro**

As mentioned before, Fr. Vittorio Viola was transferred from Cordeiro to São Paulo in December 1905.<sup>35</sup> We are not informed on when he returned there; all we know, however, is that he left it again in August 1907, when he moved to Ribeirãozinho as its quasi-pastor.<sup>36</sup>

His place was taken by Fr. Leandro Dell'Uomo, who completed in a short while the construction of the church on a piece of land that had been blessed on September 8, 1906. The new church was solemnly dedicated on December 8, 1908:

"From the newspaper 'São Paulo' of that city on December 13, we gather the description of a double celebration that had taken place in Cordeiro on December 8, 1908.

With extraordinary solemnity the announced feasts were celebrated at the Immaculate Conception and of the solemn blessing of the new Mother Church built in less than a year by the young and zealous missionary of St. Charles, Fr. Leandro Maria Dell'Uomo, pastor of this parish for the past year and a half. Fr. Faustino Consoni arrived at Cordeiro last Friday with the evening train, duly authorized to conduct the blessing of the Church the following morning. On a reserved (railroad) car kindly provided by the 'Paulista Co.', the 38-boy music band of 'Christopher Columbus Orphanage' arrived on Saturday morning accompanied by its founder and director, Prof. Gioacchino Capocci, who was more than once accorded great demonstrations of appreciation for his talent, patience, and constancy in teaching those young men the fine art of music.

The Orphanage Band was welcomed at the station by the "Town Band Unido Cordeirense", and by the celebration Committee. After dinner the two bands marched through the main streets of the town directed to Committee headquarters, where they played the national anthem together. At six o'clock, accompanied by the two bands and by the students of the State and municipal schools, the Committee walked over to the pastor's rectory to present him with a magnificent crayon painting of himself encased in a rich frame, with the inscription: *'The people of Cordeiro to his active pastor Fr. Leandro Dell'Uomo'*.

For the occasion, Dr. Antonio Viotti, a lawyer and a distinguished Catholic from Limeira, gave a speech on behalf of the Committee, the people, and the newspaper 'Cordeirense'. Several boys and girls recited some poems and offered a bouquet of flowers to Frs. Consoni and Dell'Uomo. Fr. Faustino Consoni responded to such demonstrations of love from the Catholic people of Cordeiro. He ended his speech with a 'long live' in honor of the Diocesan Bishop, Pope Pius X, and the Roman Apostolic Catholic religion. Then there followed the moving words of Fr. Leandro.

At 7:30 the services for the 'triduum' were given a start in church at which Fr. Bonaiuti gave a sermon on the privileges of Mary. The following day, Sunday, there were two Masses.

The eight o'clock Mass, with First Communion of 80 boys and girls, and with the General Communion of all people, was said by Fr. Leandro.

The solemn Mass was celebrated at eleven o'clock by the Very Rev. Fr. Consoni assisted by two of his missionaries. At the Gospel, Fr. Consoni preached a beautiful sermon on the Immaculate Conception.

Amongst others, the following were present at dinner in the Rectory: Fr. Amorin Correa, pastor of the town of Araras; Mr. and Mrs. Sodini and family; José Gomez Barreto;

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<sup>35</sup> Francesconi, "History of the Scalabrinian Congregation" cit., Vol. III, (Rome, 1973) , p. 170 (original).

<sup>36</sup> Vicentini, São Paulo, August 13, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 357/6).

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Pedro de Silveira Prado, a merchant from Leme, who extolled the great merits of the "Christopher Columbus Orphanage" directed by Fr. Consoni. Fr. Amorin, Mr. Sodini and Mr. Barreto also gave speeches.

At four o'clock, there was the singing of Vespers and the solemn procession with extraordinary participation from neighboring communities. As is the custom, Fr. Rabaioli preached the sermon when the procession returned to the church. The celebration was brought to a close with the singing of the "*Te Deum*" and with the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

Following the religious services, there was a charming display of the items exposed for the benefit of the church, while the two bands faithfully carried out the set program. This beautiful celebration conducted in perfect order left a most sweet impression in all."<sup>37</sup>

The church was completed the following year and inaugurated by the Bishop of Campinas on the occasion of his visitation of October 8-11, 1909:

"We remained three whole days in this parish either taking part in celebrations carried out for the inauguration of the new Mother Church, or busying ourselves with the specific duties of the pastoral visitation. 1,901 persons were confirmed, 8 had their weddings blessed, and 500 received Holy Communion. On the 11th, after celebrating Mass at seven in the morning, we proceeded to carrying out all the duties proper of the visitation, and to our immense satisfaction we ascertained everything to be in perfect order. The new Mother Church is a fine construction. It is provided with beautiful altars, a decorous baptismal font, very fine vestments and furnishings, and with all things needed for conducting the divine worship. The material and spiritual state of this parish is indeed an eloquent witness to the action of the Most Rev. Fr. Leandro Dell'Uomo and to his worth as a priest (...).

In closing, we offer special thanks to the Very Rev, Pastor Fr. Leandro Dell'Uomo, thus interpreting the mind of the people of this parish for all he has done already for their temporal and spiritual needs.

The entry into this parish of this priest was a veritable blessing from heaven."<sup>38</sup>

Fr. Leandro Dell'Uomo was soon afterward transferred to Río Claro with the task of opening a branch of the orphanage of São Paulo. Fr. Dotto, Pastor at Cascalho, had then to take care of Cordeiro.<sup>39</sup> On August 12, 1912, the new pastor of Cascalho, Fr. Luigi Stefanello, was named by the Bishop of Campinas as provisional pastor of Cordeiro while retaining the chaplaincy of Cascalho. We do not have information as to when the Scalabrinians ceased having charge of the parish of Cordeiro; we only know that in the period between 1921 and 1926 there has taken place a succession of twelve diocesan priests, because the Bishop could not find a priest willing to remain in that small parish, and Fr. Stefanello was always the one who had to take care of it in the intervals. We are informed, for example, that in 1926-1927 he had the contemporaneous care of Cascalho and Cordeiro.<sup>40</sup>

## **5. Ribeirão Pires**

Ribeirão Pires, Alto da Serra (now Paranapiacaba), Río Grande, Río Verde, and

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<sup>37</sup> "Nuova Chiesa in Cordeiro", "L'Emigrato Italiano, etc" a. V. February 1908, pp. 16-17.

<sup>38</sup> "Termo", Pastoral Visitation by Bishop Nery, Cordeiro, October 11, 1909, Copy (Arch. G.S., 410/2).

<sup>39</sup> Dotto to Consoni, Cascalho, November 16, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 403).

<sup>40</sup> Canestrini to Card. De Lai, São Paulo, November 23, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 403).



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Pilar were only chapel stations of the parish of São Bernardo o do Campo. Frs. Luigi Capra and Giovanni Rabaioli continued to serve them more or less periodically in the years 1905-1909.<sup>41</sup> On June 1, 1909, Fr. Capra was assigned by the Bishop to a permanent residence at the chapels of Alto da Serra and Ribeirão Pires. With the local notables, satisfied to have at last a permanent priest, he made plans for the restoration of the chapels and for other initiatives, but a telegram from Fr. Consoni called him back to São Paulo only two days later. The Archbishop had ordered Fr. Consoni to provide him a priest for the almost totally Brazilian parish of Braz, and Fr. Capra had to remain in it four months.<sup>42</sup>

He returned to Alto da Serra on October 10, 1909, and on April 26, 1910, he sent out to the Italians of the region a letter in which, among other things, he said:

"By appointment of the Most Reverend Archbishop I exercise the sacred ministry in the region along the 'English Line' running from São Bernardo to Alto da Serra. With much sacrifice I have restored and enlarged the church of the 'Bom Jesus' at Alto da Serra, and it is my intention, this year, to complete the Church of São Jose at Ribeirão Pires, and to build a new church, dedicated to the most Blessed Virgin at the (station of) Pilar. But, with the approval of Archbishop D. Duarte I expect to build first a monument in honor of Jesus our Redeemer(...). I want to erect it on top of a hill overlooking the station of Campo Grande exposed to the view of the arriving immigrants, of the passengers going through."<sup>43</sup>

As mentioned above, on December 21, 1911, Ribeirão Pires was made an independent parish embracing also Alto da Serra, Campo Grande, Rio Grande, and Maué. It was 35 km in diameter, and in 1913 it counted about 7,500 souls. Religious practice was very poor; in the same year only 300 Communion were registered. Fr. Tarcisio Zanotti was its first pastor. He took possession of the parish on March 25, 1912, but was transferred to Rio Claro a year later. The parish was entrusted for a few months to the new pastor of Santo André, Fr. Luigi Capra, who assigned to it his assistant, Fr. Francesco Navarro. The latter had a rectory built right away! Fr. Navarro was named pastor of Ribeirão Pires on September 3, 1913, and took official possession of it on the 11th of the same month.

The parish was again provisionally attached to that of Santo André from October 4, 1917, when Fr. Navarro was moved to São Bernardo, to February 10, 1918, on which date Fr. Giuseppe Chiappa, was made its third pastor and remained until 1921.<sup>44</sup>

## **6. The Church of Santo Antonio, São Paulo**

In 1908, the chaplaincy of Santo Antonio of Praça do Patriarca in downtown

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<sup>41</sup> Cfr. Francesconi, *op. cit.* pp. 170-171.

<sup>42</sup> L. Capra to Vicentini, São Paulo, Sept. 1, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 383/1).

<sup>43</sup> Capra, Circular of April 26, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 383/1).

<sup>44</sup> Navarro to Consoni, São Paulo, October 5, 1917 (Arch. G.S., 383/1).

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São Paulo was entrusted to the Scalabrinians. It is one of the oldest churches of the city, as mentioned in the last will of Alfonso Sardinha on November 2, 1592.

In 1593 the Minor Conventuals were authorized to acquire a piece of land around the church for the building of a monastery. In 1642 the friars abandoned it because of isolation and lack of water, and founded the monastery of São Francisco. The church of Santo Antonio risked falling into ruins. Devotees of Saint Anthony of Padua founded in 1717 the confraternity of Saint Anthony and completed the church, dedicated in 1747 by the first Bishop of São Paulo, Bernardo Rodrigues Nogueira.

In the meantime, the confraternity of Saint Anthony was replaced in 1724 by the Confraternity of Our Lady of the Rosary. By the close of the XIX century, this confraternity of twelve members was made up mostly of the members of the Count Prates clan. After a fire in 1891, they restored the church at their own expenses. In 1899 they had the front rebuilt together with the bell tower, when the church had to be shortened to make room for the Praça do Patriarca.<sup>45</sup>

Since the confraternity of Our Lady of the Rosary had no chaplain, in 1908 Count Eduardo Prates asked Fr. Faustino Consoni to take charge of the Chaplaincy. The official document of the take-over on the part of the Scalabrinians carries the date of October 6, 1908:

"Today, October 6, 1908, by request of Count Eduardo De Prates and with full approval of Archbishop D. Duarte Leopoldo e Silva of São Paulo, Fr. Faustino Consoni took charge of the Church of Santo Antonio on behalf of the Missionaries of the Congregation of St. Charles, with the following obligations:

- Everyday Holy Mass at 7:00 o'clock in the morning;
- On Sundays and Holy Days, a mass at 8:00 o'clock with homily, and another one at exactly 9:00 o'clock;
- Afternoon schedule: at 2:00 o'clock catechism for children until 3:00; in the evening, at 7:00 o'clock, benediction with the Blessed Sacrament with sacred hymns; every Saturday at noon together with the 'Angelus' the bells shall peal out the Vespers of Sunday;
- A clear schedule of Masses, services and information in case the Frs. be needed for sick calls and other urgent cases, shall be affixed at the church entrance. So also, be it announced that confessions are heard both in Portuguese and in Italian.
- It is forbidden to pass through the church for due respect to the Blessed Sacrament. Except for women, access to the sacristy is allowed only through the hall of the cloister.

Various notices and announcements:

- On Monday, the 7:00 o'clock Mass shall be applied for the poor souls as intended by Countess Antonia De Prates.
- On Tuesday Mass for the devotees St. Anthony

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<sup>45</sup> Cfr. Jubileu Aureo da Pia Sociedade dos Missionarios de S. Carlos (São Paulo, 1946), pp. 57-58.

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- On Tuesday evening, benediction with the Blessed Sacrament.
- The church schedule: mornings, from 6 to 10; afternoons, except in case of confessions, from 2 to 4."<sup>46</sup>

Fr. Marco Simoni was given charge of the chaplaincy:

*"I was assigned to the Church of Santo Antonio in São Paulo in October. It belongs to the Counts Prates, our benefactors, and it had been served eight years by the Spanish Franciscans. The church is located by the viaduct, frequented almost exclusively by Brazilians, all good and practicing their religion. Now that we are directing it, Italians also begin to frequent it. It yields 400 milreis a month, and many masses 3 milreis each."<sup>47</sup>*

Fr. Vicentini repeatedly insisted on preaching in Italian, at least on Sunday, to the very many Italians of the city, pointing out time and again that he did not intend and could not send missionaries that were not to be employed in the assistance to Italians, as required by the essential scope of the Congregation.<sup>48</sup>

Fr. Consoni gave the following answer:

*"It has been really providential to have that church, especially for so many poor abandoned Italian children of Villa Marianna and of this city. Here they gather for catechism classes held by Fr. Marco for boys and by two of our Nuns for the girls. More than 350 children were admitted this year to First Holy Communion. Besides, we hear the confession of many adult fellow countrymen and are called to assist the dying.*

*As to preaching, I tried it twice, but this is a miserable location due to the steady flow of street cars that do not allow the faithful to hear clearly, and make for a continuous distraction.*

*Furthermore, in that church we got to know many good people, be they Religious, Priests, and Canons who come here for confession, or members of the laity, who may be very influential on behalf of our work for orphans. Besides, it can also serve as a meeting place for the missionaries coming in from the hinterland and for those who should stay overnight for reasons of ministry."<sup>49</sup>*

In his report of 1909, Fr. Simoni pointed out that the confessions had been more than 5,000; the communions 1,433, including 233 first communions; 250 the children, mostly Italian, frequenting catechism classes; and that the church was attended by the highest "Paulista" aristocracy, while Italians were going there especially to make their confession.<sup>50</sup>

Fr. Simoni left the chaplaincy of Santo Antonio on July 9, 1912, as he had to return to Italy for reasons of health, and was replaced by Fr. Consoni. In 1913 Fr. Simoni resumed the chaplaincy and kept it till the end of 1919 when he was appointed director of the "Christopher Columbus Orphanage". On November 24, 1919, he was succeeded by Fr. Faustino Consoni who held the chaplaincy till 1932. Fr. Faustino turned the Church into a welfare center of great importance with the distribution of "*the bread of Saint Anthony*". As we

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<sup>46</sup> "Memorandum" on taking charge of the Church of Santo Antonio, São Paulo, October 6, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 395/7).

<sup>47</sup> Simoni to Vicentini, São Paulo, December 11, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 395/1).

<sup>48</sup> Vicentini, "Diario", Vol. V. August 6, 1909, p. 190. October 10, 1909, p. 200 (Arch. G.S., 1642).

<sup>49</sup> Consoni to Vicentini, São Paulo, November 8, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 357/9).

<sup>50</sup> Simoni to Vicentini, São Paulo, January 6, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 395/1).

have seen, the reason why Counts De Prates had entrusted the church to the Scalabrinians was to provide a source of support for the Orphanage. The scope was obtained both by means of the offerings collected in church, and of contacts with members of the high society that frequented it, faithfully taken care of by Fr. Consoni.

### **7. The Mission of Santo Antonio at Ribeirão Preto**

On June 8, 1908, Fr. Consoni reported to the Superior General:

*"Allow me to enclose this other letter from the Bishop of Ribeirão Preto requesting Missionaries to open a mission house in that city from where to attend to the chapels and plantations of the colonists, as he was expressing himself in the previous letter I sent you on the part of the same Bishop.*

*See to it, Your Reverence, that you send some missionaries who together with Fr. Stefanello, about to leave in a few days for Ribeirão Preto, may establish there a mission house where they will do much good."<sup>51</sup> (51)*

Fr. Luigi Stefanello seems to have gone to Ribeirão Preto in October, 1909, where he was soon joined by Fr. Giovanni Rabaioli, who had been assigned in the meantime to Caconde by the first Bishop of Ribeirão Preto Alberto José Gonçalves. The two missionaries were entrusted with the assistance of Italians, very numerous both in the city and in the plantations all over the diocese, and of a hospital they were planning to build. In 1906 it was estimated that, out of the 53,000 inhabitants of the municipality of Ribeirão Preto, 25,000 were Italian. The large and rich plantations surrounding the city were filled with them, besides.<sup>52</sup>

By appointment of the Bishop, Fr. Rabaioli devoted himself since the early months of 1910 to founding the *Pious Union of Saint Anthony*, a diocesan institution, whose Statutes, approved by the Bishop on June 13, 1910, stated the following:

"Art. 2. - The *'Pious Union of St. Anthony of Padua'* has as its main scopes:

- a) to promote devotion to its glorious Patron by solemnly celebrating the thirteenth of every month.
- b) to place the faithful under the special protection of the Saint, so much venerated for the abundant favors he is obtaining for his devotees.
- c) to promote the teaching of Catechism to children, and to work for the conversion of sinners.

Art. 3. - The *'Pious Union of Saint Anthony of Padua'* has the following as its particular goals:

- a) to build here, at its headquarters, a temple worthy of the great Wonderworker, and the holy pride of each member and devotee of the Saint.
- b) to open a hundred-bed hospital; fifty for men, and fifty for women, for the benefit of all Associates.
- c) to establish an Old Peoples' Home for elderly members and those unable to work, where they will benefit from the help and comfort of Christian charity.

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<sup>51</sup> Consoni to Vicentini, São Paulo, June 8, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 357/9).

<sup>52</sup> Consoni to Vicentini, São Paulo, November 8, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 357/9).

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- d) to help the members in their sicknesses and in trip expenses to the *Saint Anthony Hospital*.<sup>53</sup>

In early 1910, Fr. Rabaioli built an eight room rectory at his own expense.<sup>54</sup> Fr. Stefanello was his assistant until October 5, 1911; his place was taken by Fr. Giuseppe Chiappa, but he was immediately sent, by request of Bishop José Homen de Melfo of São Carlos to take temporary care of the parish of Taquaritinga, returning to Ribeirão Preto on May 1, 1912. He was replaced in the meantime by Fr. Pietro Savelli, whom we will meet again later on at Ribeirão Preto as an assistant of Fr. Carlo Pedrazzani. We point out that on September 5, 1911 Fr. Rabaioli was appointed Provincial Superior.

The Bishop was present at the feast of the Patron Saint in 1911:

*"The feast celebrated in honor of Saint Anthony at our little Italian Church was splendid indeed. The Bishop said the 8 o'clock Mass with General Communion of a great many people. He was very happy about it.*

*Bishop Dom Alberto assisted at the Solemn Mass, appreciated the Italian sermon on 'Saint Anthony's social action', was very pleased with the 'Mass' accompanied by our orchestra, a branch of our music band, now made up of 55 musicians, a fine group of young men around the priests. This band was also much appreciated for the marches it played in front of the church. In a word, the feast was a triumph of Catholic faith and of devotion to the Saint. Praise be to God.*

*The Catholic school, now three months in function, is attended by 83 pupils already; other children learning to love God, Jesus, his priests, and religion. Besides, over 300 more boys and girls gather every Sunday in this little church, a potent means for attracting parents to the place their children attend so willingly, and from where they return home educated and instructed. Many parents come out of curiosity, still they enter the House of God, and He will certainly bestow on them his gaze before they leave."<sup>55</sup>*

Bishop Gonçalves gave Fr. Rabaioli permission to buy the land around the church of Saint Anthony to install a printing shop for the publication of the monthly review, "*Bulletin of Saint Anthony of Padua*", which began circulating in 1913.

Fr. Rabaioli, already afflicted for many months by an ailment caused by an accident while on a horse ride, died on January 29, 1913. He was succeeded by Fr. Carlo Pedrazzani, also with the responsibility of Provincial Superior, on February 7. The first anniversary of Fr. Rabaioli's passing on January 29, 1914:

*"A solemn 'Requiem' Mass, at which the choir of St. Cecilia sang pieces of Maestro Perosi, was celebrated by the Vicar General of the diocese. There was a large concourse of people and clergy, both regular and secular.*

*The sad rite, though offered for the repose of the blessed soul of Fr. Rabaioli, who at the young age of 38 was taken away not only from the love of our emigrants of Ribeirão Preto, but of the whole State of São Paulo as well, of which he was the*

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<sup>53</sup> "Statuto della Pia Unione Diocesana di S. Antonio di Padova con Santuario e Sede in Ribeirao Preto" (Statutes) (São Paulo, 1910, pp. 3-4).

<sup>54</sup> Rabaioli to Consoni, Ribeirao Preto, April 24, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 406).

<sup>55</sup> Rabaioli to Consoni, Ribeirao Preto, April 24, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 406).

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Provincial Superior, has also served to highlight his memory and the apostolic brilliance of a priest to whose zeal are due several beneficial institutions such as the Shrine (of St. Anthony), the Hospital and the Bulletin of Saint Anthony.

With deep emotion we read in the last issue of the Bulletin of Saint Anthony (no. 20 - 1914), that, having decided to erect a marble memorial in honor of Fr. Rabaioli, the 'Commissione Antoniana' has already obtained subscriptions for 100 thousand milreis (some 160 thousand Italian liras).

In a valued article on our missions, a Catholic magazine of the State of São Paulo gives a report on the humble action of our confreres at Ribeirão Preto. Among other things, it says this: *'Approximately some 30,000 Italians live in Ribeirão Preto. Inspired to the spirit of their illustrious Founder Giovanni Baptist Scalabrini, the missionaries of Saint Charles direct the diocesan Society of Saint Anthony with several thousand members, and run two day-schools, attended by one hundred children and evening drawing classes. On Sunday, catechism classes are frequented by more than 400 children. The modest shrine, newly restored a short while ago, is visited every day by many pilgrims. Some five to six thousand Communion are administered every year! Preaching is done in Italian as is likewise the Bulletin of St. Anthony being published. Our felicitations and sincere admiration to the able missionaries for the zeal by which they seek to gain souls to Christ.'*<sup>56</sup>

In 1914, construction was started on the hospital and on the Sisters' Convent, and the bell tower was built.<sup>57</sup>

Fr. Savelli had to leave in October of the same year. In asking for added help, Fr. Pedrazzani was thus writing to the Superior General:

*"Just think: the diocese of Ribeirão Preto plays host to over 200,000 Italians; it is our most important mission. The association of Saint Anthony in Ribeirão Preto is just helping us to carry out our scope."*<sup>58</sup>

The assistants of Fr. Pedrazzani were Frs. Giuseppe Chiappa, Augusto Rizzi, Francesco Carchia, and Ernesto Consoni. The institutions projected by Fr. Rabaioli did not make much progress; by 1919 only the foundations of the hospital had been laid and only the first floor of the little house for the assistants was built. At the end of the same year and with the consent of the Bishop, Fr. Enrico Preti, the new Provincial Superior, authorized Fr. Marco Simoni to relinquish the Pious Union of Saint Anthony together with its properties and furnishings to Fr. Luigi Perego, Abbot of the Olivetans, who had no support in that city.<sup>59</sup>

In 1914, Fr. Giuseppe Chiappa wrote an interesting article in "*Italica Gens*" on the Italians of the Ribeirão Preto region.

"We receive from Ribeirão Preto this article by a missionary who for some years now has been devoting himself to the assistance of our emigrants in the center regions of the coffee producing plantations, where are found the so-called "*fazendas*". The article faithfully describes the conditions of Italian colonists.

I remember how in my young years I happened to have in my hands a book describing the sufferings of the negro slaves working in the coffee plantations of Brazil. It seemed impossible to me that human beings, whose only guilt was the color of their skin, should be dragged to work in chains, sometimes tied to a piece of wood, flogged like

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<sup>56</sup> "Da Ribeirao Preto" "L'Emigrato Italiano in America" a. VIII, March, 1914, pp. 28-29.

<sup>57</sup> Simoni to Vicentini, São Paulo, July 19, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 395/1).

<sup>58</sup> C. Pedrazzani to Vicentini, Ribeirao Preto, September 17, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 395/1).

<sup>59</sup> Canestrini to Cicognani, São Paulo, November 7, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 406).

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dogs disobedient to their master, and then fed at a common dish with a mixture of rice and beans, while the merciless landowner had himself a lavish dinner served by slave girls. My information was on the mark. Except that, by that time, it was no longer the negro slave who under the eyes of a guard was wetting the black coffee furrows with his blood, but, instead, our Italians, whom hunger had associated with the freed negroes of the vast plantations of Brazil. More often they were farmers from the Veneto who, nostalgic for their distant little towns, their beautiful churches, and tall steeples, were gaining, by a work they could hardly accept, the bread that their country could not supply. So also, they were mostly Venetian women, who, sacrificing their beauty and fine complexions proper to inhabitants of their mountains, in a work before unknown, were giving evidence of creatures weakened and turned pale by malaria in the humid valleys of Brazil.

When a priest appeared coming to them riding a horse, Only then could the beautiful smile of their native towns return to the faces of these good Venetians; they would greet him, as is the custom with them, with the words: 'At your service'. Then the men wiped away the sweat of their brow with the sleeve of their shirt, and the women tidied as best as they could their corsets disarranged in their work.

Horrible things have been said about the plantations of the State of São Paulo, and also some overoptimistic and interested people have extolled to the sky the good fortunes realized by individual colonists. This writer has only the pretense to tell things as they really are for the simple reason that in a five-year span he has visited plantations in various parts of the State of São Paulo, and is therefore in a position to describe them in a way he believes more respondent to the truth. The first plantation I visited pretended to be a 'model' plantation. Cabinet ministers and foreign diplomats of the not so close city of São Paulo were invited here to lavish banquets that they might make a favorable propaganda of it in Europe and elsewhere.

Yes, it may well have been a model for the sumptuous estate of the landowner, and even for the administrator's house that enjoyed a certain degree of comfort, or even still for the extravagance of his horse stables, profusely lighted with electricity, for the lusciousness of the threshing floors, machinery, gardens and orchards; but....what about the colonial houses spread around the plantation? I will only say that the landowner enjoyed fame of being prompt in paying; but the rest had no importance for him; whoever did not intend to remain could have his pay and be free to go. The rest: keeping the colonists' houses in good repair, not forcing them to work Sundays all year round, granting them some degree of freedom; all this did not concern the landowner.

And what about the administrator? I was made to know later on that he was the terror not only of his many colonists and employees, but of the neighboring regions, as well. I was told, besides, that he had borne dishonor on an unlucky girl whom he later accused and evicted from the house.

Of course, some will ask whether all plantations are run in the same conditions! And here we enter the question at issue.

The conditions in the plantations in the past, compared to now, seemed to have been better. True, most landowners might have used archaic or patriarchal methods; generally speaking, however, it was better then, because the landowner was residing in his land, and so it could not happen, as is often the case nowadays, that the plantations should be left entirely at the mercy of the administrator who is likely up to all sorts of expedients. It is also true that in times past some 'fazendeiros' (landowners) availed themselves of the brutal slavery system that, together with a low sense of morality, gave rise to highly regrettable tragedies, still, to tell the truth, it was not generally so. But now when the great majority of landowners has gained in status and dwell in great cities, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, or even farther yet in Europe, we have as a consequence, I repeat, that the 'fazenda' (plantation) is left in the hands of

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administrators who, besides lacking experience, often show of much lower moral standards.

It often happens also that the old fashioned landowners are succeeded by sons that have no experience and act like tyrants, or who leave everything in the hands of their administrators and go to amuse themselves; in either case, the results are the same. And so you have here the difference between old and new plantations. How true it is that certain institutions are bound to regress unless they strive for progress!

We could not explain why quite a few of our countrymen are presently enjoying a discreetly comfortable life, unless we are willing to admit that the colonists were in the past better off economically than now. The reason is that in the past they were allowed to raise grain and corn between the long rows of coffee plants. For this reason, besides having plenty of food, each colonial family owned pigs and chickens, and sold their excess of grain. Nowadays, instead, under the pretext that the coffee plants are too old to allow it, colonists are almost generally forbidden to raise corn in the midst of them, or they are given either an unsuited piece of land, or, should even this still be allowed, one too distant from the settlements! It is well known that, while the cost of life has risen, wages for hoeing the coffee plants are still the same as at other times!

Besides coffee does not represent any gain for the life of the colonist in spite of the fact that he has a percentage on its yield, forced as he is to buy in the city at a relatively high price the grain and corn he is forbidden to grow on his own. Right here lies the unceasing tug of war between colonist and landowner representing an issue the colonist considers so important as to make him decide even to abandon the plantation.

We have said in passing that some of our countrymen have made fortunes in the plantations, and we ourselves have indeed personally known a number of them still living there who have put aside considerable sums of money, without mentioning others who have doubled time and again their fortunes in trade and in buying small properties. This is true when there are a good number of strong armed and healthy members in the same family, so precious in Brazil, who work steadily all year round. But, how many are the unlucky ones who, ruined by sickness, have seen their savings eaten away by doctors and medicines so costly in these deprived regions.

And then, the dreadful eye ailment! How many times did I enter homes where at the first opening of the door all members of the family had to turn their faces the other way in pain because they could not suffer the light piercing through it!

True enough, by a monthly payment, colonists can avail themselves, in some places, of the services of a doctor, the equivalent of a community general practitioner; but in how many others no one gives it a thought, and ignorance itself and the poor cooperation on the part of the colonists makes it impossible! Unfortunately, as a means to comfort themselves over their seclusion from everything and everybody, these poor colonists abuse a drink that, while robbing them of the taste for the wine of their hometowns, too costly in these regions, becomes the cause of their physical and moral ruin. This drink is the so-called '*pinga*'. Should you unluckily chance in the midst of these colonists, so sober and respectful otherwise, on a Sunday, you could not have them connect an idea, and you would waste your day. This is their way of spending the days of rest.

Worse yet, in case they should go to the city! They present such a strange procession of drunk and quarrelsome individuals that if it were not something immoral it would offer quite a comical sight. This way, together with the colored people, they make themselves ridiculous before Brazilians.

In 1888, when they were freed, all the slaves of Brazil abandoned their old landowners, thirsting for a freedom that would cost them so dearly. Not knowing the nature and strength of alcoholic beverages they gave themselves up to such drunkenness and orgies as to cause very many of them to die within less than a



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month.

Coming back to our colonists, we must say that they ruin themselves and their families when they are left to themselves and cut off from the moralizing influence of the Church. We have indeed known certain individuals who, while very good Christians in their hometowns, made themselves totally unavailable and set a very bad example for their children, in those regions.

Our colonists justify their neglect of certain duties with odd excuses. When you rebuke mothers for forgetting to teach their children the religious principles, often due to being pressed by much work, they answer that they are living in a 'crazy' land and that children do not understand any of these things. They do not elaborate further, but by their way of saying it they intend to make one understand that when there is no church or priest in their midst it becomes very hard to impress these truths on children's minds; and it is indeed sad when we think about their future. Morality is not warranted either by the conditions in which a colonist finds himself in a plantation. The episode of Mr. Longaretti's defense of his sisters threatened by the landowner's lust could unveil a barely known unending chain of immoral conditions imposed by employees, or even by landowners. The story I refer to is very simple. A young man seized a gun in defense of his old father who was fighting for the good name of his two daughters, but he was trodden underfoot by the landowner. In fact, he paid for his courage with a prison sentence, and only later was he set free through the good services of a most worthy Brazilian gentleman, the well-known Dr. Perreira Barreto.

Neither tigers nor snakes, also found in large quantities here, can scare our poor colonists of those lands; the lack of conscientious doctors and of education for their children is what scares them. As I mentioned before, certainly not always do they appreciate the absolute importance of a doctor as they unwisely resist likewise to pay a monthly salary for a teacher who would impart their children the needed instruction! In fact, they prefer to take them along to the fields when still in their tender years, especially at the time of coffee harvest, subjecting them to hard work!

The government, besides, cannot or does not want to supply the plantations with the needed schools. Furthermore, there are no teachers willing to accept the sacrifice of a life away from the city! And so, though born on Brazilian soil, a great number of children are left without any instruction.

But, the worst part of it is considering the consequences. One gets the terrible impression that mothers be raising irrational creatures rather than children.

So also it is sad to witness the young when they present themselves for the celebration of weddings. They are completely ignorant of the obligations our elders know so well.

It is natural at this point for someone to pose the question: is there anyone, then, to take an interest in the lot of these colonists?

From time to time, especially appointed people, extraordinary envoys, or whatever they are, arrive here on special trains and are treated to lavish banquets everywhere. They go on a ride across the countryside of the State and thus they say they have visited the plantations so as to be able to say on their return to Italy that our colonists are well, or, which is the same thing, badly off. Some have been purposely guided through certain plantations that in the city enjoy fame of being the best, while others may have heard horrible things about them from people who, perhaps, have never set foot in one. And so, on their return to Europe they will give reports that are either too negative or too rosy.

The colonist's good common sense condemns this totally indifferent manner of doing things, especially when he sees pouring into the State of São Paulo visitors and lecturers, who pretend to speak about the plantations without having ever seen a coffee plant. Will this comedy ever come to an end?

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And what about the Brazilian government?

We must all know that the landowners are generally opposed to unions and to any slightest interference of the government in the plantations of which they are the absolute masters. And this is certainly the reason why the local rural patronage cannot always carry out its task, as I have been given proof in some particular cases.

Let us speak, rather, of a kind of people who, without meddling in things that do not concern them directly, still bring religious, and as far as possible, civil and economical help to the colonists; that is, the missionaries of Bishop Scalabrini. I have seen them courageously knock at the door of dreaded landlords, obtain hospitality, and request time to allow them to remind colonists of their religion and distant homeland. How often have they been sent away being, thus forced to sadly retrace their steps and look for more humane landowners, even suffering hunger in the long distances from these to other places where they might be better accepted!

When the missionary was welcome, the landowner himself sent out word of the priest's arrival to women at home doing their chores, and to men on the job, who were happy to suspend their heavy work. At dusk, the landowner had someone ring the bell hanging from a wooden beam at the far end of the threshing floor. At that hour, in those places far away from the cities, that little bell gave a strange impression, well aware as the colonists were of the fact that the very same bell had been calling them very early in the morning to be on their way to work. In the meanwhile, acting as a sexton, a colonist improvised a small altar at the residence of the landowner on which the priest was to say Mass on the following day!

Rosary was recited in the evening before the altar, and in the singing of the Litany those colonists were indeed pouring forth all their longings! Then the priest addressed them with words of comfort, as only such moments can suggest, inviting them to a practice they had abandoned for a while due either to distance from the city or to having priests that spoke a different language.

Then all of them, one by one, knelt before their Italian priest who, often making use of a miserable bench as a confessional, was to hear the miseries of all, men and women, boys and girls.

This religious service would often last until after midnight and the priest had only a few hours left in which to restore his strength after the apostolic work. In fact, he had to celebrate Mass in the early morning because the colonists had to go to a frequently urgent work.

If the landowner was more humane, the colonist would not go to work on that day, and so the good missionary could pass from house to house giving each a blessing those poor ones were longing so much for. In those moments the priest listened to all the troubles of those unfortunate people to whom it did not seem true to be talking to a priest from their own country! In fact, half an hour after hearing you speak in Italian, they still asked you whether you were Italian.

This way, the missionary begins his mission at the altar and carries it on in the homes with his frequent and salutary advice."<sup>60</sup>

## **8. The Parish of Santo André**

Today's Santo André, a city of some half a million people, takes its name from old Santo André da Borda do Campo, founded in the XVI century by João Ramalho and destroyed by Mem de Sá in 1560. It began repopulating three centuries later when the English "São Paulo Railway Co." built a station there

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<sup>60</sup> G.C. "Tra i Coloni Italiani dello Stato di São Paulo" *Italica Gens*, a. VI., n. 1-2 (January-February 1915), pp. 109-119.

at a place for many years called Estação de São Bernardo. About 1890 there rose up the "Ypiranguinha" factory, the first one of many characterizing the city that attracted a great number of families, most of them Italian. Neapolitans were the first to celebrate their religious feasts, of which Our Lady of Mount Carmel soon became the most important one. It was celebrated at first in a hall lent by one of the local families, and then in a chapel made of branches and covered with blankets where the image of Our Lady was displayed! The celebration was held in the fields, and the bazaar along the roads.

Fr. Faustino Consoni took care of those Italians from the first years of his residence in São Paulo, and entrusted the special charge of them to Fr. Luigi Capra who, as we know, periodically visited all Italian groups scattered along the São Paulo-Santos railroad. Fr. Capra tells us, on March 28, 1906, about plans for a shrine at the Estação de São Bernardo.<sup>61</sup>

The need for a resident priest was getting ever more acute, due to the distance of the parish residence at São Bernardo, and above all, because of the diversity of origin and religion of its people giving rise to regionalism, the source of individualism, egotism, and religious indifference. In 1908 Fr. Consoni succeeded in securing from Mr. Iacopucci a room in his house, right across from the "Ypiranguinha" factory where he could celebrate mass on Sunday. In 1909, by initiative of Colonel Alfredo Flaquer, the chapel of Santo André was built, which was canonically made a quasi-parish on May 21, 1910. Fr. Francesco Dolci, pastor of São Bernardo, blessed and opened it for public worship on May 30.

The priest's action had to be limited to mornings of Sundays and Holy Days. It was continued in the afternoon and during the week by a group of enterprising young men headed by Nicola Colavini. They gathered the children together for catechism classes, attracting them by means of singing lessons, outings, and by founding the "Saint Aloysius" sport's club.

With the vertiginous increase of the population, the most prominent Catholics had Fr. Consoni petition the Archbishop to erect a new autonomous parish. Archbishop Duarte e Silva granted the request and on December 21, 1911, he formed the parish of Santo André of a territory taken from São Bernardo parish. Fr. Luigi Capra was made its first pastor on January 12, 1912, and he took possession of it, installed by Fr. Dolci, on March 3.

The parish "Cronaca" ("Chronicle") informs us that "*the new pastor didn't find anything in the chapel of Santo André. He found only the four walls and nothing else. He carried along from Alto da Serra the altar stone, the vestments, the missal, etc.*" Equally miserable were the religious conditions of a great part of the people already prey to extremist and anticlerical propaganda, typical of peripheral industrial districts.

Only a few days after his entry, Fr. Capra decided to enlarge the chapel with an addition made of wood. He celebrated the first Holy Week and the first month of May with particular intensity, and he immediately organized the catechism

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<sup>61</sup> L. Capra, "Diario", March 28, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 1520).

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classes, which were attended from the very beginning by more than 300 children. He gave First Holy Communion for the first time on June 2, 1912, to a class of 134 children. It was the first evident sign of the parish revival! On June 30, 1912, he organized a parade of the 850 students of the Salesian Lyceum of the Sacred Heart with their band, headed by the director, Fr. Pietro Rota, which drew all people to the church square. On a central location, between the station and the Ypiranguinha factory, he bought two lots of land from Colonel Flaquer, and had a hall, 35 by 10 meters built, which was dedicated on September 14, 1912. It was meant to serve as the seat for a Catholic Workers Society with entertainment and movie facilities. But the existence of this hall was short-lived and Fr. Capra had to sell it only eighteen months later because no suitable movies could be found, and then came also competition from soccer games and a serious industrial recession.

Following the failure of this project, Fr. Capra devoted himself to the construction of the new parish church, initiated in October 1912, and inaugurated on March 25, 1914. In the same year he established the "Apostleship of Prayer" and the practice of the "First Friday" of the month and in 1915 the "Holy Hour" attended by over 200 men. Founded in 1913, the Sodality of the Children of Mary was officially established in 1916.

On March 14, 1919, Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Queiroz dos Santos and Pauline Isabel de Queiroz donated to the Chancery a lot of land measuring 4,000 square meters near the railroad station; on June 29, 1919, the first stone of the Church of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel was laid. It is now the Cathedral of the Diocese of Santo André.

In a letter of Fr. Corrado Stefani, who had arrived to assist Fr. Capra on Easter 1918, we read as follows:

*"On Saturday before Whit Sunday (that is on April 6) I went to Ypiranguinha (Fr. Capra's parish) to help him with the confessions (...) More than 500 people received Holy Communion, but more than a thousand of them did so during the whole triduum. It was indeed a spectacle of edification and of practiced faith, a scene unfortunately not common in our day (...). What was there at Ypiranguinha six years ago? It grieves us to think about it. Indifference, irreligion and anticlericalism were the order of the day; the good element did not dare raise their heads. A parish was erected, the first pastor appointed, and things changed overnight; the bad element is now the one holding their heads low."<sup>62</sup>*

When the parish of Santo André was created in 1911, the territory of São Caetano, a dependency of the parish of Braz, was also attached to it. The first 18 Italian families to inhabit the area found a small chapel dedicated to Saint Cajetan, but which had been turned into a shelter for cattle, grazing in the region. They restored it and from the government they obtained a priest to visit them on the principal feasts of the year, arriving generally from the parish of Braz. In 1898 they had a resident chaplain, a certain Fr. Felice from Naples, and in 1899 the former Scalabrinian Fr. Remigio Pezzotti.

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<sup>62</sup> Stefani to Rinaldi, São Paulo, April 23, 1918 (Arch. G.S., 396/14).

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The missionaries of the "Christopher Columbus Orphanage" began to take care of it in 1900. In that same year the chapel was torn down, and a new church built.

As we read it in his diary, Fr. Luigi Capra went there on Easter 1906, with little enthusiasm:

"14. - At St. Cajetan I bless a few homes: great indifference. Very few confessions: 30! I pass the night at a good Roman's house.

15. - Easter: I arise at 5:00 o'clock, go to the church, but I wait in vain: very little fruit. At 9:30 I say Mass and preach the sermon: 30 Communion! The musicians stand outside of the church. Six Baptisms."<sup>63</sup>

In 1911, when it was attached to Santo André, São Caetano had 2,000 inhabitants. Fr. Capra established there the Apostleship of prayer, the Sodality of the Children of Mary, and the Society of Saint Anthony. On Sunday, after hearing confessions from six to eight at Santo André, he said Mass at São Gaetano at 9, to return to Santo André afterwards for the 10:00 o'clock Mass.

It was right here in this humble little church of São Gaetano that on Sunday April 4, 1920, Fr. Luigi Capra was stricken with a heart attack while ascending the altar: he died shortly afterwards in a house nearby.<sup>64</sup>

We conclude this chapter on the Scalabrinian missions of São Paulo with a brief reference to other missions or parishes temporarily held by the Missionaries of Saint Charles.

Unfortunately, we have very few documents left, and a very long and difficult research through the archives and libraries of the State of São Paulo would be necessary to reconstruct with precision or with a certain approximation the history of the Scalabrinian presence in many places of the vast Paulista State.

In 1909, Fr. Consoni was thus writing to the Superior General:

*"The two new residences we accepted in the diocese of São Carlos by request of Bishop Homen de Mello are the parishes of Dourado whose pastor is Fr. Viola, and of Ribeirão Bonito with Fr. Chiappa. They are two communities of Italian colonists, and I deemed it proper to accept them to do some good for those poor migrants."*<sup>65</sup>

The Scalabrinians had residences as well at Guariba and Bica da Pedra, also in the diocese of São Carlos. About the latter (Bica de Pedra) we have the following piece of information of the year 1912:

"The fruitful action of our zealous Vicar Fr. Alfredo Bonaiuti is deserving of all our praise and imitation.

On the 22nd of this month he solemnly inaugurated the parochial school of Saint Anthony, attended by 106 students. The day school is frequented by 66 pupils, 25 of which studying the basic notions. Mr. Jubal Taveres is the teacher. For Sundays, there is the recreational center where children gather to play and for gymnastics. From here they all go in good order to the parish church for Mass. Evening classes are attended by 40 students, mostly workers.

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<sup>63</sup> Capra, "Diario", April 14-15, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 1520).

<sup>64</sup> Almost all the news reported here on the parish of Santo Andre' has been gathered from Fr. Francesco Milini's pamphlet: "Padre Luiz Capra" (São Paulo, 1935).

<sup>65</sup> Consoni to Vicentini, São Paulo, November 8, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 357/9).

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Fr. Vicar bought also the banner for the Sacred Heart Association with a membership of 500, associates included. Another one will arrive shortly for the Society of St. Anthony, 60 members, and for the Sodality of the Children of Mary, also with 60 members. There will soon be also a music band.

The month of Mary is very well attended: the closing of May took place on the last Sunday of the month with a solemn procession.

The zealous priest is making preparations for a solemn celebration in honor of the parish patron Saint next June. The festivities will be held from the 14th through the 16th of June.

The people of Bica de Pedra are happy indeed to have such a zealous and active pastor. May God keep him for many years to come." (From the newspaper "La Squilla").<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> "Bica da Pedra", "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. VI, n. VI (1912), p. 90.

**CHAPTER XII**

**THE MISSIONS IN PARANÁ'**

**1. Santa Felicidade**

Fr. Giuseppe Martini was pastor of Santa Felicidade from 1906 to 1919. This is how he recalls his entry:

"Fr. Brescianini had been working eleven years in this colony, and even though he had been left in charge of only this and the communities of Campo Comprido, Ferraria, Pilarzinho, and Gabriela, still he had always plenty to do not only in the exercise of the sacred ministry, but also in teaching the children and in visiting the sick!

He had studied medicine, and had some experience in hospital care; his advice, therefore, was precious. Many people owe him the cure from their ailments, and the sparing of much expense. For these and other talents, the departure of the priest was regretted and lamented by many, and more so because together with him, Fr. Natale Pigato was also leaving, who following nine months of hard work and a serious illness, had need for some rest with his family in Italy. It was a moving scene, therefore, when on April 30 (or 27?), 1906, the two beloved priests were about to leave the colony.

Fr. Francesco Dolci had been assigned to replace Fr. Brescianini. He had arrived on January 31, but he fell seriously ill, and could not endure the burden all alone.

Fr. Natale had reached São Paulo where he was to sail to Italy, but on his sea voyage had experienced a great improvement. I had left Italy four months before with the hope of not being burdened any more with the responsibilities of a pastor and of spending the rest of my life helping the missionaries. But the Superiors appointed both of us to Santa Felicidade, and recalled Fr. Dolci.

We arrived on the night of May 6, 1906. Fr. Natale was happily seen returning to the midst of old acquaintances, and I set foot for the first time in this colony, about which I had heard very good accounts."<sup>1</sup>

The novitiate of the Sisters Apostles of the Sacred Heart was opened at Santa Felicidade on October 3, 1906, with five postulants, but without either obtaining or asking permission of the Bishop Leopoldo e Silva, opposed to the project. It was granted by the new Bishop Francisco Braga, and the novitiate was officially opened on June 11, 1908 with the investiture of five postulants.

The Missionaries began residing in the new rectory on September 23, 1909.<sup>2</sup> School activities continued with evident good religious and social results. Sister Eufrosina Invernizzi wrote the following brief report of 1916:

"Our countrymen here hold on jealously to their faith, language, Italian customs, and convey to us the pleasant illusion of life in our home country. They are much concerned also with the education of their children, and do their most to send them to our school. It has four classes, and is attended by over a hundred pupils of both sexes. In this same colony of Santa Felicidade we operate also a kindergarten for children, three to five years old. It is divided in two groups, with some one hundred pupils. We follow the programs of the schools in Italy with the addition of the language, history, and geography of Brazil. Besides a night school we conduct classes

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<sup>1</sup> G. Martini, "Origine e Sviluppo della Colonia Santa Felicidade". (Sao Paulo, 1908), pp. 36-37.

<sup>2</sup> Martini to Vicentini, Santa Felicidade, October 15, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 358/1).

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also on Sunday for young ladies, to whom we teach especially the Italian language and certain skills for women; likewise, we operate a day workshop for girls.

Both school and kindergarten buildings are by themselves, large, full aerated and lighted, surrounded by an pleasant evergreen countryside, where the climate is always good and mild.

In a section of the vast school building your confreres have installed a beautiful small theater as a means for training the young and entertaining their parents. Besides providing a secular education, we work also in the religious field, and so on Sunday we teach catechism in church to more than 200 girls.

The Children of Mary Sodality was established for them in 1900, and a great good is being accomplished by it in this colony and in the communities around it. In fact, this beneficial society has given excellent mothers to our families, and fifty-three nuns to various religious congregations; twenty-five of them joined our Institute. Their consoling number has given growth to the small seed, and made it possible for us to open schools and workshops also at Pilarzinho, Água Verde, Umbará, Vila Colombo, and at Curitiba, capital city of Paraná.

As you see, Rev. Father, God has admirably blessed our apostolate to the immense good not only of these Italian colonists, but of our home-country as well, because it is still the object of a very intense love in the heart of these distant sons which is kept alive by the zeal of the missionaries and by the action of the Italian school."<sup>3</sup>

In 1913, Dr. Ranieri Venerosi of "*Italica Gens*" published a report on the Italian schools of Paraná, which we find in the "*L'Emigrato Italiano in America*":

"The last issue of '*Italica Gens*' (May -December, 1913) published a report by Dr. Ranieri Venerosi on the schools of Paraná' entrusted by our missionaries to the Sisters Apostles of the Sacred Heart. We quote the most important section of that article: '*The Italian Schools*' - and we accompany it with simple observations:

"The Missionaries of Bishop Scalabrini began residing in these colonies (Santa Felicidade, Pilarzinho, and Água Verde) a few years after their founding. Here, as in other colonies of the State, they are to be highly appreciated by the Italians for the assistance they always accorded them with love as fellow-compatriots. We owe it to them especially if the memory and traditions of the home-country is satisfactorily kept alive in these colonies. It is true that, on account of the steady contact with the Brazilian element, due to closeness to the city, there is evidence of a strong process of assimilation; however, one notices also that among a strictly rural population, which in Paraná is made up in great majority of our countrymen, Italian customs are kept unspoiled and our language is almost the only one spoken. In each of the three colonies just mentioned, there is an Italian school directed by the Italian Sisters Apostles of the Sacred Heart, the same ones that have charge of our colonies of Santa Catarina. The teaching is carried out almost exclusively in Italian. I visited all three of them and was well impressed by the large attendance of students and by the good results obtained; and more so if one considers the location of these schools in proximity to the capital city of the State, and the competition waged on them by the local Brazilian schools.

The school directed by the Sisters at Santa Felicidade is attended by some 150 pupils, while the other two local Brazilian schools, one held by an Italian teacher, and the other by a Brazilian lady, have hardly 25 students each. I was reminded, besides, that the Sisters do not have either means or facilities to start a school for boys, of whom they can admit only a limited number; otherwise, they would teach quite a larger number of them.

The Italian schools of the Sisters at Pilarzinho and at Água Verde are also attended by

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<sup>3</sup> Invernizzi, "Da Santa Felicidade", "*L'Emigrato Italiano in America*" a. X, June 15, 1916, pp. 45-46.



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one hundred students each. The results of these institutions clearly show that Italian schools can exist and give good fruits also in environments that would seem unfavorable to them, provided they enjoy the support of the people. The families of these colonies prefer sending their children to the Italian schools of the Sisters, rather than to the Brazilian public school, even though it may seem to offer sure advantages under certain material aspects.

To subsist and prosper these schools need some financial assistance; the tuition of the children is very modest, and often is not paid, while the expenses run high. Only the school of Santa Felicidade was receiving a modest subsidy from the Royal Consulate till last year, while the others were waiting in vain for a long time for some help.

I do not know whether it was granted, and, if so, whether it responded to the need. But in regard to the school at Pilarzinho I found out that, having given up hope of obtaining what they were asking from the Italian Consulate, plans were under way for setting it on a course more in tune with Brazilian programs by according greater emphasis on teaching Portuguese and other related subjects in order to secure a subsidy from the Brazilian government.

This fact speaks quite clearly and meaningfully by itself for me to try to explain the harmful consequences on our national interests, and the need for taking prompt measures."

From the report just quoted two things are clear:

1. The efforts of the teachers of our schools in Paraná.
2. The neglect in which they are left by our country's government.

Leaving it up to our readers to bring judgment on this evident and meaningful fact, we say right away that one of the main difficulties preventing the growth of Italian schools in Paraná is generally the lack of a missionary. Where there is one, schools multiply their number and activities.

So, in the State of *Río Grande do Sul*, for instance, where missionaries are more numerous, schools are also more numerous. Encouraged by their providential and zealous presence, the Sisters easily overcome the obstacles that could prevent the progress and growth of the schools entrusted to them.

All this is accomplished because the missionary of Saint Charles knows how to harmonize the exercise of the sacred ministry as demanded by his priestly character and by the spirit of his Institute with a true love for one's country. He keeps this love alive in the hearts of adults by his sermons, catechetical instructions, simple conversations, and jealously transmits it to the pupils of his schools by having them taught the language of Italy and its history.

In truth, the Knight Tancredi Castiglia was not mistaken when he wrote in his report of November 1906 that 'the religious, especially those of the Congregation of St. Charles, keep Italian sentiments alive in their communities'.<sup>4</sup>

## **2. Rondinha**

Fr. Andrea Garau was quasi-pastor of Rondinha from 1905 to 1910. We have seen that the Church of Saint Sebastian was dedicated on October 7, 1906<sup>5</sup>; Fr. Garau had a house built for the sexton in the same year; on September 29 he inaugurated a small church at *Río Verde Abaixo*, a locality between Timbotuva and *Río Verde*, inhabited by 15 Polish and 25 Brazilian families; he had a small building, 7 meters by 8, constructed to serve as a school for

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<sup>4</sup> *Le Scuole del Paraná e le nostre Missioni*", *Ibid.*, a. VIII, March 1914, pp. 29-32.

<sup>5</sup> Francesconi, "History of the Scalabrinian Congregation", Vol. III (Rome, 1973) pp. (72-73 original).

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Timbotuva; he erected the chapel of Mariana, blessed on September 29, 1907. On that occasion, the newly ordained Scalabrinian priest, Fr. Giacomo Garzaro, sang his first solemn high Mass in it. He had spent his early years there, and had been sent for his studies to Piacenza by Fr. Brescianini.<sup>6</sup>

It must be pointed out that the chaplaincy of Rondinha was then dependent on the parish of Campo Largo, directed since April 23, 1906 by Fr. Claudio Morelli, successor to Fr. Giovanni Bergia. By the middle of April, 1907, a Brazilian priest was appointed pastor of Campo Comprido. The Italian colonies continued to nominally depend on this parish, just as the quasi-parish of Santa Felicidade kept on depending nominally from the cathedral of Curitiba. It was decided that Frs. Morelli and Garau should live together at Timbotuva.<sup>7</sup>

However, Fr. C. Morelli left for Tibagi in June 1907, and Fr. Garau remained alone with the care of the communities of Rondinha, Timbotuva, Rio Verde, and Campina. In 1910 he dedicated the chapel of Timbutuva, where he went to say Mass on Sunday and on days of obligation.

In 1911, Fr. Garau was succeeded by Fr. Brescianini, with Fr. Pietro Savelli as his assistant. On June 5, 1911, Fr. Brescianini wrote as follows to the Superior General:

*"Here, in Rondinha, our missionaries have built a beautiful church, dedicated to Saint Sebastian, but this is all there is; everything else is lacking, and it is almost totally deprived of sacred vestments. There are many young people, but without real instruction, because of the lack of a Catholic school. I have a strong desire to call in the Sisters here too, but I cannot do so now, because the colony has still a debt of six "contos" to pay on the new church."<sup>8</sup>*

Fr. Brescianini returned to Italy on July 20, 1914; he was succeeded for a short while by Fr. Sblandiano Simoni, soon transferred to Água Verde, and on August 6, 1914 by Fr. Stefano Angeli<sup>9</sup>, who remained at Rondinha for one year. Fr. Silvano Giuliani<sup>10</sup>, who had been an assistant to Frs. Brescianini and Angeli since the end of 1913, remained there alone in August 1916.

In 1916 Fr. Giuliani was moved to Santa Felicidade, and Fr. Natale Pigato remained as Pastor of Rondinha. He had received the appointment on December 28, 1915.<sup>11</sup> Fr. Pigato devoted all his exceptional zeal to this quasi-parish until he died in 1926.

### **3. Campo Comprido**

Campo Comprido depended on Santa Felicidade, and was served by the missionaries of this quasi-parish.<sup>12</sup> On behalf of the colony, then counting 62 families, the trustees sent a petition on May 12, 1907, to Fr. Faustino Consoni

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<sup>6</sup> Garau to Consoni, Ferrara, May 6, 1907 - Timbotuva, October 1, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 387/1).

<sup>7</sup> Martini to Consoni, Santa Felicidade, April 23, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 390/6).

<sup>8</sup> Brescianini to Vicentini, Rondinha, June 5, 1911 (Arch. G.S., 387/1).

<sup>9</sup> Martini to Vicentini, Santa Felicidade, August 7, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 358/3).

<sup>10</sup> Martini to Rinaldi, Santa Felicidade, September 3, 1915 (Arch. G.S., 358/4).

<sup>11</sup> Pigato to Cimino, Rondinha, August 29, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 1603).

<sup>12</sup> Francesconi, op. cit., pp. (original 67 and 73).

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to obtain a resident priest; in fact, they had donated the land and built the new church following a promise to have a resident priest made to them by Bishop Scalabrini himself. Now they were set to turn the old church into a rectory for the missionary, whose support they would insure through a yearly contribution of the people.<sup>13</sup>

On June 2, Fr. Martini read from the pulpit an evasive answer of Fr. Consoni: "he would soon send a priest as new missionaries would arrive from Italy."<sup>14</sup>

On February 11, 1908, the chapel of Campo Comprido, dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes, solemnly celebrated the 50th anniversary of the apparition:

*"For seven years the people had been gathering in church on the 11th of each month to hear Mass and pray to the Virgin (...). The feast was preceded by a novena of prayers and by a triduum of sermons during which the faithful received the Sacraments. The same rites took place at Santa Felicidade, whose inhabitants are always happy to welcome this occasion for a pilgrimage on foot to the feet of the Immaculate of Lourdes. Greeted at dawn by the festive sound of the bells and by the repeated fireworks, the day began dark and sad for the human eye, but beautiful and joyous for the eye of faith. The sky was grey and covered, as though with a thick veil, by a sea-fog that seemed to threaten rain (...). Once that dark veil had almost lifted and the drizzle ceased, the colonists of Santa Felicidade started out from their church in procession after receiving Holy Communion while those of Ferrara, who had been joined by many others from Timbotuva, were beginning to step out of theirs. The people of Campo Comprido were gathering in the church, in the meantime, for Confession and for the General Communion Mass. This was celebrated at 7:00 AM by a Franciscan priest from the city and accompanied at the harmonium by the Superior of the Sisters of Santa Felicidade, who together with her religious community and several girls of their school sang hymns fitting the occasion. Some 250 people received Holy Communion; quite a consoling number, considering that the colony has only sixty families.*

*At about 8:00 AM while I was getting ready for the celebration of the second Mass, we began hearing from a distance the voices of a people in procession singing hymns and the Litany to the Virgin. It was the people of Santa Felicidade, 800 of them, that had arrived at the end of a two hour walk and was about to enter the Church (...).*

*Deeply moved, I approached the altar, gave Holy Communion to more than fifty, and then I celebrated Mass accompanied by the alternating singing of devout motets directed by the Franciscan priest at the Harmonium, and of songs on the part of the people.*

*Right after nine, the Solemn High Mass began, sung by Fr. Natale Pigato, assisted by the Franciscan priest, as deacon, and by Fr. Andrea Garau, subdeacon. The local choir, directed by Battista Rossettin, sang a simple but melodious Mass, to the envy of the choirs of the other colonies (...).*

*In the meantime, the sky, that shortly before had seemed to clear, returned with not just fog, but with clouds and a rain which, though so light, still would not*

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<sup>13</sup> Letter of G. Oliveto, B. Ransolin, B. Rossettin, G. Demonte, G. Nesti to Consoni, Campo Comprido, May 12, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 374/1).

<sup>14</sup> Oliveto and Ransolin to Consoni, Campo Comprido, June 3, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 374/1).

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*have allowed to have the procession. The Mass was about to come to a close and it had not quite ceased raining yet; but when the sign of our Redemption was exiting through the threshold of the church, behold, the clouds broke open letting a section of the blue sky appear to us, and then the sun to shine apparently more resplendent than ever. What a moving sight! A cortege of three thousand people, belonging to three nationalities, Italian, Polish, and Brazilian, all devoutly carrying our common Mother in triumph"<sup>15</sup>*

In 1909, Fr. Martini had hopes to assign a priest to Campo Comprido, in case the missionaries should be leaving Tibagi; however, he pointed out that the colony was too small and not in a condition to either support a priest or bring the church to completion.<sup>16</sup> On February 9, 1910, the trustees sent in a new petition in the form of an "ultimatum" to Fr. Vicentini:

*"We must inform you that on this very day Fr. Giuseppe Martini, Superior of the Missionaries here told us that our Bishop has ordered Fr. Giovanni Morelli to Rondinha with Fr. Andrea and that we of Campo Comprido be served by the priests of Rondinha! All this has disturbed us very much! (...) We are also determined that, rather than accept to be subjected to these conditions, we prefer to have nothing to do with the Congregation any more."<sup>17</sup>*

The Superior General answered that the lack of personnel did not make it possible to keep a promise made by the late Bishop Scalabrini. Besides, it was the right of the local Bishop to assign the priests to this or that place. Since they (the people) had built the church with much sacrifice in order to have a resident priest, it was quite right that they should request the restitution of what they had donated to the Congregation. In any case, he would inquire about the matter, and try to settle the dispute.<sup>18</sup>

Campo Comprido had to wait till 1930 before they could have a priest, Fr. Giovanni Morelli, but only for a few months. It continued to depend from Santa Felicidade until the end of 1936, when it was united with the new parish of Orleans.

#### **4. Umbará**

The community of Umbará, assisted by the Scalabrinians since the time of Fr. Colbacchini, had been relinquished to the diocesan priest, Fr. Matteo Bonato, in 1904.<sup>19</sup> In 1906 it was entrusted to the Claretians (Frs. Martin Weber, Martin Maiztegui, José Domingo, Claudio Arenal).

In 1908, the Italians requested the return of the Scalabrinians, as we are made to understand by Fr. Martini and Fr. Consoni:

*"Fr. Natale assures me that when that colony was granted to Fr. Matteo Bonato for lack of personnel, the Governor do Bispado had stated that in case the said Fr. should die the colony would be given back to us.*

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<sup>15</sup> Martini to Rinaldi, Santa Felicidade, February 14, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 374/1).

<sup>16</sup> Martini to Vicentini, Santa Felicidade, June 1, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 374/1).

<sup>17</sup> Letter of A. Marchetti, G. Scorsin, G. Oliveto, G.M. Tosin, B. Ransolin, G. Cortato, to Vicentini, Campo Comprido, February 9, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 374/1).

<sup>18</sup> Vicentini to Trustees of Campo Comprido, Piacenza, March 9, 1910, draft (Arch. G.S., 374/1).

<sup>19</sup> Francesconi, op. cit., p. (original 65).

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*Fr. Matteo went to Italy in 1905, and in his absence the colony was entrusted to the priests (Claretians) of Água Verde, who continued to take care of it also till six months after his return when he asked for it and received it back. Following, however, serious disagreements, the Governor did not confirm his promise to the priest, and he gave the parish again to the Missionaries of Água Verde. But, part of the colonists oppose them and try to prevent them from using the chapel. On one of these last Sundays, for instance, they nailed (shut) the doors of the church and of the steeple. According to what I hear some of them say, the colony would willingly welcome the return there of our Fathers, but I did not make any proposal or complaint: I only said that the Bishop will settle the matter."<sup>20</sup>*

But, due to lack of personnel, the Scalabrinians did not have the possibility to fix a residence at Umbará separate from Santa Felicidade, and neither could they go there every Sunday. The chapel was, therefore, entrusted to the diocesan priest Ernesto Urbani from 1908 till 1911. The Scalabrinians returned to Umbará in 1911 with Frs. Giovanni Morelli and Carlo Pedrazzani, taking charge also of Água Verde, though residing at Umbará.<sup>21</sup>

Fr. Giovanni Morelli was replaced in 1912 by Fr. Claudio Morelli, who reorganized the life of the parish, and opened a school which he entrusted to the Sisters Apostles of the Sacred Heart at the end of 1913, or in early 1914.<sup>22</sup> Fr. Claudio Morelli died suddenly on June 27, 1915, at 33. He was succeeded by Fr. Stefano Angeli, assisted by Fr. Sblandiano Simoni who was charged especially with the care of Água Verde. In 1920 Umbará was ceded to the Josephites for the usual reason of the lack of personnel.

## **5. Água Verde**

The chapel of Água Verde, first residence of Fr. Pietro Colbacchini, had been left without a resident priest from 1889 till 1905. In 1905 it was made a "chaplaincy" served by the Claretians until July 3, 1908; the diocesan priest Ernesto Urbani was appointed its quasi-pastor, but he remained there only a short while. In 1909 it was returned to the Scalabrinians:

*"We have the care of Água Verde since May 23. However, before assigning a resident priest there, besides consulting with the Bishop, I shall wait for your approval. As you know already, it is a community of 200 Italian families, in whose midst there live many other Brazilian families. Due to its closeness to the city, this colony is in rather bad shape, but it offers a good hope for recovery; I deem it necessary, therefore, to assign a priest to it. As long as our missionaries will still remain at Tibagi, I would provisionally entrust it to Fr. Pigato, and to Fr. Pedrazzani, afterwards. This way we shall all be pretty busy because Fr. Savelli teaches mornings and afternoons during the week, on Sunday, one of us remains at the colony and says two Masses, and the other goes to the other communities, often binating to accommodate the colonists. Even though those of Campo Comprido are ill resigned to their situation and their mind are all set (their leaders, at least), on obtaining a resident priest, still the more we think of*

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<sup>20</sup> Martini to Consoni, Santa Felicidade, February 12, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 390/6).

<sup>21</sup> Brescianini to Vicentini, Rondinha, June 5, 1911 (Arch. G.S., 387/1).

<sup>22</sup> Morelli to Consoni, Umbará, August 9, 1913 - January 24, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 399/1).

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*it, the more we become convinced that it will not be possible.*"<sup>23</sup>

Towards the end of September 1909, Fr. Natale Pigato moved to Água Verde, but the Bishop did not allow that a priest should reside there alone: and so a missionary continued to be sent there from Santa Felicidade on feast days, as was done with the other colonies.<sup>24</sup> In the early months of 1910, Fr. Giovanni Morelli was finally appointed its chaplain. Three or four months after his arrival he wrote:

*"I am at the colony of Água Verde doing penance for my sins. For a long time these colonists had been longing for a resident priest; under many respects, especially for the intention of opening a school, a much justified desire! At last, they have a priest. I immediately got down to work and my first collection for the building of the school brought in 400 thousand reis (...). After overcoming many difficulties the school is now in use for a week, and, for the time being, the missionary himself is acting as teacher.*

*By suggestion of the Superior Fr. Martini, we are now making plans to build the rectory, or, I should say, we are thinking of it, with the intention of surrendering the present one as soon as the new one will be constructed. Once done, the Sisters, in turn, will give start to a school for girls.*

*The church of Água Verde, said to be very small years ago, has now become, instead, I do not know by what miracle, a very big one, especially during catechism classes. I am told that the shops are crowded both during Mass and religious instruction. Close to the city, some hear about Protestantism, Presbyterianism, Evangelism, and others about Spiritism; and so, those that once used to be staunch Catholics are now fervent freemasons.*"<sup>25</sup>

The residence of Água Verde was immediately contested because *"very close to the city, only a fifteen minute walk from the church of the Spanish (Claretians), and twenty from the Seminary; and so, the priest of Água Verde would be left with only four or five homes.*"<sup>26</sup>

By the end of 1912, Fr. Giovanni Morelli was substituted by Fr. Angelo Stefani, who soon began residing with Fr. Claudio Morelli at Umbará. This way the two quasi-parishes had only one residence until 1920, when both were surrendered to the Josephites. That chaplaincy, so close to the city, made always many claims for securing a resident priest but it did not respond very well to the solicitudes of the missionaries. In 1914, Fr. Claudio observed:

*"We will soon have the pastoral visitation of the Bishop also at Água Verde, now that the church has been restored and partly decorated by our able Brother Luigi. I do not intend to waste time to tell you that the people of Água Verde are still as frigid as ice! I shall try to stir them up a little with a mission I will have preached by the Passionists, unless it will achieve the same unfortunate results as that of last year when the whole fruit consisted of six Communions.*"<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Martini to Vicentini, Santa Felicidade, June 30, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 390/6).

<sup>24</sup> Pigato to Vicentini, Santa Felicidade, November 18, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 390/6).

<sup>25</sup> Morelli to Vicentini, Agua Verde, July 20, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 356/27).

<sup>26</sup> Morelli to Vicentini, Agua Verde, October 14, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 356/27).

<sup>27</sup> Morelli to Vicentini, Umbará, January 24, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 399/1).

## **6. Campo Largo and Colombo**

By desire of the Bishop, Fr. Giovanni Battista Bergia had charge of the Brazilian parish of Campo Largo from 1904 till 1906.<sup>28</sup> Fr. Claudio Morelli succeeded him on April 23, 1906, but as we have seen, the Brazilian priest Fr. Otavio Julio Dos Santos was sent to Campo Largo in April, 1907. Frs. Claudio Morelli and Andrea Garau moved, then, to Timbutuva, which together with Rondinha, Río Verde, and Campina, was nominally dependent on Campo Largo. And so was solved, at least as far as the Italians were concerned, the tangle of the situation of that quasi-parish where three nationalities, Brazilian, Polish, and Italian, were always at odds with one another because each wanted a curate from its own nation.

Following the death of Fr. Francesco Bonato, a companion of Fr. Colbacchini and founder of the church at Colombo, the Scalabrinians held this parish for a few months in 1913.<sup>29</sup>

On May 27 of that year, Fr. Martini wrote to the Superior General:

*"Fr. Francesco Bonato has died a few days ago (May 23, 1913) at Villa Colombo. Informed of the sad news, the Bishop asked me by telegram from Petropolis to take temporary care of that and of the other colonies dependent on it.*

*In agreement with Fr. Brescianini I accepted on a temporary basis, and I invited Fr. Giovanni Morelli to assume that assignment. It is to be expected that the Bishop may offer us that community as a steady commitment, but I will hold out for a temporary task until I shall be instructed by your decision.*

*My opinion, as with all the other Fathers, would be to accept it, and I believe we could do so without the need for other priests besides those we have here. I would rather surrender Água Verde. The said colony and those dependent on it, were founded by Fr. Pietro Colbacchini, and were the charge of our Congregation until 1895. A short distance from Colombo there is a parish called Bocaiuva whose pastor, an Italian priest, died on March 30. We had to accept this parish also, because the Bishop did not have anyone to assign to it; but we will always be free to give it up sooner or later. After all, in spite of his serious trouble, Fr. Bonato was still able to take care of both places for fifteen years."<sup>30</sup>*

And so Fr. Giovanni Morelli was assigned to Colombo, but only for a short while, because he left for Río Grande do Sul in August of 1913. The parish was taken later by the diocesan priest Angelo Macagnani, from the end of 1913 until 1915, when it was entrusted to the Passionists.

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<sup>28</sup> Francesconi, *op. cit.*, pp. (original 66-67)

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. (original 65-66).

<sup>30</sup> Martini to Vicentini, Santa Felicidade, May 27, 1913 (Arch. G.S., 390/6).

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE MISSIONS OF RÍO GRANDE DO SUL

#### 1. **Encantado**

In the beginning of 1906, Encantado was under the threat of the locusts that after entering its territory in the preceding October, had taken off for the South only in early February.

Nothing was spared: beans, sugar-cane, manioc, and corn, had all been destroyed. To the scourge of the locusts was added that of a drought that lasted four months depriving the colonists of the new crops so that many of them had to migrate to other regions, though most, unable to find a job, returned.

The pastor, Fr. Massimo Rinaldi, sought to organize the efforts of the better-off proprietors by the founding of a society that should provide a little corn, at least, for the poorer ones.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the sad financial conditions, Fr. Rinaldi courageously persevered in his enterprise:

*"Afraid he may die too soon, Fr. Massimo works like mad on the church, the rectory, and the square. And as though there were not enough work, especially now with the preparation of the children for First Communion, he has given start to a course of evening classes."*<sup>2</sup>

In fact, he had the church fenced in all around, opened the two side gates for access to the front door, obtained that the street leading to the church be planted with two rows of trees on both sides, and that work be started on a road from Encantado to Lageado in order to create jobs for people that had fallen into misery. Unfortunately, work was suspended only a few months later.

The night school was opened in the old rectory; fifty-two people, ages 8 to 32, but only some forty of them attended it on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights. Tomaso Moser from Jacarenzinho was the first teacher.

In October of that tormented 1906 Fr. Rinaldi wrote:

*"As of now, Encantado is one of the largest parishes of this State; the number of baptisms, more than 300 from January first to this date, should be sufficient proof to you. It extends north something like a three day trip, while the farthest settlements of Italians are located a good two day horse-ride away."*<sup>3</sup>

Following a visitation he conducted through a large portion of this very vast parish in early 1907, Fr. Rinaldi wrote a report we want to publish again, in spite of its length and rhetoric, because it supplies us with a concrete idea of the conditions of Italian colonies of those regions at that time, and of the nature of the apostolic action employed by the missionaries:

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<sup>1</sup> Rinaldi to Vicentini, Encantado, February 6, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 442/2).

<sup>2</sup> Costanzo to Vicentini, Encantado, March 14, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 442/2).

<sup>3</sup> Rinaldi to Consoni, Encantado, October 30, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 442/2).



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"Very Reverend Fr. Superior,

My multiple and unceasing occupations and the inconvenience of being alone did not allow me, until now, to report to you the good news of this mission. I will tell you in a few words the little good that could be accomplished by God's help in this first semester of the year.

The teaching of Catechism, usually held for the young on Saturday, and for adults on Sunday, is organized in four classes and is attended by 280 people of both sexes.

At each chapel catechists diligently teach the Christian doctrine on all Sundays, and they mark attendance and progress of their pupils on a special register.

The Catholic press, also a veritable means for moral and religious teachings has 48 subscribers to our bulletin, 16 to the "Popolo Cattolico" of Milan, 6 to the "Voce dell'Operaio" of Torino, 3 to the "Nigrizia" of Verona, 2 to the "Vera Roma", 15 to the "Bollettino Salesiano", 2 to the "Letture Cattoliche" di Torino, 4 to the "Vite dei Santi" di Monza, 25 to the "Santo dei Miracoli" of Padua.

Frequency to the Sacraments is very consoling. Be it a proof to you that no less than 500 people, who had gone to confession the previous days, received the Eucharist at the General Communion Mass of Holy Thursday.

More than three hundred received Communion on the most Solemn day of Corpus Christi. Both for piety and attendance of people at the sacred services, especially at the procession, it was indeed a day of a moving spectacle of faith and love.

The pious associations of Saint Agnes, St. Aloysius, and the canonically erected Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament vie with each other in the fulfillment of their commitments and in attendance at the Sacraments, especially on the third Sunday of every month. On the second Sunday of this month 118 boys and girls were admitted to First Holy Communion after more than a month of steady and special catechism classes and following a week of spiritual exercises. To avoid being too long or seeming to exaggerate, I do not intend to describe the details of the religious feasts celebrated in this first semester. I assure you that the devotion and attendance of the faithful at the triduum of special instructions and religious services in preparation for each feast were indeed consoling and praiseworthy especially on the occasion of the Forty-Hour Devotions preached by Fr. Carlo Porrini in the three days preceding Ash Wednesday, and on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi which was attended also by not a few people from the distant municipalities of Bento Gonçalves, Villa Garibaldi, Guaporé, Lageado, attracted by the beautiful and devout processions that regularly succeed one another, by now, at the arrival of each religious feast. By God's help, the spiritual and moral growth of this parish goes on hand in hand with the material one.

The new chapel built in honor of the Sacred Heart at the side of the church facing that of the Blessed Mother constructed in the years 1904-1905; the lime and cement plastering of the outside walls of the church; the levelling off of the hill at the right of the church, thus providing for a one thousand square meter green park, adorned with a 100 meter long boulevard lined with beautiful palm and cinnamon trees leading from the church to the town, also ornamented all around with even taller ones than those planted last year; the new hall for use by the reading club on Sunday built alongside the chapel of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; all these, and lesser works, be enough evidence to you of the material progress of this parish and of the chapels around this vast territory of Encantado.

The chapel of Our Lady of Caravaggio has been enlarged and adorned with a beautiful façade and a small sacristy; a cemetery has also been blessed there. A new brick chapel is under construction at São Rocco, and the bricks have been made ready at São José; at Jacarzinho a brick wall was built and plastered for a new cemetery; at Buon Principio, a new colony by the springs of the Jacarezinho River, the material has been gathered for a chapel in honor of Saint Anthony. The chapel of Our Lady at

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Tigrino was enlarged, while that of Santo Antonio at Garibaldi has been wholly renovated. Unfortunately, nevertheless, while, because of the zeal of the missionary and of the good response of the colonists we have much to be consoled by in this territory, in the new neighboring territory of Anta Gorda, as large as that of Encantado, we have only reasons for discouragement. There hundreds of families, distant one or two days horse ride from here, forced into virgin forests, uncertain whether they will remain because of sad disputes between government and German companies as to the rights to those lands, live a weak religious life.

In January and February I tried to conduct a visitation of all those new colonies, but I did not succeed for lack of time, due especially to the care of the needs of this Encantado, whose vastness and large population you well know!

How many times have I desired and still do, to continue this visitation, and so to send you a most extended and detailed report of it But, it is all in vain! There is much work to do here, and I am all alone!

It will be best, therefore, that I supply you with the opportunity for an approximate knowledge of the needs of those new colonies, and that I send you the little information I can gather from my diary, accompanied by brief observations of mine on the life and on the material and moral progress of the new colonies in general.

January 2, 1907 - From Encantado to Anta Gorda.

At the end of an eight-hour horse ride through virgin forests, I reach the German territory called "Linha 1ª of Ant Gorda. A guest of a good German family, I was taking some rest when I awoke at the screeching of parrots' flights and rushed to the nearby chapel, that filled in no time with people of different languages and customs, but of the same faith, united in the noble and holy scope of worshiping God.

Moved at, and happy for, the arrival of the Catholic priest, blessed with the good fortune of assisting at Mass once a year, they go to Confession and receive Holy Communion in great numbers. In the colonies, the nature of the place itself, the isolation, the lack of the most elementary comforts of life, and most of all, the grace of God, contribute admirably in helping the goodwill of the colonists and the zeal of the missionary, in strengthening evermore the kingdom of Christ, in arousing kind and devout feelings in the hearts of the faithful, and in inspiring the priest with words of true enthusiasm for all things leading to civic and religious good. How much easier it is to speak about God, good and evil, the soul, good morals, in the beginning rather than later on in the growth or at the close of a colonization; how much easier it is to instill then sentiments of a truly honest and laborious life in souls. And the reasons are many; the dangers for one's life presented by the nature of the place, the forest with its trees and animals, the streams and their water, the sky and its storms, the isolation with lack of so many human comforts, and the consequent danger or even the certitude of dying without the Sacraments: these, and many other reasons, render our work easier, and more fruitful our effort in caring for the salvation of souls in the new colonies. These are the reasons that make the vineyard of the Lord so fruitful in the beginning of a colonization, but they tend to disappear little by little later on with the material progress, and should the priest not know or be able to avail himself of them on time, his work will be harder and less effective.

Once a colonist has overcome the first difficulties of the new place, adapted himself to the new environment, made friends with people of different language and customs, and, God forbid, of another religion, reached a certain degree of comfort, his mind perverted by some wicked companion or newspaper, his heart corrupted by a disorderly love for amusement especially for night clubs and dances, unfortunately much the vogue in these regions, when left to himself, he will then receive not only with religious but also with civic coldness and apathy the priest or anyone else that should go to him with the intention of urging him to live a temperate, active, praiseworthy, laborious, and decorous life useful to himself, his family and society; a

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life that may render him worthy not only of the admiration and praise of men but of the blessings of the Lord and of the eternal reward of Heaven reserved to the just and to workers, as well.

'The B colony', a deeply saddened holy old missionary of the Company of Jesus was telling me one day, 'is lost!' For scarcity of priests in the beginning and in the process of its growth it could not be provided with religious assistance, and so the colonists lost the faith and the practice thereof, good morals and love for virtue! That good Samaritan was right.

The arrival of the missionary at a new colony is a happy event for all. He hoists the Cross of Christ in the midst of the luscious deeply green forest, and raises the holy altar under the most vast dome of the world, that of the open skies; nationalities disappear, people rush, prostrate themselves, pray, worship, come together, and become brothers. Faith unites them in soul and heart, in love and good will, and by this consoling unity the colony gains growth, life, and sure and perennial harmony. Would to Heaven that certain people in government were to appreciate this gift and extend a friendly hand to the missionary! What greater temporal and eternal fruits would come to society! Oh, if only...Oh well, let us not get distracted by vain dreams! We better to come back to ourselves! I spent the days reserved to the visitation of the 'Linha 1ª' of Anta Gorda in doing the people all the good possible, then I get the indispensable mule ready and leave.

From Antagorda to "Linha 2ª" of Itapuca.

Armed with a long and sharp knife - (here called "faccone") a guide opens our way through the thick shrubs of the forest, warns me to bend over on the saddle not to hit against the ancient trees knocked down by storms and winds, and in another place he calls out for me to lift my feet and legs high to avoid any bruises from other trees that are found on the way.

As though these gymnastics for survival were not enough, to top it all, a sudden storm caught us by surprise in the midst of our trip, and together with the rain from heaven we were soaked by showers from the trees and bushes blown by the wind or shaken by our steps. We had to walk hours before we could find a little shelter.

With God's help, drenched like fish, finally we find hospitality at a good family's house, and welcomed by these and other compatriots with the most sincere and happy showing of affection, I turned a little shack into a nice little chapel.

A green palm, the many colored flowers from the woods, the clear white linens of our poor colonists, supply me with the means for preparing a devout, though so modest, abode for our loving Jesus who desires to descend to bless, and nourish his children.

Even before the sun began gilding the rising day with its rays, a rifle shot woke me up in the morning and enkindled in me the joy of being in the field of my apostolic endeavors. The poor colonists, barefooted and soaked by the rain all over their body, came out from the forest here and there, they wished to be reconciled with God, and they arrived in such great numbers as to keep me busy for several hours.

I remained with them two days; there was a steady stream of faithful, a multiplying of entreaties for a visit of mine to their distant colonies, which, though in existence for several years already, had never as yet been visited by the minister of God. For this reason some of them had migrated to Chile only a few months before. "*The harvest is good but laborers are scarce.*" (Mt 9, 37); and this abundant harvest of the new colonies, extending over more than 300 square kilometers, compels me to return to Encantado to take care of some pending business so that I may be able to resume and continue these trips with greater ease and attend to the spiritual needs of these communities with less worries. And so on January 5, I arrived back at "Linha 2ª" of Anta Gorda in the dead of night, where, by permission of the Bishop, I blessed a new

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chapel. The happy occasion of the solemn blessing of the chapel, the end of works in the fields, and, above all, the Grace of God, supplied me with a variety of steady work.

Confessions, catechism, a meeting of the chapel's society to insure its constant and best administration possible, baptisms, weddings, made me spend there in the flash of lightening two days replenished with true consolation and sweet memories.

January 20 - From Encantado to Burro Feio.

After taking care of some business concerning the ministry and the house administration, with deep emotions of sweet memories and cherished hopes, I resume my trip in the direction of Anta Gorda. At the end of a good seven hours on horseback along the river Jacaré, and up and down the mountains of Coqueiro and Granado, I arrive at an area of Anta Gorda called Burro Feio.

On arrival at the first house, the home of an Italian, to my deep sorrow I discover that, hidden all around in the woods where they can better attend to their human needs because of the nature of the place, and of water springs, live some thirty or more families, Brazilian in great majority, whose only riches consist in having a little "mate" herb in the "carigio" (a small palm hut) with which to make tea as their nourishment; with what physical results, it would be too long and sad to describe.

At this news my heart sinks and I ask myself: what will I be able to do in just a few hours for these foreigners who settled here so many years ago without ever seeing a minister of God; at the most, some of them may have had this chance on the occasion of last year's few-hour visit here by my dear confrere Fr. Giovanni (Costanzo) which was in part despoiled of its results, besides, by hard rains.

O my God, may Your Grace compensate for my inability, and instill in their heart the desire, at least, to take me to baptize their children, regardless of whether they are big or small, naked or poorly clad.

January 30

A beautiful summer sun that enlightens and brightens up little by little the highest mountain peaks, the wide and dense foliage of pine trees, the warbling of parrots of different colors and sizes, and the monotonous singing of certain other birds in places where all else is desert and silence; all arouse sweet thoughts in my mind and good hopes in my heart for rather consoling fruits on behalf of the faithful, and of the not so faithful ones, who will arrive in a short while to attend Mass.

I wrote the "not so faithful" because in other places I had noticed more than once certain colonists, unfortunately, born and raised as protestants, genuflect before the Blessed Sacrament in an expression of their naturally religious heart, thus wishing to confess the sentiments of their faith in and love of God; deprived of their protestant churches and ministers, they willingly join the Catholics and take part in their religious services.

If this religious associating of non-Catholics with true Christians is on one hand a source of consolation, on the other it saddens me because in similar circumstances quite often the opposite takes place with serious or almost sure danger of the loss of the true faith by our compatriots in places where, compelled to live isolated amongst protestants, not only do they join them in their religious services, but to an even greater misfortune, they also send the children to their schools. Poor abandoned souls, thirsty for the Word of God, deprived of religious assistance! They deserve all our compassion. May zealous missionaries come to increase our ranks, to unfurl the banner of Jesus Christ in the midst of these virgin forests, to raise His Holy Cross, to extend His loving arms to the derelict children of Eve, and to lead them on the path of virtue and of the true temporal and eternal good.

I hear a trotting of horses! It is the sound of the closest people of the colony coming to give witness to their faith in God! I greet them heartedly, inquire about their well-being, families, and work; I gather them around an improvised altar, I speak to them

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of the true scope of our miserly life and of the means to reach it, and I assure them that the Blessed God grants His sufficient help to all men; then I briefly go through the principal tenets of our faith while they listen in silence and with deep attention. These short instructions and reminders, admirably made fruitful by the Grace of God, always gain some souls back to the Lord, and the work of the missionary is thus rewarded beyond measure! At that moment he does not remember the discomforts of his trips anymore, the poverty of the people, and the inconveniences of the seasons; he has done his best to have a sparkle of divine light shine in the minds and hearts of hundreds and hundreds of people, old and young, and he is happy. He is all aglow over the little he did, and excited for new and greater enterprises and conquests.

*January 30 - From Burro Feio to Paradone (Paredão).*

After completing my ministry at Burro Feio, I pay a visit to a German school close by; I choose a location on which to build a chapel, and resume my trip on the winding paths through the forest. At the end of a four-hour voyage, partly on horseback, and partly on foot, tormented all trip long by an intense summer heat and by an unquenchable thirst for the total lack of water, I arrive at a place called "Paradone", inhabited here and there by some sixty families, most of them Italian. My first concern was finding a house, the most suitable one, where to exercise the sacred ministry, and I choose the home of a good German. All happy for his good luck, he immediately suspends his work in the fields and helps me body and soul in turning the only room, ill protected by four boards, into a modest little chapel that was to welcome the Savior of the world as once did the stable at Bethlehem. Meanwhile, the news of my arrival spreads all around with excellent response; some colonists call on me and entreat me to stay a few days with them to give all families the opportunity to be reconciled with God and hear His Holy Word. And so, here we are at work! One by one, we see the good faithful coming!

*February 1.*

How uncertain are human expectations! While the consoling attendance of the faithful yesterday morning, their good will to avail themselves of the visit of the missionary for the reception of the Sacraments, and a long expected abundant rain, besides, all give me cause to hope for a fruitful spiritual action, the sad news reaches us that a kilometer from here a representative of the government has the mandate to acknowledge those lands as the property of a certain Mr. Fueller, thus taking them away from the colonists to whom the Government itself had sold them before.

A veritable absurdity, but this is also what can happen here. In these regions, very often a piece of land is sold by government officials not just to one, but to different buyers. This irregularity is being carried out more or less all over the territory of Anta Gorda, to the great detriment of the poor settlers, most of them Italian.

And so, while in this locality called "Paradone" Mr. Mueller claims to be the true and rightful owner with the government, in the other one, close to this and much more extended, other owners, a German society especially, have already been protesting two years against the government's usurpations and the arrival of the poor colonists. Neither does anyone know when nor how this shameful and noxious dispute will end. As to the properties of Mr. Mueller, the government colonization's official arrives today, in the meantime, to order the colonists to surrender the lands bought from the government to Mr. Mueller, except for the lots on which their houses stand, compensating them with other lands several days distant from here! To what loss for the settlers, it would be too long to describe!

For the interest of these regions and to avoid the spilling of blood, I hope the government will pronounce a more just sentence than the many assurances made by its representatives to the poor colonists with beautiful words such as these:

*"The land the government sold you and you paid for is yours; be calm, go back to your homes and to your work."*

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What a misfortune! Many families, after putting all their little savings together, have sold their old lands, exploited, by now, and in need of recuperation, and have provided for the future of their children with buying for them more extended and fertile lands than those they possessed elsewhere, and today, by the saying of a word they lose all that modest fortune, the fruit of many years of difficulties, efforts, privations, travelling, and sacrifices of all sorts; not a few of them on the brink of despair. For anyone acquainted with these regions, the problem of such a sad and still unresolved dispute, between government and previous owners of these lands appears difficult indeed.

And so, while this unfortunate day of the arrival of the colonization's official keeps the colonists on edge and forces them to go over and protest to the authorities, my little improvised chapel is left empty and my goodwill to work for the salvation of souls inactive. I gather my sacred vestments and decide to leave for another place not troubled by this sinister misfortune. But, before leaving I pay a visit to the settlers gathered at the residence of the colonization's official, I caution them to be calm, plead their cause with the authorities, and then continue on my trip. Following a three hour horse ride I arrive at "Linha 2ª" of Anta Gorda. To my dismay, here also I discover the shocking repercussion created by the government's decree favoring Mr. Mueller against the colonists.

February 2.

The feast day of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin is dawning! Many people come to the little chapel, but they gather here especially to be informed on the provisions to adopt for avoiding the loss of their land. I do my best to reassure them, and on their behalf I write a letter to the Italian Consul in Porto Alegre, the Capital of the State. In the afternoon, following the teaching of catechism and the praying of the Rosary, I go to the German chapel where I embark and continue on an even heavier schedule.

February 4 - From Anta Gorda to Itapuca..

At the end of a five hour trip from Anta Gorda I reach "Linha 3ª" of Itapuca, in the midst of many Italian families, which, although they've been here three years already, have never seen a priest among them. On the following morning the Savior of the world descends on four ill connected wooden boards decorated with flowers and shining white linens, and there begins for me a day of abundant work and consolation. Old and young, all bless the arrival of the missionary, and desire to draw plenteous fruits from it.

February 5.

Long live the love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. He deigns to abide within the humble walls of this hut to give Himself early in the morning as food to the weak and the infirm unable to remain fasting till the hour of Mass, which I say at a later hour to give the colonists arriving from far away the possibility to attend. Here, all around us, super-abundant is the richness of the response of the faithful, who come in large number to receive Holy Communion. While here all is isolation and dreariness, the dark shadows of the forest render more mystical and devout the Holy of Holies, the rough table on which the Blessed Sacrament lives, reigns, and triumphs! While all is silence around us, the singing of little birds, competing with the harps of Cherubim, fills the heart with gentle sweetness; when the poor colonists prostrate themselves to adore their God, the expression of their faces and the composure of their persons remind one of the fortunate shepherds of Bethlehem, and the soul swells up with holy joy and moving feelings! How moving this mingling of poverty and faith, this joining together of piety and squalor! How well one comes to know here the love of God who is well pleased to live in the midst of the poor, and to give Himself to the humble, the derelicts, the needy. And is there, perhaps, anyone more derelict than these colonists, two or more travelling days away from the priest, without ever seeing a minister of the living God since the day they first arrived in these regions.

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Following a short trip on horseback I am at "Linha 4<sup>a</sup>" of Itapuca, everywhere most heartedly welcomed by the people so as to give me hope for a good attendance at the Sacraments and at the religious instructions.

February 6.

By God's help and the colonists' good response, I see my hopes fully fulfilled, and my soul is filled with so sweet a consolation as to make me most ardently desire to return as soon as possible to the midst of these devout people to minister to them once again the bread of eternal life.

February 7 - By the banks of the Sangone River.

At the end of a good four hour trip, as usual, partly on horseback and partly on foot, due to the difficulties of these regions, I arrived shortly after sunset last night at the Sangone river, my next station for the exercise of the Sacred Ministry. This morning, after a period of rest interrupted now and then by local conditions mentioned by me in other reports, I salute the dawn of the rising day; when the first sunrays pierce in and fill this humble house I hasten to transform it into a devout little chapel for the celebration and administration of the holy mysteries. All satisfied I resume my itinerary.

February 8 - By the springs of the Jacaré River.

I reach the springs of the Jacaré River after a five hour march from the banks of the Sangone through the thick forest of cedars, jabuticabeiras (myrtle-like underbrush), acacias, pine trees, and mate-bushes.

I enter an old and disconnected wooden hut, and the generous kindness of its owner assures me it will be my station for rest, work, and also the royal palace of Jesus Christ. Would that God allowed, at least, the poverty of this abode be compensated with the riches of the love of His children! But, alas, this is denied Him here also. And why so? Because of the religious neglect in which people live in these forests! They are poor Brazilians, who, having to embark on trips of several days to go to a priest, seldom see him, and even then only briefly; at most they go to have him baptize their children, not just few years old, but even fully grown, as well. Who knows whether a priest has ever set foot in these forests! The families most rooted in religion mechanically repeat to their children a few prayers often admixed with superstition. Poor people! They inspire compassion! How could they know the most common prayers of a Catholic, what the Mass, Confession, and Holy Communion mean, if they have never been contacted by a priest for generations. Even so, they have a good will to be instructed; this is so true that they follow, listen to, and even worship anyone who comes to them presenting himself as a priest. Still, today they remember with reverence and deep emotion their fellow countryman, the so-called *Monje*, sentenced to die by shooting. After placing himself at the head of a band of criminals, only a few years ago he used to visit his compatriots under the false name of a messiah, and even though the prophecy uttered by him did not come true, these people still hold him as a Saint. In no less esteem and veneration is held by these people the memory of a certain "João Maria" who, among other oddities, was teaching them to raise a cross made of two beams of cedar at the side of their house. If they germinated, the family was well to remain there because it would be blessed with good luck; however, if the beams dried up, the family had to leave to get away from the misfortunes that would befall it in that place. In the absolute absence of a priest, these imposters and sorcerers become their fathers and priests, and they go to them to have their families baptized and joined in marriage. And would be to God there were no others worse than these! This is one of the main reasons urging me, at the cost of any sacrifice, to visit them, to warn them of this danger and remind them briefly which one is the true religion and how to practice it. It saddens me very much not to be able to stay in their midst for long to guard them all from the deceptions of the enemies of our holy faith. The great distances among them, the total lack of roads and, above all, the intense

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work of this summer's season, when the "herva-mate" is harvested, their only source of industry, prevent me from contacting many of them with ease! Neither is it my intention to describe here their whole life, their usages and customs. I will only have you consider that the poverty of their faith and of their practice of it has its clear counterpart in the poverty of their conditions. All their riches consist in having a patched-up and worn out suit, a machete, a pistol, and a poncho very handy in time of rain. They feed on game, fish, and wild fruits; besides, they raise corn, beans, and pumpkins, which they eat especially during the off-season time. Poor people, they deserve all our compassion! Why aren't there legions of missionaries, ready to take care of these unfortunate people, and lead them on the right path to a truly religious and civilized life? In spite of the extreme need for instruction of these neglected people, I am forced to leave this unattended vineyard, and go to guard and improve, as best as I can, the one where thousands upon thousands of my compatriots live, who would also fall back into the same miserable civil, social, and religious conditions if the assistance of a Catholic priest were lacking! Alas, how little is the good that can be accomplished even in this vineyard when compared with the much more that remains to be done because of the great disproportion between workers and harvest! Oh! If instead of only one priest taking care of some seven or eight thousand souls, scattered, besides, in small hamlets days away from each other, I had just a small number of them more closely located and an assistant; how much more we could accomplish, how much stronger and steadier would the faith of these colonies grow! On the contrary, there is enough reason today to fear that, if there will not be an increase of the ministers of God, the followers of the Cross will keep decreasing, due to the in-roads of superstition, error, and ignorance! God forbid!

February 9 - From Figueira to Cercada.

Tired from the steady travelling on foot and on horseback, thirsty because of the hot sun rays and lack of water, I reach the outer edge of a thick forest where my ear gets struck by the devout singing of different voices. I wake up as though from a stupor, and I quickly realize that the good colonists had gathered at the first house on sight to pray for rain. The fields are all dried up by the summer heat, and the harvest is by now almost completely ruined by the drought. Deeply moved I take to their direction, get off my horse, enter, and see....what a scene of faith! Prostrate before a devout image of the Blessed Mother, big and small, men and women, and the entire hosting family, all pray and hope. Filled with emotion, I fall on my knees and pray with them. At the conclusion of their prayer, I address the surprised audience with words of praise and of encouragement to trust in the protection of the Mother of the sorrowing. Neither were their hopes in vain, because while kneeling the following day around the Blessed Sacrament they were imploring the Divine mercy, the sky covered up with heavy clouds, and gifted us with an extremely abundant rain. As though in competition, those good people vied with each other in receiving Holy Communion in thanksgiving to the Lord, and that humble house, made a temple of God, became a place of sweet consolations.

February 11 - From Cercada to Gramado and back to headquarters.

Would to Heaven I were granted today at this station the same consolations as yesterday! I did not arrive here dying with thirst as at the other places, but soaked from top to bottom by a persistent rain made more plentiful by a blustering wind that, shaking the trees, intensified my shower with the added danger of getting hit over the head by the fall of large branch. But the good Lord, who sees and provides, kept this danger far from me, and at the end of a four-hour trip He granted me a safe arrival at the new colony of Gramado, inhabited some years already, by a good number of Italians, by some German families, and by other more numerous Brazilians families.

In my excursions of seven years by now, I have experienced how much harder and less fruitful is the action of the missionary in places where there live communities made up



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of people of different languages and customs. I shall explain the reasons in another report of mine.

Anyway, some good is always accomplished; we remind them of the truths of faith, and a soul is now and then gained for God. In fact, we teach catechism for a while in the morning to children and to adults at night. We sow the good seed; it may not immediately germinate, bloom, or give results, but by the Grace of God, ever munificent in His wonders, it will bear copious and salutary fruits in due time. The words of Christ will then become true: "*One man sows; another reaps.*" (Jn 4, 37).

Having thus concluded my visit, I head back through the virgin forest, and return to headquarters, with the most burning desire and hope in my heart to start again, and continue, as soon as possible, and with more time at my disposal, my trips through the colonies. But, I have waited to this day in vain, because, without the assistance of another confrere, I do not have anyone to whom I may entrust the care of the territory of Encantado, not less vast but much more inhabited than that of Anta Gorda.

Fr. Massimo Rinaldi, d. C. di S.C."<sup>4</sup>

The last work of Fr. Rinaldi was the rebuilding of the rectory: the old one, built by Fr. Vicentini, was dismantled, put together again at the other side of the church, and dedicated in January 1910. In his capacity as regional superior, Fr. Rinaldi left a few months later for the General Chapter, which elected him General Councilor and Treasurer. He was replaced by Fr. Giuseppe Pandolfi. Fr. Luigi Guglieri, who had arrived from Encantado in 1908 remained there as an assistant. In 1911, on the occasion of his visit to the missions of Brazil, the Superior General assigned Fr. Pandolfi to the new parish of Anta Gorda, Fr. Guglieri to Monte Belo, and Fr. Cavigiolo to Encantado.

In the years 1914-1915, Fr. Cavigiolo had several works done to the Church:

*"As desired by our dear Superior General, the Sanctuary is being remodeled. I had it raised to a level respondent to the central nave, and I opened three crescent shaped windows in the back wall, above the molding, to be adorned with stained glass. The famous niche of St. Peter will likewise be demolished, (do not be offended, Fr. Massimo) and a window, also with stained glass, will be opened in its place to give light to the statue, so as to make it visible for the whole length of the church.*

*'And where is the money for so many things?' you may ask! I have on hand two 'contos of reis'; with these I hope to do all that is needed without getting into any debt. The chapel of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel has also been remodeled; it has a brand new altar (...) I have established the Sodality of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel; it met with the favor of the parish as did the association of the Sacred Heart, and on the fourth Sunday of each month I say the Mass for all its members (...). The 'Company of Saint Aloysius' has 75 members, and that of Saint Agnes 270. As numerous as ever is also the membership of the confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament.'*<sup>5</sup>

In those years other quasi-parishes were detached from the quasi-parish of Encantado, of which Anta Gorda was the largest; and so the families under the jurisdiction of the quasi-pastor of Encantado in 1916 were about 500. In October of 1919, Archbishop Becker called together to Encantado the twelve

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<sup>4</sup> Rinaldi "Diario di Un Viaggio tra le Colonie", "L'Emigrato Italiano Emigrato", a. V, Sept. 1907., pp. 102-108; a. VI. February 1908, pp. 6-12.

<sup>5</sup> Cavigiolo to Rinaldi, Encantado, July 23, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 442/4).

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priests of the region, and formally established the Deanery of Encantado with the dependent parishes of Muçum, Nova Bréscia, and Roca Sales.<sup>6</sup>

## **2. Nova Bassano**

Fr. Giovanni Costanzo, who succeeded Fr. Antonio Serraglia in running the quasi-parish of Nova Bassano on February 11, 1907<sup>7</sup>, had contacted the previous year the Italian colonists of that region:

"The first week I visited the chapels of the 'Linhas' nearest to the parish residence. The demanding work, the extreme heat and travelling under a burning sun, got me sick for a while. Either because of need or because I was expected, I did not stop working. And so I acceded to the desire of the colonists of several 'Linhas' not so far from here, and I went to instruct them and to conduct the sacred services in their chapels for protection from the scourges of locusts and drought. When I got better, I began the

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<sup>6</sup> Cavigiolo to Rinaldi, Encantado, November 2, 1919 (Arch. Diocese of Rieti, Rinaldi Fund). "We provide here some information on the various chapels that used to depend on the parish of Encantado, the only one about which we have sufficiently precise data on the constellation of chapels surrounding Brazilian parishes. At a distance of just one kilometer from the seat there stood the first chapel, St. Anthony the Abbot, founded by Giovanni Rossetto, Augusto Vanzetta, Francesco Echer, Antonio Buffon, Antonio and Giovanni Bratti, Zuchetti and Santo Bertoni. The present stone church was built in 1889 on land donated by Giovanni Rossetto, and blessed by the Jesuit Father Eugene Steiner in 1891. The Chapel of Saint Joseph was founded in 1891 on a piece of land donated by the family of Margherita Bigliardi between "Linhas" Lambari and Jacarezinho. It was blessed by Father Steiner. It was replaced later on with one made of stone, blessed in 1909 by Father Enrico Poggi. Albino Fontana, August Lorenzi, and Alessio Ghisleni were the first trustees. In 1898, the few colonists of "Linha" Garibaldi constructed a modest wooden chapel, dedicated to St. Anthony of Padua on land, the property of Battista Cadore, Giuseppe Pederiva and Fortunato Sandri. Other founding members were Pietro Frozza and Paolo Guizzo. The chapel was blessed by Father Domenico Vicentini. It was replaced with another one made of wood in 1933. In 1892, Father Steiner blessed the chapel of St. Rocco, built in Jacaré on land of Gregorio Giacomelli, and Anna Lorenzi. In 1907, Father Rinaldi blessed the corner stone of a new stone chapel, dedicated on August 16 of the same year by Father Pietro Negri. Among the founding fathers of the chapel we list the names of Beniamino and Domenico Pedrotti, Andrea Belló, Costanzo Fraporti, Enrico Deimichei, Basilio Turatti, Battista Cemin, and Francesco Sangalli. The chapel of Our Lady Help of Christians in Alto Jacarezinho was blessed by Father Vicentini in 1899. It was built on land donated by Carlo and Carolina Holler, and the first families that got together to form the committee for building it were those of Valentino Dadalt, Luigi, Giulio and Angelo Della Vecchia, Desiderio Bouvié, etc. The first church was soon destroyed by a storm, but immediately rebuilt. In 1939 it was replaced with a stone structure. At "Linha" Sapopema of Encantado, a small Committee composed of Domenico and Giovanni Marchetti, Giovanni and Giuseppe Gado, Giuseppe and Giacomo Aresi, Lorenzo Danieli, and Giovanni Colbacchini, built in 1911 the chapel of Saint Mark, blessed by Father Cavigiolo. Up to the year 1913 the colonists of Jacarezinho had been gathering for their common prayer on Sunday at a small school. In that year, Giovanni and Battista Bonfanti, Giovanni Battista Pretto, Antonio, Angelo, Alfonso and Sperandio De Conto, and Giovanni Bonfanti, built a chapel titled to St. Charles on land donated by Giovanni Bonfanti and Antonio De Conto. The existing chapel was constructed in 1922. In 1917, Father Cavigiolo dedicated the chapel of St. Aloysius at "Linha" São Luis, erected on a piece of land donated by Agostino Da Croce; other members of the chapel's committee were Giuseppe Perussolo, Giuseppe Lorenzi, Giovanni and Paolo Spezzato, Giuseppe Lorenzi, Jr., Gaetano Radaelli, Silvio Perussolo, and Felice Pretto. A small oratory existed at "Linha" Argola, on land donated by Giovanni Bagattini, and dedicated to Our Lady of Grace. The new stone chapel was built in 1933. Another modest chapel had been constructed at Alto das Palmas, in honor of St. Dominic. Destroyed by a cyclone in 1928, it was rebuilt on land donated by Giuseppe Giovanella and Angelo Koralescki, and was blessed by Father Carlo Pedrazzani. The same missionary inaugurated on February 8, 1922, the chapel of St. John Baptist at "Linha" Chiquinha. The first families to settle there were those of Angelo Buffon, Pietro Vian, Valentino Radaelli, and Antonio Lucca. The chapel of St. Joachim at "Linha" Lajeado was built in 1925, and blessed by Father Pedrazzani. The first members of the chapel's committee were the families of Pietro and Angelo Masiero, Giovanni Vigolo, Carlo Castaldi, Bernardo and Carlo Tremea. The piece of land was donated by Osvaldo Zart. The chapel of St. Maximus at Barra do Guaporé was founded in 1929, and blessed by Father Foscallo. The founding fathers were Guerino Zeni, Fausto Bonfadini, Ferdinando Tramontini, Mansueto Buffon, Fausto and Luigi Daroz, and Guerino Zanchet. The same Father Foscallo founded the chapel of Santa Teresinha at Jacaré in 1928, with the help of Giovanni Cima, Bartolomeo Pedrotti, Antonio Buffon, Battista and Giulio Da Croce, Mary and Angela Cima. The Chapel of Our Lady of Peace at "Linha" Anita was built and blessed by Father Zanzotti in 1938. Its main contributors were Vincenzo and Raimondo De Conto, and Giuseppe Graziola." (cfr. Cinquentenario da Fundação da Paroquia de São Pedro de Encantado (1946), pp. 35-46).

<sup>7</sup> Cfr. Francesconi, "History of the Scalabrinian Congregation", Vol. III (Rome, 1973), p. 243 (original).

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visitation of the chapels farther off from the parish; by God's help, it seems to me as though the results were good and the harvest of spiritual fruits very abundant.

I can't understand why such a general good disposition and receptive welcome to my poor words! Perhaps, the Lord wants to show His power by effecting good through instruments, which, of themselves, are utterly helpless. God's Will be done! What satisfied me most was not the attendance at sermons and Sacraments but seeing the settling of old enmities and of long standing disputes in some communities.

On one occasion, while travelling from one chapel to another, an accident happened to me worth reporting! If I got out of it unhurt, I must give infinite thanks to God and to the Blessed Mother for their miraculous help. I was riding the famous 'Pino' of the late Fr. Colbacchini, when I arrived at a wooden bridge, poorly built and in disrepair. Here the horse stopped and decided not to take one step further. With no time to spare because I had to be rather early that evening at a chapel where I was expected to say the Rosary and a few words to the people, I deemed it a good thing to spur the horse on to the other side. But the horse began recoiling, and before I knew the poor thing slipped with its hind legs into a hole, some six feet deep, at the side of the road! Because the ditch was too deep, the legs could not reach a resting place; this caused the animal to slide down in a sitting position, first, and then to fall on all four into the hole, hardly fitting in it! I do not know with what haste and determination I was able to maneuver my feet free of the stirrups and to jump off the horse's hind, thus getting hold of a beam of a fence nearby to which I could cling. Had I remained astride the horse a minute longer or gotten off him sideways, I would have been helplessly crushed by the beast, and, by that hole, which I shall never forget as the place of a great grace received, a cross would now be standing with the inscription: "*Pray for the late Costanzo!*"

I do not tarry in describing the hard time I had in getting the horse out of that narrow and deep ditch. I am content with telling you that I succeeded, finally, with the help of a man, and all ended well without harm either to horse or rider, who could this way continue on his trip and mission, as though nothing had happened. I give thanks to the Lord for this event in which I see the Finger of God, a great grace!

Another meaningful incident happened to me at a chapel called Saint Peter. There lived a Protestant man who had married a Catholic. Not contented with perverting his wife, he began propagandizing his religion in the neighborhood, and succeeded in gaining some twenty, or more, proselytes. I do not need to tell you that these proselytes of the self-styled apostle had immediately abandoned all religious practices, and began making fun of those who wanted to remain faithful to their religion.

A few days before my arrival at that chapel, the Protestant apostle had died suddenly of a brain hemorrhage, at a very young age! This unexpected and premature death left a deep impression on the people. The good, concerned over themselves and their children, were relieved and more than ever confirmed in the right path, while those who had apostatized to follow him, having lost their leader, were left shaken and confused.

I was informed immediately about it on my arrival. The following morning, leaving aside the sermon I had prepared, I deemed it opportune to instruct a little the people on Protestantism. I had always been interested in the study of the various Protestant sects, it was therefore easy for me in the two days I stayed with them to improvise several brief instructions in which I had all my heart and strength, drawing from them, by God's Grace, better results than expected! In fact, all those that had been deceived into following that Protestant, even the staunchest ones, became convinced of the error they had fallen into, and received the Sacraments to the great edification of the good people themselves, who kept saying afterwards: 'Today you had a good catch, Father; the largest "fish" of this "Linha" got caught in your net!'

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Another happening worth reporting of this mission tour was my meeting at Bela Vista with the President of the State of Rio Grande on his visit to the various municipalities to inspect the great damages caused by locusts and drought and determine what assistance should be provided. I was also invited to a banquet in his honor that evening, and it was only proper I should accept. At the end of it, I got up and said a few words praising the President for his solicitude in embarking, regardless of hardships and discomforts, on a trip meant to bring relief from damages brought about by natural causes; I likened him to our King Vittorio for rushing with concern and eagerness to Calabria to bring assistance to the victims of the earthquake; I thanked him on behalf of the colonists for all he was to do for them; and I assured him that the Italians placed full trust in him, and more so because they were well aware of sharing in the same religion (with him). I concluded with a toast to the President, Rio Grande, Brazil, Brazilians, and Italians. The President, who understands Italian quite well, was very pleased with the hodgepodge I tried my best to put together, and he answered with a beautiful speech. Showing his genuine catholicity and a good knowledge of Church history and matters, he promised to devote himself to helping the poor victim by giving way to important and extraordinary works, etc., etc., and ended it hailing Italians, so dear to his heart; the Catholic religion, source of civilization and of material and moral well-being; its most worthy - so he said - representative, which was poor old me! The following day, when the President was about to leave, someone came over to the Church to inform me about it, and since I was free, I went out to bid him good-bye. As soon as he saw me, he got off his horse, came towards me, shook my hands with real warmth, and said: 'It is my great pleasure to meet you again! Should you need my assistance, please count on me! My residence shall be open any time to my sincere friend!'"<sup>8</sup>

In 1906 Fr. Costanzo visited the chapels of Nova Bassano several times. Toward the end of the year, when Fr. Serraglia had already been appointed to the Mother House in Italy, Fr. Costanzo went to help him prepare the extraordinary festivities of Saint Bassano, celebrated in January 1907. On the occasion of these celebrations Fr. Serraglia was hoping to make some special collections to pay the debts incurred in the construction of the church.<sup>9</sup>

Soon after being made a quasi-pastor, Fr. Costanzo was given the assistance of Fr. Carlo Porrini who was charged with the very hard task of caring for the thirty chapels of the then very vast parish. Sickly, Fr. Costanzo remained almost always at the central residence. Between 1908 and 1909 he had a new rectory built, and already by middle 1909 had in mind opening a boarding school under the direction of nuns, because there was in that region only a Brazilian teacher interested in nothing else but in his salary and teaching a group of just five or six pupils:

*"I have been thinking about remedying this miserable situation by opening a school directed by nuns for the instruction and education of the young; and this is what I shall do right after the new rectory will be completed. To this end, I have also contacted the Italian Consul by whom I was promised a subsidy of money, books, and other school material."*<sup>10</sup>

The lumber for the construction of the school was ready by the end of 1909; in early 1910, within a month or so, the building was ready to house the Sisters

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<sup>8</sup> Costanzo, "Dalle Missioni di Rio Grande do Sul", "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", June 1906, pp. 77-80.

<sup>9</sup> Rinaldi to Consoni, Encantado, Nov. 29, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 442/2).

<sup>10</sup> Costanzo to Vicentini, Nova Bassano, June 5, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 448/5).

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of the Most Pure Heart of Mary from Porto Alegre; they immediately began teaching in Portuguese and Italian.<sup>11</sup> In March of 1909, Fr. Giuseppe Pandolfi replaced Fr. Porrini worn out by the much work demanded of him by Fr. Costanzo; and then he moved to Bela Vista in 1913.<sup>12</sup> In the same year Fr. Costanzo gave the finishing touches to the still rustic rectory, had the church covered with a zinc roof, and fixed up the cemetery with a wall all around it. In 1914 he remained all alone, and began suffering from arthritis; in 1915 he got worse, and was forced to spend some time at Bento Gonçalves for treatment. In his absence, Fr. Pandolfi went back to substitute for him:

*“In Bassano Fr. Costanzo was almost always in poor health, especially by the middle of the year, when he got worse so as to be forced to leave the parish for treatment at Bento Gonçalves. After a series of tests, the doctor came up with the conclusion that his health could not sustain the burden of a parish such as that of Bassano (...). They tried to keep him here with the assignment to work for the newspaper "Il Corriere d'Italia" in Bento Gonçalves, a job very well in keeping with his health and talent (...).*

*Meanwhile, still convalescing, he returned to his Bassano where he found Fr. Giuseppe (who had hardly resigned himself to direct the parish in his absence, and more so, to stay with him until the end of the year). He will remain there until after settling some pending parish business, and especially after blessing the bells, the biggest ones around, he had shipped from Italy a short while ago.”<sup>13</sup>*

The bells were blessed on January 19, 1916. Fr. Costanzo left for Bento Gonçalves the following day; he was succeeded as pastor by Fr. Giuseppe Pandolfi who was to remain at Nova Bassano till 1942. In 1912 the parish of Nova Bassano was believed to number 10,000 souls with an annual average of 450 baptisms, 300 first Communions, and 75 weddings!

As to the school and other socio-economic problems of Italian immigrants in that region, Fr. Costanzo wrote as follows in 1910:

"I read the first article of first issue of the magazine, *"Italica Gens"*, the organ of our Federation, and congratulate you whole-heartedly for showing a sufficiently correct knowledge of the not-too-flourishing conditions of Italian migrants, (especially when compared with the conditions of other nationalities), and of the measures needed to improve them thus supplying an excellent contribution towards a well-planned economic and political action on the part of Italy!

Let me make some observations, which I did not find in that noteworthy article. It is said in it that everything possible is done before the migrants' departure to prevent any emigration artificially induced by false information about the countries of entry, and that exploitation of migrants on the part of speculators and agents has been very much reduced! Though accepting whatever truth there may be in this, I take the liberty to state that as there could have been a greater severity, so there should be now the same severity in restraining the activities of certain agents, residing or roving throughout Italy, who, mindless of our laws, snatch so many farmers out of our country by means of a thousand promises, which will never be kept and will turn out

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<sup>11</sup> Costanzo to Vicentini, s.d. (December 1909) (Arch. G.S., 448/5).

<sup>12</sup> Rinaldi to Vicentini, Encantado, March 13, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 413/5). Preti to Vicentini, Vespasiano Corrêa, August 26, 1913 (Arch. G.S., 414/1).

<sup>13</sup> Preti to Rinaldi, Guaporé, December 1, 1915 (Arch. G.S., 414/3).

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to be a big disappointment for the gullible. How greatly better it would be if the millions spent in paying these agents were employed, instead, on behalf of the colonists by founding schools, building roads, or reducing taxes! There would be no need then for advertising agents because, should they find better conditions, the colonists themselves would make the best propaganda by writing to friends and relatives in Italy. It would be good also to point out that the measures of the Foreign Ministry concerning Italian schools in America do not always reach their purpose. In fact, it so frequently happens that the subsidies meant for the schools end up in places other than those for which they are allocated; and this is due to lack of control over the funds. These things do not refer to the present Consul. In fact, he has given wonderful evidence of integrity and ardor in the exercise of his responsibility. Excellent is the idea of a double order of measures, thought out by the Federation, aimed at improving the sad conditions of Italian migrants, especially in regard to schools.

It rightly points out the fact, however, that the school is less appreciated by Italians than by other nationalities, and that the results of our schools in foreign lands are quite modest. The Polish, for instance, a people without a country or a priest of their own, have here schools that are better qualified and attended. What are the main causes of this situation? One of them must be sought in the fact that those who migrated here from Italy come from the lowest classes of society. They are illiterate because under the control of egotistic and cruel landowners they had only time for working like animals to secure their scarce daily bread, and this did not allow them to devote as much as just one day to their own instruction and education. Why wonder, then, if these people, not knowing the worth of instruction, feel little inclined to it? It is not all that easy to conquer their reluctance, and the results are always slow and meager!

Another important cause is the almost total neglect in which the migrant is left by the local government (even though it is spending much on schools, still little or nothing is accomplished) and by the Italian Government. Should a community of Italians decide to have a school, they must supply the land, hire the teacher, and take upon themselves the expenses for building and maintaining it. Besides, due to the structure of this colony, the inhabited center, where it is now very hard to build a school, is quite distant from the colonists' children, who should frequent it; and so it will be even harder to provide all of them with the chance to do so. I said before that, in spite of all the money spent on them, the Brazilian public schools do not give good results. The main reason is to be found in this that the great majority of teachers here (indeed very highly paid when compared with the work they do) are better politicians than educators. It's all politics in these regions; and if a teacher proves himself a good vote-getter and able to produce a hundred voters in favor of the government he is a trusted fellow, and he may very well sleep his nights in peace, sure he will not be disturbed, should he even hardly do any teaching.

There are no lay private schools; they would not be able to support themselves! There are, instead, the schools directed by religious congregations and parishes; but it costs the missionaries and colonists alike very much (with no help from the Government) to support the teachers and to provide fitting buildings! And so there is still a greater difficulty as to having students to attend them because many colonists do not have the money to pay the monthly tuition. A government's subsidy would be opportune, indeed necessary, for these schools, to keep them going to full capacity, thus relieving colonists of a load often superior to their strength. It would certainly be providential for our new school of Nova Bassano if our home Government had us supplied with some help. We call this to the attention of the Central Office of "*Italica Gens*" and trust it will be working for it. As to the assistance our (Brazilian) Federation might offer our Italian migrants, as described in the said magazine, it could be well given here also, in different degrees as demanded by the particular conditions of each place.

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The colonist's family is not bad off as far as food is concerned, but there are other special factors contributing to its miserable conditions. I shall mention a few of them. High taxes and customs, causing exorbitant increases in the price of all goods the colonists are in need of; the greed of merchants (veritable despots), who, except for a few, play the part of vampires in our colonies, arbitrarily fixing the price of their merchandise and of the products they buy from the colonists; the high cost of transportation of their produce to the industrial centers, due to distance and bad roads conditions. All together, these things condemn a colonist to conditions that force him to perpetually work just for food and clothing without any hope for future improvement. Besides, should the poor worker, because of a numerous family or unforeseen misfortune, be late in paying extant debts, a merchant does not give him anything on credit anymore, and a colonist remains abandoned in the most miserable condition!

But, enough of these conditions! Should one describe them thoroughly, he would have to write a volume! I would rather ask what remedies could be adopted to correct these evils. In my estimation the following measures would help:

- 1) Special trade agreements between Italy and Brazil that might do away with the high custom duties on goods from Italy so that they can be purchased at lower prices.
- 2) The founding of rural unions and credit banks, social dairies, and other like organizations, to oppose the monopoly of traders, the greed of exploiters, etc.

But we would need some help for all these things! The missionary, the only unselfish defender and benefactor of the colonists, is all alone in this overwhelming task, and, no matter what direction he may turn to, he cannot find anyone willing to help him in this enterprise. He has many other duties to attend to; he is busying himself with many things, but he cannot provide for everything.

Provisions should be taken to increase the number of missionaries for migrants; the missionary should be granted some funds to help him get these societies, and socio-economic associations started, to continue on their own, later on, when well underway!

In regard to the first kind of measures mentioned by that magazine necessary to save the masses of our migrants, I have done something already: I devoted myself body and soul (in fact, I have done more than my strength could bear) to founding a school, which is to be administered by nuns at the cost of four contos, a large sum for these regions, where one has to struggle so hard to put together a little money. We have also spent a good deal already on the construction of the beautiful church and rectory, both made of bricks. To do all this I had to ask for a loan that will be paid when we can...; this is one case when a subsidy would be a blessing! It would be my intention to have three good bells sent from Italy so as to keep up even in this with the traditions of our home country, but they will cost us very dearly because of high customs duties.

By the mediation of the government could we not obtain to have customs dropped on these instruments of civilization, progress, and, under certain aspects, of trade? I also have in mind to build a theater, an excellent means for instruction, education, and kind and refined tastes. In the meanwhile our performances shall be held in the school hall.

In order to be in a position to serve and help the colonists also in material matters, I accepted the office of Italian consular representative and of circuit judge of this district. Once free of certain most urgent commitments of mine, I intend to promote the founding of a rural association and of a rural credit bank; but for all these things I need time, patience, and money!"<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Costanzo, "Italica Gens", a. I, no. 9-10 (October-November 1910), pp. 374-379.

### **3. Capoeiras (Nova Prata)**

In 1907, already in poor health, Fr. Seganfredo was given the assistance of a confrere, Fr. Giorgio Cavigiolo, and he completed the main part of the church. At the end of the same year the region was overrun by the locusts; the battle against these dreadfully destructive insects was headed by the incumbent mayor and by the pastor:

*"Locusts continue their destructive action; in those regions, of course, where people did not care to destroy them when small! Here at Capoeiras where, headed by the mayor and the old priest, colonists, artisans, and merchants have been active, and urged others to do so from morning till night, in directing the work to an almost complete destruction of the insects, the losses are minimal (...). A total loss is feared, instead for the lazy colonists and for those that, in spite of their struggle to destroy the locusts, will have to suffer damage because of the laziness of others! There are still more than 20 days left before the locusts may take to flight; in the meanwhile they bring destruction to whole 'Linhas' leaving the colonists in destitution and desperation (...) No day goes by without anyone coming to the rectory for help (And I can't refuse anybody; it does not look too rosy! Besides, some hundred bugres 'Indios', forced by the locusts to leave their desolate lands, also arrived here; though willing, still there is not enough work for all. And so women and children come to the door, and they do not leave before being fed a meal. But, I would not mind it if only the colonists gave the curate his just due: they are not at fault, however. The fault is all mine, rather, because after the example of the late Fr. Colbacchini urging me right from the beginning to be patient and compassionate they have gotten into this habit and custom, and now I cannot remedy what has been done anymore! But what else could we do in the beginning, what could we pretend from people deprived of all things? And since I loved to give to others, my rectory has always been lacking even the necessary!*

*When Bishop Scalabrini my much loved Superior, sent me here, he asked me: 'What program do you have in mind for those poor colonists?' My answer was: 'Whatever you will order me, Your Excellency! If you send me with the idea that I put together something for the Institute I will embark on a program for collecting funds.' He cut me short and said: 'The love of Christ impels us!' (2 Cor. 5, 14). And that's what I did ever since."<sup>15</sup>*

In April 1908, Fr. Seganfredo had to undergo a painful operation in Encantado; his convalescence lasted several months. He went back to work in the fall, not quite fully recovered as yet:

*"There are now many sick people here to visit; the population has doubled, but my strength is waning! All the lands of 'Silverio' are inhabited, and for this reason, though there are two of us, we are both always on the go."<sup>16</sup>*

Neither one of the two missionaries could continue for some time to visit the community of Lagoa Vermelha: Fr. Seganfredo because tormented by his ailments, and Fr. Cavigiolo, imprudent in his zeal, had been made the victim of

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<sup>15</sup> Seganfredo to Vicentini, Capoeiras, January 31, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 468/1).

<sup>16</sup> Seganfredo to Vicentini, Capoeiras, November 2, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 468/1).



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an ambush.<sup>17</sup> Fr. Seganfredo returned there in the early months of 1909, but he was stricken with smallpox and had to be brought home burning with a 108 degree fever on a cart driven by two oxen. A short while earlier he had received the renewal of his faculties as a quasi-pastor from the Bishop who had mistakenly sent out one also to Fr. Cavigiolo. The latter was quick in reading it from the pulpit. In order to settle the problem, Fr. Rinaldi succeeded in convincing Fr. Seganfredo to be contented with the title of curate in view of his poor health that forced him to spend ever longer periods of rest with his family, but to allow Fr. Cavigiolo, still young, to actually carry out the whole work, especially at the colony of Turvo (Protásio Alves), then still dependent on Capoeiras, and in the 'campo' (countryside) .<sup>18</sup>

In May 1909, Fr. Seganfredo petitioned and received permission from the Bishop to retire to private life; he remained at Capoeiras, however, to calm those who opposed his leaving, and he retired only in May 1910, after securing a six-month rest period for treatment from Auxiliary Bishop Pimenta.<sup>19</sup> In the meanwhile, Fr. Carlo Porrini had arrived to take the place of Fr. Cavigiolo. He had received the faculties as a curate to succeed Fr. Seganfredo from Bishop Ponce de Leão.

The new pastor, or curate, rather, began the immediate construction of the rectory, completed in 1912;<sup>20</sup> he had a doctor assigned to the region in 1910; he offered the old church for use as a hospital for the poor, first, and then for a night school; he encouraged the instituting of a social dairy, as suggested by Fr. Medicheschi. His main undertaking was the founding of Saint John the Baptist College through the generosity of Mr. Enrico Lenzi. Permission to open it was granted by the Bishop on December 13, 1911<sup>21</sup>, but a series of difficulties delayed its inauguration, that took place on May 13, 1913. The Sisters of the Most Pure Heart of Mary took charge of it, but they relinquished it in 1918. It included an elementary school, and it held classes of music, drawing, sewing, and embroidery. At the close of 1913, Capoeiras mourned the passing of Fr. Antonio Seganfredo in Porto Alegre on December 23.

In 1914, Fr. Porrini returned to Italy for a visit to his mother. Having no one to replace him with, Fr. Preti had recourse to Fr. Vincenzo Testani, a diocesan priest from Piacenza, who was an assistant at Caxias do Sul. Fr. Testani accepted, and he presented himself to Fr. Porrini in January of that year with the title of pastor, while the missionary had requested only someone who should substitute for him in his absence. Fr. Testani did not have it easy at Capoeiras because the people split into two factions: one favoring him, and the other Fr. Porrini, when he returned.

In August 1915, Fr. Preti assigned Fr. Francesco Carchia to Capoeiras:

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<sup>17</sup> Seganfredo to Vicentini, Capoeiras, December 26, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 468/1).

<sup>18</sup> Rinaldi to Vicentini, Encantado, February 21, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 413/5).

<sup>19</sup> Seganfredo to Serraglia, Capoeiras, May 14, 1909 to Rinaldi, Capoeiras, July 25, 1909, and May 9, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 468/1).

<sup>20</sup> Porrini to Vicentini, Capoeiras, May 12, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 468/1).

<sup>21</sup> Ponce de Leão, Porto Alegre, December 13, 1911 (Arch. G.S., Porrini's Papers).

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*"After much insistence with the Archbishop himself to return to us Capoeiras (where Fr. Testani was waging a merciless campaign against Fr. Porrini and the Congregation for quite a long time for fear of losing the parish) I appointed him (Fr. Carchia) to that very parish for the following reasons: 1) to set ourselves free of an enemy from the midst of our missions; 2) to satisfy especially the people living in the town of Capoeiras, who were asking for one of our missionaries; 3) to meet the wishes of the missionary."<sup>22</sup>*

In 1917, Fr. Carchia, unable to ride a horse because of sickness, asked to be transferred. He was provisionally replaced by Fr. Serraglia, curate of Protásio Alves; then, in the early months of 1918, the Scalabrinians waived the parish of Capoeiras which was thus entrusted to diocesan priests.<sup>23</sup> The parish was canonically erected only in 1921. According to an approximate statistic report of 1912, the parish (excluding Protásio Alves) numbered some 5,000 souls, and an annual average of 200 baptisms, 150 first communions, and 30 weddings.

#### **4. Protásio Alves**

Following the short tenure of Fr. Giuseppe Pandolfi, from February 1902 to February 1903, the people of Protásio Alves had not succeeded in securing a resident priest.<sup>24</sup> To the persistent complaints presented also by Fr. Seganfredo, Fr. Vicentini answered in 1908:

*"As to Turvo, it has all been decided. A resident priest there is out of the question for the time being! When Bishop Scalabrini died I sent them a priest, but they did not want to support him."<sup>25</sup>*

In October of the same year, Fr. Cavigiolo, assistant at Capoeiras, did not go to Protásio Alves for the patronal celebrations in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary basing his refusal on unimportant reasons. The colonists reacted in a resentful manner and invited in a self-styled priest, a certain Bodini, who remained at Protásio Alves for more than a month saying Mass and administering the Sacraments. For this reason the Bishop of Porto Alegre decreed the 'interdict'.<sup>26</sup> In 1909 Fr. Porrini attempted to mediate a reconciliation but he was not received by the people. Still, he remained so well impressed by those people that he promised to intercede for them with the Bishop to have the 'interdict' revoked.<sup>27</sup> The Bishop accepted the request, and Fr. Antonio Serraglia could take his permanent residence among those 200 families in February 1910.<sup>28</sup> In March 1914, Auxiliary Bishop Pimenta conducted the pastoral visitation and was satisfied with it. In less than a year, Fr. Serraglia had the old church restored, prepared the material for the new one, fixed the rectory and its premises.<sup>29</sup> The new church, 14 meters wide and 34 long, had the roof on

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<sup>22</sup> Preti to Vicentini, Guaporé, December 1, 1915 (Arch. G.S., 414/3).

<sup>23</sup> Serraglia to Rinaldi, Protásio Alves, December 10, 1917, and May 1918 (Arch. G.S., 455/2).

<sup>24</sup> Francesconi, *Op. cit.*, pp.(original 246/247).

<sup>25</sup> Vicentini, "Diary", Vol. V, October 25, 1908, p. 126 (Arch. G.S., 1642).

<sup>26</sup> Seganfredo to Vicentini, Capoeiras, December 26, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 468/1).

<sup>27</sup> Seganfredo to Rinaldi, Capoeiras, July 25, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 468/1).

<sup>28</sup> Serraglia to Vicentini, Protásio Alves, April 30, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 455/2).

<sup>29</sup> Serraglia to Rinaldi, Protásio Alves, March 19, 1911 (Arch. Dioc. Rieti, Rinaldi Fund).

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already by March 1914, and it was inaugurated on October 5, the feast of the Rosary:

*"On the 5th of this month the dedication of the new church of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary took place. It is impossible to describe the vivid joy transpiring from the countenance of all when our most Rev. Pastor assisted by his confrere Fr. Carlo Porrini blessed the new house of God. At the solemn Mass Fr. Porrini addressed to the people well-deserved words of praise for the great generosity with which they had responded to the zeal of the pastor in replacing the old wooden chapel with this new solid stone structure that now forms the pride and honor of this town. Besides beautiful and edifying religious services, to gladden the feast there were also public amusements and a charity bazaar. The project of the new church, in the Gothic style, had been drawn up by Fr. Serraglia, a humble and zealous priest on whom the deserving Institute of St. Carlo may well be pleased!*

*The design was carried out by Emilio Cherubin of Alfredo Alves, a well-known artist also for other works of his. Now upon its completion, anyone who, aware of the small population of Independência, should look at the new church shining at the top of the hill, could well figure out for himself the sacrifices these people, confined between the rivers Plata and Turvo, have sustained in building it; sacrifices and efforts that will evermore insure for them the protection of the Blessed Mother to whom the new church is dedicated."<sup>30</sup> (From the weekly "Il Corriere d'Italia", October 1914, Bento Gonçalves.)*

*In April 1915, Archbishop J. Becker made the pastoral visitation, and he wrote in the parish register that church and rectory had been built on the "colonization lot #28" of Section VIII at Colony Chimarrão of the Lagoa Vermelha municipality, granted free of charge to the Archdiocese of Porto Alegre by the Government of Rio Grande do Sul with decree of January 14, 1915. On that occasion 331 confirmations, 250 confessions, and 218 communions were administered.<sup>31</sup>*

In September and October of 1915, Fr. Serraglia was charged by the Archbishop with the temporary care of the new quasi-parish of Vista Alegre, whose first curate, Fr. Luigi Raffo, a Neapolitan priest, had soon called upon himself a suspension. Fr. Serraglia accomplished the main purpose, that of getting the suspended priest out of there; the people would have wished for the Scalabrinian missionary to remain, but since the head of the trustees had refused to surrender the administration books, and to sell the piece of land needed for a vegetable garden and his horse, Fr. Serraglia returned to Protásio Alves. The Archbishop appointed to Vista Alegre Canon G.A. Peres, a diocesan priest.<sup>32</sup>

Fr. Serraglia had the façade of the church plastered and a small bell tower built next to it in 1916; on June 10, 1917, he inaugurated the new rectory; he obtained that Protásio Alves be made a "district" by a decree of May 8, 1917, to take effect on May 14, 1918, and that on the same 1918 works be started on a road from Protásio Alves to Nova Prata.

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<sup>30</sup> "Independência", "L'Emigrato Italiano in America" a. IX, March 15, 1915, p. 35.

<sup>31</sup> "Termo" (Report) Pastoral Visitation by Becker, Protásio Alves, April 29, 1915, copy (Arch. G.S., 455/2).

<sup>32</sup> Serraglia to Rinaldi, Protásio Alves, February 7, 1916 (Arch. G.S., 455/2) - Preti to Rinaldi, Guaporé, December 1, 1915 (Arch. G.S., 414/3).

## **5. Bela Vista**

Bela Vista had been a chapel dependent on Nova Bassano until 1913. The first immigrants arrived here in February 1888 from Verona, Vicenza, and Treviso. They were soon followed by newcomers from Cremona, Piacenza, and Mantua. In 1891 they had built the first small church, blessed by Fr. Matteo Pasquali in 1895. A short while afterwards, with the arrival of Fr. Colbacchini, the chapel began depending on Nova Bassano. Due to the building of a road from Veranópolis to Guaporé, it was made a "district" in 1904; this contributed to choosing it as the seat of a new quasi-parish.

In 1908, the trustees of Bela Vista asked the pastor of Nova Bassano, Fr. Giovanni Costanzo, to have a mass said there on Sunday; but this project, inspired by trading interests, was opposed by the colonists of the neighboring chapels:

*"They are afraid, indeed not without a reason, that many people may abandon their own chapels to go and do business there, to make a show of luxury not respondent to their means, to get drunk leaving their wives at home to do the chores, and take care of children and animals, with evil consequences of all kinds. For this reason, the chapels would be deserted in the morning with the excuse of the mass, and in the evening for not wanting to leave their friends. And so many chapels, costing much sacrifice to these people, would remain unused without any hope for better results to compensate for the disadvantages. Normally, in present conditions, when the missionary visits a chapel, the colonists, and their neighbors, belonging to it, quit working and celebrate; they receive the sacraments in good numbers; take part in morning and evening services; listen to the Word of God and the religious instruction he imparts to them. It seems as though all this work is producing rather abundant fruits. On Sunday, even when a priest is not available, all attend the religious devotions conducted in the chapels by an appointed leader in the morning and in the afternoon. This way some good is accomplished with the advantage that excessive spending and drunkenness be avoided (...).*

*But, there exists another difficulty. "Linhas 3ª and 4ª" will not readily accept this new arrangement because they would prefer that we go to say Sunday mass at Our Lady of the Rosary of "Linha 3ª", where a stone church, 12 meters by 24, with plans to enlarge it, was built following an improvident promise made to them by a predecessor of mine. The Society of Our Lady of the Rosary alone has a hundred families, excluding the other ones of "Linhas 3ª and 4ª" that do not look quite ready to give up their desire to have the Mass said there (...).*

*As to establishing there a new parish, as they once desired, it does not pay to discuss it, because Bishop Dom Claudio does not want it, and it would not be practical on many counts!"<sup>33</sup>*

And so, the periodical visits to Bela Vista were continued by the missionaries of Nova Bassano until December 20, 1913, when it was made an independent quasi-parish. Fr. Giuseppe Pandolfi was its first curate for almost a year. He was succeeded in October 1914 by Fr. Porrini, who spent his early months in

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<sup>33</sup> Costanzo to Vicentini, Nova Bassano, October 17, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 448/5).

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devoting all his energy in reconciling the people. In fact, strong on the promises of Fr. Colbacchini and Serraglia, who had singled out the Chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary as the seat of the future quasi-parish, the colonists of "Linha 3<sup>a</sup>" were claiming their rights, while those of São Valentino and São Paulo wanted to belong to the parish of Veranópolis. We have already read in the report of Fr. Preti, that the faction supported by the Capuchins of Veranópolis had been regarded as rebellious and Protestant by the Archbishop.<sup>34</sup> By March 1915 Fr. Porrini could write as follows:

*"This community was indeed in a state of total rebellion! I got down to work and, by God's help, I succeeded in establishing peace and harmony, to the surprise of all because they seemed so hard to achieve. The church has been completed, and a new rectory is now under construction."<sup>35</sup>*

The church and rectory were made of wood. By the end of 1916 all debts had already been extinguished. On December 31, 1917, Fr. Francesco Carchia succeeded Fr. Porrini, who had been appointed director of "*Il Corriere d'Italia*" in Bento Gonçalves. Fr. Augusto Rizzi was named curate on January 14, 1919, and Fr. Giovanni Costanzo on June 6 of the same year. The parish was canonically erected on April 8, 1920, and entrusted to diocesan priests.

## **6. Anta Gorda**

The vast and inaccessible territory of Anta Gorda, extending between the rivers Guaporé and Forqueta, had been settled since 1900 by a few Brazilian families. In 1902 the State established there a "colony" where several German families like those of Phillip and Nicholas Christian Verlang, and a few Polish ones, had taken their residence. In 1904 there took place a downright invasion of Italians from Encantado, Lageado, Guaporé, Monte Negro, Bento Gonçalves, and Caxias. They were assisted in the beginning by the Jesuits of Lageado, and by the Scalabrinians of Encantado.

In 1906, following his second visit to Anta Gorda, Fr. Costanzo described the awkward situation in which Italian colonists found themselves, as was often the case in Brazil in those years:

*"The colonization of Anta Gorda is progressing very rapidly, and has reached a good point. Were it not for the problems on the right of ownership over these lands, they would be wholly colonized by now. Just to give you an idea of the colonizing progress I will tell you that over a hundred baptisms have been administered this year at Anta Gorda. The problem of ownership derives, it seems, from the selling of lands already the property of other companies or proprietors by the director of the Virginia Co. of Guaporé. These in turn, as rightful owners sold the colonies to private people who thus became their just possessors; but when they went to claim their rights they discovered that other colonists had already been working there and had built their homes!*

*They produced the documents of ownership as proof of their claim, but the others also showed their bills of sale from Vespasiano (Corrêa), whom they*

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<sup>34</sup> Preti to Rinaldi, Guaporé, December 1, 1915 (Arch. G.S., 414/3).

<sup>35</sup> Porrini to Rinaldi, Bela Vista, March 24, 1915 (Arch. G.S., 474/2).

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*acknowledged as the rightful representative of the Government in granting those lands. What were they to do then! It would not help to come to blows! After all, neither party was at fault! They had to turn to those who had sold them the land. And so, there ensued many formal complaints from many sides, with no results for a long time! It seems as though the Government has at last decided in favor of the societies and of those who bought the lands first. Consequently, the bills of sale issued at Vespasiano Corrêa would be void! But this is where the source of the whole trouble lies! Almost all of them bought the land from the Vespasiano (Corrêa) office. They left the old colony and sold it to others to buy the one they are now being contested for. Should the law be strictly enforced, they will be out in the street, with no money because the office at Vespasiano does not compensate them for the loss, with no house, and with no land, forced to go begging. Even should the government compensate them for the money spent for the old property, still it would not solve the problem because this sum is not sufficient to buy other land at the present time. Besides, they would not be for transportation expenses, for the loss suffered with the sale of the old land, for the work of cutting down the forest, and for the construction of a new house.*

*The only solution would be for the Government to compensate owners and companies with an amount of money or of other properties respondent to the actual value of the lands sold to them on its authority at Vespasiano. This way the societies would not suffer loss and the colonists not be exposed to the danger of financial ruin. Otherwise there is fear of great disorders, because, as I heard from the colonists of Anta Gorda, it seems as though they are ready to defend with their guns a right they honestly are convinced to possess. And so, should anyone go there to deprive them of the land, there will be a revolution, and the shedding of blood! This is how things stand at the present time. What a pity that this should happen! Without it, in fact, Anta Gorda could develop into a great and prosperous colony rich with all kinds of products.*

*On my visit to this new colony I met with many difficulties (...). I discovered that even the smallest hamlets want to build a chapel, so as also the merchants want to have one across from their stores to serve as bait for people to go there and get drunk. I warned everyone not to make any move or take any decisions before discussing the matter with us.*

*I have visited these places so as to know them well enough to be in a position to judge whether and when there be the need for a chapel, considering the number of people and the distance of the communities from each other."<sup>36</sup>*

Three years went by before the Government would acknowledge the just property rights of the Italian colonists. The establishing of the quasi-parish at Anta Gorda provoked long and harsh disputes over the location of its main quarters. In October 1907, Phillip Verlang, a German, set aside a piece of land, the property of his brother-in-law, with the intention of creating an inhabited center, and a quasi-parish, for which he had reserved a special lot in a way that could be made to serve trading interests. The Italians protested to Fr. Rinaldi. He answered them that the choice of a parish seat belonged only to the Bishop and his Superiors, and he invited Mr. Verlang to make a more

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<sup>36</sup> Costanzo to Vicentini, Encantado, September 7, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 442/2).

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acceptable proposal to the Bishop, especially in regard to the square in front of the church that had to be the property of the parish and not of the municipality! Because the mayor of Lageado did not accept the proposal, Fr. Rinaldi asked the Bishop to fix the seat of the parish one kilometer from the land allotted by Mr. Verlang, and the Bishop approved the project on November 16, 1907. It concerned a piece of land on a neutral location at equal distance between the two main contenders, Phillip Verlang and Olivo Dal Pasquale, while a third contender lived close to Putinga, and a fourth one an hour walk away in the direction of the Jacaré.<sup>37</sup>

At the end of 1908, when Fr. Serraglia, on his return from Italy, went to pay his respects to him, the Bishop complained about the fact that Fr. Rinaldi was keeping two priests (with him) at Encantado. When Fr. Serraglia informed him that he was also assigned to Encantado, the Bishop laughed, took pen and paper, and wrote:

*"I give orders that Fr. Serraglia be appointed curate of the quasi-parish of St. Joseph."*<sup>38</sup>

Having decided to dedicate the chapel of the location to Saint Charles, Fr. Rinaldi asked the Bishop what he meant by quasi-parish of "St. Joseph ". The Bishop specified he meant the lot "58" of "Linha" Felizardo, the very one bought by Fr. Rinaldi, which could well be called "St. Charles"; he had written "St. Joseph " only because of his devotion to his patron saint. The statement of the Bishop, dated on January 2, 1909, was read by Fr. Serraglia to the people who received it with satisfaction. But the few colonists who had bought lots from Phillip Verlang protested; they were quick in titling to St. Joseph the school opened on that land, they accused Frs. Rinaldi and Serraglia of having deceived the people, and began selling the remaining lots at a price four times cheaper. In fact, they succeeded in selling some fifty of them and in having about twelve homes built.

When the chapel of St. Charles was built on the lot "58" of "Linha" Felizardo, these rivals burnt it down in the night between May 11 and 12, 1909; and then, they threatened to "*drag the priest to reside in their colony, or to do away with him. The people are afraid and do not dare help the priest either in buying lots or in building houses on the land of the church.*"<sup>39</sup>

On July 12 and 13, Fr. Rinaldi travelled to Porto Alegre to report to the Bishop, who confirmed the previous decrees, and to the President of the State, who assured him he would see to it that freedom of worship be respected. He was advised, however, to transfer Fr. Serraglia, who was accused of having contributed to the incidents by his fiery temperament; in fact, he was replaced by Fr. Enrico Preti in the same month. It must be pointed out that the curate did not have a fixed residence as yet; he was coming in usually from Encantado or Vespasiano Corrêa.

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<sup>37</sup> Rinaldi to Vicentini, Encantado, July 23, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 413/3) - Ponce de Leão, Encantado, September 10, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 435/4).

<sup>38</sup> Serraglia to Vicentini, Encantado, s.d. (Arch. G.S., 435/1).

<sup>39</sup> Rinaldi to Ponce de Leão, Encantado, September 10, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 435/4).

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When it seemed as though peace was being restored, on September 17 a letter from the Bishop gave orders to relinquish the chapel of St. Charles, and fix the residence at São José, that is, in the inhabited center of Carlos Barbosa. Evidently, Phillip Verlang and friends had insisted and intrigued so much, also through civil authorities (the Government's Director of Colonization had taken residence in Mr. Verlang's home) that the Bishop had deemed it opportune to yield to their reasons. Fr. Rinaldi declared himself ready to obedience, but he demanded an indemnity for damages and the granting of the land needed for the church, the rectory, and the square. He sought, afterwards, to enlighten by word of mouth the Bishop on the real terms of the dispute:

*"In November 1909, at a meeting with Bishop D. Claudio José Gonçalves, who had founded and then suppressed the parish of Saint Charles on "Linha 2ª" of Anta Gorda, lot "58", I, the undersigned, had him acknowledge the trap he had fallen into, especially in believing a list of false signatures presented him by those opposed to the parish residence of Saint Charles (...). The Bishop (Claudio) admitted his mistake, and entrusted the solution in the hands of Auxiliary Bishop D. João Pimenta who was to make there the pastoral visitation right in those days."*<sup>40</sup>

Bishop Pimenta acknowledged the just claims of Fr. Rinaldi and of the colonists of St. Charles; however, he advised moving the parish residence some six kilometers from there to avoid the continuing hostilities.<sup>41</sup>

It seems as though Fr. Serraglia was in agreement with Mr. Verlang; as a matter of fact, when he left at the end of August, peace was restored:

*"With the removal of the priest, all seem calm at Anta Gorda (...). No one, to this day, has gone to the Bishop, to protest the change of residence made by him."*<sup>42</sup>

We have listened, so far, to Fr. Rinaldi's version; that of Fr. Serraglia sounds somewhat different:

*"By his obstinacy, Fr. Massimo has placed me in an awkward position. As you know, he had acquired a colony, and had the Bishop approve to fix on it the seat of the parish and the rectory for the missionary. I did all I could to carry out his wishes, but just when all seemed settled, one night, last May 12, some degenerate Christians poured petrol on the new church and set it on fire in hatred for the location and for Fr. Massimo who wanted to eliminate, at all costs, a small community of a few homes (only 9 of them) just one kilometer away (Carlos Barbosa), that had been planned some years before by a certain Phillip Verlang, a German (...). This man is wholly wrong, however, in taking it out on Fr. Massimo and on the Church under construction, because he had refused to surrender the land needed for the location of the parish seat."*<sup>43</sup>

Quite interesting is the report of Fr. Serraglia on his first visitation of the various communities of Anta Gorda:

*"I visited almost all the "Anta Gorda", this famous region, the object of hopes and anxieties on the part of the poor colonists. At last, the Government has decided*

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<sup>40</sup> Rinaldi to Vicentini, Encantado, July 30, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 435/4).

<sup>41</sup> Cir. Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Rinaldi to Vicentini, Encantado, October 29, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 442/2).

<sup>43</sup> Serraglia to Vicentini, Anta Gorda, June 17, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 435/1).



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*to declare that the lands the colonists hold and work are theirs and that they are, therefore, to consider themselves as their rightful and sure possessors and owners, provided they pay their bills of sale. Thanks be to God. Generally, these colonists practice their religion very little. Some hundred or so German families, and about 40 Polish ones, keep faithful and exact in observing their Christian and religious duties. Protestants are not lacking, however; over forty families, but they do not represent any problem at all; in fact, one of them, neighboring the colony where the parish Church will be built, donated (for the progress of the place) a piece of land, 100 by 50 meters. The region is beautiful, stupendous as it is vast; no high impassable mountains, no wide rivers to cross, no unproductive, but generally rich and promising, lands. This is a totally new colony; it lacks, therefore, all roads, trades, and merchants of some importance, so that the colonists live in rather miserable conditions; even deprived of what is needed, this year, on account of the immense number of rats, worse than the locusts, over the fields and in the houses, though more hopeful in a better promising harvest. They are poor, and at the same time, most of them are given to vices and with little desire to work. They love amusements and games; the taverns (dingy and unkempt) are frequented every day of the week! It is not so in other colonies! Almost all those living here are the children of the first colonists of the old communities where life was easy, and so, little aware of the realities of the world, they now pretend to live in a happy-go-lucky fashion with little work and much pleasure. Within the span of just one month or so, of my visit here, there have been three fights already, in taverns where someone drew a knife out of his pocket or sheath; one of them is still sick in bed, and because authorities are far from here, they go unpunished. What a difference from Nova Bassano, Encantado, and Monte Vêneto ! On my part I try to employ all the prudence I can. They are happy to have the priest though many of them are indifferent and unwilling to contribute to the construction of a church under futile pretexts. They do not attend church, at all; don't even mention the sacraments; I hardly ministered thirty communions since Christmas; there is little to hope for in both men and women, I tell you (...). So far, and there were solemn festivities in the meantime, I did not have yet the consolation of seeing as many as two hundred people attend Mass for Christmas, New Year's, and the Epiphany (...).*

*I am the guest of a certain Olivo Dalpascual of Encantado, whom you surely know; he has a tavern, and he offered me a room under tiles, a cot to sleep on, a chair, the kind used here, and nothing else. I am writing you this letter over my knees because I do not have a desk; with the family I eat polenta, cheese, pork's and cow's dried meat, codfish, eggs, soup when they make it, all without a napkin; indeed quite informally! Still I feel fine and happy!(...)*

*As you know, Fr. Massimo has bought a "colony" by the mediation of a good colonist of Encantado, a certain Giuseppe Ghisleni. With the Bishop's approval he has decided that the parish church be built on it; it is still wholly a wooded area. Last week I had a portion of it cut down already. It is my hard task to convince these young men to get down to work on sawing boards and beams, and to make tiles, etc. (...). Without a priest directing the work, they would have never accomplished anything, and only God knows for how many years they would have remained in this condition. Imagine, in the whole Anta Gorda with 20 or more "Linhas" (to be honest, very sparsely inhabited) there are only seven small chapels, real shacks or remade huts. After all, the valiant Fr. Massimo*

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*used to say mass going from family to family, something I do not approve of, or am not accustomed to, except for serious reasons and in real need.*"<sup>44</sup>

The new residence was fixed at Burro Feio, where there was a area allotted in 1909, about five-hour horse ride from Encantado, and one from Carlos Barbosa; rather than to give into Mr. Verlang, the people accepted, and dropped claims on compensation for expenses contracted in construction of the first chapel at St. Charles.<sup>45</sup>

Once settled the disputes with Mr. Verlang and his supporters, there were still the conflicts provoked by one Battista Grando, who wanted the parish seat at the Paredão, but in 1912 Bishop Ponce de Leão gave Fr. Preti, the regional superior, full faculties towards solving the dispute with calm and deliberation, so that the new Archbishop João Becker might find all things at peace.<sup>46</sup> Fr. Preti was thus able to write as follows in 1913:

*"Finally the dispute of Anta Gorda has been settled. And so, in the past days of August 15-16-17 it has inaugurated the parish with a new church, splendid as to beauty and spaciousness, though made of wood, in the presence of an immense crowd of people."*<sup>47</sup>

Following the provisional tenure of Fr. Preti in 1909-1910, Anta Gorda was entrusted for six months in 1910 to Fr. Giuseppe Pandolfi, and then again for another period in 1911-1912. Only in October 1912 did Fr. Erminio Catelli take definitive possession of it, directing it as pastor till 1948. He immediately devoted himself to a zealous and wise, but extremely demanding apostolate, due to the vastness of the territory, then embracing also the present parishes of Putinga, Itapuca, Ilópolis, Arvorezinha and Ricardo.

## **7. Esperança (Vespasiano-Corrêa)**

As regards the beginning of the parish of Esperança , today's Vespasiano Corrêa, we quote the information of Mons. Giuseppe Barea, who states that it was the last region to be colonized by immigrants directly from Italy in 1894. However, it seems as though some Italian families from Garibaldi, Carlos Barbosa, and other places had already settled there in the preceding ten years:

"Still at the time of the revolution, Fr. Bernardo Bolle, a Jesuit assistant of the parish of Lageado, from which it depended, was charged with visiting the new colony (...).

Authorized by the Bishop, Fr. Davide Faustini also visited the colony from Faria Lamos, and after choosing the location of the church, he singled out the colonial lot 38, and in a short while it was built. The colonists asked afterwards for a resident priest, and Fr. Teodosio Sanson was appointed there in July, 1895. The quasi-parish was canonically erected on May 6, 1896. In the meantime, the rectory was constructed and the colony was given the definitive title over whose possession serious disputes were later raised that were solved by the State authorities. When the Capuchins were invited by Fr. Teodosio Sanson to take their residence at Esperança, a monastery was immediately built that was dedicated on October 31, in the presence of Bishop Claudio

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<sup>44</sup> Serraglia to Vicentini, Anta Gorda, January 31, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 435/1).

<sup>45</sup> Rinaldi to Vicentini, Encantado, May 19, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 413/5).

<sup>46</sup> Ponce de Leão to Preti, Porto Alegre, June 7, 1912 (Arch. G.S., 435/1).

<sup>47</sup> Preti to Vicentini, Vespasiano Correa, August 26, 1913 (Arch. G.S., 414/1).

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who had accompanied the Fathers from Conde d'Eu to their new place. Serious differences between the pastor and the Capuchins split the people in two factions, which lasted for many years, and consequently led to the withdrawal of both from the parish. Not to leave Esperança alone, the Bishop temporarily sent there two priests of the same Order. These did not reside at the convent, but in the house of a colonist, a certain Giovanni Gionta, four kilometers from the town. They remained there fourteen months while a new church and rectory were being built some 500 meters from the inhabited center. On January 26, 1905, at the time of his pastoral visitation, the Bishop ordered the people to transfer, in procession the following day, all the sacred equipment from the old church to the new one. During the night of the 27th, while all were sound asleep, rifle shots were heard around the rectory where the Bishop, several priests, and clerics were staying. Luckily, there were no casualties. That same night, the sacred supplies were again returned by certain individuals from the new church to the old one. Bishops and Capuchins withdrew the following day, and the parish remained vacant for a year, in which it was cared for by the Vicar of Encantado. In a short while the monastery, a beautiful two story structure with 22 private rooms, besides the chapel, study halls, refectory, and laboratory, was totally destroyed without leaving a stone upon a stone; today one would hardly recognize the place where it once stood."<sup>48</sup>

On March 19, 1905, also on behalf of Bishop Scalabrini, Fr. Vicentini wrote to the Bishop of Porto Alegre congratulating him over his safe escape, and he added that in case he should assign the parish of Esperança to the Scalabrinians, he would supply the priest.<sup>49</sup> Bishop Ponce de Leão answered on the April 17:

*"I thank His Excellency the Bishop of Piacenza and Your Paternity for your sharing in my tribulation over the events of Esperança. Providence allowed this evil to provide an end to that unending dispute. On that very day (January 2) the Capuchins decided of their own to leave Esperança, and in fact they withdrew.*

*A few days afterwards, I told them not to consider returning to Esperança any longer, and by a decree I entrusted this territory to Fr. Massimo Rinaldi, detaching part of it in favor of Santa Tereza, and dividing the rest between the quasi-parishes of Encantado and Monte Vêneto, the latter one in charge of Fr. Eugenio Medicheschi. From all this, you can well deduce how great is the need here of other Missionaries of St. Charles! Should you come along with another priest, then you could take charge of Esperança, and leaving Santa Tereza with the territory just attached to it (...).*

*As Bishop Scalabrini himself saw with his own eyes, what is missing in Río Grande are only the missionaries who may reap the harvest. There is much work to be done here for the poor colonists, who are all united, and all circumstances are favoring a copious harvest of fruits unto life everlasting. Bishop Scalabrini more than once told me that this mission of Río Grande was deserving of all preferences."<sup>50</sup>*

Fr. Rinaldi had, therefore, to subject himself to the not so light burden of unceasing trips from Encantado to Esperança. He gladly welcomed the arrival

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<sup>48</sup> Barea, "La Vita Spirituale nelle Colonie Italiane dello Stato" "Cinquantenario della Colonizzazione Ital. nel Río Grande do Sul", (Porto Alegre, 1925), pp. 105-106.

<sup>49</sup> Vicentini, "Diary, Vol. IV, March 16, 1905, p. 135 (Arch. G.S., 1642).

<sup>50</sup> Ponce de Leão to Vicentini, Porto Alegre, April 17, 1905 (Arch. G.S., 465/2).

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of a Neapolitan priest assigned to this quasi-parish.<sup>51</sup> At first, Fr. Giuseppe Acierno exercised the ministry from the new church, and moved to the old one, afterwards. Fr. Nicola Muotri succeeded him in 1907. In January of 1908, the Bishop of Porto Alegre wrote to Fr. Vicentini:

*"It is also my desire to entrust Esperança to our valiant missionaries. In this case I deem it necessary that a missionary be stationed also at Muçum (or General Osorio).*

*Fr. Sanson has already waived all his claims on the lands and building of Esperança, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary are on their way back there, and, by satisfying the people of Muçum with the assignment of a resident priest of their own, all will be at peace and in good order in Esperança."<sup>52</sup>*

The quasi-parish of Esperança was accepted by the Scalabrinians in the beginning of 1909, and Fr. Giuseppe Pandolfi was named its pastor. He made his entry on January 18, just a few days after the sudden passing at Rio de Janeiro of Vespasiano Corrêa, who had been the head of the Commission of those lands and the mayor of Guaporê; Esperança was named after him on November 1, 1908, when Lucano Cunedera, the second Prefect of Guaporê, made it the 4th district of the same prefecture; while the 5<sup>th</sup> district, until then called "Linha 11<sup>a</sup>" was named after his wife, Serafina Corrêa. Fr. Pandolfi remained at Vespasiano Corrêa only until September 1909. He was followed by Fr. Preti who was also taking care, at the same time, of Monte Belo (formerly called Zamith); he was assisted, therefore, by Fr. Antonio Serraglia who, in December of the same year, sent the following information to the Superior General:

*"I have been here at Esperança with Fr. Preti many months by now, but it is very difficult, impossible, I should say, to satisfy certain disgruntled ones in town, because of the steady absence of the pastor who, goes to Zamit every week, on account of his commitments with that cooperative."<sup>53</sup>*

Fr. Serraglia added that Fr. Preti had decided to move to Monte Belo, and that he himself did not intend to continue on with "those few bullies" saying he would have recourse to the Bishop, as was his habit. Instead, Fr. Preti remained at Vespasiano Corrêa, and Fr. Serraglia, all of a sudden, left him alone, and departed on January 5, 1910.<sup>54</sup> Fr. Preti directed the parish till January 1914; he was replaced by Fr. Giuseppe Sanson, who began work on a new stone church, dedicated to St. John the Baptist and completed by Fr. J.B. Pinzon, pastor since July, 1918.

The Scalabrinians returned to Vespasiano Corrêa in 1922.

## **8. Muçum**

The missionaries of Vespasiano Corrêa took care for some time also of the colony of Muçum (also known as General Osorio) which originated in 1895 with

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<sup>51</sup> Rinaldi to Vicentini, Encantado, March 14, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 442/2).

<sup>52</sup> Ponce de Leão to Vicentini, Porto Alegre, January 9, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 465/2).

<sup>53</sup> Serraglia to Vicentini, Vespasiano Correa, June 12, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 465/2).

<sup>54</sup> Preti to Vicentini, Encantado, January 5, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 465/2).

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people coming from the oldest Italian colonies, and grown afterwards on account of the opening of the road "Estrada Geral".

In 1908, the Bishop of Porto Alegre offered it together with the quasi-parish of Vespasiano Corrêa to the Scalabrinians; the self-styled priest Bodini, mentioned when speaking of Protásio Alves, had been there and the Bishop had placed the interdict on the chapel. The people did not want to have anything to do with the curate of Vespasiano Corrêa, Fr. Nicola Muotri.<sup>55</sup> The Bishop decided the separation of Vespasiano Corrêa<sup>56</sup> from Muçum only in 1913, and when Fr. Giovanni Morelli, a Scalabrinian, arrived from Paran , he also entrusted to him the new quasi-parish created on December 23 of that year. Fr. Morelli wrote his first letter from Muçum to Fr. Rinaldi on November 30, 1913, saying he had been there a short while, and had found a lot to do.<sup>57</sup> In 1914 he founded the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament and the Sodality of the Children of Mary.

In asking for autonomy, the people of Muçum had made generous promises to the Bishop and the regional Superior Fr. Preti in regard to supporting the priest and bringing improvements to the chapel; but they did not keep their word so that Fr. Morelli had always cause to complain about their absence:

*"We have been nailed up in the house, so to speak, because of roads and steady rains; roads are so horrible as I never saw or hope to see; trade has decreased much here at Muçum. Besides, there were Sundays when I could omit saying Mass, as it were, were it not for two or three devout women and three or four children; as to the rest, no one! There is nothing else one could expect of these jackasses; in fact, they show very little goodwill to attend church even when roads and weather are good; but should there be a little mud, forget it! However, when the movie house is open, or there is a dance... then you know what I mean! Big satisfaction I had on the "Porziuncula" day. Men, none; women, the usual three!"<sup>58</sup>*

In November 1914, Fr. Preti went over to find out for himself how the situation was:

*"The scope of the visit the Superior Fr. Enrico Preti paid me a few days ago was to gain a more adequate and clear information on how things stand, especially with regard to the pledges. Upon realizing how little these people care for their many promises, he left disgusted with the serious intention on his mind of surrendering this parish to the Bishop. Last Sunday, to spare the people such a shameful showing, also in response to the desire of my Superior, I spoke my mind, hard and clear, as it were, to them from the pulpit. Did they wake up? Not at all, so far! I do not know what these slugs have on their mind! Confronted with this situation of their keeping their pledges or not, I am unfortunately afraid I may have to pack and go!"<sup>59</sup>*

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<sup>55</sup> Rinaldi to Vicentini, Encantado, January 31, 1908, March 5, 1908 (Arch. Gen. S., 413/3).

<sup>56</sup> Preti to Rinaldi, Vespasiano Corr a, March 18, 1913 (Arch. G.S., 414/1).

<sup>57</sup> Morelli to Rinaldi, Muçum, Nov. 30, 1913 (Arch. G.S., 471).

<sup>58</sup> Morelli to Rinaldi, Muçum, Sept. 4, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 471).

<sup>59</sup> Morelli to Rinaldi, Muçum, November 29, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 471).

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To add to the difficulties of Fr. Morelli, made restless by the people's behavior, came the news of Italy's declaration of war to Austria. Quite a large number of Italian families were living there from regions under Austrian domination, and many of them, loyal to Austria, protested against the Italian intervention:

*"On every feast day Italians and Austrians from Tyrol and Trieste are here at odds against each other, but only in words, so far. Anyway, honest people here, are more inclined to disapprove than to favor the way Italy behaved in regard to an ally. Who is right? Only God knows."*<sup>60</sup>

Unfortunately, also Fr. Morelli thought he knew who was right, and began thundering from the pulpit against Italy, guilty of betraying the "*Triple Alliance*". Following the strong protests of Italians, the Archbishop and Fr. Preti hastened a decision to remove him, assigning him to the new quasi-parish of "Nova Bréscia", and at the same time to join the quasi-parish of Muçum again to that of Vespasiano Corrêa.<sup>61</sup> Fr. Morelli left for Nova Bréscia in the latter part of November 1915, and Fr. Vincenzo Testani was assigned to Muçum in June 1916.

### **9. Nova Bréscia**

Fr. Morelli made his entry to Nova Bréscia on November 20, 1915, and remained there till 1929. The region had begun to be colonized in the years 1890 to 1895. By 1905, there were living there a little over a dozen families from Bento Gonçalves, Antônio Prado, and Garibaldi. A committee was formed in 1905 for the construction of a wooden chapel that was served by the Jesuits of Lageado and by the Scalabrinians of Encantado till 1915.

Accompanied by Fr. Preti, Archbishop Becker arrived there for the pastoral visitation on May 20, 1915. In consideration of the distance from Encantado and the good dispositions of the colonists, he accepted their repeated request to have an autonomous quasi-parish; though waiting a while, however, before signing the official decree of erection for fear that the disappointment over Muçum might reoccur. But, the people of Nova Bréscia kept faithful to their pledge and immediately contributed with enthusiasm to the support of the priest not so much with money as rather with their produce, and to the building of a stone church. Right after his first Christmas there, Fr. Morelli could write as follows:

*"I heard more confessions here only on Christmas Eve than I did in two years at Muçum. Besides, the church is always crowded both in the morning for Mass, and in the afternoon for catechism."*<sup>62</sup>

The wooden chapel was enlarged right away, while the people had made arrangements already for the priest's rectory. On September 2, 1916, works

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<sup>60</sup> Morelli to Rinaldi, Muçum, June 29, 1915 (Arch. G.S., 471).

<sup>61</sup> Preti to Rinaldi, Guaporé, December 1, 1915 (Arch. G.S., 414/3).

<sup>62</sup> Morelli to Rinaldi, Nova Bréscia, December 27, 1915 (Arch. G.S., 451/2).

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were started on the new granite church, 40 meters long by 16 wide, the first one made of stone in those regions.<sup>63</sup>

Work progressed at a slow pace because one could not expect more from the sixty families forming the inhabited center. In fact, it was completed only in 1927.

Bringing to fruition a project he had been dreaming of since his early days, Fr. Morelli opened in 1919 a parish school under the direction of the Scalabrinian Sisters. Mother Assunta and Sister Borromeo Ferraresi had gone there to look for a location on January 19, 1919:

*"For two days already I have the honor to play host to two Sisters who, after much pleading and entreating, anxiety and doubt, came to see for themselves whether it be worthwhile to found a new residence in this place. There is no need to put into words how impressed they are with the location, the people, the climate, etc....so much so as to give word that within a month they will come to reside here for good and for sure, even though there is no house of their own as yet. But the wood has been ready for a long time, and we will begin building the day after tomorrow."*<sup>64</sup>

The first three sisters, Mother Assunta Marchetti, Sr. Attilia Angeli, and Sr. Giovanna de Camargo, took residence at Nova Bréscia by the middle of March, 1919. A few days later Fr. Morelli wrote:

*"These people of Nova Bréscia work miracles. While works on the construction of the church are feverishly underway (...), they willingly submit to this noble enterprise, besides (...).*

*The church was started with one "conto" in debt, and today, after three years of work, we have six "contos" in the bank; and mind you, we did not tax anyone even as much as "a penny" for the new church. I keep them informed of things from the pulpit, and that is enough; this way, whoever does not have money gives pigs, calves, cows, horses, etc., and so we have carried on quite well, so far."*<sup>65</sup>

## **10. Monte Belo**

In early 1906, Fr. Rinaldi informed Fr. Vicentini that Fr. Enrico Preti, curate there since July 21, 1940, desired to leave Monte Belo, because its 400 families did not give him enough work; only half of them paid their quarterly of four "florins" as pledged; and since he had to apply the masses for the people on feast days, there remained very little for him to live on.<sup>66</sup>

In 1907, Fr. Preti himself wrote that the parish was too small when compared with the neighboring parishes, while a steady exodus was taking place to more productive and less mountainous lands. As a compensation, he had to attend to the nearby parish of Faria Lemos, and occasionally also to that of Santa

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<sup>63</sup> Morelli to Rinaldi, Nova Brescia, September 14, 1916 (Arch. G.S., 451/2).

<sup>64</sup> Morelli to Rinaldi, Nova Brescia, January 20, 1919 (Arch. G.S., 451/2).

<sup>65</sup> Morelli to Rinaldi, Nova Brescia, March 31, 1919 (Arch. G.S., 451/2).

<sup>66</sup> Rinaldi to Vicentini, Encantado, January 10, 1906 (Arch. G.S., 413/1).

Tereza, when its pastor, Fr. Giosuè Bardin, was on his more or less long vacations.<sup>67</sup>

But a new fact began to draw the interest of Fr. Preti in 1908:

*"I was very happy with the attendance to the Sacraments as more than 800 people received them! But, my greatest consolation was to witness individuals of this town returning to the religious practices who had not made their Easter duty for many years."<sup>68</sup>*

Fr. Luigi Guglieri took his place on August 14, 1911. He built rectory and steeple, made of wood, took an active interest in the opening of schools and roads, and restored the church of which Fr. Preti had already made the floor, the ceiling, the two side altars, and the pulpit.<sup>69</sup> In 1916, Fr. Guglieri gave life to the "Scalabrini Recreation Center" with rooms for catechism classes, an Italian school; and recreational programs, assisted by the Sisters of the Most Pure Heart of Mary, who had opened a few years earlier a school attended by some sixty pupils.<sup>70</sup>

### **11. Monte Vêneto (Cotiporã)**

Another great promoter of the "cooperatives" was Fr. Eugene Medicheschi, curate of Monte Vêneto since the end of 1905. Construction on the church, to which he had devoted himself, was making slow progress. Its cornerstone was blessed only in 1907; the inauguration was celebrated on January 29, 1910.<sup>71</sup>

The cooperative, that was made up of a dairy and a delicatessen factory, had been founded in 1909. To objections from the Superior General to the cooperatives of Monte Belo and Monte Vêneto, Fr. Rinaldi gave this answer:

*"Fr. Enrico has done much good, and Fr. Eugene is doing it now, by means of their societies, the cooperative at Monte Belo, and the dairy at Monte Vêneto! True, there is need of special care, shrewdness, and tact, here where the directional element is lacking. There is, therefore, an indispensable necessity that the priests also be busy in caring for the material welfare of the poor colonists who are daily being ever more stifled by merchants and ruined by traders. Beans sell for nothing for the last two years; and for months now, at the most, they may go for 3 milreis. The same must be said at Encantado for the millet; imagine in other places; in the meantime, domestic commodities, clothing especially, are very expensive! Besides, merchants and money lenders have formed a quasi religious sect, and hold the people in check at will through usury! Would it not be indeed providential, then, that good priests, urged by true zeal, should also act on the financial, industrial, etc.... fields, on behalf of the people? As far as I know, Fr. Enrico aroused only the fleeting aversion of the merchant Francioni, while gaining, on the contrary, not only the favor of his parishioners, but, I would say, of all the neighboring colonies, as well; and even with his absence from Monte Belo, that society is alive and prosperous to this*

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<sup>67</sup> Preti to Vicentini, Monte Belo, August 5, 1907 (Arch. G.S., 470).

<sup>68</sup> Fr. Preti to Vicentini, Monte Belo, September 15, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 470).

<sup>69</sup> Vicentini, "Diary", Vol. V, Nov. 2, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 1642).

<sup>70</sup> Cavigiolo to Rinaldi, Monte Belo, April 22, 1911 (Arch. G.S., 470).

<sup>71</sup> Rinaldi to Vicentini, Encantado, February 21, 1909, June 10, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 413/4-413/5).



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*day! All this, however, is no guarantee against failure! That poor priest works body and soul for Esperança and his Monte Belo; as far as I am concerned, he is worth admiring!"<sup>72</sup>*

Fr. Rinaldi himself published an article in 1912 on the "*Sul Americana*" cooperative of Monte Vêneto, employing, at that time, some fifty workers:

"With great pleasure we have gathered these days from the newspapers of Brazil the news about the honor accorded a dairy cooperative of Monte Vêneto in Rio Grande do Sul, born and grown there by the action of one of our missionaries.

Only those who know how miserable were the financial conditions of that colony until a few years ago, when it was not yet one of our missions of ours, will be in a position to exactly appreciate by what spirit of charity and sacrifice the Missionaries of Saint Charles were inspired, and how important is that beneficial cooperative for our emigrants. As one who spent many years in the colonies of the State of Rio Grande, I still remember what deep sadness I felt when, passing through the territory of Monte Vêneto, I saw its arid lands and steep mountains made even more unproductive and barren than nature itself would have called for by an indiscriminate deforestation. While travelling up and down those mountains, to my great sorrow I noticed here and there certain disjointed wooden shacks, many of them abandoned by the poor emigrants forced by the barrenness of the soil to move elsewhere in search of better land. That desolate sight made me sad and had me foresee that the day was not far off when those poor fellow countrymen, urged on by dire necessity, would be compelled to resume the path of exile.

As God willed it, such misfortune was averted when that colony was entrusted to our missionaries and Fr. Medicheschi began taking care of it. Trained in the Spirit of our Venerated Founder, he decided that the spiritual welfare of his parishioners had to go hand in hand with their material well-being, and he began studying the means to open for them the way towards some economic resource.

With the willing response of all his beloved sons, he succeeded in founding a dairy cooperative endowing it with modern and perfect equipment. In less than two years the products of that successful industry reached a wide range of trade in the markets of Brazil, especially in the State of São Paulo.

The lucky success of the enterprise drew the attention of Manoel Rodrigues, general director of the Secretariat of Agriculture in Rio de Janeiro, who deemed it his duty, last May, to travel from the capital of Brazil to Monte Vêneto to see for himself on the spot that flourishing Italian industry. In the same month, the jury at the exposition of Porto Alegre, capital of the State of Rio Grande assigned the first prize to the Monte Vêneto cooperative for the excellent quality of its products.

Upon hearing this consoling news from the press, mindful of the sad past of these compatriots and of their harder future if they had been lacking the assistance of a missionary, we give thanks to the Lord for stirring up, 25 years ago, for the protection of emigrants and to the glory of Church and country, that angel of charity, our Venerated Founder, Bishop Giovanni Battista Scalabrini."<sup>73</sup>

Though not strictly pertaining to our history, we point out that in 1912 the dairy cooperative founded by Fr. Medicheschi was the largest in the State of Rio Grande, with an annual production of thirty thousand kilos, and that the dairies of Nova Prata, Nova Bassano, General. Osorio, Lajeado, in the region of Veranópolis were inspired by, and took their origin from, it. As we have seen,

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<sup>72</sup> Rinaldi to Vicentini, Encantado, May 24, 1910 (Arch. G.S., 413/5).

<sup>73</sup> Rinaldi, "Nuova Benemerenzia Sociale delle nostre Missioni", "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. VI, no. 7, (1912), pp. 105-106.

the initiatives of Frs. Medicheschi and Preti were born in 1908 and 1909, that is, two or three years before the vast cooperatives' movement of began in the Italian colonial region of Rio Grande do Sul, whose pioneers are generally credited to be the Minister Pedro de Toledo, and his right arm, the Italian Stefano Paternò, who had started their propaganda campaign and coordination only in 1911.<sup>74</sup>

## **12. Santa Tereza**

About the quasi-parish of Santa Tereza, on the road from Bento Gonçalves to Muçum, we know it was created on March 12, 1888 in the village founded in 1885 by the head of the Immigration Commission, Mr. Antunes, and that Fr. Giosuè Bardin took possession of it on March 25, 1888. He was the first priest, the son of Italians ever to be trained in the diocesan seminary of Porto Alegre. Fr. Bardin directed the parish of Santa Tereza during different periods, from 1888 till 1891, 1898 to 1902, 1903 to 1904, and again in 1921. The first church, made of wood, was built in 1886, the stone one in 1912.<sup>75</sup>

In April, 1903, when he appointed Fr. Bardin to Guarany, the Bishop charged Fr. Vicentini, then curate of Encantado, with the provisional care of the quasi-parish of Santa Tereza, sending to it, afterwards, Fr. Icilio Pampanelli, who remained for only three months, because of a censure he had incurred. Fr. Pampanelli was replaced by Fr. Vicentini.<sup>76</sup>

As seen before, Fr. Preti took care of it several times in 1907 and in 1908 from Monte Belo; in March, 1908, he wrote to Fr. Vicentini saying he deemed it opportune to take charge of that quasi-parish because neighboring the other parishes in the care of Scalabrinians.<sup>77</sup>

A few days later, Fr. Rinaldi informed Fr. Vicentini that Fr. Preti had obtained faculty to join the parish of Santa Tereza to that of Monte Belo, and it was necessary, therefore, to assign him a companion because the people of Santa Tereza were clamoring to the top of their voices and with fuming rage to have a resident priest in their town. The quasi-parish had been dismembered, and its territory on the other side of the Rio das Antas was assigned to Vespasiano Corrêa. There had remained a small community, with only one hundred baptisms a year, as many as at Monte Belo; besides, the Bishop would have wished to join to Monte Belo also Faria Lemos.<sup>78</sup>

Fr. Vicentini answered he was inclined to accept Santa Tereza provided he had the missionaries available; the idea of establishing a central residence for three communities did not appeal to him as practical, because each of them was

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<sup>74</sup> Monserrat, "O cooperativismo na zona de colonização Italiana", "Album comemorativo do 75 aniversário da Colonização Italiana no Rio Grande do Sul" (Porto Alegre, 1950), pp. 294-315.

<sup>75</sup> Barea, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>76</sup> Vicentini, "Diary" Vol. IV, April 25, 1903, p. 119; May 19, 1903, p. 119; August 16, 1903, p. 123. (Arch. G.S., 1642).

<sup>77</sup> Preti to Vicentini, Monte Belo, March 1, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 467/2).

<sup>78</sup> Rinaldi to Vicentini, Encantado, March 5, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 413/3).

already used to having a resident priest, and they would rebel, therefore, at such a solution.<sup>79</sup>

On January 4, 1909, Fr. Rinaldi notified Fr. Vicentini that in obeisance to the Bishop he had decided to send to Santa Tereza Fr. Pietro Negri as one who would obtain without difficulty the return of the territory on the other bank of the Río das Antas from the confrere of Vespasiano Corrêa.<sup>80</sup>

Except for a short period in 1910, when he was substituted by Fr. Cavigiolo, and then by a Capuchin, Fr. Negri was pastor of the quasi-parish of Santa Tereza until 1921. He built the church in stone and the rectory and obtained that the town be made a "district" in 1917. In the same year, the Vicar General, Mons. Mariano da Rocha defined the boundaries of the parish thus terminating the disputes between Muçum and Roca Sales.<sup>81</sup> He had to retire in early 1921 because, due to his excessive weight, he could not ride a horse<sup>82</sup> and so, the parish passed into the hands of the diocesan clergy.

### **13. Guaporé**

Before being declared a municipality in 1903, Guaporé was called Varzinha or Nova Virginia. The colony was established in 1892, and began to be inhabited by Italians from Bento Gonçalves, Farroupilha, Garibaldi, Antônio Prado, and Veranópolis. The early religious assistance was provided in January 1894 by Fr. Bernardo Bolle, a Jesuit from Lageado. When the Scalabrinians arrived at Encantado and Nova Bassano in 1896, the periodic visitations became the charge of Fr. Pietro Colbacchini who, in consideration of the needs of those people and of the great distance from Nova Bassano, petitioned the bishop to make Guaporé a quasi-parish. The request was accepted in early 1897, and Fr. Antonio Pertile, a priest from Padua, was sent there, as its first pastor until December 1898. Fr. Stefano Gazzera was appointed to it in February 1899. He worked hard for the improvement of the religious and social conditions of emigrants, and acted also as an Italian consular agent.

When Fr. Gazzera died on July 10, 1913, Fr. Giuseppe Sanson was assigned to it on a temporary basis. Fr. Preti wrote to Fr. Vicentini:

*"The parish of Guaporé is vacant. The confreres urge me to accept it because it would do very well for the center of our missions both because of its location and it being the seat of the municipality. In fact, it would be central on one side to Anta Gorda, to Nova Bassano on the other, and to the more distant Esperança, Muçum, etc. The Archbishop would be well disposed, but we lack personnel. I tried to move Fr. Serraglia; no use! And I am afraid it will be the same with the others! For this project to succeed there does not remain any hope except in outside help. I ask you, therefore, that for the sake of these missions, you send us, as soon as possible, or promise with certainty to do so before the end of this year, the absolutely needed help of, I would say, four priests; two for*

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<sup>79</sup> Vicentini to Rinaldi, Piacenza, June 18, 1908 (Arch. G.S., 413/3).

<sup>80</sup> Rinaldi to Vicentini, Porto Alegre, January 4, 1909 (Arch. G.S., 413/4).

<sup>81</sup> Negri to Rinaldi, Santa Teresa, February 11, 1917 -December 8, 1917 (Arch. G.S., 467/2).

<sup>82</sup> Negri to Rinaldi, Santa Teresa, Oct. 31, 1920 (Arch. G.S., 467/2).

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*Guaporé because of the great work, and distance there, one for Muçum , and the last one provisionally available, together with the assistant of Guaporé, for preaching missions throughout the Italian colonies in obedience to the Archbishop's desire (...). Should you intend to avail yourself of this opportunity, which, perhaps, will never come again, for the good of our missions, I believe this to be the most opportune time."*<sup>83</sup>

After securing the Superior General's consent, Fr. Preti accepted the quasi-parish of Guaporé, and he took charge of it himself in the beginning of 1914. A few days before his entry, a fire of suspicious origin destroyed the rectory and the archive. <sup>84</sup> Fr. Preti committed himself immediately to the construction of the new stone church, titled to St. Anthony of Padua, and blessed the corner stone on June 13, 1914. The roof was laid in 1917, the same year when, under the direction of the Scalabrinian Sisters Antoinette Fontana (later on, Superior General), Gertrude Mileti, Carolina Grasti, and Cecilia Mosca, the Scalabrini School was opened in March with 75 students:

*"The parish church has its roof; the mission has been preached by the Capuchins with much fruit; a well-attended school has been opened under the direction of the Sisters titled to their founder Scalabrini."*<sup>85</sup>

In 1919, Fr. Enrico Preti went to Italy for the General Chapter and was appointed Provincial Superior of all Brazilian missions. He was provisionally succeeded by Fr. Augusto Rizzi and Fr. Ernesto Consoni until June 1920.

#### **14. Bento Gonçalves**

The beginnings of the Italian colonization of Bento Gonçalves, then Dona Isabel coincides with the early Italian immigration into Rio Grande do Sul. In fact, the first Italians, almost all of them from Tyrol, that is "Trentino-Alto Adige today" arrived here in December 1875. They were visited in 1876 and in 1877 by their countryman Fr. Bartolomeo Tiecher, and, later, by Fr. Domenico Munari. Fr. Giovanni Menegotto was named its chaplain on January 9, 1878, and he directed the parish, officially erected on August 6, 1884, until he died. He was succeeded in February 1902 by Fr. Cesare Ciullo, replaced by Fr. Angelo Donato from May 1906 until January 1908, and by Fr. Francesco Acierno until the beginning of 1911.

Archbishop J. Becker reports:

*"The parish of Bento Gonçalves (...) had been the victim of the scandalous conduct of Frs. Cesare Ciullo and Francesco Acierno before Fr. Enrico Domenico Poggi took charge of it. By his good example, zeal, and the assistance of missionaries, Capuchins especially, he succeeded in calling the people back to the faith and its practice. Fr. Poggi was assigned to Bento Gonçalves in February 1911, and his appointment was confirmed from year to year as with all the other priests of the Archdiocese (...).*

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<sup>83</sup> Preti to Vicentini, Vespasiano Corrêa, August 26, 1913 (Arch. G.S., 414/1).

<sup>84</sup> Costanzo to Vicentini, Nova Bassano, January 8, 1914 (Arch. G.S., 448/5).

<sup>85</sup> Preti to Rinaldi, Guaporé, July 13, 1917 (Arch. G.S., 444/2).

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*In the course of his tenure Fr. Poggi had the missionaries of Saint Charles as his assistants.<sup>86</sup>*

Archbishop Amleto G. Cicognani adds:

"Masonry made good on a wide scale of these scandals, and after establishing a lodge at Bento Gonçalves it began to attack the faith of the people. The people appeared to be taking to its propaganda at first, but in virtue of their deeply rooted religion, they soon felt very uneasy about it. Right then, the Archbishop appointed Fr. Enrico Poggi, a diocesan priest from Genoa, to be pastor at Bento Gonçalves. He was received by his parishioners with the distrust then prevailing against priests in general; but his reserved manners, his piety, his mild temperament, and his generous hand, gained him, within a short while, the esteem and love of the people who returned in body to the practice of their religion. Devotion to the Sacred Heart, celebrated every year in February with adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and general Communion, rewarded the work. The pious practice is being continued and has become widely known, so that many outsiders flock to Bento Gonçalves, for that occasion, where they may find as many as ten or more priests ready to hear their confession.

Neither did the work of Fr. Poggi stop here! He gave start to, and brought the restoration of, the beautiful and spacious church to a good point, at his own expense he opened the convent for the Sisters of St. Charles, a real necessity for providing boys and girls with a Christian education after the Sisters of St. Joseph had left Bento Gonçalves at the time of Fr. Acierno; he built the rectory and a hall for meetings and plays; and together with the Fathers of St. Charles he founded the "*Il Corriere d'Italia*" as a means for counteracting the vile campaign waged by the freemasonry"<sup>87</sup>

The closing lines of both letters are not exact. Not only did Fr. Enrico Poggi have Scalabrinian assistants, but he himself was one as can be proven by the oath of perseverance undersigned by him on September 30, 1921.<sup>88</sup> The same Fr. Poggi gave the details of it in a letter of 1928 to Cardinal Perosi:

*"Several times invited to join the Scalabrinians, I accepted. I had been living with Scalabrinians for a number of years already, paying one of them to direct the newspaper, and having them as assistants. But I accepted to enter the Institute on two conditions:*

- 1) that upon leaving Bento Gonçalves the Scalabrinians be willing to take charge of the parish and of all his works;*
- 2) that I be given a position in Genoa, where to continue my cooperation with the Scalabrinian Institute.*

*The then Superior, the Most Rev. Fr. Chenuil admitted me on these conditions."<sup>89</sup>*

As to the "*Il Corriere d'Italia*" we must make it clear that the Scalabrinians began collaborating on it only some three years after it was founded, that is, at the end of 1915, when Fr. Giovanni Costanzo was appointed its director with the approval of the Archbishop:

*"Concerning the newspaper you must know that after a period of give and take and doubt, strong on the advice of the Superior General (as reported to me by Fr. Porrini on his return from Italy), giving us full freedom of choosing the newspaper we should deem most helpful for our missions, in consideration of*

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<sup>86</sup> Becker to De Lai, Porto Alegre, January 15, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 467/1).

<sup>87</sup> "Cicognani" Report, Sept.-Oct. 1926 (Arch. G.S., 467/1).

<sup>88</sup> "Documento del Giuramento di Perseveranza di P. E.D. Poggi" (Arch. G.S., 2009).

<sup>89</sup> Poggi to Perosi, Rome, October 18, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 2009).

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*the favorable attitude of the Archbishop, of the need for a publication more suitable to the different tastes of our priests and missions, and of the opinion of several confreres, we deemed it opportune to lay our choice on the "Il Corriere d'Italia", founded a few years ago by Fr. Poggi, pastor of Bento Gonçalves, an excellent diocesan priest, with the help of a certain S. Battocchi, the Vice-Consul, also of Bento Gonçalves, and with the great favor of the Consul of Porto Alegre, as on the newspaper that best responds to our twofold mission: "God and Country." And, so, a corporation was set up composed of three partners: a representative of our Congregation, Fr. Poggi himself, and the said Vice-Consul, with a combined capital fund of 12 contos, four each, plus one-half contos each for eventual personal expenses. All this has been done with the full approval of the Archbishop, whose desire is that the newspapers, capital and all, pass sooner or later, under our direction in view of making it someday the mouthpiece of Catholicism amongst the Italian colonies."<sup>90</sup>*

Fr. Costanzo moved to Bento Gonçalves on January 14, 1916, and directed the weekly until the beginning of 1918. His successor was Fr. Carlo Porrini, appointed assistant to Fr. Poggi on April 12, 1918; under his administration subscribers increased from 800 to 3,000. When the discussion came up over substituting Fr. Costanzo with Fr. Porrini, the Vicar General was not much in favor of it; in fact, in a private audience with Fr. Poggi, he let him understand that the change had to be on a provisional basis. The truth was that he intended to subtract the newspaper from the direction of the Italian missionaries, perhaps because too Italian:

*"I was asking for Fr. Carlo as my assistant, but he persisted in saying he could not be sure of it while insisting in sending me a provisional one. This amounted to telling me: with you gone, the newspaper's direction will go also, etc."<sup>91</sup>*

Fr. Poggi had expressed the desire to return to Italy but he delayed leaving because he felt sure that the newspaper "Il Corriere d'Italia" would be discontinued if he did so:

*"But, if I come to Italy what would be of the "Corriere"? It is not right to discontinue the newspaper now when after so many sacrifices it is going so well and its circulation is on a steady increase. With my departure the survival of the "Corriere" will not be possible with a new pastor, because the Bishop will not leave Fr. Carlo exclusively for it, and the Fathers of St. Charles do not seem too inclined to replace me with one that may be a pastor here. Be kind enough to suggest to me some good way out, and let yourself take an interest in a work that is doing so much good, and is so necessary to your missions in these regions. The newspaper should indeed cease only when your mission will be completed. I would have liked to apply for membership in the missionaries of St. Carlo if only to save the newspaper, but I am past the canonical age and too old; besides I have to pay a visit to my mother whom I departed from without telling her I was leaving for Brazil."<sup>92</sup>*

Actually, Fr. Poggi returned to Italy only in 1926, and he had Fr. Giuseppe Foscallo as his successor. However, the Archbishop was keen in confirming his

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<sup>90</sup> Preti to Rinaldi, Guaporé, December 1, 1915 (Arch. G.S., 414/3).

<sup>91</sup> Poggi to Rinaldi, Bento Gonçalves, April 14, 1918 (Arch. G.S., 467/1).

<sup>92</sup> Poggi to Rinaldi, Bento Gonçalves, Nov. 28, 1918 (Arch. G.S., 467/1).

full rights on the parish entrusting it to Fr. Foscallo only on "a temporary basis" as "acting pastor" with simple faculties and provisions.

One of Fr. Poggi's merits was paving the way into R o Grande do Sul to the Scalabrinian sisters: in fact, the first residence they established in the State was that of Bento Gonalves opened on February 4, 1915, by Sisters Lucia Gorlin (future Vicar General), Giuseppina Oricchio, Barromea Ferraresi (future Superior General), Giovanna de Camargo (also a future Superior General) and Maria di Lourdes Martins. Two months after arriving at Bento Gonalves the first one wrote to Fr. Faustino Consoni:

*"Hardly a day goes by without us speaking a little of you and of the house (Villa Prudente). Today, for instance, as soon as we began speaking about our departure (...) we started crying, not because of anything wrong with us, or of being unhappy; in fact, by God's help, there is peace among us. The Vicar (Pastor) shows himself ever more solicitous every day, and people seem satisfied with us, and our hope gains strength by the day (...). The Most Reverend Fr. Enrico (Preti), the Provincial Superior, came to visit us and was quite pleased. He said he also wants to have the sisters at Guapor , and is now getting a house ready for them.*

*(...) This morning, the Vicar called us in after Mass, because the Vicar of Caravaggio was waiting to talk to us. And he also was here to tell us that he wants the Sisters, three at least; but I answered him I was not in a position to promise him anything, and he should write, rather, to S o Paulo. He invited us to go over and see the place and the house. The Vicar's name is Angelo Donato, at one time, many years ago, pastor here at Bento Gonalves. I told him we have to take it easy because we cannot do everything at once; besides, we must take care of Guapor , that has requested them first. He said he would be contented for the next year, and so we remained at that."<sup>93</sup>*

## **15. The Relevance of the Church to the Emigrants of R o Grande do Sul**

As a conclusion of this chapter on R o Grande do Sul, we reprint an article of 1914, from which we are given to understand the pastoral method adopted by our missionaries in founding the first parishes for Italian emigrants, and, at the same time, the importance, not only religious, of their work in the history of the Church of R o Grande do Sul, of Paran , and to a lesser extent, of S o Paulo, though considering the geographical and historical limits of the activities of those few pioneers.

"After succeeding with God's help and by His zealous solicitude in forming an ecclesial community of souls (...), the missionary devotes all his attention also to building the material church, symbol of communion amongst the faithful who will gather in it for worship and mutual good example to foster Christian piety and brotherhood! Besides these most noble sentiments by which any sacred building becomes an expression of faith and love, the missionary of migrants has in mind other more immediate and particular scopes, which we will call to your attention through this article.

Let us pay a visit, for instance, to a region of the immensely vast country of Brazil. An Italian family, urged on by who knows what good fortune, settles on a deserted and

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<sup>93</sup> Gorlin to Consoni, Bento Gonalves, April 24, 1915 (Arch. G.S., 103/4).

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uncultivated soil in hope to succeed in making it fertile by steady work, and thus derive from it its daily bread, as well as some good savings. But it is all alone; it hardly sees or hears anyone, and the virgin forest surrounding it like an impassable barrier, makes it continuously experience its own isolation causing it to desire the presence of known and good people who may come to share in that solitary and comfortless life. Then, lo and behold, broken off and cast far away, the little branch turns to its original source; a hardly legible letter arrives to remind relatives and friends of their dear ones who had left several months before for America, and whose news they are anxiously waiting for. These dispersed ones are still alive and think about them and hope to have them there to share in the little comforts and in the many sorrows exile accords.

And so, these too depart, urged on by love and by the hope of better fortune; relatives and friends leave to join their distant migrant members bringing along another load of memories and affection for their native town, which is then sadly deprived of its life source. In the meantime, however, other families have by now joined the first one; their home dialect is spoken once again in these lonely regions, and the interrupted customs of thoughts and cares are here revived on which the future community will be formed.

But something else is still missing; perhaps something they did not appreciate very much back in their country, but which they now feel necessary and want to do everything to have: the church! And so they build small chapels, made of wood like their houses, where they may gather in prayer before a crucifix or a beloved image of Mary, taken from the wall above the head of the bed of their parents and religiously brought along across the Ocean as a sacred pledge of heavenly protection. They have sent word for a priest by now, as they do not want to descend into the tomb without his comforts, or desecrate a nuptial bed by being deprived of his blessing. The magnanimous heart of Bishop Scalabrini has heard the desires of these distant sons of Italy, and behold, one of his missionaries has come into their midst! A new light has dawned over that group of good families, and a most deep joy fills the hearts of all as though a happier and more secure life were to dawn for them!

But the priest, whom the colonists have already provided with a house in which to live, cannot allow that Jesus, of whom he is the humble minister, should remain without a home or in one too unworthy of his greatness and of the love of his children for Him. A church must then be built; the missionary spreads the word trustingly among the people and all respond generously! And right away things begin rolling along; the heads of families are called together by the pastor so that all things may be planned by common consent to the satisfaction of all. This way even those who live far come together, old friendships are revived, and new ones made; through the parents also the new families develop common friendships and interests, which pave the way for new family ties and new relationships of resources and work. But, as is always the case, you also come across those who are opposed and disagree. For whatever reasons, business, jealousies, misunderstandings, and what else have made them enemies; they do not greet or speak to one another anymore! Still they must be all present at the meeting with the pastor; it is a pledge of honor and a duty no one can or wants to forego, cost what it may!

This way opponents are sitting next to each other; they begin looking at one another less sullenly, and the religious aim that drew them together in the presence of the priest, their common father, awakens in them sentiments of fraternal charity that urges them to speak to stand each other, and to become good and faithful friends, once more. Should they have continued on road of hatred they might have been led to the most serious excesses, there especially, where public justice is often powerless, and impunity may therefore render crime an everyday event.



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All discords, then, have been settled in town; following the lead of their heads, families and relatives have been reconciled, and there will be concordant love and peace around the church to be built.

But where is the church to be constructed? Well, here we have one of the points on which agreement cannot be quickly reached without difficulty, because every hamlet of the parish wishes to have it in its own territory by reasons of convenience and interests. How many contestations, rivalries, and jealousies the missionary has to overcome to satisfy all and eliminate all dissent! This is certainly an occasion when he is in need of a great wisdom of judgment and action not to arouse the doubt, easy to happen as equally fatal it may turn out to be for his ministry of peace and concord, of sympathizing or taking sides with this or that party. One can very well understand such an interested concern when he considers that from the church depends the life and growth of the hamlet that is to become the main town, the seat of a municipality, and a center of industry and commerce.

When agreement has been reached, we start planning the work, but to build we need money and strong willing arms. And now we have a confession to make: due to many reasons, especially to lack of training in their home country, our Italians are not very aware of their duty in contributing towards the support of the church.

It is difficult therefore to induce them to offer their contribution, especially if substantial, as is needed for the construction of a church; and more so, should one consider that they have left country and most all cherished things just because of a desire for gain, which, much like the sea, can never be filled. Still this exaggerated attachment to money must be vanquished, and more noble and high sentiments, ideas, and resolutions must be instilled in the heads and in the hearts of migrants, so that disregarding their particular interests they may learn to be concerned over the needs of all, which are not as felt by our egotism but are far superior and indispensable for social life.

Once this new awareness of the common good, sealed, as it were, in the common effort to build the church, begins to grow, it will lead to the forming of mutual and charitable societies, as well as cooperatives and other works of charity. After securing the funds, sacred to God like the widow's mite because it is fruit of the daily toil and savings subtracted from their rightful comforts of life, the migrants are given also the great opportunity for exchanging ideas and engaging in common activities. First comes the design of the church; it is at this stage that the fantasy and hearts of all go back to the churches of their hometowns, where they often offered their prayers, received the grace of the Sacraments and the Divine blessings, and where their elders still pray for them. In their nostalgic excitement they can still see it very distinctly as if they had just seen it the night before they went to sleep!

Since most migrants come from the same town or province, even before any discussion they already agree that the design of the new church has to be similar to the parish churches of origin. But if the missionary, as is sometimes the case, is of a different religion, and therefore of other customs and taste, migrants must then supply a description of their church; and hence there derives an upsurge of imagination and a race for words and drawings - what else can we call them? - so that the missionary may have an idea of what they envision. When he understands, or thinks he does, he assures them he will take all their suggestions into account, and present a project. One must take it for granted that, though keeping in mind the desires of the people, the missionary will try to prepare a work that is as far as possible artistically acceptable and fit to the demands of liturgy and to the needs of the faithful, as well! Finally, the project he presents is more or less enthusiastically approved by all, and the church will soon be an accomplished fact! Obviously, we still need to start working on it; but lo and behold, robust arms offer themselves for the job, and their horses, ready with harness and all, for the long and difficult transport.

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It is a wonderful competition, which, while honoring God from whom it takes inspiration to the comfort of the missionary directing it, it also helps in bringing forth the best talents of the colonists! All of a sudden they discover being architects, masons, carpenters; they have found in the untapped depth of their own energies a hidden treasure, so that the parish will have from now on its workers in time of need without recourse to strangers in distant places. This way, the consciousness of their abilities and self-sufficiency shows to be a much needed factor for the unity and prosperity of our colonies, and it serves as a bulwark against any infiltration of natives or of migrants of other nationalities. This indispensable awareness of self-sufficiency is a great source of strength for them, and it progressively shapes the force by which our colonies of the States of Paraná and Rio Grande do Sul have preserved better than all others not only their own national, but also their regional and local traditions.

In the meantime construction is making progress; upon hearing that a church is being built at that mission, the people of neighboring towns are edified by such unity of wills, and feel urged to follow the example. Not only our compatriots, but foreigners as well, had to confess that our migrants are indeed capable of doing something for their religion, provided there is one to coordinate their talents.

The church is now completed. Through the contributions and the work of the faithful, Jesus has been given a house; maybe not sumptuous or resplendent with marbles and gold, but perhaps more pleasing and dear to Him. Every one of the stones bespeaks sacrifice and love, and expresses a silent prayer for the people. Work in the fields has not been interrupted or delayed, but the colonists knew how to pick out willing and strong arms to devote them to the new building; others have readily filled in and doubled activities for them, some even if they had to shake off their apathy and idleness.

The inauguration festivities draw many people from neighboring communities, and all are amazed to find besides a beautiful church also good grocery stores, and the sale of work tools, as well as of commodities of different kinds! The construction of the church has also given start to a satisfactory industrial and economic growth that will bring a healthy increase of life to an already steadily growing town. In fact, very soon many new buildings will spring up around the bell tower. Here the colonists will find lodging and food, and buy the supplies they are in need of for their families.

Naturally, shop owners make good earnings and enlarge their shops; this also was the reason why the colonists exerted so much pressure to have a priest at the mission, and the construction of the church, to which they cooperated with their not entirely disinterested contributions. But let us go back to the temple just now dedicated to the Almighty and all-good God, and to the Patron saint, that is generally the titular of the town in Italy where migrants come from. The rightful satisfaction the faithful experience in seeing the church completed at which they themselves had worked with so much love, is joined in their hearts with an inner persuasion of capability and talent that helps them appreciate their own qualities such as they will later employ in other works of public and private interest. And so, when attending Mass, they find themselves all united in a beautiful church that disposes the heart to sentiments of prayer and love, and they are given to understand that they are indeed brothers before Jesus in the Tabernacle as a Father in the midst of his most beloved children. In that pious hour of prayer they forget the sorrow of their exile, and enjoy for a moment the illusion of being gathered together in the church of their home town because everything, decorations, the manner of worship, and even the images, remind them of it.

It's Christmas; from the fine steeple (...) the ringing of bells spreads all around the sacred tidings of the feast. In all directions, from nearby and distant places, groups of people come in on foot and horses; all, young and old, urged on by an ineffable joy transpiring from their countenance and attitude, impatient to soon reach the church.

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The missionary, who has embellished it with kind care, awaits them ready to say Mass in commemoration of the day's mystery! He speaks to his flock: "*Brethren, you are indeed all gathered together here before Jesus; you must, then, love each other tenderly if you wish to respond to the infinite love of God.*"

The priest has shown these faithful people the key to peace and harmony, he has pointed out to them the only force by which they can remain always united and make steady progress while resisting the temptation or the almost compulsive need for adaptation to the alien ways and customs found in those foreign distant lands (...).

To sum up, besides spiritually benefitting from it, in the construction of a church and in making preparations for it, our colonists find also a factor of social and economic progress; common interests and ideals are born and grow in their souls conquering egotism and excessive attachment to money; they acquire consciousness and pride of their personal and collective worth; they develop an attitude for mutual cooperation both in charitable activities and in works for economic and industrial progress, thus making it also possible to retain their national traits immune to any external influence; rivalries and hatred between persons and families are set aside, and friendships are strengthened that will pave the way for future relationships. Briefly, the church becomes the center from which there flow the life and growth of our new Italian communities that only this way will preserve overseas the traditions of their home country, which would otherwise fade away in the struggle against opposing factors, fierce by their own nature or by the will of those who manipulate them."<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> M.C. "Che cos'è per l'Emigrato la sua Chiesa di campagna", "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. VIII, December 15, 1914, pp. 7-14.

**APPENDIX**

**LETTERS OF BISHOP SCALABRINI  
DURING HIS TRIP TO THE UNITED STATES**

**(July-November 1901)**

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**APPENDIX: SCALABRINI'S LETTERS DURING VISIT TO US - JULY-NOVEMBER 1901**

**1. Bishop Scalabrini to Bishop Bonomelli,  
Piacenza, September 14, 1901**

Dear and Venerated Friend,

I do not want to leave Piacenza without first sending you my most warm and affectionate farewell.

Tomorrow at 4:30, I will depart for Genoa and I will not be back until the end of September or in October.

To tell the truth, it is a rather daring trip, but I am only following your bad example! On the other hand, I embark on it in the pursuit of a good cause, and I am confident in God's help.

I trust the waters of the Boario resort may be so propitious as to return you to your old self.

I bid you goodbye in a holy embrace, I recommend myself to your prayers, and in a hurry, but with a hundred hearts, I confirm myself,

as ever all yours,  
+Giovanni Battista, Bishop

**2. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot  
Capua, July 19, 1901**

My dear Fr. Camillo,

I arrived in Naples after a truly delicious crossing. Very calm sea, healthy air, excellent people, full of kindness and attention, an exceptionally comfortable cabin, and not even the slightest symptom of the dreaded sickness that often affects passengers; in one word, all things were perfect.

The ship will stay in port until tomorrow afternoon, and what I did in the meantime is written to you in this note of mine. Cardinal Capececiattolo welcomed me with moving cordiality. We reached Naples at two in the afternoon, and at 3:15 I was at the Archbishopric of Capua. I shall spend the night here, and will be back on board tomorrow afternoon at four, with departure non-stop for New York at 6. It is my hope that by the many prayers of good people the rest of my trip be also blessed by God.

Convey my thanks to the Most Rev. Chapter for their holy thought in my regard, and greet all its members individually on my part, taking care that you do not leave out the children of Agar.

I embrace you with the affection you well know; I bless you with a big heart, and in you I bless all the clergy and my beloved people.

Farwell. Take all care possible of yourself. I recommend to you the renovation works of the Cathedral. Many greetings to Comm. Guerra and Prof. Guidotti.

In a hurry, but with a hundred hearts,

all yours in Jesus Christ,  
+Giovanni Battista, Bishop

P.S. Carlo feels very well, and sends greetings to his good mother. As to sea-sickness, none in the least.

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**3. Bishop J.B. Scalabrini to Canon Mangot**  
**Aboard the ship "Liguria", August 2, 1901**

My dear Fr. Camillo,

With the deepest emotion I report to you the notes I jotted down day by day with pencil during my voyage to give you an exact idea of my life onboard, and then mail them to you on my arrival in New York. Don't I appear to you a provident and diligent man?

I reported to you already on my trip from Genoa to Naples and from here to Capua. My stay, with the friend of my heart, Cardinal Capececiatro, was replenished with a pure and festive joy. His Venerable Chapter came to pay his respects in a body and they detained me for quite a long time so that we had to leave in a hurry for the station, thus forgetting eyeglasses and breviary. As the real gentleman as he is, Card.

Capececiatro had them brought to me on board by an attendant of his he had sent on purpose by coach to Naples. I had secured another breviary already, but I was indeed deeply moved at this kind concern of his. I shall write to him from New York.

July 20

The ship sails out of Naples at 2:00 PM. 1,200 migrants had boarded the ship on third class; some thirty of us are lodged on first class, among whom a young priest from the Diocese of Springfield returning to it after completing his theology in Rome. He is a Canadian, pious, full of talents and of the spirit of God; should he continue on this line, he will be a real honor for the Church. He has the same ideas as the late Villeneuve, and he will very well fill in for him in the question of nationalities in the United States. He acts as my secretary, confessor and friend. He fills in efficiently! The sight of Naples all lit up from the ship is magnificent! Farewell. I bless all.

July 21

I say Mass on deck in full sight of a most tranquil sea. All passengers attend with devotion. It's Sunday. I cannot tell you what I experience and feel. They are divine impressions. At elevation time I cannot hold back my tears! While skirting along Sardinia by noon, a rather strong wind is blowing; the ship slows down a little, but it goes forward majestically and without a jolt.

July 22

The day is beautiful, the sea tranquil. I celebrate Mass in the main hall, and to my great consolation I attend the one celebrated by the Canadian priest Fr. Louis Rodier.

July 23

Beautiful. I say Mass and hear that of Fr. Louis. We are coasting Spain but we do not stop. By 8:00 o'clock tonight we shall be at Gibraltar. By noon a little wind begins to blow. The Captain seems concerned. One cannot write even with a pencil. I shall continue my diary tomorrow. Greetings and blessings to you, Fr. Francesco, the children of Sarah and Agar, to all.

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July 24

I take my pen again, but the notes are not so happy anymore! Yesterday, before entering the strait of Gibraltar all of a sudden a cold wind began blowing and with it a thick fog set in so as to force the captain to halt the ship and to order the sounding of the siren to warn off other ships, which do the same in turn, also at a standstill. Every two minutes that unpleasant, loud, dismal, funereal sound, tears our ears apart and fills the heart with sadness. As to health, very good!

This morning the sea is calm. We are in the vast Atlantic Ocean. I say Mass and attend that of Fr. Louis. I make a day of recollection. I go to confession at 3:00 PM, earlier than anticipated. It was an inspiration. All of a sudden, at 3:30 a strong wind rises up shaking the ship on all sides. Anyone standing fell! All passengers lock themselves up in their cabin stricken with the mysterious seasickness. I, myself, experience a heavy head and weak legs! I undress with difficulty and quick to bed. I feel very well lying down! No stomach trouble! No one is at table for dinner. Carlo is suffering from seasickness at its worst; as pale as a dead man! I sleep almost all night through, and I wake up in good shape in the morning. Carlo, too, feels well!

July 25

A most beautiful day without any trouble, but the sea is ever in motion and we cannot say Mass. I am very sad about it; it's the feast day of St. James.

July 26

Saint Ann's . A splendid day, but even today I cannot say Mass. I had hopes Saint Ann would obtain this favor for me, but I did not deserve it. The sea continues to be slightly agitated and the altar shakes too much! Patience, let's hope tomorrow.

July 27

A magnificent day, more tranquil. I say and attend Mass! Thanks be to God!

July 28

A splendid morning! First Holy Communion and Confirmation services. I put on the purple vestments with miter and crosier. The altar has been set up high on the main deck with 1,200 in attendance. I give the sermon before Mass and many shed tears. We are in mid-Ocean. With deep emotion I say Mass assisted by Fr. Louis.

I speak two more times, and my voice is heard by all everywhere! When I mention the home country left behind it's a general sighing; but I remind them right away of our heavenly country, and all lift their eyes to heaven! "*Vous étiez très-éloquent, très-imposant*" (You are very eloquent, very impressive), Fr. Louis keeps repeating to me! I dare anyone not to be so! If there had been a photographer, the scene would have made a beautiful picture to send to Mr. Daelli for his "*Pro Familia*". But, he will make up for it with an appropriate description when he will receive news of it.

Every day from 4 to 5 PM I teach catechism to several boys. This also would make a beautiful sight. The Bishop on board surrounded by a group of young boys....

July 29

At noon yesterday a strong wind began blowing hard until 12 o'clock today: exactly 24

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hours. Neither I, nor Carlo, suffered any discomfort from it! Must have been the prayers of my people of Piacenza!

July 30

I say and attend Mass. Fine weather but a bit windy. We are coasting Newfoundland, and here the wind makes itself always felt more or less strong! Carlo's health and mine are good!

July 3

We are almost at the polar regions. The wind is blowing but with much discretion. I say Mass, and as usual, Fr. Louis says it after me. Since we are in the Ocean the temperature is always cool, as in our region at the end of September, and we need sweater and coat. We keep sailing north, and naturally it is cool. It's easy to meet with icebergs at this latitude. But there is no danger. They are more visible at night than by day, and they are easy to avoid. I am always in good shape; I never had the slightest discomfort all along. I eat, drink, pray, study, and meditate on the same schedule as at home. I am treated with all respect and kindness by all. In his goodness, the Lord has filled me with sentiments of such assurance as not to allow the slightest feeling of dread or fear; exactly as if I were in my room at Piacenza.

I am grateful to God, therefore, and to you, Fr. Francesco, and all those who pray for their Bishop on his voyage to the "other world". I embrace you with "*corde magno et animo volenti*" (a big heart and a benevolent affection).

July 31

9:00 PM - At dinner, the captain, an able old sea-dog and a man of few words, but all heart, tells me that we should have arrived in New York tomorrow, but that the slowdowns I told you about and the need to follow a route North of that city in order to avoid the famous current of warm water, the so-called "Gulf stream", will hold us at sea until Friday night. Saturday we shall sail along Long Island (three hours), and by 8:00 o'clock we shall land at the desired harbor.

Farewell. I bless you, who moved me so deeply at Genoa with those eyes filled with tears; Fr. Francesco, "*qui pleurait comme un enfant*" (who was crying like a baby). Goodbye, good night. May God keep you both to my affection. Pray for me.

August 1

Yesterday I heard the confessions of a good number of men (the poor women cannot share in this grace for lack of an appropriate place and confessional) and this morning I was expected to repeat the rite of last Sunday, July 28, but the wind is blowing rather hard and the services are held in a hall overcrowded with people. I spoke before Holy Communion and before Confirmation to a class of three boys. When moved, it is easy to become eloquent even without being so.

We are getting nearer to the American soil. This is to be one before the last day of sailing; tomorrow we shall catch sight of Long Island. I have been, and am, so well that I look to the end of this long voyage almost with regret. How grateful I must be to God for accompanying me along with so many very special blessings! How grateful I am to all my dear priests and faithful of Piacenza for praying for me! "*Te Deum, laudamus*"



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(We praise You, O God)! My greetings to Mons. Vinati, Rossignoli, Piacenza, Rossi, and to all others by name. Has Fr. Francesco ceased shedding tears? Are the works on the Cathedral making progress? To Comm. Guerra, whom I always remember with affection and a grateful heart, and to Prof. Guidotti, my greetings and the usual recommendations! Remember me to the Rector and the professors of the Seminary, whom I bless with all my heart together with the clerics. In the services I conduct on the Ocean I wear the ring they gave me as a reminder of them all. The wind is blowing harder and I cannot write any more. Farewell! The most heartfelt greetings to you my secretary, confessor, and friend! Carlo sends greetings to all and is well!

6:00 PM. - The warm wind from the south has ceased, and now a rather cool breeze carries away all clouds! I have ascended up high and contemplate ecstatically the immensity of the Ocean! How one is experiencing the greatness of God! "*Benedicite maria Domino*" (Bless, o seas, the Lord)! (Dn 3, 78). This is, indeed, a hymn rising up to the Creator from these waters!

At this hour, you are certainly sound asleep, because it because it is midnight at Piacenza! Six hours difference. I bless you, anyway! A blessing is propitious also to those in slumber! Rest well, Fr. Camillo, good night Fr. Francesco. God keep you!

August 2

Following two splendid hours, last night a thick fog came up so that the ship was forced to slow down, and the siren began its dreadful sound. Fortunately, it did not last all night as it did the other time, but only from 8:00 to 11:00 P.M., because the fog, so thick one could cut it with a knife, began clearing and then disappeared altogether!

With what deep emotions I celebrated Mass today in honor of Saint Alphonse, and gave Holy Communion to several men I confessed yesterday!

9:00 PM - We have happily reached port, some three hours North of New York! By keeping to the North we have avoided crossing the Gulf Stream, and experiencing the consequences thereof, though not dangerous, still not always cheerful, and in any case, unpleasant. I will send you a telegram tomorrow morning to be followed later on by these notes which I jotted down without much attention to grammar or syntax! Correct them and send a copy each to Angelo and Luisa, to whom as to all my dear ones, I convey my most heartfelt greetings without number or end! Send Carlo news to his mother. As to Carlo, here they believe him a Baron and so the address him. I do not know how the word got around that he was a noble and a Baron serving his Bishop out of devotion to him. And so, all, including the young Canadian priest, address him as Baron. But, then I found out this morning about the existence in Naples of a certain Baron Spallazzi! Hence the story! This contributes a touch of hilarity to the whole voyage!

And so I must come to a conclusion; still I experience great sorrow in turning my thoughts away from you and my children across the Ocean! But, I have no other choice but to conclude. I embrace all of you, therefore, with the affection you well know, I bless you, and with you I bless Fr. Francesco, the clergy, and my people, whom, though so far, I love immensely! Farewell. Pray and have others pray for me.

All yours in Jesus Christ,  
+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop

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**4. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot**  
**New York, August 4, 1901**

My dear Fr. Camillo,

I am writing in the form of a telegram. A welcome cortege of two ships into port. An American newspaper called it a royal welcome. Addresses, flowers, joyous shouting. The whole parish bedecked with little multicolored flags. After entering the Church, I addressed moving words of greeting that the Archbishop's representative called simply (do not laugh) wonderful.

The Archbishop came to see me immediately and our meeting was very cordial. At three in the afternoon I returned the visit and together we took a tour of the colossal metropolis. A beautiful gothic cathedral.

Last night I blessed the wedding of a man from our Piacenza, a certain Angelo Alpi of Sambuceto. Today, Sunday, August 4, I said Mass with miter and crozier; I explained the Gospel to an immense audience, and spoke briefly again at Holy Communion. Over 400 people came to the Lord's Table. At ten, I addressed a few words to the children. They are gathered apart for their own Mass, with the assistance of the Brothers and of the Sisters. At 1 p.m. I have dinner at the Archbishop's house.

My health is excellent. Carlo feels very good!

The parish is all decorated today also. It was rather warm yesterday, but it is cool today and rainy. The missionaries send you their sincere greetings. I join mine with theirs to you, Fr. Francesco, to all. Pray and have others pray for me. I strongly experience the efficacy of prayer.

All yours,  
+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop

**5. Bishop Scalabrini to Card. Vincent Vannutelli**  
**New York, August 6, 1901 (draft)**

Most Eminent Prince,

I am informed from Piacenza by Fr. Bartolomeo Rolleri, Rector of the seminary of the Missionaries of St. Charles, that the S.C. for the Propagation of the Faith has written him what follows: "In order to receive the usual grant of six months on behalf of, etc.... it is necessary that Bishop Scalabrini write directly to Card. Vincent Vannutelli, in charge of finances, and choose the delegate to whom the check for five thousand liras may be sent, etc." And so, Most Eminent Prince, I hasten to inform you that I am hereby appointing to this task Fr. Rolleri himself on whom the relative title may be conferred.

I am here, Your Eminence, visiting the Italian missions, and I realize how vast the field is, and how necessary in it is the action of true priests of Jesus Christ. There is a small number of them who have subjected themselves to the most humiliating and hard jobs. I have met six of them, these days, inviting them to the retreat I will preach to the Missionaries and other Italian priests at the metropolitan seminary beginning on the 19th of this month. Together with the Archbishop I am working on a project for calling these lost sheep together to examine their situations, putting them to a period

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of trial, and so depending on each case come to...

**6. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot,  
St. Joachim's Church, New York, August 9, 1901**

My Excellent Fr. Camillo,

My telegrams continue. Last Sunday, August 4, after dinner with the Archbishop and with the Bishop of Brooklyn, I returned to my residence for the evening services held for an immense attendance of people. On Monday, the 5th, I received the Missionaries that could not be present at my landing. On Tuesday, the 6th, an enormous number of visitors of all classes and conditions, all of them kind, including members of the press - correspondents of all colors, all making favorable reports. On Wednesday, the 7th, visit, together with the Archbishop, to the splendid assistance centers of other nationalities. Then we cross over to the island where we assist at the landing of 650 Italians, at their examinations and questioning. The General Commissioner treats us to dinner, and then on his own boat he takes us around on a tour of the beauties of the magnificent panorama presented by the great four cities of New York, Brooklyn, Newark, and New Jersey, facing the sea and the Hudson. It's something to set your head spinning; four million people, caught up in feverish activity, with elevated railroads, etc. Here new and grandiose ideas are indeed being fermented.

Thursday, the 8th, great feast of the Catholic Society of St. Vincent, Martyr. I pontificated at the blessing of a new altar and preached the sermon. Nave and balconies were crowded with men.

Friday, the 9th, I blessed the assistance center for Italian migrants; the Italian consul was represented by a Count, whose name I do not recall; a number of reporters and other people of rank were also in attendance. I addressed a few words fitting the occasion and offered best wishes, etc. Tomorrow I am scheduled for our Church of St. Mary on Bleecker Street, where I will stay a few days.

My health is excellent and Carlo also feels very good! I embrace you wholeheartedly. A thousand things to Fr. Francesco. Greetings and blessings to the Canons, Beneficiaries, Pastors, Seminary, and people.

Farewell, Fr, Camillo. Pray for me.

All yours in Jesus Christ,  
+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop

**7. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot  
Church of Our Lady of Pompei, New York, August 12, 1901**

My Fr. Camillo,

It has been a few days since I am at this other church. I have found here many of our people from Piacenza. Yesterday, I conducted the services with great attendance of deeply moved people. I baptized two babies; one of the parents is from Bedonia, and the other from Agazzano. I am happy with what I see!

Our missionaries are doing excellent work; they are well esteemed by all, and many of the clergy, American included, go to them for confession. Bishops are very satisfied

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with their action and they tell me of their whole approval, only pointing out that there is the need for other priests! How happy I am to have come here to see for myself that, in spite of some defects of personality in some of ours, the work is being carried on, and that our Missionaries are held as true apostles, and indeed so not only by our poor migrants, but by the Bishops, the clergy, and the American laity, as well. God be blessed!

On the solemnity of the Assumption I shall visit the Italians of Newark, a city neighboring this one. There are some 40 thousand of ours there! They will all attend the reception and I will preach in the cathedral, especially granted by the Bishop for the occasion. On the 18th, I will be in New Jersey, where our Fathers have a fine mission. On the 19th I shall start preaching a Retreat to our Missionaries and other Italian priests. The Archbishop and the neighboring Bishop have invited them to it with special circular letters. It will end on the 24th, and on the same day I shall leave for New Haven. But of all this in another letter of mine.

At this moment, I received your dear letter of July 30; it did a lot of good to my heart to know that you are well. By God's help, I am truly fine indeed, also. He is manifestly assisting me! Carlo has suffered a slight indisposition. The climate here is changeable and the temperature is subject to sudden changes, and it is easy to suffer some consequence from it. Some days it is very hot, just like, more or less, in our region in the days of the greatest heat.

Are the works on the Cathedral progressing well? Did Cisterna return? We must take diligent care that all decorating be completed "*in tempore opportuno*" (in good time).

Farewell! I embrace and bless you together with the Thomist Fr. Cecchino (Francesco). My respects to the Prefect, to the Mayor, etc. Individual greetings to the Canons, the Pastors, etc...., to Guerra, Guidotti, and especially to Dr. Marchesi for sending me a telegram. Please tender him my most warm thanks!

Farewell! Pray and have others do so.

All yours in Jesus Christ,  
+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop

**8. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot**  
**St. Joachim's Church, New York, August 18, 1901**

My Dear Secretary,

I am just returning from the visit to the Italian community of New Jersey, a city of more than 300,000 people. It is directed by Fr. Sciolla, assisted by a priest that does not belong to the Congregation. It was a grandiose and moving spectacle. Italians came to welcome me with several music bands, flags, societies, etc., and I was accompanied through the city as a victor. All Americans, Protestants included, waved their respects. After entering the church, there were addresses, flowers, etc. Deeply moved I spoke to an even more deeply emotional multitude.

I sent them off in the evening with the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. On the 15th, I visited the community of Newark, a city of some half a million people. In America there is the obligation to hear Mass, but people are allowed to work, and so I could not see our migrants until that evening in the Church of Fr. Morelli. It was a solemn service, but not quite as that of New Jersey!

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Tomorrow I begin the retreat for the Italian clergy at the Major Seminary of New York. Besides our Missionaries, about forty other religious and diocesan priests will take part in it.

I continue in excellent health. Carlo has fully recovered from his slight ailment caused by the change of climate. Farewell. I embrace you with sincere affection. I have received only one letter from you so far; from Fr. Francesco, not a word! Why so lazy? I greet you all. Pray for me.

Most affectionately yours in Jesus Christ,  
+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop of Piacenza

**9. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot**  
**New York, August 25, 1901**

My Most Dear Camillo,

A brief report on the past week. On Monday, the 19th, I began the Retreat for our Missionaries and other Italian priests. Altogether there were about sixty of us. A new and moving experience! Fr. Paroli had travelled two days and two nights from New Orleans; Fr. Lotti 42 hours from Kansas City, and so on. There were priests from almost all the States, representing all regions of Italy! I spoke to them with fervent emotion all the time, and those good priests were even more fervent than I. More than once I noticed several of them shedding copious comforting tears! It is a striking experience! An Italian Bishop preaching to Italian priests eight thousand kilometers from Italy!

The method was very much like ours. At 6:30, Meditation; at 10:15, a practical instruction; at 3:15 p.m., explaining of the Mass and of the Liturgy (we needed the professor here); at 6:00 p.m. Meditation. In between, Divine Office in common, Rosary, Visits to the Blessed Sacrament; at 7:00 p.m., Benediction. Everything in perfect silence!

I remained very satisfied with it; in their enthusiasm the priests did not know how to express their gratitude. Prof. Fr. Ferrante, a Roman priest, for ten years the General Secretary of the Archdiocese, read an address to me on behalf of all; so laudatory, it would make you laugh. (They offered me \$272.00; keep this to yourself.)

On Saturday I gave Communion to all of them wearing their surplices and stoles. Here, during a retreat priests do not say Mass. Then, came the last meditation and the solemn chanting of the "*Te Deum*", so expressive as to appear like reaching up to Heaven. We all parted with tears in our eyes. Truly unforgettable scenes and moments!

The Seminary where we had gathered is a grandiose building! It was opened three years ago about 30 kilometers outside the city in a little town called Dunwoodie, a delightful place by the great Hudson river, all meadows, thickets, pleasant ground undulations, low hilly slopes spread over with gracious homes. But, the weather was not kind to us; such heat to melt you, a humidity that prevented shutting the doors of the room due to the swelling of the wood; the was terrible food, all American-style, and it made all sick, me included! In spite of it all, I carried on the work of God until the end.

Today I feel good, but I will be careful for a few days. Were I not that well, do you think I would be writing you so much? Let us thank the Lord, therefore.

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I continue hearing the highest praises of our Missionaries! Just yesterday the Bishop of Harrisburg was telling me: "*Your Missionaries are admirable Priests; we love them best; they lodge wherever they can and live in any way possible, as long as they are available for the needs of their countrymen. We have only one complaint to make: you send us too few of them. All Bishops with Italian communities desire them ardently....*"

To tell the truth, I had believed them less orderly and zealous, but I am happy to witness their activity and piety. Our churches are well attended, Communion at all Masses, etc. It is a real consolation! Defects are not lacking, and when speaking to our Missionaries alone I did not neglect to point them out, but they are little frailties of character, temperament, and some differences of opinion, that do not touch the substance of their apostolate. I hope that my visit here may be of great benefit also in this respect.

In one of the seminary chapels we proceeded to the naming of the new Provincial, because Fr. Gambera has insisted on having his resignation accepted. Fr. Paolo Novati of Providence, was almost unanimously elected by secret ballots to succeed him! He does not enjoy only the high esteem of his confreres but of the Bishops, as well. The Archbishop described him to me as the most distinct ornament of the Congregation. He is very talented, prudent, all heart, and knows English to perfection. When he saw me stepping down off the ship "Liguria", on meeting me he broke down in such copious tears as to move all. I admitted him to First Communion at St. Bartholomew parish in Como. I place high hopes in him. There was talk also of Fr. Oreste Alussi, but he mustered only four votes; a tribute to his piety and virtue. It is my conviction that Fr. Novati had voted for him.

On Saturday I will definitely leave New York for New Haven, and Providence, Boston, etc. When shall I return? I do not think about it, and in the meantime I continue living as though in a daze. Certainly not before All Saints Day.

Convey my news to my relatives, and to Fr. Rolleri, whom you shall also inform about those concerning the Missionaries. Farewell! Don't you deem it proper that I should write such a long letter as this, right on the day following the preaching of a retreat, with confession, etc.? Greetings to Fr. Francesco, to Monsignors Vinati, Rossignoli, Piacenza, Rossi, Dallepiane, and Pinazzi, and to all my priests by name! Do not forget Fr. Vincenzo Pancotti, and convey to him my sincere thanks for his most welcome letter.

I embrace you with much affection, and hurriedly, though with a hundred hearts,

I confirm myself sincerely all yours,

+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop

P.S. I hope Dr. Marchesi will have recovered from his serious illness. My greetings to him. Remember me to Guerra and Guidotti. And the works?

**10. Bishop Scalabrini to Mons. G.B. Vinati**  
**New York, August 30, 1901**

*(copied by Mons. G.B. Vinati  
in a letter he sent to Fr. D. Vicentini on August 24, 1912).*

Most dear Monsignor,

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At this moment I received your most welcome letter of the 18th of this month! Wholehearted thanks to no end. Anything coming from Piacenza is a smile from Heaven to me.

The Lord is visibly accompanying me with an all special assistance. The spiritual retreat to the Italian clergy, about sixty priests, was a unique and a most inspiring spectacle. There, at the major Seminary of New York, a grandiose building opened three years ago, some 30 kilometers from the noise of the immense metropolis, an Italian Bishop was speaking to Italian priests gathered there from all dioceses and parts of the United States. It was a new event that moved us all to tears. I spoke to them four times a day, and I did not experience any discomfort except for a slight stomach trouble. One day of rest after the retreat was enough to return me to my usual good health.

Tomorrow I shall leave for New Haven, then Providence, Boston, etc. All of September will be taken up with the visitation of our missions. How much good is being done by our Missionaries, and how much more would be accomplished if vocations to the apostolate were more numerous.

In these missions I found things to be more consoling than I had anticipated; the Bishops think highly of our priests and prefer them to others; the local clergy love them, and it is a steady coming and going of priests seeking them for confession, etc. So far, I have never said Mass without ministering Holy Communion; and so it is at all other Masses. Praise be to God! If I only had 50 true priests at my disposal!!!

Fr. Oreste and the other missionaries send you their respects. A thousand greetings to the Provost and to all your colleagues by name. I embrace you with affection; I commend myself to your prayers, and my blessing to all.

**11. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot,  
New York, August 31, 1901**

My most dear Provost,

At long last you have realized that I have never been so diligent in furnishing you with my news as in the present circumstances. I have received just at this instant your letter dated on the 18th of this month; it brought me great joy.

I am sending back, dutifully signed, the check for Fr. Faustino so that Fr. Rolleri may cash it. By this time the subsidy from Propaganda should also have arrived. I wrote to it immediately after receiving notice from Fr. Rolleri himself. Give him my news, especially those concerning the Missionaries, and you shall tell him that I urgently need three or four priests. I could ordain here the Deacons, and then place them under the supervision of Fr. Demo, while taking classes together with the Cleric Gregori. Start immediate procedures with the shipping line, and let me know the price soon, that I will reimburse him on my return, at the latest. I would be very happy if they were to arrive by next October. This way I could settle things before my departure from America. It is 4:30 p.m., and at 5 I shall leave for New Haven; and so, farewell! Greetings to all. I embrace you and I confirm myself

all yours in Jesus Christ,  
+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop

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**12. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot**  
**St. Michael Italian Church, New Haven, September 2, 1901**

My dear Fr. Camillo,

I am sending you from New Haven, a city of 120,000 people, these newspapers in English, all Protestant, reporting the welcome accorded me by the Italian community. It was something spectacular; a welcome truly American style! The whole city was out in the streets all showing kindly respect.

We have here a most beautiful church and a magnificent rectory. Wonderful and moving services in church; numerous Communions, more of men than of women! The Confirmation service was also devout and well orderly! The Bishop sent me a kind welcoming telegram from Hartford, the city of his residence, granting me all faculties in very friendly terms. Today I will pay him a visit. It takes an hour by train.

The Italian newspapers are not published today; it's Labor Day, our May Day! I will remain here until Thursday to reach Boston in the evening.

Farewell. My greetings and blessings to all beginning with Fr. "Cecchino". I embrace you in the Lord.

Your Most Affectionate in Jesus Christ,  
+Giovanni Battista, Bishop

**13. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot**  
**Sacred Heart Italian Church, Boston, September 7, 1901**

My dear Fr. Camillo,

I made my entry into Boston on Thursday evening at seven, in the midst of a royal welcome. One cannot describe the enthusiasm of this community of ours, 40,000, or more, strong. Parade, music bands, illumination, applause, something indescribable. I have sent you the newspapers, all Protestant; you will know all about it from them.

I wrote to Card. Svampa declining the known task; I have written also to Mons. Foschi on the matter. There is no need to send in the draft of that work, a poor and hurried repetition of things already printed.

I delegate Fr. Ferdinando for the blessing of the new bells of Tavernago, as prescribed by the Canon Law. In the absence of Fr. Ferdinando, I delegate the Dean, the Archpriest of Gragnano.

I approve of what you did in regard to the Convention in Taranto. As to health, by God's favor, ever so good! The heat is unbearable at times, but I still enjoy the wonders of these great, flourishing, and spectacular cities, even though they make one sigh for a return to our more modest ones, yet so artistic and ever beautiful.

I greet and bless all. Many affectionate things to Monsignors Vinati, Pinazzi, Rossignoli, Piacenza, Dallepiane, Rossi. I interrupt to receive a group of ladies.

I have received the Catholic Irish Ladies who take care of the Italian girls. What able and fervent ladies! With my little French I can manage beautifully! I give lectures intermingling some English phrases and I keep going frankly straight forward as Americans do.

Tomorrow is to be the most solemn day! We spend a long time hearing confessions,



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and tomorrow there will take place a most numerous general Communion. To my great consolation, this morning I gave Holy Communion to the children. Fr. Giacomo (Gambera) is an apostle.

Greetings and blessings to Fr. Francesco. To you my grateful heart!

All yours in Jesus Christ,  
+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop

P.S. My warm greetings to Mr. Guerra and to the members of the Cathedral Committee, and to Mr. Cisterna.

At this very moment news reaches us of the attempt and wounding of President McKinley at Buffalo. I gave orders that all festive demonstrations be suspended as a sign of mourning and protest! This disappoints a little these Italians, but they understood the highly proper timeliness of my decision that is bound to create an excellent impression.

To the excellent Canon Uttini, if still living, my most special blessing. G.B.

**14. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot**  
**Our Lady of Czestochowa, South Boston, September 10, 1901**

My Most Dear Fr. Camillo,

Today I am here with Fr. Giovanni Chmielinski, whom you know. As you know, with my permission he has been taking care, for many years now, of his Polish countrymen, and he succeeded in building a beautiful church and a comfortable rectory. He is very attached to me and to the Congregation. Like all the others, he has made the renewal of his vows with the formula suggested by Propaganda; I have good hopes in him. He is an intense young man, and attends with zeal to the carrying out of his duties.

This is a day of rest, or almost! I say so because tonight I will go to Winthrop to visit the Italian community assisted by our missionaries. There I will also administer Confirmation to about 100 hundred Italian teen-agers!

I was welcomed here at 7:30 by these good Polish people with a group of girls, dressed like Angels, strewing flowers. I said the Mass and I had Fr. Giovanni tell them what I could not say. They can understand only their language. I was very moved by this service otherwise mute to me.

At Saint Mark, the church of Fr. Giacomo, Sunday was quite a celebration. These Italians were not too happy with having to suspend the so-called "parade" (they had two of them) and the splendid illumination they had already planned and paid for! But they complied giving this way an excellent impression to Americans.

The aging Archbishop came to dinner with us in the evening. Already yesterday I had dined with him at the rectory of a certain Fr. Rossi, a native of Canton Ticino, who arrived here when still a baby. He is the confessor of the Archbishop and well loved by him. As I told you already, with my French I can keep the conversation going, and I can manage pretty well. All bishops and priests here know some of it because they are great travelers.

Thursday morning I leave here for Utica, and then Buffalo, where the Bishop is anxiously waiting for my arrival. There I shall see the President, perhaps, who is lying

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wounded at the hospital. By the way, last Sunday, to a deeply moved crowd, many crying bitter tears, I mentioned the horrible crime in my 11:00AM solemn sermon. Here is the point: "The sorry wound over the detestable assassination of our King Umberto has not yet healed in our hearts that an attempt is made, right these days, on the life of the President of this great and hospitable nation...." *Domine salvum fac* (Lord, save) the elected one of the American people..." It was an eloquent (don't laugh) improvisation.

Temperatures have suddenly plunged by forty degrees, but my health continues to be very good. Carlo also is fine.

Fr. Giacomo, here at my side, and Fr. Giovanni, send you through me a world of respects and their most affectionate greetings. The "Baron" joins them.

I embrace you and Fr. Francesco, and bless you all with a big and loving heart.

All yours in Jesus Christ,  
+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop

**15. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot**  
**Sacred Heart Italian Church, Boston, September 12, 1901**

Most Dear Provost,

It is 9:00AM; at 10:00 I leave for Utica, and I dedicate the last moments of my stay in Boston to you and my Piacenza.

Tuesday night I was at Winthrop where I was splendidly welcomed to the fantastically illuminated Italian neighborhood. I spoke twice to a devout and touched community. I administered Confirmation and gave the benediction. The church is directed by our Fathers, beautiful, clean, and not without a certain degree of artistic elegance.

Yesterday I took my leave of the Archbishop, a venerable aging man. With great satisfaction he told me that when he was a boy he knew by name all the Catholics of Boston, who used to gather in a hall, and now there are 600,000 of them.

Since news has reached us that the President has been taken off the danger list, the Italians decided to welcome me with a beautiful illumination and a music band. On my return at 8:30 PM from Saint James, where I had preached to that numerous Italian community, they met me with acclamations, applause, etc.

Yesterday, I visited also the most important public buildings of the city; grandiose, but generally not very artistic. On getting out of the Church after Mass this morning, the people present were crying so bitterly while bidding me goodbye as to bring deep sadness to my heart, and more so when I heard them addressing me as their angel, savior, etc!

Enough for the diary and to tell you that I am fine.

I go for a little breakfast, and then off on my way. Farewell! You and Fr. Francesco, do pray for me.

Very much yours,  
+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop

**16. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot**  
**Syracuse, September 14, 1901**

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My Fr. Camillo,

Just a line from this city of 120,000, and, precisely from the Bishop's house; he absolutely wanted me with him as his guest. He is an excellent man; speaks fluent French. I conducted services the first time here yesterday; this morning First Communion; tomorrow I will administer Confirmation. At noon I will go back to Utica for the laying of the corner stone of an Italian church. Here, as in Utica, they were planning on big demonstrations, but the passing of the President of this Republic, last night at 2:00 A.M., made me have all manifestations of rejoicing suspended. Americans are very sensitive to such showings of respect.

On Monday the 16th of this month, I shall depart for Buffalo where the tragedy occurred. I shall leave at 10:30 A.M. and arrive at 2:00 P.M. There, too, I will be the guest of the Bishop; in fact, even though the Missionaries here have a most modest rectory, there instead, they are still living with the priests of the Cathedral as they did not succeed in building their house, as yet. I shall write to you from Buffalo. The Pan-American Exposition is underway there, and the Niagara Falls are close by.

Farewell! I embrace you wholeheartedly and bless you, together with Fr. Francesco and all my good people of Piacenza.

All yours in Jesus Christ,  
+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop

**17. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot  
Buffalo, September 17, 1901**

Most Dear Fr. Camillo,

I left Syracuse last Sunday at noon, directed to Utica for the laying of the Corner stone of an Italian church. The community of Utica gave me a moving welcome, but without much fuss, out of respect for the passing of the President. The celebration, attended by all the pastors of the city, was beautiful. I preached the sermon from a stand in the open, and I think I did a very good job! What rare modesty of me: Ah, Ah!

Yesterday at 5:00 P.M. I arrived at this big (450,000 souls) and beautiful city, all strewn with gardens, parks, unending streets shaded by tall trees on Lake Erie. It is a wonder! I am a guest at the residence of the excellent Bishop Quinn (*editor's note; should be "Quigley"*), who sends to all of you, to Mons. Vinati and to the others whom he has met, abundant affectionate greetings.

It is quite cool here! We are close to the famous Niagara Falls, which I shall visit tomorrow, the northernmost point of the United States in this region. It takes only twenty minutes to reach the Niagara, whose left bank belongs to Canada.

In a few moments I will be on my way to visit our school, and tonight I shall preach to the people in church. This community counts about 20,000 Italians. Two more Missionaries would be needed; "*rogemus Dominum messis*" (Let us pray to the Lord of the harvest) and so forth. In his modest joviality the Bishop of this city is indeed an apostolic and admirable man. If all of them were like him filled with esteem and loving care for the Italians, our colonies would soon rise up and take one of the first places in importance.

This pen does not help me much, and so I close sending a world of greetings and

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blessings from this ancient kingdom of the buffaloes to you, Fr. Francesco, my dear ones, to all.

Healthwise, O.K. Farewell.

Your Most Affectionate in J.C.  
+Giovanni Battista, Bishop

**18. Bishop Scalabrini's note to Canon C. Mangot**  
**Canada, September 18, 1901**

Most Dear Provost,

A greeting and a special blessing to my Piacenza from distant Canada. I have visited the wonderful Niagara Falls, I have crossed the border, and now I am standing on the territory of the English Empire. The venerable friend (the Bishop) of Buffalo is also here with me, and he joins me in sending you a world of friendly greetings!

This time I come to embrace you with a photo.

Yours,  
+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop

**19. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot**  
**Cleveland, September 19, 1901**

My Dear Secretary,

From this great city (410,000 people) I send you heartfelt greetings and the news of mine and Carlo' perfect health. I arrived here from Buffalo right at the very hour when the dead President McKinley was being given burial in a little town close by, his birth place. Therefore I did not want any kind of welcome. Today I had dinner at the Bishop's residence. He is truly a serious and prudent man. He gave me a veritably fraternal welcome. In an hour I shall speak to the people in church, followed afterwards by a meeting with the leaders.

I shall remain here until noon tomorrow, when I will leave for Detroit, a city to the North, also by Lake Erie. I will stay there a few days. I will write to you then. I find great consolation in writing to you, the highest dignitary of my clergy! It gives me the impression of tarrying a while with Fr. Francesco, with all and each one of the Chapter and of the Priests.

Farewell! I embrace you wholeheartedly, and I bless you, the clergy and my people with great love.

All yours,  
+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop of Piacenza

**20. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot**  
**Detroit, September 23, 1901**

Most Dear Provost,

I arrived Saturday night in this wonderful city (320,000 people), the most beautiful of the United States, so they tell me! I was given a quiet but very cordial welcome. I got

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off at the Bishop's residence from where I was taken by a great cortege to our church of St. Francis, whose fantastically lighted facade had a magic effect. Some one hundred children dressed in white were carrying and strewing flowers; there were speeches, songs, etc.... fitting the occasion. Fr. Francesco Beccherini is an able organizer; in the space of two years he succeeded in building this vast and fine church and the truly magnificent rectory. The Bishop, a cordial and unpretentious man, loves and esteems him very much.

Great services yesterday in church, sermons, meetings, as usual, together with other American priests. The Vicar General of the diocese assisted and helped me as deacon. Today I visited the seminary, the main churches, but nothing extraordinary, except for the intense cordiality of their welcome! The Bishop had dinner with us, and pleaded that I do not remove Fr. Francesco. But, I am not so sure whether I can accede to his request; he (Fr. Francesco) knows English perfectly, is wise; a little of a joker, but sound, pious, and very talented. He teaches Hermeneutics at the seminary, where he is well loved and highly respected. I would like also to see him at the port of New York, where he could do a wonderful job! I shall decide on what to do at the conclusion of this long tour. All bishops want to hold on to the missionaries they have. This is what the Bishop of Cleveland said when he first saw me: "*If it's in my power, Bishop, I forbid you to touch my dear missionaries!*" "*That is all right with me*" - I answered - "*and so be it.*"

Tomorrow morning I will depart for St. Paul, a guest of Archbishop Ireland! And what about my return? It is hardly possible that I may be back for All Saints, as was my desire! God willing, I will probably arrive by the middle of November. I shall land at Naples, hence to Rome, and I will hurry to my Piacenza, a few days later.

God is ever assisting me with a most distinct attention; my health is always excellent; Carlo also is getting used to the climate. It's a month I do not receive your letters; they may be following me, but who knows when they will reach me? Patience! I shall read them all at one time!

I am one thousand miles from New York, imagine how far from you! But souls do not know of distances of place, and I am always close to you, to Fr. Francesco, the Canons, the Pastors, the Seminary, the Clergy, and to my people.

My heartfelt greetings and blessings to all. Anything new about the Cathedral and the Holy Sepulcher?

Farewell. I embrace you with the affection you well know.

All yours,  
Giovanni Battista, Bishop

**21. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot**  
**St. Paul, Minn., September 26, 1901**

My Most Delightful Monsignor,

It is the Feast of St. Justina, and today my thoughts go back to my Piacenza, though I am 2,300 kilometers from New York, and how many more from you! I arrived here at noon yesterday from Detroit, after a 23 hour train ride through Chicago. I was met by Archbishop Ireland, who took me gladly to his residence. Saint Paul is a beautiful city that, united now with Minneapolis, has a population of 400,000, about half of them Catholic. Archbishop Ireland does not have a Cathedral yet, and is using an ordinary

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church of little value, the first built here. He has opened a beautiful Seminary for all the dioceses of this Ecclesiastical province (six of them). It has 152 students of philosophy and theology with a faculty of distinguished professors. Almost all of them know Italian and French. Yesterday he treated me to dinner, and it was an evening Italian style! I had the illusion of being in our dining hall.

Today I visited the Seminary. An address was read to me in Latin and I answered likewise in Latin. This time I was not caught unaware as in Detroit, where, on being invited to pay a visit to the Polish seminary, I had been addressed in Latin. But, I did not want to again be put to the test here. Tomorrow I will take a 24 hour train ride to Kansas City. I shall write to you then.

Archbishop Ireland is indeed a distinguished man: learned, zealous, modern, modest; he has only the salvation of souls and the honor of the Church on his mind!

The weather is splendid, and the site of St. Paul is enchanting! The health of both, Carlo and mine, is excellent. By the middle of October, I will be back in New York and I hope to be on my way back to my country by the end of it. It's a month I do not hear from you, however, a telegram from Boston informed me today that all my correspondence has been forwarded to Cincinnati, where I will be on the fourth of October next.

Greet for me by name the Most Reverend Canons, the Pastors, the Superiors of the Seminary. Do not forget the Chancery's staff or the children of Agar, the Thomist, especially.

Farewell; I heartedly embrace you. Pray for me.

Affectionately yours,  
+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop

**22. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot**  
**Kansas City, Mo., October 1, 1901**

My Most Dear Provost,

I keep up with my diary, and I continue it to let you know that God is ever assisting me, and that in spite of the not-so-light work I steadily enjoy excellent health.

I left St. Paul on Friday at 8:00 P.M. arriving here on Saturday at 4:00 P.M. after a twenty hour train ride. I lodged at the Bishop's residence. On Sunday morning the parish societies decided to take me to this church of ours with a cortege of many coaches, with music bands, and flags; the Italian Consular Agent and the French Consul were also in attendance at the morning services. On entering the church an address was read and flowers were offered to me; I spoke with much emotion and remained very pleased.

I cannot say the same about Confirmation! These Sicilians were presenting for Confirmation also crying babies, so that I had to tell them openly that I could not accede to this. Still, I continued on Monday for three more steady hours, but order and tranquility were not equally steady. Patience!

There are two bishops here: the Ordinary, a venerable man, who came here fifty years ago, the only Catholic priest in the whole territory of the present Diocese wholly built by him; his Auxiliary, in his forties, but looking twenty, active, talented, amiable, respected, and much loved by all! Neither one knows Italian or French. We spoke in

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Latin, and I did a better job, naturally. The Auxiliary, however, can carry on a good conversation.

Yesterday he took me to visit two academies of young students: one for boys, the other for girls. I gave two speeches in Latin, and they were pretty good, if I may say so myself.

I am about to leave for St. Louis. It is 8:00 AM and I am scheduled to depart at 9:30 AM, and therefore my farewell to you, Fr. Francesco, to all my dear ones, Angelo, Luisa, etc., to the Clergy and to my beloved people. Pray for me.

All yours in Jesus Christ,  
+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop

**23. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot**  
**St. Louis, Mo., October 2, 1901**

My Dear Secretary,

As I have written you, yesterday at 10:00 A.M. I left Kansas City, a beautiful city of 120,000 people, all hills and meadows in flower, and I arrived at 6:00 P.M. at this city of St. Louis with a population of 750,000, soon to reach one million. I was joyously welcomed at the station, and then taken by the good Archbishop, whom I got to know last year in Rome, to our Church where a great number of Italians was expecting us. I preached and gave the Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament.

Today I partially visited this immense metropolis, and some representatives of this colony. I will do the rest tomorrow and Friday. On Saturday I will depart for Cincinnati.

After Cincinnati, I will still have to visit Columbus, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Providence. If it were only possible, I would like to leave on the 22nd of this month with the "*Sicilia*", one of the best ships of the "*Generale*" Company; if not, then it will be right after All Saints.

Upon hearing wonders about our seminary, the Bishop of Hartford has insistently pleaded with me to accept three of his clerics of Theology into it. You shall tell the Rector, therefore, to have three rooms properly furnished and ready for them. All expenses and tuitions will be paid by them. They do not know Italian, but for the early few months they will manage their best in Latin. This is a sign of recognition for our professors; to all of them I send loving greetings and heartfelt blessings.

Notwithstanding my demerits, God always assists me with His blessings and excellent health.

Here in the Southern part of the United States, the weather is still warm (30° C), but the spirit is comforted in the good that is seen and being accomplished.

Farewell. I bless you, Fr. Francesco, the Clergy, and the people.

I embrace you wholeheartedly. Let us pray.

**24. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot**  
**Cincinnati, Ohio, October 6, 1901**

My dear Fr. Camillo,

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I was very pleased with my stay in St. Louis. After twenty years of unsuccessful disputes and maneuverings I succeeded, at last, in drawing up a contract for the acquisition of the church they have been renting. Willingly agreeing with my proposals, all were satisfied. The contract will be signed within days.

I left yesterday morning at 8:00, arriving in this city at 6:00 P.M., welcomed at the station by the notables of the colony. Today, very beautiful services: First Communion, Confirmation, Solemn Mass with Pontifical assistance and sermon on the Rosary. Tonight, the blessing of the new organ, of a Catholic flag, etc., and tomorrow, visit to the parochial school.

The Archbishop, a holy man, is out for the pastoral visitation, but he wanted to send me a most kind telegram in which he tells me, among other things, that he will see me in Columbus, where I shall depart for tomorrow afternoon. Time of departure 2:00 P.M., of arrival 6:00 P.M.

Here in Cincinnati I found all your mail of September, a letter from Fr. Francesco, one each from Louise, Provost Busi, Fr. Rolleri, and a large number from these states. Yours and those from Europe gave me great joy. Through you I shall reply to all of them.

By God's help, I keep enjoying excellent health. Carlo, too, is fine.

I would love to be on my way home; unfortunately, I will have to delay my departure to the beginning of November. Should I accept all invitations, who knows for how much longer I should stay! But I feel the need to return, and let this evidence for you on whether I would ever accept the office of which the newspapers, the eternal disturbers of the peace of others, have so thoughtlessly, as they almost always do, speak of. By the way, there is not the slightest foundation to what Fr. Maldotti has been telling you. My words were at all times inspired to the respect for the language and the laws of the country, though warmly recommending the preservation of the national language as do the Germans, the Poles, etc.

Farewell; my heartfelt greetings to the most Rev. Canons, to the beneficiaries, the Pastors, the Superiors of the Seminary and all. Do not forget Guerra, Cisterna, Guidotti, etc.

I embrace you and confirm myself,

All yours in J.C.  
+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop

**25. Bishop Scalabrini to Archbishop M. A. Corrigan**  
**Cincinnati, Ohio, October 6, 1901 (draft)**

E.R. ( Most Rev. Excellency):

On my arrival to this city of Cincinnati I found many letters waiting for me here, one of them kindly directed to me by Your Most Rev. Excellency on the September 17 last.

I am very grateful for your kind attention, and I do not know how to express in words the sentiments of my deeply moved spirit. God reward and bless you for it.

I am grieved to hear that the deal over Transfiguration church did not turn out the way I desired; and more so because I do not know what the future of St. Joachim will be; but the Lord is contented also with our good intentions, and so we must be likewise.



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On Saturday I shall be back at the Archiepiscopal Residence and I shall promptly pay you my humble respects.

I commend myself to your prayers, and with expressions of deep gratitude I confirm myself Your Humble Servant

**26. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot**  
**Columbus, Ohio, October 8, 1901**

My Most Dear Provost:

A letter from each city; is not this surprising to you? Yesterday at 2 in the afternoon, I left Cincinnati, a great city of more than 400,000 people, with beautiful suburbs, hills all around strewn with homes and gardens, and I arrived here at 6:00. The able Bishop of Columbus was not in the city, but he absolutely wanted me to lodge at his residence. The Archbishop of Cincinnati interrupted the visitation and came to meet me here. He is a holy man, and I spent a few precious moments with him! Relations between him and this Bishop, his former secretary, are like those between you and me. He has in mind calling him back as his Coadjutor, should the Holy Father consent to it. But, Columbus would suffer a serious loss. This city counts 120,000 inhabitants; it is new, and is acquiring the proportions of the great industrial cities.

The Italian church is one of the most beautiful ones of our Congregation and the rectory is clean and adequate. The community counts 3,000 people. Last night I preached and gave benediction with the Blessed Sacrament; this morning I said the Mass and off for Washington tonight. I will be there tomorrow morning at 7:00. Trains here have real beds and one sleeps well on them. I shall call on Cardinal Martinelli, and, perhaps, on the President of the Republic.

My usual greetings to all. Farewell. I embrace you.

All yours in J.C.  
+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop of Piacenza

P.S. I have received the homage of the priests who made their retreat at "Alberoni" College and at St. Theresa's. Prepare a communication for the Diocesan newspaper saying that, deeply moved, I give my most heartfelt thanks to all, etc.

**27. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot,**  
**Washington, October 10, 1901**

My Most Dear Provost:

What a beautiful and magnificent city this is! The most beautiful one I ever saw, with a population of 500,000.

Tuesday I left Columbus at 2:00 p.m., and I arrived here at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, after a nineteen hour train ride. Yesterday I called on Cardinal Martinelli, the Apostolic Delegate, a little man, all piety, prudence and zeal. I saw him again today.

This morning at 10:00 AM I had a visit with the President of the Republic at the White House who welcomed me with kind distinction right on my arrival. He entertained me for quite a while with exquisite courtesy. Archbishop Ireland had prepared the ground

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for me very well.

In a few moments I will be on my way to Baltimore, where I am expected by the Archbishop, Cardinal Gibbons. Probably, and finally, tomorrow night I shall be back in New York. Health, ever excellent, by God's help, in spite of hardships of all kinds. Farewell. Pray for me.

Your Most Affectionate,  
+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop

**28. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot**  
**St. Joachim Church, New York, October 16, 1901**

My Most Dear Secretary:

A short journey! From Washington I went to Baltimore, where I spent a happy Friday (11th of this month) in friendly familiarity with Cardinal Archbishop Gibbons, an approachable man, filled with simplicity and learning, a kind of Capeceletro. He is one degree higher in dignity than Archbishop Ireland, but he seems to me a degree lower in talent. We parted like old friends.

I reached New York at 10:00 in the evening. A trip of 4,000 miles without the least incident and in excellent health! There is indeed real cause for thanks to the good Lord with tears in my eyes!

On Sunday I administered Confirmation to 750 Italian children of our two churches, in the midst of such perfect order and deep devotion as did not allow me for any slight fatigue.

On Monday the Italians of St. Joachim treated me to a little entertainment. Last night the "Catholic Circle" of New York held a solemn reception, as they call it here, in my honor. I was taken in by the Archbishop, who absolutely made me take the first seat. An address was read to me in English by the Chairman, and then another one in French. I answered with a speech in French, interrupted by frequent applause. A reporter described it as very lofty and eloquent: all were talking about it, today. To me it seemed quite plain, though to the point. Well, this too is over with!

With the Archbishop I went to visit today the great *Catholic Protectory*, where some 2,700 orphan or delinquent children are cared for. It is under the direction of the good Brothers of the Christian Schools, as excellent and zealous as ours (at Piacenza), to whom I convey my greetings!

Saturday I will go to Providence for the dedication of the Italian church directed by our Provincial. I shall remain there for almost the entire week. The following Sunday I shall again be in Boston to confirm the Polish children of the parish of Fr. Giovanni Chmielinski.

Concerning the widow's son you wrote to me about, if it is a question of one hundred liras (1901's value), the answer is yes; but I could not pledge myself for more.

I would like it very much if the pulpit and organ were to be inaugurated with a special rite on my return. Talk things over with the Chapter, to whom I send a thousand greetings.

I have no more paper left, and therefore, goodbye. Greetings to Fr. Francesco, and thanks for his long letter. I embrace you in the Lord. Carlo and I, both in excellent health.

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All yours,  
+ Giovanni Battista Bishop

**29. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot**  
**Providence, RI, October 23, 1901**

My Dearest of All,

As I wrote you, on Saturday morning at 10:00 I left New York, and at 2:00 in the afternoon I was in Providence, the capital of the State of Rhode Island, the smallest one in the Union. I could not have a more cordial welcome! The representatives of the colony headed by the Consul came to meet me at the station. Sunday, the 20th, I solemnly blessed the new and beautiful Italian church dedicated to the Holy Spirit, administered Confirmation, and preached to a devoutly attentive audience. The Bishop is a real able man. Sunday he had dinner with us, and today we were his guests. At least three missionaries are needed here; there are 21,000 souls here now, and they keep increasing daily.

The house next to the rectory of the missionaries is on sale for \$4,500.00; and, maybe, only \$4,000.00 will be enough! We have decided to buy it to house in it three or four Fathers, who will attend to the preaching of missions.

I made the idea known to the Bishop who approved wholeheartedly of it and he added: "*to show you my appreciation I give you a contribution of \$1,000.00, and I will supply the rest at 4% interest!*" which is something unheard of! What a generous man!

Accompanied by S. Raphael, tomorrow I shall go to Worchester to visit that community, and to find out whether it will be possible to do something for those Italians. Perhaps, I shall have a meeting with the Bishop of Springfield.

Saturday, at 2:00 P.M., again in Boston for the Confirmation of the Polish children, whose pastor is Fr. Giovanni Chmielinski, as you know, and to have a look at the house he bought for the sisters. By the way, there will be the need to tell the Superior of our Nuns to prepare a dozen of them, and to have a few take English lessons. It is necessary that in each convent at least one knows well the language of this country. It will turn to the great moral and material advantage of all. Tell them all to pray for me, as I never forget them. I bless all of them with a big heart.

Farewell. My blessings on you, on Fr. Francesco, the clergy, and the people. Let us pray for one another! Health, ever excellent. Carlo is doing very well also!

All yours,  
+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop

**30. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot**  
**Church of Our Lady of Pompeii, New York, October 31, 1901**

My Dear Provost,

Finally, the date of my departure has been set for the November 12 on the "Liguria". I shall get off at Naples and travel to Rome, where I will stop just a few days. This way I avoid leaving Piacenza again.

Fr. Sinopoli gave me a good impression: he is making his retreat here with those to be

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ordained, and he behaves as an excellent priest. I am preaching the retreat myself, but I do not find it hard at all because the chapel is very small.

Fr. Sinopoli will make his novitiate in Providence where I will send also Fr. Garau, who shall continue to be tutored by the Provincial Fr. Novati, a very talented and solid man. The Bishop of Providence calls him his Vicar General for the Italians of his city and Diocese and he has actually granted him such faculties.

From Providence I travelled again to Boston for the General Communion and Confirmation at the church of our able Fr. Giovanni. I have been greatly edified.

On Monday night (28) I was in New York. Already preceded by other encounters, the following day I had an all-important meeting dealing with the assistance to migrants and with the Society of St. Raphael. I have high hopes for great results from it! I shall submit the entire project to Senator Bodio.

In Boston also it was decided to purchase a building on sale for \$32,000, to be used as an Italian school and which to give start to an orphanage. May God help us!

His loving Providence has indeed accompanied me so far in a Fatherly manner! Excellent health, festive receptions, abundant fruits, revivals of faith and action! Let us bless Him all together!

My cordial greetings first of all to Mons. Vinati, to whom you will give all my news; and then, to Monsignors Costa, Dallepiane, Scrivani, Piacenza, Roncovieri, Rossi, and to all your colleagues, the good children of Agar included, a lot of good things from the heart!

Remember me to Comm. Guerra, to Guidotti, and to all members of the Cathedral Restoration Committee. Do not forget the Institute (the Scalabrinian Motherhouse) and the Seminary, on whom goes my especially affectionate blessing. A particular greeting and blessing to Fr. Francesco.

To you all blessings from God. I embrace you with the affection you well know!

All yours in J.C.  
+ Giovanni Battista, Bishop

P.S. Congratulations on my behalf to my most dear Provost Busi, to whom I convey sincerest greetings and most cordial blessings!

**31. Bishop Scalabrini to Canon C. Mangot**  
**Archbishop's House, New York, November 6, 1901**

My Dear Fr. Camillo,

By the time you will receive this letter of mine I shall be in the middle of the Ocean on my way back to my dear Piacenza! I wish I could be there today!

On Saturday I concluded the retreat for those to be ordained, and on Sunday (November 3) I held the Holy Ordinations.

After dinner I had to go and visit the Italian Community of Brooklyn. The reception was something extraordinary and moving! I was deeply touched by that truly explosive manifestation of Italian faith that is always manifesting itself so vehemently in those who do not lose it! And many, indeed, are the dangers here of losing one's faith! Protestants work with all means at their disposal to corrupt Italians especially, and now I return to Italy with greater concern on this point, than I had when I first arrived

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here.

I have experienced deep sorrow over the passing of the Bishop of Reggio and of Canon Giacobini.

Today the newspapers carry a communication from Bologna reporting the sad news that Cardinal Svampa has been stricken with apoplexy! I still hope it is not true, or at least, that it is just something light! But how grieved I feel by it!

As you see, I am writing from the Archbishop's residence. His Excellency Corrigan has wanted at all costs that I spend a few days with him, and I had to satisfy him. I shall stay three days. On Sunday (November 10) I shall travel to Newark for the blessing of the Italian orphanage put up by Fr. Morelli, and on Tuesday morning (November 12) I shall at last sail back!

I just remembered something. I wrote to you that the Bishop of Hartford is sending three of his theology students to our Seminary telling you to have three rooms ready for them. Did you receive my letter? Did you notify the Rector? I hope you did, even though you did not mention anything to me about it!

My usual greetings to Fr. Francesco, etc., etc. I embrace you wholeheartedly, and I remain

All yours in J.C.,  
+ Giovanni Battista Bishop