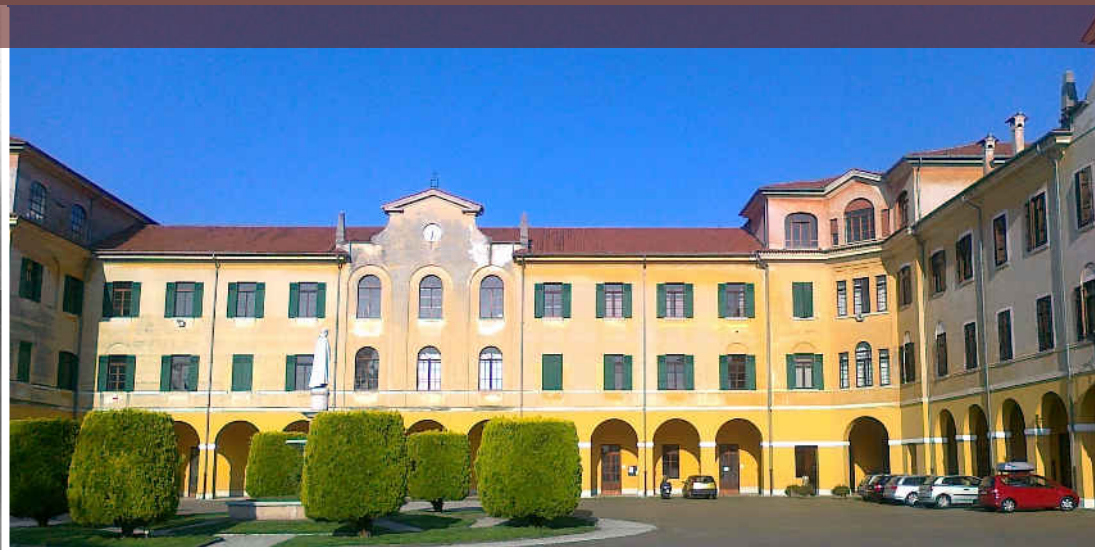




HISTORY OF THE

SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATION - VOLUME V

The Years Following World War I (1919- 1940)



HISTORY OF THE SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATION

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Translated by Martino Bortolazzo, c.s.

VOLUME V¹

**The Years Following World War I
(1919-1940)**

1983

**Province of St. Charles Borromeo-Scalabrinians
Scalabrinian Development Office
Center for Migration Studies
New York**

¹ Volume V was reviewed and transcribed in digital format in January-May 2016 by Peter P. Polo, c. s. Please send comments and observations to PROVINCIAL OFFICE, 27 Carmine St., New York, NY, 10014-4423. Thank you.

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PART ONE

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

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CHAPTER I

THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT
UNDER FR. PACIFICO CHENUIL

1. The General Chapter of 1919

Following two postponements due to World War I, the second General Chapter was called together by Fr. Domenico Vicentini with a circular letter on February 20, 1919, in which the main concern of the Superior General over the most serious problem of the Institute is apparent:

"I am also well aware of the fact that several are complaining about our deficiencies and I am the first to admit them and to take my share of responsibility for them, but right now is the time to get down to work on repairing the damages and on straightening up what is less perfect. It is necessary that we return to a stricter discipline. An army, which is not well disciplined and coordinated, seldom leads to Victory. To use a now frequently used expression, we must work on a united front under the leadership of one man; it is not enough to work, even ever so much, if it's done in isolation from others and guided by one's individual criteria. I do not think I am offending anyone if I say that a greater unity and dependence on Superiors is needed among us as must be expected of a religious Institute."¹

The Chapter was initiated on August 20, 1919, in the General House at 75 Via Ponte Sisto, Rome, under the chairmanship of Fr. Domenico Vicentini. Present were: Fr. Massimo Rinaldi, Vicar and Treasurer General; Frs. Antonio Demo and Pacifico Chenuil, Provincial Superiors respectively of the Provinces of St. Charles Borromeo and of St. John the Baptist in the United States; Frs. Carlo Pedrazzani, Giuseppe Martini, and Enrico Preti, Provincial Superiors respectively of São Paulo, of Paraná, and of Río Grande do Sul; Frs. Vincenzo Jannuzzi, Riccardo Lorenzoni, and Pietro Dotto, elected delegates of the Provinces of North America and of São Paulo. Due to lack of priests to substitute for them, the delegates of Paraná and of Río Grande were absent. The following took part in it, besides: Fr. Giovanni Capello, Fr. Giovanni Ginocchio, and Fr. Vittorio Gregorio, who was chosen as its secretary. On August 21, in the presence of Card. Michele Lega, Protector of the Institute, they proceeded to the election of the Superior General. Following the scrutiny of the 62 ballots of the Missionaries with the right to vote, Fr. Pacifico Chenuil was elected by an absolute majority. The election was ratified by the Sacred Congregation for Religious on August 23.²

On August 23, the following were elected General Councilors: Fr. Domenico Vicentini, Fr. Giuseppe Martini, and Fr. Massimo Rinaldi, Procurator and

¹ Fr. D. Vicentini, Circular of February 20, 1919 (Arch. G.S., 182/2).

² Cfr. Decree by Card. R. Scapinelli, Rome, August 23, 1919 (Arch. G.S., 182/2).

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Treasurer General. On the same day it was decided to reduce the number of the Provinces from five to two: one each for the United States and Brazil. On August 26 a monthly allowance for the Missionaries was approved on an experimental basis:

"Each missionary is entitled to freely dispose of all low Mass offerings of one dollar in the United States and of three milreis in Brazil. They shall receive, besides, a monthly allowance of \$20.00 or 60 milreis for clothing, shoes, and other personal needs. Each house shall take care of the expenses for food, board, laundry, doctors, medicines, and trips requested by the superiors. The said monthly \$50.00 or 160 milreis are allowed only to priests actually employed in work in the missions, or who reside in Italy by reason of their office. Those also shall enjoy these benefits, who will be forced to return to their country for reasons of health proven by medical consultation, but this allowance shall cease for them if they decide not to go back to the missions once they get well enough to do so."³

Lay Brothers were granted an allowance respondent to half the amount accorded to the priests.⁴ Two more provisions were passed on August 25:

"The aging and disabled missionaries, who should decide not to avail themselves of their right to retire at the Mother House, shall be permitted either to return home to their respective diocese or to choose any other place of residence, and the Congregation will continue to grant them the allowance as though they were still in the missions.

However, the Council reserves the right to decide on the matter in each individual case. To deserve these benefits a missionary should not only render a long and praiseworthy service, but generously contribute also to the support of the Institute, whose life depends solely on the contributions of its members."⁵

As to these Chapter Resolutions, it must be pointed out that the provision concerning the monthly allowance modified Art. 6 of the Rules of 1908, that was granting only ten Mass offerings a month.

The permission accorded aging and disabled members to return to their homes or to choose a residence outside the houses of the Institute following "a long and deserving service", besides contradicting Chapter XIV of the Rules of 1908, was actually an attack on the bond of stability. Furthermore, it represented a juridically inadmissible discrimination between "successful and not-so-successful missionaries:

"To enjoy all these moral and material benefits of our Institute its members must render a long and deserving service in our missions."⁶

The "General Norms" promulgated after the 1919 Chapter were, then, basically wrong on two counts. First of all, they brought serious modifications to the Rules approved by the Holy See, and they were contrary

³ Printed Leaflet: "General Norms", N. 7-11 (Arch. G.S., 182/2).

⁴ Cfr. the "Minutes of the General Chapter of the Institute of St. Charles Borromeo for the Italian Emigrants held in Rome in 1919". (Arch. G.S., 182/2).

⁵ "General Norms", cit. N. 12-13.

⁶ *Ibid.*, N. 4.

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to the common law. Since they had not been duly ratified by the Holy See, they could also be considered void. Worse yet, they endorsed the idea, unfortunately held already by certain missionaries, that the Institute was some kind of an association meant to solve the economic interests of its members rather than to carry out the apostolic action respondent to the scope of the Congregation.

In 1924, Card. Gaetano DeLai, Secretary of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, will submit the following instance to the Sacred Congregation for Religious:

"The Institute of the Missionaries of Saint Charles, or Scalabrinians, had its Rules approved by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith with a Decree dated on October 5, 1908. However, on August 25, 1919, at their last General Chapter, the Scalabrinians brought a number of modifications to such Rules, and it is about these modifications that I kindly ask Your Most Reverend Paternity to let me know whether they are canonical and legitimate."⁷

The Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Religious, Abbot Mauro Serafini, pointed out in his answer that the Chapter had no power to make those modifications, and more so because some of them were contrary to the common law, and then he added:

"The whole thing engenders the idea of a basically economic society of persons not bound together by spiritual and moral duties, and it does not respond to the nature of an Institute with the form of a Religious Congregation."

He concluded with the following suggestion:

"Since it is urgent that the approved Rules be conformed to the Canon Law, let this be the occasion for developing and defining them more clearly so as to give the Institute a more genuinely ecclesial character."⁸

Among other decisions of the Chapter we point out the task entrusted to the Superior General for the opening, whenever possible, of two seminaries in the United States and Brazil; the establishing of a fund for a rest home for aging and disabled members; the faculty accorded the Provincial Superiors to admit to the Congregation, without previous permission from the Superior General, those priests living in foreign lands who should "have given sufficient evidence of ability and good behavior"; and the authorization given to the General Administration to assent to the desire expressed by some of the members of the Society of St. Anthony of Padua, founded by Msgr. Coccolo, to work out for a union of their Institute with the Scalabrinians.⁹

2. Shortage of Personnel and Recruiting of New Missionaries

⁷ Card. DeLai to Abbot M. Serafini, Rome, July 14, 1924, copy (Arch. G.S., 182/2).

⁸ Abbot M. Serafini to Card. DeLai, Rome, July 29, 1924, copy (Arch. G.S., 182/2).

⁹ Cfr. Minutes, cit.

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Fr. Chenuil's first concern was to strengthen the ranks of the missionaries decimated by World War I. Already in his first circular letter to his confreres he manifested this intention and the hope to carry it out with a certain ease, motivated by the mitigation of the religious obligations, and, let's admit it, by the economic advantages offered by the modifications made to the Rules by the General Chapter:

"As in the sad war years we just went through, the dioceses of Italy have suffered great losses among their young clergy, and the Religious Congregations have lost many precious vocations, so also our Institute has unfortunately not been immune to this terrible crisis! We have suffered considerable losses among our young students on whom the future of our missions depends.

But we are comforted in seeing that in spite of these serious difficulties our parishes in America keep multiplying and making steady progress day by day. Hence, the ever more urgent need (if we intend to effectively save the life of the Institute) for an immediate increase of the number of missionaries proportioned to the ever growing demands of our large colonies.

(...) Since the harvest is much too abundant and workers are scarce, you, the few, have to do the work of many, in a few short years you have weakened your health and shortened your lives in a hard and relentless ministry. Your parishes are so large and the number of our priests is so small by comparison, as to force you to be steadily tied down and burdened with your daily work. Thus you find yourselves in the impossibility of taking at least a few days off, for a little vacation every year, as is the custom not only with your American colleagues but with priests all over the world, as well. For this reason some of you have not been able to return for a visit to your homeland, or to have the comfort of seeing again your relatives and friends in more than twenty years (...).

By my own personal experience I am too well aware of the present crisis and of your most urgent needs; it will be my concern, therefore, to take immediate and effective steps towards resolving this serious problem. For an efficient and complete success of our apostolate, I am utterly convinced it must be conducted on the basis of new criteria and of more modern methods that may better respond to the needs of the countries, where we exercise it. For this reason all my activities and energies shall be directed towards faithfully carrying out my program, and I will try to lighten the excessive burden of your work by sending you soon a new band of able cooperators. I am sure I can recruit quite a few of them that will enable me to bring about those reforms and practical improvements proposed by you and approved by the majority of the Chapter Fathers. The actual application of the observations and suggestions prompted by your long experience will give a new and more vigorous life to our missions, and mark a new era for our Institute, which will then succeed in being finally free and independent because it will not have to depend any more on outsiders, who, excepting a few deserving cases, have generally shown little appreciation for, and gratitude to, the Institute that hosted, helped, and even enriched them. I do not want to be too optimistic on the matter, but I

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have total trust that from the wise modifications we have brought to our Statutes there will derive incalculable benefits to our churches because we will succeed in increasing our ranks by the recruiting of a good number of priests."¹⁰

In fact, from November 1919 until August 1922, Fr. Chenuil admitted to the Institute, and immediately sent to America, 37 priests, of whom 20 were from Piedmont. Only one had spent some time as a student at the formation school of Piacenza. Usually, only a few days elapsed between dates of admittance and departure for the Americas. Thirty-two were sent to the United States and five to Brazil. In his second circular letter dated on September 28, 1928, Fr. Chenuil wrote:

"A year has elapsed since I took over the government of our Institute. By God's help, a good part of our program has been in this time happily carried out. Our recruiting has been highly successful and it exceeded our expectations. A fine group of able and zealous priests readily responded to our appeal and in a rather short while we succeeded in supplying our most important missions of the United States with new personnel. And so, we can consider ourselves free, at last, from outside elements, and be perfectly independent in our own house...."¹¹

These two goals, the supplying of personnel and freedom from foreign elements could be said to have been achieved, but one could not subscribe with equal certitude to the words immediately following:

"... as we are now all united together like a family...."

Just hoping for it was an illusion. In fact, in almost all cases the new missionaries were not receiving any training for a Society with a community life; worse yet, having entered the Institute several years after ordination, a good number of them had already acquired a mentality and a style of life of their own.

In the circular letter of June 1, 1921, the Superior General himself felt the need to call the attention to "certain fundamental points":

"There is need of greater unity and of perfect harmony among us (...). Earlier we were threatened by external enemies, but let us examine now whether there be any internal ones within our own ranks (...). If I have erred by the haste with which I was forced to provide for the many and urgent needs of the different missions, I stand ready to remedy in the best way possible the bad results of the mistakes I may have made. However, except for some drawbacks, which I am the first to admit, I can say I am fully satisfied with the good results obtained so far. I only hope that there may continue to reign among old and new missionaries that perfect good understanding and harmony on which the whole success of our apostolate depends."¹²

With this third circular of the October 12, 1921, he reported the main complaints of the confreres: little understanding between pastors and

¹⁰ Chenuil, Circular Letter, November 28, 1919 (Arch. G.S., 18/1).

¹¹ Chenuil, Circular Letter, September 28, 1920 (Arch. G.S., 18/2).

¹² Chenuil, Circular Letter, June 1, 1921 (Arch. G.S., 18/3).

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assistants, uneven sharing of work, and above all, an improper set-up of the administration:

"The community accounts are not being trusted, because the books are not sufficiently in order, and pastors do not keep assistants well informed about them."

And he added:

"Should all of us do their conscientious duty towards the Institute, as, by God's help, the majority of the well-meaning members have been doing, these indictments would have no cause to exist, and they would fall by themselves.

But there have been unfortunately some ugly exceptions, and certain priests, sadly famous for their greed or prodigality, have never heeded the admonitions of their superiors or contributed, as was their duty, to the support of the Institute. Now the time has come for a radical elimination of such a serious and deleterious abuse. If all missionaries of good will do not give immediate way to this salutary reform, the structure of our Institute will never function properly, and we will never enjoy good order, equality, and harmony in our missions (...). The administration of our houses should be conducted as in a small company in which the pastor, who plays naturally the parts of president and treasurer, must be assisted and monitored by his assistants. These, in turn, have the right to know how the money earned in common has been spent in the course of the year. This holds good not only for the administration of the house but for the interests of the church, as well. A pastor should never take important decisions or incur extraordinary expenses without consulting his assistants first (...). From now on, the mutual control the Fathers of the same house will exercise on one another will cause the regrettable abuses of the past never to be repeated in the future."¹³

By means of these circular letters, often written in very decisive tones and in always threatening expulsion, Fr. Chenuil tried to plug the holes deriving in part, at least, from his hasty recruiting and from lack of a minimum of training for life in a community. The fact is that, in seeking to get the society free of the foreign elements, he actually admitted as effective members new missionaries, some of whom were surely no better in behavior or in mentality than the previous ones! The initial misjudgment, which had been at the root of the transformation of the Scalabrinian Institute from a Congregation to a Pious Society with a community life without vows, was now coming to light. As such, the Institute had to continue on a form of life proper to religious communities with vows. But right from the start, the preoccupation was to save appearances rather than worrying about substance; and, as we have seen, Fr. Chenuil had been the main supporter of a relaxing of the religious discipline. The sad results were not late in coming. The first warning signs of the crisis that would provoke the intervention of the Holy See were noticed in 1921. In May of that year, Card. DeLai wrote to the Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Religious:

¹³ Chenuil, Circular Letter, October 12, 1921 (Arch. G.S., 18/3).

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"In order to provide for the numerous parishes they direct in America certain religious congregations, such as the Scalabrinians, got into the habit of recruiting diocesan priests as their associates. To prevent this disorder, this Sacred Congregation extended the provisions of "*Magni Semper*" to include also those priests who have recourse to this opportunity to migrate with the intention of securing their independence once they arrive in America.

The case has been brought lately to the attention of this Sacred Congregation where the Scalabrinian Institute is sending to America such priests no longer as associates, but as effective members of the Institute, admitting them without any trial period, and at times even without seeking the required information.

Because of this situation, new and serious bad results have surfaced, which, if continued, may cause grave scandal and harm to religion. It would certainly be desirable that the Scalabrinians, whether they are a Congregation or Pious Society, did not aggregate anyone without first putting him through the Novitiate."¹⁴

The Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Religious confirmed the obligation of a regular Novitiate for priests wishing to be admitted to the Scalabrinian Institute, and asked for precise information on the specific cases that had brought about the "new and serious troubles". Four or five names were reported, and these were convincing enough for the Consistorial Congregation to want to get to the bottom of the problem. In early 1922, Card. DeLai wrote to the Superior General:

"On February 20, 1914, upon request of the Most Rev. Fr. Vicentini, your predecessor, the Holy Father Pius X accorded the Institute of the Missionaries of St. Charles, or Scalabrinians, to be transferred over under the direction of and the dependence from, the Sacred Consistorial Congregation. The mission of the Institute among migrants made it deem proper to place it directly under the direction of and the dependence from this Sacred Congregation. To the Sacred Congregation for Religious is reserved the right to decide on matters of its competence.

Actually, due to the war and to the consequent serious crisis of the Italian emigration, this provision did not have its course; and so, the government of this Institute continued to carry on its action without any directive or control from a higher authority. Now, however, consequent to certain serious facts, which occurred both in Italy and in America, this Sacred Congregation intends to carry out the following provision in order to avoid repetition of the regrettable abuses. I ask you kindly, therefore, to send to this office a copy of the Rules of the Institute together with the list of the various parishes, houses, offices, and residences, held by the Missionaries of St. Charles, specifying the type of ministry and activities performed in them. In addition, you will furnish us with the first and last names of all priests who are currently members of the Institute, their exact stand with the Institute, the dioceses they come from, and the date of their admission, without omitting a list of those that have left it in the last three years,

¹⁴ Card. DeLai to Card. Bonzano, Rome, May 5, 1921, copy (Arch. G.S., 18/3).

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especially if they remained in America without normalizing their canonical status." ¹⁵

Fr. Chenuil answered:

"By taking the Scalabrinian Institute under the jurisdiction of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, Your Eminence does us a great honor and gives us a strong encouragement; we can only bless the holy memory of Pius X who had decided already in 1914 such a salutary provision, and we thank Your Eminence with all our heart for finally carrying it out.

If with our only forces we have until now succeeded in doing some good to our migrants, we are sure that, under the auspices and high dependence from this Sacred Congregation, our Apostolate will be from now on much more fruitful than in the past.

Once they become aware that the directives given then by their Superiors derive directly from the Supreme Authority of this Sacred Congregation, not only will our missionaries receive them with greater respect and reverence, but they will also hasten to carry them out immediately without any criticism or hesitation. Our authority will be strengthened and discipline better observed; we will not have so much trouble and sorrow anymore; our task will be made simple and easier; our Institute will be run more efficiently, and bring more abundant and consoling fruits.

When the trust of my confreres called me to accept this office, our missions were going through a terrible crisis for lack of personnel. In some of our most important parishes only the pastor was a member of the Institute while all his assistants were outside priests provisionally engaged for the ministry with us. Some of these outsiders, taken on by necessity under the responsibility and supervision of the Missionaries of St. Charles were good and well behaved; others, however, after being kindly admitted, and have benefitted, and even made rich by us, behaved badly causing serious evils in our parishes and grave trouble for us and the bishops. This deplorable state of things could not be tolerated any longer, and with the help of my able councilors, I immediately devoted myself to this salutary reform. To save our parishes, seriously threatened in their very existence, there was no other way but to get rid of these foreign elements and supply all our churches as soon as possible only with personnel exclusively of our own.

I found myself confronted with this sad alternative: either I immediately provide some new missionaries, or I must go through the loss and the humiliation of closing down or giving up for good some of our most important missions which had cost us so many years of toil and sacrifice. With God's help, I succeeded in recruiting a sufficient number of new missionaries, enough to provide at least for the most serious and urgent needs, and now I have the consolation to be able to say that the crisis has been happily solved and our situation considerably improved. The large majority of these new recruits has stood the test very well and have given good hopes for the future. Few were those who did not succeed. However, since this is not exactly a so-called religious congregation, we have never allowed that these missionaries, when admitted to the Institute, should be

¹⁵ Card. DeLai to Chenuil, Rome, January 20, 1922 (Arch. G.S., 18/4).

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excardinated from their dioceses; all of them know that, in case of inability or unwillingness to continue working in our missions, they must go back to their dioceses and return under the jurisdiction of their respective bishops. Herein enclosed you will find a list of all our missionaries and missions together with a copy of our Rule. I point out, however, that at the Plenary Meeting of our Superiors and Delegates, held at the end of August 1919, some articles of the said Rule have been revised and modified as shown in the insertion there added.

I take also the liberty of enclosing copies of some of my circular letters that will give you an idea of my efforts in reaching my goal and towards remedying in the best way possible the evils threatening our Institute. I have not altogether succeeded, but I am comforted in being able to say that, thanks to the good will inspiring the great majority of our missionaries, an impressive improvement has been brought to the administration of our parishes and everything seems to point toward a better future." ¹⁶

The first provision taken by the Sacred Consistorial Congregation on April 8, 1922, concerns the "outside" priests:

"All acts carried out by the members of the Institute in opposition to the provision of Art. 7, Chapter XII, of the Rule stating that "no member of our Institute shall invite or accept any outside priest to his mission without permission from the Superior General and without canonical dependence on his Ordinary" are hereby declared null and by this very fact totally destitute of validity." ¹⁷

Another one dealt with finances, and it had been proposed to Card. De Lai by the Superior General himself in a letter of October 10, 1922:

"Taught by the experience of these three years that I have been at the helm of our Institute, and fully aware that the source and cause of many troubles, disturbances, and complaints on the part of confreres in our missions derive unfortunately from a not properly conducted administration of the single houses, I entreat Your Most Illustrious Eminence to consider the following observations and proposals I humbly submit to your kind attention. Art. 5 of Chapter X of our Rule indeed says that "the local Superior (that is the Pastor) shall send every year to the Regional Superior a report on the income and expenditures of the house or station once the report has been viewed and undersigned by his assistants, should he have any", but this provision did not produce the good results one would have expected. In fact, as busy as he is with the parochial activities in all our most important parishes, a pastor is in general easily exposed to the danger of neglecting the accounts of the house. This is where all troubles, disturbances, and complaints of the other confreres derive from!

Therefore, for the good order and management of our missions, besides the Superior or Pastor charged with the administration of the parish, there must also be a treasurer, who under the authority of the Superior may keep the accounts of the house. A directive of this kind would place our houses in line

¹⁶ Chenuil to Card. De Lai, Rome, February 14, 1922 (Arch. G.S., 18/4).

¹⁷ Chenuil, Circular Letter, November 4, 1922 (Arch. G.S., 18/4).

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with the prescriptions of the new Code and of the American dioceses ordering the administration of the house to be absolutely kept separate from that of the Church.

Since our Institute is now depending from, and under the jurisdiction of, this Sacred Congregation, I ask Your Most Illustrious Eminence to deign order us as follows:

- 1. Let there be in every community a treasurer charged with the accounts of the house, to be appointed by the Regional Superior, dependent on the authority of, and under the direction of, the local Superior, to whom he will give a monthly report of his administration.*
- 2. The Regional Superiors must make frequent visitations to the houses under their jurisdiction and gather diligent information on the conduct of the missionaries, on the state of house and church, and on all things concerning the good government of the mission. In turn, the Regional Superiors must send an accurate report of their visitations to the Superior General."¹⁸*

On October 20, 1922, Card. De Lai enacted these provisions exactly as worded, in place of Art. 5, Chapter X of the 1908 Rule.¹⁹

In transmitting to his confreres the decisions adopted by the Consistorial Congregation, Fr. Chenuil placed the major blame for the complaints reaching the Holy See on the "outsiders":

"Except for a few cases, the great majority of those assistants, after being by us accepted and benefitted, became our worst enemies and detractors. Though given by us a higher salary than ours, these individuals respond with the serpent's bite accusing us to authorities as a bunch of exploiters."

But he had to add besides:

"To our deep sorrow, we discovered that there are traitors within our very rank, who dare send here and there to church and civil authorities of America and Italy grave accusations against their confreres, and even against their superiors."²⁰

The truth is that the accusations against the administration of Fr. Chenuil and the denunciations over the critical state of the Institute were not just coming from the "traitors" but from some of the most exemplary missionaries as well, one of whom reported to Card. De Lai:

"I am one of the councilors, but of what? We are called together, or rather, I am told something when all has been done already, or when there is need for remedying the evil resulting of it.

A treasurer has been appointed for each house; but both treasurer and Scalabrinians need a good conscience. Even as of now, Fr. Chenuil continues on the same system: he accepts individuals and sends them out as Scalabrinians; but they are not, and often have no conscience. I have the impression that, more than a Congregation, we are a hiring Agency for

¹⁸ Chenuil to Card. DeLai, Rome, October 10, 1922 (Arch. G.S., 131/1).

¹⁹ Cfr. Card. DeLai to Chenuil, Rome, October 20, 1922 (Arch. G.S., 131/1).

²⁰ Chenuil, Circular Letter, November 4, 1922 (Arch. G.S., 18/4).

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*priests, sending them to America to make money and be freer."*²¹

Such being the circumstances, in February of 1923, the Holy See decided to conduct an Apostolic Visitation of the Scalabrinian Institute. The Apostolic Visitor, Fr. Serafino Cimino, a Friar Minor, made it known by a circular letter on May 22, 1923:

"Dated on February 11 of this current year I received from the Sacred Consistorial Congregation the following Decree (Prot. 809/20): "Considering the particular situation of the Institute of the Missionaries of St. Charles for Italian emigrants with General House in Rome, and to the end of promoting its good, at an audience granted on February 9, 1923 to the Most Eminent Cardinal Secretary of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, the Most Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, has named and appointed Fr. Serafino Cimino, O.M., as its Apostolic Visitor, in the sense and form intended by this Decree, with all the opportune faculties needed to provide for those things that do not allow for any delay, and with all rights and privileges proper to this office.

After completing the visitation, the Most Rev. Visitor shall give a faithful and accurate report of it to this Sacred Congregation and express his opinion as to the means he may consider opportune for promoting the good of the Institute.

Given at Rome, from the Office of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, on February 11, 1923.

(signed) C. Card. De Lai, Bishop of Sabina, Secretary
A. Sincero, Assessor "

"Ever an obedient subject of the Catholic Church (Rule of St. Francis), upon receiving the above Decree I would soon have liked to devote myself with all my strength to the carrying out of the mandate entrusted to me by His Holiness Pius XI, happily reigning. But, for reasons beyond my control, I had to delay it until early April, and it is a month now since I began conducting the Apostolic Visitation of your Institute. With God's help I hope to continue the task I have begun.

Unable now to absent myself from Rome for a long time because of my commitments, I find it difficult to visit you in person. I have decided, therefore, to write not only to convey to you the decision of the Holy See but to secure your cooperation as well in a matter of such importance! Before all else, therefore, I address myself to the Superiors and Pastors inviting them to send me an exact and accurate report of their administrations. In preparing this report the following norms are to be observed:

- a) the house report must be drawn up on a separate paper from that of the church;
- b) both church and house reports must begin with January 1921, and whoever has been made a Pastor after this date must present a report beginning with the day when he took office, ending with and including the month of June of this year 1923;

²¹ Secret Report, November 27, 1922 (Arch. G.S., 18/4).

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- c) it must be compiled and balanced month by month;
- d) income and expenditures must be distinctly itemized;
- e) finally, after stating that its content responds to the truth, the Pastor or Superior and the other priests of the house, should there be any, are to undersign the report.

Secondly, I turn to all Missionaries, whether Superiors or subjects, Pastors or Assistants, inviting them to send me a written report of all things they would have wished to tell me by word of mouth in regard to the state of the house or church to which they are assigned, in general, and of their confreres, in particular, should I have visited them in person. I am sure that all of you, solely concerned for the good of souls and for the welfare of the Institute, in reporting to the visitor on both the state of finances and the communities, will conform, not only to principles of Christian justice favoring no one, but also to norms of evangelical sincerity and priestly charity."²²

3. The Apostolic Visitation of Fr. Cimino

As he had anticipated, Fr. Cimino could not conduct the visitation of all persons and houses; in fact, he did not leave Italy at all, so that he carried it through mostly by correspondence, and therefore without a thorough vision or a concrete verification of the real situation, of the missions especially! Almost all missionaries responded. About half of them provided detailed and motivated relations; the rest were contented with sending in the financial reports, or limited themselves to brief and generic phrases, mostly the equivalent of a no comment. The majority of the former acknowledged the existence of troubles and abuses especially in the field of finances, and they placed the blame for them above all on certain ones of the new missionaries recruited by Fr. Chenuil. They contended, however, that the most serious accusations had been coming from the missionaries least imbued with the priestly spirit who had arrived at the missions for economic reasons, or from those who had been justly reprimanded by the Superiors because of their bad behavior: it was a question of personal revenge, therefore, that had reached at times the nature of slanderous incrimination. Quite a few complain about the despotism of some pastors and consequent discrimination in the treatment of assistants detracting from the equality of rights and duties proper to a religious Institute.

The decidedly negative reports did not exceed ten in number, most of them undersigned by priests, who, by their conduct, were given proof that the evil rested with the persons rather than with the Institute. We chose to transcribe the following report from North America as we deem it representing best the real situation, expressing a sufficiently accurate and dispassionate vision of both positive and negative aspects:

"Allow me to submit with due respect and sincerity to Your Most Rev. Lordship some observations and considerations that may explain the "special

²² Cimino, Circular Letter, (May 22, 1923).

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circumstances" mentioned in the Decree of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation appointing you as the Apostolic Visitator of our Institute (...).

Theoretical and Practical Differences

My eight years' experience in America has led me to the conclusion that certain peculiarities of some houses or missionaries (I mean those in good faith) must be understood in the light of the following facts:

- 1) There still are several Fathers, some of them in places of authority, who joined the Institute when it was a Religious Congregation with simple vows, temporary, at first, but perpetual, later on. It is natural that by their education and conviction they be inclined towards a communitarian system, especially in regard to the monthly allowance. Even the fact that later on brought the Institute from dependence from the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to that of the Consistory, helped in confirming them in their attitude.
- 2) The majority of the missionaries come from Piacenza's "Cristoforo Colombo" Institute where they received since early youth a specialized missionary preparation and grew a filial-like affection for our Institution. Either because of seniority in the missions or of better qualifications, they direct some of the most important parishes. This fact may have made them the object of a little envy and jealousy on the part of those who by reason of their seniority of years or of ministry in Italy are tempted to consider themselves more deserving of those places. Neither can one pretend that all Missionaries who join our Institute when already priests may have the same heartfelt and total commitment to it as do confreres trained by and for it. The point about which one may be surprised to find differences of opinion between the two groups of missionaries concerns our condition in regard to old age or sickness, when we should become unable for active work in the parishes! And more so because the ordination "title" of those who entered when priests seems to ascribe them strictly to their diocese. An authentic declaration would bring an end to all difficulties and confusion.

The Future of the Missionaries

As to the new monthly allowance provision, while Article 1 of Chapter XIV of the Rule provides for the retirement of disabled and old missionaries at the Mother House where they are to be accorded "all charity and necessary care according to need and means available", the circular letter of Fr. Chenuil on September 28, 1920, speaks of a "pension" granted old missionaries by the Institute. It seems to me that the difference between these two provisions should be settled by the authorities once and for all.

Monthly Allowance

This is one of the central points of discussion. From the ten free Mass intentions allowed all priests each month (Chapter VII of the Rule) we have been introduced (juridically, I presume) into the present monthly allowance. Should this be continued? I think so because it is not excessive for the following reasons:

- a) After deducting the expenditures for clothing, mail, etc., the missionary does not have much left, especially when the exchange will be normalized, thus disproving it to be the main motive why one is joining our Institute.
- b) In our parishes, none of our priests takes the salary he is entitled to receive from the church by diocesan statutes as dependent on the diocese. Only at a very few missions, the poorest, the smallest, and the most recent ones, do the missionaries need to receive part of their salary from the church. And the merits of our Institute on this point with the dioceses and the single Italian churches are extraordinary. This policy, never imposed by any authority has

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made possible the remarkable growth of our Institute and its missions.

- c) The members of the Institute provide every year whatever is needed for its support and for the "fund set aside for the pension of old and disabled missionaries" spoken of by Fr. Chenuil in his circular letter of September 28, 1922.

Leaving the Institute

Leaving the Institute is made easy by the American bishops who do not oppose any obstacle or difficulty against the requests (often hasty and unwarranted) of the missionaries. In all cases a dispensation from the oath has been petitioned and granted by the Holy See as required by the Rule, Chapter VII, paragraph 3.

Our Institute is now pulling through one of those crises that accompany and strengthen the growth of Society and individuals, as well.

The proposals we here respectfully submit for your consideration will also render its progress easier:

- a) Greater growth and progress of Piacenza's "Cristoforo Colombo" Institute.
- b) A longer and more adequate training of priests applying for admission to the Institute.
- c) A financial and moral report on the single missions undersigned by all priests of the house to be sent every three months to the General and Regional Superiors.
- d) In accord with paragraph 2 of Card. DeLai's letter of October 20, 1922, let the Regional Superior visit all houses at least once a year.
- e) Equal treatment for all priests as required by the Rule. Let no Superior make any exceptions, take any arbitrary action, or play any favorite. The provision number 7 of Fr. Chenuil's circular letter of November 4, 1923, shall be observed by all and everywhere.
- f) Elections of:
 - 1st: Superior General and his Consultors. Chapter XI of the Rules be retained (especially paragraphs 5 and 17 concerning the Vicar General), with the exclusion of the provision of paragraph 16 that the Rector of the Mother House be included in the General's consultation body.

2nd: Regional Superior and his Consultors. In substitution of paragraph 2, Chapter X of the Rules, the proposal is that the Regional Superior be designated by the electing priests through presentation of three names from whom the Superior General has the right to pick the one of his choice. His Consultors shall be elected by the General as required by paragraph 2 of Chapter X of the Rules. In any case, let the Consultors be such not only in name but also in their own right, with responsibility before the Superior General and the Missionaries for the decisions of the Regional Superiors.

Criticism and accusations levelled at our Institute were not without foundation. One could expect that a young Institution with new scopes and, to a certain extent, with a new organizational set up, should be born perfect out of the hands of its Founder. It is also true, however, that it was the object of envy and slander, especially on the part of outside priests called at one time to the help of our missionaries too few for the needs. The great majority of them, "after being hosted and benefitted by us, became our worst enemies and defamers." (Chenuil's circular letter, November 4, 1922). Justly, therefore, has Card. De Lai declared null on April 8, 1922 any decision by the Chapter in contradiction with Chapter XII of our Rules.

Through past experiences, tribulations, and trials, the Institution of Bishop Scalabrini has reached the period of maturity and is looking forward to the future

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with trust, blessed by the Vicar of Christ, under the protection and guidance of the Consistorial Congregation, and directed by the enlightened and sincere zeal of its present Superior General.²³

Particular importance must be attached to the two reports of Fr. Domenico Vicentini, Superior General from 1905 till 1919, and of Fr. Pacifico Chenuil, Superior General in charge, addressed to the Cardinal Secretary of the Consistorial Congregation. In both reports, in that of Fr. Chenuil especially, one reads the comments on the work of Bishop Scalabrini, which we have made the subject of our criticism already in the preceding volume.²⁴

Fr. Vicentini writes:

"The Apostolic Visitation to our Institute of the Missionaries of St. Charles for Italian Emigrants seems to come to a close, and there will soon be opportune provisions taken; strong and effective, I hope.

The Most Reverend Visitor had a conversation with me at the start of the Visitation saying he would take the opportunity to talk to me with more ease at another time, but from what I am given to understand from one or other of those interviewed, it seems as though there will no need that I be called in again.

I am firmly convinced that the Sacred Congregation is by now in possession of sufficient information for knowing the state of our things and for forming an idea on the measures to take in order to put order in this Institute of ours that greatly needs it, though not so much in regard to the work of the Missionaries in parish ministry both in North (the United States) and South (Brazil) America. I believe that the Visitor will have gathered sufficient proof in favor of the Missionaries on this point.

Our sad deficiency is found in the organization, or in the internal discipline, rather, in the lack of authority, or of energy, if you will, on the part of Superiors. I do not speak for the others, but I acknowledge my share of this responsibility, though one must admit certain extenuating circumstances. As I had occasion to tell you once before, our Institute is suffering from something like an original sin, and there was need of nothing else than the "baptism" of this Sacred Congregation if not to cancel it, at least to limit as far as possible its serious consequences without rebuilding the Institute itself from its foundations.

Our Venerable Founder, a man of broad views as to the scope of the Institute did not employ equal foresight in the internal organization and discipline of the Missionaries. He seemed to be contented at first with "flying" missionaries with no bond whatsoever; then he established the obligation of a five year period with the religious vows, and he had a rule written out which was approved "for a time" of five years by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith; actual experience proved it to be insufficient for the continuity of our institution and on account of the difficulties deriving thereof especially with regards to the students' title of ordination. Therefore, then the idea of perpetual vows came and without further hesitation it was decided they should be taken.

The time "*ad experimentum*" granted by Propaganda had elapsed, and so Bishop Scalabrini petitioned it for the approval of the change. This took place about 1898. The Sacred Congregation answered that not only it did not approve of the perpetual vows, but even of the five-year vows on account of the nature of the Institute, and it suggested adopting an oath of perseverance as is the practice with Institutes of this kind. Bishop Scalabrini did not make anything of that re-script;

²³ Father X to Cimino, Chicago, September 12, 1923) Arch. G.S., 23/4).

²⁴ Francesconi, "History of the Scalabrinian Congregation" Vol. IV (Rome, 1974) pp. 40-42 (original).

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he said nothing about it, and he continued with the perpetual vows, which he asked of all candidates ordained in the Institute.

As to those then joining the Institute who were priests already, Bishop Scalabrini had some of them take the vows, while for others he only asked for a simple conditional promise, or no bond at all. Let us not talk about the "Probation" year: some of them were sent to America without even going through the Mother House; still they were considered members of the Institute, and at times even set above the others.

One can very well imagine what results derived from such confusion and differences, especially to the young members educated and ordained in the Institute, who were thus to find themselves subjected to outsiders, and very often exploited by them in the ministry.

In 1892 I was been appointed Provincial Superior in the United States, but finding it impossible to rule with such individuals around (they were not many then) I resigned from my charge and only upon insistence from Bishop Scalabrini I remained as his Delegate, but when my five year term elapsed, by the end of 1895, I returned to Italy. In early 1896 Bishop Scalabrini sent me to Brazil where we had a mission in Paraná, and another one was just beginning in São Paulo. I was assigned to the founding of the Mission of Rio Grande do Sul. Except for one, all missionaries there were trainees of the Institute, and things were running ahead pretty good. After a while, I had to accept the responsibility as Provincial once more.

In 1904 Bishop Scalabrini came to Brazil, and he decided to take me along to Piacenza placing me in charge of the "Istituto Cristoforo Colombo". Unfortunately, Bishop Scalabrini died unexpectedly six months later on June 1, 1905, before he could (as he seemed to be intentioned to do) make provisions for the financial state of the Institute. The Sacred Congregation of "Propaganda" charged me with the temporary government of the Institute and with preparations for the election of the Superior as required by the Rule. The election took place, in fact, by the end of the same year 1905. The undersigned was elected and immediately confirmed by "Propaganda". The Institute had no endowment of any kind either in real estate or in personal titles. The Mother House itself was having a dispute with the Diocesan seminary; there were only 23 thousand liras on hand with some forty students to care for.

Reluctantly I subjected myself to the difficult task trusting in the help of God and in the good will of the Missionaries who were showing a genuine intention to continue the work of the late Founder. With God's help, and by careful planning, I could carry on without incurring any debts. For some two years, to obtain possession of the Mother House, I was entangled in a lawsuit with the Ordinary that had a happy conclusion, thanks also to the moral support of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and by the good-will of the Civil Government itself.

In our Archives I found the "Rescript" of "Propaganda" that denied permission to take vows, suggesting, instead, an oath of perseverance and modifying the rule accordingly. With the help of the late Msgr. Melata and of Fr. Ojetti, I wrote a short Rule and presented it; it was approved on October 5, 1908; as His Eminence Card. Laurenti was telling me, the approval had been ready for some time, but we were delayed notification of it in order to finalize for good the ordination title of our missionaries. Almost all Missionaries accepted the change, but the old system changed little. At the Mother House the community was being ever better organized to the great satisfaction and edification of all. Before my time, our students made their studies under the direction of very good and zealous priests, attached to the Institute, but informally and without regularity. Also at the

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personal urging of His Holiness Pius X, I reached an agreement with Bishop Pellizzari and the urban seminary to have our students follow classes at the Seminary for all their years in training: we did not have the personnel qualified to teach.

As to the spiritual direction of the students, I always had the strong help of the Jesuits both for their confessions and their weekly instruction. The Seminary was promising very well; unfortunately, however, the old elements were to be hindering in great part these good results.

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Institute, I made the proposal to the Missionaries for the building a practical monument to the memory of the Venerated Founder, that is, of a "Scuola Apostolica" (Minor Seminary) on which I was placing good hopes for the future of the Institute. As a whole, the Missionaries approved of it and helped me. There were those who were not in favor of this little school because of so much waste of money for such poor results, saying it would have been better to rely on the recruiting of priests for whose training no expense was needed.

The place chosen for the new building was in the parish of Crespano Veneto on an ideal site recommended and approved by the Holy Father Pius X, who knew it very well, and he told me: "Hurry up, that is the "Brianza" (a region of splendid resort hills and towns of Lombardy) of the Veneto!"

The zealous pastor Fr. (Giovanni Battista) Ziliotto helped me much with the works, and he promised me that his priests would offer their services for the teaching of the first three high school years, as they actually did; after these, our young boys would have continued their studies at the diocesan seminary of Piacenza. By 1913 the building was ready and began operating; but the war came along to spoil everything. In 1916 it was requisitioned to be used as a field hospital. Due to various circumstances, after the war no thought was given to reopening it, and now it is there waiting for some kind of arrangement. Two missionaries of ours are residing there as in a rest home.

I never had any complaints concerning our Missionaries on the part of the Supreme Authority until 1909. At about that time, His Eminence Card. Vives y Tuto sent me a report and a accusation against the Missionaries in North America handed in by a certain one whom I was easily able to discover by the circumstances of the tour there described, by the accusations made, and by the person named. He was a priest that had been accepted by Bishop Scalabrini, and sent by him to America without vows in 1905. He remained there a few months and then returned to Italy. In the short time spent in America, he was taken by our missionaries to visit some of their houses where he gathered matters worth reporting to the Holy Office, which he describes in his accusation, getting into many details especially against the missionary then acting as Superior. I sought to lessen the bad impression, but that would have been the opportune time for a thorough Apostolic Visitation. Some two years later, while I was on my visitation of Brazil, being the priest mainly accused in Rome, the Cardinal Prefect for Religious showed him the report with invitation to prove his innocence. The defendant appealed to the Bishop in the United States in whose diocese he had exercised the holy ministry for many years and by whom he was well esteemed and loved. There was no further talk about it afterwards. That Missionary has long been dead. God rest his soul.

Leaving other observations aside, I must express my impression on the provision of the last General Chapter concerning the allowance of the Missionaries made by the 5th session of August 25, 1919: "After a long debate on the proposal of the Provincial Chapters of Buffalo and New York in regard to the raising of the allowance to the Fathers, they agreed on the following order of the day: "It is

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hereby questioned whether it would be proper, by way of experiment, to grant each Father the free application of all Masses he now applies "ad mentem Superioris" instead of the ten intentions allowed by our Rules." When put to the vote, eleven voted for and three against.

At the 6th session the question was proposed "whether besides the intentions of the Masses it would be proper to add ten dollars a month which together with the Masses could serve to provide for all their personal needs, etc. When put to the vote, twelve were for it and two against. I opposed these proposals to the bitter end as disastrous for the finances and the morale of the Institute. These benefits (so the Chapter decision continues) shall be equally enjoyed by Missionaries in need to return to Italy for treatment of a sickness proven through medical consultation, but this right shall cease for them when upon being sufficiently better to be able to serve in the missions they should decide not to go back. As to the aged and the disabled who should not want to avail themselves of their right to be sheltered at the Mother House, they will be allowed to choose another place of residence, and the Institute shall give them the allowance as though they were in the missions.

In what way this rather elastic provision is to be implemented is proven by the complaints being made already.

The \$40 a month granted by the Chapter was not enough for the missionaries in the United States, and they did not quiet down until the Superior General had raised their monthly allowance to \$50 (I repeat, \$50). One does not need any further comment.

And so you have here a sincere summary of the history of our Institute, which is meant to serve not so much as a justification for our actions, as, rather, for the serious measure taken by Your Most Rev. Eminence of an Apostolic Visitation with consequent decisions, which God may bless and make effective."²⁵

Let us read now the long relation of Fr. Chenuil who as the Superior General in charge was naturally the main defendant, and, therefore, more inclined than anyone else to defend his actions by placing the greater part of the blame on the past:

"I wish I could obtain an audience with Your Eminence to tell you which one is, in my opinion, the true origin of all the difficulties that have troubled this poor Institute ever since its birth, and so, unable to talk to you by word of mouth, I deemed it my duty to do so now in writing so that, after hearing the various reports sent in either directly to the Sacred Consistorial Congregation or to the Apostolic Visitor, Your Eminence may be pleased to listen also to my voice, and be able, this way, to get a more accurate idea of the state of our things such as will help you in taking those measures in our regard, which in your high wisdom you will deem most opportune and necessary for the good of all.

I had the good venture of being admitted as a missionary by our Venerated Founder himself; I had long conversations with him on his Institution; I was closely associated with him during his visitation of our missions in the United States; I have had, therefore, all the time and opportunity to be able to get a sufficiently clear idea of the project he had in mind to carry out.

First of all, his intention was not that of founding a Congregation in the strict sense, but only an Institute for assistance, similar to the one established by his famed friend Bishop Geremia Bonomelli, with the sole difference of providing for the spiritual care of permanent emigrants in the Americas, while the Bishop of Cremona concerned himself only with the temporary migrants in the nations of Europe.

²⁵ Vicentini to Card. DeLai, Rome, December 21, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 19).

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The idea of giving to his institution the form of a religious congregation was suggested to him later on by certain religious of Piacenza, whom he had entrusted with the task of compiling a draft of rules for the new "Istituto Cristoforo Colombo" he had founded for the training of the new missionaries for emigrants. Without ever seeing America and with no knowledge of the kind of life the future missionaries would have to adopt in the new world, those religious wrote a Rule better fit for monks than for secular priests. As to its practical application, this rule met immediately with many difficulties, and it was not observed almost by anyone from the very beginning. And this fact is self-explanatory if one considers the way the first missionaries were recruited. In fact, some committed themselves to a simple promise; others made their vows for five years; some had to take perpetual vows later on; and finally, others, the most privileged ones, did not take any vow and were admitted just the same, while some of these latter ones were even promoted to higher posts.

It must be pointed out, however, that those vows had no power to bind in conscience because the Holy See, when requested for permission to have vows, had never consented to approve them; and this was done following a report of Cardinal Satolli, who had personally known several of our missionaries in America. In it he had stated that our Institute was not one that could make its members observe vows. Meanwhile, these differences in procedures of admittance, in obligations imposed, in exemptions and privileges granted to the various members, were the principal cause - later on called by someone the original sin of our Institute - of all the abuses resulting thereof that were undermining like termites and jeopardizing the whole future of the Institution. In fact, even in case the vows were approved, some of those missionaries had such precedents as to make anyone foresee they would not keep them at all from the very beginning. The good Bishop had too much of a big heart, and he used to admit all applicants without distinction (...).

However, to the credit of the Institute we must say that besides these there were also a good number of good, active, and zealous priests who, from those early years, generously helped the Mother House, offering the Founder cause for great consolations. The sad thing about it is that none of these missionaries were made to go through a regular probation at our seminary in Piacenza; they were all sent to America, instead, either within a few months, or weeks, or only days, or even immediately, without having them as much as set foot in the Mother House.

If the Founder had little luck with the first priests he sent to the missions, we have also to admit that he was not more successful in the recruiting of the clerics he intended to train and form in the seminary he had opened for this scope at Piacenza. His mistake was that of admitting without distinction all those students who had been dismissed from their Institutes or seminaries either because they could not pay the tuition, or did not pass the school exams, or had some negative mark in their conduct. Imagine! Among them there were even two Poles, who were ordained just the same; but then, once they arrived in America, they ended up, naturally, with going to the assistance of their fellow countrymen. This seminary has had a bad start as did everything else concerning this Institution; and the new Missionaries trained in it, instead of remedying the defects of their older confreres already in America, only helped in increasing and worsening them. That poor seminary was not being run then as well as now, when all our clerics are following all regular courses at the diocesan seminary. At that time everything was improvised, and it seemed like a veritable confusion; as to their studies, not only were they never regular, they were mangled, on certain occasions - if I be allowed to say so! (...) No wonder, then, if these young men, so hurriedly prepared at the seminary, should have produced afterwards the results they did. The Founder had hopes they would be at least more attached than the others to the Mother House

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to which they owed everything; but sadly enough he had to be bitterly disappointed also on this point, because as soon as they arrived at the missions these young men did not behave any better than the others, and as to contributions, they did not do more or less than their older confreres (....).

In fact, to know which ones were actually the most faithful in the service of the Institute one would need only to look over the following statistics that speak for themselves and louder than a lot of words. As of now, 105 secular priests have so far joined the Institute and 35 left it with 70 of them remaining; while the young seminarians ordained in the Institute were 86 in all, of whom 35 left and 51 remained.

It is clear that should the Founder have wished to make of us Religious in the true sense he would have decided, before all else, to establish a solid foundation and secure a choice personnel qualified for the task; he would have never allowed a missionary to live by himself; but he would have them gathered, instead, in small communities where a mutual supervision could be exerted, the strictest observance of the discipline exacted, a rule obliging "*sub gravi*" given, etc., as is common to all the religious Institutes in the true sense.

Instead it is possible today to historically prove that he has done everything contrary to this. In fact, he laid very few burdens on his missionaries; and he always took care to point out that his rule did not bind under pain of sin.

As to finances, in his big heart and boundless trust in Divine Providence, he did not give much thought to them. On the other hand, he himself soon found out also that this article of the rule was not being strictly observed; still he never did anything to enforce it. Already since then confronted with the abuses and irregularities creeping little by little into the administration of certain houses, some of the well intentioned missionaries were quick in sending in their strong complaints to Piacenza to solicit the necessary measures; but these never came. The poor Bishop had too much at stake in his immense diocese, and he could not attend to his Institute that was thus left to fence for itself when still, as it were, in its infancy and in the greatest need, therefore, of the care of its Founder to be duly started off and strengthened. A visitation of his to the missions was seen as ever more necessary and he made one to North America in 1901 and to South America in 1904.

The Institute had been in existence by then for over fifteen years and all felt the need to see our Institution well organized once and for all. Of this visit we were all expecting great reforms that never materialized because they were frustrated by the maneuverings of those missionaries, who did not even want to hear of any reform. The great majority wanted to continue in the "status quo", and so the minority had to resign themselves to the existing situation and could not do anything about it. The most serious difficulty was always the same: the pastors who were naturally also the superiors of the houses, never wanted their administration to be under the scrutiny of their dependents and always did what they pleased as true masters rather than as members of a Congregation. Some of them contributed generously to the Institute, others gave what they wanted, while still others sent in but little or nothing; and there those who chose to use up everything they had rather than contributing their quota; some were helping their own relatives and friends, while others were storing something away for their old age. These last ones were reasoning something like this: "This Institute is in such bad shape as not to last for long; it is just a temporary kind of thing as emigration itself, and when this will cease the other will also. Besides, it is an ill founded, ill directed, and ill conducted Institution that does not guarantee our future; we had better, therefore, take the best way out by providing for ourselves while we have the chance." By the way, much concerned over the miserable state of things, some

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missionaries pleaded with the Founder not to let the most favorable occasion of his visit go by without stipulating some kind of agreement with the American bishops to insure for us not the ownership of those churches, naturally the property of the dioceses, but only the preferential right over other Italian priests to administer them, and so to provide in some manner for the future of our missions so far exclusively dependent on the benevolence of the bishops in our regard. By the prestige he enjoyed with those bishops and their clergy, he could have obtained this favor with ease. But, to our misfortune he did not want to do so, and he contented himself with answering to those missionaries. "Only continue to behave like good priests; always perform your duty, and there will not be any danger that those Bishops may dismiss you from their dioceses; however, should you make yourselves unworthy of their trust and so have them fire you, much the worse for you!"

When the Missionaries realized that their Founder, the true apostle of emigration, insisted only on the practice of their spiritual duties proper to the life of a missionary, while he did not even give so much attention to financial matters as would induce him to take this step to insure their future, they got deeply discouraged and became evermore convinced that this Institution not only could not be considered a religious congregation but that it was not even a serious and well organized Institute on which to depend for the rest of their life. Besides, when they became aware of the fact that the good Bishop was contented with accepting whatever he was freely given and did not enforce it as a strict obligation demanded by the rule, those Missionaries, who had everything to gain from such state of things were very pleased, while the others that had hoped for some reform, realizing that the responsible ones who could and should have remedied our ailments were actually not doing so, also behaved likewise, and there was no more talk of reforms; and it so happened that this article of the rules fell into disuse for defect of enforcement. In fact, as no one was ever rewarded with promotions for observing it more faithfully so neither was anyone ever punished or dismissed for not keeping it.

Since then, due to this lack of sanctions certain deplorable abuses were born, and consequently discipline suffered moral paralysis because the Regional Superiors could no longer exercise their authority. No one was willing to accept the position of an assistant anymore and be the subject of another confrere; they all wanted, instead, to become pastors as soon as possible with the intent of taking matters in their own hands and be masters like the rest.

While still simple assistants, they had to render an account to their superiors or pastors, and they complained steadily as if the Institute were due for shipwreck; but as soon as they succeeded in having a parish, they, too, stopped complaining about the Congregation saying, rather, that things were alright with it. As a consequence, a few of our pastors remained without assistants, and they had to avail themselves of the services of outsiders, some of whom caused, later on, serious troubles in those parishes. Worse still, some of our pastors had preference for those outside priests over our confreres in order to be freer and without any control especially in financial matters. All this was the cause of an even worse evil. Some of these outsiders succeeded so well in ingratiating some of our superiors, that when there was talk, later on, of opening a new parish, they were put in charge of it in preference over our priests, who had all the rights to it. While on his visit to America we strongly protested to our Founder against such an unjust and partial procedure, and we pleaded with him to dismiss those intruders right away. Surmising the danger, in order not to lose their good parishes, those sly old foxes immediately applied, instead, for admission to the Institute and they were accepted. However, we know that, except for the small donation made into the hands of the Founder on that occasion, they never contributed anything to the

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Institute anymore since; and yet, they continued on undisturbed in their posts. But, this is still not enough! As a few missionaries had openly refused to contribute to the support of the Mother House, it so happened that though not dismissed from the Institute they were still regarded as rebellious members by the others, and were treated as if they did not belong to us anymore. We became discouraged indeed when, during his visit, the good Bishop, much too lenient, not only did not remind them of their duty in this matter or take any strong measures either by punishing them in some manner or dismissing them from the Institute, as we would have wished, but as the Father of the Prodigal Son he treated them, instead, like his beloved sons (...).

If it is true that in temporal matters he showed himself even too lenient with certain missionaries of his, who had abused of his excessively good heart at times, so also is it equally true that in things of the moral order he demanded everything possible of his sons; and when it was a matter of serious offenses against the spiritual duties of one's priestly life, he was of unbending rigor and did not spare anyone. As I said before, his greatest handicap was being always too caught up with the duties of his vast diocese, which did not allow him to personally attend to the direction of his Institute. If this did not meet with better success, it is all the exclusive fault of certain few of his sons who did not respond to the trust he had placed in them. Should his first missionaries have complied with his flames of faith and love for the cause of migrants, who knows what growth our Institute would have reached and how much greater good it would have accomplished for Religion and country (...). I found out that, in their reports sent to the Apostolic Visitator, certain missionaries have made him believe that all was well in the beginning; certain disorders and abuses were only the product of the latter years. I strongly object to such an accusation as not responding to the truth. I believe I have given clear evidence of the fact that the most serious abuses we now deplore have their roots in the past. Except for a few cases, , I can state that, as a whole and without fear of disavowal, that as to ability, knowledge, as well virtue, the missionaries now working in the Americas are far superior to those of the past. As to myself, I am the first to acknowledge my deficiencies and to ask pardon for the mistakes I may have made in the exercise of my difficult responsibility. It is quite a long time now since we first sensed being looked upon with suspicion and distrust by the Supreme Authorities; we willingly accept, therefore, the hard trial the Lord has reserved for us, and we are totally resigned to do whatever the Holy See will ask of us!"²⁶

We deem it opportune to complete the picture resulting from the investigation demanded by the Apostolic Visitation with the report of Fr. Enrico Preti, at that time rector of the Mother House, to whom credit must be given in part for having begun to lay down the basis of a renewal by allowing that a new impulse be given to the promotion of vocations and to the formation of the group of young men on whom was to rest the reconstruction of the Scalabrinian Institution. The draft of this report, sent to Fr. Cimino on August 16, 1923, does not make for easy reading; we report it anyway the way we "have it":

"Much concerned over the many urgent needs, and under pressure of many requests for help, His Excellency Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, of happy memory, once the Bishop of this city and diocese, who is the Founder of this Institute for the assistance of our fellow countrymen in the Americas, had nothing more in mind at first than a quick gathering of priests willing to devote themselves in the

²⁶ Chenuil to Card. DeLai, Rome, December 18, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 19).

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largest number possible to this apostolate in order to provide best to the most compelling needs. As yet he gave no immediate thought for a definite formal organization, as he had presumably the intention to do as soon as he should have obtained a more accurate notion of the life and activities of the Missionary Institute he was about to found; death, however, overtook him almost unexpectedly right at the time of his greatest action on behalf of this same Institute.

I said "presumably", and indeed so for a good reason. In fact, the undersigned has been under his training up to the priesthood and as a parish priest, spanning a period of twenty years, and he can quite assuredly testify together with many other Priests and Prelates of all ranks, still living, by means of documents and actual facts, by what apostolic spirit he was moved in guiding the diocesan clergy, as is still well remembered and felt today. Besides, from my early years as a missionary I can equally confirm how zealously he tried in all circumstances to instill this spirit of his in the first members, who had entered to take part in this mission, while expecting, at the same time, for a more mature idea and organization of the Institute to be applied later on to a program of action such as experience would inspire as most opportune. If, on the one hand, the greatness and magnanimity of his heart had embraced the cause of so many needs, on the other he never lacked in prudence to insure good results: this is proven by his many accomplishments still extant and flourishing in this city such as the Catholic Bank of Sant'Antonino, the Institute for deaf and dumb girls, the magazine "Catechista Cattolico", etc. Would he not have equally, or even better, provided, then, for an Institution, which because of its importance, was his pet project and on which he had expended his best energies even to the sacrifice of his life? In fact, he died only a few months after his return from an extenuating visitation of the missions in Brazil as a result of such extreme overwork that would have weakened the strongest, especially considering his age and sickly condition.

It was right because of so many activities in the Catholic Apostolate, of this one especially, that much praise was attributed to him by the laity of all parties and by the clergy of all ranks up to the various Supreme Pontiffs, Pius X for one, who singled him out as a "great Bishop" in an eminent way.

But this spirit of his, which this Institute would have need of in the process of its growth, unfortunately was not inherited by succeeding governments, which, with all their good faith and intentions either did not understand at all his ideal, or lacked the ability to carry it out. And so through an uninterrupted succession of indecision and weakness they became the first, if not the only, cause of the present disorders, which they traced back to the Founder, as though blaming him for not leaving behind a definite and sure norm. But, anyone who had the opportunity to really know and study him at close range could easily see that in the whole plan of his project he had the clear and precise intention of founding, as soon as possible, the Congregation, first, in view of the most great and urgent needs, while reserving for a later date to give it whatever religious shade would best secure its scope. All his initial effort was, therefore, primarily directed to giving life to the Congregation as is proven by his ardent and relentless zeal in a tour of lectures through the greater part of the most important cities of Italy to sensitize people everywhere to the problem and gain them to his cause, by the publication of various pamphlets, by his urgent appeals for the help and support of all authorities, Holy See, Episcopate, Government, and of anyone who could or should take the cause to heart. At the same time, however, he was studying, - and we have proof of it in his various experiments under the direction of Jesuit Religious, and of Priests of the Institute itself afterwards, with a five-year term vows first, and perpetual ones later on, - which system would best fit the purpose.... leaving with his death the final solution to his successors, who did not

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respond at all. This is the plain truth, which in all respect for my superiors I am ready to stand by before any Authority! And so, instead of a prosperous life, rich with good fruits such as its Founder had envisioned, the Institute had a difficult anemic existence, deplorable under various aspects, so as to call upon itself the warnings and provisions of the Supreme Church authorities, with the hope that, in consideration of the present situation, instead of being looked upon as odious or undeserving of trust, the Institute should rather be welcomed as providential if they will help in setting it on the right road, by means of a wholesome, serious, and radical norm aimed at reaching the true scope intended by the Founder, that is, the spiritual good of the Missionaries and of the souls entrusted to them.

Though unfortunately not successful, an attempt had been made already in this direction shortly before the First General Chapter, with Fr. Vicentini as Superior General, when the authorities of "Propaganda Fide" issued a "Rule" along with a pertinent "Decree" "by way of experiment without delimitation of time." This rule, though simple, if enforced, would have been sufficient not only to keep the Institute free of so many disorders, but to also so effectively extend its beneficial fruits, as to dispose it to accept those other amendments of which the same "Decree" was speaking: "...that also other modifications be made as soon as experience may warrant (them) to be useful," in view of an eventual final approval.

Things were worse still, at the Second General Chapter, when the election of Fr. Chenuil, the present Superior General, was plotted in contradiction with the prescriptions of Canon Law outlined by his predecessor Fr. Vicentini in the Circular Letters of convocation to the Chapter. At this Chapter, modifications of all kinds were made to the "Rule" in spite of the serious objections, now fully vindicated, on the part of several Fathers, better experienced and more concerned with the good of the Institute. To these modifications, the even more arbitrary ones must be added which were introduced by the Superior at all occasions so as to lead things to utter confusion, with no idea of where it might have all ended, were it not for the timely intervention of Church Authorities, whose provisions should spell out a program of complete religious, moral, and financial restoration, in line with the original intentions of our Founder.

1. Religious: Such a strong spirit of prayer should be instilled in all as is absolutely necessary for a conscientious carrying-out of one's duties within the difficult context of our missions that it may lead us to the literal observance of Our Lord's command: "Seek out instead his kingship over you, and the rest will follow in turn!" Our Founder wanted this so badly that, among his other exacting exhortations on the subject, he had this to say, among other things, in his farewell speech on the occasion of an expedition of missionaries: "During Mass this morning I prayed to the Lord for you, and I asked him that, rather than seeing you someday fail in your priestly spirit, he make you all perish at sea." These words contain a program, but they would carry less importance today, perhaps, if we didn't know who said them. In fact, now-a-days candidates are thought, or they pretend, to be above certain dangers, actually outright strong, except, of course, for certain downfalls that will follow....or even worse still, in order to cover up their sloth, some prefer to make fun of those who are busy about their duties without giving a thought to the extremely unhappy consequences especially with regard to our young missionaries. There is no excuse for what is being said: that ours is not an Institute of monks or a Religious Congregation in a strict sense, because if the words of the Lord just quoted must hold good for a simply good Christian, how much more so should it be for one who by all means must be his teacher? And then, why not at least apply seriously and practically, what Canon Law prescribes "about the obligations of clerics" for the Diocesan clergy to which the last of priests is bound. Instead, for fear of the monastic specter we unfortunately went to the opposite extreme thus falling to a lower level than that of the purely secular clergy.

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The latter is subject, in fact, to guidance, supervision, and if need be, to sanction (as a Bishop, our Founder did not admit anyone to apply for a pastorate unless he produced proof of his weekly confession); on the contrary, our Institute is utterly neglected by all as far as its members are concerned: no wonder, then, if disorders of all kinds do happen!

Should, therefore, a good religious foundation be laid, it would also be easy to settle the other two areas, that is:

2. Moral: There must be a clear stating of reciprocal relations and obligations between members, and Superiors in the mission and outside, etc. because it is not known today by what bond we are kept together or whom we depend from.

3. Financial: As to the members, let them have all they need according to modern demands, but without acting as mercenaries towards the Mother House, the Seminary especially (either it is run in a way more or less similar to that of other institutions of this kind or let us discontinue it altogether rather than have it live an anemic existence). In fact, if it is meant to serve as a nursery for our Institute then it must be provided, not doled out, the sufficient means for its proper support and growth from the missions, especially on the part of those who had their training in our Seminary. It is only a question of justice, as it is generally done in the other seminaries and institutes. Besides, it may serve also as a means for making restitution on their part, and for continuing its task of forming new recruits on the part of the Seminary. Oh! how sad certain neglects, especially when compared with certain affluence, or even surplus, of some in the missions so much in contrast with certain privations of these young men in the seminary who are waiting the time of their vindication when in turn they, too will be in the missions....

Considering, as I mentioned before, that the main cause of the disorders is found in lack of authority and of proper directives, the restoration could be achieved with the help of the superior Authority already officially appointed by the Holy See in the person of the "Prelate of Emigration". This Prelate could act on his own authority by means of one, or more, members of the Institute judged best qualified for their proper attitude, good-will, and love for the Society, though preserving the autonomy of the Institute itself, in line with the Rule given it by the Holy See, while awaiting the new modifications thought to be most respondent to modern needs as envisioned by the relative Decree accompanying it. This way he could lead the Institute little by little to the achievement of the scope once wanted by the Founder. And all the more so for the fact that, by acknowledging through this provision the serious necessity of providing for the migratory phenomenon, the Superior Authorities supply us with an implicit proof that our Institute is needed, at a moment when this point is unfortunately being debated so much by its members. In fact, at the same time that some are in favor of its preservation, and are willing, therefore, to work wholeheartedly for its growth, others also are favorable, but only in word, to the point of singing praises to its merits, etc....while they exploit it for their own more or less ignoble interests. Finally, there are some, like the actual Superior General, who, convinced that the Institute has served its purpose already, do not foresee anything else but its end as more or less imminent. On the basis of these different attitudes one has more than enough for explaining the diversity in behavior of certain individuals, the abuses of certain others, the irregular line of action adopted lately by the Superiors especially concerning the conditions and the admission policy of the new candidates. The chaos thus brought about is such that should all the members have a general assembly nobody knows what confusion there would ensue concerning the existence of the Institute! And it would all be to the detriment of our Mission, of the members themselves, and of this seminary especially!

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I believe that the only means for a restoration stands on the determination to correct these contrasting opinions and stamp out their consequent disorders so as to reach a consensus of ideas responding to the course intended by the Holy See. It should not be all that difficult. I believe, in fact, that, once the existence of a real authority has been clearly established, the great part of the members will fall little by little in line, even though we should be ready to lose some as long as the Institute be saved and securely kept in existence. It is proven by the fact that when there is a question of direct obedience to their Ordinaries they show as much good-will towards them as is lacking, on the other hand, in the observance of their various obligations towards the Institute. This explains that difference of conduct for which our Institute is generally enjoying a good name in the dioceses where our missionaries exercise their ministry while, at the same time, being less concerned about the internal life of the Institute, also entitled to a like, if not more stringent, respect. This is so true that, having trouble as Provincial Superior in the missions with certain individuals who were playing this trick on me, in desperation over the situation I myself had recourse one day to the Archbishop and through his authority I could secure the backing I was not getting from the Institute; and all this, mind you, for the good of the individuals, etc....

As I told Card. De Lai, so I tell you now, Rev. Sir, that the thread of it all, though seemingly so entangled, is to be traced back in great part to the moral tone of this seminary. Not that its life of discipline and prayer is lacking; as a matter of fact, it is quite orderly, even close to exemplary! It springs, rather, out of the students' conviction that life in the mission, though one of hard work, is at the same time a life of uncontrolled and unrestrained freedom. Unfortunately, this idea is being drilled into their heads by the hardly praiseworthy deeds of various missionaries who are thus responsible for undoing wholly or in part whatever good start the candidates may have received in the seminary.

Among the many examples proving this point, I can produce a most recent one, right of these days, concerning a certain missionary. As a student he had constantly been one of the best both for study and discipline, but as soon as he became a priest and was sent to the missions he quickly showed himself to be of quite a different spirit.

Any effort for a serious formation would be futile if, at the same time, nothing is done to reform the religious and moral spirit of the missions. This, in turn, could influence this seminary and help create in it the moral environment, which may convince the seminarians that the discipline of the seminary, though under different forms, must follow and sustain them also in the mission field. Otherwise, in spite of all good dispositions, resolves, and resolutions, even the most orderly life of this seminary turns out to be a mockery. Actually, even with good, sometime excellent, elements, we run the risk of having wolves rather than missionaries; and so, with all the many exhortations we impart to them, they will still keep answering, and worse yet, practicing: "in the missions we will do like the rest."

Things will continue down this road, actually disorders will get worse, exposing themselves as the missionaries do, especially the young, to ruin and all its consequences, while they could be doing so much good for themselves and others, were they only set on the right track. I say on the right course because right on it stands the whole secret of the missionaries' success in their field of work, unless they be priests of mature age, already, and of proven good conduct. Indeed, right was then that holy soul, Card. Massaia, in demanding of his friars, though of the strict observance, the test of the field of work in preference to that of the monastery...., how much more so for those who are not of a strict observance. In fact, with all the most perfect formation and the best and holiest dispositions, should the young missionaries be left without the support of a good guidance, they

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will shortly make the most shocking blunders, as is proven by so many young priests and religious who, though among the best in all respects in Italy, have come to a miserable end later on in the missions because of the lack of it.... An excuse is found in the great need; but, no matter how great the need, it can never warrant the danger, etc. There is also the need to know whether a missionary be fit or not for a certain job so that parts may not be inverted: to have the flock, that is, keeping an eye on the priest instead of the priest taking care of the flock. In cases like this it is much better to abandon a position than run the risk of placing the missionary in jeopardy. This is so true that, made wise by sad experience, many Bishops prefer to leave the people deprived of any spiritual assistance rather than send them priests about whom they do not have sufficient proof to rely on. In conclusion: as I already told the Superior General and various confreres, on my part I am ready to say it again to your Lordship and to any other authority, if need be, even by writing a memorandum, should it become necessary, on the matter thus to bring proof apt to confirm my assertions. I deem it my duty in conscience to present my proposals:

- a) Either the radical reform I mentioned above: it would be quite possible, though not without difficulties and sacrifices, should it even be at the cost of losing missionaries and missions. It is, in fact, preferable that we suffer a decrease rather than we should remain in a state of confusion. Besides, as long as we do our work in the right spirit, the Good Lord will generously compensate, if He so pleases, for the losses. Of course, this program is likely to succeed only by resorting to the good system of a prudent and strong government aimed only at the objective of saving the Institute by giving it the moral and religious structure the Holy See demands of more or less similar Institutes.
- b) Or the prompt suppression of the Institute in order to forestall further, and perhaps worse, evils....

And so you have, Most Reverend Father, what my experience taught me in my more than twenty years in the missions of North and South America, both as a simple missionary and as a Provincial Superior, but especially lately as Rector of this Seminary. Right here I found the solution to the riddle I had become aware of in the missions on account of the variance between the education, though so good, received by candidates in this house and the practical life of the same in the missions, not all respondent to expectations....

On your forthcoming visit it is my intention to inform you in greater detail and add all other information deemed necessary for you to have a correct idea of everything.

May the Lord grant that the enlightened zeal of your most Reverend Lordship, to whom the Highest Church Authority has entrusted this important task, be able to find the most opportune means for restoring an Institute that is destined to do much good for so many of our unfortunate fellow countrymen, so that it may indeed respond to the plan of God to His glory and for the salvation of souls (....).

P.S. Remarks

1. With the expressions and recriminations, harsh perhaps, of my report, I do not intend at all to put any real blame on anyone:
 - a. either on the two Superiors Vicentini and Chenuil; not only did they always act with the best of intentions, but in the careful exercise of their responsibilities, they had also met with so many afflictions and sacrifices as would have them often wish for the end of their tenure. Still, if they did not succeed, it is only due, as is also admitted by various confreres, to lack of those exceptional skills required for a task of this kind, especially in

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consideration of the critical circumstances in which they had to operate.

- b. Or on the missionaries: even though a number of them deviated from the observance of their duties, the blame for this must be put on the environment in which they lived rather than on real ill will. This is why I affirmed, and always will, the absolute need that we start working with determination and energy, though with consideration and prudence, on correcting this environment.
2. It is not my intention to give advice to the Authorities by any of my declarations, but just to bring to their attention, on the basis of my experience and knowledge, what could be the best way towards a restoration, by the principle of authority and by wise directives. Of course, more by the latter than the first, since the Holy See had been convinced for quite a while that it had already provided a remedy with the above-mentioned Rule, etc. although nothing useful, came from it, but matters only got worse because the law without enforcement is ineffective.

And I say so for an even greater reason. I hear, in fact, from various confreres that they place their hope for the salvation of our Institute entirely in the intervention of the Holy See, perhaps anticipating, or maybe deceiving themselves, that with a new and better "Rule" things would be set aright. In the meantime, no matter how humiliating (if such is the knowledge of oneself), within our Institute there is no longer any solid principle of authority, regardless of any help that may come from changes or elections, etc., according to the present conditions of the Institute.

This is my opinion which is shared also by other confreres."²⁷

Fr. Cimino made the visitation to the Mother House in November 1923. Already by then, the group of the "clerics", the so-called "grown-ups", appeared to be morally guided by "Francesco", that is the cleric Francesco Tirondola. Resolved to save the Institute, they all agreed to be on the defensive.

The Diary of the Mother House says:

"He remained with us two or three days. His unexpected visit has indeed put a scare into the "grown-ups" who suspected, therefore, something dreadful for the seminary. We had a celebration in honor of the Apostolic Visitor Friday. "Francesco" read a brief address, and then, shortly before the end of the dinner, he invited all to stand and sing the anthem of the Institute.

The Most Rev. Visitor answered taking the hint from the words of the anthem: 'Let no one desert the sacred standard!' Let us hope Francesco's words may have left their mark on his mind and serve as a reminder of our unconditional and resolute allegiance to the missionary ideal of Bishop Scalabrini. Except for this modest demonstration, we did not give his visitation any special sign of solemnity not even in the food; at no other meal did we dispense with silence. The Visitor had called in each one of the "grown-ups" for an interview, but they all agreed not to say anything that might jeopardize the good of the seminary. They agreed also to avoid all criticism of the Rector, and the Visitor congratulated him highly."²⁸

²⁷ Draft of Fr. Preti's Report to Cimino, Piacenza, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 541/16).

²⁸ Diary of Mother House, Vol. 1, page 21 (Arch. G.S., 541).

4. The Decisions of the Holy See following the First Apostolic Visitation

To better understand the development of succeeding events, we must fix our attention on the group of clerics of Piacenza that played a role of primary importance in the salvation of the Scalabrinian Institute from impending extinction.

Evidently, credit for its salvation must not be given exclusively to this group, which could not have survived without the support of the missionaries; it was right in this group however, that the Holy See found the shoot whose growth would have insured continuity for the Institute in accordance with the scope and the original spirit.

The situation those clerics were dealing with is described for us by one of them:

"When Bishop Scalabrini died, the General Chapter was called together to elect the Superior General. The choice fell on Fr. Domenico Vicentini. The 'Statutes' also were modified, and the vows were done away with and substituted with an oath of fidelity. To avoid abuses, each missionary was assigned the stipend of ten Mases for his own personal needs.

Fr. Vicentini, sharing Bishop Scalabrini's idea on the necessity of the seminary and against the opinion of many, did not allow it to be closed down even though the funds of the Institute amounted to barely seven thousand liras. The seminary did have a rather difficult existence due to scarcity of means and to the steady changing of Rectors. And so we arrived at the year 1912.

For total lack of propaganda, our Institute was unknown to all... It was at this time that due to an increase of remittances from the missionaries, Fr. Domenico Vicentini deemed it opportune to give a new impulse to the Seminary by opening a minor seminary. On suggestion by Bishop Pellizzari of Piacenza, Crespano del Grappa was chosen as its site. The building cost one hundred thousand liras.

It began operating in October 1914 under the direction of Frs. Francesco Brescianini and Giovanni Capello, and with the assistants at the local parish Frs. Pio Sartori and Agostino Lazzarin, as teachers.

The latter of these two became, later on, a Scalabrinian missionary. On May 24, 1915, war broke out between Austria and Italy.... In May 1916 Austria launched a strong offensive against the Italian lines in the region of the 'Sette Comuni' and took Asiago. Fr. Brescianini did not deem it prudent to remain at Crespano; so he asked for, and obtained, permission to transfer the students of the minor seminary to Piacenza. Of the 24 students in that seminary only one, Fr. Guglielmo Pizzoglio, persevered and became a missionary. The war had its impact also on Bishop Scalabrini's Institute. Admission of new recruits was suspended; a number of young students were called to arms; two of them, in fact, Natale Pigato of Longa (Vicenza), and Giovanni Bisinella of Cartigliano (Vicenza), died in action.

The few that remained had also to suffer hunger. Cabbages were grown in the garden, instead of flowers....

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When the armistice was reached, the General Chapter was convoked for September 1919. There was much hope that a great revival might be given to the seminary, but it was a disappointment for all.

Elected were:

Fr. Pacifico Chenuil - Sup. General

Fr. Massimo Rinaldi - Procurator General (the future Bishop of Rieti)

Fr. Domenico Vicentini - General Councilor

Fr. Giuseppe Martini - General Councilor and Rector of the Mother House

Twenty years a very zealous pastor in the United States, Fr. Pacifico Chenuil knew full well the urgent needs of the Scalabrinian missions so short of trustworthy personnel and in the hands of a salaried clergy, often of doubtful morals. He deemed it opportune, therefore, to make it easy for diocesan priests to join the Institute. To this end, the small allowance of ten Mass stipends was increased also to prevent abuses and establishing equality between pastors and assistants. Within four years as many as 38 priests were admitted to Bishop Scalabrini's Institute, and so the parishes could dismiss many assistants until then ill tolerated by force of circumstances.

When the United States enacted the law restricting Italian immigration, convinced that the Italian parishes would cease to exist within 20 years, Fr. Chenuil considered it superfluous, or useless, to bear the heavy cost of the seminary and he decided to suspend immediately and forever admission of new vocations, dismissed the three students accepted in 1921 and 1922, ordered the 15 theologians and philosophers to complete their studies, and implicitly, to weather the extinction of the Institute in the work field.

It was decided to leave each missionary free to decide whether he wished to spend his last years on his own or at a house of the Institute. In the meanwhile, he had a house built in "Via Calandrelli" on the Janiculum, at the cost of one million liras, to serve as "General Quarters" and as a future shelter for whoever intended to retire there some day. Ill resigned to the slow agony of the seminary and to the inevitable extinction of the Institute, with the right intention of preventing it, to the objections of the Superior General concerning the excessive amount of money needed for the support of the Seminary, Fr. Martini responded with limiting the expenses economizing even in food and clothing.

Finding his position as rector unbearable he resigned, and though old, he returned to Brazil. He was succeeded by Fr. Enrico Preti, a most active missionary, back from Rio Grande do Sul to recuperate. In the meantime, two boys, Stanislao Fiscarelli and Ruggero D'Agostino, both of Circello, were recommended to Fr. Chenuil by the Hon. Petriella, the People's Party representative of Benevento. Fr. Chenuil could not say no, and so he entrusted them, in turn, to Fr. Preti.

It was the spark. Without asking permission, Fr. Preti admitted six more, and the following year the new recruits rose to 26.

Too numerous, the students were not granted access to classes at the diocesan seminary; teaching was then carried out at home. All Religious Orders and Institutes had begun work on conforming their constitutions to

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the Code of Canon Law, but the Scalabrinian Superiors delayed action, thus provoking an Apostolic Visitation of the Institute, which was also called for by the frequent recourse superiors and missionaries to the Sacred Consistorial Congregation over internal differences and over problems of administration. The Apostolic Visitator was appointed in the person of Fr. Cimino, O.F.M., later on an Archbishop and Apostolic Nuncio to Mexico first, and then to Peru, who passed away at sea on his way back from there. He sent out a special circular letter to all the missionaries asking for the needed information. At the end he sent such a disastrous report to the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, that the dissolution of the Institute was expected from day to day. On November 22, 1922, he made the visitation at Piacenza personally. He was greatly impressed and sent back an excellent report, but, due to the turn the Institute was taking, he delayed the ordination to the Sub-diaconate of the eight clerics who had made their retreat already and were supposed to be ordained on the 30th of the same month.

On "Via della Scrofa" in Rome, the so-called "Pius X College" had been opened since 1914 to gather priests and give them a year's training, some kind of novitiate, and then send them to the various communities of Italian migrants at the Bishop's request. Should they be satisfied with their assignment they could apply for incardination to their respective diocese; otherwise, at the end of a five-year term, they could return to their Ordinaries who would have considered their service as given to the diocese.

When Pius X was still living, the College had been offered to the Scalabrinian missionaries; Fr. Gambera was supposed to be its Rector, but Fr. Vicentini, Superior General, who was not too enthusiastic about it, declined all responsibility at the last moment. With the passing of Pius X and the beginning of the war, things remained as is now; negotiations were resumed after the armistice. Cardinal DeLai was very much in favor of it.

A Bishop for Migrants was appointed in the person of Msgr. Cerrati. On his death, a few years later, he was substituted with a simple Prelate: Msgr. Beltrame.

A good number of priests entered it from the various regions of Italy; not a few of them crossed Alps and Oceans, but results did not respond to expectations. There was no bond, no formation; it was soon realized that, though providential in itself, this institution was only a momentary expedient intended to provide for the immediate and urgent needs, which, however, could not last. There was need of a seminary to train young men.

There was a Seminary in Piacenza, it had been found well directed and with the right spirit, why, then, think of another one? As a whole, the Bishops of America were satisfied with the Scalabrinian missionaries, their reports were good, the missionaries were doing their work, their differences and accusations were only from person to person on the internal level. Rather than start anew, Card. DeLai deemed it better to build on Bishop Scalabrini's Institution as the one already in possession of a seminary, to weed out the unfit, to improve, to give new life to the seminary of Piacenza. To achieve this, he dispatched as Visitator to Piacenza Msgr. Raffaello Rossi, Assessor at the Consistorial Congregation, naming Msgr. Cicognani, at the same time, as Substitute Visitator of the missions in America. On his arrival

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at Piacenza, Msgr. Rossi questioned all the clerics one by one, was satisfied with the way things were going, and - something Fr. Cimino could not detect because of the silence of all - he noticed that if things were so it was due to the Cleric Francesco Tirondola, who had been twelve years a lay Brother with the Sons of the Sacred Heart (African missionaries).

The first good result of this providential visitation - of which he gave an excellent report to Card. De Lai on his return to Rome - was that the eight clerics of the fourth year of theology should immediately be admitted to the Sacred Order of Sub-diaconate."²⁹

The most disconcerting aspect of the testimonies here reported is that they confirm the suspicion we get in studying the figure of Fr. Chenuil, which would be more than sufficient to explain his course of action: perhaps, the Superior General was one of those who did not believe in the vitality of, and the need for, the Scalabrinian Society; after all, the measures the Holy See seemed inclined to adopt seemed in line with his expectations. The Institute would have been left to wither away by itself. There are some who maintain that the main reason why the same Fr. Chenuil and the Provincial Superior of the United States, where disorders in administration mostly took place, showed such weakness in government was that they were afraid of "being accused of the same faults."

The following were the conclusions arrived at by Fr. Cimino: the Institute of the Missionaries of Saint Charles has suffered a marked setback especially at the hands of the priests "flung" into America without preparation. In his opinion it would have been opportune, therefore, to have the seminary of Piacenza and the priests, who were truly inspired by the spirit of Bishop Scalabrini, pass under the immediate jurisdiction of the Migration Prelate, and to send the others back to their respective dioceses.

Fr. Cimino's report was presented to the Sacred Consistorial Congregation on December 13, 1923. The "Plenary Meeting" of the same Sacred Consistorial Congregation was called together on February 21, 1924. It proposed presenting to the Pope the opinion that he should publish a "Decree" by which the Scalabrinian Institute would be made to become a part of the Institutions for Migrants dependent on the Consistorial Congregation, with the evident intention of letting it wither away little by little by itself without the need for a public act of suppression. In fact, Fr. Pacifico Chenuil, the Superior General, would have had to relinquish his office into the hands of the "Migration Prelate", who would be given the task of placing the Scalabrinian missionaries on the same level with the priests coming from the "Pontifical Migration College." The same fate would have practically befallen the clerics studying at Piacenza once they were ordained. Their temporal goods were to be "frozen" at the disposal of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation.³⁰

After submitting this opinion to Pius XI, on March 26, 1924, the Secretary

²⁹ Note of Fr. A. Corso, 1930 (?) (Arch. G.S., 24/2).

³⁰ Bishop Caliaro "La Pia Società dei Missionari di San Carlo per gli Italiani Emigrati"(Rome, 1956), pp. 122-123.

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of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation sent the following Circular to all Scalabrinians:

"For your norm and government, I have the task of letting you know that at a recent "Plenary Meeting" all the acts of the Apostolic Visitation conducted by Fr. Cimino of the work and Institute of the Scalabrinians have been carefully examined. With the full approval of the Holy Father, it has been decided that the Sacred Consistorial Congregation take direct charge of this Institute and its work with the understanding, however, that the Statutes and rules now in use remain for the time being unchanged. Consequently, for all matters concerning the houses of the Scalabrinian Institute, correspondence must be addressed from now on to the undersigned Secretary of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation. However, Fr. Massimo Rinaldi, shall continue managing matters concerning the administration, with Fr. Chenuil as local Superior of the house in Rome and as Procurator General of the Scalabrinian Institute with the Sacred Consistorial Congregation."³¹

To the Rector of the Mother House, Cardinal De Lai added:

"While sending you information of this for your norm and government, I must add that, having learned from the Visitation with what great spirit and good results you direct that seminary, this Sacred Congregation has decided not only to keep you in your office, but exhorts you, as well, to persevere in it with an ever greater zeal, diligence, and love.

Furthermore, concerning any urgent material need, you may have recourse to me, while Fr. Rinaldi stays on as head of the administration and Fr. Chenuil as Superior of the house in Rome.

You shall tell your young men, especially those about to complete their studies, not to worry about their future because they will be properly provided for.

God willing, I myself will come with the blessing of the Holy Father to visit the seminary. I will let you know when ahead of time, asking you in the meantime to keep it a top secret."³²

From the content of these two documents we understand that the proposals contained in the "opinion" of the "Plenary Meeting" of the Consistorial Congregation had been substantially attenuated by the Supreme Pontiff. In fact, nothing is said in them anymore about dependence on the "Prelate for Migration" and neither is there any allusion to the hypothesis of equating Scalabrinians to the priests of the "Pontifical Migration College." A proposal of this kind, both in intention and in its logical consequence, would have meant the implicit suppression of the Institute. It was only decided, instead, that the Institute should be placed under the direct jurisdiction of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation; this way, the Cardinal Secretary of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation became the Superior General of the Institute.

³¹ Card. DeLai, Circular, Rome, March 26, 1924 (Arch. G.S., 24/2).

³² Card. DeLai to Preti, Rome, March 8, 1924 (Arch. G.S., 541/19).

CHAPTER II

REORGANIZATION: PHASE ONE

1. Under the Direct Jurisdiction of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation

Consequently to the decisions taken by the Holy See in March 1924, the Scalabrinian Institute passed under the direction, not only internal but external as well, of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation. Cardinal Gaetano DeLai, Secretary of the same Congregation, was therefore the fourth Superior General of the Scalabrinians from March 1924 to October 24, 1928, the date of his death.

Relieved of his office, Fr. Chenuil was appointed, as we have mentioned already, local superior of the house in Rome and General Procurator of the Scalabrinian Congregation with the Consistorial Congregation. The former Superior General suggested that the Superior of the house in Rome be given the title of Vicar General of the Institute:

"As a link between missionaries and the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, this Vicar should limit himself to transmitting the communications of the General Government to the various houses and to reporting at the same time to the Congregation the various matters referred to him by the missionaries. In any case, each missionary remains free to correspond directly with the General Government of the Institute without having to go through the Vicar General. In this way, without possessing any authority of his own, the Vicar General would serve as an intermediary in transmitting to the single missionaries the orders of the Sacred Congregation, he would be the faithful executor of the directives sent out by the same Congregation, and while making its task easier, he would represent a most effective means for keeping ever stronger the unity that must exist between the members of the Institute."¹

On April 11, 1924, the Pope decided for the title of Procurator General. Other forms of intervention on the part of Fr. Chenuil as intermediary between the Consistorial Congregation, like the sending out of a circular letter to the confreres to explain the situation and give them advice, were also written off, so that all might understand that he had no longer any governing authority, and also because he was not thought to be the person best apt to give advice to others.

On April 28, 1924, Archbishop Raffaello Carlo Rossi arrived at Piacenza for the visitation of the Motherhouse. He had been appointed assessor to the Sacred Consistorial Congregation on June 7, 1923, and had begun soon afterwards to take the destinies of the Scalabrinian Institute to heart.

In April the Diary of the Motherhouse reports:

"28 - We had been notified of it two or three days ago, and tonight, sent by the

¹ Letter Chenuil to Card. DeLai, Rome, April 11, 1924 (Arch. G.S., 25/2).

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Pope, Archbishop Raffaello Carlo Rossi of Thessalonica, Assessor to the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, arrived at our Seminary. Francesco Tirondola met him at the station and the community welcomed him lined up in two files down the hall from the entrance. On entering the hall with the Rector he exclaimed: 'What a beautiful community!'

We all knelt to kiss his ring, and then we applauded the Pope's envoy with a loud 'long live' and an ovation (...)."

"30 - His Excellency called on the Bishop for a visit of protocol and remained with him for dinner. He also visited his religious confreres, the Carmelites. By evening, His Excellency spoke briefly to the whole community gathered in the chapel. He talked about our missionary scope exhorting us to perseverance and opening our hearts to good hopes for our Institute. Immediately after this, we gave start to the month of May with Rosary and singing of the Litany, followed by solemn benediction at the altar of the Immaculate. His Excellency also assisted. After supper, the community gathered around him and he stayed to converse with us. He showed us a great benevolence, and told us amusing stories. At the close of the recreation we sang the anthem of the Institute, and His Excellency congratulated Pizzoglio (Guglielmo) for composing the music. He will depart tonight leaving us with the memory of his singular kindness. He took notice of everything and he showed himself to be a true man of God. He wanted to talk to the 'grown-ups' (clerics) individually."²

Archbishop Rossi's visitation was conducted, then, in a quite different atmosphere than that of Fr. Cimino, and quite different were also its immediate results. On the May 5, Card. DeLai wrote to Fr. Preti:

"It is not without deep satisfaction that this Sacred Congregation has come to know how that seminary be now flourishing not so much for the number of students as rather for the spirit of prayer and discipline characterizing it, no less than for the good spirit of all seminarians. While rejoicing with Your Lordship over all this, this Sacred Congregation strongly exhorts the seminarians to continue on the way of virtue and perfection for the good of their souls and in view of the ministry to which they are proximately or remotely preparing themselves. And now, turning his solicitous attention to the most urgent needs of the seminary, this Sacred Congregation, while reserving the right to provide at the opportune time for all things that will contribute to an ever better administration of the Institute, imparts the following instructions:

- a) Sacred Ordinations. Those young men shall be soon admitted to tonsure and Holy Orders, who, possessing respectively the requirements demanded by the Sacred Canons, will so wish and submit regular petition to be ordained. Let all those, therefore, who are to be found thus ready, send with solicitude their petition to this Sacred Congregation as required by Canon #993, 1-4 (...).
- b) Admission of New Postulants. Should other young men wish to enter the Institute, their applications may be accepted and then sent, together with the opportune documents, to this Sacred Congregation, to which belongs

² "Diary of Mother House", 1921-1925, pp. 24-25 (Arch. G.S., 541).

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the right to decide on their admission."³

Directed to Fr. Preti, who for reasons of health had requested to be relieved of his office as rector, proposing as his successor either Fr. Dominic Canestrini or the Cleric Francesco Tirondola⁴ Archbishop Rossi added the following note:

"I ask you also to send us direct, special, and thorough information on the life, qualities, etc... of Francesco Tirondola and your opinion on the following point: 'Whether, upon relinquishing your office, the said Tirondola could be put in charge of that seminary, for the time being, at least, following his ordination as a priest.'"⁵

In the report of his visit to Piacenza, the Archbishop had noted that the cleric Tirondola, age 37, was already the coadjutor of Fr. Preti, the soul of the seminary, the trusted friend of his companions, the fatherly guide of minor seminarians. He had found there 15 students of theology, 4 in philosophy, and 41 in high school.

The clerics were aware of the situation of the Institute, discouraged and neglected by the Superior General: yet - he pointed out - they would have deserved to be attended to and helped because they were indeed virtuous and full of good will. Their dominant wish was that the Institute might live and preserve its nature as a congregation, that the vows or the oath were reinstated. They would never consent to giving assistance to migrants as secular priests, even if depending on the Holy See. Though in contrast with that of the Superior General, this desire of theirs - the Assessor of the Consistorial Congregation continues - was worth considering because they represented the real hope of the Institute. Lastly, he praised their order, piety, discipline, and serious application to studies, suggesting that they acquaint themselves with the languages of the mission lands and be gradually initiated into their special vocation.⁶

At the audience granted to Card. DeLai on May 9, Pope Pius XI made known his satisfaction with the report and approved the proposals suggested.⁷ Finally, on June 3, 1924, Archbishop Rossi sent out the dimissorial letters, so ardently expected, for the ordinations of the seminarians:

"By order of His Eminence the Card. Secretary of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, I am sending you in a separate envelope the dimissorial letters, which you shall present to the Bishop of Piacenza that he may deign to admit the following seminarians of that seminary to the Orders of:

- a) Subdiaconate: Francesco Tirondola, Luigi Pedrazzani, Alfredo Antonelli, Angelo Corso, Giuseppe Chiminello, Giuseppe Lazzeri, Remigio Pigato, Luigi Bolzan.
- b) Exorcists and Acolytes: Antonio Cogo, Sante Bernardi, Francesco Prevedello.

³ Card. DeLai to E. Preti, Rome, May 5, 1924 (Arch. G.S., 541/17).

⁴ Cfr. E. Preti to DeLai, Piacenza, March 25, 1924 and April 2, 1924 (Arch. G.S., 541/17).

⁵ R.C. Rossi to E. Preti, Rome, May 6, 1924 (Arch. G.S., 541/17).

⁶ From Notes extant in Archives G.S., 541/17.

⁷ Ibidem

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- c) Porter and Lector: Ugo Cavicchi.
- d) to First Tonsure: Guglielmo Pizzoglio, Pietro Rigo

It is understood that all these clerics must prepare themselves with a retreat as prescribed by Canon Law, at the close of which they shall take the Oath required by the Rule, Chapter VII, #3, according to the formula in use."⁸

After the taking of the perpetual oath of perseverance on June 14, 1924, ordinations were conferred by Bishop Ersilio Menzani of Piacenza. A few days later, Francesco Tirondola could write as follows to Fr. Demo:

"Following the storm endured by our Institute that seemed to submerge all things, calm has been restored, and so we entertain high hopes for the future (...); we deem it our duty, therefore, to inform you about what has happened lately. The last visitation of this house on the part of Rome was conducted by Archbishop Rossi of Thessalonica, Assessor to the Consistorial Congregation, in the last days of April. He was with us two full days and he remained very well impressed not so much by the number of the students, which the Holy See hopes will increase,(we are some sixty seminarians, at this moment), as rather by their good spirit and discipline. Following the Visitor's return to Rome, Card. DeLai, on whose authority this house now depends, imparted us the following directives:

- I. Proceed to the Ordinations as soon as possible. So, eight of us were ordained sub-deacons, five in the minor orders, and one received first tonsure; fourteen in all.*
- II. Vacations: the first fifteen days shall be spent with the family; all together at Crespano, the rest.*
- III. New Vocations: as many as possible shall be accepted, so that the desire your Paternity expressed when you were here of reaching one hundred may be fulfilled.*
- IV. Oath of Perseverance: All shall take the oath of perseverance in the first year of theology as required by the Rule and according to the new directives the Holy See may deem it opportune to impart in the future. And so, the bond remains that will keep us united and our Community will be a separate entity. Archbishop Rossi said also that in all our needs we must have recourse from now on to the Consistorial Congregation. With this, he adds, they do not intend to preclude the possibility that a number elected from among us may be appointed in the future to head our Institute.*

As you can see, Most Reverend Father, there is indeed ample reason for rejoicing! In spite of all machinations of men, the Institute of Bishop Scalabrini will live and prosper; God wills it!"⁹

Francesco Tirondola, Luigi Pedrazzani, Angelo Corso, Giuseppe Chiminello, Giuseppe Lazzeri, Alfredo Antonelli, Remigio Pigato and Luigi Bolzan were ordained deacons on August 3, and priests on September 7, 1924, by Bishop Elia Dalla Costa of Padua at Crespano del Grappa.

On October 17 of the same year, the Pope approved the appointment of Fr.

⁸ R.C. Rossi to E. Preti, Rome, March 6, 1924 (Arch. G.S., 541/17).

⁹ Tirondola to A. Demo, Piacenza, June 26, 1924 (Provincial Archive, New York).

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Francesco Tirondola as Pro-Rector of the Motherhouse. And so that first step towards the internal settlement of the Institute was thought to have been taken which witnessed the immediate growth of the number of vocations: by the beginning of the school year 1924-1925 there were about eighty of them.

In the meantime, the Holy See adopted another measure, also destined to reassess Fr. Cimino's visitation. By a Rescript of August 7, 1924, Pope Pius XI appointed Msgr. Amleto G. Cicognani, Substitute to the Consistorial Congregation, as Apostolic Visitor of the Scalabrinians in the U.S.A., and by a Rescript, dated on August 16, he named Fr. Giuseppe A. da San Giovanni in Persiceto (Msgr. Bussolari), Minister General of the Capuchins, as Visitor of Scalabrinians in Brazil.

Msgr. Cicognani conducted the Visitation in the United States from August 27 to October 11, 1924. From what we could ascertain Msgr. Cicognani's reports of were substantially positive.

"At close range one can see how many things were ill reported." This is the phrase that could well sum up the favorable impressions of the Visitor.

"I see, now" - the same substitute declared - "that the Cardinal's decision to save the Institute was most wise: we have good, excellent elements, here, and more than useful for assisting the many Italians. While Scalabrinians are faithful to the Spirit of the Founder, I would deem them preferable to many others who came here to try their luck." Likewise, in spite of the very bad declarations made to him by Archbishop Duarte Leopoldo e Silva of São Paulo, the report of the Visitation carried out in 1925 by Fr. Giuseppe A. da San Giovanni in Persiceto in Brazil was sufficiently positive. The main trouble encountered in the visitations of the missions was the disregard for the Rule. *"They are neither fish, nor fowl, nor good red herring"*, a certain Bishop told Msgr. Cicognani. As members of a Pious Society in their community life of discipline Scalabrinians should have been obeying the internal authorities of the Institute, but these, as Frs. Vicentini and Chenuil were steadily complaining, were practically destitute of all authority. The Bishops' authority was limited to external discipline and pastoral action and it could not interfere with internal questions of discipline. The first concern of the Consistorial Congregation was, therefore, to restore authority and discipline, something that took place almost automatically with the passing of the Institute under the direct jurisdiction of the same Congregation.

2. The Statutes of 1925.

We call to mind that in July 1924 Card. DeLai had asked the Sacred Congregation for Religious for a response on the legitimacy of the modifications made to the Rule of 1908 by the General Chapter in 1919, and that, upon ascertaining the unlawfulness of these modifications, the Secretary of that Congregation had suggested to take this as the occasion for reforming the Rule

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in conformity with the new Code of Canon Law.¹⁰

Following this response, on August 1, 1924, the Pope charged Card. DeLai with asking Abbot Mauro Serafini, Secretary of the Congregation for Religious, to prepare the draft of a Rule in accord with the prescriptions of the Code and with the conditions of the Scalabrinian Institute. In January 1925, Abbot Serafini presented the first draft of the Rule which was extensively and minutely revised, even rewritten in some parts, by Archbishop Rossi.

After recalling that the previous Rule had been approved in 1908, the Decree of Approval, signed by Cardinal De Lai on March 19, 1925, added:

“Since it became necessary to introduce some modifications due to changed circumstances and to the publication of the Code of Canon Law, the Supreme Pontiff Pius XI ordered the revision of the Statutes of the above mentioned Pious Society: approved and confirmed by His Holiness himself, they are hereby made public and definitely promulgated by the present Decree.”¹¹

In May 1925, the Statutes were sent out to the Scalabrinians. Cardinal DeLai accompanied the copies to Frs. Quaglia and Fani, Regional Superiors of the U.S.A., with the following letter:

“I am sending out to you through the new Scalabrinian missionaries the Statutes of the Pious Society. I do not know how to better accompany them than with the words of St. Benedict to his sons, words I address to my dear Scalabrinians with the heart of a Father: *“Listen, my sons, to your teacher's commands, pay attention to, willingly accept, and effectively carry out the admonition of your Father.”*

Repeat these words individually to all, and tell them that each paragraph has been the object of a special study with particular attention to the holy ideal of their Pious Founder Bishop Scalabrini, to their previous Rule, and to the new Code of Canon Law. If by virtue of my office I have to busy myself about all the missionaries for migrants, I must devote special care to the Scalabrinians just entrusted to me by the Holy Father; nothing else do I more greatly desire than to glory in them, in their ministry and apostolate in foreign lands, in those dioceses of America, where the need for good priests is so great. This Pious Society takes its name after St. Charles Borromeo under whose protection your Venerated Founder has desired to place it. Let all members put on, therefore, and carefully imitate the high virtues of this Saint. Filled with this spirit, which is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, they will be example and salvation for their parishioners, for all the faithful, and for Protestants themselves, and above all, acquire on earth an incorruptible crown of merits and glory for heaven. In the reports I have examined, seeing that everyone is concerned about their support, material needs, monthly allowance, and by a criterion of equality, respondent to the hopes of the majority, I have decided what must be done about this matter with Article 28. Excepting future modifications, in regard to the monthly allowance I hereby decree the following for North America. All differences, the so-called Christmas, Easter, or other bonuses, must cease; each priest shall receive an allowance of \$50.00 a month, one of

¹⁰ Cfr. above Chapter I.

¹¹ "Statuti della Pia Società dei Missionari dei San Carlo per gli Italiani Emigrati" (Rome, 1925), p. 3.

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\$25.00 the Brothers. Needless to say, I demand in all this an exact observance on which an annual report shall be sent to me in accordance with Art. 100.

The new Fathers are coming to you with an ardent desire to work in the vineyard of the Lord, while the many seminarians of Piacenza are preparing themselves with equal fervor.

Let each one, young and old, set a good example and edification for their confreres in faithful obedience to the Statutes, while for this I implore on all of you the Divine assistance and bestow my blessing with religious affection."¹²

The Scalabrinian Bishop Marco Caliaro of Sabina and Porto Mirteto, offers the following analysis of the new Statutes:

"Various are the changes made in the Statutes. First of all, they ratify the dependence of the Pious Society from the Sacred Consistorial Congregation. In fact, Art. 1, Chapter 1, says: 'The Pious Society of the Missionaries of Saint Charles for Italian Emigrants is constituted under the High Authority of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation.' (The Statutes do not speak of direct dependence of the Pious Society from the Consistorial Congregation. In fact, they say that 'it is constituted at the immediate dependence from a Superior General appointed by the same Sacred Congregation,' (art. cit.) This leads one to understand that in the future the Institute would be given a government of its own.) The scope of the Institute, instead, and the means to obtain it, remained unchanged. (Among the various tasks of the missionaries there is no longer any mention of the assistance to emigrants aboard ships crossing the Oceans This is explained by the fact that in 1923 Pius XI had entrusted this task to the care of the Priests of the Pontifical College for Emigration, which, like the Pious Society, was at the direct dependence from the Consistorial Congregation...).

Chapter II specifies who the members of the Pious Society are, which ones are their tasks, the order of precedence, the position of the Brothers, and the habit.

Chapter III, regarding the "Admission of Postulants", repeats the norms of the 1908 Rule, but adapted to the new discipline established by canons 677, 542-544.

Chapter IV, regarding "Novitiate", analogically to canons 555, 559, 560 and 565, gives detailed directives on how to prepare postulants for the Oath of Perseverance.

Chapter V, regarding the "Admission and Duties of Members", sets down the conditions for admission to the Oath of Perseverance by which young men are allowed to join the Pious Society. In it, the consequences of the oath concerning temporal goods and common life are also specified.

In Chapter VI, the General Order of Studies and of Sacred Ordinations is entirely governed in accordance with the common law which also confirms as title for the ordination that of *Mensae Communis* 'by special permission of the Holy See.'

Chapter VII, regarding "Community Acts and Prayer" calls back and gives full force to the prescriptions of the Rules of 1888 and 1895.

¹² DeLai to Quaglia and Fani, Rome, May 5, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 131/1).

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All matters concerning the exercise of the sacred ministry in the missions, already present in the previous Rules, is updated according to the common law (Canons 631; 533, #1, #4; 535, #3, No. 2 and 630) in Chapter VIII, on the "Departure of the Missionaries and their stay in the Missions".

The Chapter following concerns both the temporary and the definitive return of the missionaries to their native land, while Chapter X repeats what was contained in the Rule of 1908 concerning the suffrages for deceased confreres.

Chapter XI, regarding the "Members who leave the Pious Society or are dismissed from it" concludes the part concerning the nature and the internal discipline of the Society. It is all ordered in conformity with Canons 681, 632-635, 645, 646-672.

In Chapters XII to XVI the Statutes deal with the Government of the Pious Society, the General Chapter, the election of the Superior General and his Council, the authority of the Superior General, the appointment, tenure, and faculties of regional and local superiors (here we should point out also that the government of the Pious Society is spoken of without any consideration of its actual dependence from the Consistorial Congregation. This allows one to understand that the Consistorial Congregation had no intention of retaining the Pious Society in the status of a minor Institution in its nature, but rather that at the opportune time it would bring into effect the norms promulgated in the Statutes concerning the internal General Government.) As it appears from the Statutes approved by the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, the juridical configuration of the Scalabrinian Pious Society has no need of detailed comments or of any further explanation because it is clearly expressed in the Code of Canon Law, Book II, Title XVII, whose norms are wholly applied to our case (...). It is, therefore, a "Society of men living the common life after the manner of religious, under the direction of Superiors, in conformity with regularly approved constitutions, but not bound by the three usual public vows." (Canon 673) According to their Statutes, Chapter VI, No. 21, the Scalabrinians' defining bond was their oath of perseverance. Its external juridical status, instead, has changed by transfer from dependence from the Sacred Congregations of Propaganda and for Religious to that of the Consistory, which is thus acquiring ordinary jurisdiction over all cases for which the intervention of the Holy See is required by the common and particular law.

By the very fact, however, that the outline of the 1908 Rule was retained, one must realize that, by incorporating into the new Statutes the norms of the Rules of 1888 and 1895 about the missionary spirit and life in common, a good stride was taken on the road back to the form wanted by the Founder."¹³

Some other modifications were made later on to the Statutes of 1925. The first, on January 17, 1927, ruled that the whole clear balance of each house or mission be sent annually to the Provincial Superior, not just one-third of it as required by Art. 114, which was, therefore, modified as follows:

"On this occasion the Regional Superior shall require that each house or mission send him the clear balance, or whatever be left of the year, should there be any, leaving what he may deem necessary for the houses or missions

¹³ M. Caliaro "La Pia Società dei Missionari di San Carlo - Scalabriniani" (Rome, 1956), pp.127-130.

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themselves till their first ordinary income!"¹⁴

Still further modifications were decreed in November 1932 concerning the Brothers and the Oath of Perseverance, when an introductory period of a temporal bond of three years was enacted:

"I am pleased to bring to the attention of your Paternity that, as a partial modification of certain points of the Statutes of the Pious Society of the Missionaries of St. Charles, the Holy Father has deigned to approve and order:

1. Before being admitted to the prescribed probation (Articles 11 and 12) let the Brother-candidates spend a six month postulancy, according to Canons 539 and 540 of the Code of Canon Law, 'all things considered' (...)
4. As to the location, spoken of in Art. 13, where the probation year is to take place for both Priests and Brothers and for Students, let it be enough to say: '...in the house set aside for this purpose,' except for observing the required procedure when this house is chosen, and making sure, as far as possible, that it be a definitely established one.
5. In regard to their membership by which they attain by the taking of the Oath of Perseverance (Articles 19-21), from now on let the following directives be observed:
 - I. After completed their probation year, be they already priests, or young students, or brothers, the candidates (having decided as per Art. 19) shall take the oath of perseverance for one year. At the close of its term and after previous scrutiny, this oath shall be renewed for another year, and again for a third one, so that it may have a period of three years, after which, the temporary members found possessing the needed requisites shall be admitted to final membership by perpetual oath."¹⁵

3. Reorganizing the Administration

In March 1924, the Sacred Consistorial Congregation had charged Fr. Massimo Rinaldi with "handling matters concerning the temporal administration." On the August 2 of the same year he was elected Bishop of Rieti. Some missionaries, Fr. Rinaldi included, thought they recognized in this fact the intention of eventually removing the last obstacle standing in the way of a definitive passing of the administration of the temporal goods of the Pious Society to the Consistorial Congregation. Bishop Rinaldi did everything possible to avert what he considered as the most trying humiliation for the Institute in the sense that it would have implied the Holy See's total mistrust in the efficiency of Scalabrinians in administration. He sought to delay as much as possible his own episcopal consecration, and even after it, on March 19, 1923, he tried very hard to ensure that the administration might remain with the Scalabrinians: but to no avail! On April 13, 1925, Card. DeLai wrote him:

"It becomes urgent, by now, that we put thoroughly in order also the General Administration of the Pious Society of St. Charles Borromeo of which I am happy to send to you separately the Statutes just published. I pray you, therefore, to make available to us every note or document under key of which you may still

¹⁴ Card. DeLai, "Circular Letter", January 17, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 131/3).

¹⁵ R.C. Rossi to Tirondola, Rome, November 10, 1932 (Arch. G.S., 131/4).

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have custody. I have already come to an understanding with Fr. Chenuil, who on his part has made everything ready; but there still remains that we receive other indications from you, as said above, and I am waiting for an answer!"¹⁶

Bishop Rinaldi answered:

"I cannot hide from you the bitterness of my heart over the news concerning the administration of our Scalabrinian Institute. I am saddened at the sorrow my confreres will experience, I am sure, on account of the loss, moral especially, the Institute will suffer, and also for fear on my part of remaining without help especially for the needs of this diocese so very poor in all respects."¹⁷

Card. DeLai insisted:

"Should Your Most Rev. Lordship have knowledge of the letters and reports arriving at the Sacred Consistorial Congregation from Scalabrinians both in South and North America, instead of sadness for the provisions taken you would have seen the urgent need of them, and you yourself would have to ask that they be adopted. Believe me, if this and other measures had not been taken, the beautiful Institute of Bishop Scalabrini would have come to an end in a few years, very few, perhaps. Regardless of what you may think, it was already breaking up."¹⁸

Bishop Rinaldi still tried to offer some resistance, as he himself wrote to Fr. Faustino Consoni:

"Card. DeLai has gone over all my objections, and he has taken into his hands the entire administration of the Institute, mass registers included. In case I did not tell you, I can assure you now that I shed bitter tears over an action so humiliating for our poor Institute, and I fought with the officials of the Consistorial Congregation as one would do in the open. Still, I salvaged something, our savings; but I got a very resentful letter from Card. DeLai. As I have answered already to His Eminence, I did this because of my great love for our beloved Institute,....alas! much too ill-treated. Only by word of mouth would one get an idea of my old, continuous, and recent struggle for it. If only my words had been listened to by my confreres, our Congregation would have been spared, perhaps, this bad state and humiliation."¹⁹

Here is the letter of Card. DeLai alluded to by Bishop Rinaldi:

"It is my desire (indeed I should use a much stronger word) that neither you nor Fr. Chenuil concern yourselves any longer with the administration of the Scalabrinian Society but that you leave its care to the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, terminating that policy of obstruction which seems to have been adopted. Do not be afraid for the Society. The new Rule should be the best warrant to assure you and Fr. Chenuil that we do not seek anything else but its good. Scalabrinians shall have their own administration and superiors. But, it is necessary, and in your interest in fact that you accept, for the time being, the direct government of the Holy See (...). The Holy Father, this Sacred

¹⁶ DeLai to Rinaldi, Rome, April 13, 1932 (Arch. G.S., 153).

¹⁷ Rinaldi to DeLai, Rieti, April 29, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 153).

¹⁸ DeLai to Rinaldi, Rome, May 18, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 153).

¹⁹ Rinaldi to Consoni, Rieti, July 13, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 1616/6).

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Congregation and myself, if I may say so, have been working hard to reform it and keep it alive. Much has been done, but not everything; and one of the things to be done is the establishing of a regular financial administration."²⁰

Bishop Rinaldi replied he felt much saddened for the unintentional trouble he had borne on his Eminence, assuring him he had carried out all the orders received except for the books which he had left in the custody of Fr. Chenuil with word to surrender them.²¹ By the end of 1925, the Consistorial Congregation solicited the observance of the statutory provision ordering Regional Superiors to send in the annual moral and financial report:

"Close to the year's end, I deem it proper to call your attention to the requirements of Art. 100, #2, which says:

The Regional Superior shall send in every year the report of the Houses and Missions of his region together with the financial accounts.

The bond of unity between the General and the Regional Superiors, which is the link joining them with the individual Fathers in the missions, must be confirmed at the end of each year by a diligent and careful evaluation of the good accomplished in the single parishes, of shortcomings to correct, deficiencies to remedy, good resolutions for the future. The Statutes just enacted, the distribution of the personnel in the various parishes according to merits and ability, the removal and transfer of some considered unfit, our urgings towards a spirit of charity, humility, and holy laboriousness after the spirit of St. Charles, all stand to demonstrate the solicitude with which this Sacred Congregation intends to make sure that the desire of the Holy Father that the Pious Society be up to its task may not be frustrated. I trust that each Scalabrinian may well prize such a Fatherly care! A test of the members' attachment to the Motherhouse is also the sending of material help: and by God's grace and donors' generosity, it has never lacked! As much as I am pleased with this, still I find the existence of certain gaps that should not be there.

The expenses we must meet are not small! There are more than ninety young men to care for in the Seminary of Piacenza. True, they are all promising young men, animated by an excellent spirit and good will, as I myself had occasion to ascertain when I visited them; still, almost all of them belong to families of modest means, able to pay only in part, but not in full, their tuition, so that the Mother House must supply the rest. Work is also underway to adjust the buildings so as they will respond to the demands proper to the nature of the Seminary (...)."

He continues with mentioning the houses of Crespano and Rome, and then he adds:

"To all this, one must add the need for increased funds, so that, assured of not having to think for their future, the missionaries may do their work without any worry. Your Paternity will understand, therefore, that the various contributions from time to time requested are actually a holy deed towards the

²⁰ DeLai to Rinaldi, Rome, June 14, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 25/3).

²¹ Rinaldi to DeLai, Rieti, June 17, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 153).

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survival and the future of the Pious Society, and how necessary it is that the provision of Art. 114, Chapter XVII, of the Rule, be observed. Be so kind, then, Rev. Father, as to have what is said above made known to the missionaries of your region, especially to those who, though able to do so, still have not sent anything so far to the Motherhouse."²²

Six months later, on June 12, 1926, in presenting the printed 1925 report to all missionaries, Card. DeLai wrote:

"In presenting the report of 1925, I must express my satisfaction to all, Superiors and Fathers, who by welcoming the invitation of the Holy Father have cooperated in strengthening the spirit of the Pious Society so to make themselves ever better fit for the carrying out of their holy mission, which is the preservation of the Catholic Faith in our beloved Italian emigrants. We have come a long way and still have much more to go ; but with God's help, under the protection of Saint Charles, trusting in the cooperation of Superiors and in the humble discipline of all missionaries, we will be able to continue on the chosen path.

The promulgation of the Statutes, which represent the cornerstone of the Pious Society, has been followed by a period of reflection for reorganizing the ranks.

We have reverted to the old division into Regions for both North America and Brazil, and we have appointed superiors of proven zeal, solid spirit of prayer, and of steadfast attachment to the Institute to head them. By opportune changes we have tried to provide parishes and missions with personnel equal to their importance, having regard for seniority, experience in the ministry, and knowledge of the language, customs, and practices of the place. In as much as it was possible, we have strengthened the parishes in need of help with new priests, while granting their well-deserved rest to missionaries for so many years in the field. We have insistently directed that the accounts of the houses and missions be kept with utmost accuracy and diligence, making not only the pastors, but their assistants and coadjutors as well, responsible for it. And so we have obtained control over the administration while the spirit of fraternity was strengthened at the same time.

From the entries of the report, it is clear that, since when the administration has passed to the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, almost all confreres have contributed in accordance with the prescriptions of the Statutes. Accounts will have to be accurately dealt with and rigidly controlled also in the future, so that it may evermore be evident that the Missionaries of St. Charles conduct their ministry exclusively for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

I gave special attention to the seminary at Piacenza where as many as 82 students are now preparing to be future missionaries. Convinced that the number of good missionaries will depend on the religious formation they receive from their early years, I took care that discipline and studies be ordered in conformity with the provisions wisely enacted by the Holy See. To make the Institute were the of its tasks, I ordered important work of adaptation on the structures of the Seminary, such as are now demanded by good scholastic criteria and hygiene, and by the ever increasing number of students. The estimate for these works amounts to L. 600,000.

Other works, also very important, are ordered on the "Christopher Columbus" orphanage of São Paulo; shelter to so many poor and abandoned young men.

The Pious Society of St. Charles was granted a special gift from the Lord: that of being made the object of particular attention on the part of the Holy Father.

Let each one make himself worthy of his paternal benevolence; let each one set a good example and edification for his confreres, doing his work with a spirit of Christian

²² DeLai to Regional Superiors of North America, Rome, December 1, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 556/1).

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abnegation in the field entrusted to him by the Lord."²³

In the report we find that in the beginning of 1926 the Pious Society numbered in:

Italy		7 priests and 82 students
Region of St. Charles (East), USA	18 parishes	38 priests
Region of St. John the Baptist (West), USA	10 parishes	23 priests
Region of S. Paulo (S. Paulo/Paraná), Brazil	8 missions	13 priests
Region of St. Peter (Rio Grande do Sul)	14 parishes	17 priests
In All	53 houses	98 priests & 82 seminarians

The financial report which included the contributions sent in to the Consistorial Congregation by the missionaries until April 1926, was summed up as follows:

INCOME	
Returns on Assets	L. 61,425,73
Individual Contributions of Missionaries	L. 848,607,64
Interest on Bonds and Bank Accounts	L. 35,352,85
Masses	L. 55,734,30
Total Income	<u>L. 1.001.120,52</u>
EXPENDITURES	
To Fr. Tirondola for Piacenza Seminary	L. 210.000,00
To Fr. Poggi for the House in Rome	L. 20.000,00
To Fr. Brescianini for the House at Crespano	L. 6.000,00
To Fr. Chenuil for "Opera Msgr. Coccolo" (Arrears)	L. 13.768,03
Varia	L. 6.317,95
Varia by Fr. Quaglia for Region East U.S.A.	31.607,06
Total Expenditures	<u>(L. 287.693,04)</u>
BALANCE	<u>713.427,48</u> ²⁴

The report of 1926 was presented by Card. DeLai on October 24, 1927:

"By the help of God and the good response of the Fathers, the life of the Pious Society of the Missionaries of Saint Charles unfolds peacefully, active, and all-intent on the pursuit of the scope envisioned by your Venerated Founder (...).

Following restoration, the seminary in Piacenza is surely worthy of the Pious Society, and has room for many students. The students will grow in number this year also, and there will be soon the need, perhaps, for separating the upper classes from the lower ones. The house at Crespano, the summer vacation residence, is no longer sufficient for the students; it will be necessary that we find some solution there, too. It will all be possible provided the zeal of Superiors in Piacenza should meet the response of the Fathers in the missions, who are already showing generally much interest. They are not asked for great sacrifices, but only for a careful and strict economizing in their administration. It is the small things that accomplish the big ones, and so, should each Father carefully avoid superfluous expenditures in all things, by

²³ DeLai, Circular, June 12, 1925, "Pia Societa' dei Missionari di San Carlo per gli Emigrati Italiani", (Rome, 1926), pp. 3-5 (Arch. G.S., 25/3).

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 16

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the end of the year he will have assured a considerable amount of money as well as the life of the Pious Society. We are doing all we can to increase the assets of the Pious Society and, at the same time, to meet the rather heavy expenses. To help the Fathers and establish a sole and homogeneous system of administration, we decided to print a form which shall be sent to each Father by his respective Regional Superior.

The Shrine of Rivergaro was added this year to the houses of Italy; the shrine was dear to Bishop Scalabrini's heart, who had it restored, solemnly crowned its sacred Image of Mary, and that is where he had desired to be buried. At vacation time the major seminarians of Piacenza do ministry at the shrine, while residing in the annex, which was also bought for the Pious Society.

We did not neglect strengthening the missions with new personnel. Four priests have been sent to the missions from the seminary of Piacenza, and nine others from their respective dioceses. A steady stream of requests for help comes in from all sides, where the need for providing to the spiritual assistance of Italians is urgent; with God's help we hope to remedy all situations.

With pleasure I must also inform you that the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles has overcome the difficulties besetting it. The Institute has been divided into two Provinces: São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul; we have appointed their respective Provincial Superiors; and lastly, we took care of the election of a Superior General, chosen in the person of Sister Assunta Marchetti, Mother (correct "Sister") of the Founder of the "Christopher Columbus" orphanage of São Paulo, Brazil. Each region has a flourishing novitiate, and there is ground for hope that within a few years there will be the personnel requested for kindergartens, houses for the poor, and hospitals."²⁵

In 1926, the Pious Society had the following in Italy and in the Regions:

Italy		10 priests, 2 brothers, and 128 seminarians
U.S.A. East	18 parishes	42 priests
U.S.A. West	10 parishes	19 priests
São Paulo, Brazil	10 parishes	17 priests
Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil	15 parishes	18 priests
In all	57 residences	103 priests, 2 brothers and 128 seminarians

The financial report of the period of time running between January 1, 1926, and June 30, 1927, was summed up as follows:

INCOME	
Previous Balance	L. 713.427,18
Returns on Assets and Bank Accounts	L. 134.102,20
Individual Contributions of Missionaries	L. 668.324,02
Masses	L. 361.808,86
Total Income	L. 1.877.662,26

²⁵ DeLai, Circular, October 24, 1927, "Pia Societa' dei Missionari di San Carlo per gli Emigrati Italiani", (Rome, 1927), pp. 3-5 (Arch. G.S., 144)

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EXPENDITURES	
To Fr. Tirondola for Ordinary Expenses of Seminary	L. 505.307.00
To Fr. Tirondola for Enlargement and Restoration of Seminary	L. 805.000.00
To Fr. Costanzo for the House of Rome	L. 45.235.00
To Fr. Brescianini for the House of Crespano	L. 17.000.00
To Bishop Rinaldi for services to Pious Society	L. 20.000.00
Travels, legal procedures, varia	L. 88.963.80
Fr. Quaglia's Expenditures for Region USA East	L. 18.284,55
Investments	L. 70.198.87
Total Expenditures	<u>L. 1,569.989.22</u>
BALANCE	<u>L. 307.673.34</u> ²⁶

And so, the returns collected in 1926 by the administration of the Consistorial Congregation had been spent on works for the enlargement and overall restoration of the Mother House. The entire year's balance of L. 307.063.04 would have not been sufficient to meet the ordinary expenses of the same house! Besides, there was registered a drop in contributions from missionaries (about L. 180.000 less), only partly explained by the fact that in 1925 also sums of money were sent in that had been set aside in banks during the preceding years. It became necessary, therefore, to intensify supervision over the accounts on the part of local superiors, and to enforce rigid observance of what had been decreed on May 19, 1926, in regard to the monthly allowance to the missionaries:

"Italy:

- a) To Fathers in the active ministry a monthly allowance of L. 100, plus L. 50 for clothing; a sum of L. 150 shall be added for their families eventually in need, if requested.
- b) To retired priests, L. 100 monthly, plus L. 50 for clothing.
- c) To the Father representing the Pious Society in Via Calandrelli L. 400 monthly.

United States: A monthly allowance of \$50.00, plus \$10.00 for clothing.

Brazil: A monthly allowance of 175 milreis, plus 35 milreis for clothing.

It is understood that all the Fathers residing in Italy will have to apply the masses according to the intention of the Superior General for the benefit of the Pious Society, and the priests in the missions according to that of the local superiors. And so, I hope I resolved the problem that was long the source of complaints, thus satisfying the desires and the needs of each one. It is my hope, then, that all the missionaries may devote their strength to the moral and religious bettering of the parishes with a peaceful and serene heart, free of all worries for their future, and in unity of ideals, to the end of saving the faith of our dear Emigrants."²⁷

As seen above, by a modification of Art. 114 of the Statutes, on January 17, 1927, it was decided that the whole net balance should be sent in every year by

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 14.

²⁷ DeLai to Costanzo, Rome, May 19, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 142).

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the local Superiors to the regional Superiors.²⁸ Consequently to these provisions, the problem arose, especially in the missions of the United States, concerning the salaries the missionaries were entitled to take from the parish funds, not from the house, as retribution for the service given to churches that belonged to the dioceses. In fact, because of heavy debts weighing down on some churches, in order to spare heavier burdens for the faithful and insure the favor of the Bishops, a number of missionaries were relinquishing their salaries totally or in part, and so they remained the charge of the Institute. In 1927 Card. DeLai thus wrote on the matter to Fr. Leonardo Quaglia, Superior of Region East, U.S.A.

"The question presented us by your Paternity since 1925, whether, that is, the Scalabrinian Missionaries should receive their salaries from the Church or the house, and in what amount, has been the object of much thought by this Sacred Congregation since receipt of the financial reports of 1926 from houses and missions.

From these reports we noticed the lack of a common criterion on the matter, since it is left to the judgement of pastors whether to burden the house or the Church for the entire salary or part of it. This is true also in regard to missions that, though benefitting of a remarkable balance of Church funds, still charge salaries to the houses with great loss to the Pious Society.

As you will see in the attached summary table, going through these reports, we have noticed, in fact, that the Mother House has suffered a loss of \$ 9,000.00 so far in 1926. It is necessary, therefore, that we set down a common directive to which all pastors of the various missions will have to conform, and precisely the following one:

In all missions where churches are free of debts, let salaries be taken out of the parish funds as is the practice with all pastors of those regions; in those others where pastors do not benefit of such revenues because the church itself is in need (to be verified by the Regional Superior), let salaries be taken from the house funds but as credits to be refunded later on to the Pious Society."²⁹

Fr. Quaglia objected that all churches had debts. When these were about to be paid off, new plans were made for other projects, such as schools, etc. Besides, the practice was that salaries were not allowed to accumulate; when not taken within their respective year they were considered to have been entered for the church.

He suggested, therefore, that the following should be decided:

"As far as possible and within the directives set down by the diocese, salaries due to houses and missionaries will have to be annually taken from the funds of the church they serve. It is not permitted to donate to the church funds belonging to the house. In case of the need (to be verified by the Regional Superior) of using house money for the church, the money thus spent will have to be registered in the annual financial report of the church as a debit due to the Pious Society."³⁰

²⁸ Cfr. above, p. 44.

²⁹ Card. DeLai to Quaglia, Rome, March 25, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 556/3).

³⁰ DeLai to Quaglia, Rome, March 25, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 556/3).

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Card. DeLai decided to inform the American bishops as follows:

"The Sacred Consistorial Congregation, by the decision of the Holy Father, has charge of the government of the Pious Society of the Missionaries of St. Charles for Italian Emigrants, after examining the financial reports of the Scalabrinian houses for the year 1926, directs that the salaries due to the missionaries be taken, as far as possible and within the limits consented by the laws and customs of the diocese, from the funds of the Church, as is the common practice for parishes conducted by Religious Orders or Congregations. In case there should arise the need, to be verified by the Regional Superior, of using money of the house for parochial works, the money thus employed must be marked down in the annual financial report as credits in favor of the Pious Society of St. Charles."³¹

The strict control of accounts conducted by the Consistorial Congregation was not slow in bringing forth its good results, first of which must be considered the Seminary of Bassano del Grappa (Vicenza).

In presenting the report of 1926-1927, Card. Carlo Perosi, new Secretary of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, thus wrote to the missionaries on December 31, 1928:

"This year, also, this Sacred Congregation presents the report on the government of the Pious Society for the year 1926-1927.

This is reason for me to address a word of encouragement and praise to all those who have well responded to the cares and trust of superiors, and, at the same time, of exhortation to persevere on the good path engaged in for the glory of God, the honor, and ornament of the Pious Society called by Divine Providence to carry out the holy task of the spiritual assistance to Italian emigrants.

The need for such assistance becomes ever more urgent everywhere! Most recent statistics report some 10 million Italians scattered all over; and it is because of this that the view of the members of the Pious Society must not limit itself to their own field of action, but extend, rather, to the innumerable brethren scattered throughout the world deprived of all religious comfort, and by prayer, personal sacrifice, and perfect observance of the Rule contribute in carrying out the dream of the venerated Founder: *'To bring the Word of God, the comfort of faith wherever there be an Italian emigrant!'*

The Holy Father, who has very much at heart the faith of Italian Catholic emigrants, has turned his paternal attention to the Pious Society of Saint Charles that it might render itself ever more worthy and fit for the task for which it was founded. It is everybody's duty, therefore, to nourish deep gratitude in one's heart, and respond to his generous benevolence with holiness of life and alacrity of work. Let religious life be intensified in the single houses; let every priest strive to be a good example and edification in kindness, meekness, and work which must now be doubled for the love of God until new missionaries will be turned out in droves from the Motherhouse of Piacenza: a reality very close at hand by now. Let charity and perfect obedience be the mark of the Scalabrinian Missionary because the secret of all

³¹ DeLai to Quaglia, Rome, April 27, 1927 (Arch. 556/3).

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success is found in the spirit of harmony and discipline.

Concerning obedience and discipline, I want at this point to call your attention to the oath of perseverance! By it, the missionaries have taken *before God* the pledge of remaining in the Pious Society *for life*, and of obeying the superiors in all things pertaining to the observance of the Statutes and of the duties of the ministry. Be it far from you that anyone should fail to keep faith to his solemn promise; that one day he may decide to consider his task ended, his mission completed, as though it were a temporary commitment, and so aspire to end his days in his native home, or elsewhere, outside the field to which the Lord has called him. Whoever should think or behave so, would fail his vocation and give evidence of having sought '*quae sua sunt*' (1 Cor. 13,5) rather than the Glory of God and the good of souls, using the Pious Society as an occasion and means to secure a pretended rest, or even perhaps material affluence. This way, should such ideas spread about by his action and example, he would put in jeopardy the very existence of the Pious Society that could thus lose the reason, the scope, of its being and continuity. Instead, should age or other justified reason recommend that someone leave, though with regret and with the consent of superiors, a mission outside Italy, let everyone be reminded that there are houses in Italy, where confreres will be able to find good rest or still a wide field of apostolate and zealous service.

And now, a word on the temporal administration. We must recommend that a strict control be adopted so as to insure continuing contributions on behalf of the Mother House, as regards both the clear balance of the houses and the mass stipends in excess of the needs of the single communities, in accord with the provisions of the Rule. This Sacred Congregation has enacted some directives on the matter, conveyed to all through the Regional Superiors, and it is necessary that these provisions be scrupulously observed if for no other reason than that we may properly provide for the ever increasing needs of the Pious Society, and therefore - which someone seems to have forgotten, perhaps, or not understood - for its very existence. All know, in fact, that by God's Grace the Seminary of Piacenza is steadily growing; many boys are preparing to become missionaries in the Pious Society under the loving care of the good Fathers. The number is such - as of now, 157 of them, of whom 32 already vested with the habit of the Pious Society - and the future is so promising, that we had to proceed to the acquisition of a piece of land in the vicinity of Bassano Veneto where a large building will be constructed. The new seminary will host the lower classes of the '*ginnasio*' (high school), and it will serve as summer vacation residence for all students of the Pious Society because the house of Crespano has grown too small. The students of upper '*ginnasio*', Philosophy, and Theology, shall continue to remain, for the time being at least, at the Piacenza Seminary.

All these facts mark an index of growth and give way to high hopes, certainly to become reality soon, if together with the help of God, the support of the missionaries will not be lacking, especially at this time, when they must be united with their superiors in order to bring the Pious Society to that degree of well-being, which is demanded by the great needs of Italian emigrants and desired by all, after its successful resurgence to new life.

In this regard, I am pleased to conclude this message of mine by inviting all to turn a pious and loving thought to the venerated memory of Card. DeLai, who

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by his prompt intervention and firm hand, has certainly raised the lot of the Pious Society, was its sure and provident guide, and loved it so much as to ever remember it to the Lord, even to the last instant of his life!"³²

Apart from the increase of students, the statistics on personnel remained practically unchanged. In 1928 there were:

Italy		10 priests, 4 brothers, 157 students
Eastern Region, USA	19 parishes	44 priests
Western Region, USA	10 parishes	17 priests
São Paulo & Paraná, Brazil	10 missions	15 priests and 2 brothers
Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil	14 parishes	17 priests and 2 brothers
In all	53 parishes	103 priests, 8 brothers, 157 students

The financial report for the period between July 1, 1927 and June 30, 1928, shows the following data:

INCOME	
Previous Balance	L. 307.673.34
Returns on Assets & Bank Accounts	L. 108.585.75
Individual contributions of Missionaries	L. 780.638.52
From the Diocese of Tortona	L. 718.65
Wills & Donations	L. 91.225.10
Masses	L. 196.700.83
Rio Grande's Assets & Arrears	L. 5.766.30
Total Income	L. 1.491.308.49
EXPENDITURES	
To Fr. Tirondola for Seminary Piacenza	L. 457,225.10
To Fr. Costanzo for House in Rome	L. 32.380.00
To Fr. Brescianini for House at Crespano	L. 10.000.00
Legal & Varia	L. 16.613.39
Expenses Region East U.S.A.	L. 28.352.17
Expenses Region Rio Grande do Sul	L. 19.157.90
Total Expenditures	(L. 563.728.56)
BALANCE	L. 927,579.93 ³³

The financial report for the year between July 1, 1928 and June 30, 1929, presented by Cardinal Rossi, showed a steady increase of students: 195, fifty of them at Crespano del Grappa (Treviso).

Students		195 (50 in Crespano)
Italy		7 priests and 6 brothers
Eastern Region, USA	19 parishes	45 priests
Western Region, USA	11 parishes	20 priests
São Paulo - Paraná, Brazil	10 parishes	16 priests and 2 brothers
Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil	14 parishes	16 priests
In all		104 priests, 8 brothers and 195 seminarians

³² Card. C. Perosi, Circular, December 31, 1928, "Pia Societa' dei Missionari di San Carlo per gli Emigrati Italiani" (Rome, 1928), pp. 3-6 (Arch. G.S., 144).

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 17.

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Here follows the financial report:

INCOME	
Returns on Assets and Bank Accounts	L. 112.842.20
Sales: Newspaper & Plant of Bento Gonçalves	L. 113.765.65
Individual Contributions of Missionaries	L. 879.696.00
Masses	L. 127.094.10
Previous Balance	L. 927.579.93
Total Income	<u>L. 2,160.977.90</u>
EXPENDITURES	
To Fr. Tirondola for Seminary of Piacenza	L. 480.000.00
To Fr. Costanzo for the House of Rome	L. 26.391.00
To House of Crespano	L. 34.055.55
Taxes and Varia	L. 11.762.30
Extraordinary Expenses	L. 10.000.00
Expenses Eastern Region USA	L. 4.770.00
Expenses Region of Rio Grande do Sul	L. 1.855.15
To Fr. Costanzo for Trips of Confreres	L. 8.000.00
Purchase of Land at Bassano and Building Expenses	L. 784.361.10
Total Expenditures	<u>(L.1.361.195.10)</u>
BALANCE	<u>L. 799.782.80</u> ³⁴

In July 1931 only the financial reports for the years 1929-1930 and 1930-1931 were published. First the report of July 1, 1929 to June 30, 1930:

INCOME	
Previous Balance	L. 799.782.80
Returns on Assets and Bank Accounts	L. 127.107.95
From Archbishop of Cincinnati for new Seminary of Bassano	L. 1.907.00
From Bishop of Providence for new Seminary of Bassano	L. 9.522.50
Contributions of Missionaries for Seminary of Bassano	L. 1.104.516.95
Remittances of Missionaries	L. 204.887.10
Masses	L. 288.860.40
Total Income	<u>L. 2.536.584.70</u>
EXPENDITURES	
To Tirondola for Seminaries of Piacenza and Crespano	L. 600.000.00
To the House of Rome	L. 22.727.75
Works on the New Seminary of Bassano	L. 1.608.014.75
Expenses of Eastern Province of U.S.A.	L. 4.205.07
Expenses of Province of Rio Grande do Sul	L. 1.751.30
Varia	L. 19.345.00

³⁴ "Pia Società dei Missionari dei San Carlo per gli Emigrati Italiani" (Rome, 1929, p. 15).

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Total Expenditures	(L.2.256.043.87)
BALANCE	L. 280.540.83 ³⁵

Finally, we have here the financial report for the period of July 1, 1930 to June 30, 1931, the last to be published:

INCOME	
Previous Balance	L. 280.540.83
Returns on Assets and Bank Accounts	L. 85.035.20
Collection for New Seminary of Bassano	L. 128.574.95
Contributions for Missionaries for Seminary Bassano	L. 67.675.20
Remittances for Mother House	L. 803.409.85
Fr. Gregori's Will	L. 114.000.00
Masses	L. 262.782.60
Returns on State Treasury Bonds	L. 14.750.00
Legacy "Campbell"	L. 2.064.85
Total Income	L. 1.758.833.48
EXPENDITURES	
To Tirondola for Seminaries	L. 584.050.00
To Fr. Giuliani for House of Rome	17.325.00
For Trips of Confreres and Varia	13.429.65
Works on new Seminary of Bassano	928.350.00
Restoration Works House of Rome	4.825.00
Expenses Eastern Region U.S.A.	6.008.50
Total Expenditures	(L. 1,553.988.15)
BALANCE	L. 204.845.33 ³⁶

In presenting the last financial reports to the Regional Superiors, Card. Rossi thus wrote on March 8, 1932:

"As this report shows, remittances for the years 1930 and 1931 have been employed in great part in the purchase of land and in the construction of the new Seminary in Bassano del Grappa. The section so far built has been entirely paid for. There still remains to build the other section and the chapel, provisionally located in a large hall of the seminary. We have cause to give thanks to God who by the zeal and love of the Fathers for the Institute made it possible for us to succeed within a short time in bringing to an end an enterprise highly honoring the Pious Society, which, on account of the great number of young men presently in its two seminaries (128 at Piacenza, and 118 at Bassano) has now high hopes for its Providential growth.

In sending to each local superior a copy of the report, let your Paternity remind them that this Sacred Congregation trusts in the cooperation of all, as by the ready obedience to Superiors in a spirit of reciprocal charity and by the perfect observance of the Statutes, the Pious Society will gradually continue along the designs of Divine Providence on its further development to the end of

³⁵ Pia Società dei Missionari di San Carlo per gli Emigrati Italiani" (Rome, 1931) pp. 5-6 (A.G.S. 145).

³⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 19-20.

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safekeeping the faith of Italian emigrants."³⁷

At the close of the period spoken of in this volume, Card. Rossi made a revision of the whole financial administration from October 1924 to December 31, 1939 and prepared the following summary:

INCOME	
Remittances Eastern Province USA	L. 8.354.169.44
Remittances Western Province USA	L. 4.542.377.71
Remittances São Paulo Province, Brazil	L. 529.048.90
Remittances Rio Grande Province, Brazil	L. 480.129.12
Remittances France	L. 14.492.60
Returns on Assets	L. 1.390.291.11
Scholarships, Donations, Inheritances, etc.	L. 905.181.44
Masses: Eastern Province, USA	L. 2.310.166.55
Masses: Western Province, USA	L. 705.127.40
Masses: São Paulo Province, Brazil	L. 199.992.22
Masses: Rio Grande Province, Brazil	L. 410.825.16
Masses: Various Sources	L. 1.927.20
Varia	L. 55.003.60
Total Income	<u>L. 19.898.732.45</u>
EXPENDITURES	
Ordinary Administration of Seminaries and Novitiate	L. 9.403.645.10
Ordinary Administration House of Rome	L. 467.029.85
Ordinary Administration of Crespano (before Novitiate)	L. 73.549.80
Restoration and Maintenance, Piacenza	L. 805.000.00
Construction of Seminary at Bassano	L. 4.480.309.67
Adaptation and Maintenance Works, Crespano	L. 212.665.00
Addition and Maintenance Works, Rome	L. 1.767.099.70
Travels	L. 292.314.50
Varia	L. 282.707.63
Masses given to other Priests	L. 946.172.36
Total Expenditures	<u>(L. 18.730.493.61)</u>
BALANCE	<u>L. 1.168.238.84</u> ³⁸

4. Moral Recouping

The entire effort in organizing the economy and the financial administration was aimed at supporting and insuring the slow, patient, but persistent work on the moral restoration of the Scalabrinian Institute.

These efforts were turned first to warding off the causes of the troubles, especially by the renewal of the personnel on the qualitative level, by means of

³⁷ Card. Rossi to Regional Superiors of the Missionaries of Saint Charles, Rome, March 8, 1932 (Arch. G.S., 153).

³⁸ Notes Card. Rossi (Arch. G.S., 158).

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a thorough formation. The numerical renewal operated by Fr. Chenuil had not obtained, nor could it really do it, great additional results, besides holding on to the acquired positions; even so, the very credit for saving them would have been annulled if the renewal had not actually come from within. Fr. Chenuil entertained illusions of having averted a crisis, as he declared in Brazil:

The Most Rev. Superior General takes this opportunity to declare that he is in favor of admitting any priest in good standing to the end of strengthening our missions in Brazil. He explains why he was forced in his three year tenure to provide for the missions of North America, threatened in their existence by the ingratitude of associate priests who through malicious maneuvers attempted to disgrace and to have confreres removed as pastors from the parishes. The sending of 35 new priest confreres has solved the crisis.

The parishes of North America are now safely in the hands of our priests with incalculable advantages, moral and financial.

The Institute has gained a lot in the esteem of the high ranks in the Vatican, and we have a meaningful evidence of it in the new status of a 'Religious' (sic) Society without vows accorded us by the Consistorial Congregation.

So far - the Most Rev. Superior General continues - I had to take care of North America but now I shall direct my attention to South America and send five or six missionaries there within two years.³⁹

A number of the missionaries gathered by Fr. Chenuil, we repeat, were zealous priests; but very few had the feeling for Scalabrinian mission as such. They showed no interest, therefore, beyond the limits of their parishes. On vacation in Italy, one of them, who had petitioned the Consistorial Congregation to retire in his diocese of origin, had a conversation with Card. Rossi that went something like this:

"I objected: 'And what about the Pious Society? And your oath?'"

He answered: he is not a Scalabrinian; he took the oath because he was made to; he had placed restrictions to it; he did not intend to bind himself to it at all; and so on! I told him a couple of words, such as the case demanded, but it was all a waste of time

*It would be good if all these of the old 'Self-Help Society' would leave. Our hopes rest with the young!"*⁴⁰

It was not easy to convince the Regional Superiors of the need to hold on for a few more years, so as to give new recruits the opportunity to prepare for the missions according to the original spirit of the Congregation. While Fr. Tirondola was effectively busy in the field of formation with the help of his closest collaborators, Archbishop Rossi knew how to be patient also for those who should have been, holding fast to principles, looking far into the future, and committed to the saying that what is most urgent is not necessarily most important.

In March, 1926, when Fr. Quaglia, Regional Superior of the East, U.S.A.,

³⁹ Volume of Meetings held by the Missionaries of Saint Charles in the Hall of the Orphanage Christopher Columbus of São Paulo - December 21, 1932 (Provincial Archives of São Paulo).

⁴⁰ Notes Card. Rossi (Arch. G.S., 541/19).

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petitioned that the Scalabrinians who were teaching at the Mother House be substituted with secular priests, Archbishop Rossi spoke his mind:

"It is primarily a question of principles, while the good Fathers in the missions look at it only, or preferably, from the practical point of view. And this has caused only havoc for the Pious Society. Substituting the missionaries teaching at Piacenza with diocesan priests would spell the beginning of the decline of a seminary on which all hopes of the Pious Society depend (...).

What a wonderful job the professors chosen from within the Pious Society itself are doing! They bring along a greater love for, a stronger interest in, the school: gradually, but without self-conceit, they impress upon these young men the spirit of the Pious Society, they tend to their vocation and scrutinize it (a young man manifests himself in class, as well): they devote themselves entirely to teaching as to a vocation without self-interest, and harmonize classes with the other acts of the community (...).

The concern of the Superiors is reasonable, but it is still more reasonable and dutiful to care and provide for the seminary.

Abandoning a parish is preferable to the return of the seminary of Piacenza to the old deficiencies!"⁴¹

In October 1928, Card. Perosi answered to the new entreaties of Fr. Quaglia in the same tone and under the same inspiration:

"This Sacred Congregation is well aware of the difficult situation in which quite a few Scalabrinian parishes are for lack of personnel, and it did not neglect taking any favorable opportunity for presenting petitions and entreating several Bishops of Italy not to refuse the surrendering of some good priests to the Pious Society of St. Charles. But no matter how great the needs of the parishes, they cannot excuse us from using utmost prudence in accepting new applications.

Too recent are the mistakes of the past when individuals were admitted to the Institute, who instead of bringing help, have created such a situation as to make us fear for the life of the Institute itself. The great care this Sacred Congregation devotes to the Seminary of Piacenza serves as proof of the sentiments from which it takes inspiration on behalf of the Pious Society: to persevere, that is, on the chosen path of spiritual renewal, at the cost of sacrifices, in expectation that the seminary may be in a position to supply, we hope it won't be long now, all Scalabrinian missions with well-prepared personnel."⁴²

Sacrifice on the part of the missionaries and the patience and perseverance of the general government were bringing forth the desired results. By the end of 1927, Fr. Tirondola could thus write to Fr. Beniamino Franch, the Superior of the Western Region of the U.S.A.:

"With God's help and by the solicitous care of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation and the contributions of our Missionaries, the Seminary is going well. Should things continue this way, the day will come when eight or ten new priests will be ordained each year, and then our Institute shall be able to care for the assistance of all emigrants everywhere in the world! We are witnessing, at the present time, the decline of all institutions born for assisting emigrants!

⁴¹ *Ibidem* (Arch. G.S., 541/20).

⁴² Card. Perosi to Quaglia, Rome, October 19, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 556/4).

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The Missionaries of Msgr. Coccolo have gone out of existence; from one of their bulletins I find out that those of the Pontifical College for Emigration are only eight; and those of Bishop Bonomelli are heading for doom. We, the sons of the great Bishop Scalabrini, are the only ones decidedly on the way to a complete organization. As Archbishop Rossi, Assessor of the Consistorial Congregation, who was at this seminary for the feast of St. Charles, assured me, the Holy See expects that we take up the assistance of all emigrants. The Holy Father himself has sent us in his own hand the holy benediction expressed in these terms:

'To Superiors, Priests, Candidates, Aspirants, of the Institute, Christopher Columbus, belonging to the Pious Society of St. Charles for the assistance of Italian emigrants, we wholeheartedly impart our Apostolic Blessing that they may respond to their holy vocation and do much good on behalf of souls by preparing themselves for it in accordance with the scope of their Pious Society.

From the Vatican, Oct. 28, 1927

(Signed) P.P. Pius XI, with love and kindness in Domino."⁴³

Among Cardinal Rossi's papers we discovered a document on the general situation, prepared by an official of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation. We present it here, reporting in *Italics* the annotations made by the then Assessor Archbishop R. C. Rossi:

"The general report sent in by Fr. Quaglia, Regional Superior, serves as evidence not only of the USA Eastern province's kind of government, but also of the gradual improvement one notices every year in the religious and financial conditions of the Pious Society.

One must take into consideration that out of 97 priests working in all missions, 46 belong to the USA Eastern region; consequently the situation of this region reflects almost generally the feelings of all members.

Religious life and peace - except for a few instances - form the order of the day almost everywhere, even if there existed, though not so apparent, a rivalry between young and old.

There were no cases of overt disobedience to the orders of the Consistorial Congregation and almost all Fathers have shown willingness, external at least, to follow its directives. A sufficiently evident example of the Fathers obedience is seen in the fact that no one of this region dared not abide by the order of this Sacred Congregation forbidding one's return to Italy before a period of ten years in the missions elapsed. There have been no complaints on the part of the Bishops in whose dioceses the Fathers are working. In fact, regarding the collection for the new seminary of Bassano, not only did they willingly grant the request, but they praised the Pious Society and some have personally contributed to it. The improvement is evidenced by the remarkable increase of remittances and of Mass offerings.

In the last year of Fr. Chenuil's tenure, the *contributions of the missionaries from the four regions amounted to L. 251.000 liras*. Reports on the financial situation of the single houses were not sent in and everything was left up to the more or less interested discretion of the pastor who was the arbiter of the situation without the assistants' awareness of the exact state of things!

⁴³ Tirondola to B. Franch, Piacenza, December 3, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 607/1).

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By contrast, in 1929 only in the USA Eastern Region (Fr. Leonard Quaglia) *the remittances increase to L. 769.030*, and only one of the Fathers did not send in the financial report. In regard to these contributions we must keep in mind, besides, the changed economic situation of the United States, much worse today than in 1925.

One must admit, however, that such state of things derives more, perhaps, from the strong leadership of the Sacred Congregation than from the inner conviction of the Fathers, who for the most part are lacking the preparation and formation needed to belong to a Pious Society! But this must not be attributed to them as their personal fault, as rather to the system then used for accepting candidates and to the method of government itself.

All of the above leads us to believe that the time has not yet come for the Pious Society to go back to have a Superior General of its own, as seems to be, perhaps, the desire of the same Regional Superior, Fr. L. Quaglia.

Care shall be taken, rather, that the new recruits coming from the Seminary of Piacenza may not get lost in the field at large, but that they be sent, instead, to missions with pastors of good spirit and proven attachment to the Pious Society. (*Attention! Let the House of Piacenza keep always in touch with them.*)

The office of bursar as distinct from that of pastor shall be gradually established wherever several Fathers live together. While this office has been introduced into the USA Western Region, it has not been possible to obtain in Fr. Quaglia's Region (...). Let, then, Your Eminence be the judge whether it be prudent not to mention the fact that Fr. X has sent in no report for the years 1928 and 1929. (*No, by all means. Demand them under threat of censures.*)

From what Fr. Quaglia writes, many missionaries wish to expand the field of action by accepting new parishes; but Fr. Quaglia restrains their enthusiasm (egotistical, perhaps) with the reason that there is no personnel to take the place of those who should be chosen to head such parishes. (*It seems to me he is right.*)

This proposal calls to mind the scope of the Scalabrinian Institute. It was founded in 1888 (sic) when Italian emigrants were pouring into the Americas in steady flows without any religious or material assistance. Once in the new lands, there was nobody to care for them. The neglect, the distrust, and the contempt, many a times, on the part of the local clergy, created the state of utter abandonment, whose consequences are felt today as testified by recent statistics showing that only 10% of Italians in New York go to church.

It was then that the apostolic zeal of Bishop Scalabrini thought of and willed the Pious Society of the Missionaries of St. Charles to bring the Word of God and all forms of assistance wherever there were Italian migrants; and Saint Raphael Society was organized in the port of New York where good Fr. Gambera expended the activities of his ministry for many years; chapels and churches were built for Italians; missionaries were sent to alleviate the hard miseries of migrants in the fazendas of Brazil; they worked especially for the formation of Italian settlements in Rio Grande do Sul.

Much has been done by since then, though not enough for the needs so as to make up for the mistakes of the past (that is what the Cardinal of New York said in a speech with which he recommended the greatest solicitude for Italian emigrants). There are now 800 Italian parishes in the U.S.A. in the hands of

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diocesan clergy or Religious of various Orders or Congregations. Of this large number, only a small portion, 30 parishes, are those held by the Missionaries of the Pious Society.

It will be worthwhile considering then, whether it be opportune to give specialized training to the Scalabrinian missionaries in new forms of apostolate among Italian emigrants rather than accepting new parishes. This would respond to the nature of the Pious Society itself, which should adapt itself the needs of emigrants, which have substantially changed since 1888.

The Pious Society does not differ today from what other Religious Congregations and Orders do in the field of assistance to emigrants, may be even on a more limited scale, perhaps; but if the Pious Society is made up of missionaries, it should form at least a group of flying priests ready to go wherever the need is more keenly felt. This project may not be practical now, perhaps, due to lack of personnel and to present financial conditions, but when these will normalize and new well-prepared recruits will be available at the seminary of Piacenza, then it will be time, perhaps, for considering whether it may be advisable to restore to the Pious Society of St. Charles its original intent." (*Especially by expanding its field of action also in Europe.*)⁴⁴

In 1931, on the occasion of the appointment of the new Regional Superiors, the Consistorial Congregation took the opportunity for insisting on the respect for the directives governing the functioning of the regional Councils (it could be well said that the role of councilor had been obscured) and for reawakening attention to the specific scope of the Pious Society. In a letter of April 1931 to Fr. Marchegiani, Cardinal Rossi says:

"I call to the attention of your paternity to the provision of Article 100, which states that the 'Regional Superior must consult his councilors in matters of importance', and in order to avail yourself of the experience and advice of your councilors, you shall periodically convoke your Council. At these meetings you are to discuss the following matters:

1. *The transfer of the Fathers from one house to another (...).*
2. *Whether discipline is being observed in the various houses; whether the Fathers are leading a good moral life; whether they are making every effort to be faithful to their common and individual practices of piety and in the exercise of their sacred ministry.*
3. *Lastly, in view of the scope of the Pious Society (...), to evaluate the particular situations in which the emigrants are assisted by the Fathers of the Pious Society; the eventual moving away of the same elsewhere and the consequent need of new foundations as the number of priests allows. By the way, it will be well to take into serious consideration also the possibility of seeking out parishes in the Diocese of Brooklyn and Newark where Italians live in great numbers, taking care, if deemed necessary, that small parishes be abandoned in favor of others of greater importance."*⁴⁵

In 1932, Cardinal Rossi was in a position to announce to the same Fr. Marchegiani that the first of the programs of the Sacred Consistorial

⁴⁴ Notes of Card. Rossi (Arch. G.S., 556/6).

⁴⁵ Card. Rossi to Marchegiani, Rome, April 14, 1931 (Arch. G.S., 557/1).

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Congregation, that is, the renewal of the personnel, was about to be carried out. In fact, he wrote to him from Bassano del Grappa:

"I write to you as I am about to leave this beautiful Seminary of the Pious Society so replete with true and great hopes!

There are 222 seminarians today, but their number will be increased in a few days by the new aspirants who will be admitted to first year high school ("ginnasio"); and so they will be about 250 altogether, of whom 91 already vested in the habit of the Pious Society, 37 in theology and 54 in philosophy. All young students! In a few years they will be assigned to the sacred ministry to the great consolation of the Regional Superiors who are pleading for priests from the four regions. They will have them, no doubt, and then they will bless the Holy See even more than they do already for its provident care of the Pious Society, without which we can well say that we could not accomplish what has been done or entertain such high hopes for the future! Still a few years of limited numbers of sacred ordinations - seven or eight each year; even this number is not so negligible - but afterwards there will be ten, fifteen, twenty of them, and beyond that number, perhaps, each year. Wait trustingly, pray for the successful preparation of these young men and for the missionaries that their strength may not wane in the meantime.

Unfortunately, trials are not lacking, and while the needs of the United States are urgent, we worry about conditions in Brazil, where the Missionaries, few in number, many advanced in years, exhausted with fatigue, witness their ranks grow thinner, as just happened with the recent passing of Fr. Stefano Angeli, Regional Superior, still a young man."⁴⁶

And now, having made possible its conditions and realization, attention could be turned to the second point: the revival of original spirit, recalling our specific missionary scope, and, then, the religious life as it too was in the beginning.

Out of the various documents illustrating the action of Cardinal Rossi for a more explicit return to the scope of the founding, we choose the most meaningful ones which refer to Brazil.

In early 1935, immediately after the publication of Msgr. Francesco Gregori's biography of Bishop Scalabrini "*La Vita e l'Opera di un Grande Vescovo*" ("The Life and the Work of a Great Bishop"), Cardinal Rossi wrote as follows to Fr. Francesco Navarro, Regional Superior of São Paulo:

"For quite a while now, I have been thinking of calling the attention of Your Paternity and of Regional Council to the present conditions of the Pious Society in that Region, which are not as I would like them to be. While reading the "Life of Bishop Scalabrini" published these days, I have particularly lingered upon what had been the objectives of the program planned there in São Paulo since 1904, and precisely on July 14, by the Venerated Founder together with the Bishop of the time.

I transcribe it for you:

- *'... to shelter the deaf and dumb, both boys and girls, and open this mission:*

⁴⁶ Card. Rossi to Marchegiani, Bassano del Grappa, September 4, 1932 (Arch. G.S., 557/2).

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- to entrust the parish of St. Benedict to the missionaries. The parish is almost entirely made up of Italians:
- to establish as soon as possible two residences in the state's hinterland for assisting the Italians working in the fazendas. In this state - Bishop Scalabrini wrote - there are 1.200.000 Italians. Getting things well started here has great importance, because the largest Italian community of South America would thus benefit from it.'

Though not ignoring the good done by many holy missionaries, on looking back to the past, and more so to the present, could one indeed say that what had been planned by Bishop Scalabrini has been carried out? Excepting the Orphanage, also in need of reorganization as to discipline and to educational and professional programs, what can be said to have been accomplished since 1904 to this day, except the limited activities in the rectory - not a parish - of St. Anthony in a major center like São Paulo, where Italians are counted by the hundred thousands, and to some parishes on the outskirts of São Paulo, where Italians are not in great number?

Besides these considerations of mine which I place for serious meditation before Your Paternity and the Regional Council, I come to make known to Your Paternity and the Regional Council what you will have to do in order to return the Pious Society on a course respondent to its scope of bringing assistance to Italians (...).

As soon as you will receive this letter you shall examine the points I propose to you:

1. Study the present situation of the Pious Society vis-à-vis its scope as stated in the Statutes, and then make proposals which may better characterize the Pious Society in its mission of assistance to Italians (...).
2. Study the possibility of opening a preparatory Minor Seminary.⁴⁷

Since Fr. Navarro did not show himself too willing to follow these directives, the Cardinal convinced him to resign, and then he appointed Fr. Milini, to whom he wrote:

"Particular conditions of times and other things did not allow past Superiors, though so animated by good will, to carry out the programs intended by the new Superiors. They must be credited, however, with holding on, so to say, to the old positions, and with preparing the way for the new developments for all those who will head the Region today. This new course may be summed up in these words: reaffirming the Pious Society and placing it definitely on track, with assisting Italian emigrants. This is not an easy or small task, which your Paternity shall carry through with the help of the Fathers of the Region, all of whom, young and old, have certainly a strong desire to see the Institute, to which they devoted their lives, flourish once again (...).

At the top of the program to be carried out with the cooperation of all confreres you shall place what constitutes the scope of the Pious Society: the assistance to Italian emigrants, and see to it, therefore, that those initiatives be perfected or given life, which may contribute to this end."⁴⁸

⁴⁷Card. Rossi to Navarro, Roma, January 24, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 360/6).

⁴⁸ Card. Rossi to Milini, Rome, October 24, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 361/1).

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A few years later, when the parish of Santo André was taken away from the Scalabrinians, Card. Rossi deemed it his duty to appeal to the missionary spirit proper of the Congregation:

"The territory of Carmine, a dependency of Santo Andre', was separated from the parish for reasons having to do with the spiritual welfare of the people, but the new parish thus created has not been confirmed to your care, because you already have others and will be in charge now of the church of 'Peace', since the Bishop must also keep in mind his clergy. In any case, he assured me of all his benevolence in your regard. At the time, or on the occasion of this separation, some less than prudent expression must have slipped someone's lips, perhaps, which certainly did not help your cause. You must be prudent, better still, virtuous, and remember that the missionaries are the helpers of the Bishops, and albeit within the limits of justice, they must never insist, and much less, pretend. It belongs, in fact, to missionaries in all parts of the world to go forth, do the work, prepare the ground, preach, and convert souls: they toil year after year for the Lord. When everything is in good order and things are in their proper place, in patience they must yield with love and generosity their positions to the local clergy. Their work then could be considered completed, because the goal of the Missionaries is not to enjoy results, but to work so that others may take over when it is completed. A missionary does not live in a house, but under a tent; houses stand firm, but tents are moved! Tell this to your Missionaries: that they may have and keep this spirit and be content with this!"⁴⁹

Two similar letters were addressed to the Regional Superior of Rio Grande do Sul in July 19, 1937:

"Sad to say, your letters show also your disappointment over the way things slowly turn out because of the division of the parishes forcing you to leave, almost, a field of missionary activity which Scalabrinians have been working on with love for so many decades. I have engaged the Apostolic Nuncio to inquire on the matter and I am waiting for an answer.

However - aside from the intentions, unknown to us, about which it is not possible to pass judgement - this fact should not totally take one by surprise! Such is, indeed the destiny of all missions. Missionaries go, work, and build; year after year they till the field and even establish grandiose institutions for the benefit of all, but, then, others take over: the local clergy that in the meantime had been providentially in formation. It is at this point that the missionaries leave their positions: they have sown, others will reap: always purely and only for the Glory of God and for the good of souls. And so they move on to begin anew somewhere else their hard and laborious work in the midst of numberless sacrifices: when everything will have been made ready, again will they have to relinquish the field to the blessed newcomers (...).

Actually, these new missions, are they really for Italians? To tell the truth, by a combination of circumstances I have my doubts about them! I do not deny that some Italians may live there, but this is not enough. It is necessary that the missions be Italian as a whole, otherwise, Scalabrinian Missionaries would be operating outside the field of their specific apostolate, and, though doing good, they would find themselves to disperse forces otherwise needed in many other

⁴⁹ Card. Rossi to Milini, Rome, June 1, 1940 (Arch. G.S., 361/6).

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*places in America and outside, where numberless Italians in need of assistance are waiting for the ministrations of your Pious Society. Accepting parishes just for the sake of having them, no; for the care of Italians, yes."*⁵⁰

A few days later he was back on the subject:

"I am willing to send you missionaries because I know the need, aware as I am of the wide field of apostolate they can find there in the form indeed respondent to their vocation. At the same time, however, I have the impression I am sending, or maybe throwing them into a well! See what strange fantasies pass through my mind? Let me explain: once arrived, it seems to me that these missionaries are scattered so far and wide as to cause us to lose track of them. I believe that there is indeed the need for carrying out what I wrote you. Until we cannot dispose of an abundance of personnel, you must limit new foundations (which must first be approved by me); do not waste the missionaries here and there, by themselves, abandoned far from one another; keep them close to each other, better yet, group them together, so that they may live together, give reciprocal help and advice, and not be deprived, as much as possible, of the good habit and benefits of life in common (...).

And then, I wrote you, turn your attention to the scope of the Pious Society: the assistance to Italian migrants. Therefore, do not accept parishes with no Italians or with so few of them as not to need a Scalabrinian Missionary. This does not mean neglecting souls, but actually caring for them; it means not devoting oneself to those whom others can assist, in order to provide for those whom Divine Providence has entrusted to the Scalabrinians.

Italian emigrants in America and elsewhere are millions, but Scalabrinians are very few at the present time: it is not possible, and is not admissible that they be sent to other ministries. If there are no longer any Italians there (is it true? I doubt it!), then other fields remain open: to these the missionaries can be sent! Wouldn't you agree, Father?

As I wrote to you, I say this because I got wind that the new positions, accepted with admirable enthusiasm by Your Paternity, and by the Fathers there, are not for Italians (some yes, maybe, but others not). You should leave them and make the good and very Excellent Bishops understand that the Pious Society has a specific mandate and that this Sacred Congregation demands the faithful pursuit of it.

*So, for instance, I have come to know that the parish, to which Fr. X has recently been assigned, is wholly Brazilian. Should such be the case, with all respect, leave it so to avail yourself of that excellent Fr. in another parish."*⁵¹

The work of renewal of the Institute had to lead it to a greater awareness of the spirit and thought of the Founder. Two brief biographies of Bishop Scalabrini had been published: one in 1909, by Fr. Domenico Vicentini⁵², the other in 1912 by Fr. Luigi Sterlocchi, of the Diocese of Como, on order from his uncle, the Blessed Luigi Guanella.⁵³ There was also a large volume of documents put together by Professor Angelo Scalabrini, the Bishop's brother, and published in

⁵⁰ Card. Rossi to Carlino, Rome, July 15, 1937 (Arch. G.S., 418/4).

⁵¹ Card. Rossi to Carlino, Rome, July 26, 1937 (Arch. G.S., 418/4).

⁵² Vicentini, "L'Apostolo degli Italiani Emigrati nelle Americhe" (Piacenza, 1909).

⁵³ L. Sterlocchi, "Cenni Biografici di Mons. Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, Vescovo di Piacenza" (Como, 1912).

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1909 with the title, "*Trent'Anni di Apostolato*" (Thirty Years of Apostolic Work).⁵⁴ No thorough and complete study, however, had been undertaken yet on the personality, work, thought, and above all, on Bishop Scalabrini's place in the Church and in history! The first idea of a complete and documented life seems to trace back to Archbishop A. C. Cicognani. In a note written after his Apostolic Visitations of the U.S.A. and Brazil he suggested:

"Gathering information on his life, accomplishments, and writings, would be of great help in keeping alive the spirit of Bishop Scalabrini and of the many missionaries who carried out with zeal and admiration his program of assistance to Italian migrants in the Americas. There is a thick volume about him, "*Venticinque (sic) Anni di Apostolato*" but it is in greater part only a collection of newspaper articles in praise of him and of his work, compiled by the Bishop's brother. Even so, it can still be a source of good information.

It would be more important to collect his many letters and writings, write his life, and compile a book of spiritual and missionary formation that could do much good to the missionaries of St. Charles, particularly to the students of the Seminary in Piacenza."⁵⁵

Then he suggested writing to Msgr. Camillo Mangot, the Secretary of Bishop Scalabrini, who was keeping quite a few cases full with the writings, books and things of the Founder, urging him to make them available. Msgr. Mangot answered the invitation of Cardinal DeLai from Genoa, where he was living at the time, that, "at the age of 77 and with poor eyesight", he had to wait for a better season before he could remove the nails of the 47 cases of documents of various kinds in his possession, and sort out those of Bishop Scalabrini.⁵⁶ In 1928 he handed the documents over to Msgr. Francesco Gregori, of the diocese of Piacenza, who had been closely associated with Bishop Scalabrini. He had been singled out by Msgr. L. Mondini and Fr. Tironbola as the person most suitable for writing a biography.⁵⁷ Msgr. Gregori worked at it for six years. His work, 615 pages, which must be considered fundamental because of the first-hand knowledge the author had of the environment and vicissitudes in which Bishop Scalabrini lived, was published in 1934 by the "LICE-Berruti" publishing house of Turin, with the title "*La Vita e l'Opera di un Grande Vescovo (1939-1905)*" (The Life and the Work of a Great Bishop, Msgr. Giovanni Battista Scalabrini.)

5. Relations with the "Opera" (Institute) of Msgr. Coccolo

In the preceding volume we have mentioned⁵⁸ the relationship of the Scalabrinian Institute with the "Institute of the Missionaries for Emigration of Saint Anthony of Padua founded by Msgr. Giovanni Giacomo Coccolo. The union of these two Institutes had been ratified by Pope Benedict XV on January

⁵⁴ A. Scalabrini, "Mons. Giovanni Battista Scalabrini. Trent'Anni di Apostolato. Memorie e Documenti" (Rome, 1909).

⁵⁵ Note by Cicognani, Rome, November 11, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 26/1).

⁵⁶ Msgr. C. Mangot to DeLai, Genoa, November 30, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 26/1).

⁵⁷ Mangot to Cicognani, Genoa, March 25, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 26/1).

⁵⁸ Cfr. Francesconi, "History of the Scalabrinian Congregation", Vol. IV (Rome, 1973) pp. 64-69 (original).

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9, 1920.⁵⁹

By the end of 1921, Fr. Chenuil asked for a raise of the annual sum of money that the Sacred Consistorial Congregation used to grant the Scalabrinian Society as a subsidy for the Institute of Msgr. Coccolo. Cardinal DeLai answered:

"Though finding valid the reasons on which you base your request, I deem it opportune, however, to delay acceding to it until the day when certain irregularities will be eliminated such as have been noticed in the first period of your tenure (about which I am writing you separately), and the bases shall be laid for re-establishing the religious assistance on board ships in the service of migrants, according to the main scope of said Institute."⁶⁰

Sometime later, Fr. Chenuil recommended a priest for this specific task. In giving his assent, Card. DeLai pointed out:

"In consideration of what Your Paternity has illustrated in your letter, and consequent to the special recommendation you made in it of Fr. Enrico Bianchi, this Sacred Congregation grants you the faculty to appoint him as chaplain aboard the ship "Conte Rosso" soon leaving on her maiden voyage, on the precise condition, however, that he carry out his task dependently on and under the responsibility of the "Institute of the Missionaries for Emigration" by you directed and to which only is entrusted the spiritual care of Italian emigrants on their voyage to America.

In due time, I will appreciate a detailed report of this first trip, which I wholeheartedly hope will turn out thoroughly beneficial to the spiritual welfare of the emigrants, and to mark the beginning of a revival in the exercise of the Sacred Ministry aboard all ships."⁶¹

In early 1923, the mission of the chaplaincies aboard ships was entrusted to the Pontifical College of Emigration, that is, to the Prelate of Emigration, who was then Msgr. M. Cerrati:

"I must inform you that, after examining all circumstances in this case, we deemed it opportune to detach from the Scalabrinian Congregation the Institute of Msgr. Coccolo for Assistance on ships and to entrust it instead to the Pontifical College for emigrants. I am convinced that you will not be displeased of being relieved of a burden you had not spontaneously accepted and that seemed to be burdensome to you. In any event this separation became necessary in view of the new circumstances of our time and it was sanctioned by the Council of the Institute, by the Most Eminent Card. Vannutelli, Protector, and approved by the Holy Father.

There will be a few outstanding financial matters to settle; I ask you to treat them directly with Msgr. Cerrati or with Msgr. Beltrami, Rector of the College."⁶²

Besides the assistance to emigrants aboard ship, that of Italians at ports of departure and arrival was also entrusted to the Prelate for Emigration. For this reason, Scalabrinians were invited to discontinue their activity at the port of

⁵⁹ DeLai to Chenuil, Rome, January 17, 1920 (Arch. G.S., 65).

⁶⁰ DeLai to Chenuil, Rome, January 20, 1922 (Arch. G.S., 65).

⁶¹ DeLai to Chenuil, Rome, March 11, 1922 (Arch. G.S., 65).

⁶² DeLai to Chenuil, Rome, January 29, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 65).

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New York as of October 1923. The assistance of Italian migrants on their arrival was taken up by the "*Italian Auxiliary*" under the direct dependence of the Archbishop of New York.⁶³

The pending administrative matters with the Institute of Msgr. Coccolo were settled by way of a compromise in 1925, when the government of the Scalabrinian Society was transferred over to the Sacred Consistorial Congregation.⁶⁴

⁶³ DeLai to Chenuil, Rome, November 16, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 65)

⁶⁴ (*no information was found on original text*)

CHAPTER III

REORGANIZATION: PHASE TWO

1. Going back to the Religious Vows

On October 24, 1933, ten years after the Sacred Consistorial Congregation had taken over the Government of the Scalabrinian Society, Card. Raffaello Carlo Rossi addressed a Circular Letter to the Missionaries, where he recalled what had been accomplished so far, and outlined what still remained to be done *"towards a higher goal, he was calling his sons to ascend to greater perfection"*:

"Ten years have elapsed since the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, by decision of the Holy Father, began caring for the Pious Society even to the point of taking over its government, and on this occasion I am pleased to address a paternal word which all of you, Superiors and Missionaries will welcome with filial respect and satisfaction.

First of all, I invite you to give thanks to the Lord: to give Him thanks with me, as indeed I am doing, blessing Him, as a witness and minister of His mercies on the Pious Society: to give thanks from the bottom of your hearts for all He has bestowed with Divine liberality upon your Institute and on each of you. You know it, but I do not deem it out of place to repeat it to you today: It seemed as though the Pious Society, thought of and willed by your pious and venerated Founder, had not only fulfilled its mission, but had finished its very life. Various and manifold circumstances, which I don't need to enumerate, had reduced it to a sad state of decadence: a reduced number of missionaries, too many of them looking after their own interests, rather than after the supreme ones of souls and of the Institute. Neither was there any hope for a revival thanks to the seminary of Piacenza. No longer cared for as needed, because of considerations that, though unacceptable today, seemed then to be subjectively correct, the seminary was irreparably heading for its extinction.

A closing down of it would have meant the end of the Pious Society.

I tell you this today, ten years later: we had reached that point!

But, such was not the Will of God, whose plans - ever inscrutable and divinely wise - were quite different for the Pious Society. An unforgettable circumstance provided the spark; it was enough to discover the latent fervor burning within the Institute. Right then, authoritative and decisive, came the word of the One who - as it were - had in his hand the destinies of the Pious Society: the most august blessing of the Holy Father. In a moment things changed: the Institute had to live and prosper.

Ten years later, we can safely say that the Will of God has been accomplished: the seminary of Piacenza, Mother House of the Institute, restored and embellished; another grandiose seminary, risen, as though by magic on a most pleasant the healthy location at Bassano; more than 250 students, up from about 25 of them; studies conducted in accordance with the most exacting instructions of the Holy See at the two seminaries and in Rome, where some students are frequenting higher courses of Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University; new missionaries

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sent in successive stages to both the United States and Brazil as the number of ordinations consented it; the new possibility of sending them uninterruptedly every year in sufficient supply while sacred ordinations are being prepared in greater numbers. Above all, love and attachment for the Congregation has increased in all members. And so, not only the old feel more united to it who remember the venerated Founder and his zeal, and those, who, following later, made his ideal their own, but also the young who are either already giving way to the fervor of their activity in the mission, or in the seminary preparing themselves in prayer and study for the duties of their future ministry.

In these ten years and in this work of reconstruction and restoration, difficulties had certainly to be overcome which were neither small nor few; old situations had to be faced and radically changed; recourse was had to warnings that even resulted in severe sanctions; in fact, we should say that on this level such a sad but necessary task has not yet been concluded. But even in this, the Lord assisted us so that His plans might be fulfilled. And now, ten years later, I do not say: let us resume, but, let us continue, the great work undertaken, and it will be a special grace of God if, on this ten-year anniversary, we will be able to start the Pious Society on the road to a higher goal by calling its sons to ascents of greater perfection. But, it is necessary in the meantime, that all of you, Superiors and Missionaries, give the contribution of your most willing and intense cooperation.

1. First of all, I expect - rather, the Pious Society expects - of you a great spirit of religion. In your houses you live generally in small groups and are kept very busy with the duties of the ministry, but you must still try to live the community life and you should not neglect the common practices of piety. To all those who have spiritually benefitted from their life in seminary, I say: 'Do not forget this blessed place and continue to live by its spirit through the most diligent regularity of your acts.'

To the missionaries in the United States I say: 'In the midst of the unrelenting spiritual and temporal work of your parishes, practice piety as your source of recollection, light, comfort, and encouragement.'

To the missionaries of Brazil I say: 'In your apostolic peregrinations turn your glance to heaven and in the fervor of prayer you will find the strength needed also to sustain the hardships of your laborious life.'

2. Secondly, I recommend you to persevere in mutual charity. Love and forgive one another. Remember the Apostle's teaching: - *'Love is patient; love is kind. Love is not jealous, it does not put on airs, it is not snobbish. Love is never rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not prone to anger; neither does it brood over injuries. Love does not rejoice in what is wrong, but rejoices with the truth. There is no limit to love's forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure.'* (1 Cor. 13, 4-7).

You are different in age, in time of entry to the Pious Society, and let me say so, in formation in the Institute; but you are all members of the same family. Love and forgive each other.

You will succeed in this if you cease busying yourselves less than charitably about each other, if you keep your eye simple, your ears shut, your tongue prudent. St. James teaches us: 'If a person is without fault in speech, he is a man in the fullest sense.' (Jas. 3, 2).

Furthermore, if each one obediently gets busy about his own field, and only

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about the field entrusted him by Divine Providence, without interfering in the affairs of other houses or Provinces, be it even only for zeal, which in case would be misguided and out of place! Each house, each region has his superior; to him all care belongs, to him the whole responsibility. Not a few troubles have derived sometimes from undue interference.

3. Have at heart the honor and the spiritual growth of your parishes for the good of souls, the consolation of the Sacred Shepherds (Bishops), the perfect fulfillment of your apostolic mission. Have at heart the good name and spiritual growth of your houses by taking care that the spirit and the observance of your rules may flourish in them.
4. Care, as your duty demands, for the temporal interests of your churches and parishes. Deficiencies, serious at times, had to be deplored in some places, along with no less serious consequences. Be it your care that you be or become prudent and wise administrators. If only we did not have to concern ourselves at all for things temporal and transitory to attend only to the spiritual and eternal ones! However, since one must concern himself about them, though on a subordinate order, let him be, therefore, a faithful and vigilant administrator!

Be also good administrators of the revenues of each house, as of a patrimony that does not belong to you but to the Pious Society. If it depended on it, the Society would willingly like to go without such subsidies, but due to general conditions of things, it cannot do so. In fact, it has great need of them for its growth, for the support, and for the formation of today's students, who will be Missionaries, your coadjutors and successors, tomorrow.

5. In regard to missionaries, this is the right moment for me to speak about your wishes, - mine, as well, - and about the present circumstances and needs.

Requests for missionaries are pouring in from all regions. You could not present a petition more natural and proper than this. But I wish you would be so understanding, as to be convinced that it is not possible for a short while yet to honor your requests according to needs, as I myself well know!

Above all, be pleased to consider that you owe it all to God, first, and then to the Holy See, which took the Pious Society under its care from the throes of death and infused new life into it, if you were able to obtain some young man of good will these last years. If the seminary had not been revived and so well taken care of by its superiors, no one, or hardly any, could have been sent to the missions anymore. What you have obtained is for you a clear gain, therefore, but do not press for more, please, because it is impossible for me to give it to you.

The students are there, many of them, but they must prepare themselves, they must attend to their studies; still a hopeful wait, still some effort of good will and intensified work, till those young men may be sent group after group: then you will have enough of them to fill in the vacancies, to provide for needs I am the first to acknowledge as serious and urgent!

Still another consideration, by which, besides, I want also to give you due praise for your solicitude for the field respectively assigned to you. My very dear ones, don't you realize, however, that the Pious Society is divided into various regions, that all of them have urgent needs, and that all must be provided for with equity? I am fully aware of your heavy and unrelenting

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ministerial work in the United States, but I cannot forget the very laborious ministry of your confreres in Brazil; I must not neglect the many widely extensive parishes of the South, but I cannot leave aside the more intensely populated, though more constricted, ones of the North; I must think of the schools in the United States, and yet not accord second place to the eminently Scalabrinian institution of the Orphanage at São Paulo; I want to provide a respite for the young missionaries, but I must care with special attention also for the older and more tired ones.

Besides, I call your attention to the seminaries of Italy. More than 200 young men stand in need of supervision, guidance, and training. Sacrifices, many of them, have been made to help the missions by the very few of your confreres who in total dedication have devoted themselves to the good of the seminaries, but it will be also necessary that responsibilities and tasks be distributed not only on the spiritual and disciplinary level, but in the field of studies as well, due to the fact that the increased number of the minor and major seminarians at Piacenza no longer allows them to frequent classes at the diocesan seminary. Hence, the necessity of establishing your own internal study programs to the evident advantage of the regularity of life in the seminaries, which requires, therefore, the employing of some added personnel. So then, by the love you bear the Pious Society, be patient for a while yet; within a short period of time, sacred ordinations shall be numerous; we will be able, then, to provide without difficulty for all the needs of missions and seminaries: already within a few months we shall send some eager young men who will be of great help to you.

In the meantime, pray, work for the Lord, and remain assured that you are being followed by the solicitous thought and constant care of your Superiors.

From the bottom of my heart I impart on all of you, Superiors and Missionaries, a most copious blessing."¹

During the month of September 1933, while on vacation, which he had begun taking habitually at the Scalabrinian seminary of Bassano del Grappa, Cardinal Rossi personally conducted an inquiry among the priests, clerics, and brothers who resided in Italy, regarding their position to embrace the religious life. When he had the final answer in hand, following a period of reflection concluded with a retreat in October 1933, he sent another circular letter to the missionaries:

“It seems as though the Lord, admirable in his inscrutable counsels, wants to call your Pious Society to a higher perfection, for which he had been preparing it with Divine Wisdom in the course of these last years by means of an abundance of heavenly blessings. And this would be the perfection He is calling it to: that the missionaries who compose it and are its members, be bound to it, from now on, no more just by the oath of perseverance but by actual simple vows - temporary at first, and then perpetual - of obedience, chastity, and poverty, in accordance with what has been the desire of the Venerated Founder, and the practice enacted by him.

And, so, the Pious Society shall enter the number of the Religious Congregations and cease being an Association of Persons living in common without vows (cfr. Code of Canon Law, tit. XVII, Can. 673 and segg.)

¹ Card. R.C. Rossi, Circular Letter, October 24, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 28/2).

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This desire for higher perfection had been manifested to me by some for quite some time now, but though approving of their deep sense of piety, I deemed it opportune to think it over not only in view of a decision, but also as to an immediate consideration of their petition. There was need of fervent prayer and serious thought.

And this is what has been done. I have not neglected to consult also a few of the most influential missionaries, and I was given their immediate full support and spontaneous declaration that they themselves were ready to take the vows.

The time was ripe for inquiring into the minds of all members of the Pious Society and knowing their feelings. And so, we began with the seminary. The seminarians were invited to reflect on the matter through opportune instructions by the Spiritual Directors and Superiors.

Besides, taking the opportunity of my brief period of vacation spent during the past month of September at the Seminary of Bassano, by means of common and special lectures I decided to illustrate for them all those matters that refer to the vows as contained in the Laws of the Church, to show their worth, and to set wide open the difficulties occasionally encountered by the frailty of human weakness in observing them.

Those young men identified themselves - as it were - with the matter; they were given opportunity and freedom to candidly express themselves, to make known their desires and objections, to ask for explanations, to manifest their assent, doubts, or dissent: fifteen extremely laborious days, all devoted to community prayer and common study.

Matured before God and through a most serious reflection, this was the final result: a spontaneous, full, and almost unanimous plebiscite favoring that the Holy See may deign to introduce the simple vows of the religious life into the Pious Society. Proof of their common assent is found in the extended, diffused, meditated handwritten answers of all and each one - priests, clerics, brothers - a moving revelation of the sentiments that inspire all, especially these pious young men.

I pointed out that the plebiscite was almost unanimous. Should it in fact have been thoroughly unanimous, one could doubt, perhaps, as to the sincerity and freedom of their answers. And so there were some who did not show themselves willing to accept this eventual new way of life: these, ten out of one hundred and twenty, have preferred, and have asked, to leave the Pious Society right away: all young men about whom there was justified reason to think that they would have not persevered, independently of the proposal for the introduction of the vows. And now I invite and call on all the good missionaries, attending to their apostolic ministry in the various regions, to meditate on the serious matter and to express their opinion.

Except for a very few Brothers, those I turn to are all Priests, and therefore particularly enlightened by the Lord and knowledgeable of the Sacred Laws of the Church; there is no need then for me to expand in explaining to them the vows and the obligations they entail. However, I shall separately give some explanation on the matter to exhort them to consult the approved experts of Canon Law, while inviting them to pray and seek advice. The Priests shall do the Brothers the charity of opportune instructions. Furthermore, the

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missionaries to whom I address this letter of mine are already bound to the Society by the perpetual oath. I hasten to declare and assure that, should they not feel like spontaneously binding themselves with vows, they will not cease thereof to belong to the Pious Society, which they eagerly joined at other times when different rules were in force. They shall remain bound by the oath with no further obligations, and continue to exercise their generous and effective ministry for souls in the Pious Society.

And now let each Missionary and Brother respond to the following question and send in his answer directly to me:

'Should the Holy See introduce into your Pious Society the simple - temporal and perpetual - vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty, is it likely that you would be willing to take them, and if so, even perpetually right away (since you are already bound by the perpetual oath), or do you prefer, rather, to remain bound to the Pious Society only by the oath?'

May the Lord enlighten and bless you!"²

Already by the end of September, Cardinal Rossi had given instructions that, in expectation of the decisions of the Holy See, the seminaries should begin to adopt "a period of life in common and on the individual level in which, though without vows and, therefore, without any obligation under pain of sin, each one may devote himself to the exact practice of the single virtues just as if he were bound by the vows, so as to gain the experience of what it will be like, when the vows will be introduced into the Pious Society".³

The formula of the oath was modified with the following addition:

"Si autem interim ab Apostolica Sede vota simplicia in hac Pia Societate admittentur, propono, quantum in me est, ipsa vota, loco juramenti, me esse professurum, etiam ante expletum annum ab huius juramenti emissionem."⁴

("Should the simple vows be introduced in the meantime into this Pious Society by the Holy See, I resolve, as is in my power, to profess these vows in place of the oath, even before the expiration of the year, since the oath was taken.")

The responses to the question contained in the circular of November 4, 1933, came in during the period between that November itself and July 1934. Out of 88 priests, 33 declared themselves willing to take the religious vows, 44 asked to continue with the oath of perseverance, 6 were undecided, and 7 took the occasion for presenting or renewing their petition to be dispensed from the oath. The greater part of those who asked to continue with the oath declared themselves in favor of the introduction of the vows into the Pious Society, even if they personally did not feel like embracing the religious life: the reasons they gave were either their advanced age, or a mentality already oriented differently, or still the desire to retain a certain independence in the use of the monthly allowance accorded them by the Institute. Someone, finally, objected that there existed the risk of dividing the Missionaries in two classes, one enjoying greater

² Card. Rossi, Circular Letter, December 4, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 30/1).

³ Card. Rossi to Tirondola, Rome, September 29, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 28/2).

⁴ Card. Rossi to Tirondola, Rome, September 29, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 28/2).

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favor with the Superiors than the other.

Of the 55 clerics already bound by the perpetual or temporary oath, 47 declared themselves ready for the profession, 6 against it, and 2 undecided. Of the 54 "postulants" preparing for the oath, 46 were in favor of the religious vows, 5 against them, and 3 undecided. Ten of the 12 Brothers were willing to take the vows, 2 preferred to continue with the oath. When the decision to return to the religious vows was being taken for granted, ten clerics preferred to leave the Institute; others, who had shown themselves against it or in doubt at first, decided to make the profession.

On February 10, 1934, Cardinal Rossi telegraphed the Seminaries of Piacenza and Bassano del Grappa that, at an audience of that morning, the Holy Father Pius XI had decided the return of the Scalabrinian (Pious) Society to the religious life:

"Upon receiving a complete report on the matter, the Holy Father deigned to give instructions that the simple religious vows, temporary and perpetual, that is, obedience, chastity, and poverty, be introduced into the Scalabrinian Society in accord with the Sacred Canons. The temporary vows shall be annual. The Holy Father has also granted to the undersigned Cardinal Secretary the faculties needed for adapting the Rules to the new course of the Pious Society."⁵

A few days later he wrote to Fr. Tirondola:

*"It gives me a special joy to send you immediately - as I did also to Bassano - my telegram announcing that the Holy Father had authorized the vows for the Pious Society, and I sent it immediately following the audience. And now it is up to all of you, and I address myself in particular to our most dear young men, to respond with generosity. Tell them that I myself look forward with eagerness to the day when I shall receive their vows and offer them to God. Besides, to the common rejoicing of all, tell them also that not one voice was raised against the innovation: even those who for particular reasons of age or formation did not feel like being able to offer the complete sacrifice have acknowledged in the vows the new strength of the Institute. No need to say anything about the old missionaries who have recalled with moving words Bishop Scalabrini and his intention of founding a Pious Society with vows."*⁶

To the four regional Superiors he sent the following message:

"I make it my solicitous duty to announce to Your Paternity and to all missionaries of your Region that the Holy Father has kindly deigned to authorize by his supreme authority that the holy simple vows of obedience, chastity and poverty be introduced into the Pious Society.

These vows shall be temporary to one year at first, till the sub-deaconate for the clerics, and up to the twenty first year of age for the Brothers; but in either case always for the duration of not less than three years: and then they shall be taken perpetually.

Naturally, such changes shall be introduced into the Rule of the Pious Society,

⁵ Telegram Card. Rossi to Tirondola, Rome, February 10, 1934 (Arch. G.S., 32/1).

⁶ Card. Rossi to Tirondola, Rome, February 23, 1934 (Arch. G.S., 32/1).

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as the new course will demand. I take it upon myself to send instructions to the Missionaries who intend to take the vows as said before. As to the rest, I do not need to confirm that they shall continue in the bond of the oath, as ever devoted sons of the Pious Society, always closely united without any change in their mutual relation with the Institute and their confreres."⁷

The ceremony of the first profession of the vows in the Pious Society, once again a Religious Congregation, was celebrated in the Church of St. Charles at the Mother House of Piacenza on April 8, 1934. Nine priests and 24 clerics took the perpetual vows while another 36 clerics took the temporary vows.

At the celebratory act that concluded the day, Fr. Tirondola traced the plan for the next ten years: the founding of seminaries in the United States and Brazil; the opening of new ones in Italy; the return to Italy of the Scalabrinian Sisters. With the Cardinal leading them, the first nine professed priests renewed their vows at the tomb of Bishop Scalabrini on April 10.⁸

By a decree of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, dated September 18, 1934, the novitiate was established within the premises of the Mother House in Piacenza, and on the following day the first Novice Master was appointed in the person of Fr. Raffaele Larcher, later replaced with Fr. Stanislao Fiscarelli, named "Pro-Novice Master" on January 15, 1935. The first year of Novitiate started on October 7, 1934. The novices of the second year moved to the new seat of the novitiate in Crespano del Grappa, established by a decree of October 19, 1935.

2. The Constitutions of 1936

Immediately after having reestablished religious life, Cardinal Rossi began compiling the new Constitutions personally working on them for about two years. On February 24, 1936, he sent their draft to the regional superiors, informing them of the criteria he had employed:

"These Constitutions, the object of a study initiated almost two years ago, have been written after the pattern of the old rule of Bishop Scalabrini, of the Statutes in force to this day, keeping in mind the laws of other Institutes, and above all, the norms indicated for such cases by the Sacred (Roman) Congregations, and in obedience to the Code of Canon Law.

Before publishing them, however, I desire that the Missionaries in the full exercise of their ministry may also look at them and examine them, and express their opinions. Your Paternity will take care, therefore, that you study them, and submit them also to your Councilors, and, should you deem it fit, even to some other Fathers, who, in your opinion, would offer a competent contribution of prudent advice. It is understood that in matters of vows and of their observance, the Constitutions shall only bind the professed members.

Everything else is rather a disciplinary code that does not call for any

⁷ Card. Rossi to Regional Superiors, Rome, March 8, 1934 (Arch. G.S., 32/1).

⁸ Cfr. A. Ceccato, "Una falange di Scalabriniani fa nelle mani dell'Em.mo Card. Rossi la professione religiosa" ("A Compact Group of Scalabrinians take their Vows at the Hands of the Most Eminent Card. Rossi"), "L'Emigrato Italiano", a. XXIII, #2 (April 1934), pp. 5-14.

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substantial change in the way of life of the members of the Pious Society, and has its roots and justification in the Canons of the Code of Canon Law."⁹

Besides the entire section concerning the vows, the main innovations were represented by the following ones:

From n.1 the following words were left out: "*The Pious Society etc..*) is constituted under the high direction of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation and at the dependence of a Superior General appointed by the same Congregation", and this was done in view of the possibility of a return to the normal regime of dependence from the Congregation for Religious. So, likewise, all references to the Consistorial Congregation were taken out, dealing with matters of authorizations and appointments, ordinarily the domain of a Superior General. For authorizations and appointments pertaining to a higher authority, the name of the Consistorial was replaced with the generic one of the "Holy See".

The division into provinces, rather than regions, was reinstated. The norm by which the General Chapter had to be presided over by a Delegate of the Consistorial was abolished.

The right of active voice for the election of the Superior General, till then the right of all the Priests who had been members of the Pious Society for three years, was limited to the members of the General Chapters. Much space was devoted to the spiritual and ascetical sections, all in line with the various sets of Rules promulgated by Bishop Scalabrini.

The Constitutions were approved and promulgated on August 15, 1936 by the Sacred Consistorial Congregation in virtue of the special faculties accorded it by the Supreme Pontiff.

On September 3 they were sent out to all Missionaries accompanied by the following circular letter:

"The fruit of much praying, assiduous study, and prudent and valuable advice, the new Constitutions of the Pious Society shall be solemnly promulgated on the next solemnity of the Nativity of the virgin Mary in the presence of the Communities of Piacenza, Bassano, Crespano, and Rome, gathered together, and right of this moment they are sent to all members of the Pious Society scattered in Europe and the Americas for the spreading of the Gospel and of the good odor of Christ.

The new order given the Pious Society by the return to the religious vows, once introduced by the Venerated Founder, and its raising to the rank of a Religious Congregation, demanded this work which was carried out on the footprint of the first Rule given by the Servant of God Bishop Scalabrini, and of the Statutes in force till now, without neglecting the norms enacted by the Sacred Roman Congregations, and in absolute conformity with the Code of Canon Law.

It is now up to you, my dearly beloved in the Lord, to observe them with utmost exactness, and, I would add, with fervent eagerness. On them will depend in great part your sanctification, and through them the Pious Society,

⁹ Card. Rossi to Regional Superiors, Rome, February 24, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 132/3).

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so visibly blessed by God, will acquire a new stability and growth, thus ever better and less unworthily responding to the high and holy mission entrusted her by God.

As one who is already well acquainted with your spirit and zeal, I am confident that all of you will readily keep them:

- for the parts which only concern them, those who, having joined the Pious Society at other times, have remained bound to it by the oath because they did not choose to make the profession of the religious vows, without thereby ceasing to be members of the Institute and sons of Bishop Scalabrini with all the rights and duties deriving from it;
- for all parts and integrally, those who accepted or are about to accept the religious vows, and all those who, on entering the Pious Society after the introduction of the new order, will find in the New Constitutions the code of their study and discipline from the early days of their Novitiate.

However, should any practical small difficulty arise in houses where missionaries with oath and with vows exercise the ministry together, by the innermost mercy of our God, insistently and trustingly, I ask you for charitable and mutual understanding; in reciprocal respect, conscious each of his own duty, these difficulties will be ironed out, and they shall deal with each other with understanding and mutual edification: those with the oath by admiring the stricter bonds accepted by the others; the first not taking it as pretext to relax their commitment, and the latter as an opportunity to be solicitous in giving good example; all shall be united in the love of Our Lord, to the glory of God, for the good of one's and others' souls, through the observance of these laws we are hereby sending you.

With this act, the Pious Society has taken another decisive step forward. Under the protection of the Holy See for the past 12 years until now, the Institute rose to new life and holy exuberance: restored in all respects, the Mother House of Piacenza, in Italy, has witnessed the rising of the grandiose seminary of Bassano, the reopening of the house of Crespano as a Novitiate, the revitalizing of the house of Rome with a number of young students of theology, gathered together there in the pursuit of demanding higher studies. The few young candidates of 1924 have increased to the almost 200 of today; the very few clerics of that time are now soon reaching the number of 100, plus 40 novices, let alone the newly ordained Priests who are already contributing, one way or other, with their piety and zeal, to the Pious Society; the Brothers, between candidates and novices, are about 30.

Besides all this, it is important to point out that fifty missionaries have been sent to the missions in the course of the past 12 years, while others are about to leave for the mission. By the zeal of the Superiors and the cooperation of the members, the existing institutions of the missions have been strengthened and new ones initiated.

It has been a year now since in the Western Province of the United States a preparatory seminary for young candidates has been in existence. With the beginning of the new school year there will be 25 students, all gathered in a specially built locale, open also to good young men of the Eastern Province that has already sent to it its willing representation.

In the Province of São Paulo, Brazil, there is all-out fervor of great initiatives

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for the assistance of so many Italians living in the cities and in the State of São Paulo. So also in the Province of Rio Grande, work is about to begin on the construction of a preparatory Seminary, with a reasonable hope of bringing forth good and abundant results. In both Provinces new parishes have been entrusted to the Pious Society.

And lastly, in order to give start to an effective spiritual assistance to the many and many thousands of Italian migrants in the various regions of Europe, exposed to many serious dangers for their faith and morals, a mission, our first one, has been opened; humble indeed, but which the Lord will certainly bless.

Let all of you, therefore, give a good welcome to the new Constitutions, which, as I said before, are adding another decisive step to the tangible progress of the Pious Society in the field of the apostolate, and may the Institute, willed by Bishop Scalabrini of blessed memory, achieve through them, and by virtue of your faithful observance, its full and effective growth. This shall be the most beautiful glory by which the name of the venerated Founder will be honored, even at the very first beginning of his Cause of Beatification and Canonization introduced by the Bishop's curia of Piacenza.

Finally, in your resolution to keep the new Constitutions with the greatest perfection, may the Apostolic Blessing, which the Holy Father, who follows with fatherly care the Scalabrinian Institute, charges me to convey to you in his name, as a pledge of all choicest blessings from Heaven, be to you a spur and a source of comfort."¹⁰

3. The State of the Scalabrinian Congregation at the close of the period before World War II

Cardinal Rossi gave the exact description of the situation with the circular letter of April 25, 1940:

"A few years ago, when celebrating the 10- year anniversary of the Pious Society's revival, in the course of a memorable celebratory program held at Piacenza, in the presence of His Excellency the Bishop, Fr. Tirondola, the Superior of the houses of Italy, had this to say solemnly with all sincerity and perfect tranquility, to the manifest surprise of some present: *'And now the program for the next ten years: a minor seminary in the United States of America, another in Brazil, and a third one in Italy, outside of Emilia and Veneto.'*

Dearly beloved, the seminary of the United States, opened in Chicago, now flourishing with about fifty students, has already sent its first fruits to the Novitiate of Crespano, and they are the object of much hope. The seminary of Brazil, opened at Guaporé, Rio Grande do Sul, also numbers about fifty Italo-Brazilian boys; and to think that it was founded only two years ago! To complete the program, the new seminary of Italy has also been established by the splendid munificence of an illustrious benefactor to whom the whole Pious Society owes it undying gratitude.

That night, Fr. Tirondola had spoken as the heart dictated: the Lord has

¹⁰ Card. Rossi, Circular Letter, September 3, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 132/5).

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blessed his words and made them a reality.

The new seminary is located in Cermenate, in the diocese of Como, just a few miles away from the hometown of the Founder, and it is already alive with a group of candidates.

Someone else will tell you, in due time, about the beauty of the place, the capacity of the building, the beautiful park surrounding it. But, something other than this I tell you for your comfort and as a stimulus: 'Once again, accept this as the tangible proof of God's all-embracing and everlasting favor upon your Pious Society.' And let me soon add: 'Continue to be worthy of it by the faithful observance of your Constitutions, always persevering in the good spirit and fervor, not only in the course of your stay in the solitude of the houses of formation, but outside, as well, afterwards, when in the exercise of your ministry often not devoid of difficulties or dangers.' Even though I am far away, I am following you with my thoughts and prayers; I would like to be able to write more often and comfort you, if need be, so as to urge you onward to ever greater achievements. Pray that I may find the time for my wish come true. In the meantime, let these few words of mine, collectively addressed to all and each one of you, assure you of my constant remembrance, renew your spirit, help you in all kinds of good deeds, and bring you my fatherly and most plentiful blessing."¹¹

Fr. Francesco Prevedello, then rector of the Mother House, took the occasion of this circular letter to write to the Provincial Superiors, on June 1, 1940, ten days before Italy entered the war, to invite them to express their thanks to the Cardinal and to propose the following:

"Since this year, precisely at the end of this month of June, marks the tenth anniversary of the Cardinal's elevation to the Sacred Purple, it will be our duty to stress this date with the expression of our good wishes, a date, which is coinciding on his part with a more solicitous and authoritative concern for our Pious Society; in fact, I would deem it proper to petition His Eminence that, as a crowning achievement of this special interest of his, he may be pleased to accord our Society a definitive form of government by the appointment of a Superior General of our own and of his General Council.

Since in virtue of our Constitutions we must arrive at the level of such a definitive settlement and order, and on the other hand, thank God, men capable of government are not lacking in the Pious Society, this would be the most opportune occasion for setting ourselves on the road to normalcy because in his first years, the most difficult ones, whoever should be called to head the Pious Society could count on the solicitous and wise assistance of his Eminence."¹²

Even before receiving an answer from the Provincial Superiors, the same Fr. Prevedello sent a petition of his own to Card. Rossi who gave him the following answer:

"As to the matter you submitted to me, I am glad you wrote to me about it because this way, by the time we will come to it you shall share in the merit.

¹¹ Card. Rossi, Circular Letter, April 24, 1940 (Arch. G.S., 34/1).

¹² Prevedello to Provincial Superiors, Piacenza, June 1, 1940 (Arch. G.S., 34/1).

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But I tell you right away that not only have I been thinking for quite a while already about this 'completion' but also that I have been setting things in motion for it. So far, the administration of the economy is in the hands of Fr. Sofia since the first of November, last.

True, I keep an eye on him, but only on a personal basis; the Sacred Congregation, though continuing its high protection, has absolutely no longer anything to do with it. And I follow him not because he is much in need of instruction for dealing in business; he knows quite well how to handle matters; but, rather, so that he may learn how to keep the books.

As to matters concerning discipline and government, this Sacred Congregation has taken care of them in the past, though rather as an executive instrument when things began to depend on me. However, even this action is limited now, because I have much of it either carried out by Father Superior or I do so myself personally dealing with the single superiors. It is all a process towards an autonomous government which is not meant, of course, to be subtracted from the high supervision the Holy See exercises over all religious institutes. If up to this time I did not decide to take the decisive step, the reasons are to be found in the following:

- 1. There were quite a few things to introduce, to do, and to bring to completion;*
- 2. It was necessary that the Institute were given a lasting configuration;*
- 3. There was the need to set distant provinces on a position that could enable them to enter the new order of things so as to avoid complaints and defaults.*

Now things have changed. The Pious Society has achieved its identity. There is a general consciousness of its history and scope, a consoling 'team spirit'. There are men capable of keeping houses and institutions alive and flourishing. There is a soul, there is a spirit, in them. And these institutions are not few, and all of them, more or less, well organized and very promising.

As to the Provinces, it was necessary that within them Religious, who have lived this new way of life and have known well the Superiors, be increased. We have reached the point, therefore, or almost so, to which, as I said, I have been aiming for a while now, and more than once I mentioned it both in this Sacred Congregation and outside. I remember mentioning it, in passing to the Superior, who was not yet of the opinion perhaps that there should be a deliberation on the matter. If I am not mistaken, there was a time when of his own initiative even Fr. Franch wrote to me incidentally that the direction of the Sacred Congregation should be continued; whether for reasons of prestige or to avoid divisions, perhaps, I do not know. Anyway, I think that we will have to come to this soon enough, without excluding, of course, the high supervision of this Sacred Congregation, first, as is natural, and then, should it be useful or not, even of that advice which I shall be willing to give you any time you will ask for it.

I am also of the opinion that two reasons, which I would call extrinsic, are warning us not to delay for too long: first, I am.... much less younger than you, and the future is in the Hands of God. Of course, another one will follow after me, and the world will keep going on. It would be presumptuous of me if I think of myself as useful for anything. However, as I have been following and

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accompanying you since when you were one meter above sea level - not to say when the Institute was about to go under - until now that you are on the heights of the Himalayas, it may be useful if I myself should place the direction of the Pious Society in the hands of new Superiors of 'its own'.

Secondly, the years go by for you also, and it would not be right to let grow in age also those, on whom should fall the choice in time of elections.

And so, here you have what I have been thinking about for quite a while now, and which I keep suggesting around without much fuss, but with determination of purpose. Pray that all may be accomplished and well, in the shortest time possible."¹³

Only one remained of the responses of the Provincial Superiors, that of Fr. Beniamino Franch, Superior of the Province of St. John the Baptist, West U.S.A.:

"If you of the houses of Italy acknowledge the great good done by this most prudent and respected government, we, in America, owe His Eminence the continuation of our life before and after the vows.

In this Province we could not have made those changes that marked our revival of it were it not for the direct support of the Cardinal. And I am convinced that we would have lost several parishes in these last five years had it not been for the intervention of the consideration of our direct dependence on His Eminence the Secretary of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation.

I think that more than one religious congregation would be happy to have such a Most Eminent Superior when dealing with the Ordinaries.

But something more important is at stake here: the fact of the vows. You well know that the greater majority of Pastors in the United States did not take the vows: twenty to some twelve of them. Now then, the Pastors are also the Superiors of the houses, and, therefore, they naturally exert an influence on the professed who are in greater part the assistants: and this influence is contrary to the vows.

I also wish to point out that the priests arriving here now, did not make the novitiate, and, if they had not been kept united by His Eminence as the one who proposed the vows, I doubt about their perseverance.

In other words, dependence on His Eminence assures us the benevolence of the Ordinaries and the peace between members with vows and those without them. I am, therefore, absolutely convinced of the need of such dependence until those with vows will have control over all, or nearly all, the houses."¹⁴

At the end of 1940, in a circular letter carrying his Christmas greetings, Cardinal Rossi presented a report on the state of the Scalabrinian Congregation:

"There is an intense missionary and parochial work going on in the provinces of North America, while the seminary of Chicago is preparing numerous and good candidates that join the ranks of those who, after fervently completing the Novitiate, are now pursuing their studies in the seminaries of Bassano and Piacenza.

¹³ Card. Rossi to Prevedello, Rome, June 30, 1940 (Arch. G.S., 34/1).

¹⁴ Franch to Prevedello, Melrose Park, Illinois. July 15, 1940 (Arch. G.S., 34/1).

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In the provinces of South America the assistance to Italians is being intensified with an ever increasing zeal, while a parish at São Paulo, titled to Mary, Queen of Peace, is functioning already in a temporary chapel, as the construction of a church with adjoining buildings is being planned. In Rio Grande do Sul an ever greater expansion is being given to the Seminary of Guaporé from where we expect excellent young men to come out, the offspring of Italians, who will return to Brazil one day to become the co-workers of the Missionaries, who are presently their Fathers and teachers.

In the Argentine Republic, as you know, a mission has been opened with a wide field of apostolate, and we are confident that others will be open as soon as possible on behalf of the many Italian families that migrated there so long ago.

With the Lord's blessing and under His care, the missionaries of Paris are still doing wonderful work today; a good Father is preparing a future for the Pious Society in Switzerland; and concerning Italy, I want to give you the consolation of the most comforting and reassuring news: Priests, Clerics, Novices, Brothers, Minor Seminarians, all are well, serene, filled with trust and hope; all in their respective places in the diligent fulfillment of their duties.

Flourishing are the seminaries of Bassano and of Cermenate - the newest creature of the Pious Society: flourishing is the Novitiate - a veritable oasis of peace and recollection; flourishing also are the seminaries of Piacenza and Rome. Our hopes, therefore, are very high to be able to send in the near future a good number of missionaries and render wholly self-sufficient the teaching staffs of the seminaries of Italy and America."¹⁵

In 1940, the numerical strength of the Congregation may be summed up into 163 priests, counting those with vows and oath, 90 Clerics, and 20 Brothers.

4. Diocesan Informative Process of Bishop Scalabrini's Beatification

The first steps towards the introduction of the cause for the Beatification of Bishop Scalabrini were taken in 1935, precisely on the occasion of a visit of Bishop Ersilio Menzani of Piacenza to the Scalabrinian seminary of Bassano del Grappa, where on September 8 he made known his intention to begin the diocesan process. On November 14, in his address for the closing of the Diocesan Synod, the same Bishop declared:

"It is indeed my intention to begin shortly the Canonical process of my great and illustrious predecessor Giovanni Battista Scalabrini. Something has been done among us already, and is being done, and soon the formal process for the introduction of his cause will be instituted. The announcement of it shall be given to the pastors, and it is our hope that in a not too distant day the Vatican's oracle may decree to him the honors of glory."¹⁶

On January 23, 1936, Bishop Menzani illustrated his project to Pope Pius XI and wrote to Card. Rossi:

¹⁵ Card. Rossi, Circular Letter, December 15, 1940 (Arch. G.S., 34/1).

¹⁶ "Per la glorificazione del nostro Fondatore", "L'Emigrato Italiano", a. XXV, #1 (January 1936), p. 9.

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"I think it will please Your Most Reverend Eminence if I let you know that at the audience of the 23rd of this month, upon mentioning to him my intention to initiate the Canonical Process for the Venerated Memory of Bishop Scalabrini, His Holiness deigned to answer immediately and assuredly: 'We view the project with favor;' - and then he added, - 'we have known Bishop Scalabrini; in fact' - he went on - ' we remember meeting him for the last time right here at the Vatican.' And he told me in the minutest details that their conversation concerned a Catechism by the Bishop which had come to him through Card. Ferrari for the revision. And he even recalled some amendments he had made to it. And then, upon my request for an extraordinary blessing for the good success of this so important and delicate task to which I was about to devote myself, he exclaimed: 'Yes, we bestow an extraordinary one and wholeheartedly!'"¹⁷

A month earlier, on December 30, 1935, the Bishop of Piacenza had convoked Canon Mons. Guglielmo Scrivani, Fr. Francesco Tironola, and Fr. Angelo Corso to discuss the choice of the promoters, the postulator, and the judges; then he submitted his plan to the judgment of Card. Rossi who answered as follows:

"Please, Your Excellency, do not be surprised if somewhat belatedly I bring to completion my answer concerning the request of Your Excellency about instituting the informative process on the fame of the virtues of the Servant of God, Bishop Scalabrini.

Your Excellency had occasion to understand a certain amount of hesitation on my part, notwithstanding all my affection for the Pious Society and my veneration for its Founder: such hesitation finds its reason in the fear that it may not be easy to prove the fame of his sanctity, and in the consideration of certain special circumstances of the life of the Servant of God.

However, now that Your Excellency has had the encouragement of such benevolent words, - which I take for granted to have been uttered in a private form and without prejudice for the canonical procedure, - I think that light will be shed right through the regular informative process, after which it will be the opportune time for judging whether the cause should be sent on to the Holy See with hopes of success."¹⁸

By the Bishop's decree of May 5, 1936, Fr. Francesco Prevedello was appointed "Postulator". On the 19th following, Fr. Prevedello addressed formal petition to the Bishop of Piacenza for instituting the diocesan ordinary process over the fame of Bishop Scalabrini's sanctity, virtues, and miracles. On June 29, Mons. G. Scrivani was named the "judge", Mons. Emilio Stevani and Fr. Italo Sgorbati were appointed "associate judges", Fr. Giovanni Ferrari, the "notary", and Mons. Egidio Piazza, "the promoter of the Faith". On June 30 they took the prescribed oath and, on July 1, the first witness was summoned in the person of Mons. Camillo Mangot. Before the end of the year the "Postulator" had the list of articles ready for the "Promoter of the Faith" to prepare the series of questions, which were asked of the 45 witnesses presented by the Postulator and of the 11 summoned "ex officio". For the informative process which was concluded on February 29, 1940, 185 sessions were held. In the meantime,

¹⁷ Menzani to Card. Rossi, Piacenza, January 28, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 3053/1).

¹⁸ Card. Rossi to Bishop Menzani, Rome, March 27, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 3053/1).

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respectively in 1938 and in 1939 the Tribunal was instituted for the collection of his writings, about 30 thousand pages, and the process "*de non cultu*" was celebrated. When time came for the "Informative Process" to be transferred to Rome, on February 29, 1940, Fr. Giovanni Sofia was named "Postulator". On March 6, Bishop Menzani handed over to the Sacred Congregation of Rites the entire "dossier" of the three proceedings. On April 3, 1940, His Eminence Raffaello Carlo Rossi was appointed "Cardinal Relator".

CHAPTER IV

THE SEMINARIES

1. The Mother House, Piacenza

The General Chapter of 1919 appointed Fr. Joseph Martini Rector of the Mother House in August. He stayed until November 1921. In November 1919, one of the students, who had remained in Piacenza, wrote to another among those still serving in the army a year after Armistice Day.

"This house about which you express your pleasant memories in your letter has taken up an entirely different look in the past few months. No longer is it surrounded by the silence and sadness that were weighing heavily on us in the past, not only because of the absence of so many companions of yours and ours in the Army, but also because of the dangers of all kinds in which they were exposed! Clear skies and joy have returned, especially because so many have come back from the war and because many new applicants are joining our missions.

Why should we not rejoice in seeing that this most detrimental standstill brought on it by the war has ceased also in regard to our Institute, and in realizing that it is once again set on the ascending road towards its noble and supremely high goal? Much has contributed to this comforting and promising revival the General Chapter held in Rome this past August with the participation of a good number of veteran missionaries endowed with experience and inspired by holy intents for a fruitful growth of the Scalabrinian Institute. We have had evident proof of this in the report of the Chapter itself and in the very words of the Fathers, but above all, in the fatherly expressions of the new Superior General who visited us last October."¹

Fr. Domenico Canestrini had left for North America shortly before. He had served as Vice-Rector. There were 18 students of Philosophy: Ottavio Menapace (died April 30, 1920), Giuseppe Rizzi, Giuseppe Chiminello, Remigio Pigato, Angelo Corso, Giovanni Luca (left 1920), Sante Bernardi, Antonio Cogo, Bruno Fabbian (left in 1920), Francesco Prevedello, Pietro Rigo, Lorenzo Melchiori (died in 1924), Giovanni Toffanin (left in 1922), Alberto DeVecchis (left in 1921), Francesco Tirondola (took the habit on November 1, 1919).

There were also a few students in high school, among whom we mention Guglielmo Pizzoglio, Ugo Cavicchi, Alfredo Antonelli, Raffaele Larcher, Giuseppe Bernardi, and Gregorio Zanoni. By November 4, 1921, when he handed over his responsibilities to the new Rector, Fr. Enrico Preti, there were 19 clerics and 16 high school students. Of these 35 seminarians, 20 became priests. On November 4, 1921, the cleric in charge of the "Diary" of the Mother House wrote the following report on the tenure of Fr. Martini:

"Attempting to prevent that the socialist administration of this city might requisition the unoccupied section of the seminary for use by private families, he has obtained this year that the Daughters of St. Joseph may come to live in it with the

¹ Letter L. Bolzan to A. Corso, Piacenza, November 20, 1919, "L'Emigrato Italiano" a. XIII, n. 4 (October/December 1919), pp. 20-21.

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understanding that they reciprocate by taking care of kitchen and wardrobe. In his tenure as rector, he was careful not to spend too much, because our Superior General, Fr. Pacifico Chenuil, does not deem it opportune to keep open the seminary for forming priests of our own; he considers it better, instead, to admit priests from the various dioceses and send them afterwards to the missions. He is of the opinion that the Italian migration will cease within a span of forty years and our Institute will not have by then any further reason to exist. The former Rector had hopes that by keeping expenses down he might influence the Superior General against deciding to close down the Seminary; but in doing so he was not guided only by this principle, but also because parsimony was part of his nature. The Superior General took notice of the exaggeration and suggested changing the cook. Fr. Martini sought the advice of Francesco (Tirondola), who made him understand that there was the need rather for more abundant provisions. The Rector did not change his ways, but students' complaints made were heard quite loud and strong. Realizing his position he handed in his resignation during the summer months.

The major seminarians were surely disappointed at his choice because they had entertained hopes he would give the Seminary a new impulse and make it flourish. He leaves us, however, a memory of the highest virtues: humble and pious, he was with the students at their recreation and walks taking part in their games; he was most considerate in correcting them."²

At the end of November we read in the "Diary" the following annotation:

"Our students Alfredo Antonelli, Luigi Pedrazzani, and Francesco Tirondola began frequenting private theology classes with two priests of this city. All three are former Lay-Brothers; they have been in training for a few years, so as to be enabled to begin their theological studies (...). They have recently come back from Rome where they had been the last summer, to paint the new General House and to install its electric lighting system."³

Eleven seminarians were tonsured on December 17, 1921, at the hands of His Excellency Ersilio Menzani, the new Bishop of Piacenza. No other one had received "tonsure" since November 18, 1915, when four students were admitted to it.

In the beginning of 1922 Fr. Preti wrote to Fr. Faustino Consoni:

*"Things are going well also with our students at the Seminary. They are looking forward with great hopes of success for work in our missions. On Ember days of Christmas, eleven students received "tonsure" from the Bishop of Piacenza at the Cathedral, and there is hope now that they will ascend little by little the other steps as well."*⁴

But just a little over a month later the diarist wrote:

"On a recent visit of his to us, the Most Rev. Superior General gave orders to dismiss all three freshmen because of unsatisfactory grades at the last trimester. And so the class has no students, something which keeps us very much in suspense because the Superior does not intend to accept new recruits, and should things continue like this, in a few years we will have no seminarians left. We entertained hopes that with the election of Fr. Chenuil we would have a prosperous and flourishing seminary, but we were utterly disappointed by the fact that there is even the intention of extinguishing the little that still remains of vitality.

The major seminarians are making plans about the various Orders to which they may possibly apply for admission in case the seminary should be closed; but some of them

² "Diario della Casa Madre" (Diary of the Mother House), November 4, 1921 (Arch. G.S., 0541).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Preti to Consoni, Piacenza, January 5, 1922 (Arch. G.S., 541/16).

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have a quite different idea, and are dead set in having it continue."⁵

We well know already that this drastic decision of Fr. Chenuil was practically made void in October 1922 at the insistence of Hon. Representative Petriella. The "Diary" of the Mother House briefly records this fact that marked the beginning of the revival:

"The Superior General did not want to admit any new applicants but when asked by a member of Parliament to accept two boys from Circello (Benevento), he recommended them to Fr. Rector. Prompted by this action, Francesco suggested the Rector to admit also some other boys that had previously sent in their applications, and so we have eight new recruits in all."⁶

On the following school year 1923-1924, with the tacit approval of Fr. Preti, Cleric Francesco Tirondola admitted a considerable number of applicants:

"By the good offices of Francesco, more than thirty new young men were admitted to the seminary, and our community has grown big indeed. Fr. Rector left him ample freedom and when he saw all these young guys enter through the lobby, he kept laughing to his heart's content. Personally, he accepted only one. A few of them have already gone through some years of high school, and they come from all over Italy: Perugia, Piacenza, Treviso, Trento, Benevento, and Vicenza. The hearts of the major seminarians open up to the most promising hopes after a period of dark forebodings over an end of the Institute, but through the intercession of our Founder, the Lord will not allow his institution to die."⁷

And so there were 27 freshmen, 14 sophomores, 3 juniors, and 1 senior: 2 were in the first year of philosophy, 1 in the second, and 1 in the third; 2 seminarians frequented the first year of theology, 2 the second, 3 the third, and 5 the fourth. We must add also the 3 students who were attending private classes of theology. Because of their number, the freshmen could not attend classes at the diocesan seminary, and so they began having classes at home. As mentioned before, the apostolic visitations were conducted by Fr. Cimino and Archbishop Rossi respectively, in November 1923 and in April 1924; following the visitation by Archbishop Rossi, ordinations, suspended, as we said above, by Fr. Cimino in November 1923, were resumed, and Clerics Antonelli, L. Pedrazzani, Chiminello, A. Corso, Lazzeri, L. Pedrazzani, R. Pigato and Tirondola were ordained sub-deacons on June 14, 1924: others received minor orders. The 8 sub-deacons were afterwards ordained deacons on August 3 at Crespano, where they were staying for their summer vacation, and there they also received, as we know, the ordination to the Priesthood on September 7, 1924.

On June 16, 1925, the Rector, Fr. Preti, had written to Card. DeLai:

"As already agreed with Archbishop Rossi, for their vacation at Crespano, I entrust the direction and administration of that house into the hands of Cleric Francesco Tirondola, provisionally at least, until the Sacred (Consistorial) Congregation will definitely provide a new Rector (...). Already close to the end of my term as Rector of this seminary, I humbly petition of this Sacred Congregation permission to return to America."⁸

In October 1924, Archbishop Rossi informed Fr. Preti that there was intention

⁵ "Diario della Casa Madre", February 6, 1922 (Arch. G.S., 0541).

⁶ *Ibid.*, October 1922.

⁷ *Ibid.*, October 1923

⁸ Preti to Card. DeLai, Piacenza, June 16, 1924 (Arch. G.S., 541/17).

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of giving him a successor in Fr. Tirondola, who wrote to the Assessor of the Consistorial:

"I assure you that this deliberation was quite a surprise to me who feels unequal to the heavy burden that is to be placed on my shoulders, and this for reasons already known to you: my limited schooling, just newly ordained, with no seniority when compared with my confreres, and desirous, besides, to reach the missions, all things that make the carrying out of such an important and delicate task very difficult. What worries me most, however, and which, as far as I am concerned, save always for my due obedience to Superiors, I will never accept, is that in view of our senior members, not known to me, be appointed to teach the young boys, and this for various reasons: first, because of discipline, as a father used to the missions, in North America especially, would find it hard to conform to routine, room and board of life in common, something absolutely necessary for a good training of the young who notice everything; and then, for the very quality of the teaching. The new recruits hail from the countryside and some have gone only through rudimental classes, in need, therefore, of a teacher endowed with an all proven patience, a certain inclination and experience for teaching, and good health. Most Rev. Archbishop, I would like to ask you strongly that the school faculty may be left unchanged this year: that is, Fr. Luigi Bolzan, teacher of the second year, sophomores, a class of 22; and Fr. Angelo Corso for the freshmen, 25 students; both helped along in minor subjects by sub-deacons Sante Bernardi and Francesco Prevedello (...). I experience the need to have here with me priests I know, whose dedication, dependence, and obedience, at the cost of sacrifice I am sure of, for the well-being of the Institute."⁹

In accepting, so to say, these conditions, Card. DeLai sent to Fr. Tirondola the decree appointing him Rector on November 7, 1924:

"The Holy Father has kindly consented to appoint the Rev. Fr. Francesco Tirondola, of the Missionaries of St. Charles (Scalabrinian Institute) as Pro-Rector of the "Collegio Cristoforo Colombo" in Piacenza with all the opportune and needed faculties."¹⁰

The same "diarist" of the Mother House passes the following judgment on Fr. Preti's tenure as Rector:

"In his three years as rector he showed himself zealous in forming the students, he did not allow us to lack anything and he conducted a wise administration. Truly an apostolic man, he was often stepping out of the seminary to exercise the ministry and to preach, for which he yearned so very deeply, entrusting the care of the seminary into the hands of Fr. Tirondola. To him full credit must be given for allowing free way to the upcoming good plans; to him is also due the forward progress now taking place in the seminary."¹¹

On June 15, 1925, Fr. Tirondola was named Rector and Master of those on probation; Fr. Angelo Corso, Vice-Rector; and Fr. Francesco Prevedello, Prefect of Studies.¹²

On December 22, 1925, Fr. Pietro Donadio, a Bonomellian missionary at Hayange (Moselle), France, wrote to Fr. Tirondola:

⁹ Tirondola to R.C. Rossi, Piacenza, October 19, 1924 Arch. G.S., 541/18).

¹⁰ Card. DeLai to Tirondola, Rome, November 7, 1924 (Arch. G.S., 541/18).

¹¹ "Diario della Casa Madre", November 18, 1924 (Arch. G.S., 0541).

¹² Card. DeLai to Tirondola; Rome, June 15, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 541/19).

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"Also on behalf of my colleagues (the missionary in Moyeuve Grande and in the one in Reims), I take the liberty to turn to you and ask whether and on what conditions a few Italian boys, children of migrants could be admitted to your deserving seminary to be prepared for and started on sacred studies. These boys grew up under our guidance, and they give good hopes of success in the sacred ministry. It would be our wish that these young men be assigned later on to the missions among the Italian emigrants of these regions and so they may fill in the sad gap left open by the scarce number of Italian missionaries."¹³

Fr. Tirondola answered that the candidates would be gladly accepted except for one condition:

"Since we depend directly from the Sacred Consistorial Congregation I am in no position to guarantee to what regions our students will be sent to work for the emigrants because their destination is at the discretion of the said Sacred Congregation. This provision must be clearly stated also to the boys, who wish to come to us and let them say they are aware of it in their petition for admission."¹⁴

At the same time the Bonomellian missionaries of Hayange, Moyeuve, Reims, who had all together 7 candidates to present, had recourse to the Consistorial Congregation, and Card. DeLai recommended them to Fr. Tirondola saying:

"The Pious Society of St. Charles, whose scope is to keep the Catholic faith alive in the hearts of Italians without geographical limitations, will be able to gain particular merits if one day it should be able to provide missionaries for the many nuclei of Italians who are being formed in France."¹⁵

But Fr. Donadio had already answered Fr. Tirondola's letter:

"It would have been my confreres' strongest desire and mine to send our young men aspiring to the Priesthood to your well deserving Institute on account of the training seminarians receive in it and of the easy financial terms that do not represent a heavy burden. But we are also interested in providing missionaries for these migrants who almost entirely lack them, and more directly so because we know their many needs."¹⁶

In other words, the Bonomellians did not accept the condition set down by Fr. Tirondola who did not guarantee their candidates' return to the missions of France or Europe, once they should be ordained; and so they sent their young men to study at Alba, with the Society of St. Paul, at Milan and Novara.

Following a visit made to Piacenza by Mons. Constantino Babini, Superior of the former Bonomellian missionaries (the Bonomelli's Institution had been disbanded in 1927) a few students, two of whom were from those studying at Alba, entered in 1928, recommended by them.

In February 1926 works were started that were intended to give a new arrangement to the Mother House with the construction of a convent for the Sisters at the corner of "Via Caccialupo" and "Stradone Farnese", the resetting of the lower courtyard formerly occupied by the Sisters, the transferal of the refectory, the restoration of lobby and various other rooms, the moving

¹³ D. P. Donadio to Tirondola, Hayange, September 22, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 541/19).

¹⁴ Tirondola to Donadio, Crespano del Grappa, September 27, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 541/19).

¹⁵ Card. DeLai to Tirondola, Rome, October 15, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 541/19).

¹⁶ Donadio to Tirondola, Hayange, October 5, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 541/19).

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backwards of the main altar of the church of St. Charles. The works were completed in November; the inauguration was attended by Archbishop Rossi, who had come to celebrate the feast of St. Charles, transferred for the occasion to the 18th of the same month.

The community of the Mother House had grown to 108 members: 3 priests heading it, the sickly former Superior General Fr. Domenico Vicentini, 1 priest studying for his degree in theology, 5 students of theology, 6 in philosophy, 15 in fifth year high school, 15 seniors, 17 juniors, 13 sophomores, 32 freshmen, and 2 brothers. The domestic services were offered by 10 Sisters and four lay people.

Fr. Domenico Vicentini died on March 16, 1927, and was provisionally buried in the Chapel of the Canons of St. Antoninus in the cemetery of Piacenza. His remains were later transferred to the Chapel of the Pious Society inaugurated on May 15, 1930, together with those of Frs. Giuseppe Molinari, Bartolomeo Rolleri, Oreste Alussi, and Domenico Canestrini: the last two had died at the Mother House respectively on November 8, 1928 and May 10, 1929. On October 12, 1927, when proceedings had already been initiated for opening a seminary at Bassano del Grappa and projects drawn for remodeling the house of Crespano, Fr. Tirondola wrote to Archbishop Rossi:

"As we see it, we inform the Sacred Congregation that there are serious reasons against building at Crespano, not so much because that house serves as a residence for vacations, as rather because it has to serve as seminary for the boys in lower high school years; and this is not long-term need, but a short-term one. Next year we will not be able to admit any new young men because of lack of room. At Piacenza we have room only for 125 students, and to be fully efficient the Seminary should host 170 or 180. Only then will we be in a position to have eight or ten new priests every year. Such is, in fact, if we are not mistaken, the idea of the Sacred Congregation, and the aim of our work; a hard work, a long way covered with thorns, but that will lead to the renewal of the Pious Society and to a global assistance of the poor emigrants, the scope our Venerated Founder had in mind when he founded the Institute. There is need, therefore, of a new seminary."¹⁷

The letter went on expounding the ever greater objections the Diocesan Seminary was presenting against admitting the Scalabrinian students to classes in the same seminary according to an agreement made at the time of Bishop Pellizzari, the immediate successor of Bishop Scalabrini. Upon request of the Consistorial Congregation, for the school year 1927-1928, besides the students of 5th year of high school, of Philosophy and Theology, those in third high school were also admitted to classes in the diocesan seminary; while the freshmen, sophomores, and seniors attended classes at home. For the school year 1928-1929, 8 students each had to be taken out of the third and fourth high school years and they were sent to Rivergaro.

Cardinal Gaetano DeLai died on October 24, 1928. The young diarist wrote of him:

"He loved the Pious Society with the deepest affection, and it was right while on his

¹⁷ Tirondola to R.C. Rossi, Piacenza, October 2, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 541/21).

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way to the General House to bring there a book on poultry-farming that he felt sick and could not continue on, and sent the domestic who was accompanying him. This marked the beginning of the sickness that brought him to the grave. It was said that his great love for our Institute was indeed his weakness, and it was cause of wonder for those who knew him. In his last agonizing hours, when in delirium he kept speaking of the Missionaries of St. Charles and about entrusting a church of the "City" to them."¹⁸

His successor, Card. Carlo Perosi, sought Fr. Tirondola's advice about establishing a small seminary for training missionaries destined to the assistance of Italian migrants in Europe. Fr. Tirondola gave the following answer:

"In order to respond to their vocation, the Missionaries for migrants must be trained, and to form them they must be gathered in a special College or Seminary where, together with a solid piety and proper education, they may be inspired to a high knowledge of their sublime vocation consisting, that is, in keeping the Catholic faith in the hearts of Italians in foreign lands, in caring for their spiritual, and as far as possible, also material, welfare. Divine Providence has inspired the late Bishop Scalabrini of Piacenza with this idea and helped him to carry it out; in fact, in 1887, he founded at Piacenza the Institute "Cristoforo Colombo", where young boys are gathered for this scope. This seminary did not make much progress in the past also for lack of material means, with students oscillating between 20 and 30. The most qualified of our Missionaries came from this seminary and brought good fruits, as is being attested to by the very large parishes they zealously conduct for the emigrants of the two Americas and by the "flying" missions they preached (...). Now it seems to me that due to the growth of the Scalabrinian Seminary it will be possible, later on, to provide for the great spiritual needs of all emigrants in foreign lands. Here is the initial plan: junior-college classes and college students to be housed at Piacenza where there are 100 of them already; at Bassano Veneto, where, as Your Eminence knows, proceedings are underway for opening a house, high school; theology students in Rome. This way, I feel I can assure you that within five or six years about eight or ten seminarians will be annually ordained priests. Later on, even those children of emigrants could eventually be admitted who might have a vocation to the priesthood, and have them go through high school there so to make sure about their vocation, and then send them on to complete their studies in Italy. As to boys with a vocation who live, instead, among emigrants in Europe, due to the ease in sending them back to their families in case of unsuitability for this Institute of ours, they could be directly admitted to the seminaries existing in Italy. The following question could then be posed: 'but will all these young men wishing to devote themselves to the religious assistance of emigrants want to become Scalabrinians?' Yes, all young men sent to our seminaries for a complete education must necessarily want so, because the Scalabrinian vocation is the only one at the present time that may be called a vocation for the Missionaries of the emigrants. The Scalabrinians form in fact a Pious Society of Priests (not religious, however) at the high dependence of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, bound together by means of a perpetual oath, liable to dispensation only from the Holy See, willing to go anywhere in the world the same Holy See wishes to send them and

¹⁸ "Diario della Casa Madre", November 15, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 0541).

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there are emigrants who are in need of assistance. They are not religious, freer, therefore, to move around in the exercise of their sacred ministry; they are bound by a perpetual oath because a bond is needed to provide unity for the vast and complex work of assisting the poor emigrants, to place the members at the dependence and under the control of authorities, and to secure their full tranquility in the exercise of their sacred ministry without worries for the future assured them by the Pious Society to which they belong. They intend to devote their whole life to the spiritual assistance of emigrants, and they readily work, therefore, both in places where their toiling insures their needs and where it does not. Whatever is left they surrender to the Pious Society, and what they lack is supplied to them, especially in time of sickness, invalidity, etc. Only this way can one be a true Missionary for the emigrants. However, since the need of so many unfortunate souls is great, we keep in mind also the following considerations. Should there be young men who, endowed with a priestly vocation, would be willing to devote themselves to the assistance of emigrants, they could be sent to the seminaries of the dioceses they live in, helping them along as far as possible, as some Scalabrinians have done in the Dioceses of Porto Alegre, Paraná, etc.; even though the Ordinaries assigned them later to anything but in the assistance of emigrants. Should there be good priests who in view of the great need in which emigrants find themselves desire to lend their services without binding themselves to the Scalabrinian Pious Society, they could well be accepted as simple oblates; they would remain incardinated to their diocese while working at the dependence of the Scalabrinians with rules and norms to be defined; however, should they wish to work instead dependently of a Bishop, they should conform to the norms regulating the transfer from a diocese to another, with the understanding, of course, that these two kinds of priests cannot be considered true missionaries, who, as such, must be always ready and willing for any place and type of work!

Based on these considerations I do not see the opportunity for another Seminary of Missionaries for Emigration which could not be but a duplication of the already existing one, because it is not enough to form missionaries, there must also be a bond to unite them, and the least one is the oath taken by the Scalabrinians such as is shown in their Statutes, about which Your Eminence has certainly full knowledge. Much the less do I find it feasible for many reasons to admit a group of other young men along with the Scalabrinian seminarians, most of all because they may be cause of diversion for the vocation of the same.

Your Eminence!

- a) Let us develop the Seminary of Piacenza as much as possible, let us open other ones in Italy and in foreign countries in the midst of the emigrants themselves, if we can have vocations from among young sons of Italians.*
- b) Let us accept as many Italian priests as may be found who may have the vocation to become members of the Pious Society.*
- c) Let us not neglect aggregating as oblates those who wish to work with us free of any bond. There is need, however, for gathering the most exact and conscientious information before accepting them. And such must not be only in writing, as these in most cases are not sufficient. Rather, each case should be investigated interviewing in place superiors, priests working with them, so to make sure of their virtue and zeal before launching them into the difficult and*

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dangerous field of the missions.

I must admit that to accomplish all this, many great difficulties stand in the way for scarcity of both personnel and availability of means. However, with the help of God, the support of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, through an intense appeal among Bishops and people done by some capable individual as soon as one is available, and with some publication intended to make known the great needs of migrants and the work of the missionaries, all conducted according to a well-coordinated plan, all difficulties shall be overcome."¹⁹

By the opening of the school year 1929-1930 there were 9 students in theology, 25 in college, and 151 in high school. With great difficulty the college students were able to continue to frequent classes at the diocesan seminary. Some fifty freshmen were housed at the house of Crespano del Grappa under the direction of Fr. Angelo Corso with the title of Pro-Rector. Fr. Francesco Prevedello gave start to his tenure as Vice-Rector at Piacenza.

At last, by the end of July 1930, the community of Piacenza was able to move into the new Seminary of Bassano del Grappa for summer vacation, excepting the lower classes of high school that spent their vacation in Crespano.

For the school year 1930-1931 the first three years of high school remained at Bassano del Grappa; seniors, college and theology students continued to frequent the diocesan seminary of Piacenza, while the fifth year of high school attended internal classes at the Mother House.

To head the two seminaries of Piacenza and Bassano, Fr. Tirondola proposed appointing two rectors, but the rector of Bassano, Fr. Angelo Corso, should have had limited authority:

"As to the direction of the two seminaries we submit to the judgment of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation a humble proposal of ours, which is that though free in the full exercise of their office the two rectors may not be wholly independent from one another being the two seminaries one moral unit, that is, at Bassano the minor, at Piacenza the major. Since the minor seminarians will have to pass one day to the major seminary it is good that the two staffs proceed in unity of views and of educational criteria so that that the young students may not run into too much difficulty when they pass from one seminary to the other. It would be proper, therefore, if the Rector of Bassano were one of the councilors of the Seminary of Piacenza and the Rector of Piacenza had authority over the Seminary of Bassano in the form thought to be best suited by the Sacred Consistorial Congregation."²⁰

Following the death of Cardinal Perosi on February 22, 1930, Card. Rossi had been appointed on July 4 Secretary of the Consistorial Congregation. He gave this answer:

"In reference to the proposals made by Your Paternity with letter of October 17 last, while taking them into consideration and giving its assent concerning the appointment of the personnel for the two seminaries of Piacenza and Bassano, all things well considered, this Sacred Congregation does not deem it opportune to name two distinct Rectors for the two seminaries, and this to the end of

¹⁹ Tirondola to Card. Perosi, n.d. (Arch. G.S., 541/22). Probably January 1929, as we gather from a note of "Diario della Casa Madre" dated on January 15, 1929.

²⁰ Tirondola to Card. Rossi, Piacenza, October 17, 1930 (Arch. G.S., 541/24).

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maintaining unity of direction.

*Your Paternity, therefore, shall continue as in the past to be the Rector of the Seminaries of Piacenza and Bassano with Fr. Angelo Corso as Acting Rector at Bassano, while Fr. Francesco Prevedello shall be Vice-Rector at Piacenza, and Fathers Raffaele Larcher and Luigi Bolzoni shall be respectively Vice-Rector and Dean of Studies at Bassano."*²¹

This arrangement was perfected in 1935 by the appointment of Fr. Tirondola as Superior of the houses of Italy:

"According to the Statutes now in force in the Pious Society, and by a provision which I deem should be confirmed in the new Constitutions, all the houses of Italy are placed at the direct dependence on the Superior General. The opportune nature and feasibility of this provision become clearly manifest considering that the houses of Italy are not ordained to a task limited to the confines of the country but houses of formation, rather, for the welfare and the benefit of the whole Pious Society in view of its particular mission outside of Italy.

Having established and explained this, since the Pious Society does not have a Superior General chosen from among its members as it depends instead from this Sacred Congregation, - and being necessary, on the other hand, that the houses of Italy may all benefit of the advantages of an only direction always at the dependence of this Sacred Congregation, - in order that the young students, who are being trained in them for the religious and missionary life, may have equally ordered and coordinated directives for their spiritual and intellectual education, this same Sacred Congregation has decided to name a Superior on whom all the houses of Italy shall depend without detriment for the authority of the local superiors.

And so, it has appointed him '*at the discretion of this Sacred Congregation*' in the person of Fr. Francesco Tirondola, who shall continue to retain at the same time the office of Rector of the 'Collegio Cristoforo Colombo' of Piacenza."²²

With decree of November 4, 1927, Cardinal DeLai had approved the internal Rules of the 'Collegio Cristoforo Colombo' which were published in 1928 with the addition of the common practices of piety. Author of the first, at least in great part, was Archbishop Rossi, who wrote them on the outline of the Rules of Bishop Scalabrini; the second ones were very much akin to those of the 'Combonian' Fathers.

On November 15, 1930, the trimonthly publication of the periodical publication of the Scalabrinian Congregation "*L'Emigrato Italiano*" was resumed in tabloid form under the direction of Fr. Francesco Prevedello. Founded as a monthly publication with the title, "*Congregazione dei Missionari di San Carlo per gli Italiani Emigrati nelle Americhe*", it had been published regularly from July 1903 to July 1905, when its publication was suspended following the death of Bishop Scalabrini. It resumed publication in February 1906 under the title, "*L'Emigrato Italiano in America*", with issues at irregular intervals at first, and every three months, later on. Only one person was in charge of it until 1925:

²¹ Card. Rossi to Tirondola, Rome, December 16, 1930 (Arch. G.S., 541/24).

²² Card. Rossi to Tirondola, Rome, December 16, 1930 (Arch. G.S., 541/24).

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Fr. Massimo Rinaldi.

When the Scalabrinians passed under the immediate jurisdiction of the Consistorial Congregation, it was decided to suspend its publication soon after in 1925. On the occasion of the return of the Pious Society to the form of a Religious Congregation in April 1934, the periodical resumed the format of a trimonthly magazine titled "*L'Emigrato Italiano*". Beginning with January 1931, the Consistorial Congregation required previous revision of the articles,²³ a revision that was punctual and meticulous. In 1937, the direction of the "*L'Emigrato Italiano*" was transferred to Rome and entrusted to Fr. Giovanni Sofia, and its publication became bimonthly. With the first issue of 1939, it assumed the face title of "*Le Missioni Scalabriniane tra gli Italiani all'Estero*" ("*Scalabrinian Missions among Italians abroad*") in compliance with Fascist provisions forbidding the expression "emigrati Italiani". On August 8, 1938, Fr. Francesco Prevedello was appointed Pro-Rector, and later, on May 27, 1939, Rector of the Motherhouse.

2. The "Scalabrini" Seminary in Bassano del Grappa

We have already seen how in 1927 the Motherhouse of Piacenza, though restored and enlarged, could not host the ever increasing numbers of students. In order to admit the new vocations there was thought, at first, of enlarging the house of Crespano del Grappa; and so, in July of the same year, Mons. Cicognani, the "Sostituto" of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, was charged with conducting a study in Crespano. After this 1927 investigation, the idea of enlarging the house of Crespano was abandoned and it was decided to open a new seminary in Bassano del Grappa (Vicenza), a center which is much more important and easier to reach. At first the plan was to purchase the 17th century "Ca' Rezzonico"²⁴, but this idea was also set aside because of the difficulties deriving from the artistic restrictions as well as other juridical and practical complications.²⁵

In 1928, the idea of purchasing a 45.635 square meter piece of land by the banks of the River "Brenta", North of the city, in a locality called "Zuecca or Giudecca", was gaining ground along with the project of a new building that would have included an already existing house. On August 6, 1928 the bill of purchase of land and house between the owner, Mrs. Carolina Moretti, nee Agostinelli, and Fr. Tirondola²⁶, confirmed by Card. Perosi on August 17, was drawn up.²⁷ The contract was signed on September 5. The preliminary project had already been designed by Architect Fausto Scudo²⁸, and was checked and corrected on behalf of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation by Architect Sneider of Rome, and approved by the same Sacred Congregation on October

²³ Card. Rossi to Tirondola, Rome, January 28, 1931 (Arch. G.S., 116/2).

²⁴ Tirondola to R.C. Rossi, Piacenza, September 26, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 541/21).

²⁵ Tirondola to R.C. Rossi, Piacenza, January 9, 1928 and February 10, 1928; Card. Perosi to Tirondola, Rome, March 10, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 541/22).

²⁶ Report by B. Freddi to S.C. Consistorial, August 9, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 532/13).

²⁷ Card. Perosi to Tirondola, Rome, February 10, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 532/13).

²⁸ Tirondola to R.C. Rossi, Crespano del Grappa, Sept. 8, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 532/13).

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31, 1928.²⁹

In February 1929, the specifications of a contract with the Amabiglia Brothers and Eugenio Cenere Firm were discussed and some modifications were brought to the project (ex. the terrace) on orders from the Venice Art Commission.³⁰

The foundations were laid down in March. Fr. Tirondola would have liked to immediately go ahead with the construction of the framework of both wings of the building, but he was granted permission to build only the first and works on the other were ordered to stop when the walls were 50 cm. off the ground already.³¹

By the end of 1929, Card. Perosi sent the following communication to the Missionaries:

"From the first moment when, by decision of the Holy Father, this Sacred Congregation has taken upon itself the direct government of the Pious Society of the Missionaries of St. Charles, its foremost concern was to extend its most solicitous attention to the Seminary of Piacenza where the future hopes of the Institute are. And it is with deep pleasure that this Sacred Congregation informs you how flourishing is now the Seminary not only for numbers of students but for piety and discipline, as well.

This success is due to the Fathers who run the Seminary and have shown responsibility. They are the ones who did not shrink away from toil and sacrifice as long as they could succeed in setting on the road to virtue and perfection those young men, who sooner or later will be the successors in the institutions of the Fathers in the missions!

Undoubtedly, however, all this would have not been possible if the good missionaries of St. Charles in North America and Brazil had not been close to the Seminary with their prayers and generous contributions.

This way, the Seminary of Piacenza, which had become inadequate, was enlarged and restored so that it now can house well over one hundred students. As a whole, it is worthy of the Pious Society and of the happy memory of the Founder who envisaged and wanted this Institute.

On the other hand, the needs of such promising growth of the Pious Society demanded that we should further provide for the numerous vocations now applying for admission.

For this reason, unable to count on the house of Crespano for lack of room and for its distance from important inhabited centers, after mature deliberation and following consultation with experts on such matters, this Sacred Congregation came to the decision of constructing an entirely new seminary at Bassano del Grappa. The good and deeply religious character of the people, the favorable esteem enjoyed by the Pious Society in that region, and finally the beautiful occasion being offered, all these factors led this Sacred Congregation to choose the this location.

The land purchased covers the whole area of 3,200 square meters* for the price of L. 300.000, sale taxes and all included.

A study was immediately undertaken for a detailed construction project drawn up by a local architect, with the professional assistance, as to the project, the estimate and actual construction, of a technical expert, a man of trust of this Sacred Congregation; and it so happened that the expenditures have always been scrupulously ascertained before any order for payment was given.

After eight months of steady work, two-thirds of the whole project was completed from the foundation to the roof; and even without the West Wing (of which only the

²⁹ Card. Perosi to Tirondola, Rome, October 31, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 541/22).

³⁰ Tirondola to Card. Perosi, Piacenza, February 18, 1929 (Arch. G.S., 532/14).

³¹ Card. Perosi to Tirondola, Rome, May 21, 1929 (Arch. G.S., 532/14).

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foundations have been laid out waiting for the opportune time to build the rest) it rises grandiosely in its majestic beauty.

Besides a basement extending to about half of the area it covers, the building reaches the height of three tall stories, with the addition of a fourth one at the central part and at the extremities. The general services have been installed already while arrangements are underway so that the first group of young students may, in the meanwhile, find comfortable quarters. Excluding the sum for the purchase of the land, the cost of the construction so far completed, which includes the foundations of the whole project, the frame walls of the higher sections as well, the reinforced concrete works, the flooring of the various stories, and roofing, amounts to 1.300.000 liras. There remain still all the finishing works of the sections above ground, that is, the partition walls of the various rooms, all the plastering and paving, the fixtures, the stone and iron works, the hygienic and sanitary systems and parts of the sewers, the machinery for the kitchen, and the heating and lighting installation. The overall estimate cost of all these works will run into some one million liras. From the estimates conducted, in order to have the seminary ready for the beginning of the 1930-1931 school year, L. 960.000 are needed. In addition to the urgent need of the seminary itself, it would also be our desire to dedicate it next year as it marks the 25th anniversary of the Founder Bishop Scalabrini, of blessed memory. This, however, would be in addition to the ordinary remittances that together with the interest on the existing capital will have to be used for the support of the students now grown to 200, and therefore distributed between Piacenza and Crespano to where the freshmen, a class of 50, have been moved.

Consequently, to meet the present needs of the Pious Society, this Sacred Congregation addresses a warm appeal to Your Paternity asking you to cooperate in providing help either by generous extraordinary contributions from the house or by soliciting the collection that will be authorized by the Regional Superior, thus giving new proof of attachment to the Institute while contributing to its strengthening and growth at a time when new help is always opportunely asked by the Fathers working in the missions.

And as a mark of honor and good example, I am here pleased to point out that there are fathers who spontaneously and willingly send in donations out of their own private funds, and how we even have some who donated for the construction of the new seminary all the personal savings they have accumulated all through their long years of missionary life."³²

** Note (added by translator): Most probably the Cardinal had in mind only the area to be covered by the construction itself and not the whole property which measured actually about 45.000 square meters.*

Responding with generosity and great spirit of sacrifice by means of the said collection, but above all by the extraordinary donations of the single houses, the missionaries made it possible to complete the first wing of the seminary by July 1930, and to complete payment of expenses by February 1932.

The community of Piacenza moved into the new seminary for the summer vacations on July 31, 1930; on August 1, Fr. Tirondola blessed the chapel in a provisionally adapted hall on the second floor. The Third Order Sisters of Saint Elizabeth from Padua took charge of the domestic services of kitchen, wardrobe, and laundry.

In October of the same year the first school year began with the lower classes of high school, some 120 students in all; the juniors had until then studied at Piacenza, the sophomores had spent the preceding year at Crespano; and there

³² Card. Perosi, Circular Letter, February 14, 1929 (Arch. G.S., 532/14).

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were about forty freshmen. The administration was entrusted to Fr. Angelo Corso, as acting rector until March 21, 1935, and as Rector until 1938. Fr. Raffaele Larcher was the Vice-Rector, and Fr. Luigi Bolzan, the Dean of Studies.

On March 19, 1933, a small shrine was dedicated in honor of St. Joseph at the southwest corner of the property on the former Campese Avenue, that in 1930 had been renamed "*Viale Scalabrini*". Work was resumed in the same month on the construction of the other wing. On July 5, the "Commission for the Protection of Medieval and Modern Art of Venice" ordered the suspension of work which had already reached the third floor already, following the "strong objections" of a few citizens of Bassano to the Ministry of National Education for obstruction to the landscape.³³

Cardinal Rossi had a "Pro Memoria" presented to Mussolini through the services of the Jesuit Fr. Tacchi Venturi, and discussed the problem with the Director General in charge of "Antiquities and Fine Arts", who gave assurance he would send to Venice "a telegram to make them understand what was desired".³⁴ On July 18, the Superintendent of Venice granted the permit for the resumption of work, which was resumed right on the following day, the 19th.³⁵ On July 30, Fr. Tacchi Venturi received the following communication from the "First Private Secretary" of the Prime Minister:

*"As to the instances presented by Your Rev. Lordship in regard to the suspension of work on the new wing of the 'Collegio Scalabrini' at Bassano del Grappa, I am pleased to inform you that consequently to the good offices of His Excellency the Head of the Government, the Ministry of National Education has decreed the revocation of the suspension's order of the said work."*³⁶

The new wing was inaugurated on July 29, 1934, with the blessing of the provisional chapel set up at the south end of the ground floor. When in 1938, Fr. A. Corso was appointed Provincial Superior of Río Grande do Sul (Brazil), he was succeeded by Fr. Giovanni Favero as Acting-Rector on August 8, 1938 and as Rector on the June 1, 1939.

3. The House of Crespano del Grappa

From the end of World War I to 1929 the "Scuola Apostolica Scalabrini" of Crespano del Grappa (Treviso) remained practically unused except for the summer vacations of the students of the Seminary of Piacenza beginning in 1924. During these ten years it was attended by two retired missionaries, Fr. Francesco Brescianini, who died at Crespano on July 15, 1929, and Fr. Giovanni Capello, who was hospitalized in June 1928 at a healthcare resort in Cavaso del Tomba (Treviso) where he died on February 7, 1930.

In the spring of 1924 some remodeling was done to adapt the building for

³³ Superintendent G. Fogolaro to Tirondola, Venice, May 7, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 532/14).

³⁴ F. Baldelli to Tirondola, Rome, July 20, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 532/14).

³⁵ Superintendent C. Fogolaro to Tirondola, Venice, July 18, 1933; Tirondola to Card. Rossi, Bassano del Grappa, July 22, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 532/14).

³⁶ Letter of First Private Secretary of the Cabinet's President to P. Tacchi Venture, Rome, July 30, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 532/14).

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about 70 people, who would have to spend their vacations there. On July 6 the eight sub-deacons, who were later ordained deacons on August 3 by Bishop Elia Dalla Costa of Padua arrived. After completing their vacation time with their families, on July 22 also the other students of the community of Piacenza arrived. Francesco Tirondola substituted for the rector Fr. Enrico Preti, who had remained at Piacenza.

On September 7 in the Parish-Church of Crespano, Bishop Elia Dalla Costa ordained priests the deacons Francesco Tirondola, Luigi Pedrazzani, Alfredo Antonelli, Angelo Corso, Giuseppe Chiminello, Giuseppe Lazzeri, and Luigi Bolzan, conferred the sub-diaconate on Sante Bernardi, Antonio Cogo and Francesco Prevedello, and the last two minor orders on Ugo Cavicchi. On the same day he blessed the "Grotto" of Our Lady of Lourdes built at the urgings of Fr. Tirondola. The community returned to Piacenza at the end of September. The community of Piacenza returned to Crespano for its summer vacations by the middle of July 1925. A penthouse had been built in the meantime for their recreation. The eighty odd persons certainly could not be comfortably accommodated in such small premises, and so a good part of them had to spend their nights in attics so low that they had to stoop to walk around. The small chapel of St. Joseph was built that summer.

As mentioned before, a project had been readied in 1927 for an enlargement of the house of Crespano while procedures had been initiated at the same time for handing over to the care of Scalabrinians the Shrine of Rivergaro (Piacenza). It was decided, therefore, that part of the students should spend their vacations at the house by the Shrine and that the project for the enlargement of the house of Crespano should be postponed.³⁷

For the summer vacations of 1927 a number of students (4 philosophers and 13 on probation) settled in the house of Rivergaro, while the others managed their best in their quarters at Crespano. The project for an enlargement was abandoned in favor of a radical solution. In fact, first contacts were made in August for a possible purchase of Ca' Rezzonico in Bassano del Grappa. So, also the vacations of 1928 and 1929 were spent in Rivergaro by those on probation, that is, the seminarians who were preparing for the oath of perseverance, and in Crespano by the others. But it was necessary in 1929 to rent a house at a five minute walking distance from the "Scuola Apostolica Scalabrini" in order to provide accommodations for a group of students. On October 3, 1929, about 50 freshmen were housed in Crespano where they spent 1929-1930 the school year in that "Scuola Apostolica" under the direction of Acting-Rector Fr. Angelo Corso and of deacon Tarcisio Prevedello who was ordained a priest on December 21, 1929. Classes were conducted by Fr. Corso and Fr. Gaetano, a priest from the diocese of Vicenza. From 1930 to 1935 the house of Crespano remained unused again except for summers when the freshmen and sophomores, and in 1935 the novices, went to spend time there for their vacations.

As seen earlier, the Novitiate, which had had its temporary seat at the Mother

³⁷ Tirondola to R.C. Rossi, Piacenza, May 5, 1927; Rossi to Tirondola, Rome, May 7, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 534/6).

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House of Piacenza, was transferred to Crespano in October 1935. The transfer was suddenly decided upon on October the 13, because military authorities had set their eyes on the house of Crespano with the intention to demand or requisition it upon request, perhaps, of the local Fascist party, that had been entertaining hopes for economic gain by the presence of the military. With the help of the mayor of Crespano, Architect Fausto Scudo, Fr. Tirondola, who happened to be at Bassano at the time, immediately decided to occupy the building by moving the novices into it on October 14. On the 19th of the same month, following an audience with the Pope (ex audientia Sanctissimi), Card. Rossi issued the decree by which the house of Crespano was to be the seat of the Novitiate.

The official inauguration took place on November 13, feast of Saint Stanislaus Kostka, the Patron Saint of Novices. Fr. Stanislao Fiscarelli, who had been until then Acting-Master of novices, was appointed Master on September 8, 1936, remaining in office until 1959. To insure greater freedom and privacy, a piece of land, 9.585 mq in size, contiguous with the property of the Novitiate was bought in 1937.

4. The House of Rome

By the end of 1920, a property, 1854 sm in size, was purchased on the southwest slopes of the Janiculum hill, on Calandrelli Street, in Rome, where excavation for the construction of the new General House were started on the last days of that year. They were continued all through 1921 and completed only by the middle of 1922. The General Staff, however, did not move in until February. The building, three stories high including the basement, could hold about twenty rooms.

Fr. Pacifico Chenuil, its local superior, continued to be in charge even after ceasing as Superior General in March 1924. On November 7, 1924, Fr. Enrico Preti was appointed in his place. By the middle of the same month the newly ordained priests Fathers Luigi Pedrazzani, Remigio Pigato, Giuseppe Lazzeri, Giuseppe Chiminello, and Alfredo Antonelli began specialization courses in Rome in preparation for the missions. At first they frequented classes at the "Pontifical Migration Institute" on Via della Scrofa; but then, due to distance and poor practical usefulness of the courses, it was decided that they should attend the Institute of Via della Scrofa only for matters concerning migration laws, while they would have to frequent classes of languages, pastoral care, liturgy, practical medicine, and accounting, at home, following, perhaps, a no-so-well organized program. On January 6, 1925, Fr. Enrico Preti was granted permission to leave for Brazil with Fathers A. Antonelli and L. Pedrazzani; their departure took place by the middle of February. Fr. Chenuil took his place as Acting Superior until November 18 when Fr. Enrico Poggi took over from him until April 1926, followed by Fr. Giovanni Costanzo, who was appointed "General Treasurer" upon Fr. Chenuil's return to the United States. In June 1928 the house was entrusted to Fr. Silvano Giuliani.

From 1925 it remained practically empty; then in 1930-1931 there was

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thought of selling it and of assigning the only missionary in residence to the chaplaincy of a church with the intention of using the income of the sale for the benefit of the seminary in Bassano del Grappa.

But in 1932, Fr. Tirondola was able to put into action, instead, a project he had already been contemplating for a long time, that is, the placing of a certain number of students on their way to academic degrees so that the clerics might complete all their studies up to Theology within the Scalabrinian seminaries. On October 23, clerics Giovanni Sofia, Luigi Casaril, and Iginio Bortolazzo left for Rome together with Fr. Armando Pierini, who was to be their Acting-Rector, and registered for classes at the Pontifical Gregorian University. Fr. Pierini departed for the United States in July 1933. In the meantime the house of Rome was administered by Fr. Silvano Giuliani until 1936. Fr. Giovanni Sofia was appointed Acting-Rector on September 8, 1938, and Rector on May 27, 1939, remaining in charge until 1945.

In the summer of 1937 the house was remodeled and enlarged with the construction of a new wing to the existing building, and of another story, thus doubling its capacity so to have sufficient room both for the General Government and for the "Collegio San Carlo", that is, for the community of religious frequenting the Roman universities. The community could move into the new or renovated quarters in the beginning of the 1938-1939 school year; Scalabrinian Sisters began taking care of domestic services at the close of 1938. The main altar of the new chapel was consecrated by Card. Rossi on the May 25, 1939.

5. The Shrine of the Blessed Virgin of the "Castello in Rivergaro

The Shrine of the Blessed Virgin of the "Castello" in Rivergaro (Piacenza) was entrusted to the care of the Scalabrinian Congregation in 1927.

The origins of the Shrine trace back to a chapel dedicated to Our Lady already in existence in 1025; another church was built later with the inclusion in it of part of the castle of Rivergaro, of which there are documents from the 16th century. It was restored and a bell tower was added at the close of the past century especially by the good offices of Carlo Spallazzi, Bishop Scalabrini's faithful butler. In 1876, Bishop Scalabrini detached the church from the parish of Bassano and joined it to that of Rivergaro; he crowned the statue of Our Lady and raised the church to the rank of a shrine.

More than once he expressed the desire to be buried by the Altar of Our Lady of Grace of "Castello" in a crypt he had decided to dig out shortly before he died with the intention of carrying out the project for the lengthening of the sanctuary of the shrine.³⁸

In 1913, Bishop Pellizzari, Bishop Scalabrini's successor, entrusted the care of the shrine to the Passionists, who turned the adjoining building into a minor seminary for their students; but they abandoned it for various reasons in 1923. With their departure the spiritual services, pilgrimages and offerings were also

³⁸ Cf. G. Malchiodi, "Il Santuario della Beata Vergine del Castello di Rivergaro. Memorie storiche. (Piacenza, 1905).

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interrupted. By the end of 1926 procedures got underway for entrusting the shrine to the Scalabrinians by initiative, it seems, of Bishop Menzani of Piacenza, of the Pastor and of the parish Committee, and of Mr. Carlo Spallazzi, who was the owner of the house and of the piece of land adjacent to the church. In declaring that the Missionaries of St. Charles were well disposed to accepting the offer, Cardinal De Lai sought out the opinion of the Bishop of Piacenza on the matter on January 3, 1927. The Bishop answered on January 19, making known that both he and the parish Committee of Rivergaro were in favor of the idea. An agreement was stipulated on July 4, 1927, between the Pious Society of the Missionaries of St. Charles, represented by Fr. Tirondola, and the Parish Committee, represented by Melsemino Po, with the consent of the Pastor, Fr. Pier Luigi Veneziani and with the approval of Bishop Menzani.³⁹ In the same month of July, Mons. Cicognani, the substitute of the Consistorial Congregation, contracted with Carlo Spallazzi the purchase of the house attached to the shrine, and in force of this agreement a deed was drawn up by which Spallazzi surrendered to the Scalabrinians the house, three stories high and with sixteen rooms, and the land, adjoining the shrine, on payment of a life annuity of L. 2000.

The Scalabrinians took actual possession of the Shrine of Rivergaro on the July 10, 1927. The whole community of the Mother House travelled to that town, a distance of 18 kilometers from Piacenza. At the shrine the Mass was celebrated by Mons. Mangot, the Secretary of Bishop Scalabrini, while Fr. Francesco Tirondola was the celebrant at the solemn high Mass in the parish church. The care of the shrine was entrusted to Fr. Silvano Guiliani, who was succeeded by Fr. Giovanni Costanzo from November 1929 to June 30, 1937; and then by Fr. Carlo Porrini from July 1 to 1956. The contract of 1927 was liable to revision by the close of the first ten years by force of a clause contained in the agreement itself. On the mistaken notion that the contract was to cease, the pastor of Rivergaro requested that the direction and the administration be given back to him and a vicar coadjutor appointed for the care especially of the young and of the associations of Catholic Action. Cardinal Rossi answered that the contract was for keeps and liable to revision only in regard to a few changes to be agreed upon by both parties. At that, the Archpriest of Rivergaro proposed a draft for a contract with certain rather drastic changes. At long last, an agreement was reached that, though substantially respectful of the conditions of the 1927 contract, was binding the Scalabrinians to allow the use of the shrine for the manifestations of Catholic Action presided over by the pastor and to help him in teaching catechism and in other ministries for the young, keeping always in mind that the shrine did not cease being a part of the parish. The new contract was signed on July 17, and approved by Cardinal Rossi on August 16, 1937.

³⁹ Cf. Copy of Agreement of July 4, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 543/2).

6. Sacred Heart Seminary at Melrose Park, Illinois (U.S.A.)

At different times and occasions the need was brought forth by the Scalabrinian missionaries in the United States for reconsidering Bishop Scalabrini's idea of establishing in America a Seminary for the children of migrants who should feel called to become missionaries for migrants. We know, for instance, that the famous Arcese brothers, four priests devoted to the care of Italians in New York, offered to the Scalabrinians a seminary in Brooklyn, New York, for eighty thousand dollars, but the offer could not be accepted. In the course of his apostolic visitation in 1924, Mons. Cicognani had occasion to realize that such need was evermore felt, and he was informed that a meeting of Scalabrinian pastors had been held in Dunkirk (Western New York State) at which the project of a minor seminary was launched; but only four missionaries had approved of it, while the others, though not rejecting the idea of a seminary as such, were suspecting it to be a scheme of the regional Superior Fr. Strazzoni to enhance his authority. After his visitation to the missions of Brazil in 1927, Mons. Cicognani repropounded the project especially for that country. But, fear of causing havoc to the seminaries of Italy and the current financial straits were against it. And so, the response to Fr. Pigato was that it was better for the time being, to lay aside the idea of a seminary for the formation of Scalabrinians outside of Italy. In fact, on July 10, 1928, Fr. Pigato had written to his regional Superior Fr. Franch as follows:

"When the Archbishop of Cincinnati came to administer Confirmation in this Church of the Sacred Heart he asked me for the second time whether the Superiors were thinking about opening a formation house here in America to have the future Italian-American priests.

My answer to him was that I had already mentioned the matter to you, at which he replied I should write also to Rome; and he added that he was ready to receive our students to his seminary. He said, besides, that the Superiors do not have to be deterred either by financial difficulties or by scarcity of vocations because we can give it a humble start."⁴⁰

We are inclined to think that the main difficulties rising in those years against the establishment of a seminary in North America were due to the absorbing commitment to the construction of the Scalabrinian Seminary in Bassano del Grappa towards which all financial resources of the Congregation were being directed.

The idea of this seminary was continuously upheld, however, especially by the Province of St. Giovanni the Baptist. Appointed Provincial Councilor, Fr. Pigato renewed the proposal for the seminary in 1932:

"It is extremely important that a seminary be established here as soon as possible for young Italian-Americans who would complete their studies in Italy."⁴¹

But when it became clear that with the completion of the seminary of Bassano del Grappa, the remittances of the missionaries for the support of the

⁴⁰ R. Pigato to Franch, Cincinnati, July 10, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 617/1).

⁴¹ R. Pigato, Observations, 1932 (Arch. G.S., 607/6).

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seminaries in Italy would not decrease, in view of opening one in the United States, all objections on the part of both the Consistorial Congregation and of Fr. Tirondola were deemed to have ceased.

In March 1935, Fr. Remigio Pigato presented to the Sacred Consistorial Congregation the "proposal for an immediate, easy and economical opening of a Minor Seminary in the United States of America" agreed upon by Fr. Franch and some Fathers of his Province in place of a project by Fr. Tirondola himself who had suggested "a well-furnished seminary, with rooms for the Fathers, etc., in an airy place or in the country." Such project would have taken up, in fact, the greater part of the annual remittances. For this purpose it was preferred to make use the former rectory of the Addolorata parish in Chicago, which could be adapted within a two-week time for \$15,000.00 with capacity for about twelve students, who would frequent classes at the diocesan Minor Seminary, about thirty-minute walking distance away.⁴²

On April 4, 1935, Cardinal Rossi wrote to Fr. Franch approving the project, and the Provincial Superior sent back the following answer:

"In line with your approval I have carried out the project by securing from His Eminence Cardinal Mundelein permission to open the said Minor Seminary and to make use for it of the old rectory of the Church of the Addolorata. All this has been kindly granted to me. Not only has His Eminence accepted and approved the project, but he showed himself glad, as well, to give his assent to any initiative Your Eminence may wish to undertake for the growth of our Pious Society. His Excellency Bishop William O'Brien, president of the "Church Extension Society" of America and Auxiliary of Chicago, has promised all his moral and financial support that we may secure a permanent site for the Minor Seminary. He has taken it upon himself, in fact, to look around in the Diocese to see whether it will be possible to find a suitable place, for free or thereabout, where we may finally establish our Minor Seminary; actually, both Cardinal Mundelein and Bishop O'Brien well realize that the former rectory of the Addolorata will serve the purpose for only a short while. And so the small Minor Seminary could be moved later on to the outskirts of the city or to a suburban community (...). On suggestion of Fr. Tirondola and following consultation with Auxiliary Bishop O'Brien, we have deemed it better to decide for classes at home rather than to send our students to the Diocesan Seminary; and we are planning to have a staff of our own. There is need of an Acting-Rector, who could be Fr. Pierini; Fr. Bolzan could teach Latin and Italian, while we will have to engage a Jesuit or a Diocesan priest for English."⁴³

Cardinal Rossi approved all these proposals and the decision to hold classes at home, as it would have helped "in better forming the young students to the spirit and the scope of the Pious Institute."⁴⁴

The small Seminary was inaugurated on September 8, 1935, with a Mass said by the Provincial Superior and a sermon given by Mons. M. P. Foley of the Quigley Seminary. The first ten seminarians were lodged in a small building required some sacrifices. In his first report, Fr. Armando Pierini, helped at first

⁴² Pigato to Tirondola, Chicago, January 21, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 617/1).

⁴³ Franch to Card. Rossi, Melrose Park, Illinois, April 12, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 617/1).

⁴⁴ Card. Rossi to Franch, Rome, May 4, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 617/1).

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by the new arrivals Fathers Gabriele Zaniolo and Luigi Riello, wrote:

"Right from the early weeks I have given thanks to the Lord for sending us in this first year the ten boys we have (...). They are serious, willing to study, they accept all things, and, what is most important, they seem to love piety and to get into the spirit we seek to instill and insist upon.

I said that they accept things because in order to limit expenses to the utmost, we have given up not only on things useful but also on many that are not absolutely indispensable. What harms us most is the lack of room in the house and the steady noise of the city where we are located at present.

You had pleaded with Fr. Franch that the rules and customs of our seminaries in Italy be followed as best as possible; we keep them to the letter even in the details of our schedule which is quite different from all those of the American seminaries."⁴⁵

Fr. Franch pointed out Bishop O'Brien's benevolence:

*"He encouraged and endorsed the founding of our small seminary, donated the Altar, vestments, and other supplies needed for the Chapel; he took an interest, and still does so, even personally, in the choice of a suitable location where this young Institute will shortly, we hope, be moved."*⁴⁶

In fact, only four days later, on January 18, 1936, did Fr. Franch send in the information that an occasion had come up for buying a 70 acre property at the village of Glenview, Illinois, about 26 kilometers from Chicago, with two buildings, two stories high, with about 40 sufficiently large rooms.⁴⁷ Cardinal Rossi gave permission to buy it in a telegram of February 6, and charged Archbishop Cicognani, the Apostolic Delegate to the United States, to assist Fr. Franch in the deal.⁴⁸ Mons. Cicognani had a meeting with Cardinal Mundelein:

*"I mentioned to him the project of a new residence for our small seminary. He knew of the difficulties to obtain permits from city authorities in Chicago, of which you spoke to me, and though without any specifics he gave me the impression of one who deemed it better, perhaps, that we should look for a more appropriate site."*⁴⁹

In fact, the Archbishop of Chicago did not grant permission to buy in Glenview, but he was in favor of purchasing a piece of land in Melrose Park, Illinois. On August 15, 1936, Fr. Franch informed Cardinal Rossi:

*"We have bought six hectares of land already and given start building which is now progressing fast (...) The building consists of three stories, plus a basement and a spacious attic; it measures 29 meters in length and fourteen in height; about forty students can be easily accommodated."*⁵⁰

At about the same time, Fr. Pierini sent in a report on the spiritual situation. Among other things he wrote the following:

"Of the ten boys we admitted last year, nine will begin the second year (...). The students find Latin very hard but Italian somewhat easier; yet, by the end of the

⁴⁵ A. Pierini to Card. Rossi, Chicago, January 12, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 617/1).

⁴⁶ Franch to Card. Rossi, Melrose Park, Illinois, January 14, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 617/1).

⁴⁷ Franch to Card. Rossi, Melrose Park, Illinois, January 18, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 617/1).

⁴⁸ A.G. Cicognani to Franch, Washington, February 7, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 617/1).

⁴⁹ Cicognani to Franch, Washington, April 7, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 617/1).

⁵⁰ Franch to Card. Rossi, Melrose Park, Illinois, August 15, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 617/1).

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year, they were all promoted to the second class.

Their spiritual formation, which is the most important of all my efforts, is much more difficult here than in Italy. The environment in which they grew up and we are continuously surrounded by, is quite bad. To this one must be added that in this country boys complete their grammar school when 13 or 14 years old; and so they enter the seminary at the critical period of their adolescence without having enjoyed the opportunity of a preparation through a solid and heartfelt spirit of prayer (...).

For their summer vacations we made use of the parish school of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Melrose Park. By September we will go back to the old residence, which is absolutely insufficient to receive the new candidates; we had to rent a hall close-by to serve as their dormitory. This is certainly not an ideal situation which we sought to remedy by speeding up work on the new building where we hope to be by Christmas.

This year we shall admit about twelve or fifteen boys, of whom three are from Boston, sent to us by Fr. Arnoldo Vanoli."⁵¹

On September 20, 1936, Bishop O'Brien blessed the foundation stone of the new seminary, built after a project by Architect Giovanni Chiaro and titled to the Sacred Heart. The first Mass was said in the new building by Fr. Pierini on the first Friday of March 1937. The official inauguration took place on May 19, in the presence of more than twenty thousand people.

Invitation had been sent out to Cardinals Rossi and Mundelein. Cardinal Rossi had himself represented by Fr. Tironola, Cardinal Mundelein by Bishop O'Brien. In his report of the celebration, Fr. Franch wrote:

"I want to point out that all the Fathers have cooperated and done their best so that everything might succeed as well as desired; clear evidence that the need for this seminary and the desire to see it prosper is fully felt by all Fathers of both this and the Eastern Regions. People from all parishes, even the farthest ones, flowed into the seminary where the great event of the dedication was to take place. What is worth noting is that in such a large crowd poured in from all places, not a single incident had to be deplored; on the contrary, satisfaction was in all and it shone forth from all hearts. In fact, on that occasion ten thousand dollars were collected, the gift of the people, the priests, and the authorities to our beloved Seminary. Surely, the Holy Blessing of Your Eminence has obtained an abundant recompense for us from God.

On this occasion also, our beloved Bishop William D. O'Brien has shown all his fatherly affection for our new seminary and for the Scalabrinian Congregation by dedicating the Seminary on behalf of His Eminence Card. Mundelein, and remaining all day afterwards with us, besides generously contributing again for the support of the seminarians.

The new Italian General Consul, representing his Government in Chicago, took an active part in this Dedication not just by remaining all day with us, but by expressing to us and to the people his noble sentiments of admiration and encouragement for the Missionaries and the Scalabrinian Institute.

Soul and heart of all this celebration, which I would rather call a spontaneous manifestation of affection and appreciation for the Scalabrinian action in Chicago, has been Judge Luigi Senese, who has never spared himself on any

⁵¹ A. Pierini to Card. Rossi, Melrose Park, Illinois, August 15, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 617/1).

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*occasion for the success of our activities. The press, Italian and American, both here and in New York, and radio stations gave our event wide and favorable publicity giving thus further proof of the good being accomplished by the Scalabrinian Missionaries in America and of the need of their continuing so by means of the new Seminary."*⁵²

With letter of June 19, 1937, Fr. Franch reported that the financial aspect of the construction and the building of the Sacred Heart Seminary had all been taken care of.⁵³

On May 31, 1938, Bishop O'Brien was entered as a "Spiritual Member" of the Scalabrinian Congregation in recognition of his merits especially in helping us found the Seminary.

In the same year 1938, Fr. Pierini began beautifying the property of the seminary with an artificial pond and a tiny island in the middle. He built up the Calvary Hill with an altar and the Crucifixion scene on it, the "Holy Stairs", the "Stations of the Seven Sorrows" around the back, and "the Pieta" in their midst. The Stations were placed along the path around the lake, spaced along the bushes growing on the elevations of dirt dug out for the construction of the lake. It was inaugurated on August 25, 1940, and made into a center of attraction and devotion for thousands of pilgrims.

In 1940 the convent was built for the Scalabrinian Sisters who were to take charge of kitchen and wardrobe; the first ones arrived from Brazil on April 10, 1941.

By the end of 1940, the students of the Seminary wrote the Cardinal a letter from which we gather the following information:

"We are four students of philosophy, all men over twenty years old (...). We hope our desire to be novices may come true next year (...).

The students of the fifth year of high school have already completed their four years; they are not studying philosophy yet but are engaged in advanced studies of Latin, English and Italian and other sciences. They too hope to go to the novitiate next year.

*There is no senior class because, for one reason or another, they all left. We have the Freshmen, Sophomores, and Juniors, forty students in all, hailing from seven States of this star-spangled Republic: Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Missouri; most of them are from Illinois."*⁵⁴

On May 13, 1939, after completing his visit to America, Fr. Francesco Tirondola had brought along with him the first three seminarians, who were to make their Novitiate and continue their studies in Italy.

The beginning of the war prevented doing likewise with the other students. Permission was asked therefore to open a Novitiate in the United States: something that could be accomplished only in 1945.

In regard to the seminaries of North America, we must also mention a proposal made by the two Provincial Superiors in 1932:

"Both Regional Superiors feel the same way about the need that the young priests, in addition to knowing the language of the people they will be

⁵² Franch to Card. Rossi, Melrose Park, Illinois, June 8, 1937 (Arch. G.S., 617/1).

⁵³ Card. Rossi to Franch, Rome, August 6, 1937 (Arch. G.S., 607/9).

⁵⁴ Students of Sacred Heart Seminary to Card. Rossi, Melrose Park, Illinois, November 9, 1940 (Arch. G.S., 617/2).

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ministering to, they must also be knowledgeable of their customs and traditions, which will assure the success of their ministry. They regret to point out that the first three years of service of these young priests are partly wasted because they are not in full command of the language. They propose therefore that a plenary meeting of both councils be called together to discuss this important point of the life of our missions in North America and to humbly present to the Sacred Consistorial Congregation a concrete project for the opening of a house of studies in Washington where our students of Theology may complete at the University their theological courses initiated in Italy." ⁵⁵

Cardinal Rossi answered he did not deem opportune to send the students of Theology to pursue their studies in America when the diocesan clergy considered it an honor to send their seminarians to study in Rome.

7. "Aeterni Patris" Seminary of Guaporé (Brazil)

On November 16, 1926, while on his visitation of the Scalabrinian missions in Brazil, Archbishop Cicognani discussed the proposal with some missionaries of Rio Grande do Sul for the founding of a Scalabrinian seminary. Some of them supported the idea, but the majority did not favor it for lack of personnel and other difficulties. In 1928, four hundred men of Bento Gonçalves sent a petition to the Sacred Consistorial Congregation for the opening of a Scalabrinian seminary in that city. The Congregation gave the following answer to the Regional Superior, Fr. Aneto Bogni:

"Though good in itself, the idea does not seem possible to put into effect as of now due to conditions at Bento Gonçalves and to absolute lack of qualified personnel for the direction of a Seminary. However, in your kindness let Your Paternity study the matter and then give us your opinion on it." ⁵⁶

Fr. Bogni answered he deemed it impossible to undertake the project.⁵⁷ In 1931 Fr. Giuseppe Foscallo wrote to Cardinal Rossi:

"The need of a small Seminary, or Apostolic School rather, for our Institute there in the midst of the Italian colony of Rio Grande do Sul, in my humble opinion, seems to be dictated both by the lack of clergy whose number is insufficient to cope with the extremely great need of that colonial region of ours and by the difficulties and obstacles the foreign born clergy encounter in their apostolic work.

First of all, from my own experience and by admission of a number of my confreres, I believe I can assure you that still today, by God's Grace, many priestly vocations may be found and obtained from among our colonists. In spite of this, however, the provincial Seminary of St. Leopold, where all the priests for the various Dioceses of Rio Grande are trained, houses actually quite a small number of seminarians, especially of Italian extraction, even though this colony is so flourishing as to make up perhaps for more than one-third of the entire population of the State.

Out of 39 students of Theology there are 16 this year of Italian extraction, 17 in philosophy out of 37, only 39 in high school, and 17 out of 80 in the preparatory

⁵⁵ Franch and Marchegiani to Card. Rossi, Utica, N.Y., October 18, 1932 (Arch. G.S., 557/4).

⁵⁶ Card. Perosi to A. Bogni, Rome, May 1, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 431/2).

⁵⁷ Bogni to Card. Perosi, Casca, July 2, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 416/3).

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classes. This scarcity and poor percentage, that seems to be growing worse, is due in part to the site of the present Seminary not suitable because of climate and other reasons for boys of our Italian colonial region, to the high cost of tuitions, for which no exception or reduction is granted, but above all to its education system....German, and totally contrary, therefore, to the Italian character; of course, the system is overseen by the superiors who are all German Jesuits, otherwise so excellent, to whom the direction of the seminary is entrusted. I do not hide either that there enters sometimes also a certain degree of nationalism as to having or not an understanding of others. National pride rides very high among authorities and Portuguese Brazilians, and they eye with distrust foreigners and their activities: they are afraid of being overtaken, dominated, etc. There exist on the part of authorities, and of confreres themselves at times, a more or less disguised or open opposition, a certain criticism over our preaching in Italian, etc. And their chauvinism, distrust, and aversion are steadily on the increase especially in the cities. In my contacts with authorities and various ethnic groups I have had through my life continual evidence of it, and I could bring forth many instances. Well now, by founding there an "Apostolic School" (Minor Seminary) for our Institute, we could choose our future Missionaries for those colonies from among the children of migrants already thought of as natives. And we can find many of them: only in the parish of Encantado more than half a dozen are waiting, and have been doing so for some years, already. They could attend high school there, and even philosophy later on, if it should be so decided; they would then complete their studies here in our seminaries in Piacenza or Bassano to be imbued with that Roman spirit which together with the language will help keep alive the memory of their country of origin and the love of their faith which unfortunately they are losing little by little to the degree by which they lose touch with their traditions and way of life.

The idea in favor of Bento Gonçalves having, in fact, been abandoned, even though the people there would still be willing to make great sacrifices if they only could host our seminary, I believe the best site to have a school built is Guaporé or there about, since that is where the most important parish of the colonial region entrusted to the care of our Missionaries of St. Charles is located.

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As a result of the famous program launched by Fr. Tirondola on April 8, 1935, once again hopes and desires rekindled. ⁵⁹ Fr. Eugenio Medicheschi declared himself ready to donate a seven hectare property of his and a house he owned at Sarandi.⁶⁰

A short while afterwards, the regional Superior, Fr. Domenico Carlino let it be known that Fr. Foscallo continued to work on the "Apostolic School", and that certain people of Bento Gonçalves "*had offered him for this purpose a most beautiful piece of land - Grande Hotel Planalto - at a modest price.*"⁶¹

On October 20, 1934, Cardinal Rossi sent to the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Aloisi Masella the following telegram:

"The Consistorial Congregation kindly asks Your Excellency to convey to Fr.

⁵⁸ Foscallo to Card. Rossi, Biella, August 2, 1931 (Arch. G.S., 431/2).

⁵⁹ Carlino to Card. Rossi, Putinga, June 8, 1934 (Arch. G.S., 431/2).

⁶⁰ Carlino to Card. Rossi, Putinga, July 10, 1934 (Arch. G.S., 431/2).

⁶¹ Carlino to Card. Rossi, Guaporé, July 31, 1934 (Arch. G.S., 418/2).

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Carlino, Scalabrinian, (at) Guaporé, Rio Grande do Sul, the approval for the project of the Seminary. The proposal of Fr. Medicheschi is good, but Bento Gonçalves is preferable as a more central site with greater availability for schooling. Let him study the project with Councilors."⁶²

After discussing the various proposals, Fr. Carlino answered:

"With satisfaction the confreres received news that the founding of the "Apostolic School" is no longer just a pious dream, but something which is soon to be a reality (...).

As to the choice of its site, observations were made. Some would have liked Guaporé better because more centrally located for our present missions, and also for being a parish of ours, etc.

I pointed out to them that even though Bento Gonçalves be not actually a parish run by the Missionaries of St. Charles it may well be entrusted to us not long from now...that we have a new Bishop at Caxias. Most Eminent Lord, with Bento Gonçalves as a parish in the care of the Missionaries of St. Charles, it will be easier to insure support for the seminary. Besides, the Fathers staffing the "Apostolic School" could exercise the ministry in the parish itself on solemn feasts and in times of great need..., furthermore, Bento Gonçalves is the seat of the flourishing Novitiate of the Missionary Sisters of Saint Charles. Here in Rio Grande, where generally the Religious Orders have their seminaries, they also have the care of the parishes of the places where they have their seminaries thereby avoiding not infrequent friction.

In any case, Most Eminent Lord, the whole matter is in your hands. All the Fathers are willing not only to offer their cooperation by means of natural resources and annual remittances, but also through free and special "ad hoc" offerings in the course of my next visitation of the houses." ⁶³

On December 22, 1934, Cardinal Rossi wired the Archbishop of Porto Alegre recommending the seminary and the entrusting of the Parish of Bento Gonçalves to the Scalabrinians. Archbishop Becker and Fr. Carlino answered:

"We, the undersigned Archbishop Becker of Porto Alegre and Fr. Domenico Carlino Regional Superior of the Scalabrinian Fathers in Rio Grande do Sul, in their quest for finding the best solution possible towards founding the "Apostolic School" of the said Institute and entrusting to it a parish that may be a point of reference and support for the school itself, by one accord present the following proposal for approval by Your Most Reverend Eminence: The above-mentioned school shall be built in the city of Bento Gonçalves and the Scalabrinian Fathers will be given the parishes of Bento Gonçalves, Faria Lemos, and Monte Belo, in the area close by, that all together nearly cover the whole territory of Bento Gonçalves Municipality.

In return, the Scalabrinian Fathers shall surrender to the Archdiocese of Porto Alegre the parishes of Guaporé, Linha XI^a, and Casca, which they have been serving so far."⁶⁴

On February 16, 1935, Cardinal Rossi sent the following telegram to the Apostolic Nuncio:

"Inform Archbishop (of) Porto Alegre and Fr. Carlino (that the) Consistorial (Congregation has) received (the) compromise (solution) for (an) exchange (of)

⁶² Telegram of Secretary of State to Aloisi Masella, October 20, 1934, copy (Arch. G.S., 431/2).

⁶³ Carlino to Card. Rossi, Guaporé, January 16, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 418/2).

⁶⁴ J. Becker and Carlino to Card. Rossi, Porto Alegre, January 30, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 418/2).

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Scalabrinian parishes, gives thanks and orders to await further communications."⁶⁵

On March 23, the same Cardinal informed Fr. Carlino that the three parishes of Guaporé, Casca, and Linha XI^a (Serafina Corrêa) could not and should not be released. The other three, proposed as substitutes for the Scalabrinians, were soon to belong to the new diocese of Caxias, of imminent creation. Fr. Carlino could therefore start negotiations with the Archbishop of Porto Alegre in his capacity as apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Caxias, but only in regard to the parish of Bento Gonçalves.⁶⁶

All the efforts of Cardinal Rossi to obtain this parish brought no results, and the idea of building the Seminary in that city was therefore abandoned.

Thoughts were again turned to Guaporé: Fr. Carlino asked for authorization from the Chancery of Porto Alegre to build there the Seminary, but the Vicar General was opposed to the idea at first, and suggested Sarandí.⁶⁷ Cardinal Rossi charged the Apostolic Nuncio with personally requesting the consent for the opening of the Seminary in Guaporé; and the Archbishop of Porto Alegre granted permission, finally, on March 26, 1936.⁶⁸

On September 8, Fr. Carlino reported:

"At last I can report that the small seminary has been given a start. I met with good-will and enthusiasm on the part of all and on all sides. The Municipality of Guaporé donates 18 lots of land on the outskirts of the city... splendid site, wonderful panorama (...) Besides, I was able to obtain to buy right away another lot (25 x 50 meters) adjoining the other 18, making it one whole piece of property, a colony and a half (325 x 1100 meters), much of it wooded, with water, vineyard, wooden houses, orchards, etc. (...). Since I should have needed quite a good amount of money for all the paper work, I had recourse to the State Assembly of Deputies, and I was graciously granted exemption from the taxes on the transfer of the property. Even here in Guaporé I had the work done by clerks and public notaries practically for nothing.

*As you see, Your Eminence, we seem to be doing well. Besides, here in Guaporé all expect to see something, the foundations; then the programs for raising funds will be organized, avoiding to go from door to door, as the Archbishop, who is presently engaged in collecting for his seminary would not allow it. During this week work has already been started"*⁶⁹

Fr. Carlo Pedrazzani donated 60 contos for the new seminary on condition it were titled after the "Divine Father". Fr. Carlino suggested naming it after Cardinal Rossi, but the latter gave orders to call it "Seminario São Carlos".⁷⁰ The cornerstone was laid on January 15, 1937.

"The Mass was celebrated in the Parish Church, from where we all moved to the site set aside for the seminary.

⁶⁵ V. Santoro to A. Ottaviani, Rome, February 16, 1935, copy (Arch. G.S., 431/2).

⁶⁶ Card. Rossi to Carlino, Rome, March 23, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 418/2).

⁶⁷ Carlino to Card. Rossi, Guaporé, December 31, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 431/2).

⁶⁸ Carlino to Card. Rossi, Guaporé, April 14, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 418/3).

⁶⁹ Carlino to Card. Rossi, Guaporé, September 8, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 431/2).

⁷⁰ Card. Rossi to Carlino, Rome, December 12, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 431/2).

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Civil, judicial, and military authorities, no one excepted; lawyers, professors, Marist Brothers, the Missionary Sisters of Saint Charles, businessmen, traders, both Italian and Brazilian; a crowd of over two thousand people; all assisted at the ceremony, deeply moved and happy.

Colonel Agilberto Moia, Prefect of the Municipality, acted as sponsor. He had done much, in fact, and much will he do also in the future for the construction (...) Work is proceeding fast, though not as fast as I would expect, due to the fact that the building material is slow in coming in from distant places. Imagine, Your Eminence, that the lime must come in from the State of Paraná."⁷¹

On his visit to the missions of Brazil in 1938, and precisely on March 22, Fr. Tirondola succeeded in working out difficulties and in dispelling some misunderstandings with the Archbishop of Porto Alegre, thus securing also his explicit approval for the seminary of Guaporé.

"Concerning the small seminary he agrees to have it built, and to us opening a Novitiate and a house of Philosophy and Theology such as have the other Religious Orders who entered the Diocese after the Fathers of Saint Charles."⁷²

Built after a project by Tiziano Bettamin the seminary was opened on February 28, 1939 with 27 students, 15 of them in high school, the others in the preparatory course, Fr. Guerrino Zago as rector. A convent was built in the same year for the Scalabrinian Sisters who were to take charge of the domestic services.

In a report of April 1939 to the periodical "*Le Missioni Scalabriniane*", the Provincial Superior Fr. Angelo Corso, who had succeeded Fr. Carlino in 1938, wrote:

"On a site 750 meters above sea level, the seminary stands on a pleasant hill overlooking the industrious city of Guaporé. Only two-thirds of it has been built and it will house more than a hundred students when completed (...).

It is not easy to tell its story, to recount the difficulties we met with: each brick is the fruit of sacrifice. So far expenses amount to half a million liras; an incredible sum for these parts. It must be all credited to the spirit and zeal of each Scalabrinian Father of Río Grande, no one excluded, but especially of the former Provincial, Fr. Domenico Carlino, who has wholly devoted himself to this work. His name will always be remembered in connection with the Seminary of St. Charles.

As already reported before, the Seminary came to life on February 28, the day the school year started (). As to the official inauguration, we do not know yet whether and when we are going to have it. We would like to see it completed, properly furnished, and to have the chapel, at least (...).

If Our Lord, as all Saints tell us, blesses and will always bless those houses where poverty is thriving, then we are convinced that He will certainly set aside an infinity of graces and blessings for our Seminary of São Carlos. Let our humble chapel be a sign. While awaiting the permanent chapel, we did the best we could and so we turned a classroom into a chapel.... A very plain wooden altar, four old pews loaned to us by the parish Church, a glass for a lamp, and this is our Chapel (...).

Who would have thought that, after calling the colonists together for so many years to attend to their religious duties, the first bell, or one of the earliest bells, of the Italian colony in Brazil, would be one day the bell of St. Charles Borromeo Seminary? Fr. Pietro Colbacchini, of the famed Colbacchini Bell Foundry of Bassano del Grappa, brought this bell with him to Brazil, weighing 15 kilograms, and it followed him hence

⁷¹ Carlino to Card. Rossi, Guaporé, February 1, 1937 (Arch. G.S., 418/4).

⁷² Tirondola to Card. Rossi, Porto Alegre, March 24, 1938 (Arch. G.S., 419).

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as an inseparable companion of his peregrinations..."⁷³

8. "Scalabrini-O'Brien" Seminary, Cermenate (Como)

The founding of "Scalabrini-O'Brien" Seminary at Cermenate, in the Province of Como, some five kilometers from Fino Mornasco, the birthplace of Bishop Scalabrini is due mostly to the munificence of Bishop William O'Brien, Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago and president of the Catholic Extension Society, who had generously contributed already towards the establishment of Sacred Heart Seminary in Melrose Park, Illinois.

Fr. Francesco Tirondola had made his acquaintance with him in May 1937, on the occasion of the inauguration of that seminary, and then met him again in May and June of 1938, when Archbishop O'Brien took a trip to Italy and visited our seminaries at Bassano del Grappa, Crespano, and Piacenza. Here he was presented with a parchment naming him a spiritual member of the Scalabrinian Congregation, and with the episcopal ring of Bishop Scalabrini:

*"At Piacenza he promised L. 100,000 liras for the purchase of the land for the new small seminary to be built in central Italy, as part of the ten-year plan, and gave me \$1,000.00 as his first offering, assuring me that he will do a lot more for that institution, the 'Scalabrini-O'Brien' Seminary."*⁷⁴

Thus wrote Fr. Tirondola to Cardinal Rossi on June 3, 1938. "The ten-year plan" launched by the same Father Tirondola on April 8, 1934, envisioned the founding of a seminary in central Italy.

Inquiries were conducted in Umbria and Marche, but without results. In the summer of 1939, the centennial of Bishop Scalabrini's birth, thoughts were turned to Fino Mornasco (Como). An offer was made of a very large property but for a price much too high for the financial situation of the Congregation. Finally, following inspection of several estates, an occasion came up for the purchase of "Villa Clerici", the property of General Clerici, aide-de-camp to King Victor Emmanuel III, located in Cermenate, some five kilometers from the birthplace of our Founder. Fr. Tirondola paid it a visit on September 10, 1939, and then he reported as follows to Card. Rossi on the 23rd of the same month:

*"Wednesday Fr. Sofia and I went to Cermenate, inspected very carefully Villa Clerici, and were thoroughly convinced of the excellence of this property; the buildings are not exactly ideal for a seminary, but they are not that bad as a whole; on a peaceful location, there are no servants, etc. (...) We called also on the Bishop of Como who welcomed us like a father and told us he was happy for the opportunity to have the sons of Bishop Scalabrini in his diocese and that as of now he grants us all the faculties."*⁷⁵

Cardinal Rossi gave his consent for the purchase,⁷⁶ and a preliminary agreement was first drawn up on October 14. On November 4, 1939, Pope Pius XII gave his approval for the founding of the seminary and granted the faculty to erect the internal chapel and to keep the Blessed Sacrament in it.

⁷³ A. Corso, "Dal Collegio Scalabriniano di San Carlo", "Le Missioni Scalabriniane tra gli Italiani all'Estero", a. XXVIII, n. 4 (July, 1939), pp. 116-117.

⁷⁴ Tirondola to Card. Rossi, Piacenza, June 3, 1938 (Arch. G.S., 541/33).

⁷⁵ Tirondola to Card. Rossi, Piacenza, September 23, 1939 (Arch. G.S., 533/1).

⁷⁶ Card. Rossi to Tirondola, Pisa, September 28, 1939 (Arch. G.S., 533/1).

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Adaptation works were given an immediate start, especially on the chapel, and in February 1940 Fr. Tirondola could send the following report to Bishop O'Brien:

"This letter of mine comes to bring you the most heartfelt, respectful, and brotherly greetings for a Happy Easter, assuring you that we shall all pray for you and your holy intentions; those 33 junior seminarians will especially do so who together with their professors Fathers Michelato and Zanatta will come to live in your 'Scala-O'Brien' Seminary on March 19, Saint Joseph's feast day. And so, thanks to you, a start shall be given to that long and endless line of young men who will spend their first years of studies in this seminary to become missionaries of the Gospel in the world. Whom do we owe the merit and honor to for all this good if not to your big heart and personal generosity? (...) On your arrival here next June with Fr. Franch for the inauguration, great will be your satisfaction.

Very confidentially I inform you now about the financial situation, in response to what you wrote to me: 'Remember, I beg you, that the financial worries of this institution are mine, while I leave its spiritual charisma in the hands of the Venerated Founder etc.' The cost for the purchase of the property, including change of title, brokerage, etc., amounts to \$32,500.00. I have already used for the purchase the \$25,000.00 you sent me on different occasions, and there still remains \$7,500.00 to be paid. Adaptation works are now in progress, then will come the furnishing, etc., for which about \$5,000.00 more will be needed; and so all will be paid up by then."⁷⁷

On March 18, 1940, 33 juniors left the seminary of Bassano for Cermenate, and on the following day, feast of St. Joseph, at a solemn Mass they were presented to the people of the town by Fr. Tirondola who preached the sermon especially stressing the closeness of the new seminary to the birthplace of the Apostle to the Migrants. In the afternoon a Eucharistic procession marked the informal inauguration of the seminary.

Completed by the end of June, the new chapel was blessed by Bishop Alessandro Macchi of Como on July 6. World War I broke out on June 10, reason why it was not possible to go on with the official inauguration envisioned for June 23 with a solemn pontifical Mass in the Cathedral of Como by Archbishop O'Brien, a sermon commemorating the centennial of Bishop Scalabrini's birth by Archbishop Cardinal Giovanni Battista Nasalli-Rocca of Bologna, and the consecration of the chapel of the Seminary by Card. Rossi. Cardinal Rossi paid a ten-day visit to the seminary of Cermenate on August 21-31, 1940. On the 29th of the same month the seminary had the honor to play host to Lady Luisa Scalabrini, the widow of nobleman Alessandro DeOrchi. She was the only surviving sister of our Founder and was accompanied by her nephew Fr. Alfonso Bianchi, Pastor of Rebbio.

Still with Fr. Tirondola as rector, Fr. Renato Bolzoni took office as vice-rector on September 9, 1940, before being himself appointed rector on August 27, 1941.

At the close of the 1940 summer vacations, Fr. Tirondola retraced the story of

⁷⁷ Tirondola to O'Brien, Cermenate, February 1940 (Arch. G.S., 1592).

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the new seminary:

"My desire was well-known for a while already, to found a new seminary for boys in high school to assure together with the seminaries of Bassano, Chicago, and Guaporé, some thirty new priests each year for the Pious Society and so provide for the ever increasing needs of the religious assistance to Italians abroad. I had spoken many times about it to our communities; I kept saying it all along that the new Scalabrinian seminary would be located either in Umbria or Lombardy, etc.

But while easy, on one side, to nourish a desire for founding a new seminary and even for just planning about the region, it is not that easy to actually to materialize the project, especially when, as in our case, one is absolutely deprived of all means and when, on account of this, superiors are against it.

No one can build seminaries without funds and without permission from the superiors. How was then the founding of the 'Scalabrini-O'Brien Seminary' of Cermenate possible? Indeed, it is a miracle of St. Joseph, to whom the whole Pious Society, especially the minor seminarians of Bassano, had unceasing and trusting recourse.

In May 1938, an illustrious and incomparable American Bishop, with a heart as big as the world, better yet, like the heart of Christ, who in his love did good to all men regardless of persons or nationalities, paid a visit to our seminaries in Italy. In Piacenza he visited the museum of our Venerated Founder's memorabilia. It was right in that museum that the idea dawned on me to present the good Bishop with a ring of Bishop Scalabrini, one made of gold but with an imitation stone because the Servant of God had sold the real one to provide food for the poor of the Lord.

Bishop O'Brien liked the gift very much, placed it on his finger, and it fit perfectly.

With tears streaming down from his eyes he said: 'I will wear this ring whenever I shall administer confirmation to children of Italians in America.' And then he went on repeating several times: 'Scalabrini-Scala-O'Brien'. 'Your Excellency' - said I - 'this would be a good title to give the new seminary I have in mind to build.'

'Yes, yes' - the Archbishop replied - 'Scalabrini-O'Brien'. 'But the founding of a new seminary presupposes the needed means, Excellency, and I do not have a penny.'

'I will supply the money needed for the purchase of the land' - was the immediate answer of the Archbishop - 'then Divine Providence will provide', - and right there and then he presented me with a generous check. We were still far from the amount needed to found a seminary, but the land, at least, was thus assured.

In January 1939, His Eminence Cardinal Rossi our venerated Superior said to me: 'I deem it opportune that you accompany the ten new missionaries to America and carry out, at the same time, the visitation of the missions and the confreres of the United States.'

'I am ready to leave any time you say' - I answered, and in fact on February 23 I embarked on the 'Rex' at Naples together with my beloved missionary sons.

Besides being granted the consolation of again embracing my confreres in the United States, I met a person who presented me with a generous sum for the new 'Scalabrini-O'Brien' seminary, a donation that set me seriously thinking about the new foundation.

I returned to Italy by the end of May and talked things over with my councilors, but a new seminary seemed to them an impossible enterprise, a risk. 'All the same, Saint Joseph wills it' - I said.

In the meanwhile vacation time set in, which, as in preceding years, brought to us our Most Eminent Superior. I spoke to him about the new Seminary; he listened with paternal kindness to my reasons, etc., but his answer was negative. In his prudence, also because of the critical political situation we were in, he did not deem the founding of a new seminary to be opportune.

Still, I felt that St. Joseph willed it. I called together my army, that is clerics and minor seminarians, in the chapel; I urged all to give start to a fervent novena to St. Joseph,

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but one of those novenas which are apt to obtain miracles, 'because' - I insisted - 'your superior needs a miracle.' Those young men got all excited at the thought that something real big must have been in the making. With a genuinely extraordinary ardor they began the novena: prayers, mortifications, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, etc. By the end of each day the sum total of these holy practices was simply astonishing. While the novena was in progress I decided to take a trip to Brianza to take a look at the Villa on sale. Not to do so would seem as though we were failing Divine Providence; and so, off for Varese. I went to the broker indicated to me, I show him the letter with the description of the estate, he reads it, and says: 'Father, this villa has been sold six months already. 'Patience!' - and for a moment I remained there disconcerted, almost disheartened.

'There are other estates on sale in this countryside,' - the broker went on - 'come along with me and you will have the opportunity to look them over.' We boarded his car and he drives me to Como. Here he presents me to a public accountant and with him on to Fino Mornasco, where our Venerated Founder had been born a hundred years before, and they have me visit a villa (Cascina Rizzarda).

I leave it up to you to figure out the feelings that like an erupting volcano began unfolding in my heart: Como, Fino, our Founder, his birth's centennial. I was deeply moved; it all seemed like a dream to me. But that estate also had been sold two weeks before. Then they took me to Cermentate a charming and wholesome town, five kilometers from Fino, and they had me pay a visit to Villa Clerici which was up for sale.

Solid and extensive, with plenty of water and in good status, the building had a modest appearance and could be easily turned into a seminary. I am pleased with it, and it serves my purpose well! I arrange a meeting with its owners, the very kindly Mr. and Mrs. Nino and Valentina Clerici; they express satisfaction that their ancestral home be turned into a house of formation for candidates to the missionary life, and their price was fair, indeed a special one.

I cast a medal of St. Joseph inside that estate and leave sure it was to become the site for the 'Scalabrini-O'Brien' seminary. I returned to Bassano where fervent prayers were still being addressed to Saint Joseph, and called on His Eminence to pay him my respects. He welcomed me with great kindness; invited me to a chair and questioned me where I had been, etc. I commended myself to St. Joseph and in all courage I told him I had been in Lombardy looking for a site where to build the new seminary. While speaking I noticed that His Eminence's countenance remained serene. 'And did you find it?' 'Yes, Your Eminence' - and so I went on telling him all that had happened. 'Well, then, if things are as you say, do as you please.'

How can we explain such a change of mind in His Eminence? It was the work of St. Joseph! His Eminence had been a witness to the fervor of the seminarians, to their steady going in and out of the chapel, their unceasing and persistent praying! He was impressed with it all and kept questioning the youngest ones on what they were doing and why they prayed so much. There was only one answer: 'We are making a novena to St. Joseph for Father Superior to obtain a great favor.' St. Joseph, indeed, obtained it for us! The Superior found a fitting site, secured permission to buy it, and by the middle of October 'Villa Clerici' became the property of the Scalabrinian Pious Society to become the 'Scalabrini-O'Brien' Seminary. There was the need for some remodeling; we got down to it right away, and it was successfully carried through with lightning speed.

St. Joseph has performed this miracle! There are now 70 seminarians at Cermentate, 33 in fourth high school, freshmen the rest, 8 Fathers, several lay brothers, with room for a hundred more students."⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Tirondola, "Com'è nato il nuovo Collegio", "Le Missioni Scalabriniane tra gli Italiani all'Estero", a. XXIX, n. 6 (November 1940), pp. 122-125.

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PART TWO

MISSIONS IN NORTH AMERICA

CHAPTER V

THE GOVERNMENT THE PROVINCE OF ST. CHARLES

1. Fr. Angelo Strazzoni, Regional Superior of All Missions in the United States (1919-1924)

In accepting the proposal of some of its members, the General Chapter of 1919 had reduced the number of Provinces or Regions and it appointed only one Regional Superior each for the United States and Brazil. Fr. Angelo Luigi Strazzoni, was appointed to head the Scalabrinian missions in the United States. He had been Pastor of St. Anthony, Buffalo, NY, was later made acting pastor of Sacred Heart, Boston, MA, and then, on August 8, 1920, became pastor of Holy Ghost parish, Providence, RI. Fr. Strazzoni's tenure marked one of the most tormented periods of the Scalabrinian missions in the United States, whose crisis became the crisis of the whole Congregation. We have pointed out already that almost all priests, recruited and accepted for the missions by Fr. Chenuil, without an adequate preparation, had been sent to North America. They saved the positions already acquired, opened a few other missions, and ensured the continuity of the Scalabrinian work; but they brought, at the same time, the Congregation to the verge of ruin because through their lack of esprit de corps they aggravated the sore of individualism of which it had already been ailing. There were in addition certain individuals, who were carrying on a more or less open action of disintegration. Another serious difficulty derived from the conflict of ideas and methods between Fr. Strazzoni and the Superior General: the latter tended to loosen as much as possible the internal bonds of the Pious Society; in line with his authoritarian character, Fr. Strazzoni was inclined to tighten them, instead.

The contrasting judgments on his government reflected the divergent positions of the two groups that the missionaries had hence split up into: the "Piedmontese" recruited by Fr. Chenuil, and the "Piacentines" trained at the Mother House of Piacenza. The former accused him of lust for power and of authoritarianism, while the latter judged him a superior who finally governed with due authority, though with little result because contradicted by the Superior General.

Naturally, such contrasts engendered a climate of distrust so that many missionaries were drawn to act on their own, limiting themselves, whenever possible, to dealing directly with the Bishops. And so, while the parishes were in one way or another saved, the internal malaise kept deepening and getting more ominous.

From the apostolic visitation carried out in 1923 only by mail - the most numerous, extensive, and polemical of the responses coming from the disruptors - Fr. Cimino drew up an altogether negative report in which he

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pointed out, above all, the moral and administrative ineptitude of many pastors, the discord between pastors and assistants, the lack of the spirit of prayer of a few communities, the irregularities and anomalies in their financial administration. We know already how this all too dark an impression was reshaped through the Apostolic visitation conducted during September and October 1924 by Archbishop Cicognani, Substitute of the Consistorial Congregation. He personally visited all missions and questioned almost all of the 55 priests and the two brothers who made up, at that time, the group strictly known as Scalabrinians. In fact, after the direct taking over of the government of the Institute by the Consistorial Congregation, eight other priests, the worst elements, had already practically parted with the Pious Society and were living "*extra domum*" though still juridically bound to it by the oath of perseverance.

Archbishop Cicognani ascertained that the number of missionaries was absolutely insufficient for the needs of the missions. Yet, he suggested that only missionaries of the Congregation be allowed in Scalabrinian communities to ward off the troubles resulting from the presence of "outsiders", that is, of priests not belonging to the Pious Society hired by the pastors. Amongst such troubles he pointed out the jealousy of the latter ones and the fact that some pastors had preference for them over members of the Institute in order to avoid being controlled as to their observance of the Rule and of the instructions of the general government. The substitute of the Consistorial Congregation did not neglect to point out the great good being done in America by the Institute of Bishop Scalabrini: without Scalabrinians, who knew language, customs, and mentality of Italian emigrants, great numbers of them would have abandoned all religious practices and even lost their faith. The Bishops acknowledged all this: in fact, a few of them, such as Cardinals Mundelein of Chicago, Illinois, and O'Connell of Boston, Massachusetts, and Bishop Hickey of Providence, Rhode Island, had only great praise for the missionaries. On the other hand, they did not hide their satisfaction for the fact that the direct government of the Institute had been taken over by the Consistorial Congregation, reason why they soon resumed placing their trust in Scalabrinians. In fact, realizing that their superiors disposed of their subjects too independently of the hierarchy and that disgusting incidents had taken place for which the general government of the Institute did not seem to find a solution, the Bishops had somehow left the missionaries to themselves for a while.

The complaint, nearly unanimous, of the Bishops was this: "In the last years, Scalabrinians did not have a good leadership."

The first mistake was represented by the admission of priests, mostly in their forties, without proper preparation, or without an exact notion of the scope and spirit of the Institute, and much less, of its Rule. The second problem derived from the former: a destructive division had ensued between the ones trained in the Institute and those admitted after ordination. Luckily, - as said before - all, or nearly all, those who had posed the greatest difficulties for the general government had left the Congregation already. Archbishop Cicognani noticed

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how yet another division was brewing between the missionaries of the area of New York and those of Chicago. He, therefore, suggested the return to the old system of two Provinces or Regions. But, it was even more urgent that relations between pastors and assistants were normalized on the basis of a brotherly and community spirit, a minimum of prayer in common was enforced, the "de facto" irreplaceability of certain pastors was abolished by fixing time limits for holding office, and finally, that the financial questions were defined so as to eliminate differences between parishes and between missionaries doing away with all worries about accumulating money for old age, and removing all fear on the part of some of meeting expenses on indispensable parish institutions, especially schools.

The first tangible result of Archbishop Cicognani's visitation was to return to the previous subdivision of the North American missions in two Regions or Provinces:

"I am pleased to inform you that, as a first decision, following to the Apostolic Visitation of the Institute or Pious Society of St. Charles in the United States, the return to the former division of the Scalabrinian government was deemed as necessary. The houses shall, therefore, be divided in two regions or zones; one, the Eastern, to include the Ecclesiastical provinces of New York and Boston, will be titled to Saint Charles; the other, the Western, to include the houses of Chicago, Cincinnati, and Kansas City, will be named after St. John the Baptist.

To head the first as Regional Superior, I name and appoint Fr. Leonardo Quaglia, Pastor of St. Michael in New Haven, Conn., (29 Wooster Place) with Frs. Ludovico Toma, Pastor of St. Lazarus, East Boston, and F. Parenti, Pastor of Holy Ghost Church, Providence, as Councilors.

To head the second, I name Fr. Carlo Fani, Pastor of Our Lady of Pompeii, Chicago, Illinois, (1924 McAllister Place), with Frs. D. Canestrini, Pastor of Addolorata, Chicago, and L. Franchinotti, Pastor of Holy Rosary, Kansas City, as Councilors."¹

Fr. Strazzoni's tenure was marked by the dwindling of migration streams to the United States, which provided one of the reasons for doubting the future of the Pious Society as we have noticed both with the Superior General, Fr. Chenuil, and with some missionaries.

Due also to the uncertainties of the situation and to the risks of travelling, already World War I had practically closed all boundaries. During the war, precisely in 1917, the Government of the United States enacted measures restricting immigration which had been long pressed for by workers' unions and by the Anglo-Saxon population that had successfully settled there centuries before, and attached to the (1917) Immigration Act the notorious "Literary Test" excluding the illiterates. This measure signaled a choice for "a policy of discrimination" between the "old immigration", originating mostly from the western and northern regions of Europe (Great Britain, Ireland, France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Germany, etc.) and the "new immigration", coming

¹ Card. DeLai, Circular Letter, December 3, 1924 (Arch. G.S., 24/2).

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in greatest majority from southern and eastern Europe (Portugal, Spain, Italy, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Poland, Russia, etc.).

The latter which occurred especially in the years 1880-1925, and made up mostly of Latin, Slavic, and Semitic races and of Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish religions, contrasted the composition of the immigration that had preceded it, made up mostly of Anglo-Saxon and Protestant. To use the expression of a politician of the time, already in 1890 there existed the danger that "inferior races of a lower moral and social level might overcome the great Anglo-Saxon race of the United States" with an impending "sunset of human civilization."²

In fact, immigrants from Southeastern Europe carried the largest percentage of illiterates, reaching its highest point with those from Southern Italy, of whom 50% did not know how to read or write. It should be kept in mind that three-quarters of Italian migrants to the United States originated precisely from Southern Italy.

At the close of World War I the threat of the massive resumption of immigration was looming, and so in 1921 another law decreed that the level within which the influx of individual Europeans had to be annually contained was to respond to 3% of the people of their same nationality born in a foreign land and reported residing in the United States according to the 1910 census. Three years later, with a new law reducing the number to 2%, this time in proportion to the 1890 census, the total for countries of the "old immigration" was decreased from 197,360 to 140,199 units; the "quota" for Italy, in particular fell from 42,057 to a miserly 3,845, while previously, with an annual average of 170,000 persons, Italy's immigrants had amounted to 3,375,816 between 1901 and 1921. In 1929, a new law replaced the previous criterion, no doubt restrictive but more precise, with a criterion which decreed that immigration be governed proportionally to the contribution given by each European nationality to the demographic composition of the United States as represented in the 1920 census. This is the system of "quotas" by national extraction, proximate or remote, which would have required a research into the genealogical tree of each American.

The new criterion increased the "quota" of 34,007 previously allotted Great Britain to 65,721; reduced Germany's "quota" from 51,227 to 25,957, Ireland's from 28,567 to 17,853, while Italy's went up from 3,845 to 5,802.³

In spite of such mutation in the migratory influx, Scalabrinian Missionaries did not experience the need for a substantial change in their pastoral methods. Bishops and local clergy, as a whole, continued pressing for a speedy integration of immigrants with the local churches, but, with the Italians, at least, this process of integration or assimilation was found to be a very slow and difficult one. In the beginning of 1923, Fr. Nazareno Properzi, one of the Scalabrinian Pastors most sensitive to the problems of integration, wrote:

² F. Cavalli, "Un Decennio di Attività (Ten Years of Activity) dell'American Committee on Italian Migration, excerpt from "La Civiltà Cattolica". Rome, 1961, pp. 4-5.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 5

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"It's a fact, by now, that the Catholic Church is reaching far into the most distant and remote corners of this immense Confederation of the States of North America and making its influence felt everywhere, even among the masses of new arrivals. So also, one must acknowledge that the zeal of American bishops, thanks to an ever increasing army of priests, does not limit itself to multiply churches, build schools, organize new parishes; the bishops are studying the problems of immigration, as well, in search, with renewed interest, of all possible ways for the proper approach with the new arrivals and their integration with the communities of their faithful. Unfortunately, all this is not enough, however, for an effective religious assistance of our fellow countrymen, at least in the early years of their life in America when they still do not know the language of the place and experience difficulty in taking part in the life of the faithful of other nationalities.

Indeed, to bring assimilation to its completion a long period of time is generally needed, two or three generations, perhaps, during which there is need of a priest of their own nation. One may very well learn the language of the immigrant, study his customs and racial traits, form special welcoming committees, and be able to welcome him at the port and to say to him: 'Come sta?' ('How are you?'). It takes much more than this!

Besides the character common to his race, the new arrival possesses a frame of mind which can be understood only by one who is his blood brother; he has a mentality inaccessible to any stranger, a way of thinking and seeing things that the knowledge of this language alone is not sufficient to discover and much less, understand; and even though the love of Christ, almighty at all times, may perform miracles also in this kind of work, all the same, the temporal welfare of immigrants is achieved through the action of a zealous priest of their nationality. Besides, we must not forget that our immigrants, especially, even when they do not settle too far from the local parishes, not only are kept segregated by prejudice and racial disliking, but their faith itself is also almost always undermined by a wide net of Protestant proselytizers who have extended their perfidious activities even to the smallest Italian communities; and most humiliating to us, they themselves are Italian, lost souls greedy for gain, coming from all walks of life from the former barber to the unfrocked priest, who seek to entrap the gullible with the most shameless lies, by word of mouth, counterfeit rites, and even by the furnishings of their pseudo-churches."⁴

Of another aspect, that is, of the contribution given by Italian national parishes to the gradual integration into the American society, Fr. Manlio Cuifoletti made the following analysis in 1924:

"We celebrate this year the silver jubilee of Guardian Angel Church in Chicago, the second Italian parish of the Metropolis of the West. It is my intention to publish as early as possible some brief historical notes on this beloved and important mission entrusted in 1919 to my pastoral care. In order to draw public attention to this memorable event and make known, as a whole, the importance of the Italian-American parishes, I intend in the meantime to illustrate briefly the social benefits deriving from them to our Italian communities.

Before all else, however, let me point out that besides these good social results migrants enjoy also, and especially, the spiritual advantages coming to them from the priestly zeal of Italian missionaries. By the ministry of his priests, in fact, the Church aims at forming and perfecting the future citizens of Heaven, but as they live presently on this earth so it takes pains also to make them exemplary citizens, efficient in all fields of civil endeavors.

Though ever mindful of the local conditions of this mission, I will treat the matter from

⁴ Properzi, "Una nostra nuova Chiesa e il suo grande valore", ("A New Church of Ours and its Great Importance") "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. XVII, n. 1 (January-March 1923), p. 55.

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a general point of view, because the circumstances, in which the Italian-Americans came into being and developed, were everywhere just about the same.

In the history of our churches in America one must distinguish three successive phases, the first of which precedes their organization.

1. Italian emigration was not prompted by such communal and heroic reasons as moved the preceding mass migrations from England, Ireland, Poland, and partly from Germany, that were surrounded, besides, by a halo of martyrdom! They formed whole communities of people landing on the virgin and mysterious American shores in search of liberty, a job, and better living conditions. Our immigrants, instead, came a few at a time, or in small groups, more out of curiosity and as an experiment, than with the intent of finding a richer and more clement new homeland. This situation explains also why Italian priests, differently from the German, Irish, and Polish ones, did not feel the need or the duty of accompanying their faithful to the new shores of prosperity and gold; and it was a real misfortune, to say the least, because upon finding here the fulfillment of their hopes and often also advantages superior to their most rosiest expectations, emigrants began to love this new land, to understand and appreciate its laws and customs, and to consider it as their second homeland, thus remaining without an adequate religious assistance. Therefore, the number of those, who returned to their country, after a residence here from two to five years, decreased gradually. Less frequent became the short visits to their hometowns and to their family, which eventually ended up moving finally to the new land to join their loved ones in exile. Families send for other families; relatives and friends move in with their dear ones; one's townsmen join their fellow-countrymen who made it good; and so, emigration assumes the character of a community and mass phenomenon which reveals by now the exiles' desire to settle permanently in the new land.

And therefore, few were the Italian priests who, concerned over the fate of their sons wandering around the world, decided to follow them with the intention to live, struggle, and conquer with them, to assist them especially in their spiritual needs. They did not, and could not perhaps, immediately understand from afar and, without proper information, that the migratory phenomenon was not going to have a constant and proportionate re-flow. On the other hand, neither did the American religious authorities become immediately aware nor adequately assess the presence of these new arrivals that quickly entered to be a part of the social and commercial life of America, without at the same time participating with equal intensity in the religious life of American Catholics, a fact due especially to indifference, ignorance, and the lack of guidance.

It was only after taking stock of the situation that some bishops began looking zealously for the help and action Italian priests in the spiritual assistance of their new sons entering at the last hour to be a part of their Catholic flock.

The Mexicans today are going through a similar experience. It is believed that some one million and a half of them are now present in the United States, with very few priests to assist them from their own country.

At their last national conference in Washington, D.C., the American Episcopate discussed also the most serious problem of the assistance to Mexicans steadily migrating to America in appalling numbers. It happened also that American Bishops and Priests were too few and all intent on repairing the losses endured with immigrants of earlier generations and on setting them on the straight and sure paths, which were to lead the American Church later on to its present successes and triumphs.

It so happened, besides, that a good number of Italian priests - Jesuits, especially, - who had been residing in the U.S.A. a long time already, particularly in the Western States, to preach the Gospel to the Indians, began to decrease, thus gradually surrendering the field to their American confreres right on the onset of our migration.

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Above the indifference of either side of the Ocean over the religious dangers and ruin of migrants, there arose the passionate and persuasive voice of the illustrious Bishop Scalabrini, who in his keen mind and big heart had well understood the need for Italian priests in America, if Italians were to be saved to faith, country, and society. Just a few at first, but in greater numbers later on, priests responded to his invitation, and began immediately on arrival their mission of religious and social salvation to the new and difficult field.

2. And, let us now proceed to the next period of our history, that of the organization of our parishes. How many difficulties our Missionaries had to face from both men and environment; and how much indifference oftentimes they encountered, even in those from whom they had the right to expect help and protection!

It was especially by the action of these pioneer priests that the necessary contact of Italian Catholics with the Bishops of America was established. After organizing as best as possible the most numerous communities of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Providence, etc., the decision was taken to providing each one of these cities with an Italian parish of its own. No sooner did the news get around than, lo and behold, a general movement of consensus and action began to grow among the people, which drew and gathered together the emigrants of whole cities for such high purpose.

And, so, the Italian colonies kept growing stronger.

At first we had separate groups made up of people from the same town or region, often disliking each other and rivaling with each other, at times, over parochial and meaningless disputes. As a result, we had 'little' Calabrias, Basilicatas, Campanias, Abruzzis and Sicilies, rather than 'little' Italies abroad.

With the rising of parish churches the attitude of superiority, with which emigrants from Northern and Central Italy (Ligurians and Tuscans especially) were generally looking down on their fellow-countrymen from the South, began to taper off. Hence, a strong tendency was seen to group together around the rising church; the old non-Italian inhabitants occupying the adjacent and nearby streets moved out, while our immigrants moved in and often bought their homes. Social life began to develop; mutual aid societies were born; banks, pharmacies, stores were opened; and professionals set up their offices.

In this movement of people and things, the smarter and more willing ones had their chance to know each other and be noted, and so, out of the mass of immigrants, the prominent citizens and the economic and political leaders of the future began to emerge. Some of them, sad to say, would eventually take advantage of their influence for their personal aims and interests. The fact that all were called to contribute to the construction of the church also had a great social impact. Since it represented a community enterprise, our good parishioners became, in a certain sense, its shareholders. Furthermore, contributing to the building and support of churches and of ministers of religion is so much a part of the spirit and practice of the American way of life that this simple fact helped greatly the 'colony' in gaining favor with public opinion, which improved no sooner the parish was organized.

3. At this point we come to the third phase of the history of the parish, that is, its operation and growth. Today's local press describes Italians not just as a numerous, but also as an efficient ethnic group within the community; one with its priests to guide it competing with other nationalities, willing to make all sacrifices to defend its own institutions, and proud to build and support its churches not only as a means for religious and moral elevation, but also as a training ground for civic virtue and proper Americanization.

In the big cities where most of our immigrants live, local Catholics often forming the largest group amongst other religious confessions and greatly represented in public administrations, look upon them as brothers in the faith, while all others admire their

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strong attachment to their religious and civil traditions and entertain good hopes for the republic, which will always find in them a conservative component for order.

Even those Protestants, who employ resources and activities in making proselytes amongst our Italians, are amazed, after all, at the resistance they put up against all attacks at their faith. It may well be just a memory, a reminder, a feeling of a faith almost entirely neglected in practice, but at a certain moment it can bring forth an extraordinary resilience. Italians here are either Catholics or nothing.

Our immigrants made good of this increasingly benevolent public opinion about them by integrating ever deeper into the social life and gaining more advanced and advantageous positions. The educational mission of the Church always had and still has a great influence in leading our immigrants to become American citizens. We should not wonder, therefore, if they hold first place in the race for Americanization and if in Italian-American churches and schools the dates of American historical events are remembered and celebrated with enthusiasm. Besides, the church serves as a link between the distant sons and their original homeland. It is in church that they are more often reminded through their mother tongue of their own native towns and religious and popular feasts which were so much a part of their simple country life.

On entering their churches in Chicago, New York, San Francisco, etc., they find themselves right in their own environment; in their statues, paintings, and architecture itself, at times, they recognize the church of their own younger years, so full of the many sweet memories that marked the most important events of their lives and those of their loved ones.

But, the priest does not speak to them only of religion or of their mother country in their native language; by making himself the interpreter and the echo of their fatherland's loving voice, he conveys to the people also all its joys and sorrows. There was no appeal to which the Italian Catholic people of America did not respond with remarkable generosity and spontaneity through their parish churches. This is so true that hardly any parish is there which does not boast in its history golden pages of charity and sacrifice for their distant fatherland. And, whenever Italy sends us some famous son, he is always welcomed by priests and faithful with such enthusiasm and respect as is well-known to all those who had the privilege of bringing us the greetings, the memories, and the good wishes of our distant home country. Among so many such enthusiastic and affectionate welcomes let the tribute given to 'Generalissimo Diaz' serve as an example.

Finally, the philanthropic action of the Italian parish church is also of immense social value not only on account of its institutions - orphanages, hospitals, nurseries, schools - but of its charitable work, as well. At Chicago, for instance, the charitable appeal is admirably organized and maintained by the contributions mandated proportionally to all parishes, between 1921 in 1923, \$23,398.00 were given to, or spent for, the poor of my parish by the 'Associated Catholic Charities', thus sparing those in need the humiliation of holding their hand out to people of other faiths or nations. It is enough for them to have recourse to their priest and help is there immediately, ready, courteous, and sufficient. And who can ever tell the great comfort the poor, the widow, the orphaned, and the abandoned find in the thought that in their priest they have a father, a friend, a loving and trusted benefactor? What a feeling of relief and assurance radiates throughout the community the certainty its most unfortunate members are cared for by someone in their midst who is concerned, by vocation, charity, and love of fatherland.

So far I limited myself to mentioning the Church's influence in the beginning and during its growth on emigrants, who entered this country in their adult years. But it is for their children, born and raised here, that the church and the parish-school have a particular value and significance even when viewed from the social aspect. In fact, it is

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only in these institutions that the bond of moral continuity is respected and strengthened which must exist between parents and their children. All of them go to the same church, have the same priests as guides and pastors, and share the same amusements in the parish halls.

In the Catholic schools and in catechism classes the religious traditions of the country all their parents, which are almost always also civil festivities, are spoken of with respect and, indeed, with admiration for the simple and heartfelt faith of the people.

Protestant churches and institutions tend to subtract children from the religious influence of the family, and tend to place them at odds with the traditions and customs of their parents and relatives, who are then described as too naive and old-fashioned, thus instilling into their little heart indifference and even loathing, perhaps, for whatever their forefathers held most dear and sacred. In public schools the talk concerns only several matters, Americanization, the greatness and unique power of America; the American fatherland is almost idolized and patriotism is raised to the status of a religion. Be it enough to recall the cry of Stephen Decatur which is also the 'motto' of the great daily 'The Chicago Tribune': "...right or wrong, my country forever!" And such is the attitude of the great majority of the people.

One should not wonder, then, if our young people, raised in an environment away from the sweet and salutary influence of the Church, grow ashamed later on of their own name and americanize it, of their parents whom they ignore and despise, of the land of their ancestors upon which they ignorantly look as on a poor, desolate, semi barbarous country wherein, so they see it, they were lucky not to be born.

Another great social service rendered by the parish to the children of migrants is represented by their baptismal certificates, without which they would not be admitted to schools or obtain a job. It should be known that 90% of the newborn babies of our communities were not registered in the city halls, hence it became customary with our immigrants to have recourse to the church for their birth certificates, which are also considered a recommendation in favor of young men or girls looking for a job. Through these and other similar means of relationship, besides those of a purely religious nature, our young people born here keep in steady touch with their national church, which offers this way the spectacle of an extended Italian-American family. And so, while the immigrant element fades out through the restful peace of the tomb, the young off-springs grow grateful and devoted to the glorious land of their forefathers; while being at the same time good, loyal, and able citizens of their great new homeland. To them and in their eyes, Columbus and Washington, Italy and America, all seem to join hands through time and space in the bond of brotherhood and progress.

Religiously, the Italian-American youths represent the great stream of the glorious religious traditions of Italy, who are entering to be a part of the clear waters of the calm and secure Ocean of the Catholic Church in America."⁵

2. Fr. Leonardo Quaglia (1924-1931)

Fr. Leonardo Quaglia was the Regional Superior of the "Eastern" Region (Province of St. Charles Borromeo) from December 1924 to March 1931. During his term he continued at St. Michael's in New Haven, of which he had been appointed pastor in 1916.

His administration can be divided in two phases: the first, responding to about the first three years in office, when his action was almost unanimously

⁵ Ciufoletti, "Importanza sociale delle parrocchie Italiane in America" ("Social Importance of Italian Parishes in America") "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. XVIII, n. 4 (October-December 1924), pp. 1-6.

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appreciated for the equilibrium and moderation that distinguished it, as compared with the preceding one.

The second phase marked a period when his conciliating and indulgent manner did not seem to respond to the demands of an evolution towards a stricter implementation of the reforms adopted by the Sacred Consistorial Congregation in 1924, and by the "Statutes" of 1925. The same Congregation itself had been pursuing a prudent and patient policy, well aware that the situation could not be healed overnight; on the other hand, it held faith at the same time to an urgent program aimed at, gradually but firmly, establishing a way of life respondent to the nature of a religious institute. It took note that Fr. Quaglia's tact and prudence, especially with those who were reluctant to accept the new discipline, was obtaining good results, thus strengthening the spirit of fraternity and obedience, while a more authoritarian system would have been out of place. On his part, the Regional Superior was convinced that this was the best way:

"I have always obtained more of the Fathers through patience and persuasion, in one word, through gentle ways, than through severity."⁶

Later on, however, the wish was that he were firmer, and not compromise, for fear of displeasing them, with those who were unwilling to accept the new course, and that he should favor more the young and that he lived up to his own responsibilities of government and not just stand always behind the policies of the General Administration.

It must be pointed out that the "Eastern" Region, as it was called, represented practically about one-half of the Scalabrinian Institute; in fact, out of a total of 197 Scalabrinians working in its four regions, 45 belonged to it. There were 19 parishes assisting approximately 120,000 Italians.

Though not exclusive of this region, one of the root problems was the immobility of positions. During Frs. Strazzoni's and Quaglia's terms two new parishes were founded: Saint Anthony in Everett, Massachusetts, and Saint Joseph in New York. In the mind, however, of the Consistorial Congregation it was not through the founding of new parishes that the problem would be solved, since there was no updating of the type of pastoral ministry, which was the authentic form of the specific apostolate for migrants in Bishop Scalabrini's time and in that immediately following. In fact, the Italian national parishes all over the United States had grown by then to approximately 800 and the presence of Scalabrinians, with only thirty of them, risked losing its significance. It had become necessary, according to the thought of the Substitute of the Consistorial Congregation Archbishop Cicognani, to draw up a plan for new forms of a specialized action of assistance inspired to the initial idea of Bishop Scalabrini: the parishes should have represented the centers and points of reference for groups of priests willing to go wherever the need of migrants abandoned and neglected by other priests was urgent. Actually, Cardinal Rossi had been contemplating already to revive the spirit of the

⁶ Quaglia to Tirondola, New Haven, April 5, 1929 (Arch. G.S., 556-5).

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original scope by opening to Scalabrinians the field of Europe, where the Institute of Bishop Bonomelli ("Opera Bonomelli") had been disbanded right when even more numerous were the masses of migrants moving into Europe, as a consequence of the restrictive policies that had caused the stagnation of the migration flow to America.

The financial situation had also improved, and Fr. Quaglia received most of the credit. In 1923, the last year of Fr. Chenuil's term as Superior General, all four regions combined had contributed approximately L. 251.000 to the houses of formation, while the "Eastern" region of the U.S.A. alone in 1929 had sent in L. 769.030.

And with the help of Fr. Quaglia's circular letters and annual reports let us examine now the general situation of the "Eastern" region. By the end of December 1925, he wrote the following to his confreres:

"Close to the end of the year, our Eminent Superior General, Card. G. DeLai reminds the Regional Superior of his duty to send in the annual report on the houses and the financial accounts. His Eminence desires that the reports contain an exact and careful evaluation of the good accomplished in the single parishes, the shortcomings to correct, the deficiencies to remedy, and of the plans for the future.

In conformity with the wishes of the Holy Father, the Sacred Consistorial Congregation has shown us how much it has at heart the welfare of our Society by giving it the new 'Statutes', adopting opportune changes, leading us back to a spirit of charity, humility, and holy laboriousness according to the spirit of St. Charles.

Some houses of ours have contributed considerably to the Motherhouse this year, but all of them shall have to conform to the provision of Chapter XVII, Art. 114, of the new Rules, on the occasion of their annual financial report. His Eminence Card. DeLai reminds us of the heavy expenses encountered for the support of our houses in Rome, Crespano, and Piacenza especially, where there are about 90 young men, all inspired by the best spirit and goodwill, to whose needs we must provide through the savings of the missionaries. One must add to all this the necessity of increasing the reserve funds of our Pious Society so that the missionaries may work without worries, sure about their future.

To help make the financial reports easier and the same, I forward to all houses the enclosed form which Superiors shall fill in and send to the Regional Superior in the next month of January. Should the confreres call to my attention anything that would help in the evaluation of the spiritual good accomplished in the various parishes in 1925, I will be grateful. Besides, I ask the confreres to send in copy of the financial report of the church as required by our Rules.

During January, I intend to visit the various communities in compliance with the desire of our Eminent Superior, who asks me to exhort all to work in a spirit of sacrifice, thus making yourselves worthy of God's Grace, and to convey to all of you the expression of his particular benevolence together with

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a his special blessing."⁷

In presenting, on February 17, 1926, the administration reports of the houses and churches of his Region, the Regional Superior added the following:

"I have completed just a short while ago the annual visitation of the houses and with great satisfaction I can say I have generally found among the confreres a very good priestly spirit and a fervent zeal in the care for the souls entrusted to them.

The Most Excellent Ordinaries of the various Dioceses have shown the same satisfaction and all of them said they were satisfied with our churches and priests. The steady improving of the financial conditions of our parishes is another sign of the spiritual good that is being accomplished in them.

I deem it my duty to call the attention of Your Eminence to certain points in particular:

- *The rule concerning the retreat of the Fathers has been observed in all Dioceses except New York where His Eminence the Cardinal has told us he had no room for our priests as yet. I hope he will be able to provide it this year, otherwise I shall take care of the matter differently myself.*
- *From the state of our houses one can see that the need still persistently exists for other missionaries! Our Pious Society and its need for vocations should be made better known in Italy.*
- *I have discussed with my councilors the question of our modest allowance in line with the views expressed by Your Eminence in the letter of November 18, 1925 (677/25). We do not seem to know how we could possibly bring such allowance to a level lower than the \$50 a month allowed for North America, unless a rate be established for a pension to be granted by the Pious Society to Fathers who would need to retire from America when reaching a certain age or after serving a certain number of years. Almost general is the desire of the Fathers to return one day to live and rest in Italy, and even though, thanks to the favorable exchange markets, most of them have set aside some savings with this in mind, there is still some concern about the future.*
- *As to the question of personal donations there are still some difficulties because it seems hard to the confreres not being able to give or receive gifts on certain occasions of the year, such as Christmas, Easter, and vacations. So also, the confreres would like to be allowed to retain for themselves at least a part of what they receive as retribution for preaching and special ministry outside of their own parish. It may well happen that some one of our Fathers does not feel bound to lend his services in another parish; in this case, a pastor in need of a priest will find himself forced to have recourse to an outsider and pay him more dearly than he would a confrere.*
- *Another serious problem of our Pious Society concerns the salaries our priests are entitled to receive from the funds of the churches. In certain instances these salaries cannot be drawn due to the bad financial state of the parish, but, when the parish is in good financial conditions, the pastor should act according to the procedure common to all. On the other hand, whenever pastors are forced by necessity to make use for the church of considerable sums belonging to the house, then these funds should be*

⁷ Quaglia, "Circular Letter", December 16, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 556/1).

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considered as credits to be paid back later on. So, also the faculty of pastors to donate money from the house for charitable causes should have certain limits.

*Your Eminence's directives on these problems will bear great weight on the future of the Pious Society."*⁸

We know the provisions taken by the Consistorial Congregation in regard to monthly allowance and salary to be collected from the church's funds.⁹

On the serious problem of strengthening the personnel, Fr. Quaglia wrote once again in September 1926:

"Allow me, Your Eminence, to return to the problem of the need for missionaries. I have discussed the matter with His Excellency Archbishop Pisani when I met him here in June, and I asked also Fr. Fani to do something about it, but I do not feel sure whether this is enough to get practical results.

*The lack of priests carries with it a slow slackening of discipline in our houses because changes and replacements become impossible. Some Fathers are compelled to do more work than their strength can bear and lament ill health and ability to carry on (...). In case it be difficult to find priests who wish to be members of our Pious Society could there not be some willing to serve for a time, or why not make use of those who belong to the 'Collegio di Emigrazione'? It would be only a question of adopting an extraordinary and temporary measure, which could meet the immediate needs and prevent discouragement and a little dissatisfaction that for various reasons is beginning to creep into our ranks."*¹⁰

On the same subject he will return in his report of 1927:

"Following the visitation of 1926 and from the interviews I had with the Most Rev. Ordinaries of the various dioceses, I can assure Your Eminence that the priests of our Pious Society have fulfilled their duties concerning the care of souls and the administration of the parishes with great zeal to the satisfaction of their people and superiors.

The financial reports of the churches reveal the steady progress of the parishes and of the activities of their priests. In Boston, His Eminence the Archbishop, Cardinal O'Connell, is constantly saying he is much satisfied with Fathers Toma, Properzi, Maschi, and there is reason for hope that, in the new year, he may express the same satisfaction in regard to the new pastor of the parish of Sacred Heart, Fr. Chenuil.

In the diocese of Providence, Bishop Hickey had arrived at the decision of requesting the replacement of Fr. Marenchino, judged unfit because his rheumatism had kept him from attending a conference of priests. I warned Fr. Marenchino to be very diligent, but I pointed out to the Bishop, at the same time, that the priest had brought about with remarkable zeal several improvements in the rectory and in the church, and is still able to provide for the needs of the people of a parish of little less than two thousand souls, though he is no longer as young as the bishop would like him to be.

Fr. Parenti has begun a campaign for funds for the construction of a new rectory

⁸ Quaglia to Card. DeLai, New Haven, February 17, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 556/2).

⁹ See above pp. 51-52 (original).

¹⁰ Quaglia to Card. DeLai, New Haven, September 9, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 556/2).

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and possibly for the enlargement of the parish school which can accommodate only 400 students at the present time.

Fr. Gorret has bought a piece of land where to build a chapel in the midst of a community of Italians some two miles from the parish church. There, too, a priest will be needed in the future.

In the city of New York, the new church of Our Lady of Pompeii will be dedicated on Easter Sunday. To secure greater zeal and harmony among the Fathers and also considering that it must still avail itself of the services of an outsider, two more zealous priests would be needed to provide for the needs of this parish.

The bishop of Syracuse desires that a young assistant be assigned to Fr. Strazzoni. Fr. Lorenzoni is zealous, but his health does not allow him to do much work especially such as is required for the care of the youth of the parish. Fr. Marchegiani of Utica is expecting with real impatience for an assistant. The past year I had to send him for three months Fr. Chiminello from Providence, because Fr. Fatta was no longer in a condition to carry on a heavy and steady work for which two priests are needed.

Your Eminence's letter with instructions for the visitation arrived when everything was ready for the annual report. I thank you for them and I will strictly conform to them in the future. As of now, this is what I can tell Your Eminence: no spiritual exercise is performed in common in any of our houses, as required by the Rule. The conditions of the parishes seem to prevent it or render it practically very difficult. At the urging of Bishop Scalabrini, there was an attempt to do so in some houses, but it could not be continued because many reasons prevented the Fathers from being present. I am informed that in certain houses of other religious Orders the Fathers in charge of a parish have been dispensed from the community acts.

In all our communities the Fathers are getting along in good harmony, excepting, perhaps, a certain coolness in Our Lady of Pompeii and Saint Joseph, New York. Both with letters and with my visits I've always tried to bring peace and, where I found it possible to do it, to minimize small disagreements among confrères. In almost all of our houses those providing housekeeping services are living with the Fathers. As far as I know there is no danger to the Fathers and there are no rumors among the people.

The Fathers take part in the retreat with the diocesan priests in all dioceses with the exception of those in New York. I have provided for them by sending five of them to make a retreat with the Passionists in Springfield, Massachusetts.

A new schedule of retreats has now been enacted by the church authorities of New York, with the intent of giving all priests without exception the opportunity to attend.

The membership of each parish can be gathered from the number of baptisms listed in the reports of the houses, considering the proportion of some 50 of them to a thousand souls.

In the moral report presented annually to the diocesan authorities, parochial societies are listed together with the number of their members. Our Fathers must follow in this the lead of Americans, and so at least three societies exist in every church (Holy Name, Christian Mothers, Children of Mary).

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Due to so many places of entertainment in the cities and to difficulties in finding a young priest endowed with the needed qualities for the care of youth, it is not easy to succeed in keeping the "Youth Circles" going. Next year I will be in a better position to provide Your Eminence with more detailed information.

Each parish has its board of trustees and with their help one finds it easy to carry on especially because they are chosen annually by the pastor according to local by-laws and approved by the Ordinary and the Vicar General.

Among the instructions on temporal matters, the directive concerning the control over abuses in expenditures is certainly the most important and difficult. I shall try my best to call the Fathers' attention to this particular problem whenever their reports should warrant my doing so. I have seen in some instances already the need for a better detailing of the item "other expenses".

I deem it proper to call once again the attention of Your Eminence to the advantage of leaving it up to the Fathers to provide for their personal needs as to clothing, thereby granting them a proportionate compensation. In this region I have opted for the idea of giving the Fathers \$10.00 a month for clothing. I treated the matter in a letter of mine of January 1926 (677/25).

Before concluding, I would like to plead with Your Eminence to find ways and means for increasing the number of Missionaries for this great field of apostolate. The work of our parishes is immense, not always allowing us to take due care of the health of the Fathers. The words of the superiors would themselves be more effective, were it only possible to carry out a few replacements. I do not need say a word then about the wonderful parishes our Pious Society could organize or be entrusted with, to the great relief of the Ordinaries."¹¹

On March 15, 1927, the Sacred Consistorial Congregation answered:

"From the report sent us by Your Reverence on the moral and financial state of the houses and missions of your Region, this Sacred Congregation has ascertained how well you respond to the trust placed in you by your Superiors (...).

You lament the lack of personnel for that wide field of work. I assure you that this Sacred Congregation is quite aware of such a serious need, and it examines with the greatest care the applications of diocesan priests desiring to join the Pious Society. The welfare of the Institute requires, however, that only such dependable applicants be admitted to it as would engender assurance of their solid piety, proven zeal, and sure priestly morals; for this reason we must avoid repeating the errors of the past and be careful in accepting new applications for admission.

This Sacred Congregation has special care for the Seminary of Piacenza, where approximately 120 students are preparing under enlightened guidance to be future missionaries; and on this seminary are indeed resting the most promising hopes for the future of the Pious Society.

As to expenses for clothing, I have but to remind you of the letter of this Sacred Congregation, dated July 2 last, instructing to leave the single houses free of this burden and to add ten dollars to the monthly allowance."¹²

¹¹Quaglia to Card. DeLai, New Haven, February 16, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 556/3).

¹²Card. DeLai to Quaglia, Rome, March 15, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 556/3).

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In the summer of 1927, while in Italy for his vacation, Fr. Quaglia succeeded in recruiting four priests from the Archdiocese of Turin: Frs. Francesco Levra, Natale Oddenino, Bartolomeo Tabbia, and Teofilo Zutta, all of whom were granted permission from the Consistorial Congregation to have their probation year in their field of work.

The 1928 annual report says:

"With the beginning of 1929 the Pious Society of the Missionaries of St. Charles enters the fifth year of its experience under the direct government of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation. This take-over was providential indeed. In fact, in the past four years the spirit of unity, discipline, and common responsibility, which, to the great detriment of our Institute, was very much on the wane in the years before 1925, has been revived.

In this fourth report of mine I have but to confirm the human mind my satisfaction more the good state of this Region, for its achievements and positive aspects, even when compared with what we see in other Italian orders and congregations represented in this country.

I do not intend to deny the existence of defects and weaknesses and the need for a vigilant authority, so that the Pious Society may continue to grow, but, after a serious examination of the situation I wish to point out how timely it would be to reestablish a sense of security and optimism in regard to the future of the Society.

What saddens us most today is the need of priests which is a cause of discouragement for some and of impediment in the process of selection such as is demanded by the Pious Society and must be done as soon as we shall reap abundantly from the seminary of Piacenza.

From what I could gather in the visitation of the houses, I provide the following answers to the questions listed by Your Eminence in the directives for the visitation:

On the moral aspect:

1) *The Fathers living together in our houses do not exceed generally the number of three. There are four of them in the parish of Sacred Heart in Boston, including Fr. Merlo, in poor health because of age and sickness; four at Holy Ghost in Providence, one of whom is now in Bristol, substituting for Fr. Poia, repatriated for reasons of health; five at Our Lady of Pompeii in New York, of whom Fathers Dotto and Gambera far advanced in years. The general opinion here is that the rule concerning "formed houses" does not apply for parishes in America.*

In our houses the exercises of piety are not performed in common. Such was also the desire of our Founder, but it was not possible to comply with it, because of difficulties deriving from the ministry. Even the large communities of Religious Orders have no choice in America but to dispense the priests assigned to the care of souls from the practices in common.

2) *In all dioceses the bishops now also invite our priests to the retreats conducted for their diocesan clergy. Due to a temporary inability to accommodate all of them, in the dioceses of New York and Hartford only the pastors and two assistants were admitted. I took care that the rule concerning this point was observed by all, and so I had six confreres make*

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their retreat at the Passionists in Springfield (...).

- 5) *Our Fathers are everywhere esteemed by the Reverend ordinaries. There were no complaints from the bishops, even though in some diocese the bishops prefer not to have the national churches entrusted to priests who are not incardinated in their dioceses.*
- 6) *The number of the members of a parish is better understood by the number of baptisms than by a census, which is impossible to conduct in certain urban areas. Not all parishes have definite bounds and Italian families of a district remain free to attend either the American or the Italian church. As to baptisms, it is believed that the general average of our parishes stands at forty to a thousand people. I have therefore directed the Fathers to include in their reports also baptisms and marriages.*
- 7) *In every parish there are various societies and associations for women, and the "Children of Mary" for girls. There is also at least one society for men, the Holy Name Society. A report on them is given annually to the bishop. Young men's Circles are found in few parishes because they require the care of a priest specialized in the field, proper spaces, and a perfect mastery of the English language. In the cities, many Italian young men belong to the fraternity of the "Knights of Columbus".*
- 8) *As I said on another occasion, there is no need to fear an estrangement of the trustees from pastors. The pastor is the administrator and he presents annually to the bishops the names of two good Catholic friends for the post of trustees.*

On temporal matters:

As to temporal matters, I have always done everything possible to urge confreres to feel proud to contribute generously for the support of the Mother House, to the point of being criticized for it. I do not have serious administration abuses to report. I must point out, however, that the opportunities offered us to save up on our salaries may easily engender in us the financial "bug" and the desire for gain. The spirit of the Fathers is not one of religious poverty, and so all of them, more or less, experience the need to concern themselves about their future, especially those who believe that the Sacred Consistorial Congregation intends to hold indefinite direct control over the Pious Society. The same Congregation has ordered that the newly ordained priests from the seminary be given only half salary for the first five years. On the other hand, news came from Chicago that the order concerned those to be ordained in the future, and so young priests also received the same salary. I believe it proper that the salary be reduced for seminarians to be ordained in the future at Piacenza.

Organization of the House:

Regarding the organization of the house, I don't see the possibility of making any changes for the time being to allow the local treasurer be one other than the pastor. Wherever circumstances will so require, changes will be made to remedy evident abuses.

In larger parishes, such as Sacred Heart, Boston, and Our Lady of Pompeii, New York, there are no Fathers to recommend as of now for the office of treasurer, either because of temperament or lack of ability.

I have insisted, and continue to do so, with the Fathers not to pretend compensations besides their salary for any reason whatsoever. It will not be

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possible, however, to wholly eliminate certain little donations on some special occasions of the year, as it may help sometimes in maintaining peace and harmony in the house. So also, one cannot convince the Fathers to surrender all remunerations for services rendered outside the parish. Besides, there is so much to do in our parishes that there will be hardly an occasion for which any Father may find the time or a chance to accept extra work. Until the time when the seminary of Piacenza will be in a position to supply the missionaries, there is an absolute need of someone seriously committed to finding generous priests for this of work. It will be necessary, as well, that in view of the need, the Sacred Consistorial Congregation be willing to insist in favor of priests desiring to leave for the missions and to allow them to have their probation year in America, because to have it in Italy seems to be the most serious obstacle in the way of those who wish to join our Society.

It saddens us to know that some priests invited to join the Society have ended up with entering later in the "Pontificio Collegio di Emigrazione" as happened to a priest of Assisi, and that while young priests like Bava and Della Valle of Turin are waiting in vain to become missionaries, other ones from the same diocese have likewise been admitted to the Pontifical College.

For the sake of our Pious Society, allow me once again to point out to Your Eminence the need the Fathers assigned to America have of knowing the English language. I am informed it is taught in the seminary, but this is not enough for practical purposes. A way should be found to send the students to complete their studies in English-speaking countries as, for instance, the Missionaries of Milan are doing. In fact, their students are sent to complete their studies in seminaries of England or Ireland. The great majority of confessions are heard in English here, and our young people do not know any other language.

From the list of our contributions, your Eminence will take note how some progress has been made this year in regard to savings. All missionaries have received the report of the General Administration regarding the Pious Society up to June 30, 1927. The next report, covering the following two years, up to June 30, 1929, will also help engender greater interest in our priests for whatever concerns the Pious Society and greater generosity in those of them who are still somewhat indifferent."¹³

On May 7, 1929, Fr. Quaglia pointed out to the Consistorial Congregation the state of uneasiness of many missionaries following the reminder of the decision granting returns to one's homeland only once in ten years:

"As a whole, the feelings of the missionaries are in contradiction to the will of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation on this point, so as they are also in regard to the obligation of residing at all times in houses of the Pious Society."¹⁴

In regard to the last point Card. Charles Perosi had an answer prepared, but he did not mail it:

"Dated on March 19, 1925, the Statutes do not represent anything new; they only develop and put in right order that which constitutes the internal life of the Institute; and they are quite clear. Your Venerated Founder, and Fr.

¹³ Quaglia to Card. Perosi, New Haven, February 16, 1929 (Arch. G.S., 556/5).

¹⁴ Quaglia to Card. Perosi, New Haven, May 7, 1929 (Arch. G.S., 556/5).

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Vicentini himself, of saintly memory, had presented to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith a request for solemn vows. These saintly men were convinced that if they were to form real missionaries for migrants they needed to bind them with a band of stability as to duration in time, and to complete self-denial as to the sacred ministry. Solemn vows were considered too much, and so a decision was taken in favor of an oath of perseverance. This way, the Fathers have solemnly promised before God to remain for all life in the Pious Society. To pretend to prove the contrary in the face of such evident truth shows them to be animated by very little priestly spirit, or, to say the least, by lack of awareness - certainly hard to explain - of the obligations accepted. And on this point, as the good of the Institute would demand, this Sacred Consistorial Congregation cannot compromise. I repeat to you what Card. DeLai, of happy memory, has written on various occasions: the Pious Society has the means at its disposal to meet the desires of the Fathers who should be in need of treatment or rest. Fr. Alussi died at the seminary of Piacenza praising the Lord for granting him in the last moments of his life an oasis of peace and tranquility after so many years in the mission field.

Good Fr. Canestrini has also been steadily attended to with great care and solicitude. Fathers Brescianini and Capello, sick for quite some time now, are being fraternally assisted and nothing is denied them that is needed for their particular conditions of health.

In any case, the good name of the Pious Society and of the Fathers themselves, makes it necessary that there never be any cause justifying rumors that the Scalabrinian Priests remain in the Institute for the time needed to make money and then return to Italy to enjoy it with their family."¹⁵

Fr. Quaglia's last report was given in February 1931. The first part contains some historical news of the single parishes and missionaries then it is followed by the moral and administrative reports in which amongst other things we read:

"Personnel:

- 4) No common practices of piety are held in any of our houses. As I pointed out in my report of 1928, the missionaries think that the difficulties against them are unsurmountable and they appeal to the religious orders that dispense from prayer in common those members of theirs who have charge of the care of souls in parishes. The Fathers rise at different hours of the morning, being there masses generally scheduled also at a later time. Work, recreation, and free time are routinely divided in turns. Considering the feelings of our priests, the old ones especially, the exercises of piety in common seem to be practically impossible.
On the priestly conduct of the Fathers, I do not have anything of particular gravity to report. By American standards, the moral and priestly spirit of the Fathers is rather praiseworthy and exemplary. This is due especially to the vigilance they exercise on one another.
- 5) The retreat is held annually by all in all dioceses by decision of the bishops who are very strict on this point (...).
- 6) The Ordinaries of the dioceses did not have any complaint about our

¹⁵ Draft of letter Card. Perosi, June 8, 1929 (Arch. G.S., 556/5).

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priests; actually they said to be fully pleased with their zeal and work (...).

The Parishes:

All our priests, everywhere, work with zeal and sacrifice to the satisfaction of the bishops and the people. As to frequency to the sacraments, in every parish there are large groups of pious persons who receive them every morning. Many children and young people receive the Sacraments every month on the first Friday. The Easter duty is kept not only by those who regularly attend church but by another large portion of people taking part in the missions regularly held each year in Italian and English at almost all of our churches. The number of children attending public schools can be calculated considering that they represent some 28 percent of the total population of school age.

Administration:

The books of accounts and the registers of Mass intentions are kept in satisfactory order by all. I deem it advisable, however, to supply a format of registers common to all if we are to achieve greater uniformity.

In all communities, whatever is obtained by the Fathers on occasion of services or preaching outside one's own parish is considered as personal income, which is sometimes divided amongst the priests of the house. What they receive from these activities is not much, actually, because the work in the parish does not leave much free time and invitations are rare. Besides, should they be denied such retributions, the Fathers would hardly accept these invitations. An exception might be made for a time in the beginning with regard to the missionaries just arriving from the seminary. Furthermore, when invited to our parishes, a confrere is always given less than a stranger. For many years now, it has been the custom in Sacred Heart in Boston, to allow the Fathers to keep the small offering received for baptismal certificates. Fr. Chenuil told me that, were they denied this small compensation, the Fathers would soon become restive and cease being so solicitous in their search for such certificates with the risk of irritating parishioners.

By a circular letter, I have also insisted that no money be given to the Fathers for preaching in one's parish. Unfortunately, there are pastors, not so skilled orators, who thus find themselves forced to entrust part of their duty to a confrere better qualified for the task, who would otherwise limit himself to doing only his own preaching. This occurs especially in St. Joseph and in O.L. of Pompeii in New York, and in St. Anthony in New Haven. It would cost us a lot more to have strangers do the preaching.

The Fathers are still given a gift on Christmas and Easter, and granted a period of vacation in the summer, listing them under the items: 'travel' or 'health care'. In many instances the goodwill and disposition would soon suffer loss if deprived of them. Concerning the office of treasurer, I would like to point out that we do not have any formal house such as is defined by the rule. In order to avoid disputes, the pastors are generally against the multiplying of authorities.

Before concluding this section, I deem it opportune to remind you of the need for the study of English by the young seminarians. They should be taught to esteem and respect the senior missionaries of America. One notices in these young priests a certain distrust for, and an inclination to criticize, what often is not a defect but, rather, the result of a long experience.

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Furthermore, in rectitude of intentions some good Fathers lament the delay of the Pious Society's return to the state of normalcy such as envisioned by the rules. There certainly exists some difficulties, but I have no doubt on my part that under the enlightened guidance of Your Eminence, a happy solution could be found towards a most successful future for the Pious Society and for the assistance to migrants, in general."¹⁶

3. Fr. Giovanni Marchegiani (1931-1935)

Fr. Giovanni Marchegiani pastor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Utica, N.Y., was appointed Regional Superior of the missions of the "Eastern" region of U.S.A. on March 21, 1931. Frs. Leonardo Quaglia and Nazareno Properzi were named his Councilors. The new superior received from Card. Rossi the following instructions:

"It belongs to Fr. Quaglia's particular talent to have been able to govern with tact and prudence at a time not so easy for the Pious Society due to the presence of priests who did not have the time or the chance to assimilate the spirit of the Institute.

But since now the conviction seems to have taken root, at least in most of them, that in order to belong to the Society one must observe its rules and regulations, it is to be hoped that all things may be set on a course more beneficial for the Pious Society and the salvation of souls. And so, taking as your norm the motto "fortiter et suaviter", spelling wisdom in government, Your Paternity shall inform your decisions to such a fatherly kindness and prudent firmness as are indispensable to any governing.

Articles 99, 100, 101 of Chapter XV of Statutes of the Pious Society, lay down the rights and duties of the Regional Superior. In carrying out your task all you need do is to conform to what said articles so clearly well define. At this point I call your attention to Article 100, which states that 'in matters of importance the Regional Superior must seek the advice of his Councilors; and so that you may avail yourself of the experience and counsel of your advisers for the good government of the houses, you shall call together the Council at fixed times (...). Minutes of these meetings must be written, and the decisions and proposals thereof sent to this Sacred Consistorial Congregation for the necessary approval.

As soon as you and your Council will have completed the study on the state of your Region, you shall take care that a meeting be arranged with the Regional Superior of the West to whom instructions were given on this matter by this Sacred Congregation.

With the Superior of that Region you shall discuss the following topics:

- 1) The general state of the Pious Society in the USA and the initiatives that will be deemed necessary to make it more respondent to the scope for which it was founded.*
- 2) The particular situation of each house, while considering the opportunity of effecting the transfers proposed by this Sacred Congregation from one Region to the other.*

¹⁶ Quaglia "Annual Report of the Region of St. Charles" (U.S.A.) for 1930 (Arch. G.S., 556/7).

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- 3) *The study and proposal made by this Sacred Congregation of a system of administration common to all houses and to which all should conform afterwards. In the meantime, it is necessary to determine the amount of money each house should be allowed to retain as a reserve fund for its immediate needs by the year's end, when remittances are sent to the Mother House.*

Herein enclosed, I am sending you the financial report on revenues, expenditures, balance, and amounts remitted to the Pious Society from each house in the years 1929-1930. This report clearly shows the contrasting ways of retaining funds for the needs of the houses and how necessary it is, therefore, that we adopt a common criterion, though always proportionate to the importance and to the needs of the houses themselves."¹⁷

Amongst the topics to discuss at the Provincial Council, Card. Rossi had suggested the possible taking over of parishes of greater importance conditional to the surrendering of some smaller ones. On this matter, the Consistorial Congregation had been pointing out that the "Eastern Region" covered the States nearest to the ports of entry, which is why it listed a greater contingent of Italians of recent immigration still more firmly attached to the traditions of their hometowns. Only after learning the language and getting used to the new environment did Italians move to the central or western states. And in said Region there was no reason to fear an immediate dispersion of Italians. In the Western Region, instead, with the present generation gone, there would remain only the Italian-Americans, in need of priests with a good knowledge of English and of the American way of life. As a result, it suggested that the "Western Region" retain the existing positions, which are considered still valid. With regard to the "Eastern Region" it advised, instead, the abandoning of weak positions, such as the parishes of Our Lady of Loreto in East Providence, R.I., of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Bristol, R.I., of St. Rocco, Thornton, R.I., etc., and trying to take over the direction of parishes with a very high percentage of Italians in the Dioceses of Brooklyn, N.Y., the "dormitory" of New York, and of Newark, New Jersey. In October 1931, Fr. Marchegiani reported:

"The diocese of Brooklyn, N.Y., would provide an immense field for our work. Hundreds of thousands of Italians live there without parishes, or in such vast ones as to make it impossible to conduct an effective apostolate. Some of these parishes number about 140 thousand souls. To ascertain the truth of my report of the facts, I travelled to Washington, D.C., to gather information personally from His Excellency the Apostolic Delegate, and he confirmed the state of spiritual neglect in which the Italians of Brooklyn are left. Not to fail in the project of establishing there some missions, I have not yet called on the Bishop, and I plead with Your Eminence to send me a letter of recommendation in which our request be also expressed."¹⁸

Already several months before, Fr. Marchegiani had pointed out:

"The Pious Society still has a great opportunity to have and open new parishes, such as it will never have again in the near future, when these people, not cared

¹⁷ Card. Rossi to Marchegiani, Rome, April 14, 1931 (Arch. G.S., 557/1).

¹⁸ Marchegiani to Card. Rossi, Utica, October 2, 1931 (Arch. G.S., 557/1).

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for by Italian priests, will fall under the responsibility of pastors of other nationalities, as we see it happening every day."¹⁹

He received answer that permission would be granted to take new and larger parishes on condition, however, that other ones, smaller and less important, be relinquished.²⁰ On November 27, 1931, Fr. Marchegiani requested to be transferred to Boston, but took possession of parish of Sacred Heart only in February 1932, and just for a short time, because he returned to Utica in May 1932. In the meantime, the Regional Superior had repeatedly tendered his resignation for reasons of health and also because he felt himself unappreciated by the general government; but it was not accepted.

On November 14, 1932, following the visitation of the missions, Fr. Marchegiani sent an alarming letter to the Consistorial Congregation:

"For the time being, I limit myself to send a few remarks on the three parishes of the city of New York. Being, as it were, the first ones founded by Scalabrinians and on account of their location in the largest city of the United States, they deserve a particular attention.

They are burdened with the heaviest debts with no prospect for reducing them, indeed with the constant threat, rather, that they may absorb almost all revenues of the house. This is a serious problem, and I submit it to this Sacred Congregation. Should this Situation continue, we run the risk of siphoning all profits of the Pious Society, without paying off the debts and with the danger, besides, of finding ourselves dismissed by the Bishops after losing all our goods for years to come. Is it advisable, therefore, that we still remain in those parishes, which present a doubtful situation for their future? I deem it our duty to get to the root of the matter, ascertain the seriousness of the problem, and not to allow things to get worse.

*In my opinion, the situation is not desperate as yet, provided wise and conscientious men be appointed to head them. I formally ask of Your Eminence authorization, should the need arise, to temporarily move and fix my residence in any house of the Pious Society, and take its administration in my hands to set it on the track indicated by the rules and by the various provisions of this Sacred Congregation."*²¹

At first, the answer came with ample faculty for him to reside as long as he judged opportune at the missions, which should be in need of his particular assistance.²² More detailed directives were given him at a later date:

"The reports on the general situation of that Region, and of certain houses in particular, sent in by Your Most Rev. Paternity set me thinking - as I have written you already - about the suitability of sending there a man entrusted by this Sacred Congregation with handling the various problems and with proposing those solutions that would help eliminate, in part at least, the serious troubles which have occurred in the past.

But since for unforeseen reasons this is no longer possible, I submit to your

¹⁹ Marchegiani to Card. Rossi, Utica, May 12, 1931 (Arch. G.S., 557/1).

²⁰ Card. Rossi to Marchegiani, Rome, November 24, 1931 (Arch. G.S., 557/1).

²¹ Marchegiani to Card. Rossi, Utica, November 14, 1932 (Arch. G.S., 557/2).

²² Card. Rossi to Marchegiani, Rome, December 2, 1932 (Arch. G.S., 557/2).

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prudent consideration some principles, which, in accord with Fr. Franch, Superior of the Western Region, you shall translate into practical proposals to be transmitted afterwards to this Sacred Congregation for final approval and implementation.

- 1) *First of all, this Sacred Congregation deems it necessary that those missionaries be removed from the office of pastor and treasurer who, rather than concerning themselves about the spiritual needs of the faithful and the growth of the parish institutions, have so far busied themselves about their personal and temporal interests, even to the great disrepute of the Pious Society (...).*
- 2) *In all houses, where there live two or more priests, immediate provision must be taken for the appointment of a bursar with clearly defined functions to which all, none excepted, will have to conform under pain of severe canonical penalties."²³*

In March 1933, Fr. Marchegiani wrote:

"As soon as I was informed by this Sacred Congregation that the Official of your office would not be sent to America as promised, I made it my duty to insist with you that this decision be revoked and the person of your trust be sent here the soonest possible.

As more than two months had gone by without an answer, I came to the conclusion that for good reasons an assent to this request of mine was and will be impossible to obtain. Your Eminence will certainly know what is taking place in Chicago, where the Archbishop is threatening to expel the Pious Society from his diocese. This unexpected decision was not a surprise to me. I well know, in fact, the machinations conducted by the enemies of the Pious Society within our ranks. As long as they were left free to pocket the money that belonged to the Pious Society they kept quiet, but when they found themselves under scrutiny and were forced to give an account, they acted as martyrs and took their complaints to the Bishops bringing false accusations against the Pious Society which they presented as the tyrant that demands money which, in their words, belongs to the parishes (...).

With no intention to interfere in what Your Eminence will deem opportune, if it should not be possible to send here an Official of this Sacred Congregation, I present formal petition to be called to Rome to report in person on the present state of the Pious Society (...). The Superior of the Western Region could forward the same request and both of us would be in Rome."²⁴

The proposal of Fr. Marchegiani was accepted and both Regional Superiors were summoned to Rome by early May. The most difficult situations were made the object of a serious study, and provisions were adopted, of which some were carried out immediately, and others sometime later: four pastors were removed and some assistants were changed.

Before returning to America, Fr. Marchegiani presented the following "Brief Historical Notes on Parishes in North America" to the Sacred Consistorial Congregation:

²³ Card. Rossi to Marchegiani, Rome, January 14, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 557/4).

²⁴ Marchegiani to Card. Rossi, Utica, March 30, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 557/4).

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"Churches

Besides the parish churches, so far there is no other church open to the public in North America. Some of them are headed by diocesan clergy, and part by religious priests. Some churches are known as missions within the territory of the parish and under its direct administration. Such churches do not have priests of their own but are directed and served by the clergy of the parish. They go there on Sundays and Holy Days to hear confessions and say Mass, and on stated days to teach the children catechism.

Construction of these missions is permitted by the Bishops in instances when a parish grows too large and financial difficulties do not warrant the creation of a new parish. As soon as a mission acquires a certain importance and has the means for the support of priests of its own, it is made a parish and definitely detached from the Mother Church.

Schools and seminaries for the formation of the diocesan or religious clergy, boarding schools, and sisters' convents, are not allowed to have their churches open to the public.

Should a monastery wish to open a church of their own, it must seek out an existing parochial church or build one in a place, where a new parish is needed.

The reason for these strict provisions is found in the protection of the parish as an integral part of the diocese and instituted by the Church for the propagation and preservation of the faith. The parish is responsible for the Christian formation of the people living within its territory. Should there be other churches, these do not have the obligations of a parish such as schools, catechism classes for the education of youth, mandatory Sunday preaching, religious assistance to the sick, periodical visitation of the families to make sure that all children receive First Communion and Confirmation, and marriages be celebrated in church. In fact, should things not be so, these non-parochial churches would be the beneficiaries of revenues deriving from religious services, anniversaries, etc. All this would seriously damage the life of the parishes that, deprived of the contributions they have the right to, would find themselves unable to support a number of priests sufficient to serve them and to found and run their schools and parochial societies.

Parish Endowment

Since they are of rather recent institution, the parishes of North America are not endowed with the so-called "Parochial Benefice". All parish needs are taken care of by the free contributions of the faithful, the most important of them being the Sunday collection.

On days of obligation, after the sermon on the Gospel, a group of ushers pass from pew to pew around the church handing the collection basket from person to person. The collection is made easy by the fact that the comfortable pews, covering the entire floor of the church, are divided into rows by wide aisles through which people move in and out. By reason of this comfort in seating and kneeling, people readily attend the sacred services and sermons, and all, without exception, willingly contribute to the support of the Church.

It is all in the interest of the priests of the parish to be zealous and solicitous in serving the people, to attract them to church by means of prayer and good examples, to take care of youth, to run the parish efficiently. In fact, abandoning the church, for any reason, by the faithful, would mean the financial ruin of the parish. Sunday collections, special donations, candle offerings, contributions for electricity, amusement programs, and charity bazaars, constitute the patrimony of the church, which the law requires to be administered by the Bishop, the pastor, and two lay trustees chosen by the Bishop. Expenditures not authorized by this council are not acknowledged as legal.

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From this multiple source of income comes the money for the ordinary and extraordinary expenditures of the church, including the salary of the priests and of the parochial school teachers.

Rectory

The priests assisting the pastor in the ministry are required to live the community life of the parish house. No priest is allowed to live with his family. Assistant pastors are entitled to the monthly salary fixed by the diocesan synod and to free room and board. Besides, they have a right to stole fees, mass offerings, funeral fees, retributions for services as deacons or sub-deacons.

The pastor meets the cost for running the rectory (room and board of priests, domestics, etc.) with proceeds from parochial stole fees, that is: the fees for funerals, baptisms, weddings, and the Sunday collections, according to provisions contained in the diocesan synod. The furnishing of the Rectory is entirely charged to the church.

Summing up, it is clear that pastors and assistants receive the salary from the church, the mass offerings, and proceeds for serving as deacons or sub-deacons at religious services requested by the people. All income from these sources is their property and no one can deprive them of it. Besides, they are given free room and board.

In religious communities, each month the pastor draws out of the church funds the salaries due to himself and his assistants, passes them to the bursar who then enters them into the register and house account.

The pastor, who is a member of a religious community, draws from the church account also that part of collection the synod sets apart for the upkeep of the rectory, and passes it on to the house bursar to be registered and entered into the house fund together with all other stole fees of pastor and assistants.

From this community account the bursar makes out the personal checks to the priests and for all other expenditures of the rectory. Any piece of furniture not paid out of church funds, is not considered the property of the church, but of the community. Diocesan synods strictly direct that clear records be kept in appropriate books of what belongs to the church and of the personal property of the pastor or religious community.

Parishioners

The English-speaking parishes are commonly known as 'American' parishes, but those of people speaking foreign languages are called 'National'. American parishes have charge of all English-speaking people residing within the territory assigned to them by the diocese. People of all nationalities living in it may belong to them, provided they know English.

National parishes also have a set territory, though necessarily much wider, extending at times into the bounds of one or more American parishes and they care for the faithful of a determined nationality, who speak the language of their country of origin.

Differently than with the American parishes, only those people may be registered in a national parish, who, by origin or extraction belong to the nationality for which it has been founded. In American parishes only the English language is spoken, while English also is used in national churches besides the language of their country of origin, for the benefit of the American-born youth, since they know only that language.

By reason of the bilingual situation of the national parishes, the religious culture of their people is in all instances inferior to that of the American parishes, because it so happens that there are often also only English-speaking parishioners attending services at which Italian is spoken and vice-versa. And so the American Bishops put the blame for this condition of inferiority on the priests of the national parishes, who are trying, in most cases, to do their best in bearing the burden of the use of both

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languages.

The reason why the clergy of national parishes finds it so hard to establish and run their churches may be summed up in the phrase uttered by Bishop Ludden of Syracuse, when someone had pointed out to him that there were hundreds of Italians in Syracuse who had no religion because they did not have a church of their own. 'Let all those old Italians go to hell: we shall seek to save their young!' Such was his answer.

Parish Priests

Both American and National parishes are administered in accord with Canon Law by a pastor with the help of other priests, called 'assistants'. Save any limitation on their faculties, assistants also have full care of souls dependent on the pastor and can validly perform weddings without the need of any special delegation for each case.

Pastor and assistants live together in the rectory. Many diocesan synods forbid pastors to have young sisters in the parish house.

Parochial Activities:

Religious Services

On Saturdays, eves of feasts, and First Fridays of the month, the priests are busy with confessions. On such days, all priests, no one excepted, must be in the confessional from about 3 to 6 in the afternoon, and from 7 to 9:30 in the evening. The hour between 6 and 7 is set aside for supper time.

As the parish church is the only one around, it is obvious that there should be a sufficient number of Masses especially on Sundays and Feast Days, if the needs of the faithful are to be met. Should, in fact, one of the Masses be omitted, the schedule of the parish services would get seriously jumbled up. It would then be impossible, in most cases, to gather together in one mass the crowds ordinarily attending two different Masses, because there would hardly be any room to accommodate them. Under strict obligation from the Bishops, at each Sunday and Feast Day Mass, none excepted, Epistle and Gospel must be read to the people in their spoken language and a catechetical homily preached. And so, never is there in America a Sunday Mass without the reading of the Gospel or without the sermon.

Schools

Well organized parishes have their own schools. Some richer ones, besides the grammar school of eight years, have also the secondary school of four years (high school).

The parish school is legally recognized by the State, and grades or degrees achieved in it enjoy the same accreditation as those of public schools.

Parochial schools are staffed by Nuns or Brothers of Christian Schools, and they are the exclusive charge of the parish, with no contribution from the State. The teachers (Nuns or Brothers) receive their monthly salary from the parish and live in a convent or a monastery by the school, also built and supported by the church. The school is also used for teaching catechism twice a week to parish children of the various classes frequenting public schools. Assistants take turns in visiting weekly all catechism classes and in explaining a point of doctrine. Most parochial schools are free and supported by the parish.

First Communion and Confirmation

Children attending the parish school either for regular classes or for catechism are generally admitted to First Communion at the age of eight. By special provision of the American Bishops, Confirmation may not be administered before the age of 12. The reason for this directive is to make sure that the children continue to frequent catechism classes they would otherwise quit right after their first Communion.

On the very day of their First Communion they are registered as members of the youth

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association of the parish, and from then on they receive a monthly postcard inviting them to Church on a set Sunday for their monthly confession and Communion. A priest is charged with visiting children who should not respond to the call.

Besides associations for children, there are also societies for the other sections of the faithful: Children of Mary, Holy Name, Christian Mothers, Altar Society, whose primary duty is to receive the sacraments every month.

Parish Office

All priests assigned to a parish must take turns and spend time in the care of the normal and extraordinary business of the office such as keeping Mass intentions and wedding records well updated, issuing baptismal certificates, attending to sick calls, fixing appointments for Baptisms, and hearing confessions. When on office duty, a priest is not allowed to leave the rectory for any reason at all.

Many diocesan Synods order priests to remain in the rectory also on days when they have no office duty and so they may spend time in study and prayer. In his prudent judgment the pastor may grant his assistants one day off during the week."²⁵

In June 1933, instructions were renewed on the rights of the missionaries in regard to retributions due to them from Church funds and to their obligations with the Pious Society:

- 1) "Most Rev. Father, you are hereby enjoined to restate forcefully the directives opportunely sent to you before, such as: let the net salary each diocese has fixed for the priests (pastor and assistants) be taken from the church account; so also, let all retributions or collections each diocese has decreed upon for the support of the priests be entirely devolved to the house. Such salaries and collections must be monthly deposited in the house account and registered in pertinent administration books.
- 2) This Sacred Congregation directs, furthermore, that the monthly allowance of the Fathers be decreased from \$60.00 to \$50.00, to include also clothing expenditures, and the young priests have their monthly allowance reduced from \$35.00 to \$25.00 clothing included. Such allowance is deemed sufficient for their personal needs, not only considering the times, but, especially, the particular way of life the Fathers must lead if they are to conform to the spirit of the Statutes."²⁶

A short while afterwards, Fr. Marchegiani returned to the problem whether it be the case to abandon some small parishes. It had been brought up, as we have seen, in 1931, but set aside for discussion at a later date by suggestion of the Regional Superior himself:

"After a three-year experience, I have arrived at the conclusion that the root of the evils of those parishes is found in the fact that the Fathers are living all alone, apart from community life, with little supervision on the part of the Regional Superior, because they are far removed from large cities and with very limited control from the bishops, who trust in the vigilance of their Religious Superiors."²⁷

Fr. Marchegiani sought authorization to relinquish into the hands of the bishops the parishes of: Our Lady of Loreto, East Providence, R.I.; St. Anthony,

²⁵ Marchegiani, "Brief Historical Notes on Parishes of U.S.A.", June 1933, (Arch. G.S., 557/4).

²⁶ Card. Rossi to Marchegiani, Rome, June 24, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 557/4).

²⁷ Marchegiani to Card. Rossi, Utica, July 26, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 557/4).

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Fredonia, N.Y.; Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Bristol, R.I.; and Saint Rocco, Thornton, R.I., and so to gather the Fathers together in larger parishes.

The Consistorial Congregation approved the project on condition it be made first the subject of a serious study by the Regional Council and the surrendering of one or more parishes should respond to an assurance of establishing more important ones.²⁸

Meanwhile, because of negative reactions of some at the severe provisions, otherwise impossible to postpone, taken by the Consistorial Congregation, and of disagreements with the Superior of the Western Region, Fr. Marchegiani again tendered his resignation, but once again he was refused:

*"I could not and I do not wish to accept your resignation. You must continue in your task so generously accepted at such great sacrifice and so efficiently conducted (...). Resume your work, therefore, as I am sure you did already, with unchanging zeal and unswerving trust."*²⁹

Fr. Marchegiani's term of office should have elapsed in March 1935, but he was reappointed:

"Due to the reform of the Statutes of the Pious Society now under way to conform them to the new order of things and in view of a further and final definition of the Offices of Regional Superior and Councillors, I confirm Your Paternity as Regional Superior and Fathers Nazareno Properzi and Leonardo Quaglia as your Councilors, *"ad nutum huius Sacrae Congregationis."*³⁰

However, with a sick heart, weighed down by worries over the parish of Our Lady of Pompeii in New York, of which he had taken charge, trying to heal its finances, exposed to increasing sharp criticism, though not wholly groundless, in those months Fr. Marchegiani began to show signs of nervousness and of persecution complex and started, in turn, to retort accusations at the young missionaries, at the formation houses in Italy, but above all at their Superior, Fr. Tirondola. Cardinal Rossi refuted all of them point by point and invited the Regional Superior to greater prudence and moderation. On his part the Regional Superior preferred to tender his resignation, which, this time, was accepted. On November 4, 1935, he was relieved of his duty.³¹

4. Fr. Nazareno Properzi (1935-1946)

Fr. Nazareno Properzi, Pastor of St. Anthony in Somerville, Massachusetts, was appointed Regional Superior on November 23, 1935, and took possession of his office on the 29th.

On the same day Cardinal Rossi sent him the following instructions:

1. As soon as you will have gathered all elements concerning the government of the Region it will be necessary to form the Council of the Regional

²⁸ Card. Rossi to Marchegiani, Rome, August 10, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 557/4).

²⁹ Card. Rossi to Marchegiani, Rome, January 31, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 557/6).

³⁰ Card. Rossi to Marchegiani, Rome, January 31, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 557/6).

³¹ Marchegiani to Card. Rossi, New York, May 21, 1935; Card. Rossi to Marchegiani, Rome, June 26, 1935; Marchegiani to Card. Rossi, New York, September 20, 1935; Card. Rossi to Marchegiani, Rome, November 4, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 557/6).

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Superior. It is a question of choosing two Fathers who in conformity with the Constitutions may cooperate as Councilors with the Regional Superior in the government of the Region. I ask you, therefore, to kindly propose to me two Fathers whom you deem best qualified for this office. My opinion is that one be chosen from the senior priests and the other from the juniors, who are already found by the religious vows, someone like Fr. Raffaele Larcher, for instance, a man of good trust in all respects.

2. In addition, to make your task easier, I would like to appoint a Provincial Treasurer, distinct from the Councilors, dependent on you, of course, who may keep careful record of all matters concerning the finances of the churches and the houses.

Past experience has shown how necessary it is that the financial administration be somehow kept separate from moral and disciplinary matters and that to the Regional Superior be reserved the right of the last word, a word of kindness and firmness, as the case may require, after thorough study of any situation by experts worthy of all trust.

Fr. Marchegiani seems to me the best suited for this new job: he knows all things, already, and without an excessive effort, he could well take care of finances without having to absent himself from the parish except for special cases.

Of course, all decisions must be reserved to you, the Regional Superior, also in these matters, and you shall refer to the Sacred Congregation afterwards any problem that should come up, as also you will submit to this same Sacred Congregation all financial reports, etc....

In practice, the Provincial Treasurer could carry out his duty as follows:

- a) The financial reports sent in from the houses every two months should be studied by the Treasurer, who shall in turn report to you his observations on each one after comparing them with one another and with the preceding ones. You will examine, then, all possible remarks and decide whether in order an intervention of yours be necessary to weed out any abuse or irregularity, or a simple warning from the Treasurer be sufficient.
 - b) It is the task of the Treasurer to see to it that the directives given on finances be strictly observed and to report to you any possible failure for the opportune and necessary provisions.
 - c) The Treasurer shall also keep an eye on the administration of the Church so that no debt may be incurred without the regular permissions envisioned by the diocesan laws and by the Constitutions of the Pious Society (...).
3. A strong special recommendation I enjoin on you concerning the young priests arriving there from the seminary of Piacenza. New to the environment, with no experience of life in the ministry in places so different for language and customs from those they grew up in, they have an absolute need of a secure and fatherly guide, especially when faced with the occasions and dangers which can easily occur there. I assure you that these good young men leave Italy spiritually well prepared with the only desire to serve the Lord in the Pious Society for the salvation of souls.

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But, they need a superior, I repeat, who may be to them a good and prudent father, wisely concerned that they do not forget what they have learned in the seminary, that they be exact in the observance of their vows and religious obligations and particularly cautious in their relations with lay people, above all with persons with whom their self-restraint must be extraordinarily prudent.

4. Your particular solicitude for the young shall not allow you to neglect, I am sure, the elders, to whom the Scalabrinian Society owes so much. In that region there are missionaries, who are venerable for their age, spirit of prayer, and zeal, who have shown in difficult times so much love for the Pious Institute and its scope by founding, developing, and fruitfully directing wonderful religious and charitable institutions through years and years of tireless work. Well then, it is only right to tell these brave and good Fathers, should they need it, that their work is not finished. They should know, rather, that they have a great task ahead of them now, the task of setting themselves as good living examples of such piety, great charity, and efficient zeal so that the young may not diminish the spirit of the specific formation they received in the Seminary. And since in the houses they may encounter or will encounter older Fathers with no vows living with young priests, who have them, it will be the concern of your paternity that no difficulty may arise, and so the young may continue with joy in their resolutions and observe them, especially considering the somewhat different ways of dealing in certain things of those not bound by the vows."³²

Proposed by Fr. Properzi, Fathers Ludovico Toma and Raffaele Larcher, were named Provincial Councilors, and Fr. Marchegiani was named Provincial Treasurer.

On September 8, 1939, Fr. Properzi was confirmed as Provincial Superior for another three year term, and given Fathers Leonardo Quaglia and Ugo Cavicchi as Councilors.

³² Card. Rossi to Properzi, Rome, November 29, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 558/1).

CHAPTER VI

MISSIONS IN THE CITY AND STATE OF NEW YORK

1. Saint Joachim, New York

The twenty years between 1920 and 1940 are marked by a progressive decline of the parish of St. Joachim. Fr. Vincenzo Jannuzzi had been its pastor since 1907. In 1914 he had started devoting most of his time and activities to the creation of the future parish of St. Joseph in a still strongly Italian neighborhood, while Saint Joachim was changing into an industrial district and other immigrants, Greek especially, were gradually replacing the Italians. Consequently to this displacement of its people, but above all, because of the division of the parish in two by the creation of Saint Joseph parish, the membership of St. Joachim estimated at about 25,000 souls in 1923, dwindled to 5,000 in years that followed: of these 2,000, children included, regularly frequented the church. A Catholic school formed always its crucial concern. Fr. Jannuzzi's conviction was that a school could not possibly be opened at St. Joachim because of its closeness to that of St. James parish, which Italian children were already attending. And so in creating the new parish of St. Joseph he turned all his attention also to this matter including it in the project. On November 14, 1921, the "Dante" club was opened and inaugurated with the blessing of Msgr. Lavelle, Vicar General of New York. It counted a membership of 350 young parishioners under the direction of Fr. Jannuzzi and Cav. A. Pisani. The premises included meeting and entertainment halls, and a variety of sports facilities. Fr. Jannuzzi took charge of the new parish of St. Joseph in June 1925. Fr. Arnaldo Vanoli was appointed Pastor of St. Joachim and he had the façade of the church cleaned, the interior redecorated and enriched with a new mosaic-laced baptismal font. The financial state of the parish continued in the red, however, for a pending debt of \$137,000.00, contracted in building the new church of St. Joseph and for poor administration.

Fr. Tarcisio Prevedello was named Pastor of St. Joachim on September 12, 1935, and took possession of it on October 15. With the ardor of his young years that marked his style, he gave new impulse to parochial societies, catechism classes, and social activities, which he entrusted to a permanent committee.

In view of the 50th anniversary of the parish that was to occur in 1938, he had the church redecorated by artist Anthony D'Ambrosio, the organ restored, and its floor covered with a rubber carpet. Restoration works were carried on through the basement and the rectory. Jubilee festivities lasted from November 3 to 7, with Msgr. Stephen Donahue, Administrator of the Archdiocese of New York, presiding. The parish, though, had grown still smaller. By this time it hardly had a membership of 2,000 people. In 1891 it had recorded 1,151

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baptisms, but only 82 in 1937; there were 760 confirmations in 1921, but just 115 in 1936.

In early 1939 Fr. Tarcisio Prevedello was transferred to the parish of St. Joseph while Fr. Giuseppe Bolzan was called to succeed him at St. Joachim. This is what he reports on the situation of the parish:

"In the place where I am at I have a hard time holding the young in the parish because, while the aging parishioners pass away one by one, these, the majority of them, leave, that is, they move out as soon as they get married. A ray of hope still shines for the future of this parish: restoration works have begun on several buildings right here across from the church, and there is the prospect that the Italian families may return, if only to forestall the possibility that Spaniards, Greeks, or worse yet, the Chinese may begin moving in (...). To attract children to Mass and Catechism, we purchased a movie projector (...). This way we succeeded in increasing their number of about 40 to more than 150. As long as they can get something for nothing they come, otherwise we would remain with an empty church. And more so because we have several Protestant institutions close by that do everything possible to draw the young. They, too, every Sunday afternoon offer a movie for free, adding an ice cream, besides, or some dresses for the girls; and so it may well be that children who, perhaps, have been at Mass in the morning, go to the Protestants in the afternoon (...).

The main fault lies with their parents who, as ignorant as they are, have very little understanding of the danger, and even when they do understand it is always in their own way! It is certainly difficult for us to compete with Protestants, because we cannot dispose of means such as they have."¹

2. Saint Joseph, New York

The parish of St. Joseph, New York, was officially established in 1925, but its beginnings go back to 1908 when Fr. Jannuzzi, Pastor of St. Joachim, opened a mission chapel on Catherine Slip. Let us hear the story from the missionary's pen himself:

"In 1908, Fr. V. Jannuzzi (...) discovered that not even one block away from St. Joachim a certain Fr. De Ponte, from the Diocese of Nola, was ministering to Italians in the basement of the church of St. James the Apostle.

He certainly had the consent to do so from the pastor, Monsignor James B. Curry, D.D. This had been going on since 1904. But to do so lawfully, permission was needed from the closest pastor, on whom the Italians of the district depended, and the authorization of the Ordinary of the diocese. These two essential conditions were lacking, and so, strong on his own rights and concerned over the fact that the very existence of St. Joachim was being undermined, in February 1908, Fr. Jannuzzi brought formal complaint and objection against opening the basement of St. James for worship by Italians. The then Archbishop J.M. Farley of New York upheld his claim and fixed the date for a special meeting with the pastors of both St. Joachim and St. James, and both attended it.

¹ J. Bolzan to Clerics of Piacenza, New York, April 21, 1939 (Arch. G.S., 665/14).

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Fr. Jannuzzi was accompanied by trustees Cav. Dr. Anthony Pisani and Mr. J.B. Perazzo, an employee of C. Bacigalupo on Mulberry Street. The problem was discussed and evaluated in the presence of the Archbishop from both points of view and the reasons brought forth by Fr. Jannuzzi prevailed. He took charge of St. James' basement a week later, and was introduced to the Italians of that district by its pastor, Fr. Curry, with flattering words.²

Fr. Jannuzzi took care of the needs of those souls, since it had been decided to open a new mission for them in a suitable location. The Archbishop authorized him to do so and a chapel was in fact officially dedicated on June 24, 1908, to replace the basement of St. James.

A small house for the new mission was purchased from a certain Matthew Garone at 18 Catherine Slip for \$13,500.00. It was appropriately and conveniently adapted for the immediate urgent needs with furnishings and pews for \$3,000.00. The new chapel, titled to St. Rocco, was opened for worship on June 24, the feast of St. John the Baptist, in honor of the Founder of the Institute of St. Charles. The building was blessed by the Vicar General of the Archdiocese, the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Edwards, Pastor of St. Joseph on Sixth Avenue. The first solemn Mass was sung by the then Provincial Superior, Fr. Anthony Demo, Pastor of Our Lady of Pompeii on Bleecker St.; Fr. Pio Parolin, from the seminary of Piacenza, assistant of the Provincial, he gave the inaugural address; the Rev. Fathers Cangiano and Giuseppe Cardinale of St. Joachim, assisted the celebrant; Fr. Jannuzzi played host to the guests. These were quite a few: among them were: the pastor of St. James; the Mott St. pastor, Fr. Ernesto Coppo; the pastors of St. Theresa and of the Precious Blood, and several others, together with a large gathering of people.

For history's sake, I deem it proper to point out that the chapel was named after St. Rocco because in moving out of St. James' basement it was necessary to take along all furnishings supplied by the Italians including a statue of St. Rocco, which, on account of strange rivalries between the mutual Society of St. Rocco and the Church of St. Joachim, had to be forcibly taken away from there. The Society and the people had decided to place this much venerated statue in the church of St. James, but the pastor refused to do so though allowing them

² In a New York newspaper we read what took place that morning in the Church of St. James: "A few days ago, Archbishop Farley decided to cut the expenditures of the parish by assigning the Italian group of the church of Saint James to that of Saint Joachim, located two blocks away on Roosevelt Street. This left Father De Ponte without an assignment. By Saturday a sense of discontent had spread around the parish for what had happened, and there were many complaints of disapproval. The parish requested the intervention of the Oak Street police station, and the Lieutenant sent two policemen there. On Sunday morning a great crowd of people gathered in church for the 6:30 mass and Fr. Curry presented to them Fr. Janucci (Jannucci), of St. Joachim's, as their new pastor. There was an immediate uproar: 'De Ponte! We want De Ponte! Away with Janucci!' - the people shouted. At the same time, a dozen, or more, men burst up to the altar where the two priests were standing. Some say that a woman jumped over the railing and struck Father Curry. The priest did not budge but raised his voice and said: 'It is an order of the Archbishop. I am the pastor of this church and I will obey it Quiet down!' Women were the great majority of that assembly. Overcome with panic, all ran out of the church. With the help of police, order was finally restored. News of the incident spread quickly, and at the other masses many of the singers were so nervous that they had to leave the choir. Fr. DePonte felt very bad when he heard that his former parishioners had rebelled at his removal. 'I have heard about the demonstrations of Sunday morning' - he said - 'and I am deeply disgusted over the incident that took place. I wish to assure everybody, Father Curry included, that I did not instigate it in any way whatsoever. I was at home (...)' It is generally rumored in the neighborhood that Father has received letters marked by the 'Black Hand' ('Mano Nera'), threatening death if he does not return the shepherd to his flock. The pastor refused to confirm or deny such rumors (...). Father Janucci, who is replacing Fr. DePonte, has stated: 'There was no demonstration Sunday morning, and both parties are in agreement about the change. All is well.'" ("Almost a Riot at the Altar; Courageous Pastor Stems Mob", New York American, March 10, 1908).

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the use of the basement.

*Fr. Jannuzzi had served the Mission of St. Rocco for six years before he could purchase from Federico Maggio the property at 64 Catherine Street for \$19,500.00. He had his mind set on buying that place from the very beginning, but due to innumerable circumstances, it was not possible to have it. Finally his dream became a reality, and after properly adapting its use for church, he transferred the mission of St. Rocco from 18 Catherine Slip to 64 Catherine Street changing its title to that of St. Joseph, which was officially approved by the diocese. On behalf of Card. Farley, Msgr. Michael J. Lavelle, Vicar General, blessed the mission and its furnishing on July 4, 1914."*³

In the publication commemorating the event, published on June 28, 1925, date of inauguration of St. Joseph's church and school, we can read of the various steps in the project undertaken by Fr. Jannuzzi:

"It is in 1917 that Fr. Jannuzzi's decision materializes to have a piece of land big enough on which to build combination structure of a school and church, which had been the first of his dreams. And so he buys the property at the corner of Monroe and Catherine Streets (...). His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop approves the project presented by the Missionary, who immediately creates and sets in motion the needed apparatus. In the young architect Matteo Guglielmo Del Gaudio he finds an affectionate and unselfish collaborator (...). In his worries over this arduous enterprise Fr. Jannuzzi is assisted by Attorney Carlo Zerbarini, who provides him with legal assistance free of charge, and by the trustees Dr. Anthony Pisani and Mr. John B. Perazzo. He has other fervent and enthusiastic collaborators in Fathers Giuseppe D'Andrea, Carlo Delbecchi, and Carlo Ronci, his present assistants at the new mission.

On December 25, 1923, the cornerstone was laid and blessed by His Eminence Cardinal Hayes. A campaign was then launched to raise the funds needed for the construction which has amounted so far to \$400,000.00. A committee of volunteers was formed with the title, "Founding Society of St. Joseph's Italian-American School".

This campaign began on the evening of June 14, 1924, with a banquet on the huge transatlantic "*Diulio*", hosted by the ship's captain, Cav. Angelo Ruspini, New York's representative for the Italian General Shipping Co. The banquet was presided by his honor Judge Freschi. The sum of \$27,800.00 was pledged from among the 160 guests present that evening. They represented the most generous subscription ever signed by Italians in America in such a short time for an educational institution of the Church, a historical event in the life of the colonies, which even non-Italians admired.

Another banquet was held in honor of Fr. Jannuzzi and his collaborating fund-raisers aboard the magnificent transatlantic "*Conte Rosso*" by the generosity of the "Lloyd Sabauda" through the services of its representative in New York, Cav. Uff. Dr. Meriggio Serrati and of the captain of the ship, Mr. Tullio Cignoni. The 1924 campaign brought in over \$80,000.00.

The 1925 drive - launched to provide the furnishings needed for the school - marked its first event on the evening of May 21 with a banquet in "Cardinal Hayes Hall" of the still incomplete school building. It was presided over by popular Mr. Michael Santangelo at whose urgings the invited guests pledged more than \$6,000.00. This drive had that far produced \$25,000.00. Both campaigns combined, had thus grossed \$105,000.00.

At this point we can boast:

- a) A church: large, beautiful, bright, well furnished; altars, rails, Carrara marble

³ Jannuzzi's "Note" (Provinc. Arch., New York).

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statues; comfortable pews with sitting capacity for 1,100 people; equipped with a powerful electric lighting system.

- b) Classrooms: 18 of them, spacious, airy, bright with sunlight; they can well accommodate some 1,200 students; a kindergarten and a terrace for after school programs.
- c) Recreation rooms: there will be several of them, and a gymnasium for the youth of the parish.
- d) The rectory for the priests serving the parish.

There still remain the organ, the school desks for 1,200 pupils; the equipment for the gymnasium, the furnishings for the auditorium or meeting hall; the stained-glass windows for the church; and the twin towers to be built at either side of church's front, of which only the steel framework is now extant."⁴

In the same book, Fr. Jannuzzi explains the reasons for a new parish within the territory of St. Joachim:

"The territory of St. Joachim parish extends from the old Brooklyn Bridge to the new one on Canal Street. There were, at one time, about 25,000 to 30,000 Italians; only half that number is left today. The neighborhood benefitted from the improvements brought about by the city's demolition plans; of modest means at first, as soon as our families became richer and more prosperous, they moved in the new apartments, which, for being healthy and comfortable, exerted a greater attraction. With the exodus of the wealthy, St. Joachim lost territory and parishioners. The eastern end of the parish, however, did not undergo great building changes because of the peculiar structure of the region on the river banks by the bridge, precisely the section inhabited almost entirely by the good immigrants from Sicily, who steadily give preeminent and convincing proofs of the sincerity of their character, faith, and family and civic virtues, all sons of the sunny island, always the object of unfair prejudices on the part of those who do not know or understand them, nor care to.

Having the need risen to preserve to the Catholic faith (...) soul and character, spirit and action of immigrants and their children, prey to an endless process of denationalization threatening at its roots the very identity of the Italian exiles, the idea took hold of intensifying the religious and educational effort of the parish of St. Joachim that was slowly reaching out to the compact mass of Italians living in the district."⁵

In early 1926 the Regional Superior had sent in the following report on the situation of the parish:

*"Fr. Jannuzzi is quite capable of taking care of its financial needs, but the church has great necessity of spiritual activities; people's attendance is low, not through any fault of the Fathers, who do all they can, but because the parishioners from Sicily in greatest part, have long lived away from the church, and so they need constant care and a zealous priest totally devoted, full time, exclusively to pastoral work. Fr. Pio Parolin could very well be the man for the job."*⁶

Fr. Parolin was, in fact, assigned to the parish of St. Joseph in April 1926. The parish report of 1930 shows a membership of 8,000, of whom only 25%, however, attended the church regularly. The school had 300 students; the kindergarten, directed by the Sister Apostles of the Sacred Heart, was

⁴ "Ricordo della festa inaugurale del Tempio e Scuola Italiana della Parrocchia di San Giuseppe (N.Y. 1925).

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ L. Quaglia to Card. DeLai, New Haven, January 19, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 556/2).

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frequented by 97 children.

These few statistics lead one to understand how even the parish of St. Joseph seemed to be following the fate of St. Joachim: a large portion of Italians had moved elsewhere and the parish had already lost much of its importance.

Naturally, finances too suffered the consequences of the situation and no one could figure out how to possibly extinguish or reduce the heavy debt weighing on the church.

After thirty years of hard work, Fr. Jannuzzi began feeling tired and discouraged.

In 1931 he asked to be relieved; his resignation was not accepted for lack of personnel, but he was made to understand, at the same time, that he was expected to conduct a more diligent and accurate administration.

He answered to one of these warnings in May 1934:

"This mission, Eminence, is one of the most important we have, and while requiring the work of six missionaries, by God's favor, it has actually only three of them besides good Fr. Antonio Livolsi, who is free to say Mass and hear confessions for us only on certain days of the week. On me, the founder of this parish, rests the tremendous responsibility of attending to everything and to all each single day, month after month; this has entailed so many exhausting years of hard work that I feel a broken man (...). I have a parish alive with the ferments of a full growth of religious life. It is a mission of ours, it must be well organized, therefore, in all aspects: programs for young workers, a grievance office to meet the many and overwhelming needs of all kinds of these people of ours; and as if this were not enough, I must also attend to the material buildings for which wise provisions are required, and more so on account of the strained circumstances of our time."⁷

Attempts at replacing Fr. Jannuzzi with a younger man in 1934 and 1935 failed because of the diocesan chancery's refusal, as it did not want young priests as pastors, especially in the city of New York.

In September 1936, Fr. Jannuzzi decided at last to return to Italy, and the Consistorial Congregation ordered the Provincial Superior, Fr. Nazareno Properzi, to present to the chancery Fr. Raffaele Larcher as the new pastor, and Fathers Giuseppe Bolzan and Giovanni Zanon as his assistants. The chancery, instead, appointed him administrator of St. Joseph for one year "on a trial basis". Actually, he carried out all duties of a pastor until the end of 1938, and completed the construction and decoration of the church.

He was succeeded in January 1939 by Fr. Tarcisio Prevedello, who was replaced in turn by Fr. Carlo Celotto in 1940. The reasons for these frequent changes are to be sought in the financial strictures of the parish which remained still very serious.

⁷ V. Jannuzzi to Card. Rossi, New York, May 4, 1934 (Arch. G.S., 584/2).

3. Our Lady of Pompeii, New York City

It grew considerably in its first years, passing from 10.000 to 30.000 souls, but it lost some seven to eight thousands of them in those immediately following World War I; it had between 22,000 or 24,000 members in 1924.

Unfortunately, there was no location, and none could be found where to build a parochial school proportionate to the number of children in the parish. Sunday school classes were conducted by the Christian Brothers with the help of some seventy catechists; something that gives us an idea of the great need for a school, and more so on account of the Protestant institutions being established in the neighborhood. Even the kindergarten directed by the Pallottine Sisters was very small; in fact, only seventy children attended it. As recorded in the Apostolic Visitation, the parish was found in need of a revival, of a more dynamic leadership, and of a wiser administration. The Sacred Consistorial Congregation had decided, therefore, to change the pastor, Fr. Anthony Demo, who had been heading it for the preceding twenty five years; but the Regional Superior, Fr. Quaglia pleaded for a suspension of the order:

*"His removal at the present time would not benefit either the Institute or the greater good of souls (...). The parish is to undergo certain transformations: the city of New York is planning to purchase this property with the intent to build a new road. A new church should then be raised elsewhere. I am informed that Fr. Demo is making plans for an intensive drive to collect funds to make important improvements to the church, if not quite to build a new one, and to set aside a special fund for the school. Considering his name and popularity, no one else could do all this better than Fr. Demo."*⁸

Fr. Demo himself wrote to Cardinal DeLai in February 1925:

"There is need to give the parish a new life but I cannot do so until the help I am anxiously waiting for is given me by the generosity of Your Eminence.

*Because of topographic changes carried out by the city, I am now forced to start working again on the construction of the church and rectory; and I do not like the parish to remain without a school. Eminence, I do not seek anything but your moral support."*⁹

The Cardinal answered:

*"Your Paternity speaks also of new plans for church and rectory: they shall have to be opportunely and dutifully studied as the Statutes require. As to the school to be opened close to the church, the idea is, no doubt, praiseworthy; but this Sacred Congregation cannot help wondering - or dispensing itself from asking for an explanation - at the fact that in twenty four years of ministry you should only now discover the need for initiating an institution of such a vital importance for the good of souls and the progress of religion."*¹⁰

In his monograph on the parish of Our Lady of Pompei, Fr. Constantino Sassi says:

"In 1925 the city began works on a new section of subways: a line that was to have

⁸ L. Quaglia to Card. DeLai, New Haven, January 5, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 583/6).

⁹ A. Demo to Card. DeLai, New York, February 24, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 583/7).

¹⁰ Card. DeLai to Demo, Rome, March 20, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 583/7).

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two different directions to be known as Eighth and Sixth Avenue subways.

The latter would run underground right through the area on which church and rectory of Our Lady of Pompeii stood.

At the news of the project's approval and of the decision to demolish the church, one cannot express in words the sorrow of priests and people at the thought that their worship center of some thirty years was doomed. But, the decision was final, and a new church became indispensable. Fr. Demo found himself face to face with a tough challenge. How to provide a new church now that all buildings around were crowded with people? There remained only one solution! He would purchase the existing homes no matter what their price! On this basis, the most appropriate location appeared to be a place only a block away from the church at the head of Bleecker Street, on the corner of Carmine and Leroy Streets. It involved some ten homes which, though so modest, cost him one more than the other! The contract for their expropriation was signed for the total sum of \$300,000.00. Demolition work and the laying of the foundations began in March 1926. The cornerstone was solemnly blessed by Msgr. Michael Lavelle, Rector of the Cathedral, on behalf of the Cardinal of New York on October 3, 1926, the Feast of the Holy Rosary, titular of the church.

Construction works were progressing beautifully, but who was to foot the enormous bill? Fr. Demo organized a great banquet at the Pennsylvania Hotel on February 10, 1926 (...). Msgr. Lavelle represented the Cardinal Archbishop of New York (...). Attorney J.J. Freschi was then introduced who made everyone understand that there was need of sums written in checks or issued from bank accounts if costs were to be met.

All took the hint and a contest was on for the signing of pledges. Cav. Uff. Margarella headed the list for \$2,000.00, and in less than an hour \$39,000.00 were pledged, which increased afterwards to \$40,000.00, following a pep talk by John B. Perazzo, one of the church's trustees (...)

The good example of the notables served as a spur for the parishioners to contribute according to their means. Each family gave its more or less generous offering so that the sum collected amongst parishioners combined with the proceeds from the banquet amounted to \$150,000.00. The administration of the church added another \$100,000.00 and the city paid an indemnity of \$265,000.00 for the expropriation of the church. The total of over half a million dollars represented only half the cost for the construction of the new imposing assembly of buildings, amounting to the total of \$1,075,000.00. The other half represented exactly the debt that as of that time began to bear heavily on the church. Half a million dollars! A colossal sum, an enormous debt; dreadful! But, so were also great and inestimable the benefits thus obtained: a church admired by all, a large school such as the parish needs demanded, and a rectory for the priests (...).

As of May 1927 works had not been quite completed, but the basement was ready for celebrating Mass (...). The first solemn Mass was sung in the upper church on Christmas night to the immense joy of the people (...). This temple has been defined as the most elegant and classical sacred monument amongst the churches of the Italian colony of New York. It is the work of Architect Matteo Del Gaudio, planned and directed personally when church, school, and rectory were under construction. The dedication of the church took place on October 17, 1928. Attended also by His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop Patrick J. Hayes, the grandiose celebration was reported by the American press of all shades (...).

After the church, came the school (...). As I write I have here under my eyes a photograph of the celebration held in this parish on September 3, 1930, for the blessing and opening of the school: Fr. Demo, with cape on, stands in the middle with Fr. Dotto, the deacon, at his right, and Fr. Ronci at his left (...).

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On the historic date of the dedication of the school a great void was filled. After forty years of existence, the parish of Our Lady of Pompeii had finally its own school, the constant dream of all parishioners. Attached to the church, with 18 classrooms, spacious and bright, furnished according to all modern hygienic and educational regulations, on the day of its dedication, the school was opened for visitation by the people. The Zelatrices (the Sister Apostles) of the Sacred Heart, also present at the celebration, form the teaching staff (...); they have their living quarters and private chapel on the top floor of the building (...). In this parish they have their home and run a school for 700 students (...).

Amounting to some half a million dollars, the debt entailed payment of \$20,000.00 a year in interest. A sum quite heavy even for any rich parish, which Our Lady of Pompeii was not. Its people, besides, began decreasing fast; before the demolition of the buildings for the subway, the parish boasted some twenty thousand people, but they kept diminishing since, because many homes of the surrounding area were torn down and many families that had gained better financial conditions were moving out to other places where they had bought their new homes. In Fr. Demo's report of 1928, written on the occasion of the dedication of the new church the parish is said to have a membership of 14,000 people. Still, Fr. Demo continued to pay interest on each due date."¹¹

His punctuality in paying the interest evidently was not enough to heal the financial situation, and so in August 1933 the parish came under the direction of the Regional Superior, Fr. Marchegiani. Fr. Demo left for Italy, however, only on October 28. In the same month of 1935 he returned to the Parish of Our Lady of Pompeii with the title of house treasurer. He died almost suddenly on January 2, 1936, following an attack of angina pectoris. In 1940, Mayor Fiorello La Guardia named the square by the Church of Our Lady of Pompeii after Fr. Demo. Fr. Marchegiani brought some improvements into the administration and had the apse decorated with a large fresco (the battle of Lepanto). But, finances were finally put back in order only under the tenure of Fr. Ugo Cavicchi, who took possession of the parish on November 23, 1937, and succeeded in paying \$40,000.00 a year on the capital. He had also the decoration of the church brought to completion by Professor D'Ambrosio and inaugurated on May 8, 1939 with Fr. Francesco Tironola presiding.

4. The Society of St. Raphael in New York is discontinued.

The activities of the Society of St. Raphael, devoted to assisting immigrants at the port of entry in New York, ceased altogether in 1923. Its history was closely tied up with that of the Parish of Our Lady of Pompeii. As to its early period (1891-1896), when Fr. Bandini was in charge, we have referred our readers to the exhaustive essay of Fr. Antonio Perotti: "*La Società Italiana di fronte alle Migrazioni di Massa*".¹²

Fr. Bandini's successor in the parish of Our Lady of Pompeii, Fr. Francesco Zaboglio, continued his best in providing assistance at the port. From a report of 1888-1889, we gather that the "*Barge Office*" had given assistance to 2,486 immigrants; 254 of them were hosted at the residence of the missionaries at

¹¹ C. Sassi, Parrocchia della Madonna di Pompei in New York (Marino, 1946, pp. 63-74).

¹² Cfr. M. Francesconi, "History of the Scalabrinian Congregation", Vol. II, (Rome, 1973).

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217 Bleecker Street, and a job was found for 241.¹³

Assistance at the port was organized in 1900. On January 24 of that year, the Provincial Superior, Fr. James Gambera, sent out to all confreres a circular letter on the subject:

"The Society of St. Raphael for the protection of our emigrants at the port of New York has now become more necessary, important, and useful. As the "Barge Office" of the Italian government has been closed by the Federal Government, it should now be the concern of the Society of Saint Raphael to be present there to carry on the charitable task of protecting, counselling, directing, and saving so many of our fellow countrymen. In fact, the excessive demands of the laws, their inability to explain and defend themselves and the cruel greed of unscrupulous migration agents cause them sometimes to fall victims to ruin or to immediate repatriation in despair for their future.

The Chief of Police himself is convinced of the need of this society for the great number of Italian immigrants, and he turned to Archbishop Corrigan pleading with him to so provide that the Society of Saint Raphael may begin active and regular service at the port not just by engaging the offices of a conscientious salaried agent, but by assigning to it a priest as well, who should devote himself exclusively to this task. Naturally, His Excellency inquired of me whether I could provide an agent with a steady monthly salary as required by law, and a priest to take care of the daily ordinary assistance, of the regular administration, and of statistics.

You are well aware, Rev. Fathers, that the protection of emigrants is the duty demanded by the spirit of our Institute: the Society of St. Raphael is an essential part of our mission; we must do, therefore, what we can, not just to keep it alive, but to give it also a greater impulse so that it may ever better fulfill its beneficial, holy and patriotic mission, in these present circumstances especially. In the meanwhile, an agent and a church representative have been provisionally assigned to the job.

I wrote to His Excellency Bishop Scalabrini explaining to him the present situation, and I asked for Fr. Maldotti. Of you, Rev. Fathers, I do not ask but a modest monthly contribution which cannot be less than \$3.00, however, if we want to insure a legal salary and provide for the office expenses. Soon to be elected, a special committee will launch an appeal to the charity of others, but we must be the first to support the Society of Saint Raphael, the beloved daughter of our Congregation.

It would be indeed a real shame and sorrow for us, if we should lose this society!"¹⁴

Bishop Scalabrini petitioned the Italian Government to help reestablish the Society of St. Raphael by securing a salary for an agent who should also serve as the representative of the Italian Consulate, as he could not carry on this task directly any longer because of the recent American law ordering all port agencies of foreign governments to shut down and only allowing the presence there of non-profit charitable societies. Bishop Scalabrini got in touch with the

¹³ "Società Italiana di San Raffaele. Rendiconto dell'opera prestata dalla Società negli anni 1898 e 1899". (Arch. G.S., 110/11).

¹⁴ Gambera, Circular Letter of January 24, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 110/12).

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minister of Foreign Affairs, Marquis Emilio Visconti-Venosta, through Prof. Angelo Scalabrini (his brother), General Inspector of Italian schools in foreign countries, who sent back to the Bishop the following answer on February 26, 1900:

"In a few days you will receive an official letter from the Minister about the setting up of an office for your Missionaries at the port of New York. For your information, I set the record straight for you on the precedents.

As I told you before, I presented to the Minister a memorandum saying that your missionaries had been invited to open an office at the port but that before giving a definite answer, the Bishop of Piacenza wanted to know whether:

- 1) the project of the missionaries might not interfere, perhaps, with the action of government officials;*
- 2) the plan of the missionaries was well accepted.*

The memorandum was viewed as a most welcome act of fine diplomacy and a letter was immediately dispatched to the Italian ambassador (in Washington) to find out at what point the negotiations stood and how he felt about your proposal. The ambassador cabled back praising and approving it; and so you will receive an official document from the ministry with concrete proposals for setting up at the port a mission, supported, of course, by the Italian Foreign Ministry. It would serve as an intermediary link between the already existing center that could then be transformed into an employment labor office, and the immigrants.

As you see, it is an important project both in itself and in view of what can be derived of it. In fact, the new law would consent us to establish many labor offices, and your missionaries could be a great help and their task made easier because the new offices will benefit of the funds realized from the tax on transportation of migrants."¹⁵

The foreign Minister Visconti-Venosta wrote in fact to Bishop Scalabrini on the March 7, 1900:

"Cav. Angelo, your brother, has forwarded to me on your behalf a letter addressed to you last January by the Superior of the "Piacenza Missions" in the United States about the services the Society of St. Raphael could still offer in New York for our unfortunate countrymen, considering especially that the "American Immigration Commissariat" would readily welcome the presence of a missionary at the "Barge Office" and at Ellis Island as well, I presume, as soon as the buildings destroyed by fire a few years ago will be reconstructed.

In thanking Your Excellency for your kind message, I hasten to inform you that I deemed it proper to consult the Royal Ambassador in Washington on the opportunity of combining the activities of a missionary with those of the Office of the Italian Government directed by Cav. Egisto Rossi and recently transferred from the "Barge Office" to 17 State Street in New York.

It is clear, in fact, that these activities would attain great immediacy and effectiveness if immigrants directed to New York or passing through it, were referred by the missionary to the Italian Office, which could eventually completed also with an employment office. Emigrants would thus avoid falling

¹⁵ A. Scalabrini to Bishop Scalabrini, Rome, February 26, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 110/11).

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prey to the control and the schemes of dishonest profiteers that seek, as all know, to exploit and swindle them by expedients of all kinds. The Royal Ambassador is also convinced that great benefits would derive from the said union of forces; however, I urgently ask of Your Excellency to let me know whether you deem it possible for the missionary of the Society of St. Raphael at your dependence, and Cav. Egidio Rossi, dependent on the Royal Consul of New York, to work together in perfect harmony in the interest of Italian immigration to the U.S.A.

Should Your Excellency be in agreement, as I hope, with these ideas and proposals, this Ministry would willingly contribute to the financial needs, so that the missionary may carry out the duties entrusted to him by Your Excellency."¹⁶

The Bishop of Piacenza answered:

"I have particularly very much at heart the fate of our unfortunate emigrants and I am in constant anguish over it. Your Excellency can very well imagine, therefore, how dearly I welcomed your most appreciated letter of the 7th of this month. The ideas you were pleased to express to me and the proposals you made could not be wiser or more opportune. When my missionaries took up residence in New York twelve years ago, they soon realized the great need of assisting these unfortunate ones, and they readily offered their services to this scope but were soon forced to withdraw when our government sent there for this purpose its own public officials.

Through the services of the Archbishop of that city, said missionaries have already been invited there once again several months ago but have accepted on a temporary basis, pending my instructions.

As expected, I held a neutral position, not wishing to do anything that might seem in any way contrary to the national government. However, sure now that your plans can very well be carried out, to the great benefit of our emigrants, I will write immediately today to the superior of the "Piacenza Missions" in New York inviting him to definitely accept this hard but charitable task, so that your noble desires, which are also mine, may be at once satisfied.

Of course, it would be providential indeed if we had there an Italian center of our own. We tried to do so years ago using the house of the missionaries themselves as a shelter for emigrants, but the usual lack of means forced us to abandon the project, especially considering that the government had provided, as I said before, with its own officials.

Should Your Excellency succeed, as I hope, in having the wise law on emigration passed and in giving a substantial help to the missionaries, this serious problem will be finally solved, the evils afflicting Italian emigration will cease, in part at least, and Your Excellency will have built himself a monument."¹⁷

Fr. Gambera continued negotiating, in the meanwhile, in line with instructions from Bishop Scalabrini and so reported on April 2:

"I discussed the matter with our missionaries residing in New York and all approved the proposal to open together with Government Officials a center for the protection of our immigrants, especially in consideration of the financial help we are in need of in this task.

¹⁶ E. Visconti-Venosta to Scalabrini, Rome, March 7, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 110/11).

¹⁷ Scalabrini to Visconti-Venosta, Piacenza, March 10, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 110/11).

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The difficulty of the Archbishop now is finding an able, intelligent, active, practical missionary fit for this important job. He does not consider Fr. Zaboglio to be the man because of insufficient energy, weak determination, and slow action. He had already appointed a Salesian who still attends the "Barge Office". And so, we must send there right away, for the time being at least, Fr. Teofilo (Glesaz): he will go through the needed procedures on the spot.

I deemed it opportune to call on the Ambassador (Fava) in Washington. Though bed ridden with influenza, he granted me immediate audience with expressions of great appreciation for my visit, only lamenting my not doing so much sooner. He said it was his most vivid desire of many years to join the two offices together, and now he is very happy to find us favorable to the union. He told me he would immediately write to the Foreign Minister in support of the proposal and to solicit a subsidy.

The Society of St. Raphael would be entrusted with the main and practically most useful part of the task, that is, its presence at the "Barge Office" first, and, later on, when the new buildings will be ready on the Island, also with an office of its own.

As to the actual procedures for harmonizing the two services, they will have to be discussed and agreed upon by Your Excellency and the Royal Minister. I would only point out that the Society of Saint Raphael should have a certain degree of autonomy. Should the Commissar find out, in fact, that the Society operates in total dependence from and with the financial support of the government, I am afraid it might be denied the special privilege of free access to the "Barge Office", where no interference of any foreign government is admitted. The Society of St. Raphael would need three men here, a missionary, an agent, and an assistant.

Should the government allocate a monthly subsidy of \$200.00, not only could it be possible to provide a salary for the personnel - that would otherwise be regarded at variance with the law, and therefore excluded on suspicion of taking money from emigrants, also illegal - (an investigation is now underway on the Vice Commissar and other employees) - but an apartment of several rooms could be rented as well, where to shelter and feed in most urgent cases those emigrants who must wait for money, responses, information, etc... from relatives dispersed in distant states of this Federation.

The most serious cases were hosted until now in our mission houses, but we cannot dispose of a sufficient number of rooms; besides, it is not expedient for the residences of the priests. On the other hand, it would certainly be a holy solution if the government should intend and wish to build or buy a house for sheltering our poor emigrants. To the government's office would belong the high patronage, the correspondence, remittances, etc. It would be providential if an employment office were also opened to help protect them from the deceptions of bosses, etc. The important thing is that the government helps us financially and our Institute will always be ready.

Our missions are poor and burdened with other serious responsibility, unable therefore to provide salaries for the agent and his assistants."¹⁸

Negotiations with the government were continued in Rome by Fr. Zaboglio who

¹⁸ Gambera to Scalabrini, Boston, April 2, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 110/12).

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sent the following report to Bishop Scalabrini on June 9:

"I deem it my duty to inform you, though somewhat belatedly, about my meeting with Undersecretary Fusinato attended also by his chief assistant Cav. Pelucchi (...). Both said that: they believe to be now in a position to grant us about \$90.00 or \$100.00 a month, \$60 for the agent's salary, and the rest for the missionary in charge of the mission; have hopes to secure allocation for another sum of money for the hostel where to shelter emigrants. And this is all as to the funds the government intends to grant, about which I think you have already been officially informed."¹⁹

As Bishop Scalabrini reported to the foreign minister, Fr. Gambera had decided in the meantime to leave for Italy and discuss there the matter in person:

"I have received your most kind letter of July 31; but my dismay at the revolting crime of Monza and my concern over the death and funeral of our King prevented me from attending earlier to this duty of mine. Be pleased to accept my apology. With letter of July 5, the Superior of my missions in North America has informed me of his intention to come to Italy and discuss here several matters concerning the missions and to see once more his aging mother. Among other things this is what he says: 'As to the Society of St. Raphael, everything will be settled before my leaving for Italy with the assistance of Msgr. Ferrante, secretary of the Archbishop.'"

Should he actually find it possible to come to Italy, he will be here shortly and he will have then more detailed and exact information to report to the ministry. If not, he will write.

In regard to the lay agent, there is no objection on the part of the missionaries to avail themselves of a person who has already been an employee of the Italian Office before, but some difficulties may well be raised by the American members of the Society of St. Raphael and by officials of the government of that Republic.

In the few days of the visit here of Archbishop Corrigan of New York I could perceive the deep dislike of the people of that Republic for any interference of European countries in matters that pertain to their national territory. Now, should they see an unknown person employed in a government office they might suspect that after being chased out by the front we may not try to get in through the back door.

Just the same, I will send a copy of your letter to Fr. Gambera in case he should not come, and in his wisdom and prudence he, an expert in the matter, will be able to furnish us precious advice on this project. My opinion is that we should not be too hasty because jealousies, though unjustified, are many and strong there. To me, it would be better if we decided to wait still a few more weeks before signing the deal, and so we may settle it on a solid and lasting basis."²⁰

Fr. Gambera was introduced to the Foreign Minister by Bishop Scalabrini with letter of August 30, 1900.²¹

He was assured that the Ministry would start with placing on the payroll one or two agents, and grant later on an annual subsidy to the Society of St. Raphael.

¹⁹ Zaboglio to Scalabrini, Rome, June 9, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 110/11).

²⁰ Scalabrini to Visconti-Venosta, draft of August, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 110/11).

²¹ Scalabrini to Visconti-Venosta, Piacenza, August 30, 1900, draft (Arch. G.S., 110/11).

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On his return to America, Fr. Gambera immediately rented a house at 219 Bleecker Street:

"The hostel is ready. It stands close to the residence of the missionaries on Bleecker Street. An excellent location for its closeness to the church and for easy supervision. Besides the kitchen, a dining hall, an office, and a lounge, there is also room for 10 or 12 beds. It rents for \$55.00 a month.

I called on Mr. Branca, the Consul General, who pledged his support. Yesterday he informed me that the Italian Foreign Ministry had cabled granting permission to transfer an employee of his, an able and honest young man, to serving in the Society of St. Raphael as its agent while continuing to pay him the monthly salary of \$80.00.

I feel sure that, also in keeping with its promises, the ministry will allocate other grants for the Society of Saint Raphael to pay rents and for other expenditures, and so relieve the missions of this burden. The Fathers will offer their services for free, and this should be enough. I personally made all these procedures known to Archbishop Corrigan, whose consent and approval are indispensable for me to act as president of the Society and obtain entry to Emigration Offices.

And now we have agent, subsidy, and house, but no priest as yet. For a few weeks I will volunteer this service myself, also in view of giving the Society a good start, but I will not be able to continue on it."²²

In fact, in no position to relinquish the direction of the parish of Sacred Heart in Boston, thus wrote Fr. Gambera to Bishop Scalabrini on April 21, 1901:

"For five weeks now, I am personally performing this task at Ellis Island, leaving Boston on Sunday evening and returning on Friday night, as I could not possibly abandon the mission of Boston or provide substitutes for it. It's a hard life. I go without food or sleep, and spend seven or eight hours a day in the midst of sacks containing the miserable belongings of our emigrants. It is a great work of charity."²³

He had to carry on like this, actually, until December, 1901.

Bishop Scalabrini in person blessed the house of Saint Raphael at Bleecker St. on August 7 of the same year. On that occasion he met an Italian banker who wrote him afterwards a letter from which we can get an idea of the conditions of many Italians from the moment they set foot in the United States. Certainly they had improved much as compared with those existing ten years before, when the Society of St. Raphael had been first founded there, but they were still such as to make one perceive the need for an assistance and protection that only the Italian and American governments could provide:

"In my long experience, Excellency, what I can tell you is that no other thing do immigrants wish more than being reunited as soon as possible with their relatives and friends to whom they are directed (...).

I am quite well aware of the fact that it is not always easy to make sure that immigrants may immediately find the relatives and friends they are seeking for; it is expedient, therefore, that there be a free, or a half-price, shelter (I would

²² Gambera to Scalabrini, Boston, January 25, 1901 (Arch. G.S., 110/12).

²³ Gambera to Scalabrini, Boston, April 2, 1901 (Arch. G.S., 110/12).

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much prefer the latter). The Society of Saint Raphael could very well continue to satisfy this need by means of inexpensive meals, appropriate dormitories, and, in extraordinary cases, by securing room and board for immigrants with morally responsible hotel keepers, who would conform with all hygienic prescriptions as to accommodations and premises and willingly come to easy terms, of course, as to prices decided upon by the Society of St. Raphael.

Except for those welcomed there by relatives and friends, the greatest majority of immigrants have nowadays an address where to go: a relative, someone from the same town, and more often, a bank office.

But you always find there an agent of unscrupulous innkeepers who introduces himself to the newcomer; he asks him questions, he snatches out name and address of the people the immigrant is directed to and making believe to act on behalf of that very person or place he guides him to the hotel owned by them. There he is made to find a fine dinner ready on the table and is tricked into believing that everything is paid for by the friend or office waiting for him, and then for those miserable mouthfuls of pasta and two pieces of meat of the worst grade he is forced to pay \$1.50 or even \$2.00. Robberies and frauds of this kind are actually taking place at all arrivals of ships, and exploiting innkeepers are there with their cars to ensnare herds of their unsuspecting victims.

And when this unjust gain of theirs has been securely made, they have a young man accompany these immigrants, resentful and frightened at their first experiences in the new land to the home or office they are asking for.

The Society of St. Raphael will certainly be extremely worthy of praise if it only were to be instrumental in having these shameful and harmful practices cease and possibly all new immigrants securely addressed to the person or office they are looking for without any danger of traps or deceit.

All this will be accomplished, I am sure, Excellency, provided you be surrounded by men of character, willing to devote their time and their money, if necessary, and not just to be contented with vainly supplying their name, while leaving afterwards all the work in the hands of officials, who, though so zealous and loyal, should instead be the wheels of the wagon, not its directional staff. But we have you, Excellency, and the unsuccessful attempts of the past, not the least cause of discouragement and distrust even in the best of us, shall surely not be repeated.

Many other evils bear heavily on arriving immigrants: But the worst part is that some of them cannot be brought to the attention of the court because they are all in the system. Take for instance the money exchange and the express services. The banker and the privileged 'expressman' pay thousands of dollars to the organization to secure the exclusive rights to that service. The banker pressures the passenger to declare the amount of money in his possession under threat of repatriation for being a public charge in case he should deny having any, and when he finally surrenders his money they exchange it for him at an excessively low rate.

Generally, officials and protection societies must turn a blind eye or both on all this because the local banker has to profit more than the city banker as compensation for the thousands of dollars they pay for the privilege, for other possible extortions, and for the risks of losses he runs in case of scarcity of immigrants or of money in their possession.

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Should representatives of these societies wish to find out what's wrong with the exploitation by the banker, they would antagonize local people in high places and meet the dislike and hatred of a great part of the personnel. The only evil one can fight against is the small racket operated by intruders, pettifoggers, and lower officials with the tacit consent, perhaps, of the authorities.

The capital evil impending on immigrants is found in the danger of repatriation, its main cause stemming from the so-called 'Labor Contract' law. The application of this law is left to a group of inspectors with power to proceed on the various cases. In general, they are either people prominent in society or, as they call them here, the workers' unions, very influential in politics.

Now, it is a well-known fact that these organizations are dead against all immigrants, ours included, which they single out as 'cheap labor'. Besides, inspectors feel honored to refuse entry to as many immigrants as possible. A word by an emigrant in America suggesting a brother in Italy to come here, a letter from a person residing here to a friend, a cousin, or someone from the same own in Italy, are looked upon as contracts by the inspectors and the passenger is irrevocably rejected.

It will be the task of the Society of St. Raphael to engage the services of powerful and influential men in Washington so that the word 'contract' be given a just and honest interpretation and any arbitrary act of the inspectors stopped (...). There should be no repatriation on the presumption of one becoming a 'public charge', because the great majority of immigrants now entering the U.S.A. bring along a certain amount of money. Besides, there are no lack of fellow countrymen here in America, in New York especially, who would gladly lend the few liras needed to set free a 'paesano'."²⁴

Bishop Scalabrini invited Fr. Beccherini to take charge of the Society of St. Raphael and wrote to Bishop Foley* of Detroit where the missionary was pastor:

"In accord with Archbishop Corrigan, a society for the protection of Italian immigrants is now being organized here.

The need is urgent because Protestants are at work on a similar project and have already given life to a society. Should we neglect taking the proper steps, the losses will be incalculable. The committee headed by Archbishop Corrigan would have set its eyes on Fr. Beccherini with intention of appointing him director of the Catholic Society of St. Raphael because of his good knowledge of English, such as is needed at the 'Barge Office'. An efficient man, he would know how to make it succeed. I inform Your Excellency about it assuring you that if you should so desire I would arrange the appointment of another missionary to replace him in the care of the Italian community in Detroit."²⁵

This letter was written following a long "meeting on sheltering immigrants and on the Society of St. Raphael", held in New York on October 28.²⁶ On the same occasion Bishop Scalabrini wrote also to Fr. Beccherini:

"I have written, as agreed, to Bishop Foley. On Tuesday there will be a new meeting of the 'dreamers', and I shall inform you afterwards about it. Should not*

²⁴ Tocci to Scalabrini, New York, August 29, 1901 (Arch. G.S., 110/11).

²⁵ Scalabrini to Foley, New York, end of October, 1901, draft (Arch. G.S., 110/11).

²⁶ Scalabrini to Mangot, New York, October 31, 1901 (Arch. G.S., 8/3).

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*our 'dream' materialize we must then conclude that we are good for nothing. Even in case your pessimistic ideas were unfortunately to become true, you shall still depart from Detroit. Wouldn't you gladly accept New Orleans with its community of 25 thousand Italians, hated by others and practically abandoned by all? Oh, come on now. Let us leave any other thought aside and let us go through with our project."*²⁷

(*The original Italian text carries the name of Bishop Farley. Records show that Bishop of Detroit at that time was Bishop Foley. The confusion may come with Archbishop Farley of New York, who succeeded Archbishop Corrigan in 1902.)

Immediately following his return to Detroit, Fr. Beccherini was summoned by the Bishop:

"He inquired of me how many Italian priests there are in New York, what kind of priests they are, what Religious Orders are doing for the Italians and how many Italian Religious Orders are represented in New York.

I told him that there are five of them, but doing very little for Italians; that our missionaries, though so poor and even though they may not have fully succeeded, are the ones who have done the most for Italians, especially in New York, and have been most successful, having actually the largest portion of Italians under their spiritual care.

Finally, as I expected, he got down to the point. He asked me what this St. Raphael Society is, what are its aims, and by what means it intends to pursue them. I explained our project to him saying that: we expected help from the Italian government; the 'Statutes' of the Society were being reformed and the Board of Directors rearranged; the third meeting was held last Wednesday at the residence of Archbishop Corrigan; I did not know its deliberations as yet.... At this point he interrupted me and asked: 'But what is your opinion on this matter?'

Your Lordship should well know by now that my answer would be the old, usual, and pessimistic one. It was a clear confession to my lack of concern for the salvation of souls, that is, the zeal of a saint. In other words, my answer went like this: 'To me the project is a dream, a mere dream, but a dream nonetheless.'

That was my answer, and here I add that I do not see how we possibly can find the means for the support of an institution like this without adequate funds. In my opinion, the man that is to take this responsibility upon himself will be condemned to a day to day life of misery, worrying over how to provide a livelihood for the numerous employees of the office, to go around begging in the hope to keep going for one, two, three, or even four years, but to be left there alone, in the end, to fall, tired and exhausted, under the ruins of the roof to raise no more (...). (see Bandini).

Should the priest appointed to head this center be forced to go around blowing into the fire to keep the flame of charity alive, he will necessarily neglect his work at the office where he should be unceasingly present every day (...).

For the time being, and until things have not been set on a sure basis, only the pastor of Bleeker Street could be in a position to take care of both responsibilities. In fact, benefitting of a good income and of a sufficient assistance of priests, he would then support one with help from the other. Only

²⁷ Scalabrini to Beccherini, New York early Nov. 1901, draft (Arch. G.S., 110/11).

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*following a clear evaluation of its results should a final decision be taken as to whether the Society is to be discontinued or made independent."*²⁸

Upon Fr. Beccherini's refusal, Fr. Gambera was relieved of his duties as pastor of Sacred Heart in Boston, and was then completely free to devote himself to the direction of the Society of St. Raphael until 1905. On April 9, 1903, he wrote to Bishop Scalabrini:

'On the fourth of this current month of April, the committee headed by Archbishop Corrigan held its first meeting at last, approved the 'Statutes', and elected its officers. The following were in attendance: the Archbishop, who was made its President; Msgr. Ferrante, Secretary; Cav. Francoli, Treasurer; Attorney A. Reynaud; Mr. G. Farrelly; Mr. E. Philbin; Cav. Piva; and Fr. Gambera. The new administration will take over on the first of (this coming) May.

Msgr. Ferrante assured us that through contributions from members and our missions we will be able to gross some \$2,000.00 a year (...). At the meeting I proposed that a more comfortable and roomy building be purchased and entrusted to the care of nuns. The proposal will be carried out though not before completing the organization of the members and the assessment of the contributions. In the meanwhile, I had the present hostel wholly done over with the addition of eight new beds, 22 in all, and we have no vacancy almost every day.

The Episcopalian 'Protection Society', also government supported, repeatedly assured me it had no sectarian intention or scope whatsoever on its mind, but solely works of charity, and that it desires to carry on its activities in harmony with the Society of St. Raphael. Our Society would have run indeed serious risks had it not given proof of a steady and diligent service.

The Episcopalian society also has an agent on the island, who is a Catholic and is practically an assistant of ours. He has opened an employment office, a difficult task, better fitting a lay person than a missionary. He tried also to open a large guest house. But, together with our Consul, I succeeded in preventing it. In fact, if the Society of St. Raphael were to lose its hostel or have another one in competition with its own, in the actual circumstances ours would have been utterly pushed out of the way.

*On the landing island no priest says Mass or conducts any religious services; there is no chapel, nor any place reserved for this purpose. Should a chapel eventually be built there, the Italian missionary will be even too happy to exercise his holy apostolate in that place."*²⁹

Unfortunately, Fr. Gambera did not get the cooperation of his confreres, and in the summer of 1902 he pleaded with Bishop Scalabrini's secretary to secure from him that the missionaries be not just exhorted but clearly ordered to financially support the Society. And here is how he described his work:

"Our many immigrants, who for one reason or other are detained in those vast halls, afflicted, in tears, discouraged, almost hopeless, have need of prompt assistance, opportune instructions, and charitable encouragement. They find themselves confused and bewildered in the midst of hundreds of other

²⁸ Beccherini to Scalabrini, Detroit, November 4, 1901 (Arch. G.S., 110/11).

²⁹ Gambera to Scalabrini, New York, April 9, 1902 (Arch. G.S., 110/12).

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immigrants of all nationalities. Unable to figure out the why of their unexpected detention, they soon feel struck with fear and fright, almost terrorized at suddenly finding themselves confronted with a serious threat of expatriation.

On entering in their midst in those halls, the missionary, who well knows their pains and needs, and is the only one fit for this merciful task, at his first addressing them in their native tongue immediately becomes their confidant, something, as it were, like a guardian angel.

The moment they recognize him, they surround him, draw close and rush up to him, and with one voice, they all implore help, ask to be let go free, and the priest tries his best to assist and encourage them, and urges all to hope.

Besides this merciful service for the detained, the missionary moves on to the other halls where immigrants already in possession of their passes are waiting for the boat that will bring them ashore to the various railroad stations from where to continue on their journey towards their places of destination in the different States of this immense North America. In these waiting halls, crowded with hundreds of thousands of passengers, all of them new to the environment, the priest checks tickets, informs them, minors especially, about the length of their trip, nearly always unknown to them and about conditions in places of arrival; he sees to it that they have the exact address, correcting it himself if necessary. He is the only one, in fact, that speaks to them about the trains where information is only given in English and help stem toward their destination.

But he recommends to them, above all, that in their newly adopted country, amongst this hospitable, peaceful, educated, civil, orderly, law abiding people so keenly respectful of religious freedom, immigrants immediately seek to follow their example; to conform to its ways, customs, and spirit; to refrain from any disorderly conduct or crime; to give honorable witness of fidelity to the glorious faith of their own ancestors; and to honor religion and country of origin with the practice of Christian and civic virtues.

To their great appreciation, he presents them, when possible, with some medals or holy pictures that will remain the only religious symbol, perhaps, to follow and accompany them through all the years they will spend wherever they may reside. In the name of God he wishes all a farewell, health, a job, and good luck. To me, the service of the missionary on this landing island to which with rare exception, hundreds, and sometimes four, five or even seven thousand immigrants converge every day, is the first, most noble, effective, and fruitful of all missions.

Besides, there is also a hospital close-by to visit, where many of the patients are always our immigrants. Furthermore, there is the service of the charitable hostel of the Society of St. Raphael, where many unfortunate ones are directed and are given room and board for free and all kinds of assistance to get in touch with their relatives or find a decent job."³⁰

Due to scarcity of means, the activity of the Society of St. Raphael in assisting immigrants appears rather modest in its 1902 report:

"Of the immigrants detained for various reasons at landing on Ellis Island, 596 were taken care of by the Society of St. Raphael and sheltered at the charitable shelter; 402

³⁰ Gambera to Mangot, New York, October 17, 1902 (Arch. G.S., 110/12).

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were routed to their relatives living in the different States of North America; 167 were assured a job (...); 52 young ladies were joined in both religious and civil marriage on the Island itself; 7 sick calls at the immigration hospital; 5 baptisms of babies aboard ships; many thousands assisted. The hostel provided room and board for 3,015 days on an average of five days per person.

Total expenditures \$3,202.50 distributed through the following items:

Rent on building	
Room and board	
Services at the shelter	
Services on the Island	
Office work	
Transportation, Mailing (...)	
Total Income: Government Grants	\$ 1,529.25
Society's Committee	\$ 990.00
Private contributions	\$ 87.00
Fr. Gambera and Confreres	<u>\$ 596.25</u>
Total Income	\$ 3,202.50 ³¹

The 1903 annual report reads:

"The activities of the Society of Saint Raphael cover actually the following services:

1. Helping and counselling detained Italians on what must be done while waiting on the Island for relatives, friends, or money, either for lack of, or uncertainty of address, or other reasons; explaining to them the obvious reasons of their detention to convince them that this temporary delay is for their protection and benefit, while an imprudent and immediate release would wholly turn to their disadvantage;
2. Helping and instructing those that are referred to the Federal Bureau or Commission for special investigations (...).
3. Assisting and counselling immigrants detained or delayed in order to secure from their relatives, by affidavits or by bonds, evident proof or responsible warrants such as requested by authorities in order to avoid that they may shortly become the charges of public charities;
4. Comforting and consoling the few unfortunate ones (about 1%) being repatriated;
5. Pleading with the Board or in court, wholly on one's own responsibility, to seek permits of entry for the rejected, provided they be judged worthy of protection and help;
6. Attending with particular care to the immigrants being detained on Ellis Island four or five days already, the maximum consented them by federal authorities for finding relatives, or securing the money needed to continue their journey to destination that they may not be transferred otherwise to the hall of the excluded. In such cases, the representative of the Society of St. Raphael intervenes and pleads with the Commissars or Inspectors deputized for this service to let them go free under pledge to give them shelter at his own expenses while continuing procedures in search of relatives, etc., and should this fail, after a while, he would try to secure them a decent job, or contemplate repatriation in exceptional cases. Of these detained Italian immigrants 693 were set free in 1903 and entrusted to the care and responsibility of St. Raphael Society (...).
9. Both as priest and civil servant, the missionary on the Island also performs the weddings of young girls, already engaged to marry, who have no relatives close by to whom they may be safely directed; he visits Italian patients at the nearby Immigration Hospital and administers the last rites to the dying.

Other observations. The Society of St. Raphael offers its services, room and board

³¹ Gambera, "Rendiconto generale della Societa' San Raffaele per l'assistenza agli immigrati italiani al Porto di New York, Anno 1902" (Arch. G.S., 110/12).

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entirely at its own expense, and almost all transportation and guidance of immigrants entrusted to it, as well. The Society of St. Raphael carries on its mission on Ellis Island in good harmony with the agents of the "*Italian Protectory*", a society devoted to services highly beneficial to Italian immigrants, so as to make sure that by the unselfish and diligent assistance of both, Italian immigrants may benefit of the best care on the landing Island of New York."³²

As to this report, Fr. Gambera wrote the following observations to Bishop Scalabrini:

"I had a copy of it, in Italian and English, sent also to the Archbishop of New York and to the Bishop of Brooklyn, members of this committee but those gentlemen have too many things on their hands and have no time for these matters! I got no answer.

It's just as well! Rome well knows, in fact, these rich American bishops who, unable to appreciate the unselfish spirit of certain missionaries, criticize them rather for inability to accumulate thousands of dollars from among our Italians, poor,.... new to their customs, reluctant to contribute to the church. We have done, however, what they did not do or could ever know how.

To tell the truth, this Society of Saint Raphael was actually kept going by grants from the Government and my exceedingly burdensome daily service in an American church that secures me a monthly income of between forty or fifty dollars. Without it I could never pay for the food of these unfortunate ones, not considering that, even so, quite often there were no funds left on hand and no change for my trips to Ellis Island (...).

We will have another building shortly. Msgr. Ferrante charged me to look around for one, as he has been authorized to do the buying. It will be placed under the direction of the Pallottine Sisters present here who have some five to six thousand dollars at their disposal. Should this project succeed, my dream will be a reality and the institution will be strengthened, because, as it is now, it is standing on crutches."³³

On the 28th of April he could report:

"To my great consolation, I inform Your Most Rev. Lordship that the Society of St. Raphael is in possession of two new places, in good condition, at 8 and 10 Charlton Street, New York, that will be occupied next week, at the cost of \$29,500.00 with \$8,000.00 down payment.

Due to the needs of the moment, to my sorrow I had but to accept that the care and direction of this house be entrusted to the Pallottine Sisters whose director is Dr. Ferrante.

Were our missions and missionaries united and concordant, were they to understand the moral and social importance of this center, in all ease they could claim for themselves everything, institution and ownership, credit and praise. But our pastors and local superiors, selfish and advocating too much power, did not take any interest in the Society of St. Raphael. And I will never cease blaming them for this."³⁴

³² Gambera, "Società Italiana San Raffaele. Terzo Rapporto Annuale. Opera della San Raffaele nel 1903". (Arch. G.S., 110/12).

³³ Gambera to Scalabrini, New York, February 8, 1904 (Arch. G.S., 110/12).

³⁴ Gambera to Scalabrini, New York, April 4, 1904 (Arch. G.S., 110/12).

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The two new buildings were furnished with 50 beds “so as to provide temporary shelter not only to immigrants entrusted to the Society of St. Raphael by the Federal Commission of Ellis Island, but to offer, as well, a secure refuge to those unfortunate mothers and honest girls in danger, already residents of New York and other places, who, because of evil circumstances, find themselves without a job, exposed to all risks, and with no one to turn to.”³⁵

In his memoirs, in a somewhat polemic key, Fr. Gambera thus recalls his last months of work with the Society of St. Raphael:

"(Archbishop Farley) had authorized me to arrange a deal for a roomier building on condition that the Society of St. Raphael were legally incorporated as a Moral Corporation with five Trustees.

To my sad surprise, I found out lately that the ownership of the property had been transferred into the hands of the Sisters sponsored by Fr. Ferrante! How did this happen? Who consented to this transfer (...)?

With a mortgage of \$22,000.00, we purchased two buildings, close to each other and in good condition, and elected the trustees: the Archbishop, President; Fr. Gambera, Chairman; Msgr. Ferrante, Treasurer; Gen. Cesnola and Attorney Philbin, members of the Board (...).

The quarters of the Sisters, kitchen, dining room, chapel, a dormitory for 50 beds all were furnished anew. The shelter was comfortable, with a touch of luxury, even. Small orphan girls were also sheltered.

The Sisters had permission to collect, and used to go around begging for provisions and cash. The Archbishop, Trustees Cesnola and Philbin, supplied \$100.00 a year (...).

That year the government decreed also a grant of \$800.00 aimed at defraying in part the interest. The agent received his salary from the Consulate on behalf of the Society of St. Raphael. My service was free because as one living with the poor I had necessarily to be the first among them; besides, for a missionary devoted to the welfare of his brethren in need, this is a duty of his profession.

The treasurer insisted that guests be made to pay a percentage, but I always opposed it. With what nerve could we ask money of one who was arriving with little means, no job, and despoiled of everything? The Society of St. Raphael had to remain purely an institution of Christian charity (...).

Two instances gave me to understand the high esteem accorded the Society of St. Raphael by the American Commissariat. One day, Commissar William summoned to his office the representatives of all the societies assisting their immigrant fellow nationals on Ellis Island. Following a pep-talk, he addressed serious admonitions to some of them, threatened two more with expulsion if they continued to pretend excessive compensation of their brethren, and finally he set before them our St. Raphael Society as a model charitable institution, that was indeed benefitting the immigrants in a truly unselfish manner.

On another occasion, President Theodore Roosevelt had been visiting that important government complex, accompanied by Attorney Philbin, one of our trustees, but before departing he requested a meeting with the ministers of all religions frequenting the Island either for assisting immigrants or for propaganda of Bibles or other religious literature. After his brief and respectful address, the Attorney turned and presented me to the President. To the surprise of all, the President had high praise for Bishop Scalabrini and warm congratulations for me.

³⁵ From a report of Gambera, probably of November, 1904 (Arch. G.S., 110/12).

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Such gestures of condescension drew to the center of the St. Raphael Society visitors of all kinds - Commissars, Consuls, and even foreign Ambassadors - eagerly seeking to have information on my system. I told them that our Society was offering everything for free: the ministry of the missionary, the services of the Sisters, and room and board.

To the question as to the sources of funds for the support of the center and of the guests, my answer was that private benefactors donated food and money every day through the services of the Sisters and, by way of a most wide mental interpretation, that I had also the help of our Missions. They were amazed though confessing that they could not possibly adopt such systems (...).

Such was my field of work from October 1900 till May 1905, and since the Society had been set by then on a solid basis with high hopes for the future, convinced of having done my part, I began to think about entrusting it into other hands and returning to parish work, especially because my health was declining and I was running a temperature (...).

But how could one be found to take my place with the Society? I did not wish to have recourse to the Archbishop for fear he might appoint a priest who did not belong to the Congregation; and so I turned to our confrere Fr. Moretto, who was heading a small Society of St. Raphael in Boston.

The missionary immediately responded to my invitation, came to New York, and I presented him to both authorities. He was well received, and carried on the project quite efficiently. In fact, when I visited Ellis Island eight years later, all employees from the Commissar to the last Inspector, had but praise for him (...).

I deem it my duty to point out that much of the credit for the efficient service of the Society of St. Raphael is due to the active and wise cooperation of the agents: good and diligent Ettore Irippitelli, present manager of the Fabre Line; attorney Joseph Mattucci, who continued to offer his precious service for 15 years with the most diligent honesty and with a sincere sentiment of humanitarian patriotism. He was taking care of immigrants with zeal and love as though they were his own brothers! How many of them owe their freedom to his wise and solicitous services."³⁶

To well grasp the meaning of certain passages of Fr. Gambera's writings we must remember that besides the St. Raphael's two more Societies were operating in New York with the same or a similar purpose for the protection of Italians, also supported, and in a more generous manner, by the Italian government. One, the "*Italian Protectory*" was organized by the Commissariat for Emigration of the Italian Foreign Ministry in 1902, on proposal by Cav. Egisto Rossi; and the other, the "*Istituto Italiano di Beneficenza*", was founded in January 1903, by Comm. Celestino Piva, with encouragement and blessings from Bishop Scalabrini.³⁷ Fr. Gambera operated in harmony with the first, though Episcopalian, and gave his support for the founding of the second. The "*Italian Protectory*" did not succeed in establishing neither the shelter nor the guest house, or the legal counselling office, or the schools, as stated in the founding Statutes. It only set up an information center at 17 Pearl Street, and an employment office at 159 Mulberry Street until 1905, and on Pearl Street, later. In one year, 1904 precisely, this office found employment for 200 Italians. Together the two offices organized a special service of cars and guides for transporting and accompanying emigrants: but it was quite lacking and one

³⁶ Gambera, "Memoirs", pp. 53-55 (Arch. G.S., 1558/3).

³⁷ Gambera to Scalabrini, New York, March 2, 1904 and April 28, 1904 (Arch. G.S., 110/12).

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had to pay for it. On the contrary, the service rendered by the two agents on Ellis Island was for free and truly effective.

The "*Instituto Italiano di Beneficenza*", practically entirely the charge of generous Comm. Piva, opened a dispensary offering free assistance to some 1000 Italians a month, and a hospital for 30 beds; another 80 beds had been set aside at a modest price for immigrants on the first days of their arrival. The center was actually providing room and board for about a hundred immigrants a month, and board only for some five hundred. It was located at 165-167-169 West Houston Street.

In 1906 the "*Italian Protectory*" received from the Italian government a subsidy for 30,000 liras; 20,000 liras were given to the "*Istituto Italiano di Beneficenza*"; and 8,000 liras were set aside for the Society of St. Raphael.³⁸

The 1905 annual report shows 920 people assisted; 11,555 room and board days, and 118 board only. In 1907 the number of immigrants sheltered at the center of the St. Raphael's Society increased to 1879 units. Naturally, with expenditures increasing and income remaining the same, the year 1907 closed with a \$6,871.74 deficit.³⁹

In 1911 the people sheltered were 1071; room and board days were 6,836; only board days, 700; recourses for counselling and assistance amounted to 8,760. In 1913, the year in which emigration reached its peak, the persons sheltered were 2,139; room and board days were 11,203; only board days 1,812; recourses for counselling and assistance came to 9,855. Including the value of commodities collected by the Sisters, income increased to \$5,773.82 and expenditures to \$7,598.281.⁴⁰

In 1914, the persons sheltered were 1,891; in 1915, 1,769; in 1916, 1,720; in 1917, 696; in 1918, 454; in 1919, 1,667; in 1920, 1,879; in 1921, 1,780; and in 1922, 1,160.

In poor health, Fr. Moretto returned to Italy in 1921. The Archbishop of New York appointed Fr. Demo, Pastor of Our Lady of Pompeii, Director of the Society of Saint Raphael, and Fr. Riccardo Secchia its representative, who actually took the place of Fr. Moretto. In his 1923 report to the Apostolic Visitor, Fr. Serafino Cimino, Fr. Secchia declared:

*"Because of ill health, Rev. Fr. Gaspare Moretto relinquished his post with the Society of St. Raphael and by the end of June 1921, he left for Italy. For 15 years an active, straight, and conscientious director of the Society, he had earned the esteem and trust of all authorities of the city, of emigration, and of the shipping companies, as was proven by their sincere and cordial concern over the course of his sickness. Right then, I received word by my Superior, Rev. A. Demo to assume duty at the center of the Society of St. Raphael and to take care of immigrants' weddings and of all other urgent office matters."*⁴¹

³⁸ G. Preziosi, "Le Società di protezione per gli Emigrati in New York," "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. V. January 1907, pp. 2-9.

³⁹ Cfr. "Società San Raffaele per gli Italiani Immigranti in New York", *Ibid.*, a. VI, February 1908, pp. 19-21.

⁴⁰ Cfr. "Società San Raffaele per gli Immigranti Italiani. XXI Rapporto Annuale". (New York, 1914), pp. 8-11.

⁴¹ R. Secchia to S. Cimino, New York, September 27, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 22/9).

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In his report Fr. Secchia states he was under the impression of a temporary assignment, but since no one was being officially appointed in a long time to head the center, he asked to be relieved of this task for inexperience and insufficient mastery of the English language. Besides, the hands-on management of activities, finances, and paper work was practically entirely in the hands of the lay agent. His resignation was not accepted and he had no choice but to continue to do what he could, while Fr. Demo showed little interest. Meanwhile, difficulties kept increasing with the Pallottine Sisters, with the "Travelers' Aid Society", though in perfect harmony before, and with the Archdiocesan chancery, with which Father Demo failed to establish the necessary contacts for a fast processing of practices, especially of matrimonial cases.

"In spite of all these and other difficulties, for duty's sake, love of the Institute, and a sense of discipline, resigned to my hard and complicated work, I patiently continued to do my best that all things might succeed well, always in expectation, as I was often told, of improvements.

In fact, by the middle of 1922, Fr. Demo informed me that a meeting would be called after Easter by the Archbishop, President of the Society, to discuss and reorganize it by naming an official director and taking the needed provisions. Easter came and went, but no decision was taken on the matter."⁴²

Fr. Secchia again tendered his resignation, but to no avail. By the middle of 1922 the Provincial Superior pleaded with Fr. Secchia to officially assume the charge with promise of help, which never came.

"Finally, in answer to a letter from the Provincial Superior naming me the official Representative of the Society of St. Raphael, on September 15 the Archbishop forwarded the document confirming and approving the appointment. Fr. Demo placed it in my hands a month later, October 14, 1922. After 16 months I was able at last to take charge of the administration of the Society, set it on a better course, reorganize it somewhat, and give it new life through greater efficiency. I could secure, besides, admission permits to go aboard ships and to the immigration Island (...). During the whole time between September 28, 1922 and February 5, 1923, I had only a half a day to myself, I repeat, a mere half a day. And this is how it went, more or less, both before and after.

With God's help, things have now changed a bit; I must admit it for justice's and truth's sake. With letter of June 1923 from Fr. General, I was finally relieved of my parish duties; due to the new emigration law, my work now is not as stressed or pressing as it used to be."⁴³

This letter was written on September 27, 1923: a month later the Superior General Fr. Chenuil, received notification from Card. DeLai that the religious assistance to Italian emigrants aboard ships and at the ports had been entrusted to the "Emigration Prelate", and Scalabrinians had therefore to relinquish the assistance of immigrants entering New York in the hands of the "Italian Auxiliary", directly dependent on the Archbishop of that city.⁴⁴

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Card. DeLai to Chenuil, Rome, October 26, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 65).

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The fact is that following accusations against Fr. Moretto, in 1922 an investigation was conducted by the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Giovanni Bonzano, which gave rise to suspicion of some administrative irregularities and brought to light, most of all, the dissatisfaction of the Pallottine Sisters. For these reasons, the Emigration Prelate, Msgr. Michele Cerrati, made the proposal that the Society of St. Raphael be entrusted to the Pallottine Sisters and that in place of a Scalabrinian another Italian priest, either presented by the Archbishop of New York or prepared at the "Pontifical College of Emigration", be appointed as its director. The post was assigned to Msgr. Formica and to Msgr. Silipigne of the "*Italica Gens*".

The "*Italian Immigrant Auxiliary*" took over the work previously carried out by the Society of St. Raphael on December 1, 1923, and on December 7 the Archbishop of New York wrote to Fr. Demo:

*"In compliance with the instructions given me by His Eminence Card. DeLai of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, dated November 14, 1923, I come to inform you that the work amongst Italian immigrants at the port of New York shall be from now on the task of the 'Italian Immigrants Auxiliary' of Walter Street."*⁴⁵

In relinquishing the financial report and the administration books to the Archbishop, Fr. Anthony Demo, on whose disinterest must be placed the blame for the end of the Society of St. Raphael, made the following observations:

*"In giving thanks to Your Excellency for the flattering words expressed in regard to our past work (carried out at a much greater sacrifice than is commonly believed), I assure you that the provision taken by our legitimate superiors have been received with utmost gratitude. We feel sure that by the effective support of the Archdiocese of New York, our immigrants will benefit of greater security and of a speedier dispatching of the many difficulties they first experience on arrival."*⁴⁶

5. The Parish of St. Anthony, Buffalo, N.Y.

Fr. Arnaldo Vanoli succeeded Fr. Angelo Strazzoni in December 1919 at a time when the people of Saint Anthony were increasing:

*"The parish is now increasing fast: This year's census of St. Anthony shows a population of some 15,000, mostly Sicilians, who at times make you lose your cool."*⁴⁷

On April 2, 1920, he reorganized St. Anthony parish club, founded by Fr. Strazzoni for the spiritual, cultural, social and physical education of the young. The strange thing about it is that a large part of its members were "newsboys". It boasted two noted baseball and basketball teams. Other sections of the parish club were represented by a theatrical company and a drum and fife band.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Archbishop Hayes to A. Demo, New York, December 7, 1923 (Provinc. Arch. New York).

⁴⁶ Demo to Hayes, New York, March 7, 1924 (Provinc. Arch. New York).

⁴⁷ Vanoli to Chenuil, Buffalo, May 20, 1920 (Arch. G.S., 555/5).

⁴⁸ Cfr. "Chiesa di S. Antonio di Padova, Buffalo, N.Y. 1891-1921" (Buffalo, 1921) pp. 18-19.

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Fr. Vanoli opened a school of Italian also for women and continued a plan of development for the parish school:

"In Buffalo, where these schools are flourishing, the Sodality of the Children of Mary of our parish of St. Anthony alone doubled its membership in 1920 thus succeeding in pulling more than a hundred proselytes away from Protestantism by means of their organization and activities. They made the Baptist minister declare bankruptcy.

Another good result of the parish school in 1920 was the founding of the 'University Students' Club, of the Holy Name Society, and of the sewing and embroidery school. Not only do the old organizations still live, they actually prosper so well, that the club of St. Anthony, for one, has 125 members with basketball and baseball teams of unopposed superiority over all others in the city. In fact, they won the golden cup this year. The club has now been endowed with new halls and an excellent library."⁴⁹

The kindergarten was opened in the beginning of the school year 1921-1922. Always under the direction of the Sisters of St. Joseph, the "Scalabrini" School was frequented that year by 403 students. From the 1923 report we learn that the parish school had an attendance of 485 students, while one thousand Italian pupils were thought to be attending public schools. There were 355 baptisms, 87 weddings, 115 funerals, 210 first communions. There had been a marked decrease of people. From statistics, albeit approximate, that in 1920 showed a parish population of 15,000 Italians, membership dwindled to 7,050 in the report of 1923. In presenting the financial report of 1924, Fr. Vanoli wrote:

"The year 1924, for which I am sending the Financial Report, has been a year of pleasant surprises and unexpected consolations. What has taken place before your very eyes on the spiritual level I need not tell you: you were witnesses yourselves: frequency to the sacraments, the large crowds attending Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, the moving spectacle of faith publicly professed in religious celebrations prorated by our beloved Bishop; the encouraging growth of our parish kindergarten and school, for which State authorities had high praise; are all facts not easy to forget, and we must give thanks for them to the good Lord and to our glorious patron Saint Anthony. But the year just passed has not been satisfying only on the spiritual level, it was not actually less so on financial matters than the previous years. Take a look at the report and you will see for yourselves how true this is.

In the early months of 1924 various circumstances had me worried for the future of the parish and over the historical Mother-Church of the Italian churches of Buffalo. The moving out from the parish of hundreds of excellent families that represented a precious support for the parish; the city's plan to force us to sell the church; the discouragement of many who were too quick to lend their ears to prophets of doom, were all facts that made it difficult to plan ahead and form projects for the future. Fortunately, however, because the Blessed Virgin of Pompeii, to whom we had recourse in faith, protected us... the city called off its demolition, new families took the place of those that left and in your generosity you have contributed in compensating the decrease of our extraordinary sources of income by doubling the ordinary ones, so that - all expenses paid - we were

⁴⁹ "Nella Missione di S. Antonio a Buffalo, N.Y." "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. XV, n. 1 (January-March, 1921), p. 20.

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*able to defray the parish debt by another \$2,000.00. After God, we must thank you, dear parishioners and friends, the unselfish and zealous priests who helped me even by waiving their salary, the good and able Sisters of St. Joseph, the other young teachers, our trustees, collectors, ushers, and all members of the two unsurpassed clubs of St. Anthony."*⁵⁰

In 1924, after his term as Provincial Superior had expired, Fr. Strazzoni also returned to Buffalo, but Bishop William Turner was not satisfied with the two priests, especially because they were not getting along with Msgr. Gambino, Pastor of Holy Cross, highly esteemed by the Chancery. On January 2, 1925, Fr. Strazzoni was transferred to the parish of Saint Peter in Syracuse, New York; the following May Fr. Vanoli was named Pastor of St. Joachim in New York, and his place was taken by Fr. Carlo Rossi, while Fr. Giuseppe Lazzeri replaced Fr. Carlo Celotto as assistant, to be followed soon afterwards by Frs. Giuseppe Foriero and Antonio Sandro.

Fr. Rossi's early months were not easy:

"In this place, the unexpected removal of all priests, especially of the Pastor, very well remembered, has so much irritated the people that many have not been attending the sacred services for months. As much as we try to use the greatest care in serving the faithful with ready promptness at their every request both at home and in the office with ample service mornings and evenings in church, still we notice little improvement (...). The entire people of the parish is convinced that the change is the work of Msgr. Gambino, the Pastor of Holy Cross church; and in no way can they be made to reason. In addition, since I, like him, am also a native of Turin, the rumor amongst the people is that I am related to him, a creature of his, and so much more undeserving of their mistrust.

*One thing is certain, we the priests of St. Anthony are taking extreme care not to commit any error, especially in regard to parish boundaries (a touchy question against which not even the provisions of a will are taken into consideration); we keep on good terms, therefore, with the neighboring pastors, though with no illusions as to the future."*⁵¹

Msgr. Gambino was also urged by the bishop to use the greatest prudence possible. In presenting the financial report of 1925, Fr. Rossi wrote:

"It will be easy to notice a sensible decrease of revenues in the second semester of the past year as compared with those of 1924.

*The resentment of the people over the sudden removal of the priests, who were here, still runs deep after seven months. Plenty of daily religious services and our promptness at any call for service in the office or in the ministry have begun to show, and we've noticed it, a somewhat larger attendance at church, but the revenues are still quite scarce. While there were before three or even four high masses each morning, now we are lucky if we have three or four a week (...). To gain the people's trust, we formed two religious circles for the young, and they begin to produce good results; we hope to see a good number join them."*⁵²

⁵⁰ "Chiesa di S. Antonio di Padova, Buffalo, N.Y. Resoconto finanziario anno 1924" (Arch. G.S., 575/5).

⁵¹ P. C. Rossi to Card. DeLai, Buffalo, September 9, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 575/6).

⁵² P. C. Rossi to Card. DeLai, Buffalo, January 15, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 575/6).

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Shortly afterwards the Regional Superior, Fr. Quaglia, reported to Rome:

"At Buffalo, the difficulties caused by the enmities risen before between people and priests of different parishes are slowly waning away. On my visitation there I had a talk with the neighboring pastor, Msgr. Gambino, and I took care that certain little points of friction be eliminated. Both sides acknowledge the need for reciprocal friendly relations. Unfortunately, our priests cannot dispose of the same ability and means of action of the church close-by, served by four priests. I had words of encouragement for our confreres, sure that by their good spirit they will experience an ever increasing love for them, and even in case they were not to succeed in doing as much as their neighbors, still their work will always be meritorious and blessed by the Lord just the same. Being a Monsignor earns an Italian pastor such a mark of distinction as to become easy cause of bad feelings or of inferiority complex among his colleagues wherever there are several Italian churches. Msgr. Gambino is an able and zealous priest, but I believe him to suffer too much at times the effects of the steady public attention accorded him by the press.

Bishop Turner declared himself satisfied with our priests, even though like other bishops he would prefer to have priests wholly at his dependence."⁵³

In March 1926 the Municipal Council of the City of Buffalo decided to build the new City Hall in the neighborhood of St. Anthony's church. The danger was looming of a possible demolition of church and school with the consequent transferal of the parish to another location. Fr. Rossi had these observations on the matter:

"The present parish of Saint Anthony is not what it used to be a few years ago. Italian immigrants were the ones who wanted to have here their church, and by their contributions and work they succeeded in their noble intent. At that time, 37 years ago, and for many years afterwards, this was the only Italian church. Later on, due to the increasing numbers of immigrants and to their spreading over various sections of the city, there was need for other churches for our own nationality, and eventually they were built. However, the great majority of Italians are now leaving the section of the city in which our present church is located and is moving elsewhere. Several hundred families have changed residence this year and now with the construction of the new City Hall, and at the hundred or more of them will have to move out, to the great detriment to parish and school. For sure, within a few years' time very few Italians will be residing in this part of the city. Considering the construction of a new church at the cost of \$250,000.00, it would be opportune that we choose a location which offers good hope for a prosperous future."⁵⁴

For all these reasons, Fr. Rossi pleaded with Card. DeLai to mediate his offices with the Bishop of Buffalo so that a convenient new location might be assigned, possibly removed from the existing one, also in view of eliminating the disadvantages resulting from closeness to the parish of Sacred Heart. Cardinal DeLai reported to him Bishop Turner's meaningful response:

"For the time being, there is no reason for a new arrangement, because the City Hall is assigning us by way of compensation a new location, somewhat larger

⁵³ Quaglia to Card. DeLai, New Haven, February 17, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 556/2).

⁵⁴ P. C. Rossi to Card. DeLai, Buffalo, March 29, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 575/6).

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than the old one, but only 40 meters from the present church site. Such being the circumstances, it would seem better to leave the parish of St. Anthony in the care of the same priests with no changes of boundaries."⁵⁵

Because of the increasing difficulties and of the mistrust of the chancery, Fr. Rossi, who did not feel equal to his task as head of a parish, repeatedly asked to be relieved of it. His request was accepted in November, and he was appointed assistant at the parish of Our Lady of Pompeii in Chicago.

He was succeeded by Fr. Foriero; but he, too, resigned two years later. The Sacred Consistorial Congregation had already accepted when the Regional Superior Fr. Quaglia wrote to Rome:

"When everything had been made ready for the replacement of Fr. Foriero as Pastor in Buffalo, I wrote to the Bishop of that city to inform him of the change and solicit his approval.

The Bishop responded saying that I would do him a favor if I did not remove Fr. Foriero both because without any pressure on the part of the authorities he had changed his mind and as a pastor he had been doing well, much better, in fact, than all who preceded him. I have acceded to the wishes of the Bishop."⁵⁶

The difficulties did not cease, however, in fact, they kept increasing because with the construction of the City Hall the Italian people of the parish dwindled to 5,000 souls, and the opening of two new schools at a five minute walking distance from the church had brought attendance to the parish school down to less than 100 students. The Bishop decided that "Scalabrini School" should be closed and that only catechism classes be held there every day, with the help of four Missionary Sisters of Christian Doctrine and of a few students, for all children, about 900 of them, frequenting the public schools. The Regional Superior, Fr. Marchegiani, however, attributed a good share of the blame for the decline of the parish to the two missionaries:

"The Bishop of Buffalo, whom I called upon last June (1931), expressed to me his highest praise of our two priests at St. Anthony and of their zeal. Both have always done their best for the good functioning of the parish, and the pastor is therefore deserving of special recognition.

But what's wrong with the parish is that both Fr. Foriero and Fr. Oddenino are very narrow minded (...). Both lack the gift of eloquence, and these poor people are deserting the church because they cannot understand the strong Piedmontese accent of Fr. Oddenino or hear Fr. Foriero with almost no voice. In American churches where preaching is carried out at all Sunday masses, the sermon is everything, and the people are most eager for it. Whenever preaching is lacking, the parish declines!

Things would quickly improve in that parish if there were a priest somewhat used to the American ways, broad minded, and a sufficiently a good preacher. However, we must reckon with Msgr. Gambino's great ability as an organizer, and the chancery plays the part of 'Don Abbondio' and seems to say: 'Why should I side with you the weaker one of the two?'"⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Card. DeLai to P.C. Rossi, Rome, May 27, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 575/6).

⁵⁶ Quaglia to Card. Perosi, New Haven, Nov. 11, 1929 (Arch. G.S., 575/7).

⁵⁷ Marchegiani to Card. Rossi, Boston, April 19, 1932 (Arch. G.S., 575/7).

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Yet, even Fr. Marchegiani had to recant, in part at least, these statements and become convinced that the accusations steadily brought up by the missionaries in regard to the hostility of Msgr. Gambino and of the diocesan chancellor were not groundless, when in 1934 the Bishop of Buffalo requested that the two Scalabrinian parishes of his diocese, St. Anthony of Buffalo and St. Anthony of Fredonia be surrendered to the diocesan clergy, because there were no Italians left. Fr. Marchegiani wrote then to Cardinal Rossi:

"Let me state again, first, that I have been keeping always in touch with that Bishop, and that no complaint has been made to me by him concerning our Fathers. In fact, he had the highest praise for the priests of our parish in Buffalo publicly in church before the congregation, Fr. Quaglia, and myself.

Now, out of this state of tranquility and satisfaction of the Bishop there comes the sudden request for the removal of the Scalabrinian missionaries from this diocese. One could not possibly explain it, were it not for the machinations of Msgr. Gambino and of the chancellor, both of them sworn enemies of our Institute (...).

These the alleged reasons:

- 1. Ignorance of the local idiom*
- 2. Poor preaching (also) in Italian*
- 3. Neglect of our priests to conform to the customs of the country they live in.*

This (Regional) Council has responded to the first two objections by sending Fr. Pio Parolin to Fredonia as Pastor (...). It has also assigned Fr. Carlo Celotto as acting pastor in Buffalo, and Fr. Agostino Lazzarin, as treasurer. Both are excellent orators, and they can preach fluently in either language (...).

As to the last objection, I am sorry to answer that I have no provisions in mind, and neither will I ever try to take any.

The American customs spoken of by the Bishop of Buffalo are those introduced into his parish by Msgr. Gambino. Each family of that parish must pay the Church a certain tax every year; members of families that do not comply with it are denied baptisms, weddings, confirmations, and even church funerals (...).

Our priests did not want to subject themselves to such ...American customs ...; they must therefore be removed so that they may not be 'a sign that will be opposed' (Lk. 2, 34) and the faithful oppressed by their taxes avoid taking refuge in our churches (...).

In consideration of said facts and of the provisions taken, this (Regional) Council humbly pleads that our Pious Society be spared an unjustified humiliation such as this and that it may not be deprived of the parishes it has founded."⁵⁸

Approval for Fr. Carlo Celotto's appointment was requested on May 28, 1934. Ten months later, the Bishop of Buffalo again petitioned the removal of Scalabrinians, especially from Buffalo, for the reasons we gather from a letter of Fr. Marchegiani to Cardinal Rossi:

"Solicited by me, the Apostolic Delegate made known some time ago to the Bishop of Buffalo the considerations that had prompted me to ask that the two parishes of Buffalo and Fredonia be left in the hands of the Pious Scalabrinian

⁵⁸ Marchegiani to Card. Rossi, New York, June 5, 1934 (Arch. G.S., 575/7).

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Society.

But the Apostolic Delegate now sends me an answer, dated June 17, with a statement of Bishop Turner insisting that the parish of St. Anthony, (this is the only one he is claiming at the present time) be taken away from the Scalabrinians. These are the alleged reasons:

- 1. Scalabrinian priests would be unfit for an effective parish work because of poor acquaintance with the American language and customs.*
- 2. The parish of St. Anthony had to close the school just for this reason.*

It is necessary, therefore, that the priests serving that parish be endowed 'with the qualities needed in dealing with the teaching staff of public schools and with civil authorities so as to insure the children's attendance to religious instruction to protect their faith and morals'. To him, the personnel of St. Anthony is wanting in these qualities. To prove it, the Bishop submits a table of statistics (of which I send you copy) of three parishes located in the same neighborhood showing the inferiority of St. Anthony's in religious accomplishments as compared with the other two."⁵⁹

Fr. Marchegiani gave a first response on September 5, 1935:

"From documents I could set my eyes on I find that the church of St. Anthony is actually the most attended of the Italian churches and that the table of statistics presented by the chancery of Buffalo is no longer valid because they are three years old at least, and do not reflect the actual state of things.

Besides, while listing the great steps forward of two Italian churches, the said chancery has forgotten to mention the Church of Mt. Carmel, also Italian, which is now in total spiritual and financial ruin."⁶⁰

After pointing out later on in his February 14, 1936 report, that the construction of the municipal buildings had practically emptied the central portion of the parish, Fr. Properzi, Fr. Marchegiani's successor, added:

"The two missionaries now serving the parish, Fr. Celotto, Pastor, and Fr. Lazzarin, assistant, have been working with all proven tenacity and zeal. To me, the results of their work are evident on the moral and the religious as well as on the material level. The increased attendance of young and adults to the religious services and the sacraments shows a religious revival, while the financial improvement is marked by a marked gain in revenue.

With satisfaction, I noticed that while need or expediency had the previous pastor close down the parish school, the present one was able to set up a number of well heated and airy rooms in the basement of the church for catechism classes, after school programs, and evening activities (...).

To the Bishop of Buffalo, unable to grant me an audience on the day of my visitation, I sent a message of greeting and respects on behalf of Your Eminence and myself, pointing out to him, at the same time, that our missionaries were displaying the most of their fervor and zeal, always proud to serve under his high leadership, and that I felt sure that their work would ever meet with his much appreciated approval. I was not honored with his answer, though I was

⁵⁹ Card. Rossi to Marchegiani, Rome, July 11, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 575/8).

⁶⁰ Marchegiani to Card. Rossi, New York, September 5, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 575/8).

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*indirectly informed that he was pleased with it."*⁶¹

And so, the parish of St. Anthony in Buffalo, as well as that of Fredonia, remained with the Scalabrinians. Fr. Celotto directed it until September 1940, when he was assigned to the parish of St. Joseph in New York and its pastor, Fr. Tarcisio Prevedello, was called to succeed him.

6. The Parish of Saint Anthony, Fredonia, N.Y.

The priest assigned in April 1920 to head the parish of St. Anthony in Fredonia, N.Y. was Fr. Luigi Ziliani, who later on was to join the "*Italica Gens*". In October of the same year Fr. Ziliani wrote:

"The moral state of this parish has changed much since that tumultuous day when my entry was contested with sticks and seditious cries. Little by little the flock has quieted down into accepting the new pastor and his program. Here in America, the index of church attendance is represented by the collection. In confronting the collection each Sunday, I find it on the same level as last year, even better at times, and never worse.

*I can tell you that in order to have a better net result, I have indeed been particularly careful in economizing this year, and by eliminating a lot of unneeded or superfluous expenditures, I could pursue my program for a wise administration. I was thus able to take care of all necessary expenses by the net income of raffles and picnics without cutting any notches into the collection or other odd revenues of the church. As an example, I had the rectory, in disrepair for the past nine years (...), repainted and remodeled. And now, by the end of the year, I will be in a position to pay \$1,000.00 on a debt of \$16,000."*⁶²

Fr. Domenico Belliotti was made pastor of St. Anthony in 1921. He was well liked by the people, because he hailed from Valledolmo (Palermo), the place of origin of most immigrants in Fredonia. In his 1923 report he gave the following statistics: 1,930 parishioners, 63 baptisms, 78 first Communions, 120 confirmations, 18 weddings, 11 funerals and some 5,000 Communions.

In 1930, already afflicted by a pernicious anemia, made worse later by a heart condition, Fr. Belliotti returned to Italy and died in a sanitarium at Palermo on September 26.

His successor, Fr. Buffo showed himself a poor administrator and both Regional Superior and people requested his removal. We know already that the Bishop of Buffalo had taken this occasion to ask the Sacred Consistorial Congregation for permission to staff the parish with his diocesan priests. With letter of May 28, 1934, Fr. Marchegiani presented to Bishop Turner, Fr. Pio Parolin, as the successor of Fr. Buffo. Following the inquest conducted in the two parishes of Fredonia and Buffalo by order of Card. Rossi upon complaints from the Bishop, the new Regional Superior sent in this report:

"Small in membership but much extended in territory, our parish of Fredonia is

⁶¹ Properzi to Card. Rossi, Somerville, February 14, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 575/8).

⁶² Ziliani to Bishop Rinaldi, Fredonia, October 18, 1920 (Arch. G.S., 580/4).

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the only one we have in the restful beauty of the open country. Originating mostly from Sicily, its people live of the work of their fields. Anyone, observing these vast properties, all so well tilled in great part as vineyards, would quickly guess their presence here, so Italian is the look of these fields!

It is very consoling, besides, to note that the soul of these immigrants has also remained more Italian here than elsewhere, and perhaps more strongly attached to their Italian church no less than to their Italian priest, here than anywhere else.

The present pastor, Fr. Pio Parolin, who has been directing this parish with great zeal and excellent results for many months now in spite of poor health, testifies with high praise to the good disposition of his people. In the year just past, he was able to have some repairs and improvements done on the church and reduce somewhat its mortgage. And we must appreciate these results all the more when we consider that farmers were the ones who suffered the most from the financial crisis. Yet, we have to take note, unfortunately, that a year ago within this community which is normally so peaceful, an enormous problem has arisen, which seems to defy any solution.

In this colony there has been, for quite a long time now, an Italian Catholic cemetery. It seems that certain private citizens, dissatisfied with its administration, had begun to take the necessary steps to open another one.

The Bishop did not deem it opportune to authorize or bless it, and when it was opened for the public, he ordered the pastor to remind his people of their duty to take care that their beloved departed were buried in consecrated land. In case they should not present a written certificate proving such intention, they were not to be allowed to bring their dead to the church for the funeral. All patrons of the new cemetery had, therefore, to be denied church funerals and indeed they were.

Since the patrons of the new cemetery have kept increasing in number and persistence, the parish has been split in two parties. It is easy to imagine the deplorable consequences and the awkward position of the pastor. Some ten bodies have already been interred in the new cemetery. Its many patrons want a modification of the Bishop's orders. The pastor has repeatedly asked His Excellency to benignly grant 'for the sake of peace' some modification. But, in no way could I obtain it, and so the resentment of the patrons of the new cemetery keeps growing stronger.

Fr. Parolin pleaded with me for help. My answer to him was that we on our part have to be obedient to the Bishops and that I would have prepared in the meantime a report on the question for Your Eminence.

I point out that in no way can the Bishop put on us the blame for a situation with which we have nothing to do."⁶³

Here is now Fr. Pio Parolin's version of the facts of Fredonia as we find it in a somewhat apologetic book he wrote of his memoirs from the day of his entry into the parish:

"After making my acquaintance with the trustees and the notables of the church, I managed to get along for months all by myself without any cooking, but just living on bread and a little milk, and an occasional dish of pasta sent to me by the wife of one

⁶³ Properzi to Card. Rossi, Somerville, February 14, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 575/8).

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or other of the notables. And so it went on month after month....

In the meantime, a society was founded by some members of the parish with the goal of establishing an Italian cemetery. Mind you, there was one already; but proud over the importance they gave themselves, its owners were attempting to burden the people with exorbitant prices for any request of graves or of excavation of burial places. Such is the truth, and it was exactly to spite them that a new society was formed to purchase the land for another cemetery. The Bishop himself volunteered his services to this end, but without consulting the new pastor. The society had the Bishop's approval in writing and his word that he would personally bless the new cemetery as soon as it would be ready. In the face of this tragedy I could not take sides with either one because all of them were my parishioners. Praying in silence, and crying, sometimes, was all I could do.

Finally, the day came when everything was ready for the blessing of the new cemetery and the new society called on the Bishop inviting him to bless it. But, what happened all of a sudden? The Bishop refused and it was not quite clearly why. Had the old cemetery's society bought perhaps the favors of church authorities? I could not say for sure! I only know that I was sent a letter telling me that whoever wanted to be buried in the new cemetery could not have either Mass or funeral, or even a drop of holy water. Imagine then the conflicting passions, the rebellions, the curses, and the imprecations that followed hence against church authorities! And who else bore the consequences of all this but the church itself and its pastor? The letter, that was to cause so much trouble, is probably still kept in the archives of the parish of Fredonia, New York.

The fact is that from then on hardly 20% of the people frequented the church with the result that my Sunday collection and candle offerings together amounted to seven or eight dollars a week. What a scourge for the souls entrusted to my care! I cried much, I suffered much, but there was nothing I could do!

At that very time orders came for the annual charity collection. There was even someone, a priest I must say, who stated he would personally come to take care of my people. He was a Monsignor living not very far from my parish. I called the people to a meeting in church. The Monsignor showed up and began his speech. No sooner did he start speaking of charity than someone from the audience interrupted him saying: 'Listen, Monsignor, before you start talking to us about charity, tell us why the Bishop gave orders to buy the land for the new cemetery.... Explain it to us, and then we will talk charity!'

Monsignor excused himself assuring him he did not know anything about it. At that, one of the most audacious walked up to him waving an arm as though he wanted to strike the Monsignor. After this I could not take it any longer, and I cried out loudly: 'Enough of this!' The Monsignor took off as fast as he could and never showed up anymore, certainly startled and scared at having to do with people like that. I volunteered then to talk myself to the members of the new society on the need of this collection giving them to understand that the Bishop would thus be appeased perhaps and so come to bless the cemetery. They agreed to follow my advice and we succeeded in grossing a more generous collection than would have been ordinarily expected. Together with the president of the new society, I called afterwards on the Bishop to present him the collection in hopes to hear some expression of praise. But what was my surprise, instead, when I saw the Bishop take me aside leaving the poor man all alone behind because he wanted to talk to me....

I handed him the offering of charity and said: 'Your Excellency, from this you will see that these people are not pagans but good Catholics like the others. 'Good!', the Bishop replied. 'And now, what do you wish?' 'I wish to ask that you erase from your letter the provision forbidding to grant church funerals to the faithful who intend to be buried in the new cemetery.'

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At this petition of mine, the Bishop stood up and said simply: 'No!' 'But, Excellency' - I said - 'should I then deny the sacraments to those intending to be buried in the new cemetery?' 'Oh, no,' - he replied - 'this cannot be!' But then, ' - I went on - 'how could you, a Bishop, justify the last rites without a Christian burial?' Angry this time, he said to me in a conclusive tone: 'This does not concern me. But go now and obey my orders.'

I wrote in this regard to the Apostolic Delegate, who prudently answered me to follow the Bishop's directives. At that, I presented myself to the people in church the following Sunday, and this is what I said: 'The problem of the cemetery has not been solved yet, but I promise you that I will eat the stones of this church, if necessary, and that I shall not leave here before it be concluded to the satisfaction and good accord of all....' More than two years went by without my calling once on the chancery of Buffalo. In the meanwhile, the Bishop fell sick and died (...).

Following the Bishop's death, the Vicar General of the Diocese deemed it opportune to come and see for himself how things were in Fredonia; or was it orders from above? I could not tell! The fact is that he came to find out for himself personally, and so I had the opportunity to inform him about the spiritual and financial conditions of my parish. He travelled to Washington and on his return he asked me whether I could succeed in having certain papers undersigned in one accord by both the society of the old cemetery and that of the new one. I was able to do it right away. And so now we can bury our dead in both cemeteries at last, to the peace and harmony of all. This question also was thus finally solved."⁶⁴

As the Regional Superior, Fr. Properzi, reports in reference to a letter by Fr. Parolin, the solution of this controversy was reached in the summer of 1936:

*"As to the long debated question of the cemeteries, it was finally brought to a happy conclusion by the Vicar General, Msgr. John J. Nash, presently the Capitular Vicar. The controversy was ended before the Bishop's death. I am of the opinion, however, that the Apostolic Delegate had a hand in it."*⁶⁵

Fr. Parolin goes on:

"People were returning little by little to their church and in a short while I could extinguish the entire debt weighing down on it and carry out all the repairs that were needed. I even got a mission started that may well mark the beginnings of a new parish someday.

At that time, by order of the Bishop, I had also to take care of religious instruction at Laona. I began by trying at first to gather the children in some private home. But, anyone well knows how children are! They do not readily keep their hands off things, they dirty all over, they break the furniture, they throw everything upside down. And so, to avoid troubles and complaints on the part of owners, I decided to make still one more sacrifice. I called on the Bishop and clearly reported to him on the situation. I told him afterwards that I knew of an unoccupied house and that I would have liked to buy it on behalf of the church.

'That's fine!' - he said - 'Go ahead, buy that house immediately, and I will help you to pay for it.' Naturally, I got down to work right away, and no sooner I purchased the house, or signed the contract, rather, than I returned to the Bishop to solicit the financial help he had promised.

Unexpectedly, however, I heard him telling me that he had no money in the bank and that in no way could he help me. Should I reconsider? No, I said to myself, thinking that with God's help I would have managed also in that occasion. In fact, I succeeded

⁶⁴ Parolin, "Memoirs", pp. 69-73 (Arch. Gen. S., 1598).

⁶⁵ Properzi to Card. Rossi, Somerville, August 12, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 580/7).

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in paying off little by little that mortgage, too, and thus extinguishing the debt within the prescribed time."⁶⁶

The chapel of St. Joseph at Laona was opened on November 28, 1939.

7. The Parish of St. Peter, Syracuse, N.Y.

Fr. Pio Parolin, who had been Pastor in Syracuse since October 1914, was forced to leave the parish in the spring of 1922 to be taken to the hospital on Broad St., where he remained for six months; he spent six more months convalescing at the St. Vincent de Paul Hospital in Norfolk, Virginia, and still another half year at the hospital of Mestre, Venice.

On March 28, 1922, Fr. Parolin was succeeded by Fr. Vittorio Rossi, assisted at first by Fr. Emanuele Basile and, later, by Fr. Carlo Celotto. Because of the discord existing between the pastor and Fr. Celotto, the Bishop of Syracuse had both of them transferred. They were replaced on November 6, 1923, by Fr. Agostino Lazzarin, pastor, and Fr. Silvio Sartori, assistant.

In June, 1924, Fr. Lazzarin wrote to Card. DeLai:

*"Unfortunately, my assistant and I are experiencing the burden and the consequences of too long a stormy past. This parish has been divided in two on April 19 of this year. The great majority of the Italians under our care live in the midst of American parishes, 30 minutes or an hour and a half away from the church. Incidents deriving from the splitting are a daily occurrence."*⁶⁷

The parish created by the Bishop on April 19, 1924, was Our Lady of Pompeii, initiated by Fr. Parolin, as he had also been the initiator of the parishes of St. Bartholomew in Norwich, NY, Saint Joseph in Oswego, NY, and St. Anthony in Courtland, NY. At that time there were in Syracuse about 17,000 Italians. According to Fr. Lazzarin, after the division, only 4,040 Italians living in the city belonged to the parish of St. Peter with another 1000 or more spread far and wide in the countryside. But, those living in the city were also scattered all over, and it was difficult to keep in touch with them; neither was it easy for them to go to church, so that attendance at St. Peter ran between 20% and 25% of the total. Only one religious society, the "Angels' Sodality", was flourishing there under the direction of the Missionary Sisters of St. Francis, who had arrived in Syracuse in 1919 and placed their chapel at the disposal of the Italians living far from the church of Saint Peter.

Due to the location of parish church facing the railroad tracks, no land could be found for a school for which great need was felt and a collection continued to be held. The Sisters conducted the Sunday school in the basement of St. Peter church.

Fr. Lazzarin repeatedly asked to be relieved of his responsibility. His resignation was accepted by the end of 1924, though to the regret of Bishop Curley, who was sorry to lose him now that he had succeeded in restoring peace among the faithful.

⁶⁶ Parolin, "Memoirs", pp. 73-74 (Arch. Gen. S., 1598).

⁶⁷ Lazzarin to Card. DeLai, Syracuse, June 23, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 593/9).

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On January 2, 1925, he was succeeded by Fr. Angelo Strazzoni who endowed the church with the front stairway, two side doors, and the baptistry, and did repair works on the rectory.

From the 1930 report of the Regional Superior, Fr. Quaglia, we gather that only about 1,200 Italians were attending the parish, and that its community was in steady decrease. For this reason, in 1933 the Regional Superior Fr. Marchegiani made a proposal to the Bishop of Syracuse that would have assigned the parish of St. Peter to the diocesan clergy in exchange for the then vacant parish of St. Anthony in Utica, New York.⁶⁸ In spite of the favorable opinion of both the Bishops and the Consistorial Congregation, the project was abandoned.

After his first visitation in Syracuse, the new Regional Superior, Fr. Properi, reported on March 3, 1936:

"This parish has been disintegrated by the great construction projects of the city and by the railroad tracks running close to it. As is the case with not a few of our churches, the members of this parish are scattered about at considerable distances. We are fortunate, however, that the call of the blood draws them back to their Italian priest when they are in need of the religious comforts and that by their spirit of sacrifice our Italian priests make themselves well loved by them and esteemed also by non-Italians.

*Bishop Duffy of Syracuse (...) expressed to me the highest praises for our missionaries and his deepest satisfaction for their work."*⁶⁹

In 1937 a fire destroyed the organ and damaged a great part of other furnishings of the church. Within the same year the ceiling was rebuilt, the furniture replaced, and a new organ purchased.

8. The Parish of St. Mary of Mt. Carmel, Utica, N.Y.

The last undertaking of Fr. Giuseppe Formia, pastor of St. Mary of Mt. Carmel since 1903, was the parish Club, founded in 1920:

"This year's most remarkable event is, no doubt, the institution of the new parish club, for which our colony is rightly proud (...). The need for this club could not be more urgent, nor could its founding be more opportune. Indeed, the church is meant to serve the faithful who regularly attend it, and the parish school is for our children (...). But this is not enough. There are unfortunately many of our fellow countrymen who have never had the good fortune of attending a Catholic school and do not attend church. There are many light-hearted and inexperienced young people, especially, who, left to themselves in the midst of the world, fall easy prey to Protestant sects and to dangerous subversive doctrines. How could we effectively provide for the salvation of so many of our beloved youths? How could we promote the moral, civil, and economic betterment of the masses of our people, destined to become such an important factor in the life of the great American Nation? There had to be a Catholic circle, therefore, if we were to impart a good formation to our young Italian Americans, and this providential circle was founded at last (...)

This club was born under the auspices of the National Catholic Welfare Council that

⁶⁸ Marchegiani to Rossi, Utica, July 26, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 593/8).

⁶⁹ Properi to Card. Rossi, March 3, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 593/9).

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directs and administers it, but, as a Catholic institution, it has been placed at the dependence of the church of St. Mary of Mt. Carmel, whose priests have charge of its spiritual direction. The building of the club rises a short distance from the church with the advantage, therefore, of being located right in the center of the Italian community. Truly grandiose and fitting their purpose, the premises include a large theatre and five beautiful halls for use as offices, meeting places, and various sport facilities (...).

The inauguration of the Club took place in a private ceremony last April 15. From its opening, registration of members amounted to the beautiful number of 500 (...). From then on the club building has become a veritable center of life towards which gravitates and from which radiates every movement of the activities of this colony. On October 2, Fr. Raschiotti held another important conference there on the evil of blasphemy at the meeting of the Holy Name Society. The new Club aroused such enthusiasm in the people that all vied with each other in having themselves registered, and so its membership increased from 500 to 1,000 in less than a month (...).

The club was officially dedicated on October 26 (...). The club has now 1,400 members. The men's section is under the direction of the President, Mr. Kelly; the women are the charge of Miss MacGough. There are special departments for music, singing, and dramatics. In addition, a free movie, offering an instructive and educational show, is given every Wednesday in the theatre. Between acts, good musical selections are performed by the boys and girls of the club. The evening is always concluded with a talk on the various topics of the day. The largest majority of the Italian community attends this conference, but the hall is always insufficient to hold all those that would like to be present. The speakers are judges, lawyers, doctors, priests, who willingly offer their services for this highly moral and civic enterprise. At each meeting, it is always the note of Italian sentiments that prevails over all others and most arouses enthusiasm. Furthermore, on special days the girls are taught sewing, embroidery, and other useful women's skills.

Friday evenings are devoted to Americanization classes for the teaching of the norms and procedures needed to acquire the American citizenship. This may not please some Italians, but the writer of this article, who has the advantage of long years of experience in the midst of our immigrants, is of the opinion that the sooner they become American citizens the more numerous will be the benefits for them. In America, where people are not as idealistic as in Italy, one must have the right to vote if he wishes to make himself known and respected; anyone lacking this right counts as nothing. This service is performed by the famous judge, Mr. Leed of the Utica Court, with the help of the young and able Italian-American Mr. Sisti, who acts as his interpreter. Both devote themselves with great unselfishness and love to the formation of good citizens.

Last, but not least, comes the Italian language school opened by our missionaries and entrusted to Fr. Peona, who made it so interesting and likeable, as to see it attended not only by many Italian young men but by many young Americans, as well."⁷⁰

Fr. Formia retired to Italy in 1921 for reasons of health. Fr. Giovanni Marchegiani succeeded him.

"When Fr. Marchegiani on the evening of June 5, 1921, presented himself by order of his Superior to the Rector of St. Mary of Mt. Carmel in Utica, New York, and said he had been sent to take charge of the church, he heard the people tell him these very words: 'The Superior has indeed placed on you a difficult task. Everything is falling to pieces. The school is in ruins, the roof in such disrepair that rain pours in all over, the walls are black and cracked, the boilers do not work, and the Public Health Office is

⁷⁰ Shenweel, "Una benefica istituzione a Utica, N.Y." "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a.XIV, n. 1 (January-March 1921), pp. 5-8.

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now threatening to close everything off. The church has grown too small for the number of people and is always cold in the winter because of the inadequate heating system. It stands in need of urgent repairs and thorough cleaning, the bell is cracked, the basement has become a swamp, and the house needs repairs, too, etc.' And who knows how much more sad information would have been given to the new pastor had he not, though so heart stricken with sorrow, interrupted them saying: 'We hope things will not all crumble tonight; tomorrow, upon securing permission from the Bishop, I shall start checking out whatever will have to be done.' And, he did indeed get down to work on the following day and gave start to the moral and material restoration which is still underway.

Works were first started on the school: the roof was fixed, the walls were scraped, plastered over, and equipped with new blackboards, doors and windows were varnished, the pavement was done over, so that when the school year reopened in September it seemed like entering a new building. For that year he contented himself to have the boilers fixed the best he could to last through the whole winter. Expenditures for the said first works amounted to \$1,000.00. Repairs on church and rectory began as soon as was possible. Soon afterwards, on the occasion of the Confirmation of some 800 boys and girls, seeing that the church was too small to hold the people, the Bishop gave permission to make the changes needed to insure greater space. In fact, the vestibule was done away with, the sanctuary was widened on either side so that what was sacristy before now became the sanctuary. The altar was moved back, a new altar railing was installed, so that enough room was added for sitting 280 more people. Our church has now a sitting capacity for 750 persons, much of it obtained from the changes brought to the balcony. There in a state of utter disrepair, the organ was dismantled, cleaned up, endowed with an electric motor, and reassembled at one side of the balcony. These changes made room for the faithful, the large artistic stained glass, previously hidden behind the organ was brought into view, while the church gained in light and beauty (...).

To spare ourselves the inconvenience of stepping out of the house whenever there was need to go to the church, a short passageway was built between the church and the rectory. All this was done in the first year.

Before the new winter set in, it was necessary to provide a new heating system that while responding to the needs should not exceed our finances at the same time (...). A space, sealed with cement, was obtained in the basement of the church in which only one boiler, the newest "vapor" model, was installed with sufficient heating power for church, school, and rectory. Its cost amounted to \$5,000.00.

After this, he began thinking about repairing the church basement (...) which was transformed into (...) a vast and magnificent hall, furnished with chairs, a movie projector, an "Ampico" piano. The Sisters have already begun to teach catechism in it, and the Societies of the parish hold their meetings and socials. All this cost \$8,000.00.

And what about the money? And everything was paid for in full! A sign that God's Providence was assisting us! In fact, from the annual reports one can notice that revenues had grown from \$8,000.00 to \$23,000 in two years; an evident sign that with their contributions people have approved of this work and appreciated the sacrifices their pastor, Fr. Marchegiani, has made even at the risk of his health (...). The house for the Sisters (...) was purchased for \$4,500.00, but is in need of repairs (...)⁷¹

While this fervor of activities had brought about the material restoration of the whole complex of buildings, the spiritual benefits deriving of it were even more consoling. To the already existing societies were added in 1923 the Altar Society, the Junior Holy Name, the St. Agnes Sodality, with a cumulative membership of 1,500 people. With

⁷¹ "Un reduce ammiratore, 'Madonna del Carmine'", "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. XVII, n. 3, (July-September, 1923), pp. 31-32.

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great sacrifice of time and money, and with the cooperation of the Franciscan Sisters, catechism classes were organized to accommodate the 800 children every week for religious instruction. That year's 16-day mission (8 days in Italian, the other 8 in English) bore the most copious spiritual fruits and brought back to the church many souls who had stayed away from it (...).

The financial report of the church concluded the year 1923 with an income of \$31,093.09, a real sign of the zeal and ability of Fr. Marchegiani, and of the satisfaction for and response to his wonderful endeavors by all people. But while the ever increasing crowds on one hand were a tangible proof of the success of Fr. Marchegiani's action, they had become on the other hand the source of his main concern. In spite of enlargement works carried out in 1922, the church had again grown inadequate to the needs. After consulting the Bishop, Fr. Marchegiani figured out a daring project: the addition of two lateral naves to the existing church. He decided in the meantime to put also the Sisters' convent in good order. It was translocated, first, some thirty feet towards Mohawk Street, to give more ample open space to the church; and then a new construction, including six bedrooms, the chapel, a study hall, and a roomy basement, was added to the old building. It became thus possible to provide comfortable living quarters for nine Franciscan nuns, and a project was, in the meantime, being readied for the enlargement of the parish school. At works' completion, the church could dispose of an additional seating capacity for 460 more people. And so the ever present inconvenience of the lack of sufficient room for the people was finally taken care of once and for all.

In that same year the old standing debt of \$13,777.02 was paid off, but it became necessary to contract a new one of \$40,000 to accomplish the above work."⁷²

In 1924, there were 8,000 parishioners, the great majority of them around the church. Attendance was 50%; the parish had an annual average of 500 baptisms, 450 confirmations, and 400 first communicants. The parochial school was attended by 365 students. In regard to the same year the pastor said:

*"This past year, we had to make the sacrifice of some money to help out the activities of the youth of our parish and to counteract the persistent propaganda of Protestants among our Italians. A few steps away from our church, a fallen away Catholic priest, now married and who turned Protestant minister, has opened a Protestant Episcopalian church, and tries hard by all means to steal away especially the young from us, but with no success so far."*⁷³

In May 1926, he reported that this minister had closed down the church and had gone away; Ukrainian Catholics had bought it.⁷⁴ Concerned, like other missionaries over the scarcity of personnel, Fr. Marchegiani made the following observations:

"There is in many of us the desire that our young students be sent here for their theology courses, that they may learn in this manner the language in which they must express themselves and get acquainted with the customs of the country they will live and exercise their ministry. Coming from Italy to this country as a young priest, one can be employed only in part for almost two years because of inability to preach in the language of the place and communicate with the youth,

⁷² Pizzoglio, "St. Mary of Mount Carmel Church, Utica, N.Y. Its History and Progress from the Beginning to the Present (1896-1936)". (Utica, 1936), pp. 58-61.

⁷³ Marchegiani to Card. Rossi, Utica, January 2, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 595/4).

⁷⁴ Marchegiani to Card. Rossi, Utica, May 25, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 595/4).

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which is the life of the parish. When we preach in Italian three-fourths of our parishioners do not understand what we are saying. Such is the sad situation of our parishes, and only God knows how much we suffer for the early two or three years before we may be able to preach in English."⁷⁵

Completely restored, the parish school was inaugurated in 1928 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the construction of the upper church:

"Spacious and airy, the classrooms were increased from six to eight with the addition of an office for the doctor, a library and the auditorium. In fact, we even went further.... We endowed the school with a beautiful gymnasium where not only the students of our school, but also the youth of the parish in general may enjoy some recreation in the evenings with sport exercises and games proper for their age. And as one thing leads to another, a kitchen was added to the gymnasium with all the furnishings needed to serve 500 people (....).

In 1931 the Altar Society endowed the sanctuary of the church with a magnificent new railing, the pulpit, a new floor, all made of white Carrara marble."⁷⁶

Fr. Marchegiani was appointed Regional Superior in March 1931. On the first of February 1932, he took temporary charge of the church of the Sacred Heart in Boston, leaving in Utica Fr. Antonio Gambini, an "associate" priest, and Fr. Tarcisio Prevedello, who were soon joined afterwards by Fr. Francesco Levra. Fr. Marchegiani returned to Utica in May of 1932, and then moved to the parish of Our Lady of Pompeii in New York.

On the first Sunday in June 1934, Fr. Guglielmo Pizzoglio took possession of the parish. His first act was the taking of the census, which showed a membership of 2,035 resident families with 12,700 souls. In 1936 he wrote:

"The catechism programs for children of public schools were intensified, and for them the summer school was also instituted. In addition, the Union of the Sacred Heart for spreading the devotion and consecration of the families to the Sacred Heart, and the Mount Carmel High School Association for the young students of the parish were organized.

This year, on the occurrence of the 40th anniversary of the opening of the church basement, three artistic marble altars have replaced the old ones, the work of the "Da Prato Statuary" of New York.

For the same occasion, the church will be richly decorated by the famous Prof. Anthony D'Ambrosio, also of New York.

A new spirit seems to get hold of the parishioners. This year's mission, preached by Passionists, has been attended as a whole by some six thousand people.

Communions, which already had increased last year to 61,000, continue to grow at a consoling rate."⁷⁷

On November 8, 1936, Bishop J.A. Duffy of Syracuse consecrated the new altars and blessed the new paintings of Prof. D'Ambrosio. A new organ was installed in 1939 and the convent of the Franciscan Sisters was radically done over.

⁷⁵ Marchegiani to Card. Rossi, Utica, August 24, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 595/4).

⁷⁶ Pizzoglio, op, cit., p. 60.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 62.

CHAPTER VII

MISSIONS IN NEW ENGLAND

1. Parish of the Sacred Heart, Boston, Massachusetts

Following the departure of Fr. Vittorio Gregori, the church of the Sacred Heart was administered for a few months by Fr. Raffaele D'Alfonso, an "Associate" of the Scalabrinians, with the assistance of Frs. Buggini, Peona, and Peretto.

Fr. D'Alfonso arrived in Boston on April 20, 1920, and remained there until June 18, 1921. From that day the parish was temporarily under the care of Fr. Domenico Dellarole who wrote:

"I carried on gropingly in the midst of a thousand difficulties on account of my inexperience of America's ways and of my absolute ignorance of the language. I owe my sincere thanks to the confreres who helped me wholeheartedly and so we were enjoying, in the house at least, an incomparable peace and harmony. Particular thanks I owe to the excellent Fr. Francesco Berti, who was of a very special assistance to me. To my good fortune, I had at my side the experienced missionary Fr. Ludovico Toma always ready to volunteer his advice and help whenever I was in difficulty. And so, I arrived during the month of January 1922, when I was made an assistant of the same parish of the Sacred Heart in Boston, with Fr. Toma as its new Pastor."¹

Fr. Toma was pastor of St. Lazarus church in East Boston: as a result, he had to take care of two parishes at the same time, located at quite a distance from each other. He was given Fathers O. Alussi, D. Gibelli, C. Sassi, as assistants while Fr. Francesco Berti stayed on as his main coadjutor.

In 1922 the parish in Boston had 1,229 baptisms, 372 weddings, 675 first communions; the parochial school was attended by 620 pupils, while about one thousand more children frequented Sunday school. It was still a very large parish; furthermore, Fr. Toma was burdened with the responsibility of the works underway on the construction of the new church of St. Lazarus. This rather awkward situation was to last for quite some time; probably nobody wanted to take upon himself the responsibility of an important and difficult parish such as this; on the other hand, Archbishop O'Connell wanted it that way.

In 1923, Fr. Berti wrote as follows:

"By God's Grace, everything is well here at the North Square and the Cardinal is much satisfied with it. He clearly said so right here last Saturday when he was here for the administration of the sacrament of Confirmation to more than 850 candidates, adults included."²

¹ Dellarole to Cimino, East Providence, August 18, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 22/3).

² Berti to Rinaldi, Boston, September 17, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 573/6).

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By the end of 1924, Card. O'Connell approved the proposal of Card. DeLai for the appointment of Fr. Berti as an "assistant to Fr. Toma with the special care of the parish of the Sacred Heart, with Fr. Toma still remaining the pastor of both parishes": in practice, therefore, Fr. Toma continued to be the pastor officially, and Fr. Berti took the task of acting pastor. In fact, he did not think himself fit to assume full responsibility of a large parish.

At last, Fr. Pacifico Chenuil, the former Superior General, took charge of the parish on January 30, 1927, and Fr. Berti remained as an assistant. Two months later, Fr. Chenuil wrote in his first report:

"Though one of our oldest missions, this parish has always been in good condition, and even today it deserves to be listed among the most important and flourishing of them.

Besides ours, there are in this section of the city three more parishes: St. Mary with the Jesuits, Saint Leonard in the hands of the Franciscans, and St. Stephen for the Irish, at five to ten minutes walking distance from each other, and all attended by our fellow nationals. But even though the other three churches are much more beautiful than ours, (which is actually only a Protestant church adapted for Catholic worship) our church is perhaps still the most attended. And to prove it we have last year's revenues amounting to the handsome sum of \$30,592.21 and the number of baptisms reaching 1,122.

Besides, this House has surpassed all the others in generosity by sending in to Your Most Rev. Eminence the fine amount of \$5,000 in contributions and \$3,000 in Mass intentions.

There are no boundaries between these parishes, and our fellow countrymen are allowed to attend the church they prefer. In order to withstand competition from other priests and draw the greatest number of people possible to our church, we must have, naturally, a sufficient number of missionaries and all of them should be good and efficient workers.

It was for this reason that I felt the immediate need for asking Your Eminence another assistant in the person of Fr. Celotto (...). My actual collaborators are: Fr. Berti, well esteemed and loved by all; Fr. Lazzarin, an able and untiring worker, who is of great assistance to me with his preaching in English; and Fr. Merlo, who, though quite up in years, still works hard and does it well, but on Sunday he has to go and say Mass at Fr. Toma's place who has no assistants.

As to Fr. Oreste Alussi, who had been listed up to now in the Catholic Directory as an assistant of this church, I do not even mention him because he cannot be in any way whatsoever called one. In fact, for some time already he has been in such a state of decline and infirmity as to be cause of concern for the Superiors. He has obtained the dispensation of our Cardinal Archbishop from the Breviary, and he cannot say Mass any longer without assistance. He is the oldest of our Missionaries, being born in 1856 and having come to America in 1899. By his humility and piety he gained the esteem and love of both his people and confreres (...).

But we cannot any longer keep him in a house so uncomfortable as this with no decent accommodations sufficiently suited for the healthy let alone for the sick. You should know that this is an old, small, and uncomfortable house; it is a five story building with staircases so narrow and dark that we need to have the

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*lights on all day long. Two Fathers and I must sleep in a little room under the stairs not measuring more than six feet in width while our servant and the cook have to sleep out in other lodgings. The dining room is on the fifth floor, and it is the only airy and sunny place where the poor priests can breathe some pure air."*³

In 1928, Fr. Chenuil got around to reconstructing the church that was dedicated on December 16:

"The last year was for me one of intense and fruitful work because, in addition to directing this most large parish, I decided to take upon myself also the task of the reconstruction of the new parish church (....).

When I came here I found the people quite indifferent and disgusted because, besides making several promises and even collecting a few pledges, my predecessors had, unfortunately, never done anything else for the new church. I thoroughly studied the situation and when I understood that the project could be carried out, I secured first the approval of the Cardinal Archbishop and then I launched an appeal to the people to collect the funds needed for an enterprise that would have required the huge sum of \$75,000. The unanimous response of the notables of the colony was this: 'At this point we do not trust simple promises, we want the facts. We shall not give you a penny until we will see you at work. We shall help you only when we will see the new building rise up, not before.'

And, indeed, when they saw me actually giving start to the great works, all vied with each other to give their spontaneous contributions, and so in a little more than six months we have thus far collected the handsome amount of \$17,000.00. I would have never expected such a great success in a year as critical and difficult as the last one with so much misery caused by unemployment and influenza.

The new church turned out beautiful indeed and to everyone's liking. Our Most Eminent Cardinal Archbishop himself, who solemnly dedicated it on December 16 last, was very happy with it and had words of praise for us priests and for all of our people (....).

*But while the past year was on one hand a year of prosperity for our church, on the other hand we are sorry to have to confess that it was a rather critical one for the house. During the construction of the new building we had to say Mass in the small and lower old church holding only a few people and very uncomfortable. For this reason, many people did not want to come to it, and so we lost many extra revenues on baptisms, funerals, weddings especially, and on the feasts of the societies, which were celebrated in other neighboring churches."*⁴

In May of 1931, Fr. Chenuil returned to Italy to undergo an operation of which he died in the "Ospedale Mauriziano" of Aosta on October 26, 1931. His place was filled by Fr. Giorgio Cavigiolo from May 1931 to February 1932; and then by Fr. Marchegiani for a few months. Finally, in May of 1932, Fr. Pio Parolin was appointed pastor on "a trial basis". He succeeded in paying off the debt on the church, remodeled the altars and brought some improvements to the

³ Chenuil to Card. DeLai, Boston, March 29, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 573/7).

⁴ Chenuil to Card. Perosi, Boston, February 23, 1929 (Arch. G.S., 573/7).

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basement. Stricken with arthritis, he resigned a year later. Fr. Tarcisio Prevedello took charge of the parish on September 12, 1933, with Fr. Raffaele Larcher and Fr. Luigi Donanzan as assistants. During the following year, Fr. Larcher was replaced by Fr. Corrado Martellozzo, Fr. Berti returned, and Brother Nino Setti was assigned to Boston in 1935.

Fr. Tarcisio Prevedello was transferred to the parish of St. Joachim in New York, the pastor of which, Fr. Arnaldo Vanoli took his place in Boston and directed the parish of the Sacred Heart until 1949. Fr. Francesco Berti died at the Boston Hospital following a very brief illness.

According to 1936 statistics, the parish numbered 1,005 families with 5,200 souls, and in that year there were 360 baptisms, 405 confirmations, 121 weddings, 102 funerals. Some 3,000 people attended Sunday Mass regularly.

2. The Parish of St. Lazarus in East Boston, MA

On October 11, 1922, the pastor, Fr. Ludovico Toma, presided at the ground breaking of the new church designed by Architect Matthew Sullivan.

"The sacred building was constructed in about a year's time with special bricks and stone decorations. Located at the foot of a pleasant hill overlooking the city on one side and the ocean on the other, surrounded by a wide esplanade soon to be embellished with trees and green lawns, it rises majestically in its Lombard style, though somewhat exaggerated in the high reach of its central cusp as if to lend it a certain Gothic agility that tends to blend it well with the hilly countryside around. Its interior has three ogive naves, and light shines sparingly down from its high stained glass windows, thus creating an atmosphere of silence and recollection rarely found in modern churches."⁵

With sitting room for 800 people, the church was dedicated by Cardinal O'Connell on November 11, 1923. The old church was fitted into a meeting hall for the Holy Name Society. Shortly afterwards, Fr. Toma began thinking about a parish school. As he had done for the church, helped along by his assistant, Fr. Berti, he walked from door to door soliciting the generosity of his parishioners. Work began on the school designed by Architect Herbert Casale in May 1927. Building and furnishings were up and ready in September of the same year, and in October the school was blessed by Msgr. Quinlan, diocesan supervisor of parochial schools. The diocesan Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph was called to staff the school.

In June of 1932, on the 25th anniversary of Fr. Toma's ordination as a priest, the apse of the church was decorated with frescoes, the work of Fr. Nazareno Properzi. At that time the population of the parish had increased to 4,500 souls, and the school was attended by 400 pupils, about 70% of the children of the parish.

In preparation for the 25th anniversary of Fr. Toma as a pastor, the decoration of the interior of the church was brought to completion and then blessed by the Vicar General, Msgr. Richard Haberlin on December 6, 1936. There was still

⁵ "L'Inaugurazione della Nuova Chiesa di San Lazzaro in East Boston" "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. XVII, n. 4 (October/November, 1923).

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the need of the Convent for the Sisters who had to come in every day from Brighton. The project was entrusted to the same Architect Casale. The new convent was blessed in October 1938 by Msgr. Francesco J. Phelan, Chancellor of the Archdiocese.⁶

3. The Parish of Saint Tarcisius in Framingham, MA

In 1921, work was completed on the restoration and enlargement of the church that had been seriously damaged by a fire in 1918; its length was increased to thirty meters, and the structure was changed into a three nave building with walls made of artificial granite.

In 1924, Fr. Pietro Maschi, founder of the parish and its pastor since 1907, stated that the people of St. Tarcisius amounted to about 3000 to 4000 souls: the number fluctuated in line with the working conditions of the factories of the place. The stable element was represented only by workers employed on railroads and in the fields. The church was also attended by French-Canadians, Poles, Lithuanians, and a few Armenians. The Sunday school was attended by two or three hundred children: only 20% of the adults attended Mass. In 1924 there were 194 baptisms, 96 weddings, and about 2000 to 3000 communions. The spiritual life of the parish was languishing. Evidently, the financial state of the parish was also at a low ebb, and so partly because of this and partly because of Fr. Maschi's reluctance to contract debts the parish school was never built.

Neither did Fr. Maschi want to have anything to do with societies of the southern type because they pretended to dictate to the pastor; he was annoyed, besides, by an association titled after Christopher Columbus. It had built a hall to which were invited masons, former priests, etc., to give lectures at its meetings.

In a 1932 report the pastor reported with sadness:

"Associations exist in names rather than in facts: the Society of Christian Mothers has 20 members, and should their number be higher than that it is a sure sign that someone is there, ready to ruin it. The young men of the Holy Name Society are also very few, but as soon as the pastor asks them for something they well know how to resign (...). We have the Holy Missions every three years since 1912. Quite a few Knights of Columbus come to hear the sermons and criticize the preachers, but they never receive the sacraments. These gentlemen give \$100.00 a month for their hall, but never a penny for the church. The young born in Framingham are rich for their amusements, but too poor when entering the church; an atavistic sickness has turned into a chronic disease.

More than 400 children attend public schools but only 175 of them frequent catechism classes; there is need of a parochial school, of a kindergarten, but Cardinal O'Connell would answer that it is necessary to find someone first who can bear the burden and provide the funds needed for such monuments."⁷

And so, Fr. Maschi limited himself to bringing some improvements to the church and the rectory. In 1924 he enlarged the church basement for meetings and social events.

⁶ Cfr. "1892-1942. Golden Jubilee (Boston, 1942); Diamond Jubilee of St. Lazarus Church, East Boston (Boston, 1967).

⁷ Maschi, "Chiesa di San Tarcisio in Framingham, Massachusetts", 1932 (Arch. G.S., 579/2).

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In 1925, he built the sacristy and in 1932 the new rectory. As a result, the rooms above the church that served as living quarters for the pastor were eliminated, and the church was given a higher ceiling by the raising of the central nave.⁸

In 1939 Fr. Maschi reported more comforting statistics: attendance at church had gone up to 50% and annual communions to 10,000.⁹

4. The Parish of Saint Anthony in Somerville, MA

In early 1920, Fr. Nazareno Properzi established the "Parish Fund Society", whose members paid a \$.25 fee a month; in June of the following year he was able to purchase a property next to the "basement", which had been opened in 1917. It included a wooden house which Fr. Properzi had done over, thus turning the ground floor into office space and the upper floor into living quarters for himself. In 1922, he witnessed a one-third increase in attendance at Sunday Mass and the number of communions doubled. In the same year he organized an after school program for children that had received first communion with the intent to integrate on the religious and ethnic level the education they were receiving in the public schools; he also gave life to the St. Anthony Club for the promotion of social works. In August of 1923, he wrote to Fr. Rinaldi:

"I have given start to a campaign for an increase of funds for this church of mine that is to be built; I go from door to door, and, if I succeed in reaching a quota of at least \$5,000.00, it shall be built immediately. I have already had the projects made, and the Cardinal has given me his full consent."¹⁰

Work was started during the following October. Designed by Architect Andrew Cipollini, the upper church had a seating capacity for 600 people. The small parish was growing, so was church attendance, but access to the sacraments still remained low. In 1924, Italians living scattered around Somerville were thought to be 1,800. That is why a new church was anxiously expected. In June of 1925 the pastor wrote:

"As you may know already, this past week we were in mourning here at North Square in Boston. Our Lay Brother Vincenzo Arcelli passed away of a sudden illness on the evening of June 13. He had a most solemn funeral. Many priests of ours and others attended it together with an immense crowd of people. And, indeed, he deserved it! He has worked with exemplary dedication for a good 36 years in this colony.

On this occasion I met the new Provincial and had him see this new church of ours. The church has been completed. Now there remains to supply it with candlesticks, vases, crucifix, statues, etc. (...).

Now that immigration into these United States has practically been closed, our colonies have become much more stationary and some of them are gradually thinning down. In addition to a low increase in the number of newcomers, there is also the fact that the families who are better off financially are leaving the

⁸ Cfr. "50th Anniversary - 1907-1957 - St. Tarcisius Church", Framingham, Massachusetts 1957.

⁹ Cfr. "Missioni Scalabriniane in America", "Monografie a cura di P. G. Sofia" (Rome, 1939), p. 48.

¹⁰ Properzi to Rinaldi, Somerville, August 13, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 592/2).

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group and are scattered around in the midst of Americans. There is less talk of Americanization, but it is taking place in such a way that its effects will not be late in showing. The American clergy also has been using new tactics in regard to foreigners. It is up to us to adjust ourselves to the new circumstances. In spite of the difficulties we may be confronted with, my opinion is that this is the time when it would be absolutely necessary to found the seminary we have in mind, in which to gather our vocations from amongst young Italian-Americans and train them here according to the programs of American seminaries."¹¹

The church of St. Anthony was blessed by Card. O'Connell on October 4, 1925. As to the years following we are in possession of the scarce news provided by Fr. Properzi in a 1932 report:

"In 1927 another piece of land was purchased to widen the space around the church so as to have it reach to the main street. On this space a statue was erected in honor of the titular Patron Saint in 1931.

The overall cost of the church amounts to more than \$100,000. As of now, the debt of the church has been brought down to \$30,000. The Italians belonging to this church amount to about 300 families. It is a population of laborers scattered throughout the great manufacturing industries of this region.

Unfortunately, work is scarce these days. Many other Italians residing in the most distant sections from our church have recourse to the Italian priest for the administration of the sacraments.

The spiritual and moral growth of this colony is remarkable. Catechism classes are attended by more than 350 boys and girls."¹²

5. The Parish of St. Anthony in Everett, MA

The first Italians to settle in the region of Everett, a suburb of Boston, were a group of Genoese, Marchegiani, and Avellinese who moved into that rural area between the end of the 19th and the 20th centuries from the North End of Boston.

After World War One they were joined by considerable groups of Sicilians, Abruzzese and Apulians, who emigrated in mass from the asphyxiating crowded neighborhoods of the North End to the open country. They immediately organized on Ferry Street a Society of St. Anthony for the defense of their common interests. With no church around to respond to their particular needs, they gave the impression at first of having forgotten the religious practice. The most fervent of them braved a trip of quite a few kilometers to go and hear the Word of God and pray in their own language in the churches of the Sacred Heart run by the Scalabrinians, and of St. Leonard, run by the Franciscans, at their old neighborhood in North End in Boston, avoiding the American church of Everett.

A few years after World War I, by the mediation of Orazio Rocco, Anonio Dragone, and Celestino Pierotti, the people petitioned an Italian priest from the Archbishop of Boston. Card. O'Connell turned the petition to the Regional

¹¹ Properzi to Rinaldi, Somerville, June 22, 1926 (Arch. Vescovile, Rieti: Carte Rinaldi).

¹² Properzi, "Chiesa di S. Antonio da Padova - Somerville, Massachusetts", 1932 (Arch. G.S., 592/1).

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Superior of the Scalabrinians, Fr. Leonardo Quaglia, who wrote to Card. DeLai in March of 1926:

"We could establish a new parish in Everett in the diocese of Boston. Over 7,000 Italians live there, all very well-off, and the Cardinal Archbishop of Boston would be pleased if we were ready to get to work."¹³

The Sacred Consistorial Congregation replied that it was impossible for the time being to accede to the request for lack of personnel.¹⁴ In the meantime, the missionaries of the church of the Sacred Heart in Boston kept visiting from time to time the Italians of Everett, especially for assisting the sick. In July 1927, Fr. Berti wrote to Card. DeLai:

"Just back from the close-by city of Everett, Massachusetts, where I have been to assist a sick person, with greater persistence the thought returned to me, which I had for quite some time of writing to Your Eminence to tell you that there is in Everett a large Italian colony that has been asking for many years now to have an Italian priest, who should fix his residence there and open a church for them so that those good Italians, adults especially, may not have to attend American churches in which they do not understand the English language.

When I go on sick calls at Everett I hear them say to me: 'When will we have our church, Father?' What can I say? So far my answer has always been: 'For the time being, no priest is available; pray to the Lord that He may provide.' It seems as though God answered the prayers of those good people. In fact, today there are five of us priests here at North Square in Boston, and one could very well be chosen by Your Most Reverend Eminence to be assigned to exercise the sacred ministry in that colony."¹⁵

This time the Sacred Consistorial Congregation showed itself inclined to welcome the request and charged Fr. Quaglia with treating the matter with the Archbishop of Boston.¹⁶ The Regional Superior reported:

"After reflecting together with the Councilors of this Region on the qualifications of various confreres, it has been decided by us to propose to Your Eminence the naming of Fr. Lino Buggini, presently in Providence, as Pastor of the new parish to be erected (...). His Em. Cardinal O'Connell will immediately go through the procedures for establishing the new parish."¹⁷

In the beginning of 1928 Fr. Buggini took up residence in Boston and began commuting between this city and Everett, while waiting to find a place for worship and a house. After several unsuccessful tries, he was able to rent an old movie, the Broadway Theater, and fitted it the best he could placing an altar on the stage. He celebrated Mass there for the first time on April 1, 1928, Palm Sunday.

In his first financial report published on January 31, 1929, Fr. Buggini urged parishioners to multiply their efforts for the construction of a church, and he thanked them for the generous support accorded him in the early months. He

¹³ Quaglia to Card. DeLai, New Haven, March 15, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 592/1).

¹⁴ Card. DeLai to Quaglia, Rome, April 1926 (Arch. G.S., 556/2).

¹⁵ Berti to Card. DeLai, Boston, July 26, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 578/2).

¹⁶ Quaglia to Card. DeLai, Sostegno, August 29, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 578/2).

¹⁷ Quaglia to Card. DeLai, New Haven, November 7, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 578/2).

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singled out as worthy of particular gratitude the gentlemen A. Dragone, C. Pierotti, and O. Rocco, the choir, the ladies of the Women's Committee, who had organized entertainment and bazaars for the benefit of the church, and the promising association of Sunday School Teachers, founded four months before.¹⁸

The 1929 recession demanded the greatest efforts of Fr. Buggini and his first two assistants Frs. Augustino Iannarone and Guglielmo Pizzoglio, so that the parish should not have to die just after it was born and they might help the families in need by providing them food.

Fr. Buggini's beginnings were good; but then he started being concerned more about himself than about the parish. In his February 1931 report on the missions the Regional Superior stated:

"In Everett there are about 8,000 Italians, of whom 600 adults attend church regularly. Many still frequent American churches. Fr. Buggini, the founder, has purchased a beautiful parish house and is planning to build a new church as soon as possible."¹⁹

Instead, Fr. Buggini contented himself with restoring in 1932 the former movie house at the cost of \$6,000.00. The sacrament of Confirmation was administered for the first time there to 600 Italian boys and girls of Everett on October 10, 1932, by Auxiliary Bishop Francis J. Spellman of Boston and future Cardinal Archbishop of New York; it was also his first Confirmation class as a newly consecrated bishop.

Fr. Buggini was transferred in September of 1933, and replaced with the appointment of Fr. Peona, who three years later sent in a report of the work done at Everett:

1. Financially:

a) Rectory: In the first eight months of 1933, only \$100.00 was sent to the Motherhouse, while \$945.79 was forwarded to it in the same period of this year, even though I had been left alone for a whole month because Fr. N. Oddenino had been sent to Buffalo to substitute for the sick Fr. Lazzarin. A wise administration and the elimination of superfluous expenditures have allowed us to send this much.

b) Church: The \$10,800.00 mortgage was paid off along with another \$2,000 loose debt. A new altar with a safety tabernacle was put up for \$1,200.00, and now we have a reserve fund of \$3,000.00. To be sure, I had the most generous cooperation of my assistants, something I never had before, an element indispensable for any enterprise.

2. Spiritually: If numbers show a satisfying index of a good financial situation, more so this holds true for what concerns spiritual matters. Attendance at church has doubled especially of men, so much so that we had to add a fifth Sunday Mass.

The number of Communion also has increased by almost 100%. Religious life

¹⁸ Buggini, "Resoconto finanziario della Chiesa di S. Antonio", Broadway, Everett, Massachusetts (April 1, 1928 till December 1928)., (Arch. G.S., 578/2).

¹⁹ Quaglia, "Relazione del Febbraio 1931", (Arch. G.S., 556/7).

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is felt more strongly, a fact proven by 40,000 annual communions and by the springing up of three religious vocations, the first ones in eight years. With the newly established Society of Catholic Women, the number of the parish associations is complete.

Free of all financial worries, we can now devote our energies to the spiritual welfare of souls."²⁰

In 1939, Fr. Peona founded the "New Church Fund", an organization to collecting funds for the construction of a new church.²¹

6. The Parish of the Holy Ghost in Providence, Rhode Island

After 15 years in Providence, Fr. Domenico Belliotti had to leave the parish of the Holy Ghost in August 1920 because of a discord risen between parishioners who had divided into two factions, one favoring the pastor, the other supporting the assistant.

His successor was Fr. Angelo Strazzoni who committed himself especially to restoring the peace. In 1921, the parish registered 25,000 communions; the members of the various Catholic associations were 1,400.

Fr. Flaminio Parenti was named pastor in February of 1922. In that year, Communions rose to 40,000; there were 831 baptisms. Statistics showed the actual presence of 2,854 families with about 12,000 people. Catechism classes had an average attendance of 1,000 children: the Christian Brothers in charge of the boys; the Franciscan Sisters of the girls.

In July of the same year, artist Giorgio DeFelice decorated the interior of the church. Immediately afterwards, Fr. Parenti devoted all his energies to the construction of the parish school, which had already been in the plans of his predecessor.

"Fr. Angelo Strazzoni had purchased the land at the corner of Ridge and Tiber Streets for the construction of the school, but when he found out that the Poles were planning to abandon the church of Saint Adalbert, in agreement with Fr. Sweetala he called on the bishop and asked him for formal permission to buy the Polish church for the future parish school. The projects ran into difficulties, but an agreement had already been reached with the Bishop before Fr. Angelo Strazzoni left the church of the Holy Ghost. It took all the daring, the good will, and ability of Fr. Parenti to carry out Fr. Strazzoni's noble and difficult project. Pretty nearly forced to this work by the bishop himself, with the help of his faithful assistants and of his 'ad hoc' committees, Fr. Parenti devoted himself body and soul to the hard and great enterprise, and he succeeded. And, in fact, he succeeded in spite of the almost unsurmountable difficulties, which, rising both from the nature of things and the distrust of many, seemed aimed at opposing a work destined to accomplish so much good for the Italian colony."²²

The Polish church, located on Ridge Street was valued at \$25,000.00. In March 1923, the main hall of the structure was furnished with a thousand seats and

²⁰ Peona to Card. Rossi, Everett, September 21, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 578/3).

²¹ Cfr. Pizzoglio, "Fortieth Anniversary, 1927-1967. St. Anthony's Church of Everett. His History and Progress from the Beginning to the Present", (Everett, 1967), pp. 1-5.

²² "La nuova Scuola Parrocchiale dello Spirito Santo a Providence, R.I.", "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. XVII, n. 4 (October-December 1923), pp. 11-15.

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a movie projector. In June, work began to turn it over for use as classrooms. On October 7, 1923, Bishop W. Hickey inaugurated the school in the presence of the Governor of the State of Rhode Island, of a representative of the Mayor of Providence and of the Italian Consul. Two more classrooms were built in May 1925, and so the school could have the whole curriculum of eight classes. It was entrusted to the Sisters of Mercy, who also took the place of the Franciscan Sisters in the teaching of Sunday catechism classes. In 1931, the Regional Superior, Fr. Quaglia, will remark:

"Four hundred children attend the school, and in increase is not possible because of the indifference of Italian parents. At least 3,000 children frequent the public schools. About 25% of the adults and 50% of the children go to church."²³

The new rectory was built and the facade of the church restored with the addition of two side doors and of the front steps, in 1927. Two more classrooms were constructed in 1936 for the first high school years. In October 1939, on the occasion of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the parish, the interior of the church was restored under the direction of architect Oreste DiSaia, with 'stucco' and gold decorations by Giorgio De Felice, with the marble lining of sanctuary and columns, with the paintings by Prof. Vittorio Zucchi, a new lighting system, and above all, with a new main marble altar, donated by Mr. Michael Gammino.²⁴

7. The Parish of St. Bartholomew, Providence, Rhode Island

Fr. Vittorio Cangiano was the pastor of St. Bartholomew from April 1917 to December 1920. He was the first one to have an assistant, Fr. Gaetano Renzetti, from December 1919 until October 1920. Fr. Flaminio Parenti was pastor there from the month of December 1920 until February 1922. He gave a new impulse to the life of the parish, especially by the organization of an efficient school of catechism.

Pastor Fr. Pietro Gorret directed the parish from February 1922 until January 1949. In January 1923 he gave life to the monthly bulletin "La Campana (The Bell of) di Silver Lake" from whose first issue we gather the situation of the parish in 1922. In a community of some 7,000 Italians baptisms were 292, first communions 158, weddings 46, funerals 46, and about 5,000 communions. Sunday school was attended by 200 boys and 300 girls: the boys were taken care of by two Christian Brothers and by numerous lay catechists; the Pallottine Sisters in charge of the Scalabrini kindergarten, had the girls.

Quite interesting is the list of associations which were divided in two groups: a) "Church Societies", strictly religious, and b) "Community Associations". There were four of the first: 1) Holy Name Society with 35 men; 2) Holy Rosary-Christian Mothers' Society with 80 members; 3) Children of Mary Sodality with 30 young ladies; 4) St. Bartholomew's Catholic Club with 15 young men.

²³ Quaglia, "Relazione del Febbraio 1931" (Arch. G.S., 556/7).

²⁴ Cfr. "Golden Jubilee of the Holy Ghost Church, Providence, Rhode Island", Providence, 1939, pp. 12-16.

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Among the "Community Associations" the following are listed in first place: "Logge dell'Ordine dei Figli d'Italia";

- a) Felice Cavallotti, founded in 1897, with 251 members;
- b) San Liberato, established in 1909, with 180 members;
- c) Pontecorvo, founded in 1914, with 140 members;
- d) M. Montessori for women, founded in 1916, with 70 members.

In second place came the "Mutual and Charitable Societies":

- 1) "Saint Bartholomew's" founded in 1903, with 120 members;
- 2) "Società Laziale" founded in 1912, with 180 associates;
- 3) "Tripoli Society" founded in 1912;
- 4) "Our Lady of Mount Carmel Society" founded in 1915, with 81 members;
- 5) "Sacred Heart and Immaculate Mary Womens' Society" founded in 1918, with 50 members;
- 6) "Apostleship of Prayer Womens' Association" founded in 1919, with 180 members;
- 7) "Saint Anthony Society" founded in 1919, with 89 members;
- 8) "Marzanello Society" founded in 1921, with 80 members.

Finally, there follow "Various Societies and Clubs":

- "Silver Lake Y.M.M.S. Club", founded in 1903, with 74 members;
- "Silver Lake Citizens Political Club" founded in 1904, with 614 members;
- "Liri Club" founded in 1918, with 47 members;
- "Frank Cerbo Post" founded in 1920, with 46 members;
- "Eighth Ward Italian Democratic Club" founded in 1922, with 93 members.²⁵

In presenting the 1922 financial report the pastor observed:

"We are pleased to point out the fact, however, that, even though small part of the parish has been taken in by the new Italian parish of Cranston, the revenues of our church rather than diminish have surpassed those of the past year. And this is how besides covering the ordinary expenses for maintenance and repairs we were able to install a movie projector in the parish hall, at the cost of \$1,000.00 and to pay an overall sum of \$2,000.00 on the debt of the church and the hall, thus surpassing the record of previous years."²⁶

The new parish of "Santa Maria della Civita" (Saint Mary's) had been founded in early 1922, with inclusion of some 2,000 people who formerly belonged to the parish of St. Bartholomew. According to the 1924 census St. Bartholomew had 1,350 families with 7,060 people. One-third of these attended church regularly - Fr. Gorret reported in 1924 - the rest were seen now and then. Communion began to be a little bit more numerous, about 150 a week. The need was felt for the parochial school, but the Bishop wanted that the \$7000-\$8000 debt on the church be paid off first. The kindergarten was a miserable and ill directed place, frequented, therefore, only by about ten children. St. Bartholomew's Catholic Club had been shut down only a year after it was founded because the boys were too ill-mannered.

A certain progress is noticed in the years between 1922 and 1932: communions grew from 5,000 to 24,000, and the Sunday Masses from 3 to 5;

²⁵ Cfr. "La Campana di Silver Lake (Providence)", a. I, n. 1 (January 1923), pp. 8-10.

²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 13

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the number of members had increased to about 8,500 people.²⁷ In 1926, the church was enlarged; a property was bought on Laurel Hill Avenue where the present church is located, and the "Holy Cross" mission was built on Hartford Avenue, three kilometers from the church. The chapel was blessed by Bishop Hickey on November 27, 1926. It later became a parish in its own right.

On the 25th anniversary of its founding, celebrated on November 6, 1932, in the presence of the Bishop, the church was wholly redecorated, five niches were made in the apse for the statues of the saints, and four new altars erected in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary and of Saints Liberto, Francis and Theresa.

In 1939, one of the assistants described the progress of the parish as follows:

"For some time now, one notices a consoling movement of young people seeking to gather around their priests. I do not mean the children: in fact, we have more than a thousand of them attending their Mass on Sunday; instead, it is the youth I am speaking of here at the 11 o'clock Mass, for whom the church is too small. A club for young professionals was organized lately with over sixty members who meet monthly for discussions and entertainment. They are a great help and make it easier for us to get to their companions and friends away from the church. Besides this group, three Catholic Girl Scouts troops were organized just a few days ago. It is our hope that everything may succeed well and that the spirit now present among them remains.

Work is not lacking. Frequency to the sacraments is consoling, thanks especially to the association of the Apostleship of Prayer with its more than a thousand members."²⁸

8. The Parish of St. Rocco in Thornton, R.I.

Fr. Francesco Berti, pastor from May to April, 1921, was succeeded by Fr. Davide Angeli, who also spent a period of three years at the parish of Saint Rocco, till the summer of 1924. The following report goes back to the early beginnings of his term:

"At this mission of Thornton, R.I., a Council of the Knights of Columbus is now in the process of being organized. So that it may be a success, the Grand Knight will come here from Providence to give several lectures on the matter to our young men in the church hall. Everything leads us to hope that our young Italian-Americans of Thornton will respond to the call and show themselves eager to belong to this new Council from which we expect great spiritual and moral fruits to the edification of all.

Sponsored by the young people of the parish, a picnic was held on Labor Day and brought in \$300.00 clear. Together with some amateurs, a group of talented young men perform every Sunday and give a stage show to the full satisfaction of all and with great attendance of people who are thus kept away from public theaters where unfortunately their faith and good morals cannot be safeguarded.

The altar has been done over, new statues and pews placed in the church, and repair work carried out, as well, on the parochial buildings. Next year, God willing, the exterior of church and house also will be pointed. The parish school shall be built as soon as possible; in fact, quite a large sum of money has been collected already for this purpose.

Not only are the parish societies alive, but they make steady progress, as well,

²⁷ Cfr. "La Campana di Silver Lake (Providence)", January 1933, p. 19.

²⁸ U. Piccolo to Card. Rossi, Providence, December 7, 1939 (Arch. G.S., 589/8). Cfr. R. Almagno, "St. Bartholomew's: Heritage and Vision within a Parish", "St. Bartholomew's Church" (Providence, 1969), pp. 8-13).

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especially those of the Children of Mary and of the Blessed Sacrament. The parish members, about 500 families, are living in great part too far from the church to be able to attend it all the time. We have an annual average of 200 baptisms and 40 weddings.

The following ethnic groups celebrate the feast of the Patron Saints of their home town of origin: the people from Prata Sannita, Caserta, in honor of the Most Holy Mary of Prata; the group from Capriata, Caserta, in honor of St. Rocco; the faithful from Valle Agricola, Caserta, in honor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and of St. Ann; those hailing from Itri, Caserta, in honor of Our Lady of the Civita. The feasts of Saints Nicholas, Blaise, Michael, and Lucy, are also celebrated.

The Society of the Blessed Sacrament has its solemn celebration on the feast of 'Corpus Christi', and its members attend in a body on the third Sunday of each month a Solemn High Mass before the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the monstrance, while the feasts of the Patron Saints are still celebrated almost exclusively with external pomp and considerable expenditures for music bands and fireworks. We hope, however, to see such customs eliminated as soon as possible in part, at least, if not altogether, so that the money may be put to better use for works beneficial to the church and society, especially to the education of youth."²⁹

Fr. Silvio Sartori was the "acting pastor" from July 1924 to June 21, 1925. In starting his task he reported that there were about 4,000 parishioners; a portion of the people had been detached in early 1922 and assigned to the new parish of St. Mary "della Civita" in Cranston.

Due partly to distance and partly to indifference, church attendance amounted only to 25% of the population. The religious associations had hardly any life, and the various societies spent themselves in expensive celebrations of their patron Saints. A strong need was felt for a parish school, and Fr. Sartori acquired a property in view of building one; but his plans remained in the paper because he was soon removed.

He was replaced with Bartolomeo Marenchino, who devoted himself especially to the revival of the spiritual life of the parish, of which he gave the following report in 1933:

"The parish has its well defined boundaries. The church of St. Rocco does not have any mission chapel. According to the last census, the population amounts to about 4,000 souls, rather scattered out and about in the open country. The parish boasts the following associations: the Society of the Blessed Sacrament with 150 men and women members; the Society of the Holy Rosary, with 80 members, all married ladies; the Children of Mary Sodality, with 80 members; the Society of St. Agnes, for little girls with 80 members; the Apostleship of Prayer, men and women, with some 200 members. All these associations are directed partly by the pastor, and in part by the assistant.

Catechism classes for boys are under the direction of the Christian Brothers. They are attended by 200 of boys. The girls are in the care of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary. About 280 girls frequent the classes. There would be a lot more if they were not too far from the church."³⁰

In 1938, foreseeing the growth of the parish, Fr. Marenchino abandoned the idea of remodeling the old wooden church and decided to build a new one. With this in mind he purchased a large area at a central point on Atwood Avenue with a house on it

²⁹ "A Thornton", "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. XV, n. 4 (October-December 1921), pp. 23-24.

³⁰ Marenchino to Marchegiani, Thornton, October 31, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 594/7).Cfr. "50th Anniversary. 1903-1953

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which was adapted as a rectory. But death overtook him unexpectedly on February 10, 1939, after a very short illness. He was 71 years old. Raffaele Larcher succeeded him.³¹

9. The Parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel at Bristol, Rhode Island

The period after World War I was very tough on the Italian community of Bristol. In 1920, Fr. Poja, the pastor observed:

"Here, at my place, one could easily get along without worries of any kind if it wasn't for the habit of going on strike for the least reason. And when there is a strike, people do not earn, and so they do not give to the church. Besides, it must be pointed out that my people - all of them - are employed in the same one factory under one and the same employer. Things being so, either all work or none does."³²

In a 1921 report we read:

The last issue of 1919 of our Bulletin has reported the founding of a Scalabrinian mission at Bristol, R.I., and the construction of its new church.

So far, about \$30,000 has been spent on this building. The land on which the church was built together with the rectory, had been bought for \$10,000.00. As of today, the approximate total value of whatever belongs to the parish amounts to the sum of about \$22,500.

From the day when the new church was blessed (May 4, 1919) till today, the parish has remarkably grown in importance on both the spiritual and temporal levels. It is one of the most elegant and solid structures of the city of which it occupies one of the most beautiful and frequented spots.

Four religious Societies were born and flourished in the parish: one for men, the Holy Name Society; the other three for women, the Daughters of Isabella (Queen Isabella of Spain of the time of Columbus); the Altar Society; and the Devotees of St. Rita; with an overall membership of 260 men and women. On two different occasions 260 people in all were confirmed. In 1919, 75 boys and girls received first Communion, 85 received it in 1920, and 92 in 1921. The parish has a population of about 2,650 souls. For more than a year now some 300 people go to Communion every month, excluding the Irish and French-Canadians, who come in considerable numbers for confession and communion in our church as they prefer it over the others because they find it spacious, comfortable, and very easy to go to. From what was said so far, though so positive, one must not conclude that the spiritual state of the parish is perfect. In fact, here, too, unfortunately as in other places, many Italians are forgetful of their religious duties, even on days of obligation and at Easter time.

And this happens not because of lack of zeal on the part of the priest but on account rather of that deep rooted religious apathy unfortunately affecting our immigrants who do not attach sufficient importance to their duties as Christians, due especially to their ignorance of matters concerning religion."³³

In 1920, the feast that used to be celebrated on July 15 in honor of their patron Saint was reorganized; another feast day was added to it with procession, band concerts, and firework displays. The first Mass was celebrated in the new church at midnight on December 25.

³¹ St. Rocco's Church, Thornton, Rhode Island (Providence, 1953) pp. 9-12.

³² Poja to Rinaldi, Bristol, September 2, 1920 (Arch. G.S., 574/1).

³³ "Intorno alla Missione di Bristol, R.I.", "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. XV, n. 4 (October-December 1921), p. 24.

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A new altar was set up in 1924 and dedicated on July 8. In 1927, he had work started on enlarging the parish hall to a capacity of 250 seats. It was dedicated on January 29, 1928. The Society of St. Vincent DePaul was founded in December 1920.

Five hundred children were attending Sunday school staffed by about forty young men and women catechists. From a 1931 report, we read that the population was decreasing because of the persistent industrial crisis.³⁴

In August 1931, Fr. Poja was forced to return to Italy for reasons of ill health, and his place was taken by Fr. Giuseppe Sorzana, who remained as pastor until 1958. A new organ was inaugurated on May 26, 1935. In November of the same year the new Bishop of Providence, F. P. Keough, made his first visitation to the parish and administered confirmation to 235 children and adults.

In March 1937, Fr. Sorzana had as his first assistant, Fr. Anthony Bainotti, who was replaced by Fr. Emilio Donanzan in April 1940. On June 23, 1940, four Sisters of the "Maestre Pie Filippini" arrived in Bristol. Their first residence was a rented apartment on the second floor of a building at 83 State Street.³⁵

10. The Parish of Our Lady of Loreto, East Providence, R.I.

The parish of Our Lady of Loreto in East Providence, Rhode Island, had its origins in 1920. In 1919, Protestants had built there a church for the Italian community of a few hundred immigrants, in greatest part from Caserta, employed in cotton weaving industries and jewel shops, and some in farming. Bishop Hickey of Providence asked Fr. Belliotti, pastor at the Italian church of the Holy Ghost in Providence, to provide for the small colony. Fr. Belliotti sent there his assistant Fr. Vincenzo Vicari, who began in 1920 to exercise his ministry for Italians in the Portuguese church of St. Francis Xavier on Carpenter Street. Fr. Vicari remained there about eight months, enough to buy a rather large property in downtown East Providence at 346 Waterman Avenue. In July 1921, Fr. Vicari was succeeded by the Scalabrinian missionary Fr. Pietro Gorret, who sought independence from the Portuguese church by turning part of the parish house into a chapel. In February 1922, he was replaced by Fr. Domenico Dellarole who describes as follows the early beginnings of his residence in East Providence that was to last until death:

"My priestly ministry in East Providence began on February 3, 1922. A house and a vast piece of land had been purchased the previous year by the community and I was then notified that a debt of \$3,000.00 was still pending on that property.

My predecessor had provided for the religious services with a small chapel in the rectory, fitted to hold some fifty people at the most, and I myself continued to make use of it for about six months. There was urgent need, however, for providing a larger place, separate from the rectory and exclusively destined to public religious worship. The matter presented a very serious problem because

³⁴ Cfr. Quaglia, "Relazione del Febbraio 1931" (Arch. G.S., 556/7).

³⁵ Cfr. "Our Lady of Mount Carmel Golden Jubilee". 1917-1967 (Providence, 1967).

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people had been in greater part out of work for a long time, and they were far from being ready for any further and heavier sacrifices, after the two extraordinary collections of the preceding year for the purchase of the land and the rectory.

I did not lose heart, and so to a Committee of people I presented the request for the construction of a rather large hall that might be used as a church at first, and then fitted, as a parish hall, later on, for use by the young. I met ample consensus! But how could we solve the problem of total lack of money! (Our funds amounted to \$123.00.) The ordinary revenues of the Church (door fee and offertory collection) did not reach \$45.00 a month. Anyway, counting on the good disposition of the people, a project was prepared and then presented to Bishop of Providence, who approved it in principle. But, he changed everything following a personal inspection on the spot because he wanted the building raised detached from the rectory and its dimensions enlarged.

The people were very pleased with the Bishop's interest in the matter and a great majority of them volunteered a free day of work or its equivalent in money. The new church was raised in a few months without the services of a general contractor. The work was supervised and directed by me with the help of able parishioners and we succeeded in putting up a conveniently ornate building capable of seating 400 people, with a total saving of \$4000.00, such, in fact, was the difference between the lowest bid of the contractors and the actual cost of the building.

On the last Sunday of July 1922, His Excellency the Bishop came for the solemn blessing of the new church and congratulated this small community for their wonderful success. From the completion of the construction to this day much has been expended to properly furnish this modest church.

In order to have the people better respond to each appeal, I had to set the good example with my sacrifice. This is why I am still today all alone with no help either in the rectory or for the church. With no exception, I devoted to it all my personal revenues coming to me from salary and ministry, only hiring some worker in the course of the week for exterior jobs for the simple reason that it was not proper for me, a priest, to be seen doing manual work.

This way the people responded well, and so with only about 800 souls we were able to pay last year almost \$4,000.00 on the new expenditures encountered for the construction and the furnishing of the church (...).

It will be sometime yet before a priest can his position here settled. There has surely been a great improvement, but the population is unfortunately small and scattered over an immense territory; in fact, many live so far as to make it impossible for them to attend church regularly.

On the other hand, the Bishop of Providence had no other choice but to give life to this parish because the Protestants had established in this very neighborhood two years before a church for Italians and were trying by all means to make them abandon their faith."³⁶

Twenty-five meters long and fifteen wide, the church was blessed on July 30, 1922. A few days before the Basilica of Loreto (Italy) had caught fire; for this

³⁶ Dellarole to Cimino, East Providence, August 18, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 22/3).

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reason the Bishop decided to title the new church to "Our Lady of Loreto".

As reported by Fr. Dellarole, in 1924 the parish had 940 members; the church attended by an average of 260 people; on Sunday only an average of 25 parishioners, children included, received communion. Most of the men went to church only on the occasion of the annual missions. There were four Societies: the "Young Men's Circle" with a rented hall, the "Children of Mary Sodality", the "Christian Mothers' Society", and the "Faith, Country, Labor" Union, which had sponsored the founding of the parish.

In 1927, a large hall was built in view of turning it into a parish school, which could not be opened for lack of means. The hall served as the meeting place for the societies, a gymnasium, an entertainment center, but above all as the Sunday and summer school organized to counteract the Protestant one. It was attended by about 120 children that were taken in by bus from the various small hamlets scattered over a territory nine kilometers long and four and a half wide.

Suffering from cardiosclerosis since July 1938, Fr. Domenico Dellarole died suddenly on August 27, 1939, at Wellsville, New York, on his way to Buffalo in the company of his friend Msgr. Giubellina, of the Sacred Congregation for the Seminaries. The people of East Providence ruled that his body should be buried in Providence.

Fr. Antonio Bainotti succeeded him in September of the same year.

11. The Parish of St. Michael in New Haven, Connecticut

Fr. Leonardo Quaglia, pastor from 1916 until 1949, sold the old church on Wooster Street and with the proceeds purchased a property at the corner of Green and Chestnut Streets. The Italian Recreation Center, or Saint Michael Hall was built there. It was meant to become a center of entertainment and of the social and educational life of the parish of St. Michael. On the ground floor of the building there were two spacious rooms for the kindergarten; the rooms of the upper two floors were for use by the clubs of the boys and young men; a large hall, connected to the building and capable of close to a thousand seats had been fitted to serve as theatre, gymnasium, and school. The construction was inaugurated at the end of October 1923 by Bishop Murray of Hartford in the presence of the Hon. Mayor Fitzgerald of New Haven and of the venerable old Fr. Oreste Alussi.

In 1927, following his unsuccessful request that the Christian Brothers take charge of the institution, Fr. Quaglia wrote:

*"The building has been put up by me at the cost of \$80,000 in hopes of bringing children and young people of the district in touch with the Church. I have here almost 3,500 students who attend public schools: 200 of them are already in High School. Thousands of young people could be a part of my clubs at St. Michael's."*³⁷

³⁷ Quaglia to Br. Barnabas, New Haven, May 2, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 582/10).

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In 1924 the parish included about 14,000 Italians; about 1,700 attended Mass every Sunday, excluding children and old ladies. At Easter time they reached 8,000, especially for Palm Sunday. In 1923, there were 650 baptisms. Many Italians frequented the church of St. Patrick, which was not too far away; so also the parish school of St. Patrick was attended by 1,400 Italian children. The parish of St. Michael had only after school programs. The problem of the parish school had already been made known to the Bishop, but there was no easy solution to it because it was not all that simple to have to compete with the six public schools frequented by 3,500 Italian students.

Finally, in 1936, a parish school was started with 40 children, provisionally located in the building of the Sister Apostles of the Sacred Heart at 295 Greene Street. In the meantime a new school was built for 500 students, which was opened in September of 1940.

12. The Parish of St. Anthony, New Haven, Connecticut

Fr. Bartolomeo Marenchino, who founded the parish of St. Anthony in New Haven, Connecticut, directed it until June 1925. In 1924 the Italians were about 12,000, of whom one-third attended Sunday Mass regularly. Each Sunday 500 children attended catechism classes held by three Sister Apostles of the Sacred Heart with the cooperation of a few young ladies.

On June 27, 1925, Fr. Marenchino was transferred to the parish of St. Rocco in Thornton and Fr. Silvio Sartori succeeded him remaining there till 1950.

"This period can be defined the most productive one in the history of this parish. The American citizen of Italian extraction of 1925 was something different than the Italian immigrant of 1900. He had become a citizen of the United States, had adopted American ways, had learned how to appreciate the greatness of his 'adoptive country', and his children were frequenting elementary schools and institutes of higher learning. This type of American lived in better homes, in more pleasant neighborhoods and the most pointed edges had been rounded off. He was aware of the great importance of instruction and wanted to provide his children with the best in the field of education. The most humble laborer dreamed of sending his son to university so that he might become a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher, or a mechanical engineer; and many immigrants had reached that goal. That was the time of the 'roaring twenties', the prohibition era, the high rate of juvenile delinquency, though perhaps no lower or higher than at other times, but given prominence at that period by the ever increasing influence of the press, and then by the radio that had become a powerful means for the spreading of information.

It was in this period that Fr. Sartori, the new pastor of St. Anthony, decided to build in the immediate neighborhood of the church a parish school that should be beneficial for the entire parish. At a meeting of March 12, 1926, the pastor and the trustees of St. Anthony, at that time Anthony DeMatty and Alfred J. Lorenzi, with the approval of Bishop Nilan, decided to buy the properties of Hannah Harney, Frederick Maturo, Jacob Cohen, and Anna Vito along Gold Street for the sum of \$45,000.00 on which to build the parochial school. Those properties were purchased, and from 1926 until 1935, the depression years, all efforts of the parish were directed to raising the funds needed to pay a loan of \$45,000.00 obtained to buy the land for the future parish

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school."³⁸

In June of 1935, Fr. Sartori petitioned Cardinal Rossi for authorization to start works on the construction of the school:

"Since I was sent to head the parish of St. Anthony in New Haven I gave steady thought about raising a parish school for the benefit of Italians. I bought the land in 1926 and since then I did my best to extinguish the debt (at that time amounting to \$64,000.00) weighing down on all properties of the church.

The debt was extinguished in the year 1932. I sought the advice of the Bishop of Hartford and I had his full consent. The present financial conditions are as follows: extant funds amount to \$9,000.00; the cost of building will run to about \$75,000, a debt the parish can well take.

*Italian Sisters (Bishop Scalabrini is their Founder) will have charge of it."*³⁹

Having secured permission, Fr. Sartori gave the starting signal for the work in September 1935. Fitted for the eight grades of elementary education, and equipped with a medical ambulatory and a large hall for the parish activities, the school was blessed on August 30, 1936, by Bishop M. F. McAuliffe of Hartford and entrusted to the Sister Apostles of the Sacred Heart.

³⁸ DiCenzo, "The History of the Church of St. Anthony from 1904 to 1954". "50th Anniversary, 1904-1954. St. Anthony's Church, New Haven, Connecticut". (New Haven, 1954), p. 54.

³⁹ Sartori to Card. Rossi, New Haven, June 10, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 581/5).

CHAPTER VIII

**PROVINCE OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST
AND PROVINCIAL COUNCILS**

1. Father Carlo Fani (1924-1927)

As seen above, from 1919 to 1924 all Scalabrinian missions of the United States were under one provincial administration. In decreeing the division of the American missions into two regions, on December 3, 1924, Cardinal DeLai assigned the houses of Chicago, Cincinnati and Kansas City to the Western Region, and appointed Fr. Carlo Fani, pastor of Our Lady of Pompeii in Chicago as its Regional Superior with Fr. Canestrini, pastor of Addolorata Church in Chicago, and Fr. Franchinotti, pastor of Holy Rosary Church in Kansas City, as Councilors. In January 1926, Fr. Canestrini was transferred to São Paulo in Brazil and on May 11, 1926, Fr. Pietro Cazzaniga was appointed Councilor in his place.

In 1926, the Region included ten parishes staffed by 23 missionaries distributed as follows:

Archdiocese of Chicago:

1. Madonna Incoronata (Chicago):

Fr. G. Peona, Pastor

Fr. S. Guiliani, Assistant

Fr. A. Cogo, Assistant

2. Angelo Custode (Chicago):

Fr. M. Ciuffoletti, Pastor

Fr. U. Broccolo, Assistant

Fr. R. Pigato, Assistant

3. Madonna Addolorata (Chicago):

Fr. P. Cazzaniga, Pastor

Fr. L. Bolzan, Assistant

4. Our Lady of Pompei (Chicago):

Fr. C. Fani, Pastor

Fr. P. Chenuil, Assistant

Fr. C. Celotto, Assistant

Fr. J. Lazzeri, Assistant

5. Saint Michael (Chicago):

Fr. C. Molinari, Pastor

6. Saint Anthony (Chicago):

Fr. M. Favero, Pastor

Fr. P. Bianchetta, Assistant

7. Our Lady of Mt. Carmel (Melrose Park):

Fr. B. Franch, Pastor

Diocese of Milwaukee, Wisconsin:

8. Holy Rosary (Pompei) (Milwaukee):

Fr. A. Bainotti, Pastor
Fr. D. Gibelli, Assistant

Archdiocese of Cincinnati, Ohio:

9. Sacred Heart (Cincinnati):

Fr. A. Stefanetti, Pastor
Fr. R. Secchia, Assistant
Fr. L. Paschini, Assistant

Diocese of Kansas City, Missouri:

10. Holy Rosary (Kansas City):

Fr. L. Franchinotti, Pastor
Fr. G. Ferrara, Assistant

During Fr. Fani's term in office, the state of the personnel got increasingly weaker: in the first half of 1927 the 23 missionaries decreased to 19, descending to just 17 a few months later. This was compensated by a process of rejuvenation; in fact, to this Western Region four missionaries of the "new generation" were assigned, who began giving it a more dynamic and open image.

2. Father Beniamino Franch (1927-1946)

Fr. Beniamino Franch, pastor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Melrose Park, Illinois, was appointed Regional Superior of the Western Region on October 4, 1927, with the assignment of Fathers Giovanni Peona and Manlio Ciufoletti as his councilors.

Fr. Franch gave open support to the young missionaries and faithfully seconded the work of reform undertaken by the Sacred Consistorial Congregation: and so he put the region on the right track towards a final settlement from the very first three-year-term in office. He encountered a more or less open opposition to his program in three missionaries, his councilors being two of them. In 1930, the Sacred Consistorial Congregation decided to replace them and asked Fr. Franch to present "*a few names that may give good assurance of virtue, zeal, and attachment to the Pious Institute.*"¹ (1)

Fr. Franch answered:

"After giving long thought to the names I should propose as future councilors to the Regional Superior, I believe it would be easy to find a few Fathers who may give assurance of goodness and parish activities.

But the requisite of attachment to the Pious Institute which is shown especially by willingness to carry out the orders of the Sacred Congregation, has placed me in somewhat of a difficulty. Your Excellency well knows the urgings I had to exercise on this or that priest to convince them at least to be exact in the administration and how I could succeed only in part.

The only ones who have always obeyed me cooperating with all their strength have been the Fathers who arrived from the Seminary these last years.

And so now I find myself in difficulty as to whom to choose: the Fathers who

¹ Archbishop R.C. Rossi to Franch, Rome, April 28, 1930 (Arch. G.S., 607/4).

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arrived in this Region from the seminary are not over 31 years old and, therefore a little too young, especially if I should choose both councilors from amongst them. I am sure that the others would be of little help to proceed on the way forward the Sacred Congregation has set ahead of us.

For all these reasons, should Your Excellency deem it opportune, I would ask that you put off the appointment of the Councilors, for the time being: I shall try to do everything possible that orders be obeyed as I did in the past when I had to act indeed as though the two Councilors did not exist.

I will avail myself of the young priests as I have always done, and so I will avoid in the meantime the deep division that would soon show up in case two young priests should be chosen as my Councilors."²

His proposal was accepted and the replacement of the Councilors postponed to January 1931, when a middle course was adopted: in fact, a young missionary, Fr. Remigio Pigato, was appointed along with a relatively senior one, Fr. Luigi Franchinotti. From the report on the moral and financial state of the Region sent in on February 5, 1931, a difference appears between the "older" and the "younger" confreres.

With a few due exceptions, the senior missionaries, mostly admitted haphazardly from various (Italian) dioceses, were both physically and morally, tired and were contented with carrying on the best they could without keeping track the many parishioners that were moving from place to place, neglecting youth organizations, and limiting their activities to confraternities and societies of old type that confined their religion within noisy and empty celebrations of Patron Saints. They were more concerned about their own future than about the Congregation, and, as Fr. Franch was saying, they lived like diocesan priests, and, therefore, lacked cohesion and esprit-de-corps. On the other hand, the young had immediately given a new impulse to the parish life, as is proven by the clear improvement of the financial situation of their parishes. Fr. Franch had these remarks about them: "*They observed the common life and the practices prescribed by the statutes in an exemplary manner*"; "*their obedience to and dependence on the Ordinary are perfect*"; "*the esteem and reputation by the people is very good*"; there was among them "*true fraternity of intents*".

Consequently to this report, Cardinal Rossi gave the following directives:

1. Together with the Councilors, you shall examine the general State of the Region and the particular one of the Fathers, according to the conclusions from the visitation conducted by you, and see whether and how it be possible to implement the provision of Chapter XVI, art. 102 and ff. of the Rule, concerning the transfer of the Superior of the houses whose six-year-term has expired (...).
2. You shall take care that in the houses where the local bursar has already been appointed he be not just, as it were, a decorative figure, but that he effectively conducts his office by the keeping of the regular book of revenues and expenditures; caring that the offerings for the Masses applied by the Fathers be wholly entered into the house funds, and so also in

² Franch to Rossi, Melrose Park, June 5, 1930 (Arch. G.S., 607/4).

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regard to revenues coming in by reason or occasion of one's ministry; limiting expenses to what is strictly necessary with the elimination of the superfluous ones as is required by the spirit of the Pious Society and the particular conditions of the present.

3. Give orders that all houses have a regular bookkeeping of the administration (...)
4. Finally, (...) take provisions that the Superiors of the Houses care for the observance of discipline and of the Constitutions (...) giving you an account of everything."³

In the same letter Cardinal Rossi invited Fr. Franch to hold a meeting with the superior of the Eastern Region, Fr. Marchegiani, for a common assessment of the general state of the Congregation in the United States, and for an exchange of personnel between the two regions. In regard to the first point the two Regional Superiors answered:

"In consideration of the various provisions taken by the American government to reduce as much as possible the immigration of foreigners, we can affirm with certitude that also the immigration of Italians may be considered almost finished and therefore that the Pious Society should devote all its energies to the masses of immigrants already here many years and on their way to be almost completely integrated into the local elements.

We realize also that, notwithstanding a steady and persisting action of Americanization, these masses have remained Italian in their religious and patriotic feelings and in their indestructible love of family. It is, therefore, the responsibility of our Pious Society to hold these masses together with the bond of the parish institutions, also to keep alive in them the sentiments of spirituality and of love for the family so characteristic of the Latin nations and in open contrast with the materialism and coldness even in religious matters of the Anglo-Saxons."⁴

As to the other point, Fr. Franch had to complain that, in spite of promises, the Province of the East did not show itself ready to cooperate for an exchange of missionaries.⁵ In 1932, Councilor Fr. Remigio Pigato commented once again on the first point:

1. Italian parishes should still remain in the hands of Italian priests for many years to come, and new ones be established wherever possible. This is not an easy financial enterprise: but we could provide this way for the needs of a great number of souls who would otherwise remain abandoned.
2. That these parishes remain staffed by Italian priests does not represent any difficulty for the Bishops, on condition that there be young priests who speak the English language fluently and keep in touch with the young. Not even the generations born here would easily turn away from Italian churches if only English were spoken well in them. Etc
3. It is a matter of the greatest importance that a seminary be established here as soon as possible for Italian American boys, who would then complete their studies in Italy. But before we can do so, it would be an

³ Rossi to Franch, Rome, March 13, 1931 (Arch. G.S. 607/5).

⁴ Franch and Marchegiani to Rossi, Melrose Park, May 12, 1931 (Arch? G.S., 607/5).

⁵ Franch to Rossi, Melrose Park, August 15, 1931 (Arch. G.S., 607/5).

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excellent thing if on their arrival our young priests should follow special courses for the study of the English language in a seminary close to a group of our parishes which they could serve on Sunday and on days of greater attendance. The parishes themselves would provide for their tuitions."⁶

It was the first step on the way towards a solution of the problem such as would be effected in 1935 with the opening of the Scalabrinian seminary of the Sacred Heart in the Western Region.

On January 31, 1935, Fr. Franch and his Councilors were confirmed in office "ad nutum" of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation; the reappointment of Fr. Franch was made final on November 29, 1935, with the ordinary decree of nomination; on January 11, 1936, Fr. Remigio Pigato was also reconfirmed in his office as Councilor, while Fr. Ugo Cavicchi was named in place of Fr. L. Franchinotti. The Fr. Cavicchi, however, was transferred to the Eastern Province, and Fr. Giuseppe Bernardi was appointed to succeed him as Councilor.

On July 19, 1939, Fr. Franch was again reconfirmed in office:

"Even though you have been carrying the 'onus diei' for a long time, still, with due dispensations, the Sacred Congregation intends to confirm you once again as Provincial Superior, certain to be interpreting the wish and the desires, we believe, of the Missionaries of the Province (...). So also the Rev. Frs. Pigato and Bernardi are confirmed as Councilors. This Sacred Congregation has trust that the Province will continue in the spirit of observance of the laws, of missionary zeal, union, and fraternal unity of which it has given and gives such a living proof, and for this I ask you to express to all Religious and Missionaries my particular satisfaction. On your part, for the encouragement and guidance of the Fathers, you shall see to it that in the course of your three year term you visit often the single houses, and in case you should find these visitations hard and difficult, you shall make use of the services of the first Councilor. Visits of this kind turn out quite useful and of special help and spiritual comfort for the Religious.

*I would like to renew a particular recommendation in regard to the Seminary. We are about to gather the first fruits with the investiture of the first three students that arrived in Italy with Fr. Tirondola, while the Italian-Americans who will enter the novitiate next September will actually be five. Mindful of the directives already given before, also in financial matters, and of the exhortations of Fr. Tirondola, it will still be necessary that the seminary be developed further, if we wish that it may respond in the best way possible to the scope for which it was founded."*⁷

⁶ Pigato, "Observations", Melrose Park, s.d. (Arch. G.S., 607/5).

⁷ Rossi to Franch, Rome, July 19, 1939 (Arch. G.S., 607/10).

CHAPTER IX

MISSIONS IN THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

1. The Parish of Guardian Angel in Chicago, Illinois

The first concern of the new Pastor Fr. Manlio Ciufoletti was to bring to its completion the parish school according to the plans made before by his predecessor Fr. Pacifico Chenuil:

"Our present great concern is the school. This had to be opened since last year, but because of strikes and of difficulties in obtaining building materials we have been forced to extend the work till now. We hope that the construction will be completed by the middle of June. There remains to be completed the floors of the classrooms and the apartment for the Sisters. The electric, ventilation, and heating systems - all much up to date -are already in place (...).

If we think about all this, and especially of today's exorbitant prices, there is enough to lose one's mind! Not our confidence, however! In fact, we want to dare covering these extraordinary expenditures without adding any other debt to the already high one - more than \$60,000.00 - contracted for the new building (...).

On Holy Saturday we inaugurated a beautiful baptismal font made of plastic which was much admired, and on the occasion of Holy Confirmation the Stations of the Cross were newly decorated in color and gold. At present, plans are underway for the enlargement of the electric system and for the decoration of the chapel of the Crucifix (...).

Fr. Semeria was presented to Chicago by us. I had to make things easy for him by accompanying him to the various places where he went to collect donations for war orphans. He was our most welcome guest."¹

The 1913 project was redesigned: the school was reduced to two stories from the projected three and the classrooms were limited to twelve. The main hall had a seating capacity for 599 people. Pupils of the first three classes had to pay a monthly tuition of fifty cents, and the rest paid seventy-five cents. This helped cover one fifth of the overall expenditures. In the first year the school was opened only to five classes with 375 students. The teaching was entrusted to nine Sisters of the Congregation of the "Notre Dame" School Sisters of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The school was solemnly blessed by Archbishop Mundelein on October 3, 1920. On that occasion the restoration work of the church carried out by the "Italian Art Association" presided over by L. Amidei was also inaugurated.

Fr. Ciufoletti has always promoted the religious propaganda by means of the press; and we report the following information of 1921 on this matter:

"No less longed for than welcome, several issues have reached us of the newspaper '*Il Cittadino*' founded in Chicago, Illinois, last January, especially by initiative of Archbishop Mundelein, who, as a pledge of particular condescension and trust wanted that our confrere, Fr. Manlio Ciufoletti, should be appointed to direct it (...). The following is, in fact, the program of the new paper: to reach the Italian forces scattered

¹ Ciufoletti, "Un anno di vita parrocchiale", "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. XIV, n. 3 (July-September 1920) pp. 14-15.

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all over, to provide for the moral elevation of the people, and above all, to promote the practice of the faith and of Christian morals, besides instilling into their hearts esteem and love for both their native and adopted countries (...).

By the way, since we have called attention on this form of the apostolate of our Confreres residing there, we cannot forget what others are doing elsewhere, for many years already, on the moral and material levels, for the extension and spreading of the good press, a true source of good.

Among them we are pleased to mention Fr. P. Jannuzzi, co-founder and treasurer of the '*Il Crociato*' of New York; the Rev. Fr. Demo of the '*L'Italiano in America*'.²

Already in 1921 we discover an interesting study on the religious soul of the Italians of the parish of Guardian Angel, holding valid, of course, also for all other emigrants. Fr. Cesare Molinari is its author:

"As to their religion, one must admit that the Italian, the one from the South especially, is Catholic, in his own peculiar way maybe, but deeply and instinctively Catholic. Certainly, puritans and formalists wonder at seeing him light candles to saints whom he so easily curses afterwards; at witnessing the baptism of a child postponed for seven years only because a godparent has not arrived as yet from California or from Italy; at seeing women and children loaded with charms against the evil eye presenting themselves to the priest for the soliciting of his adjurations and exorcisms; at seeing people who do not hesitate spending \$1,000.00 to provide an aluminum casket for a dead body and two or three music bands for their own funeral and then hardly spend \$1.00 to have a Mass said for him; at witnessing people who are so scrupulous in regard to not eating meat on Wednesday and then neglect for years their Easter duty. But when one gets to know the inner life of the southern Italian, to perceive his truly evangelic spirit of sacrifice and self-denial, the spirit of prayer that inflames him, the ardor of repentance in those who return to God, he is forced to admit that the defects of his religious practice are due more to ignorance than to wickedness or malice.

In the midst of the Babylonian world of this city the morality of the Italian is noticeable (and this is no rhetoric). Above all, the number of baptisms shows that our race is not a self-destructive one. The relatively small number of hysterics and neurotics assures us that not too many tears are being shed among us for crimes and shames that otherwise beset the nations 'that are marching at the head of the world'.

The honesty and pride of our women is proven by the nearly insignificant number of scandals and divorces, so common among Americans; the sobriety of our men, the spirit of brotherhood among fellow countrymen, that leads them to share bread and room with the last to arrive; their great generosity when compared with their means; certain exaggerations that render them so pleasant even in the somewhat provincial simplicity of their expressions: fringes, feathers, scarves, sashes, medals, on oneself and on flags; discourses, waving of flags; all of them tell us how much life and enthusiasm there is in the heart of our emigrants. Without mentioning, besides, their high sense of honor, sincerity in giving their word, their sense of what is right or wrong and their gratitude.

As to patriotism, if we stop at the words of our detractors, we should think all Italians to be all Coriolani, ready to bite off in one morsel their country and government. Should you, instead, pay attention to the facts, woe to any non-Italian who would dare speak evil of our home country! The emigrant cannot unfurl the stars and stripes without pairing it with his national tricolor flag (...). These same fellow countrymen who assure you that they no longer want to have anything to do with their country of origin, subject themselves to very hard privations to send aid to Italy, when misfortune

² "Un nuovo giornale italiano a Chicago, Illinois" *Ibid.*, a. XV, n. 1 (January-March 1921), pp. 10-11.

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strikes it and will leave everything to run to its rescue. Certainly, such people are not to be accounted among those who have no country.

Unfortunately, children of Italians do not care much about their country of origin; they speak English and little or no Italian; they feel American, with the same snobbish attitude the son of a farmer shows when he goes to live in the city (...). The prevailing idea among non-Italians that the main occupation of Italians is to push a banana cart or to cry out loud the retail selling of peanuts or to turn the wheel of the barrel-organ does not respond to reality any longer.

The majority of our parishioners, for instance, are employed in the hardest and most difficult jobs that modern life has made necessary. Diggers, firemen, foundry workers, porters, bricklayers, street sweepers, tell us that a '*pleasant idleness*' is not the favorite occupation of Dante Alighieri's fellow countrymen. In the parish we have also many craftsmen, tailors, carpenters, bakers, pastry chefs, many shop owners, merchants, various very promising industrialists, and finally, not a few professionals, doctors in great part and publicists. As to the number of professionals, we cannot compete with the Germans and the English; yet Chicago could be for them the promised land, as also for mechanics, machinists and specialists of all arts and trades (...).

Naturally, the parish of Guardian Angel must follow the fate of all things in this city of many lives, where men and things are always on the move. Where there was a lake yesterday, there is a railroad today and a park will be there tomorrow; where you find crowds of people today, there will be a lonely section of garages and warehouses tomorrow. The people of Guardian Angel move to the western suburbs in sensible numbers: Des Plaines, Jefferson, Clinton Streets are practically deserted; the city plan foresees a widening of Taylor and Glipin Streets, etc... and will force several hundreds of other families to move out; the number of baptisms has declined from a peak of 1,519 in 1910, to a low of 615 last year. We must follow the people if we do not want to remain alone. We must start moving."³

In 1923, Fr. Ciufolletti wrote a report of his first semester which we like to quote here as a typical example of the activities carried on in those days in the Italian-American parishes:

"We, too, must lament our share of the number of those who fall away; and this is one of our most serious concerns. The young, boys especially, do not respond to the care of the Missionaries and the Sisters as well as they should. Before Confirmation, during the months of preparation for it, we have such a large number of boys and girls as to make it necessary to have a special Mass for them in the school hall. Once they received Confirmation, these new 'soldiers of Christ' begin to disperse: then vacations come along and very many of them go out into the country. And then in the month of September, when the normal activities of the parish have resumed their course, one notices that many, boys especially, do not return to their usual practices of religion, to their monthly Communion, in particular. The fault is found in great part with parents, but somewhat also with the environment too ripe with indifference, worldliness and distractions. More faithful and fervent are instead the students of the Parish school who are steadily under the discipline and control of the Sisters and the Priests. But, how much these blessed schools are costing us both in sacrifices and money! Only the interests on the present debt incurred for the purchase of the land and for the construction (representing actually only half of the total cost) amounted to \$800.00 for these six months, without mentioning the costs for maintenance, heating, etc.

But to follow a certain logical and chronological order I shall begin with the services of Holy Week, leaving the particulars about... finances for the end of this report.

³ Molinari, "Gli Italiani a Chicago, Illinois", *Ibid.*, a. XV, n. 3 (July-September 1921), pp. 11-12.

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The services of Holy Week have in our church the same solemnity as in the largest cathedrals: I mean all of them, including certain extra-liturgical additions. This year they were conducted more solemnly because of the presence of a very able Franciscan from Cosenza, Fr. Paolo Broccolo. He had come to Chicago to assist at the first Mass of his brother, the Rev. Umile, a missionary of this church (...). Easter Communion were extraordinarily numerous; and a number of societies of men and women made their Easter duty in a body.

Immediately after Easter I began blessing homes: a tedious and demanding task, but filled with consolations and rewarding experiences. By me, this is the best opportunity for a pastor to get in touch with his spiritual children; and while he brings to the families the Easter blessings and greetings he has the occasion for gathering information on the religious, moral, and even financial state of all members of the house. And this is all the more true when the parishioners, like ours, originate from provinces of the South of Italy, because they do not seem too enthusiastic about receiving visits of strangers, be they even those of priests.

Immediately following the conclusion of this fatiguing pilgrimage up and down the stairways of the poor houses (very many of them poor sheds, I should say,) of my beloved flock, holy missions in English started, preached by the Jesuit priest Fr. G. Macguire between April 8 and 22. They had a most consoling success, especially in the first week frequented by the members (some 600) of St. Francis Xavier Council of the Knights of Columbus. They concluded their Mission on the 15th with a general Communion. On the following Sunday the Missions closed with a general Communion at the early Masses, and at 9:00 A.M. the preacher imparted the papal blessing.

The Missions in Italian began on the evening of the same day and were preached with much eloquence and fruit by the Dominican Fr. Raffaele M. Ferrari, pastor of San Domenico in Arezzo, Italy. They lasted fifteen days and were solemnly concluded on May 6.

(...) One of the Missions' aims was that of providing godfathers and godmothers with a worthy preparation for the Holy Confirmation which took place on Saturday, May 26, at 3:00 in the afternoon, administered by Auxiliary Bishop Hoban.

According to a practice I set down two years ago, something I find more fruitful than any Mission, in this parish all sponsors, men and women, must receive Holy Communion the Sunday or week preceding Confirmation. And as proof of their having complied with this obligation they must present the proper card with their name and the name of their godchildren on it upon entering the parish hall where those to be confirmed are to gather.

This year the card showed a beautiful image of the Guardian Angel with the explanation of the duties and rights of sponsors along with the image on one side, and the schedule for Confessions, Communion, and Confirmation on the other.

This card had been sent out to the sponsors through the candidates for Confirmation during the week preceding their own Communion Sunday (...). For the occasion all 455 sponsors received the Holy Sacraments.

Unfortunately, Confirmation is customarily looked upon here more as a celebration of the family than of a religious rite, more of human friendship than of supernatural brotherhood (...).

Confirmation candidates received a complete instruction and preparation from the Sisters who had gathered them for this purpose every day in the classrooms, except Saturdays, for three whole months. In preparation for the solemn rite the candidates made a short spiritual retreat, which I myself conducted.

On the very day of Confirmation (May 26, Feast of St. Philip Neri) they received Communion at my Mass, along with a group of 36 adults, who because of neglect had not yet received these sacraments. They had been prepared by one of the Fathers at

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appropriate evening classes. After the Mass the boys were enlisted in the Society of the Holy Name of Jesus, and the girls in the Sodality of the Children of Mary(...).

The following day, last Sunday of May, there took place in the afternoon the procession of the newly confirmed and the beautiful rite of the crowning of the Statue of Our Lady. The 20 best qualified boys and girls of the Confirmation class were accorded as many scholarships for the parish school (...).

Immediately afterwards, the novenas and feasts of the patron Saints of the 27 church-related societies of men and women began. Saints, whose lives and miracles I had not the slightest idea about before coming to America (...). Such celebrations, characterized by a certain local folklore with parades, music, and great display of candles and flowers, have a strong impact on the souls of people who relive through them a happy hometown day of celebration.

The solemnities of the saints remind me of those of men, baptism, wedding, and...the funeral. Between January 1 and June 30, 257 babies, and two adult women, converts from Lutheranism to Catholicism, were baptized in our church. We performed 63 weddings and 140 funerals (...).

And now turning to the social report I will mention a most successful evening (Bunco Party) held by the Choir members, which drew together in the parish hall the elite of the young people of our church. The proceeds of \$100.00 were given to the benefit of the school which had been visited a short while earlier by our ambassador in Washington, Prince Caetani. Like his predecessor Rolandi-Ricci, he had words of praise and admiration for the premises and for the Sisters.

I will tell you also that at a private banquet in his honor, the Ambassador invited the people in attendance to express their views on the local and regional problems of immigrants. I spoke about the difficulty of securing good teachers of Italian for our schools, and made the proposal that there be in every city with Italo-American schools (practically the same as parochial schools) one or more teachers of Italian who should give lessons in it in the various schools. Such teachers should be Sisters preferably, chosen by common agreement between the Italian Consul and the Italian pastors, and paid in part also by the Italian government that would thus show in a concrete way its interest in the teaching of our language in those few schools where it is allowed and requested that it be taught.

During the week preceding Confirmation, the students taught by the Sisters gave a show that turned out interesting indeed and charming. The show was presented for children in the afternoon, and for adults in the evening. Proceeds amounted to more than \$450.00 (...).

And, do not be surprised if all these celebrations are aiming at the proceeds...; because anyone who knows how much money is needed for the support of school and church, for paying interest on the mortgage (\$4,000.00 last year), for extinguishing the debt while contributing at the same time to the upkeep and growth of diocesan institutions, wonders rather how we can possibly keep pace with all these needs (...).

But allow me to conclude this report with better news.

Another good young lady of the parish is about to enter the convent, thus bringing to eight the number of Sisters, or postulants, whom the Lord was pleased to choose for Himself out of our parochial community."⁴

We have noticed in the article of Fr. Molinari the warning signs of the relocation of the people of Guardian Angel parish. In September 1924, Fr. Ciufoletti told Archbishop Cicognani that, once he had finished paying the debt he was thinking about building a larger church but in another place where

⁴ Ciufoletti, "Relazione della Chiesa dell'Angelo Custode", *Ibid.*, A. XVII, n. 3 (July-September 1923), pp. 8-14.

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Italians had been grouping in greater numbers. In the preceding July he had written to Card. DeLai:

"We now also have a good number of Mexicans (Archbishop Crosco of Guadalupe, who will be in Rome soon, will tell you about it) whom the chancery has charged us to take care of for the reason that we can manage in their language. The only Protestant mission was opened in fact in these days for Mexicans, who are made the particular object of attention on the part of Protestants."⁵

In the summer of 1929, Card. Mundelein requested the replacement of Fr. Ciufoletti blaming him for not making sufficient efforts for the extinction of the debt. In fact, he was succeeded by Fr. Riccardo Secchia in September. Due especially, to the shifting of the population, the parish kept deteriorating rapidly. In early 1935, Fr. Secchia wrote the following report:

"If it's true that the current depression affects all institutions, in particular the parishes, as regards this one of Guardian Angel there are other courses, besides.

Located in a section that had been a long time the populous residence of the Italian community, for several years now very many families have transferred their residence elsewhere because of the city planning program and where before there stood numerous homes, only empty and abandoned lots are found today. The overwhelming difference past and present is shown by the parish registers. While even as many as 1,500 baptisms and more than 150 weddings had been entered before in one year, only 34 weddings took place and 108 baptisms were administered this last year 1934, and not all of them of people residing within the parish limits. As of now we can say that the total population of the parish amounts to about 600 families.

Church attendance is fairly good; there were 27,500 Communion this year. However, as these are families of poor laborers (the great majority of them is presently out of work) we cannot possibly pretend large contributions for either Church or School; many of them, in fact, live on public assistance. The Women's Societies of the Children of Mary and of St. Agnes represent a big help for the Church. Well deserving especially of the school is the Christian Mothers' Society, who comes to the help of the good teaching sisters by means of a variety of activities. Good hopes for the future are now placed in the Club for young men; besides being kept away from association with evil companions and from harmful amusements, they get more closely attached to the church. Doubtless, the most abundant fruits are derived through the parish school. While with a larger population we had only some 300 pupils, now there are 470 of them instead, though very few of them can afford to pay their monthly tuition on account of the financial strictures of their families. It all places a heavy burden on the church which must provide for the support of the school.

The present financial conditions are bearing too heavily on the debt we have to pay (\$55,000.) and consequently also on the annual interest (\$2,750) besides the \$500 diocesan taxes."⁶

The actual strength of the parish can be understood by comparing the

⁵ Ciufoletti to Card. DeLai, Chicago, 1-7-1924 (Arch. G.S., 649/3).

⁶ Secchia to Franch, Chicago, January 29, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 649/4).

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parochial statistics of 1940 with those of 1920:

<i>Parish Categories</i>	1920	1940
<i>Families</i>	1,275	540
<i>Members</i>	8,500	3,250
<i>Baptisms</i>	615	81
<i>Confirmations</i>	391	52
<i>Weddings</i>	146	48
<i>Funerals</i>	214	71

2. The Parish of S. Maria Incoronata, Chicago, Illinois

Fr. Carlo Delbecchi, Pastor from 1919 until 1922, concerned himself with reducing the debt of the church, and among other things he decided that the pupils of the school were to pay their small tuition. He was much criticized for this. In 1920, 584 baptisms, 134 weddings, 184 funerals were registered. It was still the case of a very populous parish even if we do not know how much the statement of Fr. Peona may respond to truth when states of having found there a population of 20,000 souls in 1922 when he became pastor of S. Maria Incoronata. In 1924, the same Father spoke of 1,000 families, scattered however over a territory of 15 kilometers in diameter; in a 1926 report the inhabitants are numbered at 5,893; in 1928, 4,800; in 1930, 5,492.

We report here the 1933 report written in by Fr. Giovanni Peona who was pastor of Santa Maria Incoronata from August 1922 to May 1932:

"I found the parish in bad condition both morally and materially:

- 1) *Morally: With a population of about 20,000 souls (presently a little over 5,000) only about 1,500 of them were attending Mass. The school connected with the parish had an enrollment of 192 pupils. Communion had been 16,000. In compliance with the program of the American Episcopate that 'every Catholic child be provided with a place in the Catholic school' and in obedience to precise directives of His Excellency the Archbishop of Chicago we got busy and ended up with having a good 450 children in our school, a number never reached by any of our parishes there. By planning the religious services so that each class of people might have its own Mass with sermon in English or Italian according to their different needs, the number of people attending the Masses (which were increased, therefore, from four to seven) has tripled. Many of those who have moved far away and outside of the parish limits still come back on Sundays for religious services. Besides, thanks to the devotions in honor of St. Theresa and of the Sacred Heart (First Friday), to the practice of the monthly Holy Hour of adoration (which is preached only in our church), the number of Communion was increased from 16,000 to a good 75,000.*

The youth was organized; and so the Parish of the Incoronata was again the only one of our parishes to have the 'Boy Scouts', the largest number of members in Youth Associations, the highest rate of subscribers to the diocesan Catholic newspaper. Following several years of hard efforts, we succeeded in having almost all high school and college students frequent

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Catholic Institutions. In my parochial ministry I did not neglect the many groups of Italians scattered throughout various townships with no Italian priests. I took care of them following agreements with their respective American pastors. Due to the strong immigration of Chinese into the neighborhood around the church, I turned my attention to those poor creatures, and we could count a few conversions already. This, in brief, the moral report. I cared for Italians also on the social level and so I could secure a job for a great many of them (...).

- 2) *Materially: The two buildings of the Church and the School were in deplorable condition (...). The roofs were repaired; the crosses, a long time dismantled, were placed back in their place to mark that the two buildings were religious institutions; retaining walls were built to shoulder up the street; sidewalks were constructed around them; fire-escapes were installed in compliance with city ordinances; new sanitation services were put up as demanded by good hygienics, and more so by good morals; the school was enlarged; and a recreation center was opened to keep the children away from the dangers of the street.*

As to the church, the deteriorating Stations of the Cross were restored; it was decorated; two new altars were erected; new furnishings and sacred vestments were purchased; a new lighting system was installed such as required by a recent city ordinance, etc., etc. (...). The debt was reduced; more than \$2,000.00 had to be added to the debt for the widening of the streets and over \$5,000.00 for Diocesan Institutions."⁷

The Sisters' Convent at 244 West 25th Place was purchased in 1924 and Mass was said for the first time in their chapel on November 15 the same year. And so it was possible to make room in the school for three more classrooms. In 1925, a catechism program was started for children attending public schools. In 1929, the 25th anniversary of the parish was celebrated in the presence of Auxiliary Bishop J. Sheil. On that occasion a large courtyard was also inaugurated for the recreation programs of the parish school students.

In 1930, the Archdiocesan Chancery Office gave orders for the construction of a new church close to the parochial school, which was one mile away from the main church, which was being surrounded by then by the Chinese, and the Italians were moving further to the South. Fr. Peona did not feel up to it: administration was not his specialty. And so the opportunity to replace him came when Fr. Peona applied for and obtained a return to Italy in May 1932. Fr. Cesare Molinari, whom Cardinal Mundelein had already named as administrator of the church on March 23, 1932, was appointed to take his place. For reasons of health, however, Fr. Molinari asked in August of the same year to be relieved of a task made difficult by the financial situation.

Fr. Giovanni Ferrara remained as acting pastor; then on February 1, 1933, Fr. Michele Favero took charge of the parish, assisted by Fr. Giuseppe Lazzeri, who had already been an assistant there from 1925 until 1930. Neither could Fr. Favero find a remedy for the financial difficulties. For this reason, on the March 15, 1934, the parish was entrusted to Fr. Lazzeri, who quite quickly healed the

⁷ Peona to Card. Rossi, Caluso, January 26, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 622/4).

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finances, though undertaking the needed restoration works on church, school, and convent.⁸

In 1935, Fr. Luigi Bolzan described as follows the picturesque neighborhood where the Church of Incononata stood:

"Did you ever happen to come face to face with people of the yellow race with almond eyes, with or without a pigtail? You wish to see them, here they are for all to see, a whole city district called Chinatown. And here, almost in the midst of them, stands our Italian church of Santa Maria Incononata on Alexander Street, a short distance from the lake.

Alexander Street is a special one: it is one of the shabbiest streets of Chicago, but compensated with being a metropolis in itself, or a Babel, rather! A good many of the houses are made of wood, that is, veritable and genuine shanties, some of them in need of props to stand. Moving out of our church at one end of the street, knock at some twenty doors and you will find yourself in front of at least three or four of the five races of mankind, and, to say the least, of twelve different nationalities: at times, two or three in the various flats of the same house; Italians, Mexicans, and Chinese being the majority (...).

Here is the Italian church: simple in its external lines, rather low and squat, made of bricks; a steeple rising from the central section of the facade, as is the custom here; no sign of any square. The entrance faces Alexander Street. Along the left side and behind there runs a dividing road, clean somewhat, through which Negroes, and even some whites now, do their daily rounds with their rickety and rolling little carts collecting waste paper and trash, which is never lacking. That little road is also the favorite one of packs of cats and dogs for their musical encounters at any hour of day; strangely for a city, where grass is lacking, one may see a goat getting fat on garbage (...).

The church is located almost at the North end of the parish, which extends indefinitely southward, as no Italian churches are found there in that direction for a distance of several miles. As a result, it becomes difficult for a great part of the population to attend church especially in case of snow, ice, or bad weather. Besides, the most distant ones, excepting the few who have a car, have always made use of that streetcar, and this may then represent a financial sacrifice for the family. Bicycles are out of the question, because their use becomes too dangerous along the streets of this city.

For quite a few years now, the problem of distances has been remedied in part by turning the basement of our Catholic school in two a subsidiary church, a true and proper chapel, where the Blessed Sacrament is kept and the pupils of the same school, 400 of them, hear Mass everyday. It is located at about a kilometer to the South of the parish church. Two Masses are said there regularly every Sunday, for the opportunity respectively of children of the public schools first, and the second of those attending the parish school, with still sufficient room for adults at both Masses (...).

The land of the dollar: this is how America is called! It should be more correctly called the land of debts. Listen carefully: the properties of the parish include the church, the rectory, the parochial school with its large recreation courtyard, and the convent of the Sisters. On all these buildings, not found, as it should be, all together in one location, but scattered over four different places, there is a pending debt of \$30,000.00. The situation is not desperate but it demands still a steady sacrifice on the part of the people and an unceasing worry by the Fathers in charge of the parish. Parishioners respond as generously as is possible in these years of straits when many

⁸ Cfr. "Fortieth Anniversary Celebration 1904-1944. Santa Maria Incononata Church" (Chicago, 1944); "Santa Maria Incononata 1904-1964 (Chicago, 1964).

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families live on charity (...).

The population of the parish is made up of Neapolitans and Sicilians. Both these groups are deeply religious, but feelings play a greater part in this than does knowledge.

Men attend little, still in proportionately greater numbers perhaps than in the cities of Italy. The number of the families in the parish is a little over a thousand. But, sad to say, the population is on a slow but steady decline; and this is due to various reasons. First of all, the birth rate is terribly decreasing and homesteads are almost deserted. Large families are becoming more a rarity even amongst Italians. Besides, many families move away to the South or the West in search of more peaceful places distant from downtown and factories. Finally, a wide railroad, built only a few years ago on a North-South route and possible to cross only through long and dark underpasses, has completely cut out almost one-third of the population that is forced, therefore, to attend the American churches located on the other side of the tracks.

A few figures gathered from the statistics of the parish give eloquent proof of this fact: baptisms decreased from 625 in 1917 to 225 in 1934; weddings, 144 in 1917, 49 in 1932; funerals, from 180 in 1920, to 99 in 1934; first Communion and Confirmations are now down to about 250 a year. There were about forty thousand Communion in 1934, with a daily average of 100."⁹

3. The Parish of "Madonna Addolorata" in Chicago, Illinois

In July 1921, Fr. Domenico Canestrini succeeded Fr. Giacomo Gambera as pastor of the Church of the "Addolorata", with Fr. Pietro Cazzaniga as his assistant. In 1922, Fr. Canestrini reported:

"The total debt pending on this church when I was appointed here (July 1921) amounted to \$38,000.00. In a year and a half it was brought down to \$33,000.00. Now the task of the present Fathers is to have a church more centrally located and to build the school, absolutely necessary to save the new generations for the faith. To succeed in this scope (as intended by our Founder) we must renounce our very salary (\$2,000.00 annually). Our fellow countrymen are extremely distrustful of the priest, they do not think they have any obligation to support their church, and unfortunately they easily abandon the practice of religion, remembering that they are Catholic only on three occasions: baptism, wedding and funeral. One does the best he can."¹⁰

He had expressed the same pessimistic impression to Fr. Rinaldi:

"Americans themselves are astonished at finding out that the Italians should care so little about their religion. In a parish like this five priests would not be enough, instead two of them are too many.... We could have instances which lead us to fool ourselves or the simpletons, but the reality is very bitter and discouraging."¹¹

In 1924 he pointed out that with a population of 1,500 Italian families, attendance at Mass amounted to some 1,200 or 1,500 people. As to church and school, the project to buy a Protestant church more centrally located had fallen through because the price had gone up from the prospected \$30,000.00 in 1923 to \$60,000.00. The Archbishop had given permission to buy a piece of

⁹ Bolzan, L., "Chiesa di S. Maria Incoronata", "L'Emigrato Italiano", a. XXIV, n. 3 (July 1935), pp. 9-13.

¹⁰ Canestrini to Cimino, Chicago, September 15, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 23/2).

¹¹ Canestrini to Rinaldi, Chicago, February 16, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 621/3).

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land four blocks away, and Fr. Canestrini was making plans for the purchase when Cardinal DeLai appointed him in June of 1925 to direct "Christopher Columbus" orphanage in São Paulo, Brazil.

Fr. Cazzaniga was named pastor in November 1925, and Fr. Luigi Bolzan was assigned as his assistant, replaced later on by Fr. Ugo Cavicchi in 1928. The debt pending on the church represented an obstacle also for Fr. Cazzaniga towards the realization of the school's project. In May 1928, he wrote:

"It is seven years now, that to reduce a debt, which up to 1921 had grown to \$38,000.00, that to make parishioners aware of their duty to contribute to the expenditures of the parish, that to provide the parish with the much needed school, that for the good name of Scalabrinians who have been running it for the past 23 years, I keep being made the object of criticism, insults, threats, insinuations, and accusations of all kinds. Fr. Ugo himself well knows how hard and difficult it is to collect money. In spite of the pressing appeal sent out to the parish and with all our going around for six whole months visiting 1,300 families, we have collected only \$1,081.00, and it will be much if we should succeed in taking in \$5,000.00 instead of the \$19,000.00 we would need for reaching our preset goal."¹²

In the spring of 1929, Fr. Cazzaniga returned to Italy. Fr. Ugo Cavicchi was named acting pastor in July and given Fr. Giuseppe Bernardi as his assistant. In an early 1921 report, the Regional Superior pointed out:

"Under the able and zealous direction of Fr. Cavicchi, assisted by the equally fervent Fr. Bernardi, this parish, once thought to be dying, is undergoing a renewal on both the religious and financial levels. As to finances, \$14,000.00 have been paid on the debt, and \$10,000.00 more was spent on restoration work. On the religious level, all societies now existing have been established, with the exception of the Holy Name Society."¹³

It appears from the same report that the parish had 1,500 families with about 11,000 souls, one-third of them attending church. A piece of land had already been purchased for the parochial school. More than 1,200 children were frequenting the public schools. They were imparted religious instruction at Sunday School by the Sisters of Mother Cabrini. In the night of January 9, 1931, the church of the Addolorata was almost entirely destroyed by fire:

"The cause is unknown; arson has been excluded. The Fathers were awakened by the heat and the crackling of the flames to the terrifying sight of an immense blaze. We could hardly save the rectory.... But there is no cause to be alarmed: this misfortune (...) to our great surprise, helped in uniting priests and faithful more closely together, and this is so true that in less than two months the Lord had His House more beautiful and larger than before and it has been in use longer than a month already. Besides, it has no debt because with the insurance money we were able to complete this church once used by Protestants, on which, after all, we had set our eyes for quite a long time as on one located in the center of the parish. As also His Eminence Cardinal Mundelein was saying to me, this misfortune has been a blessing for the Parish.

¹² Cazzaniga to Card. Perosi, Chicago, May 10, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 621/4).

¹³ Franch, "Report of 1931" (Arch. G.S., 621/5).

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*During these two months services were held in the basement of a Polish church. And so I am happy to be able to assure Your Eminence that after a short pause of two months the parish progresses beautifully and that the Fathers are not in the least discouraged."*¹⁴

In March 1931, Fr. Cavicchi was assigned to the new parish of Saint Callistus in Chicago, and Fr. Bernardi was named pastor of Santa Maria Addolorata. In the years between 1931 and 1940 he had successively as his assistants Fathers G. Ferrara, G. Lazzeri, A. Pierini, G. Rizzi, L. Riello, and P. Beltrame. Built in 1871 in the Gothic style, the former Lutheran church at North May and Erie Streets, was all done over and decorated by painter Giovanni Cangelosi. The house by the church at 648 North May Street was purchased to serve as rectory. In 1935, a campaign was launched for the parish school. The building was completed together with the convent for the Sisters in 1939. The school was opened in September 1939 for 200 pupils, and placed under the direction of the Sisters of Blessed Luigi Guanella.

It's interesting to remember that the old rectory at 909 W. Grand Avenue served as the first seat of Sacred Heart Seminary opened there on September 8, 1935, and then transferred to its definitive location in Melrose Park (presently, Stone Park) on May 9, 1937.

4. The Parish of St. Michael in Chicago, Illinois

Fr. Davide Angeli had been pastor of St. Michael's since 1919. During that time Tuscan socialists promoted in a more daring manner their propaganda by organizing political "comitia" even by the very doors of the church. At the same time, a group of Piedmontese also settled in the parish moving in from the mines of Southern Illinois and Kansas. Fr. Angeli organized a choir and a dramatic club in an attempt at drawing the people. He was succeeded for about a year by Fr. Giovanni Quaglia. In that time, a good number of families moved to suburban Cicero, Illinois. Fathers Giovanni Peona and Orazio D'Andrea directed the parish after Fr. Quaglia for very short periods. Finally, in 1924, the place of these "temporary tenants" was taken by Fr. Cesare Molinari who directed the parish from February 14, 1924 to August 15, 1933. His arrival marked a turning point for the life of the parish. His first success was the organization of a young group of some forty courageous young men into the Society of the Holy Name. Twice a year, at Christmas and Easter, these young men paraded through the streets of the parish and marched to the church for the reception of the sacraments. Human respect began waning also in others. In July of 1924, Fr. Molinari sent out to the families the following circular letter:

"After a few months' residence in this Parish, I could ascertain that the number of parishioners (all the Italian population residing between Roosevelt Road and 38th Street, moving west from Ashland Avenue, by the city limits) is more than enough to support without serious inconvenience the burdens

¹⁴ Franch to Card. Rossi, Chicago, April 15, 1931 (Arch. G.S., 621/5).

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inherent to the religious life of the community. It is self-evident that no human society can subsist without the contributions of its members; the communists themselves, who make fun of you for the offering you give to the church, pay their dues, and very dearly at that, for their club, journal, and promotion office. It is easy to understand, then, why our parish cannot pay in so many years, I do not say its not so extraordinary debt of \$25,000.00, but not even the annual interest on it, and why it is always short in paying the Diocesan taxes for the Seminary and for Catholic Charities. Many are those among us who consider themselves Catholics not because they help Catholic Institutions but because, rather, they seek their help when in need. Many, too many indeed, are those who believe having done more than their due for the church when they give an offering on the occasion of baptisms or weddings, that is, once in ten or twenty years. Very few, not to say, rare, are those who after the example of the members of St. Michael's Association seek to support the church by a steady and regular offering.

Things cannot go on like this. If by the ordinary revenues we cannot cover the normal expenditures for repairs, electricity, and heating, it is not by means of the extraordinary ones (occasional offerings of the faithful), too uncertain and much more modest, that it will be possible to cope with the precise obligations our church has with the bank that loaned us the capital for its construction and with the diocese we belong to. Now, if we do not pay interest to the bank, this in turn will end up with taking possession of our sacred buildings; if we do not contribute to the diocesan taxes, our Catholic hospitals, homes for the aged, all charity institutions will cease completely from taking care of people who do not show any interest in them. The priests sent here in charge of the parish, are thus compelled each semester to find excuses and go ask for reductions and delays, much to their shame when other parishes, poorer and with larger debts than ours, are more willing than we to pay them. And, so, priests will succeed priests until no one will be found anymore who will be willing to accept a burden as painful as this for any human heart or so humiliating for an Italian. (Is it not true, perhaps, that the parishes of Chicago's Catholic Negroes and Mexicans are rated better as such than ours, a more populous, rich, and educated one than they are? And is there anyone, besides, who may think it to be a pleasure for an Italian priest to hear repeated in his ears this statement, which responds to the truth, after all?)

Should only all Catholics of St. Michael's want to unite and contribute a set sum for the support of their parish, they could pay interest and capital of their church's debt without taking the bread out of their children's mouth; they could help improve the religious services both in regard to persons (schools, kindergarten, Bible classes, etc.) and to the splendor of the liturgy, (organ, choir, vestments, etc...); and most of all, they could prove that it was not narrow-mindedness, nor prejudice, nor ignorance that kept them until now behind Negroes and Mexicans, but only the lack, rather, of coordination and organization, defects chargeable not to persons but to circumstances.

Would it be too much if I should ask each family for half a dollar a month as compensation for a religious service promptly rendered day and night; for the teaching of Catechism absent from State's schools; for the sure assistance accorded in time of need by the local institutions of charity and education?

I would be asking you for only two pennies a day, for your religion: But don't

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you give more than this to a child for candy, toys, or a show? Don't you spend more perhaps for your cigars, newspapers, or even powder?

Generous hearts and open minds will not refuse their cooperation, so much needed in America for the existence of religious life; for this reason I trustingly include a pledge card that you will undersign and send back to me if you welcome my proposal. Every month envelopes will be distributed for your monthly quota, the names of contributors published, and they will be given an annual account of the administration of the parish."¹⁵

The efforts of Fr. Molinari did not meet with much success at first, so that by the end of 1925 he wrote to Card. DeLai:

*"Called to St. Michael in February 1924, though aware of the difficulties of this parish, I accepted the assignment, refused by all, not because of presumption but for obedience's sake. In order to pay at least the interest on the ever increasing debt of the church, I did without housekeeper preparing everything myself and taking my meals at restaurants and hotels in the city. To remedy the insufficiency of parish revenues I went around singing Masses at the various churches of our confreres in Chicago (...). After almost two years, this style of life has ruined my stomach; malaria attacks became stronger and more frequent."*¹⁶

The following letter can be profitably compared with the report of 1927:

"In 1927 we had 69 baptisms (...); 108 confirmations(...); 67 first Communions; 30 weddings, 8 of which of people who had been living together for years with or without the civil bond; 8 funerals, one of them an infant.

Sick calls, to hospitals especially, of parishioners and otherwise, were 37; practices for civil assistance, jobs, and shelter 62; confessions some 2,500; Communions 1,500. The discrepancy between confessions and communions is explained by the fact that many faithful of the neighboring American parishes find it more convenient to come to St. Michael's for their confession.

The parish has some fifty families that truly practice their faith all year round, and as many other ones that are more or less faithful to and mindful of their religious duties.

The school of Catechism for children who have already made their first communion is attended by about sixty pupils: about another seventy (so far, of course) attend catechism classes in preparation for first communion. It must be pointed out, however, that a good one-third of these children belong to families of poor Poles and Slovenians who do not, or do not want, to frequent their parishes.

From the financial report hereby included, you will notice that I have taken only \$100 from the church as my salary. Since I had to hire a housekeeper, I found it impossible to take more, as the laws of the diocese would allow. In the past years (1924-1926), when I had no housekeeper, I used to take from the church \$50.00 a month leaving the rest in payment for the interest, only half of which I could pay this year because of increased expenditures on repairs.

One notices a great improvement in everything, but it is impossible so far to carry on without the help of Fr. Fani.

¹⁵ Molinari, "Circular Letter" of July 27, 1924 (Arch. G.S., 623/2).

¹⁶ Molinari to Card. DeLai, Chicago, December 4, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 623/2).

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*Certainly, the trouble of going to Our Lady of Pompeii every day in all kinds of weather is not light."*¹⁷

From the report of 1929 one gathers that the parish counted about 200 families with 1,000 souls; 64 baptisms were performed, with 116 confirmations, 65 first communions, 34 weddings, 10 funerals. Following a new census, the report of 1930 showed a population of 264 families with 1,205 souls. Baptisms were 55, first communions 65, weddings 16, funerals 8. The children attending public schools were 291.

In the years of the great depression, Fr. Molinari founded the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul to help poor families. He had some repairs and restoration work done on the church, and so he was able at last to pay a little on that debt. By both people and superiors he was judged a priest of great zeal and mortification and, in spite of his character inclining to pessimism, a man of great courage in carrying on for ten years the sacrifice of such a miserly life in the smallest and poorest parish of the Region.

In August 1933, he was succeeded as pastor of St. Michael's by Fr. Pietro Bianchetta, who restored the rectory with the addition of the porch, and decorated the church. The associations of the parish were reorganized and guided by a direction of greater social involvement. The debt pending on the church was reduced considerably.

5. The Parish of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Melrose Park, IL.

In the years between 1915 and 1925, Fr. Beniamino Franch did not engage in any construction also because of the war, but turned his thoughts to extinguishing the debts on the previous work. Only in 1928 could he enlarge the rectory. In May 1922 he organized the Christian Mothers placing them under the patronage of St. Monica, and in 1925 he gave life to a small group of men in the Society of the Holy Name, officially erected on October 23, 1930. The association of the young ladies, begun with five girls in 1915, had received in 1919 a great impulse by the Sisters of St. Joseph and continued to flourish under the title of the "Immaculate Conception Sodality". The Third Order of Saint Francis was established in 1933, and the "Sodality of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart for young married ladies was born in May 1936.

According to the annual report of 1921, the parish counted 275 families with 1,375 souls; baptisms had been 150; confirmations, 280; first communions, 121; weddings, 35; funerals, 27. The parish school was attended by 255 students, while another 145 frequented public schools.

By the 1930 census, ten years later, there were present in the parish 800 families with 4,112 people. In 1932, baptisms were 136, confirmations 309, first communions 140, weddings 40, funerals 40; 306 pupils were enlisted in the parish school, and 460 in public schools.

Fr. Franch directed the parish all alone until 1929; but then, due to the growth

¹⁷ Molinari to Franch, Chicago, January 16, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 623/2).

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of the parish and to the new tasks he had to assume in 1927 with his appointment as Regional Superior, he was given the help of an assistant: Fr. Giuseppe Lazzeri, was the first; Fr. Gregorio Zanoni, the second; Fr. Giulio Gragnani, the third, and Fr. Ettore Ansaldi, the fourth.¹⁸

6. The Parish of Our Lady of Pompeii in Chicago, Illinois

At the close of World War I, Fr. Carlo Fani got ready for the construction of the new church called for by the people that had increased in the meantime to a community of 15,000 Italians. And since the new Church had to be raised on the land occupied by the rectory, another one was built. In April of 1923, work was started on the church which was blessed on October 5, 1924 by Card. Mundelein. In Romanic-Byzantine style, the building was considered then the most beautiful Italian church of Chicago. Ordered from Italy and donated by Alderman John Powers, the marble altar was to be a replica of the altar of St. Apollinare in Classe of Ravenna. The old church was turned into a school by the end of the same year:

"The old church is now being transformed into six classrooms. I was hoping that everything would be finished by this time, but it will still take more than a month, instead. Work was suspended for two or three weeks by order of the Housing Department of the City Hall, because they wanted a lot of specifications that did not figure in the project I had prepared and would have cost a mountain of money. But with the help of influential people I succeeded in having my plan approved.

I have learned many things in the course of these two and a half years in which I have plunged deep, up to my neck. But I am comforted at the thought that my dream of bringing this Italian parish to such high degree of efficiency, that it may not fear comparison with those of other nationalities, is about to become true, for the time being, at least. Naturally, there are yet many things that need to be done, but they are not urgent now and, besides, they would take up all my time.

Bishop Hoban came to consecrate our beautiful altar last November 6 (...). The new bells are here; they will be set in place in the bell tower and will be made to peal for the first time to announce the solemnity of Holy Christmas."¹⁹

The annual report of 1926 records 984 baptisms, 625 first communions and 650 pupils in the parish school. The report of 1929 shows a decrease of population, then estimated at about 12,000 souls; baptisms were 773, confirmations 466, first communions 417, marriages 145, funerals 247. The parish school had an enrollment of 500 pupils, while another 2000 attended public schools.

The report of 1932 instead marks an increase of population; the census of 1930 had registered the presence of 3,052 families with 14,500 people. But in 1932 baptisms were only 419; confirmations 526; first communions 400;

¹⁸ Cfr. "1903-1953. Golden Jubilee and 50th Anniversary" (Melrose Park, 1953); "Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church" (Melrose Park, 1968).

¹⁹ Fani to Cicognani, Chicago, December 19, 1924 (Arch. G.S., 618/3).

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marriages 115; funerals 187. There were 347 pupils in the parish school, while 5,000 more (the number, twice repeated, seems exaggerated to us) frequented public school.

In the years of the great depression, alongside greater financial difficulties, there was, however, a noticeable spiritual growth: the Society of Christian Mothers was organized; the Holy Name Society flourished and the Conference of Saint Vincent helped 500 families of people out of work.

At the end of 1931, on his return to Italy, Fr. Fani was relieved of his parochial responsibility and replaced for about two months by his faithful assistant Fr. Carlo Rossi. In January 1932 the parish was entrusted to the responsibility of Fr. Remigio Pigato, who was named Pastor in May of the same year. Fr. Silvio Zanoni was made his assistant in the same month.

In an August 1935 report we read:

"Because of the vastness of the parish, the activities of the religious services are enormous. A few statistics are enough to prove it: in 1934, 470 baptisms were administered, 182 funerals celebrated, and 202 weddings performed. This year Holy Confirmation was bestowed on 619 children and about 800 received first Communion (...).

51 pupils of our school who have completed this year the elementary education courses have graduated by receiving their eighth grade diploma. Seven of them will form the first group of candidates at the Scalabrinian Seminary about to open this year in Chicago."²⁰

7. The Parish of St. Anthony in Chicago, Illinois

The Italian parish of St. Anthony on Kensington Avenue had its beginnings in 1903. In 1892 a number of laborers arrived there from the "Altopiano" (High Plateau) of Asiago. They had found a job with a brick factory and so they began calling relatives and friends from Italy. Later on, a group of Piedmontese also settled there, and then still another one of Calabrians. The factory soon went into bankruptcy; but fortunately at the very time the great Pullman factory, maker of the famous railroad cars began to grow.

In June 1903, Archbishop Quigley of Chicago charged the Italian priest Orazio D'Andrea with the task of settling among that community and building a church there. According to a report from Fr. D'Andrea, at the time, already over 500 Italian families were living there. In the same month of June Fr. D'Andrea bought a hall at 160 Kensington Avenue and turned it into a chapel. Three committees were formed immediately, one of Sicilians, another of Calabrians, and the third of Venetians, for collecting funds needed to purchase a piece of land for the church. When \$1,000.00 was collected, they bought a property that included two little houses on Prairie Avenue and three more on Kensington Avenue; two of these were translocated to Prairie Avenue; the third, a larger two story one, was done over by adapting the ground floor to a chapel and the

²⁰ "Report" of Fr. Luigi Bolzan, August 1935 (Arch. G.S., 618/4).

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upper flat as a residence for the priest. Msgr. Muldeon, representing the Archbishop, blessed the foundation stone of the new church in June 1904 which was titled to St. Anthony. Three months later the church was finished already and the Archbishop blessed it on September 4.

Catechetical instruction of children was imparted at first by two Sisters of Mother Cabrini who went there every Sunday from "Mother Cabrini" hospital. In 1912 Archbishop Quigley gave orders to build the parochial school, financial difficulties notwithstanding, and he blessed it in August 1914. The Sisters of St. Joseph of LaGrange, Illinois, were chosen to staff it. The first rectory was made into a convent for them. The cost of the school was \$60,000, and Fr. D'Andrea never paid even the interest. For this reason, Archbishop Mundelein entrusted the parish to Scalabrinians on June 23, 1922, and Fr. Michele Favero was its second pastor, with Fr. Bianchetta to assist him.

The two Missionaries had to engage in hard work, and in spite of debts, to restore the church and school, thus contracting a debt of \$15,000. The population was numerous: about 11,000 Italians, of whom 3,000 were Piedmontese, 2,000 Calabrians, and the rest Venetians. A good portion of them, however, had begun frequenting other churches, also because St. Anthony had undergone a period of decadence under the preceding administration. Renewed life was given to Catholic associations, especially to the Holy Name Society and to the Children of Mary Sodality. In March 1925, the Regional Superior, Fr. Carlo Fani stated:

*"In truth, the parish of St. Anthony, directed by Fr. M. Favero, doesn't count much more than 7,000 Italians, who, besides, are scattered over a vast territory. In addition, due to the poor administration of many years, a lot of the Italians of the Pullman district go for Mass and Sacraments to the Irish church where there is a pastor who knows a little Italian as he has made his studies in Rome. And so it is also with other two sections at the parish outskirts."*²¹

A 1926 report states that the "people frequenting and occasionally helping the church" amounts to 5,000 souls. In May 1929, Fr. Favero writes:

*"The people of this parish have been out of work for the past 18 months and they moved away."*²²

But even this statement does not explain why a 1929 report states that there were 227 families and 1,500 souls, while 230 baptisms were recorded in the same year. In his 1931 report, the Regional Superior, Fr. Franch, states that the parish had 5,000 souls, and then he adds:

*"300 Pupils attend the parish school, about 50% of the children living in the parish. About half of the parishioners live in a certain area called Pullman, about two miles away from the church of St. Anthony. For this community of families a subsidiary chapel would be necessary."*²³

Perhaps, Fr. Favero no longer considered these Italians as his parishioners; the fact is that he repeats the same statistics in his 1930 report: 283 families,

²¹ Fani to Card. De Lai, Chicago, March 7, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 619/2).

²² Favero to Franch, Chicago, May 23, 1929 (Arch. G.S., 619/2).

²³ "Report" of Fr. B. Franch, 1931 (Arch. G.S., 619/2).

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1,500 souls, 177 baptisms, 300 pupils in the parish school; and in that of 1932: 283 families, 1,500 people, 238 baptisms, 247 children in the parish school, 300 students in the public schools.

In the years between 1922 and 1928, Fr. Favero spent \$40,000 for building repairs and \$49,000 on interest and taxes; in 1925 he spent another \$15,000.00 for the school yard.

When reporting these numbers in 1932, Fr. Bianchetta adds:

*"But by the end of 1928 many workers, who were actual supporters of the church, became unemployed and revenues kept decreasing, especially the extraordinary ones, that is, the proceeds of bazaars and feasts (...). This parish is financially in ruin. Collections are very poor; impossible to hold bazaars or celebrations; we do not even collect enough to pay the most necessary expenditures. The pastor and I went without our salary for over five months."*²⁴

At the same time, Fr. Franch wrote to Rome asking that the problem of the parish be solved because the debt had climbed to \$91,178 and kept going up for the reason that interest was not being paid. And he added:

*"Urged by the Chancery, the last spring I consented that the other parishes should be taxed 20% on the revenues of the church to pay the first installment of interest that amounts to \$1,500.00, while Fr. Favero refunded the house with an equal sum from the funds of the church. But because of the crisis, the revenues of the churches have now decreased and it is impossible therefore to continue this help."*²⁵

The particular situation of the parish of St. Anthony and the explanations requested by the Sacred Consistorial Congregation gave rise to a dispute with the Chancery of Chicago that threatened to expel Scalabrinians from the Archdiocese. We deem it interesting to quote from a few documents that reveal, among other things, the mentality of the American clergy concerning national parishes. On January 16, 1933, the Vice-Chancellor of the archdiocese of Chicago wrote to Fr. Franch:

"Very Reverend and dear Father:

Pursuant to our conversation of last week regarding the affair of Fr. Favero and the parish of St. Anthony, I am reporting after investigating the matter from every angle, so that you can give proper answer to the Congregation of the Consistory, specifically referring to their letter of December 20, 1932 (Prot. no. 575/32). In order that the position of this diocesan Curia may be absolutely clear in the whole matter, it will be necessary to treat of some things at rather great length. His Eminence Cardinal Mundelein has directed me to state our position clearly and emphatically, so that there may be no room for doubt concerning our attitude in this matter. His Eminence has furthermore requested that, basing your answer on this letter, you should kindly forward to me a copy of your reply to Rome before sending it, so that we may have a record of it in our files.

I intend to state clearly our position regarding the three points that His

²⁴ M. Favero to Franch, Chicago, November 15, 1932 (Arch. G.S., 619/3).

²⁵ Franch to Card. Rossi, Melrose Park, November 24, 1932 (Arch. G.S., 619/3).

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Eminence Cardinal Rossi asked you to take up with this Curia. Before doing so, however, there are certain preliminary considerations and observations which I think ought to be made for a clearer understanding of our specific stand on each of the three points mentioned.

First and above all, it must be borne in mind that the parishes entrusted to the Pious Society were originally and remain 'paroeciae saeculares'. When the parish of S. Antonio was first entrusted to your Society some ten years ago, there was a distinct understanding and condition that the Archbishop of Chicago made before committing the parish to the care of members of your Society. The contract and condition was this: that most of the parishes entrusted to the Pious Society were more than able to take care of themselves: hence, it was to be the duty and obligation of such of these parishes to come to the aid of the less fortunate, financially considered, if the occasion arose. This meant that if one or other of the parishes could not manage to meet their outstanding debts, then the other parishes would have to come to their aid. In other words, these parishes were entrusted to the Pious Society per modum unius, i.e., if one parish failed, the others would have failed too, and the Pious Society would have failed in its charge, since the original condition specified would not have been fulfilled. The Pious Society was under no necessity or obligation to accept the parishes as a whole under this condition, but as a matter of fact they did accept them, and they were not unaware of the condition of each of the parishes at the time. Thereupon, when Fr. Favero was timorous about accepting the charge of S. Antonio parish, the Archbishop of Chicago assured him that he was not standing alone but that the other parishes would back him up. His Eminence Cardinal Mundelein has insisted on this point all along and insists on it now to such an extent that if S. Antonio fails to meet its obligations and if the other parishes entrusted to the Society cannot or will not assist it in meeting them as was originally agreed, then, His Eminence will demand that the Pious Society give up all the parishes hitherto entrusted to them. We are in a position now to assign our own priests to these parishes if the occasion arises, and will therefore, ask Rome to recall the whole Society from the Archdiocese of Chicago if the original contract is not lived up to. For again, I repeat, these parishes are secular and are only entrusted to the members of the Pious Society. If the original arrangement is not lived up to, His Eminence intends to place the matter directly before the Holy Father if necessary and ask for the removal and recall of the Pious Society from Chicago.

The second general observation is this: Certain sums of money are sent each year from these parishes for the erection or maintenance of a College or Seminary of the Pious Society in Italy. The Archdiocese of Chicago has never opposed this arrangement as long as surplus funds were used for the purpose. But above all else and of primary consideration is the successful administration of the parish. If a parish fails, the responsibility is carried by us and by the pastor who is placed in charge, whether secular or religious, -not by the departing member of the Pious Society, nor by the Society itself. It has never even been intimated that the Pious Society itself is assuming the debts of these parishes and if the S. Consistory understands it in this way, they have been misinformed. If the Pious Society is asked to give up the parishes here, they do not carry with them the burden of financial responsibility for the debts of the parish, but these would devolve on the successor. This is important to bear in

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mind when I am giving answer specifically to the first point proposed by His Eminence Cardinal Rossi later on. The members of the Pious Society are simply entrusted with these parishes: the Society as such does not assume the debt. True, it is the duty of the particular member of the Society, who is charged with the parish to successfully administer the parish. And in managing a parish three things must be taken care of by a pastor and they are given in order of their importance:

- 1) the salvation of souls entailing faithfulness to duty in the administration of the Sacraments and whatever else the spiritual good of the parishioners may require - 'Suprema lex, salus animarum';*
- 2) the successful administration of the temporary affairs of the parish; and*
- 3) the investment or allotment of superfluous goods. If the third is to supersede either of the other two in importance, then the parish will be doomed to failure. Again I repeat, the Curia of Chicago has never objected to the sending of money to Italy for the building of a College or Seminary for the Pious Society, provided the first two primary ends are taken care of properly and satisfactorily. The good of the parish and the diocese must come first, for we are directly responsible for it, and if those in charge of a parish cannot or will not see to it, then we must make a change and entrust the parishes to such as can and will properly administer them. And in the case of the parishes entrusted in this Archdiocese to the priests of the Pious Society, after the spiritual welfare of the faithful, comes first the obligation to see to it that the financial obligations are properly cared for, not only holding each parish individually responsible but holding the combined parishes responsible so that they must come to the rescue of the individual parishes which cannot meet their own obligations, since this was the initial contract when the parishes were entrusted and accepted. Therefore, if one of these parishes fail, all of them fail and we must demand that a change be made in all of them, and entrust them to someone else. (Incidentally, in regard to the sending of money abroad, might I observe that I have never seen any report sent to the Ordinary of this Archdiocese whether regarding the nature of the source or the amount of money sent, as is demanded by Canon 1525, #1 and #2).*

Now, to each of the three points about which His Eminence Cardinal Rossi asked you to consult the Curia of Chicago.

- I. From what has already been said, you can reply that we do not hold the Pious Society as such liable for the debts of the parish. These debts are contracted in favor of the parish (which was and remains secular), and therefore the parish is responsible for the debts. But, it is the pastor who administers the affairs of a Parish and it is up to him to manage them successfully to the best of his ability. As I stated above, if the Pious Society were removed from the parishes, they would not carry the burden of the debts with them. Again, you can explain how in the beginning when the parish of S. Antonio was entrusted to the priests of your Society, the agreement with the Archbishop at that time was that the more fortunate parishes were to aid the less fortunate ones and that your Society accepted this condition. Tell them that if this is repudiated now that we shall ask for the removal of the entire Society for the Archdiocese and entrust the parishes to our own priests. We are not holding the Society Qua talis as liable for*

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these debts but the combined parishes of which members of this Society happen to be the pastors. If this does not meet with their approval, then the only thing to do is to give up all the parishes, for they were entrusted on this explicit condition and understanding. You might inform your Superiors also, that the fact that money was spent in amelioration of the parish and school in S. Antonio was because this was absolutely necessary for the well-being of the parish. Also that Fr. Favero cannot be blamed for not sending larger donations to Italy for Projects of the Society there, when he has obligations to meet here first. All the repairs that were done, the building of a school and its consequent debt, etc., were things absolutely necessary, and the good of the parish must come first and above all other consideration.

- II. *It is true that Fr. Favero spent \$9,178.84 of his own money in order to meet the financial obligations of his parish. But this was because the other parishes entrusted to members of the same Society refused to live up to their part of the original agreement, whereby the combined other parishes were to help the others in less fortunate circumstances. Fr. Favero paid from his own money only and solely because the other parishes did not come to the rescue. He did so feeling that it was the only thing left to do at the time, since otherwise not only his but the reputation of the other pastors of the same Society was at stake. Since Fr. Favero used his own personal money, because the other combined parishes violated their part of the original agreement, it is the other combined parishes under the direction of the Provincial, who owe this money to Fr. Favero for not having helped him as they were obliged to do at the time of meeting these obligations, and forced him to use his own money. His Eminence Cardinal Mundelein insists on the original agreement and the reputation of the Pious Society rests on living up to it.*
- III. *If the parish of S. Antonio is to be placed in good financial condition by retiring the debt of \$60,000 contracted for the school, then it will not be the diocesan Curia which will assume the debt but the combined parishes entrusted to the Pious Society for it is a parish and not a diocesan debt, and this was the agreement at the time of the entrusting of S. Antonio to the Society. If the retirement of this debt is to be made a condition of appointing a pastor from the Pious Society, and if the combined parishes refuse to accept the responsibility for it, then His Eminence Card. Mundelein shall ask for the resignation of all the pastors belonging to the same Society and their recall from the Archdiocese of Chicago. His Eminence will not permit the Society to give up the one parish of S. Antonio because it happens to have a large debt without demanding that they give up all the parishes hitherto entrusted to their care. If the Society fails in their charge of one of them, they fail in all of them, since this was the original agreement and we expect the Society to live up to it or quit.*

Finally, regarding Fr. Favero, personally I have always regarded him as a pious, diligent, zealous, hard-working priest and pastor, and I still do. He has been most successful in his spiritual care of the people of S. Antonio's parish. Ten years ago when he was appointed there were but 200 people making their Easter Duty; now he has 200 receiving Holy Communion every Sunday. His fidelity to duty is best evidenced by the fact that he has taken no vacation for the past ten years, with the exception of the few months when he was in ill

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health. The full responsibility of the fact that the administration of temporary affairs of the parish has not kept pace with the spiritual cannot be placed entirely at his door, since as stated before, the other parishes committed to members of the same Society have not fulfilled their part of the agreement by coming to his aid, as he was assured they would when he accepted the charge of S. Antonio. His successor, whoever he may be, will meet the same fate, if the Society does not live up to its original agreement regarding this parish.

In conclusion, may I again kindly request that you forward to me a copy of your letter to His Eminence Cardinal Rossi, so that we may know that our attitude regarding the three points of discussion may be made clear.

I trust that you will excuse the length to which I have gone in order to explain our position and attitude in this matter, and that you will not take offense at any of the things that are stated, for I have judged it necessary to state the matter as clearly and emphatically as possible so that there can be no misunderstanding.

Assuring you of my best wishes, I beg to remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ, Geo. J. Casey."²⁶

The Vice-Chancellor had stated in his letter that Fr. Favero was enjoying his esteem as a pious, diligent, zealous, and active priest, as was proven by the fact that while ten years before, when he had been appointed pastor, only 200 people made their Easter duty at Saint Anthony, 200 of them received Communion every Sunday at that time.

But we cannot neglect mentioning here that Fr. Favero, together with Fr. Fani and certain other older priests who kept appealing to the Chancery of Chicago against the instructions of the Consistorial Congregation that contributions to the Mother House should not be taken from the administration of the house and of 'stole' rights but from the church funds, as all other priests were doing. Fr. Strazzoni, who was the Regional Superior in 1922, was asked whether it responded to truth what Card. Mundelein was saying in regard to the contract by which the Scalabrinian parishes of Chicago had to come to the help of a parish in case of need. Fr. Strazzoni answered:

*"If memory does not fail me, I can assure you that when His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop placed the church of Saint Anthony in the hands of the Pious Society, he was planning to entrust to it all Italian parishes he would have available, so that the churches in good or better financial condition might help the poor ones in case of need. I do not recall having stipulated any written contract; it was rather 'A Bona Fide Agreement', by which the Church of St. Callistus was also later entrusted to the Pious Society."*²⁷

Fr. Franch proposed to the Sacred Consistorial Congregation a compromise solution:

"After receiving the letter of Your Eminence dated on December 20, 1932, I called personally on His Eminence Cardinal Mundelein. It was impossible to come to terms on the debt of St. Anthony's on Kensington Avenue. The answer,

²⁶ Casey to Franch, Chicago, January 16, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 619/3).

²⁷ Strazzoni to Franch, Syracuse, January 25, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 619/3).

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harsh and firm is amply expressed in the letter of Chicago's chancery here included.

This letter was written by the Vice-Chancellor who had from the Cardinal the task of studying the case. Eight days after receiving this letter, while I was thinking how to inform Your Eminence, I was summoned by His Excellency the Auxiliary Bishop who informed me on the part of the Cardinal that I was held responsible for this whole affair. On the same day, together with Councilor Fr. Pigato, I called on the Vice-Chancellor contesting the existence of an agreement so burdensome for us as to demand that we abandon all other parishes in case they should not be in a position to help the church of Kensington Avenue if it were unable to support itself. Our argument was that we did not know of any contract of this kind, and should such an agreement have been made in 1922 when the church of St. Anthony was entrusted to us by Card. Mundelein, it could not hold valid for the other parishes given to the Pious Society by his predecessor without this condition. As to the contributions sent to Italy from the various houses, we pointed out that they all represented the money coming to us from Mass offerings and 'stole' rights, as is clear from our financial reports. The Vice-Chancellor acknowledged that it was all in our right to dispose of these sums as our rules require. However, it is still the will of the chancery that we should not remit anything to the Mother-House before we finish paying the debts pending on the churches first.

After this conversation I waited for the envoy Your Eminence had promised to explain to him such a serious and delicate problem. But, considering the definite will of His Eminence Card. Mundelein, it is the opinion of Fr. Marchegiani, of Fr. Pigato, and mine, that it is wiser not to oppose the Cardinal and that we straighten up in the meantime the financial difficulties of Kensington Avenue. It all had its beginnings from the financial troubles of that parish and it would be enough if we took care of this matter to give this Sacred Congregation an indefinite time for the solution of the legal question so seriously prejudicial to the Pious Society. For the time being I inform you that Fr. Strazzoni, the Regional Superior in 1922, had contracted some kind of an agreement, as you will gather from the enclosed letter. I regret not having known this before! In this case, things certainly would not have gone this far. Surely from the 'Bona Fide' agreement made there does not follow that we must abandon all other parishes in case only one should not be able to meet its financial obligations. (We ask Your Eminence to deal with the juridical aspects of this question at a more opportune time.)

In the meanwhile, for the good name of the Pious Society and to gain time, I deemed it proper to instruct the parishes to help St. Anthony parish.

In compliance with instructions of this Sacred Consistorial Congregation I proposed to the Chancery of Chicago Fr. Bianchetta as acting pastor of Saint Anthony, and to avoid a scandal I transferred Fr. Favero to the Incoronata as pastor 'for a time'. And so, Fr. Bianchetta will seek to balance the budget at Kensington, we hope, and not only was Fr. Favero removed from there without any trouble, but he even kept quiet about being refunded the sums he says to have loaned, in hope to compensate himself in the new place. Besides, he promised me by word and in writing that, grateful for the opportunity accorded him to work in an easier field for the good of that parish and of the Pious Society, he would take care not to be cause of any new difficulty for his

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superiors. The proposal was accepted by the chancery and immediately carried out if Your Eminence sees it fit to give your approval. Fr. Bianchetta is already at the task entrusted to him on condition that by the end of the year he may succeed in balancing the finances at least, with the contribution of \$1,500 on the interest which the three parishes of Incoronata, Addolorata and Melrose Park will try to give him.

As to Fr. Favero, the provision was just an expedient to avoid yet greater troubles with the chancery to which he kept having recourse for support in his claim for a refund of his loan. I am afraid, however, that contrary to orders from the Superiors of the Pious Society, Fr. Favero will not desist from his habit of presenting his claims to the Chancery, which was the cause of this dispute."²⁸

Cardinal Rossi answered he would charge the new Apostolic Delegate Archbishop Amleto G. Cicognani with treating both the juridical and the "actual" aspects of the problem with the chancery of Chicago as soon as he should reach his see.²⁹ In September 1933, Archbishop Cicognani wrote to Fr. Franch:

"Your Most Rev. Paternity will recall when His Eminence Card. Rossi in Rome spoke to me in your presence about the dispute ensued with the Archiepiscopal Chancery of Chicago about the debt of the parish of St. Anthony on Kensington Avenue. I suppose that a complete understanding was reached by now on the conditions the Most Eminent Card. Archbishop wanted observed about the debts of the churches and about the parishes themselves entrusted to the Pious Society of the Missionaries of St. Charles.

On my way through Chicago, in the latter part of the past month, I mentioned the question to the Most Eminent Cardinal Mundelein to find out his intentions without entering into any details. Since the Most Eminent Cardinal Rossi charged me with seeing into this matter, I ask Your Paternity to inform me on how things stand at this moment. By the way, you will recall your letter on the subject forwarded to the Card. Secretary of the S.C. Congregation on February 18, 1933.

From what I was given to understand, the Chancery of Chicago demands that the administration of the parishes be in good order so that each pastor should even renounce his salary if debts or financial obligations be pending. This is what is required of all pastors, in general; nothing else.

As to the parishes entrusted to Scalabrinians, the same Chancery considers them as 'diocesan' parishes though placed 'in solidum' (as a whole) in the care of the Pious Society for their administration. As said above, I hope that all things may have been straightened out to the satisfaction of both parties and the good of the Pious Society. In any case, I ask you kindly to send me exact information."³⁰

Fr. Franch replied to the Apostolic Delegate:

"I received the letter of this Apostolic Delegation N. 5862-i concerning the dispute in progress between the Pious Society and the Most Rev. Chancery of Chicago over the state of the parishes entrusted to us. I will say that the parish of St.

²⁸ Franch to Card. Rossi, Melrose Park, February 18, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 619/3).

²⁹ Card. Rossi to Franch, Rome, April 4, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 619/3).

³⁰ Cicognani to Franch, Washington, September 20, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 619/3).

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Anthony in Kensington was the first to be called into question because of the urgency for supplying the payment of interest due on the debts of that church, something the pastors of the last years could not do. Back from Rome in accord with the S.C. Congregation, I sought to give a practical solution to these difficulties replacing the personnel with two priests of proven ability and my total trust. This, after all, was also the desire of the Chancery; that is, that each parish fulfills its own obligations. And this is the only way open to me in order to avoid trouble; and this is what we are doing also with other parishes even at the cost of sacrificing part of the revenues of the house.

I never discussed these matters any more, well aware as I am of His Eminence Card. Mundelein's mind, and I am sure he will not talk about them as long as we will succeed in continuing to pay our interest. With this, however, the juridical aspect of the problem is not solved; I must leave its solution, therefore, entirely up to the enlightened wisdom of Your Excellency and of the S.C. Congregation."³¹

This letter was forwarded by the Apostolic Delegate to the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, which repeating in January 1934 what Card. Mundelein had told Archbishop Cicognani concluded:

"All things well considered, I deem it opportune that, for the time being at least, the question be left unsolved in view also of the difficulties of our times and of the consequent need of the Episcopal Chanceries to give precise norms to the parishes to avoid the danger of financial ruin.

On the other hand the dispute arose of the particular situation in which the church of St. Anthony was with Fr. Favero as pastor. Now that conditions are gradually better, thanks to the sacrifices and good-will of the fathers assigned to that church, and that everything gives hope for a better future, it is natural, as a result, that, together with the particular reasons which gave rise to these differences, the dispute itself should also cease to exist. And so the Scalabrinian Society will again enjoy the esteem of the Most Rev. Officials of the Chancery of Chicago, which it deserves for the sacrifices the Fathers of the Pious Institute are making in the parishes entrusted to them."³²

To find out what the other side was saying, we deem it opportune to report some considerations presented by Fr. Cavicchi to the Sacred Consistorial Congregation concerning the question of principles raised by the parish of Saint Anthony:

"The Chancery of Chicago demands that we pay the interest of each and every church entrusted to us or that we leave all of them. It reprimands us first for sending money to Italy regardless of its sources, as they consider us exploiters; and then our Pastors for not contributing morally and financially to the sports of the youth.

The existing American provision is that Italians should belong to Italian parishes unless they would expressly state that they want to be members of an American church. American pastors require that all Italians residing within their territory belong to the American parishes unless they state to be members of Italian churches.

³¹ Franch to Cicognani, Melrose Park, September 26, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 619/3).

³² Card. Rossi to Franch, Rome, January 2, 1934 (Arch. G.S., 619/3).

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The present right of American pastors to take in all Italians who go to them has hindered the growth of Italian parishes, because it deprives Italian pastors of any effectiveness in giving sanction to their words, when they ask parishioners to do some sacrifice for building a church or a school; Italians would refuse to contribute and so pass to the American parish of their choice.

What some neighboring American pastors are asking for now dismembers and destroys Italian churches. For the good of the parishes we can do as follows:

- 1) No American church be allowed to take in Italians residing within the territory of an Italian parish (but this would be the source of a continuing separation of nationalities, hardly in the interest of Italians, as with immigration closed it would limit the life span of our parishes to only 25 years, and then the end).*
- 2) Italian parishes be placed on the same level with the American ones and let them register all Catholics - Italian and otherwise - residing in their territory. Such parishes could then be known as 'American parishes entrusted to religious of Italian extraction'.*
- 3) To secure this equality we could pledge ourselves to entrusting these parishes to Italian-American priests within a reasonable period of time.*

The interests and debts pending on the parishes must be paid at all costs, though seeking, whenever possible, an immediate reduction of interest."³³

As said before, Fr. Michele Favero was moved to the parish of Santa Maria Incoronata on February 1, 1933. Fr. Pietro Bianchetta took his place for a time, to be replaced in July of the same year by Fr. Ugo Cavicchi as pastor. Already in the first bimester July/August Fr. Cavicchi succeeded, with the help of Fr. Luigi Donanzan, in entering a balance of \$117.37 from the house to the church while in all preceding semesters under Fr. Favero the house was always in the red, and in the two bimesters of Fr. Bianchetta the balance had been of only \$3.00 and \$5.00

In presenting the financial report of the months of September/October 1933, Fr. Franch affixed a brief note:

"The change effected in this parish is already bringing forth its very encouraging fruits. The position is assured."

Cardinal Rossi acknowledged it with a letter of praise and good wishes:

"The financial report sent to me by Your Paternity on the economic state of the house of St. Anthony in Chicago, together with the note you yourself affixed to it, has been of great comfort to me, and it confirmed in me the hope to see resolved in due time by the good-will of the Fathers assigned to the parish the serious problem of that Church, which has involved all Scalabrinian parishes. To good Fr. Cavicchi and his Assistant, who in a spirit of sacrifice and with admirable zeal direct the church of Saint Anthony, my most heartfelt congratulations, my blessing, and a wish for holy perseverance.

Such action and zeal may very well be set forward as an example to show how much one can accomplish if in his priestly ministry he has as his aim only the Glory of God and the salvation of souls."³⁴

On July 3, 1935, when transferred to the parish of Our Lady of Pompeii in

³³ Remarks of Cavicchi (Arch. G.S., 619/3).

³⁴ Card. Rossi to Franch, Rome, December 20, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 619/4).

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Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Fr. Cavicchi presented his successor, Fr. Giuseppe Chiminello, who headed the parish of Saint Anthony until 1947. A few months later, the church, decorated in 1934 by artist Giovanni Cangelosi, was half destroyed by a fire. Ignited by a short circuit, in the night between December 11 and 12, 1935, the fire spread in a few minutes destroying part of the roof, the statues and the floor. By a miracle, Fr. Chiminello was able to safely remove the Blessed Sacrament. On December 12 in the afternoon, an altar was set up in the school hall, and immediately following the survey by the insurance company, which paid in great part for damages, works of restoration were started with the full cooperation of parishioners:

"Though this year's winter is not the most favorable one, I began visiting the families right away (...). Calling on a family for the first time to ask for help is certainly not the best system, still I experienced that all have kindly welcomed me so far, and they gave what they could. I have witnessed certain families going to borrow a dollar or fifty cents from their neighbors to give to the church; others, though indigent, knew how to deprive themselves of a dime. All this shows their attachment to the House of God.

At Christmas, the school children gave up amusements and candies and gave the money so saved to the church amounting to \$72.00. So also the various societies have all contributed according to the size of their funds."³⁵

The reconstruction was under the direction of Architect Donahue, Artist Cangelosi made the new decoration, three new altars were set up after a design by Architect Frank Polit, new heating and lighting systems were also installed.

"Amongst all other churches of America, ours is the first to have neon lights."³⁶

Restoration work was also done on the school, the Sisters' convent, and the rectory; and in addition to all this, the debt of the church was reduced by \$5,385.00. On September 12-19, 1936 the conclusion of the work was celebrated in the presence of Auxiliary Bishop William O'Brien, who consecrated the altars.

8. The Parish of St. Callistus in Chicago, Illinois

The church of St. Callistus can be looked upon as the third stage of the march westward of the Italian community. We have already seen that the parish of Our Lady of Pompeii was born of the needed separation from that of Guardian Angel. And so we can say that the parish of Saint Callistus had its origin from the expansion in a westerly direction of the first two parishes. Archbishop Mundelein, in July 1919, charged the diocesan priest Fr. William A. Murphy, who loved Italians and knew their language, to take care of the Italian community residing some two kilometers to the West of the parish of Our Lady of Pompeii and already the object of Protestant propaganda. Fr. Murphy bought and adapted a former Methodist church at 2187 DeKalb Street, and the Archbishop dedicated it on October 19, 1919, under the title of St. Callistus. The Mass, however, had been said there the first time on September 7. In 1920 a building was purchased at 2189 DeKalb Street for the rectory; the parish

³⁵ Chiminello, "Incendio della Chiesa di S. Antonio", "L'Emigrato Italiano", a. XXV n. 2 (April 1936) p. 11.

³⁶ "Bollettino parrocchiale della Chiesa di Sant'Antonio", "L'Emigrato Italiano", a. III, n. 9 (September 1936) p. 10.

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school was also erected and entrusted to the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. On April 23, 1926, Card. Mundelein inaugurated the new combination-building, with the church on the ground floor for 650 seats, and a school for 500 pupils on the upper floors.

Fr. Murphy had to retire in 1929 for reasons of health and was succeeded by Fr. John Keating. The change did not please the people, attached to Fr. Murphy. Part of the community, especially a group of women, opposed it with violence. In May 1929 they barricaded the church and prevented Fr. Keating from ministering it. A few more aggressive ones, armed with sticks, stood guard around it day and night provoking disorders only the police could intervene to quench on July 16. The Cardinal interdicted the church. Because of discords and financial difficulties, Fr. Keating resigned the parish in 1931, and then the Cardinal entrusted the parish to the Scalabrinians. On March 30, 1931, Fr. Franch sent a telegram to Cardinal Rossi informing him of the deal concluded in a very short time; a few days later he reported:

"After the telegram of March 30, I deem it necessary to explain in detail what I stated in it. His Eminence Cardinal Mundelein has decided to entrust to the care of our Pious Society the parish of Saint Callistus, located on the West side of the city. It is a parish of very great importance both for its huge number of Italians and in view of the fact that the people of our parishes of Pompeii and Guardian Angel are moving out to live in those neighborhoods.

It is the question therefore of a parish with a great future ahead and that is already one of the largest of the city of Chicago.

Until recently it was under the direction of an American pastor, assisted by an Italian-American coadjutor. This is, therefore, a great act of trust in the Pious Society and of great regard for Your Eminence which the Cardinal did.

And it is for this reason that though short of personnel, I accepted his offer, pending Your Eminence's approval, of course. Requested, then, about whom I considered to be fitting the needs of the new parish, I proposed one of our young priests at the Addolorata (Fr. Cavicchi or Fr. Bernardi). He declared himself much pleased and chose Fr. Cavicchi."³⁷

It is estimated that the parish had then about 15 thousand Italians. In 1932 there were 356 baptisms, 260 confirmations, 284 first communions, 102 weddings, 165 funerals, with 316 pupils in the parish school. The situation of the parish was not an easy one, as Fr. Cavicchi was pointing out in his 1933 report:

- 1) *There are three American parishes close to this church of St. Callistus: St. Charles (two blocks), Holy Trinity (four short blocks) and Precious Blood (four short blocks). Parishioners are divided into four groups.*
- 2) *These three American parishes have some 600 Italian children in their parochial schools (we have only 316 in ours); they are served by eight priests while St. Callistus has only two. The total number of American children in the three mentioned parishes hardly reaches 800.*
- 3) *With no pending debts, they can afford part of their revenues to attract the*

³⁷ Franch to Card. Rossi, Melrose Park, April 6, 1931 (Arch. G.S., 620/2).

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youth with sports and amusements.

To make any progress St. Callistus needs a number of four priests. One should devote himself exclusively to the young, another to Italian people and their social activities, and the remaining two to the normal work of the parish. This way we will be able to compete for some time at least, with the American parishes, provided no limitations intervene on the part of the diocesan authorities.

Limitations are demanded by our neighboring pastors, who have lost their Irish or German parishioners, and so they demand that all Italians within their territory attend and support the American church, unless they declare their will not to belong to it. They do not want the poorer ones, and gladly leave them to us. This way a national parish will be destroyed within this generation. It is likely that the chancery may approve this scheme because almost all Italians know English by now, and the diocesan clergy is in excess of the needs of their parishes."³⁸

In spite of difficulties, made worse by the economic recession, with the help of Fr. Raffaele Larcher and then of Fr. Giuseppe Chiminello, Fr. Cavicchi reorganized the parish, took care of the poor, turned three classrooms into a convent for the Sisters, and transformed the old house purchased in 1929 by Fr. Murphy into a parish hall. When Fr. Cavicchi was sent to the parish of St. Anthony on Kensington Avenue in July of 1933, Fr. Antonio Cogo succeeded him. His assistants were successively the following: Giuseppe Chiminello, Giovanni Rigo, Giovanni Ferrara, Gregorio Zanoni, Luigi Donanzan, Giulio Gragnani.

In the 1934 report we read:

Spiritually: Communion, about 50,000; attendance at church on Sunday, about 4,000; baptisms, 344, of whom seven were adults; confirmations 267, of whom 63 were adults; first Communion 286; marriages 100, of which 15 were validations. A three week Mission was very fruitful in bringing about a strong spiritual revival in the parish. The 'Forty Hours' triduum was also grandiose both for attendance of people and magnificence of services. On each First Friday of the month the Blessed Sacrament remains exposed all day for adoration by the faithful.

Morally: A new society for girls was born this year under the title of the 'Immaculate Conception'. Material and moral support was given weekly to over 100 families by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The school with its 319 pupils brings into the families the benefits of the educational words of the Sisters' teachings.

Financially: By means of a strict economizing, we were able this year to pay \$3,000 on the debt of the church which now stands at \$59,500. We could pay for the insurances and all ordinary and extraordinary expenditures."³⁹

To Fr. Antonio Cogo credit is due for the remodeling of the parish hall and the purchase of another rectory to replace the old one that was literally falling apart thus representing a menace for those passing by. All these works were accomplished in 1940.

The new convent for the Sisters was built in 1939 on the property of the old rectory. In the spring of the same year, Fr. Cogo moved to the direction of the mission chapel, and Fr. Silvio Zanoni became pastor of Saint Callistus.

³⁸ Cavicchi to Franch, Chicago, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 620/2).

³⁹ Cogo and Chiminello, "Relazione del lavoro fatto durante l'anno 1934" (Arch. Scalabrinian Province of Chicago).

9. Early Beginnings of the Parish of St. Frances X. Cabrini in Chicago, IL.

About three kilometers from the church of Saint Callistus there lived about 1,000 Italian families practically abandoned because of the distance. Protestants had already opened two churches in the midst of that community. On December 18, 1938, the chancery of Chicago gave permission to open a "mission chapel" in the parish of St. Callistus and Fr. Cogo adapted for services a locale obtained from a section of a factory at 902 Sacramento Boulevard. He began saying Mass in it for the faithful on the Sunday preceding Christmas 1938. People responded with enthusiasm as is shown by their attendance at Mass and contributions for building a church.

On May 8, 1940, Archbishop S. Stritch of Chicago petitioned the Holy See for the faculty to establish a new "movable diocesan parish for Italians" in the territory of the parish of Saint Callistus bringing forward the following reasons:

1. Because of the distance from the parish church and its small size for the enormous number of Italians, many of them cannot attend their church without serious inconvenience, and actually very many do not frequent any church. Though there be in the vicinity a territorial parish church directed by the Order of the Servants of Mary, these Italians want a church of their own and refuse to go to other ones built especially for people of other nationalities.
2. On a trial basis, a provisional mission chapel was erected the other year in this part of the city with a most favorable success and we could ascertain that there exist the means sufficient for the support of a parish without causing any detriment for the church of Saint Callistus. Such means are represented by the contributions of the faithful."⁴⁰

Permission was granted "*ex audientia Sanctissimi*" on May 15, 1940. The Archbishop of Chicago decided that the new parish should be titled after Mother Cabrini, and in October gave permission to start work on the new church at the crossing of Sacramento Boulevard and Lexington Street.

Fr. Antonio Cogo was its first Pastor.

⁴⁰ Card. Stritch to Pius XII, copy, Chicago, May 8, 1940 (Arch. G.S., 650/2).

CHAPTER X

The Missions in Wisconsin, Ohio, and Missouri in the United States
The Mission of Winnipeg in Canada

1. The Parish of Our Lady of Pompeii in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

A group of Italian families, in greatest part from Sicily, had been present in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, by the end of the 19th century. In 1898, so it seems, a chapel, called Mission of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, was opened for them; formerly a restaurant on East Claybourn St., between Van Buren and Jackson Sts, it was transformed into a small church. Fr. Nasca, a priest from Montemaggiore Belsito (Palermo) had gone there to preach a mission and was invited to remain. The first baptism was registered on June 25, 1899, and the first wedding on July 6 of the same year.

Fr. Nasca's presence lasted until October 1900 and from that month until July 1903 another Sicilian priest, Fr. Bartolomeo Imburgia took care of the Italian community. From July to October of the same year, Fr. Giuseppe Angeletti, also from Montemaggiore Belsito, resided there. Soon afterwards, a priest named Fr. Dominic Leone arrived, who founded the parish of Our Lady of Pompei and directed it until 1914. On November 1, 1903, the Society of Our Lady of Pompeii was founded with a membership of 120 heads of family, who appointed a committee for the construction of the church. A benefactor donated one lot on Jackson Street, two more were purchased contiguous to it, funds were raised and a church was built which was completed in 1904. The first baptism was administered in it on January 1, 1905. The Carmelite Sisters of the Divine Heart of Jesus arrived at Milwaukee in the same year from East Chicago, Indiana, to devote themselves to the instruction of children, gathering them in a building at 681 Cass Street.

"Evidently their scope failed, however, for lack of means and of cooperation and so, in July of 1919, these Sisters relinquished to the Archdiocese of Milwaukee said property to be exclusively used for an Italian Catholic Mission or Parish. From that date, they reserved for themselves a mortgage of \$4,500 on that property, besides interest and taxes, in case it should be sold. In any case, the proceeds of such sale must be exclusively used for an Italian Mission or Parish. And so it became a mission and the location of the Italian rectory."¹

Such were then the beginnings of the Mission, and Parish, later on, of St. Rita, detached from that of Our Lady of Pompeii in 1912. From April 1914 to July 1915, the parish was headed by Fr. Luigi Valetto of the "Italica Gens" and from January 1916 to May of 1923 by a priest from Padua, Fr. Enrico Fadanelli of the Stigmatine Order. An American priest, Fr. Peter Dietz, headed the parish from May until December of 1923. Fr. Fadanelli returned in December 1925

¹ P.C. Ostorero, "Dati cronologici della Madonna di Pompei" 1937 (?), (Arch. G.S., 661/1).

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remaining there until June 1, 1925; on this date until August 1 of the same year the parish was entrusted to a Pallottine priest, Fr. Peter Schroeder. The conditions of the parish were precarious:

"Due, perhaps, to the steady succession of pastors and consequent bad administration, a group of laymen took control of things in place of church authorities and act as masters over the parish."²

Archbishop Messmer decided to entrust the parish to the Scalabrinians. The Regional Superior, Fr. Fani, for the time being sent there Fr. Carlo Celotto, and then Fr. Antonio Bainotti, who arrived at Milwaukee on November 20, 1925. The beginnings were stormy:

"On that very evening I went to the church and addressed a few words to the people gathered in it. I was hearing a murmur around the church and on getting out of it someone shouted at me: 'Go back to Cincinnati, we want Fr. Celotto (....)'. On the following Sunday, November 29, I was invited to a meeting supposedly of the administrators of the church, scheduled for Monday night. It had no legal standing and I would have preferred to decline, but I was all alone without instructions and with no one to advise me. So, I went. There were present some thirty men, all well determined that the meeting should be able to conclude that no understanding was possible with me. They said the meanest things against priests and the whole Church. It looked more like a meeting of the most obstinate masons than of Catholics.

The heads of the meeting were the 'sweet' administrators of this church, the ones who want Fr. Celotto back. I let them say whatever they wanted, I allowed them to get it all out at me and all the others, and at the end I got up and said to them that I was willing to abide by their conditions for the sake of peace. On hearing this, half a dozen of those men came up to shake hands with me, and the others immediately left the hall. They remained disarmed; in fact, when they heard me accept their proposals they did not know what to answer anymore, and since they did not want me, they left. Being there nothing else to say on their part, on Tuesday evening they sent out the women, and knowing them deceived by those men, I retired early giving them to understand by my behavior that I did not take them seriously. But by the machination of certain ill-intentioned ones the affair was in the meanwhile blown up in the press and police was stationed around the church. This situation went on like this until Thursday evening when a certain Fr. Dietz, who had directed this church for seven months, by order of the Archbishop, together with two trustees of the parish went to send those women away from the door of the church. And so, on Friday, December 4, 1925, I was able to say Mass and to continue the novena that had been interrupted. From then on, religious services took place regularly without the least disturbance (....).

My enemies are few, but they are people that cannot be trusted, in fact they are commonly said to be members of the 'black hand'. It is even possible that, unable to get me out of here, they may try an attempt on my life. But I am not afraid.

There are several mutual societies that use the Crucifix, the Madonna and the

² Fani to Card. De Lai, Chicago, January 7, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 661/3).

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Saints to get money out of people's pockets, they have processions with much noise, they squander thousands of dollars for celebrations putting the remainder in their coffers while refusing to give to the Pastor any account of their finances. The only thing the Pastor can do is to cooperate with them by taking part in the processions for which they turn in, when they do, \$300.00 to the church.

There is a heap of reforms to carry out and everything to build. And so, the situation of the Pastor in this parish will be difficult both morally and financially for many years to come. His sorrows will be the order of the day, and any satisfaction that there may be, will be enjoyed by his successor. The church collections are rather poor. Italians live scattered all over the city. They find it difficult to come to the church, but this church is necessary for them as there are many who do not understand absolutely any English."³

In June 1927, Fr. Bainotti sent in a report of the first year and a half of his work in such adverse circumstances. The report is in substantial agreement with the opinions of the Archbishop and of the Rector of the Milwaukee seminary.

"My first concern was to reaffirm the pastor's authority in the administration and direction of the church. All power was in the hands of a committee - (I have no idea of how it came into being) - and this committee exercised control over everything at whim, always ready with the threat of inciting the mob (...).

Someone suggested a sudden takeover, but I deemed it more prudent to procrastinate and be patient. They held their meetings by themselves and came to me afterwards when all the decisions had been made. They had even gone so far as renting the church grounds for gambling for their own gain. I had to fight and did fight, standing fast on my own rights. They made use of tricks and threats of all kinds, until they finally gave up, and in August of last year they moved elsewhere protesting (...).

As I knew that it was on everyone's mind that the Pastor was there only for the money, I decided to refuse any offer of money on any occasion whatsoever (...). However, I used to tell all to give it to the church. At first they joked about it, but then some people began to understand; be it proof of this the collection made in church in the first five months of this year which has marked a monthly increase of \$130.00 over the same months of last year. With the intention to get them used to giving to the church I began distributing numbered monthly offering envelopes to the families. Four hundred and ten of them have received their envelopes by now. It's true, many of them have not returned the envelopes as yet, and many will actually never do so, but a good number have begun their payments (...).

The most important question is presently that of the feasts. These had been in use for many years and last year I tolerated them though protesting. I sought to reform them in order to try to have the permission renewed, but it was impossible. The Archbishop is out of town now, and the people complain against me. But, by the way they were conducted, the feasts had even become a scandal (...).

Financially, the church has an overall debt of some \$16,000 (...). Good parishioners begin to take notice of the change and regain hope (...). Such may be seen in the increase of people at church and of the collections. We will still have difficulties this year because many are unhappy about the feasts. It is true that these are people

³ Bainotti to Card. De Lai, Milwaukee, January 9, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 661/3).

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who never go to church, and yet they talk! Not only are the members of the feast committees displeased, but also, and especially, the bartenders and shop owners. Someone was telling me: 'Father, I care little for the Saints, but I confess that if their feasts are not celebrated, I suffer a loss of over one thousand dollars. In fact, there are five of them, and I used to have a profit of \$200.00 each.

When this storm will have subsided, all will settle down, I believe, and things will start to get better for our church."⁴

In 1929, Fr. Bainotti was given the help of an assistant, Fr. Corrado Ostorero. The parish, except for a few initial improvements, did not make much progress. In 1930, Italians, scattered all over the city, were thought to be approximately about ten thousand. Only one-fifth of them attended the parish church and the mission chapel of Saint Rita which occupied the ground floor of the rectory. Still in 1930 there existed only two societies: the Children of Mary and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. The school had not been built as yet. With his good-will, Fr. Bainotti did not succeed in curing the finances of either church or rectory:

"His system of taxing the families monthly for the support of the church (...) irritated the parishioners and made the improvement of the revenues of the house impossible, because he has thus engendered in the people the impression that by their monthly offering to the church they are entitled to the services without any further duty of an offering for the support of the priests. With this system he does not secure what is needed for the expenditures of the church and causes havoc for the revenues of the house."⁵

In July 1935, Fr. Bainotti was transferred to the Eastern Province to be replaced by Fr. Ugo Cavicchi. The latter gave start in September 1936 to the works for the parish school, which was to be entrusted to the Sisters of Charity of St. Joan Antida Thouret, called to Milwaukee in 1933 by Archbishop Samuel A. Stritch of Milwaukee, as agreed with Fr. Bainotti.

These Sisters had two houses: one on Jackson Street, the property of the church and first residence of the pastor; the other on North Cass Street, the property of the Diocese, which had been the residence of Fr. Bainotti. The priest lived nearby, in a house owned by the Sisters at 1339 North Cass Street. Such rather entangled situation and the fact that the Sisters seemed to lay claim on some kind of "jus-patronatus" over the parish that would have been accorded them by the Archbishop by word of mouth, gave rise to a dispute which lasted two years and was settled through a convention enacted by the Archbishop on September 7, 1937. We report its most important preliminary statement:

"The Sisters of Charity of Saint Joan Antida (Thouret) exist in the Colony as a foundation canonically erected with the permission and approbation of the Archbishop of Milwaukee. As this foundation is the only one of the Congregation in the United States it has the species of a Provincial House without being "de facto", as such. Its purpose in general is to help in the great

⁴Franch to Card. Rossi, Melrose Park, February 9, 1934 (Arch. G.S., 661/3).

⁵Franch to Card. Rossi, Melrose Park, February 9, 1934 (Arch. G.S., 661/3).

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work of providing for the religious well-being of our Italian immigrants and their children in the United States. In our Parish its purpose is to lend itself with the cooperation of the parish clergy to doing such works for the Italian youth, children and women as may deem advisable and opportune. Under no conditions does this Congregation in Milwaukee wish to make any sort of cleavage between itself and the parish clergy but, on the contrary, seeks only to be ancillary to the clergy in its efforts to secure the interests of Religion."⁶

Following the settlement of the dispute, it was possible to go ahead in peace with the building of the new church of the mission of Saint Rita that was to become an independent parish in 1942. In fact, Fr. Cavicchi had projected a combination building, to include church, parish hall and school. He had only enough time to finish the basement.

On November 22, 1937, he left for his new assignment: the parish of Our Lady of Pompeii in New York.

Fr. Gregorio Zanoni, who had been Fr. Cavicchi's assistant for two years, was appointed Pastor of Our Lady of Pompeii in Milwaukee, which was then beginning to rise to new life. Fr. Giuseppe Bolzan was assigned to assist him. Work on St. Rita mission was completed in 1939; the first Mass was said in the new building on March 12 and on June 11 the Archbishop solemnly blessed the new church-school combination building. In 1940 procedures were underway for the separation of the two parishes: already four were the priests stationed there: Fr. Gregorio Zanoni, Fr. Luigi Riello, Fr. Luciano Morselli and Fr. Adolfo Nalin.

2. The Parish of the Sacred Heart, Cincinnati, Ohio

Fr. Giovanni Battista Chiotti was acting pastor of the parish of the Sacred Heart since 1919, and then pastor since 1921, when he joined the Scalabrinian Congregation. For Italians who, better off financially, were moving into more pleasant residential districts he founded two missions in the midst of the communities of Walnut Street and Fairmount. In reference to these two subsidiary chapels Fr. Chiotti wrote in 1923:

"That you may better understand the work in this mission, I forward to you a copy of our parish bulletin, the one of November of last year where I was talking about the two subsidiary missions to be set up in this city and I was trying to show the need of them. The Archbishop was then in favor of the idea, but because I could not immediately have another assistant for all that work (I was given one later on), His Excellency entrusted one of these two missions to a priest of his who, having studied in Rome, speaks Italian, and now he is reluctant to surrender it back to us, determined as he is to give it a trial and see whether he can more easily 'Americanize' (something many Bishops and priests of these United States identify with 'christianizing') the Italians!, make them 'true' Catholics like the American ones' Everything is perfect here!....

This is not the time to discuss this problem which is much more important than

⁶ Archbishop Stritch to Cavicchi, Milwaukee, September 7, 1937 (Arch. G.S., 661/4).

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it may seem at first sight. I wanted to mention it anyway (and I will send you some other periodicals to let you know that the situation threatens to get serious) for the sake of my conscience! And so, should Your Paternity have anything to do or say about this, you will know how to act. I do not understand why, but it is a fact that the attitude is spreading all over the United States among Bishops and clergy of not wanting Italian priests any more. They want to do without them and to replace them with American priests. I think they are making a big mistake.

The United States does not want any more foreigners and they limit immigration while seeking to 'Americanize' those who are here already; and the Hierarchy of the Church, because of nationalism perhaps, takes after the government. And there are some who say that the reason for all this is to be found in the fact that Rome's disfavor of establishing national missions or parishes (New Code of Canon Law) encourages such attitude of the local clergy in regard to foreign priests."⁷

Fr. Chiotti's conclusions were disavowed, in part at least, by Archbishop Cicognani who in his apostolic, visitation of September 1924, remarked that Archbishop Moeller had divided the parish of the Sacred Heart, thus creating the parish of St. Anthony at Fairmount, only for the good of Italians and had entrusted it to an American priest who was doing a better job than Fr. Chiotti. In 1923 the Italian community of Cincinnati numbered some 10,000 people: the parish of the Sacred Heart had recorded 192 baptisms, 136 first communions, 36 weddings, and 60 funerals. In February 1925, Fr. Chiotti outlined the situation of the parish this way:

"The Italian community of this city numbers about 10,000 souls, but scattered all over and distant in great part from the church. As a consequence, only a portion, a relatively small one, of our people attend this church regularly; the others frequent the churches near their homes and also send their children to those parish schools; and quite often they even have baptisms and funerals in the American parishes. All this is proven by both the financial report and the shifting of population. In fact, out of 10,000 Italians, we had but an income of \$10,000 last year, 154 baptisms, and 27 funerals of adults. Unfortunately, this is also the reason why many, too many, do not go to any church, as they live too far to go to the Italian parish, and unwilling to frequent an American one, they end up with going to none. Such are those, besides, who fall prey to Protestant proselytizing among Italians.

To counteract Protestant proselytism, already twenty years ago, the Archbishop of the time had two Italian Sisters come to Cincinnati and opened an Italian institution of education and social assistance, 'The Santa Maria Institute', that had and still continues with great success. It is not under our direct jurisdiction, but it carries on its action in full accord with our parish for our fellow countrymen's welfare.

Besides the Mother Church there are here in Cincinnati two other Italian missions, one ministered by us, and the other by an American priest who knows a little Italian (...).

⁷ Chiotti to Cimino, Cincinnati, December 6, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 23/6).

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*We have flourishing societies of men, women, and young people, but it pleases me to let you know that the most successful of them is that of men - the Holy Name Society - with more than 400 members."*⁸

In 1924, the Archbishop ordered Fr. Chiotti to build a chapel and a center for the Italian community of Walnut Hills and a school for the parish. In May of 1925, Fr. Chiotti reported:

*"The new Church and school (...) we were planning to build at the earliest are now taking up all our activities and time, but we are happy to be able to tell you that things are progressing very well in this regard, and we hope that our work will be crowned with good success. In less than three months we succeeded in securing pledges for \$30,000.00; something quite extraordinary for a small colony such as ours, and made up mostly of poor people. The Church has been found already made, as we bought a Protestant church and adapted it into a Catholic one. There remains only the school to build for which \$70,000.00 will be needed."*⁹

Located by the Kenton Welfare Center and Neighborhood House opened by the Sisters of Charity in 1919, the church stood at the corner of May and Burbank Streets and could hold 500 people. While busy with plans for the parish school Fr. Chiotti was stricken with peritonitis and died two days later at the age of 44 on May 29, 1925.

He was succeeded by Fr. Ambrogio Giuseppe Stefanetti, who took possession of the parish in August 1925. With Frs. Riccardo Secchia and Luigi Paschini as his assistants, he built the parish hall and embellished the church. Because of his exaggerated nationalism and consequent opposition to other three Italian priests (Msgr. Allais, Frs. Torta and Graglia) working in other diocesan churches of Cincinnati, he was not liked by Archbishop John McNicholas. Due to an eye sickness and other personal reasons, in December of 1927 he asked to return to Italy, from where he left again for India where he had been already from 1907 until 1919 as a member of the "*Pontificio Istituto Missioni Estere di Milano*" (*Pontifical Institute of Foreign Missions, Milan*).

Fr. Remigio Pigato was appointed Pastor of the parish of the Sacred Heart. He had been an assistant of Fr. Stefanetti until the end of 1926. The official nomination was conferred on him on May 24, 1928. His report of 1929 shows the modest size of the parish: 500 families, 2,300 people, 78 baptisms, 14 first communions, 23 weddings, 40 funerals. Only 40 public school children attended Sunday school held by the Sisters of Charity; however, the great majority of the young were registered in the diocesan schools of other parishes. In 1930 there were 75 baptisms, 117 confirmations, 20 marriages, 31 funerals. In early 1932 Fr. Antonio Cogo replaced Fr. Pigato, who had been transferred to Our Lady of Pompeii Church in Chicago. In August 1933 he was succeeded by Fr. Cesare Molinari. In 1934 a choral society was founded by A. Di Girolamo; in 1937 the church was newly decorated by artist John Cangelosi; the facade was

⁸ Chiotti to Card. De Lai, Cincinnati, February 1925 (Arch. G.S., 625/8).

⁹ Chiotti to Card. De Lai, Cincinnati, May 12, 1926, (Arch. G.S., 625/8)

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restored and a new roof installed in 1938.

Already sickly by now, Fr. Molinari was appointed chaplain of Mother Cabrini Hospital of Chicago, while his assistant Fr. Giovanni Rigo was called to succeed him as pastor.

3. The Parish of the Holy Rosary in Kansas City, Mo.

Fr. Prospero Angeli was pastor of the Italian church of the Holy Rosary in Kansas City in 1920. He organized the "Colonial Committee" of 35 prominent Italians with the scope of raising sufficient funds to render attendance at parish schools wholly free of charge; he restored the church, got rid of the main altar of the forest of statues of Patron Saints crowding it, and displayed them in niches along the side walls. He gave life to a choral society, a charitable Women's Association, and a summer school.

From December 1920 until June 1921 the parish was headed by Fr. Constanzo Biancotti. On June 23, 1921, Fr. Luigi Franchinotti took possession of the parish, which he found in deplorable condition, and with the assistance of Fr. Molinari, he began working on its moral and financial restoration:

"With forbearing patience and much kindness, not only did Fr. Luigi Franchinotti succeed in bringing peace into the mind of the good, but in calling back many as well to their neglected religious practices who had been away from the church for many years.

Last October, when in Kansas City with all the Commanders in Chief of the Allied Forces, immediately upon arrival (it was Sunday) 'Generalissimo' Armand Diaz came to hear Mass in our church together with his retinue; an eloquent example of religious concern for the Italians who, either because their jobs do not allow many any time off to go to church on holy days of obligation or due to the natural indolence of people of the South and to a certain cynicism of Northerners, are rather infrequent worshippers (...). Certainly we do not have much to boast about, but there is no reason for despair, either! In the meantime, we keep at it, and so, through the new generation, that, better educated, is more conscious of its religious and social obligations, or because immigration has ceased and the aged are dying out, everything leads us to believe that the future will not be as dark as pessimists affected by 'gout' would claim it to be.

The most difficult problem of our parish is represented by the fact that our best families as to wealth and status move out to live amongst Americans, in neighborhoods seven, ten miles away from our center, and they end up by forgetting too easily this 'Little Italy' from where their good 'fortune' took its first steps; and so we get the least help of both men and means from those of whom we should get the most. This way, parish and school keep going almost exclusively by the contributions of workers and retailers of this poor district.

There are hundreds of families we get in touch with only on occasion of baptisms and weddings, the only ones our Italians are interested in the Italian parish not so much because of love for one's country and religion as rather on account of a greater ease and accuracy of the paper work, trusting very little in the summary procedures of American offices.

In 1891 there were 72 baptisms, 13 weddings, in 1921 the former ones climbed to 359, and the latter to 74, so that, calculating several hundred families living in the surrounding countryside and those belonging to other parishes in the city, one may conclude that the number of Italians in touch with us for one reason or other amounts

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to about 10,000.

Our parish schools have an average of 450 pupils, while the public school nearby our church is attended by another 2,000 Italian children, whom we must prepare for the sacraments in our 'Sunday School' with the cooperation of the Sisters."¹⁰

In the 1922 report, baptisms (down by 94), marriages (down by 11), and funerals (down by 17), appear in sharp decline:

"From the parish registers one finds that in 1922 the church had ministered 265 baptisms, 152 confirmations, 191 first communions, 12,000 confessions, 25,000 communions, 62 weddings, and 70 funerals. Sick calls to homes and hospitals were 321 (200 of them at night); home blessings 677. Practices of civil assistance for both Italy and America were 113. With eight grades, the parish school had some 500 pupils, 24 of whom were graduated into high school. With 2,000 on the list, our Sunday school is attended with some regularity by almost a thousand children (...).

The parish lives on almost exclusively by the good-will and generosity of lesser white collar workers, retailers and laborers. No help, or almost, is given to the parish school, 'the most notable expression of Italian sentiments of our colonies in America,' as Senator Roland Ricci called it. The disinterest of those who could and should be of help in this field is beyond comprehension. The Sisters teach for \$30.00, \$30.00 I say, a month; the priests hold classes of Italian and music for free: unfortunately, however, books, heating, electricity, maintenance, so as food and clothing of those who minister to the church as well, require money."¹¹

In 1924, the Bishop of Kansas City observed that out of the 13 or 14 thousand Italians who were members of the parish of the Holy Rosary only three or four thousands of them lived around the church and some 1,200 attended it. The others, scattered around all over at various distances, did not frequent the American churches nor did they send their children, though they spoke English, to the Catholic schools of these parishes. He was of the opinion, therefore, that the parish of the Rosary should be limited within territorial boundaries, and Italians distant from the church declared members of local parishes. Fr. Franchinotti, on the other hand, was assuring that while visiting the families he always exhorted Italians to attend their nearby churches and that he, too, agreed on the opportunity of limiting the boundaries of his parish; but the trouble was, however, that the societies titled after their Patron Saints had their seat in his parish, and the Italians (90% Sicilians, 5% Calabrians, 5% Venetians and Tuscans) wanted to go to the Church of the Rosary when they celebrated their feasts; unfortunately, they showed up only on these occasions and for baptisms, weddings or funerals.

As to the pretenses of these societies, Fr. Franchinotti thus wrote to Archbishop Cicognani in November of 1925:

"Restored to good health, Bishop Lillis of this city will leave in a few days for his visit to Rome. Among a variety of other matters he will certainly speak, as he told me, about the custom in use here of bands at funerals. I pointed out,

¹⁰ Molinari, "Origine e sviluppo di Kansas City, Mo.", "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. XV, n. 2 (April-June 1922), pp. 12-13

¹¹ Resoconto annuale della Parrocchia del SS. Rosario, 1922 (Arch. G.S., 23/7).

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though, that the bands do not enter the church, but always stay outside and keep quiet during the service.

Already in 1921 Bishop Lillis had written that in conformity with the decrees of Pius X, I should forbid all together such bands at funerals. In fact, I should have denied the religious services for funerals employing bands. I answered that it was all praiseworthy, but considering the people I had to deal with, the provision would give rise to strife, threats and divisions, in the parish; that I would start to comply right away, but I would decline any responsibility for whatever might happen. Should the Bishop give me time, however, I would have attempted to do something to find out whether it were possible to uproot this custom.

So I read from the pulpit everything concerning the matter and the decision of the Bishop, based on the Pope's decrees, that the custom had to stop. I approached the presidents of the various societies to make them know the will of the Church and of the Bishop. Some understood the opportunity of the provision, but the majority of them answered that in their 'by-laws' it was written that the banner and the flags do not go out without the sound of music, that the assemblies would not approve of the change, that to insist meant to dissolve the religious societies and to aid other civil and Protestant societies.

I tried it, and succeeded in preventing it sometimes, in cases of murders especially (we have some 12 of them each year, here) under threats of denying the funeral in church: but even then, how many nuisances, threats, deputations to me and the Bishop; so much so that the Bishop said he did not want to have anything to do with them any longer. The Bishop will bring up the matter with you and with Cardinal DeLai, perhaps, and then he will abide by their word.

As I told him also the day before yesterday, I do not deny such decision to be good in itself, or the right of the Bishop to enforce it (he says that the law does not have to make exceptions for Italians) even to the point of refusing the funeral in church for a deceased body that is being carried with the accompaniment of a band, but I point out that due to the temperament, fanatical I would say, of these people, I foresee conflicts which will render very difficult, if not impossible, the position of the pastor here: wholesale passing to the various Protestant sects at work around us, no less than threats, curses, and recourse to violence, perhaps, against those who carry out this order."¹²

We know that the Bishop of Kansas City showed himself quite understanding, later on, contenting himself with allowing Fr. Franchinotti to continue to educate the Italians patiently and with no imposition.

In May 1926 the Pastor wrote again to Archbishop Cicognani:

"Here the work of many Protestants supported by money is intensifying and I try to oppose it the best I can. We now have in our parish a new club of Catholic women who are doing a good job in association with the Holy Name Society and the Young Men's Progressive club.

At a meeting with the local Bishop we discussed the assistance to the Italians. There is no case for opening a new parish; it would mean a split of forces without much good result. Year after year, Italians keep scattering among Americans and so with immigration ceasing, this colony is becoming insignificant. There is no reason therefore why we should go ahead with big expenditures or with the division of the parish. Barring distant Italians from

¹² Franchinotti to Cicognani, Kansas City, November 18, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 628/10).

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coming here all together would provoke disorder. I advise distant Italians to attend the nearest church. For the rest, American pastors are already taking the most willing and rich of them, while saying to the poorer and less practicing ones: 'You are Italians, go to your church.'

The only thing to do is to establish a small chapel to be tended by us on Sunday, provided the Bishop be in a position to send a priest of his to say a Mass in our parish church. I do not believe it necessary to have another assistant of our own in this rectory. As of now we have opened a catechism school in the midst of the main group of Italians: some 200 families."¹³

This marks the beginnings of the assistance to Italians on the North Side for whom the "Don Bosco Center" was to be built in 1939-1940 on Campbell Street.

In 1927 there were recorded 228 baptisms (15 of them Mexican), 206 confirmations, 58 marriages, 66 funerals. In 1928: 234 baptisms (28 Mexicans), 166 confirmations, 55 weddings, 88 funerals. In 1929: 173 baptisms (17 Mexicans), 137 confirmations, 61 marriages, 94 funerals. In 1930: 197 baptisms (26 Mexicans), 189 confirmations, 53 weddings, 78 funerals. In 1932: 165 baptisms (10 Mexicans), 196 confirmations, 32 weddings, 81 funerals.

While in the previous years the pupils of the parish school numbered some 450-500, in 1930 there were 320, and by the year 1932 had decreased a hundred more to 222. The parish then was declining: the blacks were occupying from all sides the houses around the church and the whites were moving out. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, who had the ownership of the parish school of St. John on Tracy Street, petitioned the Bishop to discontinue it because the pupils kept decreasing ever more. Fr. Franchinotti had the intention in 1935 to purchase the building or build a new school. This project was to be realized later on by Fr. Luigi Donanzan, who remodeled and enlarged the existing school in 1942.

Among Fr. Franchinotti's accomplishments we must point out the restoration of the church in 1935, the new heating system, the founding of the Italian Choir Club, the acquisition of a new organ with the support of the St. Francis of Assisi Committee founded in 1926 to promote the unity of the parish's 17 religious societies, propagate the Catholic Faith, and assist the poor. In December 1939, Fr. Franchinotti reported on the new Bishop O'Hara:

"An untiring organizer, and a wise operator, he has taken to heart, among other things, our cause. Under his guidance and with his cordial support, and with his generous contribution as well, it was possible to build a new center, or 'palazzo' for the youth of this parish."¹⁴

He was speaking of the "Don Bosco Center" which was called for by the Italians of the North Side for their young people. Some members of the Holy Name Society petitioned the new Bishop for a solution to the problem, after all

¹³ Franchinotti to Archbishop Cicognani, Kansas City, Mo., May 26, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 628/10).

¹⁴ Franchinotti to Card. Rossi, Kansas City, December 21, 1939 (Arch. G.S., 628/10).

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previous attempts had failed. Bishop O'Hara called together 200 people charging them with the task of collecting the needed funds, and appointed the diocesan priest Fr. Killgallon to head them. Not only did the Italians contribute with their offerings but by their free work. The foundation stone was laid in September of 1939 and work was continued with the effective help of Fr. Luigi Donanzan, who at that time had been assigned as an assistant to Fr. Franchinotti.¹⁵

4. The Parish of the Holy Rosary, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

On September 22, 1929, Fr. Manlio Ciufoletti took possession of the parish of the Holy Rosary in Winnipeg, in the Canadian province of Manitoba. The parish had been founded in 1914 by Fr. Ferdinando Anzalone, O.M.I., who had rented a Protestant church. In 1915 Fr. Anzalone returned to Italy, and the parish remained vacant for eight years. The second pastor, Fr. Pietro Gilti, purchased another Lutheran church which was consecrated for Catholic worship by Archbishop Alfred A. Sinnott of Winnipeg on October 7, 1923. From 1924 to 1929 the parish was headed by Fr. C. Lynch. Shortly after Fr. Ciufoletti's arrival, Archbishop Sinnott wrote to Fr. Franch:

"The Rev. Fr. Manlio Ciufoletti has arrived and has entered into his work as pastor of Holy Rosary in this city. He has made an excellent impression, and since he came to us with a good record of piety and zeal, I am sure he will do wonderfully well. And, dear Father, I am so pleased that your Fathers have come to take charge of this parish, and are going to look after the Italian Colony. It is estimated that there are between four and five hundred Italian families in this city. They have a very good church, upon which there is still a debt of about \$20,000.00, but they have no residence for the priest.

It is an excellent colony, which has shown faith and generosity in the support of the parish. I am most anxious that your Society should take this parish in perpetuity. In due time, you will have to rent or build a Presbytery. I think two priests will be necessary, in order that the work may be well done, for the Italian people are widely scattered in the city and are, therefore, served with more difficulty.

In taking the Holy Rosary Parish in Winnipeg you are doing a noble work for the "Emigrati Italiani", and I am sure that His Eminence will be glad to approve of it."¹⁶

The Italian parish of Winnipeg was accepted somewhat in haste by Fr. Franch, as a good occasion for finding a place for Fr. Ciufoletti, whom Cardinal Mundelein had ordered to be removed from Chicago:

"On the same day Card. Mundelein called me in for an audience, Divine Providence prompted me the means to properly provide for Fr. Ciufoletti. In fact, I was insistenty requested by the Archbishop of Winnipeg, Canada, to send there two missionaries of ours to take charge of a parish with 500 families whose pastor had gone away. I accepted to send there a missionary and I

¹⁵ Cf. "Holy Rosary Parish Golden Jubilee" (Kansas City, 1942).

¹⁶ Archbishop Sinnott to Franch, Winnipeg, September 28, 1929 (Arch. G.S., 671).

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notified the matter to Fr. Ciufoletti.

I hope I will have the approval of it from Your Eminence who was inviting me to provide for Fr. Ciufoletti in the best way possible."¹⁷

From the report of 1929 one gathers that the parish had a membership of some 2,200 Italians, 24 baptisms, 36 confirmations, 10 weddings, 3 funerals. In 1930 there were 42 baptisms, 26 confirmations, 11 marriages, and 5 funerals. The rectory was built in 1930 at 832 Sherbrooke Street. Fr. Ciufoletti, till then a guest of the Cathedral's rectory, moved in during the month of November 1930. In early 1931 he wrote:

"Even though this is at the present time the only Scalabrinian parish in Canada, still it is not the first one. In fact, our missionaries entered it some 20 years with the mission of Hamilton, Ontario, that passed later on into the hands of the diocesan clergy. Other Italian parishes are taken care of by the local priests in the Archdioceses of Toronto and Quebec, while Servites direct two missions in the city of Montreal and one in Ottawa, the capital of the Dominion. They had another one in Vancouver, the great port on the Pacific; but it lost its national character, afterwards. However, the need for an Italian church in Vancouver is now felt more urgently than ever as everything possible must be done to regain time lost and to bring back to the practice of their religion people who have been away from it for years and are now approaching the day of their final account. There are, perhaps, 3,000 immigrants in that city, and, as I could personally ascertain last May, all appear willing and anxious to have a priest of their nationality, ready to support him in his task.

It will be a difficult mission but rich in merit and satisfaction for whomever the superiors should choose for it.

Another great the important center (in the same province of British Columbia) is Trail, where some 3,000 fellow countrymen live, in major part from the Veneto and both financially and socially well off. Those, too, have no priest of their nationality.

Still others are there scattered here and there, especially in the mines and in the farms; and it would indeed be an apostolic work to visit them now and then to bring them the comforts of Faith. But, when and who will be able to do so?

It is difficult to state exactly the number of Italians in Canada; the largest colony is found in Montreal (I preached two missions there in 1928) where, with the inclusion of those around it, there are about 30,000 of them. Then came Toronto with some 15,000 and Hamilton with 10,000. Winnipeg, Vancouver and Trail have just about the same number, between 3,000 and 4,000 of them; their financial and social conditions also are not very much different. About 3,000 live in the Archdiocese of Edmonton; they, too, had a small church, some time back. As many perhaps are in Calgary. Some odd 20,000 more may be living scattered in the mines, in the farms, and along the rail tracks, thus bringing to about 90 or 95 thousand the number of Italians residing in Canada.

Immigration is closed now, but with the return of normal conditions of life and business it will have to be reopened, no doubt; and Italians will be willingly admitted, especially to the immense West where they enjoy a good reputation

¹⁷ Franch to Card. Perosi, Melrose Park, September 2, 1929 (Arch. G.S., 607/3).

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both as workers and citizens. Farming (the land is extremely productive) and cattle raising should be their favorite occupation. Canada, limitless and untouched, rich in minerals and forests will be the America of the next 50 or 100 years; while the United States, saturated already with industry and products if not with men, begins to lose fame of a land of gold and opportunity.

When immigration will resume its inflow, we hope that besides the Church's institutions, our country's government also will follow it, so that the scandalous failure of certain experiments of collective colonizations not be repeated, such as the 'Lonza' project, in the vicinity of Winnipeg, that brought great havoc and much sorrow to 70 families of migrants.

A city founded only 58 years ago, Winnipeg is already in full bloom and has 280,000 inhabitants, in great majority from Northern and Slavic nations, departed directly from Europe or immigrated from the old provinces of Quebec and Ontario or from the United States; the Italians especially, presently about 2,800, two-thirds of them, at least, were born and raised in Italy. They originate from the most separate and various regions, but particularly from the South, Sicily, the Veneto (Province of Treviso) and the Friuli. They do not live grouped together, but scattered all over the city; something that though supplying certain advantages still renders the ministry of the missionary as a priest and a factor of Italian solidarity more difficult and laborious. They enjoy an excellent reputation of peace-loving and exemplary citizens; and even now in such difficult moments as these, almost no one of them has need to have recourse to either public or private charity for his support.

On the religious and Italian level, the center of the community is the church, sufficiently frequented on Sunday, especially by men; a rather curious and quite rare occurrence.

When we took charge of the parish, its religious and financial conditions were in a very sad state; but with God's help and by the cooperation of our good parishioners, they are set on a better track. With a rectory just completed last November, the work of the priest is being made much easier, while we hope that another confrere may be sent as soon as possible to this new but ever promising field of apostolate. The rectory is magnificent and fit to host two or three priests.

It stands close to the church, a beautiful and imposing building, whose exterior we have already completely remodeled in the hope to soon decorate its interior as well. The church had been Lutheran until 1922, when Archbishop Sinnott, an excellent prelate and a true father to us, titled it to the Queen of the Rosary.

By the church we already have the land on which to build the school, but we cannot think about these all important initiatives, as it is necessary that we first reduce the debt pending on the parish. We have a rudimental school, however; and on Saturdays the boys and I and a Sister and the girls teach them the basic elements of the Italian language. Directed by the missionary, there is also an excellent little band and a drama club that already made quite a name for themselves with the presentation of the Passion and of the Otello.

The parish committees (both of men and women) the Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary, the Children of Mary, and both the boys and girls clubs, work assiduously for the church that, unable to support itself through the ordinary

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revenues, has need to engage in initiatives of a social and recreational nature."¹⁸

In 1933, Fr. Ciufoletti returned to Italy to give an account of the administration of the parish of Guardian Angel in Chicago. At that time many letters concerning him arrived in Rome: some were levelling serious accusations at him, while others were praising him highly. The Archbishop of Winnipeg openly sided with him:

"Fr. Ciufoletti has done a wonderful job for the Italian colony of this city. Only to his zeal and efforts credit must be given if the parish has made such a great progress in the past four years, and the Italian people are here more highly respected than any other national group. Fr. Ciufoletti is an excellent priest, and I wish to express to him once again my esteem and trust.

I sincerely hope that his case is soon resolved and that he may immediately return to Winnipeg. Should circumstances require that he leave the Pious Society, I am more than willing to incardinate him in my diocese."¹⁹

In November 1933, Fr. Franch informed Card. Rossi that the Archbishop had written him that Fr. Ciufoletti was expected to return to Winnipeg, pointing out, however, that it would be a good thing to take advantage of the occasion for replacing him with another priest because Fr. Ciufoletti was not very well liked by part of the people. On the other hand, Archbishop Sinnott added that he had no complaint against the ministry of the pastor. Fr. Franch was asking, therefore, whether he should supply another missionary because he would have reluctantly witnessed the closing for the Pious Society of the vast field of Canada that was promising so many further developments.²⁰

He was answered that another priest could not be sent to Winnipeg for lack of personnel and the excessive distance from the other houses; and so that parish had to be relinquished.²¹

Sent temporarily to Winnipeg for the Easter season, Fr. Luigi Bolzan remained there until the middle of June 1934.

¹⁸ Ciufoletti to Agosti, Winnipeg, January 28, 1931 (Arch. G.S., 671).

¹⁹ Archbishop Sinnott to Card. Rossi, Winnipeg, June 19, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 671).

²⁰ Franch to Card. Rossi, Melrose Park, November 26, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 671).

²¹ Ciufoletti to Bish. Rinaldi, Sansepolcro, December 18, 1934 (Rieti's Episcopal Archives - Rinaldi's Papers- December 18, 1934).

PART THREE

Our Missions in Brazil

CHAPTER XI

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROVINCE OF SÃO PAULO

1. Fathers Enrico Preti and Giuseppe Martini (1919-1925)

On August 23, 1919, the General Chapter decided to unite into one Province the three Regions of Brazil. Fr. Enrico Preti was chosen as its Provincial Superior; after participating in the Chapter, he sailed for Brazil on October 8, 1919. Once at São Paulo he endeavored to reorganize the missions of that State which had been called into question by the Chapter:

*"Together with our Most Rev. Provincial, we are working" - wrote Fr. Marco Simoni - "at reorganizing ourselves, but not without painful measures, such as are needed for a smooth running of things."*¹

Referring himself to the state of the missions and, in particular, to the decision by which the General Chapter had approved the granting of a monthly allowance to the missionaries, Fr. Preti himself wrote:

*"Due to the favorable exchange rate of these days, we had been planning to send even at the cost of some sacrifice, an amount of money to the Mother House, but the last dispositions of the Chapter have forestalled all remittances. In fact, when I explained to our confreres the meaning of said decision, some of them objected that in this way the Congregation would go bankrupt; we hope not.... Thanks to God, I hope to complete shortly my task in regard to these missions, which was painful to me in all respects. Oh, if only some consideration had been given to my letters, which I kept writing from Rio Grande for years! But it is too late now; part has been completely ruined, and part is in danger. We need patience....would that the experience of the past may help to save in the future what can be retrieved and not repeat such gross mistakes...."*²

The very drastic and somewhat rough action of Fr. Preti in reorganizing the "Orfanotrofio Cristoforo Colombo", removing Fr. Faustino from its direction and some lay people who exerted undue interference, gave rise to a reaction that revealed on one hand a situation which could no longer be tolerated, and that provoked on the other a general discontent though unjustified in great part, against Fr. Preti, executor of the General Chapter decisions, which prevented him from carrying out the reforms he had planned and led him to reconsider. To the bitterness of criticism there was added the worsening of a sickness that was tormenting him already in Rio Grande do Sul; it did not bother him in Italy, but in the climate of São Paulo it got worse. Since early 1921 he asked for a final return to Italy.

In November of the same year Fr. Enrico Preti was replaced by Fr. Giuseppe Martini, the rector of the Mother House. Fr. Martini was made Regional Superior of the missions of São Paulo and Paraná, while Fr. Giovanni Costanzo

¹ Simoni to Rinaldi, São Paulo, November 19, 1919 (Arch. G.S., 414/4).

² Preti to Rinaldi, São Paulo, November 19, 1919 (Arch G.S., 414/4).

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had been named Regional Superior of the mission of Rio Grande do Sul already in early 1921.

Fr. Martini fixed his residence at the "Cristoforo Colombo Orphanage" acting also as its administrator. Fr. Faustino Consoni had been restored to head it, in the meantime.

At the end of 1922, the Superior General, Fr. Chenuil, began the visitation to the missions of Brazil. On December 21 he called together to Ipiranga the missionaries of the State of São Paulo, 14 of them in all, including two lay brothers. The secretary of the meeting, Fr. Carlo Porrini, reports in the minutes, not altogether impersonal and dispassionate:

"The Superior General began by expressing all his happy impressions at the State of São Paulo, praising its climate, topography, moral and social order. He congratulates with high words of praise the missionaries for their constant and fruitful work, and above all for the spirit of friendship and brotherhood that bind them together. He wishes them an ever increasing growth of their beneficial action and foresees a splendid future in this mission that not only has dispelled certain doubts of his, but has captured all his interest, as well....

"Until now," - the Most Reverend Superior continues - "I had to attend to North America, but now I will busy myself with South America with sending between five and six missionaries within two years. He sees a sure future for the 'linha' ("territory") of São Cajetan, Santo André, São Bernardo, Riberão Pires, small centers with a prosperous future.

(...) There follows afterwards a discussion over the two orphanages. The Superior General acknowledges the great value of the two institutions; an official act of exceptional importance because it erases all old prejudices and false ideas of those who looked upon the two institutions as upon a project not altogether respondent to the scope of our Institute."³

In 1923, on the occasion of the Apostolic Visitation by Fr. Cimino, Fr. Martini outlines briefly the situation of the whole Province beginning with the "Orfanotrofio Cristoforo Colombo":

"As to the overall administration of this house, I deem it my duty to report that it needs reform and could use improvements. This reform must be effected in the personnel directing it, who, though animated by a good spirit and willing to do any sacrifice, still it obtains only miserly results for the lack of the preparation needed for this scope and because of obstinacy in their systems they have adopted (...).

This community is made up of seven priests.

- 1. Fr. Faustino Consoni, Director of the 'Orfanotrofio Cristoforo Colombo' and Chaplain of the Church of Santo Antonio, which belongs to a confraternity. He resides by the church for the opportunity to approach the rich people of the city and insure their support.*
- 2. Fr. Marco Simoni, Vice-Director of the Orphanage.*
- 3. Fr. Corrado Stefani, who assists Fr. Consoni at the Church of St. Anthony,*

³ Acts of the meetings of the Fathers of St. Charles at the "Orfanotrofio Cristoforo Colombo", São Paulo, December 21, 1922 (Archive Scalabrinian Province of São Paulo).

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hears the confessions of the girls of the Orphanage and teaches our students preparing for the priesthood (...).

4. *Fr. Sblandiano Simoni (...).*
5. *Fr. Pietro Negri (...).*
6. *Fr. Eugenio Medicheschi, who served for some twenty years in the missions of Rio Grande do Sul. He fled from there because of the revolution still in progress.*
7. *The undersigned, who acts as administrator of this house and is the Provincial Superior*

Besides this house the Province has six others, four in the State of São Paulo and two in Paraná. The houses of São Paulo (Cascalho, São Bernardo, Riberão Pires) have one priest each, but they are Fathers of St. Charles only name and are almost ashamed of it. As priests and pastors they work well and are esteemed by the people, but they know of the Institute only when in need of it (...). The fourth house of São Paulo (Villa S. Bernardo) is staffed by a good and zealous priest, who has been admitted to our Institute only a short while ago.

In Paraná we have two houses with one priest each: Randinha and S. Felicidade. The first is headed by Fr. Natale Pigato, who has shown himself for the past 27 years a true missionary and a faithful member of the Institute. In the other one we have Fr. Salvatore Leonardi, whom I do not know too well as yet."⁴

And so the Province was at a low ebb, indeed: the personnel was scarce and promises of help could not be kept; old systems continued to be in force, based on the mistaken notion that the Province, or the Region of São Paulo at least, existed because of the "Orfanotrofio Cristoforo Colombo"; Fr. Martini, a very well intentioned and pious man, but timid, did not have enough nerve to remedy the disorders he perceived and pointed out.

In 1924 it was decided that Fr. Preti should return to Brazil in place of Fr. Costanzo, who was returning to Italy for reasons of health. For about a year all the missions of Brazil remained without a Provincial or Regional Superior. In fact, Fr. Preti went back to Brazil in March 1925 again with the responsibility of Regional Superior of all missions in Brazil conferred upon him "ad nutum" ("at the will") on January 25, 1925, and he took residence in Rio Grande do Sul, in the parish of Dois Lajeados. From the correspondence of those months it appears as though he actually took an interest almost exclusively only in the missions of Rio Grande do Sul, while asking at the same time to be relieved of his office as superior. On November 12, 1925, Card. De Lai wrote to him:

"Following your continued insistence, and in consideration of your particular health conditions, much to my regret I had but to accept your desire to be relieved from the office of Regional Superior of the Scalabrinian houses and missions of Brazil. It is my wish, however, that you still carry on, though with a lesser responsibility and hardship, in guiding Scalabrinians by means of your counsel, the fruit of experience and age, and therefore, by this document I appoint you Councilor to Fr. Aneto Bogni, Regional Superior of the houses and

⁴ Martini to Cimino, São Paulo, September 8, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 20/1).

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missions now existing in the State of Rio Grande do Sul."⁵

2. Fr. Domenico Canestrini (1925-1928)

Coming in from the United States, Fr. Domenico Canestrini was appointed on November 12, 1925, as Regional Superior of the missions of the States of São Paulo and Paraná.

"I am pleased to inform you, that as a first step in the reorganization of the Scalabrinian houses and missions in Brazil, I have decided to return back to the old division of the local direction of Scalabrinians. The houses and missions shall be therefore separated in two Regions or Zones: one to include those of the States of São Paulo and Paraná, and the other those of the State of Rio Grande do Sul.

With this present note, I appoint you therefore Regional Superior of the Scalabrinian houses existing in the States of São Paulo and Paraná. Your Paternity will have the Rev. Frs. F. Consoni and Martini as Councilors. Convey these decisions to the Scalabrinians of your region.

Being Your Paternity all new to the place, it is good and necessary that you do not bring innovations or initiatives in the beginning, except when needed and with the advice of your Councilors.

In any case, keep me informed, as much as possible considering distances, of the steps you will deem necessary to take."⁶

At the same time, Fr. Canestrini was named director of the "Orfanotrofio Cristoforo Colombo". Actually, Fr. Canestrini's task was not easy in a province where two or three Fathers had always considered themselves masters of the situation and were therefore resisting reforms. Fr. Canestrini, original from Trento, came to be defined as the "German" because he proceeded decidedly straight on his way with carrying out the orders received from Rome, meeting with the approval of the best elements and of the superiors, but arousing the reactions of those who did not interpret correctly his actions:

"Most Rev. Eminence,

*I was quite aware that this assignment was not to be free of difficulties, but I would never expect to be inflicted so many afflictions by certain persons. I told them clearly that if I am here it is because of obedience and not of my own choice, that I had to take certain disciplinary provisions, whether they liked it or not. After so many years, these lads want to put us away as good for nothing! To tell the truth, I would prefer a hit over my head rather than to hear expressions like these as though I failed in my duty of respect for age or of appreciation for merit."*⁷

Following the apostolic visitation of Archbishop Cicognani, Card. De Lai wrote to him by the end of 1926:

"I am pleased to inform you that according to the results of the visitation I am very much satisfied with your work. Go ahead, therefore, with perseverance

⁵ Card. De Lai to Preti, Rome, November 12, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 414/6).

⁶ Card. De Lai to Canestrini, Rome, November 12, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 359).

⁷ Canestrini to Card. De Lai, São Paulo, January 5, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 359).

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*and courage, disregarding any bitter remarks, which may come at you from someone who would like to be in command but does not have the authority or the ability. Know, however, how to win over with charity also the reluctant ones. In any case, it will be opportune that you entertain a friendly relationship with Fr. Faustino certainly not for admitting to the orphanage more orphans than good discipline may consent, but to endear evermore his heart because he is a great benefactor of that institution and enjoys a great prestige. So also it will be proper that you keep in frequent contact with the Archbishop of São Paulo, informing him about the parishes and the orphanage; and this is much more necessary now that measures were taken in regard to the Sisters of Saint Charles, which are not quite in conformity with his ideas."*⁸

In 1927, Fr. Canestrini tried to solve the question of the legal status of the province in relation to that of the "Orfanotrofio Cristoforo Colombo", and on the matter he gave the following report:

"The civil residence of the present juridical status of the Missionaries of St. Charles is not located at Riberão Pires (where Fr. Porrini is pastor) but at Riberão Preto, where Fr. Carlo Pedrazzani lived and the missionaries have a house claimed by the bishop and on which I am about to complete a report. The orphanage also has its own juridical status, and it goes back to May 1, 1897. As of now, a more beneficial and a popularly better known institution than this can hardly be found, and I am convinced that any other goods of the Scalabrinians, besides those already titled to it, would not find a surer protection, than the orphanage itself. Furthermore, it must be pointed out that should we wish to title the properties of the orphanage under the Pious Society, we would have to incur very grave expenses, we would offer a pretext for gossip and distrust, as many people know the orphanage as an institution all by itself with nothing to do with the missionaries of St. Charles, and our goods would gain nothing in security!

Rather, their condition, if anything, would worsen, because of the present feelings rather unfavorable towards foreigners. On my part, therefore, I deem it opportune to keep the juridical status of the Pious Society and of the orphanage separate, while modifying the statutes of both, and more so because the office of Regional Superior can very well be detached from that of Director of the orphanage. Present private goods and all those that should be coming to us in the future would have to be titled to the Pious Society.

Besides, to make it possible for Scalabrinians to freely dispose also of the goods titled to the juridical body of the orphanage, it is enough to add in the statutes approved by the government certain articles such as follows (...):

- 1. The board of directors of the orphanage must be made up of Missionaries of St. Charles.*
- 2. It is in the power of the Director to make transactions both in and outside of court, to renounce rights, to alienate, mortgage, or pawn goods of the Society, provided the General Assembly had given its approval.*
- 3. In case of discontinuance, which can be resolved only by the unanimous vote of the staff, the existing estate shall be liquidated according to a*

⁸ Card. De Lai to Canestrini, Rome, December 19, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 359).

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procedure decided upon by the General Assembly."⁹

The question was solved in 1936 according to the opinion expressed by lawyer Candido Mendes de Alveida in 1933:

"In the impossibility of uniting into one entity with a sole juridical status the "Christopher Columbus" Orphanage and the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles, a compromise can be adopted to protect the institutions of the well deserving of Fr. Marchetti.

Considering, besides, that the orphanage has been given a statute as on a civil institution and was accepted as such because the statute was thus recorded by the competent state ministry; considering also the status of its foundation does not offer any advantage due to the interpretation given it by the code of civil law, with all the consequences deriving from any intervention of the public ministry; it would be opportune to reshape the "Christopher Columbus" Orphanage as a civil institution with clear and precise statutes but thoroughly distinct from the civil status of the "Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles". As individuals, they (the missionaries) can very well be members of the civil charitable institution "Orfanotrofio Cristoforo Colombo" as successors and continuators of those who with Fr. Giuseppe Marchetti founded and bravely directed till now this beautiful and most useful Institute for the protection of abandoned children."¹⁰

In March 1928, Fr. Canestrini, who was beginning to show symptoms of the sickness that was to lead him to the grave on May 10, 1929, at the age of 36, tendered his resignation:

*"My position here has become untenable, or I am no longer capable, at least to suit myself to it! A strong man, one who knows how to take things, I do not say lightly, but as they come, can well resist and carry on; not so with me: a proof of this are the few degrees of fever which still recurs from time to time and doctors cannot explain, yet shows up whenever a setback or worry strikes."*¹¹

The answer came from Card. Perosi, who had succeeded Cardinal DeLai in the meantime:

*"This Sacred Congregation has turned its attention to the state of things in that Region and at the orphanage and it came to a most simple conclusion: you did everything you could, there is no reason, therefore, that there be any talk of resigning. You shall continue to do what you can. In the meantime, you shall intensify your action in regard to those who, though guided by apparent good intentions, still want to go on with the old systems. As you have been told before already, you will be allowed to come as soon as possible to Italy to strengthen your health, so as to resume afterwards with renewed vigor the direction of the Region and of the Orphanage."*¹²

In like terms Card. Perosi answered on July 18 to a letter in which Fr. Canestrini insisted to be relieved of his task, but adding:

"For the period of your absence leave Fr. Martini as "interim" Superior of the

⁹ Canestrini to Card. De Lai, São Paulo, August 9, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 359).

¹⁰ "L'Orfanato Cristoforo Colombo e la Congregazione dei Missionari di San Carlo", Report of Dr. Candido Mendes de Alveida, Rio de Janeiro, June 17, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 396/35).

¹¹ Canestrini to Card. De Lai, São Paulo, March 8, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 359).

¹² Card. Perosi to Canestrini, April 17, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 359).

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Region, informing the Fathers about it, and Fr. Sante Bernardi as "deputy" Superior of the orphanage."¹³

Fr. Canestrini left for Italy on August 3, 1928. In accepting the responsibility, Fr. Martini wrote:

"I was sent the appointment as "provisional" Regional Superior of the Scalabrinian Missionaries of this region. While I thank Your Eminence for the trust placed in me, I must express the desire that the Superior, Fr. Canestrini, may soon be on his way back.

He has given start to the needed reforms and arrangements and he can bring them to completion better than someone else. But he has need in this of some other priests before he may be able to effect the changes necessary to reach the scope."¹⁴

But Fr. Canestrini's health condition worsened and, on November 13, 1928, the Sacred Consistorial Congregation accepted his resignation. Informed of this decision, Fr. Martini asked to be relieved of the charge entrusted him on account of his age - he was then 70 - and of his weakness, that did not consent him to visit the houses of the two states, and because of the aversion the Archbishop of São Paulo showed also in his regard.¹⁵ He was urged to be patient because plans were already underway for the appointment of a new Superior.

3. Fr. Francesco Navarro (1929-1935)

On January 24, 1929, Fr. Francesco Navarro, Pastor of São Bernado (São Paulo), was named regional superior. He was given Frs. Consoni and Porrini as councilors. Fr. Martini was called back to Italy and named Spiritual Director of the Mother House. Fr. Navarro hastened to call on the Archbishop Dom Leopoldo Duarte e Silva, and informed him of the appointment:

"Accompanied by the Rev. Fr. Sante Bernardi, I was received with much condescension and cordiality; he offered me his congratulations stating his satisfaction with the naming of a half-Brazilian, as one who has been working many years for the good of the Archdiocese."¹⁶

1930 was a very difficult year for Fr. Navarro: he was struck twice by a sickness, that made people fear for his life, and had to worry over the political situation:

"How many new events, dark at first, and happy in the last few months! As of now, I can assure you, however, that all the Fathers of St. Charles have carried themselves very well and suffered no evil, moral or physical, and they continue in their mission as before the revolution. Since the month of April I have begun to send in remittances and reports, when my long sickness of three months prevented me from continuing the expeditions. Once back to health, a disastrous change took place, and we were always in hope of an improvement that never

¹³ Card. Perosi to Canestrini, Rome, July 18, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 359).

¹⁴ Martini to Card. Perosi, São Paulo, August 10, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 358/6).

¹⁵ Martini to Card. Perosi, São Paulo, November 20, 1928; Card. Perosi to Martini, Rome, Jan. 2, 1929 (Arch. G.S., 358/6).

¹⁶ Navarro to Card. Perosi, São Bernardo, February 20, 1929 (Arch. G.S., 360/1).

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came, in fact... we have arrived at the first of October in a state of siege with the strict censorship of the mail, the blockade of the banks, and it is still forbidden to send money out of the country (...). All entertain a great trust in the new government that got busy immediately imprisoning the thieves of the public treasury and having them make restitution. The new government of São Paulo has good and excellent people who know very well the work of our Missionaries and the Institution of the two orphanages."¹⁷

But the future of the Province of São Paulo, more than of all the others perhaps, depended essentially on an increase and rejuvenation of the personnel: the main reason why that group of missions had for a long time such a halting life as to endanger the very survival especially of those in Paraná, must be sought in this fact. In addition, at a certain moment, a feeling of discouragement also set in, as is proven by a letter addressed by Frs. C. Porrini, M. Simoni, S. Bernardi, and Milini to Card. Rossi after the passing of Fr. Faustino Consoni:

"It is with deep sadness that we, Missionaries of St. Charles of the Province of São Paulo, address this letter to Your Eminence, urged to do so by the sad situation we are in. For quite a long time now, we have been realizing with regret, Eminence, how much this Venerable Congregation is disregarding our humble requests. Once the most thought of and treated as the glory of the Pious Society from the early times, when our Holy Founder was still living, the Province of São Paulo is the last today; it is today the most neglected, not to say the most despised, the very one that was the initial mother-cell of Paraná and Río Grande. We do not know, Eminence, whether the letters of our Provincial Superior reach the hands of Your Eminence or end up rather on the table of some secretary. It is impossible in fact that they should receive such sad answers, had they indeed reached the hands of Your Eminence, a prelate of high talents and magnanimous heart. Together with his Council, our Provincial, whom we love for his truly paternal kindness, was confronted by very difficult dilemmas; and realizing that his pressing requests for priests or that the reassigning of the missionaries because of sudden and unforeseen circumstances contrasted the orders issued by Your Eminence, discouraged and sad, more than once he declared to us that he did not intend to continue with the thorny task of Superior and that he had already tendered in his resignation. Faced by such statements and by the very delicate new state of things brought about by the death of our most beloved and venerable Fr. Faustino, pillar of the whole mission of South America, we decided to hold a general assembly of all missionaries and to write this letter to Your Eminence explaining what has been done. Eminence, the changes of some Fathers and the breach of the orders received in their regard were not capricious whims, but urgent needs created by the force of events and by individual situations. For example: Fr. Rigo was not sent to Río Grande for two reasons:

- 1. he has hernia, unable therefore to ride a horse, something without which a missionary cannot be of any effective use in Río Grande;*
- 2. Fr. Rigo's presence is needed in Paraná to save the parish of Santa Felicidade following the tragic end of Fr. Bertolero. It is not possible to*

¹⁷ Navarro to Card. Perosi, São Bernardo, November 14, 1930 (Arch. G.S., 360/2).

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entrust the direction of the Parish to Fr. Severino Fei. And in all charity we are here forced to tell you in truth that Fr. Fei must come to São Paulo as soon as possible to avoid another tragedy such as that of Fr. Bertolero. The Superior has already issued orders to this effect.

Fr. Augusto Rizzi left for Rio Grande without warning, making the Superior understand not to bother about him any longer because he did not intend to remain in the Pious Society anymore. In Rio Grande he is well received, sympathized with, defended as a victim of the confreres and of the Superior of São Paulo. Far be it of us that we should disapprove of the charity accorded Fr. Rizzi, but charity is prudent and does not hurl accusations at third persons.

Let us pass on to the case of Santo Antonio. Fr. Corrado Stefani, learned, pious, and an excellent confrere, during Fr. Faustino's sickness left the Church of Santo Antonio in the hands of an Olivetan priest, a good religious, who knew very well how to work for his Order and to prepare the opportune moment in which to take into his own hands. And such moment was fatally about to come true when Fr. Stefani refused to give the benediction with the Blessed Sacrament on Fridays. With all charity he was warned to give better attention to the church... and to seek an agreement with Mr. Flores, Countess Prates' administrator. Unfortunately, the advice was not heeded. We had to resort to extreme remedies. The loss of Santo Antonio, a most centrally located and important church, would have meant the moral and...physical ruin of both the Orphanage and the Pious Society. It was when faced with such danger that because of lack of personnel Fr. Sante Bernardi was appointed chaplain there to the great detriment of the orphanage left with only Fr. Girolamo.

This is enough already to give you an idea of the sad and frightening situation we are in. We are very few priests! Frs. Ernesto Consoni and Sblandiano are of no use! Fr. Marco Simoni, 67 years old, is pastor of the difficult and vast parish of Ribeirão Pires. Fr. Navarro is head of an immense parish and also burdened with the office of Provincial. Fr. Sante Bernardi all alone at Santo Antonio, where services and decorum would require three priests. The Orphanage has only Fr. Gerolamo! It is in absolute need of a director, a vice-director, a spiritual director (with white hair possibly), a bursar, and a prefect. This institution has urgency of such a staff, if we want it to flourish! To continue as we are now, - forgive our frankness, Your Eminence, - is to betray this institution, and to stifle it. All other missionaries are engaged in work exceeding their strength. At S. André, a parish with about 24 thousand souls, there is need of the help of a Priest to serve the two churches and give Fr. Carlo time to direct the "Fiamma". He would also preach Missions for the benefit of both Orphanage and Pious Society.

Eminence, quite a few times, by means of letters and telegrams, we asked for other missionaries, but the answer was always negative. We were told that there were no priests ... Oh! Forgive us, Your Eminence, if we dare touch on this most sore subject...

Very humbly we call the kind attention of Your Eminence to a deplorable fact we have been noticing for quite some time now and which humiliates us. Piacenza is interested only in the North and in Rio Grande do Sul: to her, São Paulo does not exist... Piacenza may well have her good reasons.... one of which is unfortunately known to us: Piacenza sends priests so far as it receives money. We hear it repeated time and again, but this is a refrain that does not respond

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to truth. Most respectfully and with innermost fraternal charity, we invite Piacenza to run through the old administration books and compare the remittances of the North (America) and of Rio Grande do Sul with those of São Paulo. It will appear that the Province of São Paulo was the first to contribute to the Pious Society since the time of our saintly Founder Bishop Scalabrini and of the Rectors Rolleri and Vicentini. Are we now to be blamed perhaps for the serious crisis that hits São Paulo today and for the Brazilian law that strictly forbids sending any money out of the country? Let Piacenza have its preferences, by all means, we do not object to them! By all means, let it form groups of young men in the missions, almost separate from the older ones... but do not let it lack in justice and charity towards the earliest province of the Pious Society, São Paulo, where some of the most worthy missionaries have always been working, from the first fallen, Fr. Colbacchini, to the late Fr. Faustino Consoni.

Eminence, either Piacenza decides to send us three priests as soon as possible, or we will be forced to close down our missions in Paraná (a most painful measure) and to abandon some good position of the very mission of São Paulo. Should anyone of us unfortunately fall sick tomorrow we would have to lose some parish. With three priests we will be able to fill in the voids brought about by death and desertions. We will strengthen our ranks and with the number we will obviate the most serious void caused by the passing of dear Fr. Faustino. Oh! Your Eminence, we have no words to express our sorrow and the consequences of his loss! And so, Your Eminence, this is our humble request....three priests! Were it not audacity or imprudence, we would have still a further idea to express....A greater freedom of action in the hands of the Provincial Superior for certain exceptional and unforeseen cases. Our idea would even dare go a little further: an only Superior for the whole Brazil who, earnest, impartial, and loving not of his own name, of his own parish or province, but of the true welfare and growth of our Institute, may rule a unified province and distribute the Fathers according to need. Shall it be so, no case will ever be repeated of one getting the most attention who shouts the loudest. Those people of Rio Grande, for instance, were and are shouting and clamoring for some time now to have priests, and they know how to do it! In the past, when the horse was the only means of transportation and the colonies very populated, an only missionary was taking care of parishes which are today cared for with coaches and cars by two or even three missionaries..... And mind you, population of these colonies has been reduced by internal migration. The uniting the government of the two Brazilian provinces in the hands of an only Superior will be greatly beneficial.

Eminence, it was after mature deliberation and much prayer to God that the Fathers of São Paulo decided to write this letter, or, rather, entreaty. No ill will at anyone whatsoever led us to this somewhat daring but necessary step. It was only the welfare of the Pious Society, the growth of its institutions, and above all the glory of God... glory, welfare, and well-being which we know to be held very much at heart by Your Eminence.

Be pleased, Your Eminence, to bless and forgive us; deign to continue your fatherly benevolence on us, and....have pity on us! Should not this entreaty of ours be attended to, we shall bow our heads. It will all be in expiation for our sins, an expiation that will be comforted by the thought that we have not kept

silent."¹⁸

Cardinal Rossi hastened to send a telegram to the Apostolic Nuncio in Brazil:

"Inform Fr. Bernardi, a Scalabrinian, Director (of) orphanage (of) São Paulo (that the Sacred) Consistorial (Congregation) received (his) letter; (it) assures the under-signers (of) its keen thought (and) interest. Provision was already in progress and others will follow soon. Courage and trust a little while longer. Letter will follow. Many blessings."¹⁹

The letter was ready by the end of October, but due to negotiations underway with the regional Superior of Rio Grande do Sul, it was mailed on November 25, 1933:

"Your cry of sorrow, I would call it, and of imploration, had reached me even before your collective letter came in, because I was convinced as much as you are of the need of providing for your Province, and more so than you, I would dare say, I had the desire to help you. And take note, I speak in first person because it is I who send the missionaries, not....Piacenza! Piacenza has the seminary, not the government.

Do not say, I entreat you, that we have given better attention to North America than to Brazil. No doubt, we have concerned ourselves with it because there are too many urgent needs also and the parishes are 46 (you have 19 of them, though so very hard, I know, and with the orphanage, besides); should we, however, compare numbers - and I did so actually on purpose - it appears clearly that we have equally sought to provide with little difference for both the North and the South. From 1925 to this day, 13 Fathers were sent from the seminary to the United States, and 10 to Brazil, 5 associates to the United States and 2 to Brazil.

Nor do allow yourselves to believe that we may have been more generous with the missions of the United States in consideration of the material advantages that would come of them; should anything have been told you in confidence to this effect by and among confreres, do not pay any attention to it. On the part of Superiors care has been taken to provide for the needs of the parishes, nothing else. It is evident, however, that the material means are also necessary to promote the life and the growth of the two seminaries from which only now we begin to gather the fruits. Be willing not to trouble yourselves if you have not always been able to contribute in proportion with your very desire: all are well aware of the circumstances of time and place you have been and are living in. No blame, therefore, and no negligence on your part for all this. The missionaries assigned to your Region, besides those who have already arrived there, are preparing themselves and then others will follow them. Be patient a few months more - very few - and you will have as many of them as you wish: good and serious young men, who, though willing to go anywhere obedience should send them, feel a special calling for Brazil: young men, then, who will come to you animated by a good spirit and desirous to work and live there. And after these, others more, and among them there will also be some especially qualified for the orphanage. In a word, we think of you more than you yourselves suspect, because these early and worthy missions are on the top of

¹⁸ Porrini, Simoni, Bernardi, Milini to Card. Rossi, São Paulo, Sept. 19, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 360/4).

¹⁹ Telegr. Card. Rossi to Masella, Rome, October 14, 1933 (Arch. Gen. S., 360/4).

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the Superiors' attention.

Unfortunately, it so happened that more or less unforeseen and sorrowful cases have intervened in thinning out your ranks before we could prepare those who should have arrived to replace the less qualified or the dead ones.

Pray, hope, and remain assured of our constant concern.

In the meantime, as a first prompt provision I had been thinking of a project I was negotiating with Fr. Carlino. Unexpected circumstances forced us to abandon it, but Fr. Carlino has orders to come to an understanding with your Regional Superior to see to it that the situation of Santo Antonio be taken care of. As to Fr. Rigo, orders had been given for him to go to Rio Grande because we did not know the circumstances that have suggested keeping him there, instead. Fr. Carlino has been informed about it.

Take heart, then, and you will see that everything will be straightened out; in the meantime, be sure that you have not been forgotten that your concerns are our concerns.

I am sending this answer of mine to the collective letter to you who as resident of São Paulo have a better chance to receive mail. (I had it ready for almost a month, but could not send it due to the pending negotiations with Fr. Carlino). However, be pleased, Your Paternity, to make this answer known to all other signers, and tell all that I sympathize with them, that I stand by their side, that they have my support, and that I assure them of a near and abundant help. I bless them all."²⁰

A few days later, Cardinal Rossi wrote to Fr. Tirondola:

"Conditions of the Scalabrinian missions in Brazil are becoming ever more critical for impossibility of filling in for the voids formed lately in the personnel already so scarce in those two Regions.

Your Paternity is quite well informed that in the Region of São Paulo the responsibility over both orphanage and church of Santo Antonio rests on the shoulders of Fr. Bernardi; two offices I would say incompatible with each other, because each of them needs a single, immediate, and uninterrupted direction.

Besides, because of particular reasons, Fr. Severino Fei had to be taken out of the missions of Santa Felicidade, and so the Regional Superior was forced to send there Fr. Girolamo Angeli. Consequently, the orphanage has been left without any priest who may devote his action, full time, to that beneficial institution, at what cost for the religious and disciplinary state of the place, Your Paternity can well figure out!

The Regional Superior pleads that at least one priest be sent immediately! But where do we find him? I thought of writing to Your Paternity so that you may see to it whether in the circle of your acquaintances it will be possible to find a priest who would be willing to go to Brazil and help out the Scalabrinian missions for the period of at least two or three years. A solution of this kind would represent a sure and immediate relief for those good Fathers expecting that after Easter new young missionaries may be sent to them from this seminary."²¹

²⁰ Card. Rossi to Bernardi, Rome, November 25, 1933 (Arch. Gen. S., 360/4).

²¹ Card. Rossi to Tirondola, Rome, November 29, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 360/4).

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Following Card. Rossi's promises of help, Fr. Navarro declared himself ready to retract his resignation, which had already been accepted, and proposed a plan for the assignment of the personnel: the Regional Superior would take the direction of the church of Santo Antonio in São Paulo; Fr. Sante Bernardi, who had been taking care of it temporarily after the death of Fr. F. Consoni, would return to the sole office of Director of the orphanage; Fr. Navarro's place at the parish of St. Bernard would be taken over by Fr. Severino Fei; Fr. Corrado Stefani and Fr. Marco Simoni, pastor of Riberão Pires, but already up in years and worn out, would help Fr. Navarro at Santo Antonio; Fr. Porrini, assistant to Fr. Milini at Santo André, would be left free for the direction of the weekly "*La Fiamma*" and for preaching missions throughout the "fazendas".²²

After various negotiations and even some misunderstandings, the changes of personnel were made official in April 1934 by a letter in which Card. Rossi announced the arrival of Fr. Mario Rimondi with promise to send another one as soon as possible:

"With the arrival of the new missionary and in view of the arrival of another one, it becomes necessary that a new impulse be given in that Region to intensifying the action for the welfare of Italian emigrants in conformity with the scope of the Pious Society.

And in order that your task may be made easy as much as possible I give you the following provisions ordering that they be accurately and scrupulously carried out:

1. Regional Superior

Your repeated insistence, the fact you were referring to not feeling in good health and of not being able, therefore, to carry the burden of your office of Regional Superior, had led me to take into consideration your request for being relieved of it; but since you inform me now that you still feel strong and willing to fulfill this not so easy task, I give my assent that you remain on as Regional Superior. All this means that in the government of the Region you will follow the directives I myself will issue to you from Rome as the case and the need shall demand:

2. Councilor of the Regional Superior:

With the passing of Fr. Faustino Consoni, the post of a Councilor has been left vacant. All things considered, I name to this office Fr. Francesco Milini (..)

3. Assignment of Personnel:

- a) Santo Antonio: in compliance with the desire expressed by Your Paternity, you shall move to Santo Antonio, where you will hold the office of Rector of said church (...).
- b) Villa São Bernardo: for the time being, Fr. Porrini shall be assigned on a wholly temporary basis to the parish of Villa São Bernardo (...).
- c) Station "São Bernardo" - church of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel - Your Paternity shall assign to said church the new missionary, Fr. Mario Rimondi, who will depend on Fr. Milini. The latter will thus have the direction also of the mission of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel besides that of

²² Navarro to Card. Rossi, São Bernardo, December 15, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 360/5).

the parish (...).

- d) Orphanage "Cristoforo Colombo": Fr. Sante Bernardi shall hold the office as Director of the Orphanage, where, free of all the commitments he has had until now with the church of Santo Antonio, will be able to attend to the realization of the restoration and of the reorganization of that beneficial institution of Christian charity (...).
- e) Ribeirão Pires: I quite understand what you tell me about the need to accord Fr. Marco Simoni his well-deserved rest by taking him out of the mission of Ribeirão Pires and assigning him with Your Paternity to the church of Santo Antonio. To this good Father also I tell to be patient yet, to carry on for some time still, which I hope not to be long, in his ministry (...).

Such provisions, which you will be pleased to implement right away, will help, I am sure, in giving that Region a certain adjustment in expectation that new and young missionaries may be sent without parsimony to give new impulse and strength to the missionary work which may evermore and better reflect the scope of the Pious Scalabrinian Institute."²³

In notifying the appointment of Fr. Sante Bernardi as Provincial Councilor in place of Fr. Porrini who had resigned, Card. Rossi returned to the final subject of the previous letter on November 3, 1934:

"I limit myself to recommend to you only one thing: that, with the highest and most fervent enthusiasm, a new impulse be given to all the missionary action, and in particular, that all piously return, if need be, to what must be the proper character and life-motif of the Scalabrinian Pious Society: "the assistance to Italians."²⁴

It has been pointed out already²⁵ how much Card. Rossi insisted on this matter and the fact has also been mentioned that, realizing the slow and hesitating manner of Fr. Navarro in implementing it, he took advantage of the first occasion to entrust the government of the Region into other hands. In the meanwhile he ordered that Fr. Corrado Stefani, one of the elements that had their foot on the brake, be transferred from the church of Santo Antonio to the parish of Santa Felicidade in Paraná; that Fr. Tondelli, who had arrived in November 1934, be restored to his initial destination at the "Orfanotrofio Cristoforo Colombo"; that Fr. Augusto Rizzi, who had been transferred from Rio Grande do Sul, be appointed pastor of São Bernardo in place of Fr. Porrini.²⁶

Realizing that nothing was moving yet along the lines indicated by the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, the two councilors tendered in their resignation in April 1935, and one of them explained:

"If I feel unable now to continue any longer in the office Your Eminence has deigned to entrust to me, it is only not to make myself an accomplice in the responsibility of any future bad situation in which our Pious Society will be found because of the negligent inaction of the present Superiors (...). In this

²³ Card. Rossi to Navarro, Rome, April 17, 1934 (Arch. G.S., 360/5).

²⁴ Card. Rossi to Navarro, Rome, November 3, 1934 (Arch. G.S., 360/5).

²⁵ Cfr. above pp. 64-67.

²⁶ Card. Rossi to Navarro, Rome, January 24, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 360/6).

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general confusion each one of us does rather what he pleases, so as to imprint on our work the mark of individualism; we find ourselves so disorganized and isolated as not to be able to understand each other anymore.

Each has his own program, an idea to propound, and woe to anyone who should dare interfere; he would immediately know retaliation (...).

With the pretext of the scarcity of personnel, no thought at all is given to the morrow and eyes are kept closed to the needs while no consideration is entertained in regard to the widening of horizons. There is only procrastination, a wait-and-see attitude, a desire for no trouble; and so our serious problems remain unresolved."²⁷

Cardinal Rossi refused their resignation by telegram on May 15; on the same date he wrote to the two councilors:

"I am not indifferent to your sad complaints. Already by a previous telegram I had pleaded with His Excellency the Nuncio to give comfort to Fr. Bernardi; with another one, dated today, I charged him with informing you that I did not accept your resignation as councilors, and now I recommend you not to insist and to obey me. By God's Grace, you have enough sense to understand that it is not by flight but by remaining firm and cooperating in doing good even at the cost of some personal sacrifice, that one can bring a remedy to troubles.

These, I assure you, do not escape my attention, and neither do I overlook them. While you deplore and suffer, I am thinking of effective provisions. It's that we are too far away (from you), and it is not easy to keep in touch with that region so that we may give you the support our solicitude (in your regard) would demand."²⁸

Such situation could not help but mature the decision of Fr. Navarro to resign his post as Regional Superior, and he actually did notify Rome about it on Augusto 29, 1935. Cardinal Rossi wrote him:

"The Apostolic Nuncio conveyed to this Sacred Consistorial Congregation Your Paternity's act of resignation from the office of Regional Superior. Already on other occasions Your Paternity had pleaded to be relieved of this office but it was not possible to accede to your request then; now, however, because of changed conditions, it is possible to accede to your request, as Msgr. Charge d'Affairs has informed you in due time.

In conveying this message to you I wish Your Paternity and all religious of the Region to know that this Sacred Consistorial Congregation is grateful for the interest you took in the destinies of the Pious Society in the course of the seven years of your tenure and for the filial devotion with which you gave your service on behalf of the Institute; filial devotion and promise of continual service of which Your Paternity gives a beautiful and meaningful proof in your letter of resignation. And these are, in fact, your very words: 'I shall be the last of the Fathers but one of the first in serving and in a sincere and strong devotion to the Pious Society.'

Christian and religious humility inspire you to declare yourself the last: I tell you that you will be among the first for age, authority, and experience; among the

²⁷ Milini to Card. Rossi, Santo André, April 26, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 360/6).

²⁸ Card. Rossi to Bernardi and Milini, Rome, May 15, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 360/6).

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*first above all for the resolution to remain in service and in 'a sincere and strong' attachment to the Pious Society. Nor could one expect otherwise from one, who first in that Region, generously embraced the new order and took the religious vows. I bless you for all you did and will do, and I am keen on telling you that I still expect much of your zeal and piety, through a cordial and effective cooperation with the other religious to the end of strengthening evermore the Pious Society in the Region in accordance with the particular scope for which the venerated Founder instituted it."*²⁹

4. Fr. Francesco Milini (1935-1946)

On Augusto 29, 1935, Fr. Francesco Milini accepted the appointment as Regional President: he was not named Regional Superior right away because he had not made the religious vows and the new Constitutions were still being worked on. Fr. Sante Bernardi and Fr. Marco Simoni were appointed councilors. He immediately called on the Nuncio to whom he disclosed his program:

"As sons of Bishop Scalabrini, who devoted his whole precious life as Bishop to the good cause of Italians in foreign lands, as our Pious Society takes a new turn, we must get together in assembly to discuss our problems, on whose solution the very reason of our existence in this Brazilian soil depends, where so many Italians live.

It's useless to think about what has not been done or to stop in the face of present difficulties in expectation of a better future; the Fathers who preceded us have left us most beautiful examples of missionary activity, and since we can dispose only of the present we must decide for the continuing of our traditions in the assistance of Italians in accordance with modern needs.

Such is the mind of the Holy See expressed in many documents by our most beloved Superior General His Eminence Card. Raffaello Carlo Rossi. We must make it ours, therefore, and accept it as an order. In fact, from the bottom of our heart as Missionaries of Emigration how many a time we have experienced a sense of sadness in our very being and a weakening of our energies, because we were forced to act differently from what was demanded of our ideals? Let us take heart, then, at the urgings of him who loves us and let us wholly entrust ourselves into the hands of our Most Eminent Superior, who will certainly lead us to our much desired destination.

Let us convince ourselves that we too share some responsibilities in the missions, such as, for instance, preparing the field of work in view of the young men, who are being formed in the houses of Italy as our future co-workers.

Let us remind ourselves that out of the families of our fellow-countrymen there will come many elements of the new Brazilian people, the components, therefore, of a nation that will be religiously conformed to the education of its members. Even though these thoughts did not pass through my mind since the day in which the Lord called me to this Pious Society, now they are my constant concern, because of the responsibility I have been burdened with. I

²⁹ Card. Rossi to Navarro, Rome, October 25, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 360/6).

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came to the decision, therefore, of presenting not my own personal ideas, but of asking each member of the Pious Society for his opinion on how to put into practice our many good inspirations.

To your Paternity as well, therefore, I present the following four point questionnaire:

1. As missionaries of emigration do we have to devote our whole activity to Italian emigrants?
2. How could we reorganize and modernize our Pious Society in Brazil (precisely in São Paulo) so that it may respond to the needs not of immigrants any more but of migrants that have already been settled here a long time or of Italians residing here temporarily?
3. Is there actually in São Paulo a community of Italians, who, though scattered around in various parishes, may offer a field of work without interfering with that of pastors?
4. Should such work be possible, how will we be able to carry it out, or, at least, what positions should we take up in the beginning?"³⁰

Requested to express his opinion and advice, the "Charge d'Affaires" of the Apostolic Nunciature, Msgr. Federico Lunardi, thus wrote to Fr. Milini:

"Not only do I support, for what it may be worth, the ideas you propose, but I want to state them concretely with some of the points albeit quickly.

1. *As I have always believed and said so more than once to someone, I deem it proper that Scalabrinians do not swerve away from the scope for which they have been founded: the assistance to Italians in foreign lands;*
2. *I think that this scope cannot be achieved only by devoting oneself to the parish ministry;*
3. *it seems to me that to live isolated each in his parish and not in common is immensely detrimental to the whole community of Saint Charles;*
4. *that a life in community with a central residence devoted to the activities among Italians, would offer the opportunity to provide for the whole Italian colony of each and different dioceses. The parish ministry instead takes up the total attention of each Scalabrinian to the detriment of the wider community.*

The incident is recent of Italians who, desiring a Mass to gather together spiritually at least on Sunday, had a hard time for several months before they could find an Italian priest in a position to say a Mass for them and preach a little sermon. It was I who finally solved the difficulty by nearly forcing the Passionist Fathers to take care of them, after insisting with the Scalabrinians who refused because they did not know what to do;

5. *that a large community residence, though located in São Paulo, would supply the opportunity for providing to the Italians scattered all over the State of São Paulo and even to those of Rio and of the Federal District;*
6. *that for a greater growth of the Institute several communities would be needed, one of which in Rio de Janeiro, to attend also to this great, wholly or nearly totally neglected Italian colony;*
7. *Summing up: I believe that the Missionaries of St. Charles should view themselves strictly as a missionary Institute on the move, leaving aside the*

³⁰ Milini, "Outline of a Circular", Santo André, October 2, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 361/1).

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idea to serve as pastors of parishes; besides, orphanages or boarding schools should be entirely Italian institutions and not wholly Brazilian as they are at present.

The difficulties thereof should be made the object of a special and serious study. These ideas are all strictly personally mine and the result of an experience all my own, implying no official note on the matter."³¹

In his answer to the above-mentioned letter³² by which Card. Rossi was urging him to revert the action of the missionaries back in the direction of the assistance to emigrants, Fr. Milini reported what he had immediately begun to do:

"With great pleasure I have received the letter of October 26 last, (N. 113/29) and I hasten to answer it confirming my determination to devote myself totally to bringing our Institute back to its true scope.

In order that this work may have some success, I deem it necessary to take up immediately a few definite positions from which we may more easily move to reach our aim: some of these would be the press and the radio. From the Director of the 'Fanfulla' (a newspaper circulating in São Paulo) I have already secured permission to insert in it on Sunday a religious section, upon invitation to do so by Fr. Porrini. For the time being it will contain a brief explanation of the Gospel, and then a column will be added later on that will serve as publicity for the future Italian church.

After Christmas, I will call on the Direction of the Catholic Radio Station to ask permission for a weekly half hour both to have the possibility of addressing brief talks in Italian to our fellow countrymen and to make our ideas better known.

For some weeks now, I have been looking around for a piece of land, in downtown São Paulo, on which to build our church and organize whatever will be necessary for the assistance of our Italians. I do not know how we will succeed since we will need at least half a million liras just for the purchase of the land and we don't know, ignoring what attitude the Archbishop will assume in regard to this institution...of Italian background. I place all my trust in the Lord.

Humanly speaking, we will be able to count on the support of our colony and on the action the new General Consul has promised to take. He is a true gentleman and is all enthusiasm for our Institution.

In the meanwhile, however, we must also think about strengthening our old positions (...).

And now the good news of the spiritual exercises, which all of us, gathered together at the Orphanage of Ipiranga, will make from December 9 to 14, under the direction of a good Capuchin; I hope that the event may engender in all of us some degree of spiritual revival (...).

Then we shall follow-up with the Days of Recollection, once every two months at least, to insert in it a meeting at which we may discuss the study of our problems, unfortunately so much neglected."³³

³¹ Lunardi to Milini, Rio de Janeiro, November 2, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 361/1).

³² Cfr. above p. 65.

³³ Milini to Card. Rossi, Santo André, December 5, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 361/1).

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With the arrival of three new priests it was possible to take care of the most serious difficulty, pointed out also by the Apostolic Nuncio:

"How can you, dear Father, engage yourself in an enterprise such as the organization of the social assistance to Italians if you do not have fit elements for this action at your disposal?"³⁴

In June 1936 the state of the Province, which, in the meantime, had also taken the parish of Umbará in Curitiba, stood as follows:

São Paulo.

1. Orphanage: Frs. Sante Bernardi, Paolino Rizzi, Severino Fei, Giuseppe Chiappa, Sblandiano Simoni, Ernesto Consoni, and Brothers Bartolomeo Celoria and Francesco Prevedello.
2. Church of Santo Antonio: Frs. Francesco Navarro and Corrado Steafni.
3. Santo André: Matriz (Mother Church): Frs. Francesco Milini and Fiorente Elena Church of Mount Carmel: Frs. Mario Rimondi and Girolamo Angeli.

São Bernardo: Frs. Carlo Porrini and Primo Bernardi.

Riberão Pires: Fr. Marco Simoni (with the help of a Father from the Church of Mt. Carmel)

Cascalho: Fr. Luigi Stefanello.

Paraná: Santa Felicidade: Frs. Pietro Rigo and Luigi Corso

Rondinha: Fr. Giovanni Morelli

Umbará: Fr. Oreste Tondelli."³⁵

In July Fr. Milini could report a piece of news, the happier as the less expected, considering the attitude shown till then by the Archbishop of São Paulo in regard to the Scalabrinians, and to Italians in general:

"With great satisfaction I hasten to inform you that Archbishop Dom Duarte Leopoldo e Silva (to whom I deem it opportune that a special letter of thanks be sent) has granted us permission, without any restriction, to build in the city of São Paulo, and right on the spot envisioned by us, our religious house and the church for Italians around which to organize all those institutions of social assistance that we may judge necessary for the spiritual welfare of our fellow countrymen. This is certainly a great grace which the Lord grants us by the intercession of our Venerated Founder Bishop John B. Scalabrini."³⁶

Fr. Milini was named Provincial Superior, beginning effectively on September 8, 1936, date of issue of the new Constitutions. In April 1937 he reported:

"With the specific intention of fulfilling the scope of our Pious Society I seek to be in touch as much as I can with the many Italian institutions of São Paulo.

Already for three months now, Fr. Fiorente Elena, while still remaining my assistant at Santo André, acts as chaplain to the 'Italian Catholic Union' of the Braz (São Paulo), an association existing for very many years and certainly

³⁴ Milini to Card. Rossi, Santo André, April 15, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 361/2).

³⁵ Milini to Card. Rossi, Santo André, June 27, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 361/2).

³⁶ Milini to Card. Rossi, Santo André, July 8, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 361/2).

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worthy of all our support. For the time being, Fr. Elena says a Mass for them in their parish church with a sermon in Italian; later on we will be able to organize something better.

In the last few weeks I could have free access to the Italian Institute 'Dante Alighieri', an institution with primary and secondary schools frequented by the children of our fellow countrymen. In accord with the Principal, Director of the Institute, a complete course of Religious instruction has been set up to be given by their own teachers to the students of the elementary school, and by the missionaries to the students of high school and college. Besides, one of our priests goes there on Sunday to say a Mass for boarding students. Other activities, respondent to our scope and for the welfare of souls, could be engaged in if I only had the personnel."³⁷

The plan, which Fr. Milini had projected in the beginning of his tenure, was, therefore, being put into action; he had then made the following assessment of the state of the Province:

"There is no need of a profound or detailed study to discover that the Pious Society is doing very little, directly and effectively, for the assistance of Italians in São Paulo. In the city, the church of Santo Antonio and the Orphanage (of which a report apart), though a great asset for us the first, and an undeniable source of much good the latter, do not quite lead to the growth of our scope.

Though no one may deny that some assistance is given to Italian families residing in them, it is not possible yet in our parishes to have our scope strengthened on account of that position of impartiality in which a pastor must maintain with all his parishioners. Besides, since they built up through the efforts of all the people, even the institutions we establish in them could never be a part of our properties, of which we have so much need for a steady growth. The failure of our 50 year work here is entirely due to this way of doing things.

Our missionaries were scattered here and there without giving any thought to a strong concentration from which to draw in time of need. Actually, due to a certain spirit of independence (filed in the Archive of the Orphanage, the letters of Fr. Vicentini, whom documents prove to have been the man who best understood our mission, clearly speak about it) the Fathers went to be pastors more or less wherever they pleased. While, once they found the place of their liking, some of them abandoned the Congregation on any pretext, the others carried out but a personal and isolated apostolate that resulted of no use to the Congregation.

All reasons why we must now give our attention to a radical organization whose realization will be the tangible mark of divine protection on us. Certainly, in this enterprise difficulties will not be either small or few, as we must start to do all over again what others have done and debunk prejudices born of our ineptitude. It cannot be, in fact, that the program of great good may not be blessed by the Lord, which we set before ourselves such as the perseverance in the faith of those who after possessing it and practicing it once in their country of origin are now in danger of losing it.

It is due, perhaps, to a mistaken notion of the nature of the mission of Scalabrinians if also the local religious authorities lost interest in us and even opposed us for futile reasons of a false patriotism. And how could we arrive eventually at such organization?

We should discard the idea of parishes with a definite territory. It is not possible today to find communities exclusively of Italians!

³⁷ Milini to Card. Rossi, Santo André, April 19, 1937 (Arch. G.S., 361/3).

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Already half a century has gone by since the arrival of the first immigrants, and our compatriots are now scattered here and there and everywhere; and even though they may have given a specific character to some places, still they must live in contact with people of all kinds. Where they once built a small chapel there is a parish today; and while they were working there before on an individual basis, contented with what they could have, there stand industries today with people from all parts of the world. And so, in regard to São Paulo, where there are some 300,000 Italians (São Paulo has a population of one million and about 30 parishes) we must turn our attention to having a church possibly built in the center of the city, to which Italians may go from all parts and those fellow countrymen of ours be addressed who arrive here from the hinterland or from Italy. Once the church is built, vested with personal, not territorial jurisdiction, the pastor of the Italians (there are in São Paulo pastors for immigrants of other nationalities, as well) will thus be able to extend his action out to all Italians, who could then come to our church and attend Sunday mass with the explanation of the Gospel in Italian, frequent special courses of religious instructions, lectures, missions, and above all, fulfill their duty in the Easter season, a thing they seldom do with strange priests.

A school could also be attached to the church, especially for night classes of initiation and specialization so that even immigrants flung here from their native country may be able to settle in this land with some possibility of life. There was the case, for instance, the pitiful case of an immigrant from my hometown, who upon arrival here could not complete his courses as a technician more for lack of guidance than of means, and so ended up with a job as a laborer. There could be by the church a meeting place, honest amusements, etc. But, how do we start now? In order that the Fathers may have a base of operation it is necessary first of all that:

1. two or three other priests of good-will come here;
2. a Father be chosen as pastor of the Italians with personal jurisdiction;
3. by direct endorsement of the Holy See (against which no objection will be placed) a church be obtained in São Paulo in which the pastor may exercise the ministry for Italians, preach, perform the marriages of Italians who should so wish, and baptize their children;
4. the Society of Italian Catholics of Braz, an association now assisted by a Passionist, be placed under our direction.

On this basis, the Italian pastor (purposely appointed by the Major Superiors so as to prevent any Father of ours from desiring it for himself) could establish contacts with our consular authorities, who view with favor our action (in fact, they are amazed at our activities), so that through them he may be introduced (always short of any political involvement) to the various Italian associations - some of them having also a religious character, such as that of the Martyr St. Vito - in order to reach out to them with some lecture at first, and then as the Lord will provide, as long as some good can be done.

Besides, there is the "Dante Alighieri Institute", which has invited us some time ago to hold there the courses of religion as required by the present Italian legislation. Such the first steps, which may very well be helped along by the newspaper "La Fiamma", when it would be possible to have someone who can properly publicize them as we hope Fr. Porrini will do, when free of the care of the parish."³⁸

We deem it useful to compare the analysis of Fr. Milini with that already made by Fr. Giovanni Costanzo in 1924 so as to provide a complete picture of the causes that had led to that situation:

"We have few and not very important parishes in the diocese of São Paulo. Due to their

³⁸ "Observations" of Milini, s.d. probably, end of 1935 or early 1936 (Arch. G.S., 361/4).

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ethnic make-up, it is hard or nearly impossible to reach in them the scope for which our Institute has been founded. Except for a few cases, the assistance to Italian immigrants in these parishes comes down to very little because the Italian element is not there, and even when present, it is not homogeneous, hard therefore to take proper care of. Things being such, one can say that we waste our missionaries by sending them to serve the Archbishop's aims in parishes where everything is to be done, to be discarded later on and dismissed when he finds other priests to whom he may entrust them. And so we drudge along and do the hard work, and then others gather the fruits.

Rather than wasting our action in a field that is not ours, we should have employed it in the city of São Paulo where there live more than 200,000 Italians. There was much work for us in the city, especially in certain districts where Italians made up nearly the totality of the population. But the Archbishop is Jacobinical (forgive me the expression) and did not want to entrust the assistance of those Italians to us perhaps afraid that by preaching in Italian we might preserve for too long in the hearts of our compatriots the feelings of their being Italian. A good portion of bishops here are affected by this attitude and in accord with their respective governments they would want to "Brazilianize" as soon as possible our people entering Brazil. It is quite understandable that the civil servants of a government may behave this way, but one does not see how the Archbishops and Bishops could make any distinctions between languages and nationalities and so endanger the spiritual welfare of their flock because of an ill-conceived spirit of nationalism. This attitude is harmful. Together with their language, Italians had brought to São Paulo also their customs and religious faith. To pretend to stifle immediately by force the Italian language in our immigrants may also mean to suppress their religion. Had our Italians found on their arrival here some Italian priests ready to explain to them the Gospel, teach them Catechism, and hear their confessions in Italian, they would have continued to frequent the churches and the Sacraments as they were doing in Italy; instead, many of them began to desert the church and the Sacraments so as to become indifferent to everything, right because they did not understand in the church and did not find a priest who could understand them. Neither must we believe, as some bishops pretend us to, that they have already provided also for the religious assistance to Italians with some priests who know Italian. In general, no provisions have been taken at all, and even there, where something has been done, it is more a formality than a reality. And besides, let no one get into believing that he did all that could or should be done just by sending to the Italian migrants a few priests who knew also Italian. To be kept in the faith, our migrant has need not just of the dry words of some chauvinistic priest; he experiences the necessity, rather, of finding a soul that may love him, bear with him, know his good and bad traits, can take him as he is, be in a position to have him forget the sorrow and sacrifice he suffered in leaving his country and relatives; such a soul is indeed the Italian missionary who has himself also abandoned both country and dear ones to assist Italian emigrants. Had not such missionaries been there, it would have been all right; but they were there, then why were they not employed?"³⁹

The opportunity came up in 1938 for taking over the administration of the "Umberto I" Hospital (presently "Materazzo") that had already been offered to Fr. Marchetti in 1895:

"There is here in São Paulo the Italian Hospital 'Umberto I', founded and supported by our fellow countrymen, that by force of the recent decrees of the Brazilian Government against foreign institutions should cease functioning. It is a large hospital, in perfect working condition, with a top quality staff of doctors, and attended to by nuns.

³⁹ Costanzo to Card. De Lai, Dois Lageados, December 3, 1924 (Arch. G.S., 415).

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A large section, with wards for the various ailments, gratuitously hosts a few hundred patients; there are also two hospital sections for paying patients. Revenues from them and grants from the government more than help in meeting the expenses of the charity section.

The 'Board of Directors' now finds itself forced to surrender everything into the hands of Brazilians, who will not be able, of course, to keep alive in it the Italian spirit wanted by the founders that should be made to continue as long as there are Italians in São Paulo. Aware of our scope, the present directors would view our Pious Society as the only means by which that hospital could be saved in line with the intentions of the founders and of the Brazilian government. It would be a true and total donation and in exchange for it we would pledge ourselves to moral commitments apt to safeguarding such intentions. The terms for a reciprocal understanding cannot be established now. In fact, in case we should accept the deal, they will have to be studied there directly with our government. Would this new enterprise turn to our advantage? Indeed, we would fulfill our scope and accomplish great missionary work while benefitting of a sure economic source. Would we be able to run a hospital? I repeat, the proposal concerns an institution already well organized as to both administration and qualification. Its assets will remain intact; location, land, buildings, equipment, etc... all contribute in forming it into one of the best hospitals of the city. It would only be a question of finding a priest who should be a wise administrator, able to have all existing sections work efficiently. It pays well to abandon certain miserable parishes in favor of an institution like this, so as to have the personnel qualified to replace, at least, the missionary who is endowed with a talent for administration. Neither should we limit ourselves to looking for one among the Fathers in Brazil, but among those of North America, as well. Won't there be found a qualified priest among so many? I am sure that Your Eminence will study the proposal in earnest and then, though not wholly knowledgeable of the details, will deign to give me an answer which I shall hasten to make known to the people concerned."⁴⁰

The year 1940 was marked with important events! The Church of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, a mission of the parish of Santo André was taken from Scalabrinians and entrusted to the diocesan clergy: it had been chosen to become the cathedral of the future diocese of Santo André. As if to compensate us for this serious loss, a provisional chapel in honor of Our Lady of Peace was blessed on October 20 by the Archbishop. In the same year two missionaries left the Province of São Paulo, assigned to open the first Scalabrinian mission in Argentina.

⁴⁰ Milini to Card. Rossi, São Paulo, August 11, 1938 (Arch. G.S., 361/4).

CHAPTER XII

Our Missions in the State of São Paulo

1. "Cristoforo Colombo" Orphanage

The new director of the "Orfanotrófio Cristoforo Colombo", Fr. Marco Simoni, stipulated an agreement with the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles Borromeo (Scalabrinians) to whom had been entrusted especially the girls' section of Vila Prudente:

"Between the orphanage 'Cristoforo Colombo' represented by its director Fr. Marco Simoni and the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles, legally established as a 'Society for Education, Instruction and Charity' with headquarters in São Paulo, represented by Mother Superior Sister Antoinette Fontana, the following has been agreed upon:

The 'Orfanotrófio Cristoforo Colombo' of this Capital City of São Paulo is a Charitable Institution with the scope of assisting abandoned children. It is presently made up of two sections: one for boys at Ipiranga, and the other for girls at Vila Prudente de Moraes, both dependent on the administration of the orphanage 'Cristoforo Colombo' in Ipiranga.

The Girls' Section of Vila Prudente shall continue to remain entrusted to the care of said Missionary Sisters of the Congregation of St. Charles under the direction of a Superior on the following conditions:

- a) The Sisters appointed to staff the Girls' section of the orphanage 'Cristoforo Colombo' in proportion of eight to a hundred orphans, shall receive a monthly salary of 50 milreis each; clothing and community expenses shall remain in their charge.

The appointment of their Spiritual Director is the exclusive right of the metropolitan archbishop.

- b) It shall be the duty of the administration of the orphanage 'Cristoforo Colombo' to administer the daily Communion, to celebrate the Mass on Sunday and days of obligation, and to give them religious instruction once a week.
- c) Said Sisters pledge themselves to take care of the good order of the girls' section and to teach the orphans under their direction, including the training in the manual domestic works needed for the practical life of the same.
- d) They will have to take care of all laundry services, mending, and sewing the linen of the boys' section of Ipiranga. This clause does not include any extraordinary tailoring of new clothes that will not be possible to be done by the girls or by the Sisters assigned to the direction of their section.
- e) The Administration of the orphanage 'Cristoforo Colombo' shall provide all things needed for food, clothing, and schooling of minors boarding at the girls' section of Vila Prudente, and for the food of the Sisters in charge of them, plus other Sisters not to exceed the number of five.

The admission of the girls shall depend exclusively on the administration of

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the orphanage 'Cristoforo Colombo'.

- g) Any legacy or donation made under any form or bequeathed in heredity, as well as contributions, subsidies for the girls, etc., shall be the property of the orphanage 'Cristoforo Colombo', except for what is expressly and intentionally left for the benefit of the community of the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles, clearly distinguishing between them and the girls' section of the orphanage 'Cristoforo Colombo'.
- h) Any doubt or omission that may be found present in this contract shall be solved by common consent of both parties or in accord with the advice of the Archbishop."¹

In July of 1920 Fr. Simoni notified Fr. Vicentini:

*"Here everything runs smoothly as usual. Fathers, Sisters and Orphans, all of us enjoy good health and our work, by God's Grace, is going well, so far. Presently we have 321 orphans, 211 boys, and 110 girls, of all nationalities. I am working on getting our property free of certain provisions that stand in the way of an absolute ownership; but with no success as yet."*²

Fr. Faustino Consoni, who had been named "purveyor" of the orphanage on November 24, 1919, when he was removed from the office of Director, in September 1920, was appointed "superintendent" of both sections by the Superior General Fr. Chenuil. The administration was thus formed of three people: Fr. Consoni, Fr. Simoni, Director; Fr. Preti, Regional Superior.

*"The director may act on his own only for the ordinary administration and in things of lesser importance. However, whenever there is a question of new work, extraordinary expenditures, or other more serious and important provisions, called together by the President, that is by Fr. Consoni, the members of the Council must deliberate as a body before acting, and nothing must be done without the approval of the Council's majority."*³

This way, Fr. Consoni was partly restored to the authority he had been deprived of by the decision of the General Chapter of 1919: a fact that had aroused so many negative reactions against Fr. Preti, who had carried out the order, especially on the part of Fr. Consoni, who had been urged to ascertain as soon as possible the ownership titles of the orphanage.⁴

In 1921, Fr. Consoni gave life to an initiative, that lasted quite a few years, for the support of the Institution:

*"This year I have organized a "Tombola" (raffle) for the benefit of the orphanage by sending out 250 thousand tickets for two 'milreis' each that should have brought in a net total of 100 'contos'; but due to the financial crisis and other reasons of the post-war period known to all, they grossed only some 40 'contos'."*⁵

In October 1921, and in May 1922, Blessed Luigi Orione was a guest of the orphanage:

¹ Convention signed by Fr. M. Simoni and Sr. A. Fontana, São Paulo, January 15, 1920 (Arch. Gen. S., 396/15)

² Simoni to Vicentini, São Paulo, July 6, 1920 (Arch. G.S., 396/15).

³ Chenuil to Preti, Rome, September 26, 1920 (Arch. G.S., 396/15).

⁴ Chenuil to F. Consoni, Rome, February 22, 1921 (Arch. G.S., 396/16).

⁵ Consoni to Rinaldi, São Paulo, July 17, 1921 (Arch. G.S., 396/16).

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*"When in São Paulo, Fr. Luigi Orione was always our guest either at Santo Antonio or at the orphanage, and he will soon establish here an Institution similar to ours for abandoned children and a parish at the Braz. He is a saintly man who left in all, especially in Archbishop Dom Duarte Leopoldo, the impression of a saint. He holds our saintly Founder Scalabrini in high esteem as the one from whom he received the first wise counsels in the beginning of the founding of his congregation. Let's hope he may do a lot of good especially for the orphans roaming by the hundreds around in the streets with no one there to take them in."*⁶

Fr. Orione wrote to Fr. Consoni from Mar de Espanha (Minas Gerais):

*"I come to you today purposely to thank you, my dear Fr. Faustino, and I tell you that I have brought your portrait to this place where there will be the novitiate of my sons in Jesus Christ as I want it to be set in a frame and that the Sons of Divine Providence who are to be trained here may know the thorough spirit of holy charity binding us and that must unite our two Institutes, that is, the Missionaries of St. Charles and the Sons of Divine Providence."*⁷

The state of the orphanage in early 1923 is described in the report of the visitations conducted by the Superior General, Fr. Chenuil, in November 1922 and March 1923:

"Since this Institution has so far been administered in a too superficial manner, it has left much to be desired; to correct the mistakes of the past and obtain greater efficiency in the future, I had to form a new Board of Directors with the following members: Fr. Faustino Consoni, Director; Fr. Marco Simoni, Vice-Director; Fr. Giuseppe Martini, Treasurer; Fathers Silvano Giuliani, new Pastor of St. Gaetano, Augusto Rizzi, Pastor of Santo André, Francesco Navarro, Pastor of São Bernardo, Carlo Porrini, Pastor of Riberão Pires, and Corrado Stefani, assistant at the church of Santo Antonio, Councilors. All these Councilors live in places close to the orphanage and must get together once a month to discuss the moral and financial matters of the same. Their decisions must be recorded in an appropriate book and no one is allowed to do anything without their approval.

1. *Boys' Orphanage of Ipiranga* (...). The building appears good from the outside, but some parts are already too old and need enlarging and modernizing. In addition to the classrooms in which orphans learn how to read and write, there are also schools of music and singing, and the shops where the older boys are trained in the various crafts and trades such as tailoring, printing, baking, carpentry, etc. Children, ages 6 to 11, are admitted to it, always careful to accord our preference to children of Italian migrants. Last year's number of orphans was 227, of whom 81 were Italian, 96 Brazilian, and 50 of other nationalities.
2. *Girls' Orphanage of Vila Prudente* (...). The premises are much more beautiful and in much better condition than those of Ipiranga. The Sisters keep them in perfect order and give the girls an education far superior to that received by the orphans of Ipiranga. Besides reading and writing the girls learn singing, music, sewing, embroidery, cooking, etc. There were last

⁶ Consoni to Rinaldi, São Paulo, Nov. 15, 1921 (Arch. G.S., 396/16).

⁷ D.L. Orione to Consoni, Mar de Espanha, MG, December 12, 1921 (Arch. G.S., 396/16).

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year 124 girls, of whom 62 were Italian, 41 Brazilian and 21 of other nationalities."⁸

In 1923 the Italian Government discontinued the annual subsidy of 6,000 liras that the Commissariat for Emigration used to grant to the orphanage:

"I had a long and somewhat excited talk with the Consul Delfini and with Captain Sala, pointing out the reasons and the inconsistency of the decision with the steady pestering the Consuls have exerted on the orphanage during the past 29 years by sending us the orphaned children whose immigrant parents have died in this capital or in the 'fazendas'. He excused himself saying that it was a measure which affected all private institutions; Mussolini did not intend, therefore, to hit the orphanage, because the Italian consuls were always the first to acknowledge the benefits of the institution. He invited me to write a well detailed report on the founding and life, etc., of the orphanage that he will then forward to Mussolini to find out whether he would make an exception (...). It is not so much the amount of money that is at stake here, which is just a drop in the ocean of expenses for the support of 355 orphans, more than half of them Italian, as rather a point of principle. Even though they are quite aware of the problems of emigration, they don't follow up with the steps for the protection of migrants."⁹

In such straits, Fr. Consoni did not let any occasion go without soliciting donations for the orphans:

"There was here a wrestling match between Erminio Spalla and a huge black man, named Benedicto. As we are told, the latter challenged Spalla, a Milanese, but he lost, unfortunately, and is now in serious condition at the hospital. Taking advantage of the occasion, before the match I wrote him a most kind letter reminding him to remember our 400 orphans. He was rewarded 150 'contos', and yesterday he had someone hand me one 'conto', apologizing it was not much, but that when back at São Paulo in October for another match with someone else he would hold one for our benefit (...). He paid a visit to our two houses and was happy with them. Brazilians, the people at least and the black population in particular, resented his victory and there was fear of retaliation, but nothing came of it."¹⁰

In July 1924, the orphanage had a close call at the hands of the federalist revolution.

"The Paulista Revolt of last July kept our hearts in much trepidation and sorrow until early August. Due also to our personal experience of the terrible consequences of revolutions in Brazil, we had reason to be seriously afraid not only of the damages this revolution of São Paulo would cause to that flourishing "paulista" State, but to the other States as well, and above all, to the Italian communities and our institutions of Vila Prudente and Ipiranga (in the city of São Paulo).

On August 10, a telegram from our confreres assured us that they were safe, and it gave us some comfort. Besides, we began to receive these days the first

⁸ Chenuil, "Breve relazione della mia visita alle nostre missioni del Brasile dal 18 Novembre 1922 al 26 Marzo 1923"(Arch. Gen. S., 368/1).

⁹ Consoni to Rinaldi, São Paulo, Nov. 21, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 396/18).

¹⁰ Consoni to Rinaldi, São Paulo, May 15, 1924 (Arch. G.S., 396/18).

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letters of our missionaries and so we came to know the great perils they have been in. And here we have for you what our confrere Fr. Martini wrote on the first of August:

'São Paulo, August 1, 1924

Most Rev. Father,

Thanks to God, we are all safe and sound following the storm that had suddenly broken out in this city. Our orphanage of Vila Prudente suffered the most of it; all had to move out. I took refuge at Vila São Bernardo on the 10th of July, the day in which military actions began at Ipiranga. At São Bernardo I found our confrere Fr. Novarro seriously ill and I remained with him until he was completely cured. It is not possible to describe exactly the revolution for lack of a lot of details. It had been organized by the Federalist Party to the end of bringing down the government.

After gaining to his cause a few thousand soldiers and as many policemen of São Paulo, a certain general set himself at the head of the revolt, hoping others would do the same in other capitals or send at least many reinforcements. After seizing a general loyal to the government and various high officials, he succeeded in taking over the city. The loyalists performed prodigies of bravery to prevent the rebels from getting out of the capital; and with reinforcements pouring in little by little from other states, they forced them to retreat.

However, they fled carrying along on eight trains all their supplies and more than a hundred cases of money. And so the ones who had proclaimed themselves the liberators of Brazil have ruined this nation both materially and morally.

To gain favor with the people, the rebels allowed them to raid and burn houses and factories, thus inflicting incalculable damages and depriving thousands upon thousands of workers of their jobs.

Here at Ipiranga we had hours of great trepidation and fear. Even as of today (August 1), we lack many things of necessity, food stuffs especially.

In the meanwhile, all postal correspondence had been blocked and who knows how much of it will have gotten lost.

I hope both you and the other Fathers there are safe and sound. To all cordial greetings from me and the confreres here.

Most Devoted Confrere, Fr. Martini'

So also a letter from our confrere, Fr. Negri, dated August 15, brings us laconic, desolate news:

'A terrible revolt of the army against the government broke out here in São Paulo, which lasted from July 5 to July 28. Quite a few buildings and many warehouses were set on fire; hospitals are still crowded with the wounded, and casualties exceeded one thousand. Bitter fighting took place repeatedly between rebels and loyal troops close to our orphanage. By God's Grace, in spite of the danger we were in, there were no losses in our community. In the city, an Italian priest, Fr. Pasquale Gazineo, was wounded during the revolt and died in the hospital on August 5. The losses inflicted on private persons and the state by the revolution are most serious, and this country, so dear to us, will experience its effects for a long time to come.'

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In regard to our institutions of Vila Prudente and Ipiranga, suburbs of the city of São Paulo, our confrere Fr. Marco writes us:

"Here we have lived through the month of July in a state of real war. You will have read in the newspapers: rebellious soldiers against army men loyal to the government. The fighting went on for 20 days without interruption here at Ipiranga; guns, machine guns, cannons, bombs, airplanes, everything contributed to keeping us in constant danger and fear. The rebellion ended with the victory of the loyalists and with the ignominious rout of the rebels who fled after breaking into the coffers of the State Treasury, Police Headquarters, and Government. The city was bombed, and the most important warehouses and stores were raided and set on fire. Fr. Faustino and the orphan girls took refuge at São Gaetano; I remained with 257 orphan boys, isolated in the midst of the fighting, without food or money. The government troops, however, provided us with everything most generously. We did not have to lament losses."

While giving fervent thanks to God for our safety, all our beloved confreres, the entire staff of our two institutions, and the 400 or more orphans living in them, all of us, express our pleadings to the Lord that He may bestow, once again, not only to the State of São Paulo, but to the whole of Brazil, as well, the good order and security indispensable to set it back to the state of wellbeing it had reached in recent years, and to place the people of São Paulo in a position to come to the help of those that suffered loss amongst whom one must number our two orphanages which subsist only on grants from the Brazilian government, the State of São Paulo, and private persons.

And while still on this sad subject, we deem it our duty to cease keeping silent as we did until now and to inform our kind readers that though our two orphanages were and still be the only ones to care for poor orphans of Italian immigrants, our government has discontinued granting them even the modest contributions it used to give in the past. And so, in order that you may judge for yourselves how much those humanitarian institutions are deserving of help and support, we quote here the very words of two Italian newspapers. Concerned in the past months over the needs of our orphanage "Cristoforo Colombo", and urged by a commendable outburst of charity, they promoted on its behalf a campaign for funds amongst Italians of São Paulo.

To have more accurate information on the state and needs of our orphanage "Cristoforo Colombo" (boys section) and be of the best help possible, the Italian newspaper "*Il Piccolo*" of São Paulo decided to make an inquiry on the spot and published the following report on March 5 last:

"Amid the children of 'Cristoforo Colombo Orphanage'.

We are back from a visit that was to us something like a flash of light in the dullness of our daily life. Anyone unexpectedly crossing the threshold into a green oasis after a long journey in the desert must experience feelings like ours.

We have visited a serene and peaceful domain of charity, of that anonymous, and so more meritorious, charity, which takes its inspiration from the eternal teachings of the Nazarene, and our faith in the inexhaustible sources of man's heart has today grown stronger than it was yesterday. We return from "Cristoforo Colombo Orphanage" with an impression of mystical beauty and Christian peace. Amid the solitude of those woods, in the presence of an unselfishness unknown to most, there must have been present around us a bit of the compassion of St. Francis of Assisi, - the "Poverello" of Christ, - for our hearts to be more understanding, tolerant, and optimistic today. In

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the midst of those 230 orphans on whose infancy - which mark the golden period of life for the fortunate ones - has descended the worst of all misfortunes; among those innocent and unknowing victims of fate, deprived of their mothers' tenderness and fathers' loving guidance, we appraised the high moral stature of the generous souls who take the place of fathers and mothers to those little derelicts and act as their teachers, guides, as well as patient and beneficent guardians. One who never experienced a motherly smile or did so only for a fleeting moment, knows, or will know when of age, to understand that, even above the unfortunate fatalities incumbent on life, there is also a mysterious power for good that builds what death destroys. Whoever lost his parents at the dawn of life, and but for the intervention of charity had his existence turned into total darkness, will bless later on the good people who lent a hand, wiped his tears, and restored the light of a smile to his face once saddened by suffering.

"The love of Christ impels us." (2 Cor. 5, 14)

As aware as we may be that the zealous directors of the "Cristoforo Colombo Orphanage" have no other end but this Christian precept in carrying out their noble work of charity, still we deem it our duty to point out these humble priests of Christ and of charity to the admiration of the public, to the gratitude of the whole human family. In fact, without them, these little derelicts of life would be tossed by the storm ever farther away from any source of salvation, with no chance to avoid falling into the whirlpool of delinquency and degradation.

At Ipiranga.

Nine o'clock of a rather muggy morning, with half clear skies; no immediate threat of rain; we board a streetcar at "Largo da Se" for Ipiranga. On our rather long way there we have the opportunity to make a consideration, which, to tell the truth, leaves us neither sad nor happy: the Carnival is dormant. At that hour, we realize that its thurifers and...vestals, worn out by the night strains, are sound asleep and...snoring; we said 'dormant', however, in the sense that the external, showy, and ornamenting marks of this ephemeral kingdom are not there. The spectacle of the '*Independence*' monument, whose shape stands tall in the midst of the vast extension of the open space around it, has something imperial to it and fills us with enthusiasm. The green expanse gives a touch of gentleness to the whole and renders it more picturesque while soft breezes recreate our spirit. We leave the Institute '*Bom Pastor*' behind, ascend the hill, descend into a valley where the apotheosis of greenery is indeed overwhelming, resume our ascent passing before some humble houses, a gracious little villa, and then on by some charitable institutions, until, here we are at the end of our journey, at last. The Cristoforo Colombo Orphanage is located within a stone's throw from the head of the bus line. It rises on top of a charming hill luxurious with vegetation. All alone in the midst of its palms, surrounded by a deep valley, that seems to isolate it from the most distant houses of the suburb, it is accessible only through a narrow winding road. The place reminds us of other similar views of enchanting charm on the hills around Florence and Turin. A feeling of inner peace radiates all around us! No healthier or more pleasant spot could be chosen as the site for an orphanage!

With Fr. Simoni.

The orphanage building has something of a monastery look to it. We ring the bell under the impression of being faced by a Father guardian. Instead, we are ushered in by a very cordial layman, to whom we show the accreditation card of our newspaper, briefing him on the task entrusted to us. We are admitted to a cloister enclosing a small courtyard where the similarity to a monastery is perfect. Shortly afterwards, while we were rapidly inspecting the pictures of church dignitaries hanging from the parlor walls, there comes to welcome us in all friendliness as old friends, the Vice Rector of the Institute, Fr. Marco Simoni, a fine figure of Italian priest with greying

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hair but with an open dynamic, healthy, and easy demeanor, and kind and spontaneous manners. Fr. Simoni places himself and the orphanage at our disposal, only sorry that the secretary is absent, the only one who could satisfy our curiosity as journalists with books in hand.

- Father, tell us something about the orphanage....
- *Let us do it this way. Have lunch with us, and then, in the afternoon when the secretary will be back, talk to him, because he is our 'factotum' as to the administration.*
- We cannot possibly do so: São Paulo, the Carnival....the 'Piccolo'....
- *I understand, the Carnival is your attraction....*
- Not quite! Other commitments, rather, are calling us back to the city by noon. And now, Father, imagine yourself to be the target subjected to the shooting fire of our questions. We, reporters, form some kind of torture instruments....
- *Is that so? But what do you want to know?*

- First of all, we would like to know the names of the most important contributors.

Fr. Simoni parries the question, says he does not know, he would not want to hurt anyone's humble feelings.... But, we do not budge, and a few names - not all of them, though - come out of his lips one way or another:

Count Lara, Count Prates, Matarazzo, Gamba, Puglisi, Falchi and Papini Firm, Scarpa, De Camillis, Alvares, Penteado, Crespi Cotton Mill, Lady Mary Crespi, etc.

These are people who contribute quite a few contos annually. We understand that Dr. Alfred Ellis had the Government of Rio de Janeiro assign an annual subsidy of 17 contos to the orphanage; a grant of 25 contos is annually accorded to it also by the State Government of São Paulo, and 25 more by the City Hall. In 1921 the 'fazendas' contributed 323 sacksful of beans.

Fr. Simoni points out to us that all 'fazendeiros' are contributors to a greater or lesser degree. Brazilian landowners, especially, in no way ever oppose a refusal to solicitations for contributions they receive from the orphanage.

- Forgive our indiscretion - we beg of our kind and patient interviewee - what do the annual expenditures of the orphanage amount to?
- *To more than 200 'contos of reis'.*
- Are the contributions sufficient?
- *With the aleatory ones, yes; contributions of public charity are not enough.*
- Does the Italian community contribute all it could?

Fr. Simoni smiles, then turns serious and defensively exclaims: - *One must admit it: Brazilians' spirit of charity is indeed admirable and superior to all praise!*

Our interviewee does not say any more, but we easily understand that should Italians emulate Brazilians, the financial problems of the orphanage would have been solved a long time ago....

- To what religious Congregation do you belong, Father?
- *To the Missionaries of Saint Charles.*
- When was this orphanage founded?
- *By our missionary Fr. Giuseppe Marchetti. In the first three years we had 468 orphans, whose names were inscribed on the two large tables, you see along the cloister, for lack of enrollment certificates.*
- What nationalities do orphans belong to?

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- *To all nationalities and religions. Only Italians were admitted at first, but then circumstances advised an extension of the beneficent action of the orphanage. At this moment, we have Italians of almost all provinces, Brazilians, Greek-Catholics, Greek-Orthodox, Turks, Russians, Syrians, Arabs....*
- How many orphan girls are there at Vila Prudente?
- *As of today, 120 of them.*
- Is admission free for all?
- *Out of 230 children here now, we have only ten that pay a minimal tuition.*
- Are they indeed orphaned of both parents?
- *Yes, the great majority of them. Just a few are deprived of either father or mother, and about ten, with their parents living, are boarding here because their parents prefer our orphanage to other similar institutes of education.*
- What do you teach them?
- *We so follow normal courses as to have them on the level with the State's first year high School at graduation time. We have also carpentry and printing shops. In both all kinds of works are carried out.*
- At what age do orphans leave the orphanage?
- *They may remain indefinitely; in this case they devote their action to the orphanage. As each orphan has his piggy bank, not a few of them stepped out of here with savings of five or more 'contos of reis'.*

At this point, Fr. Simoni stands up and invites us to follow him on a tour of the Institute, for whose discovery our readers must be grateful to us, because many Italians, like us, did not know of its existence. And the poor were certainly not the last to know about it.

Among the orphans.

We meet them at recreation time. They are of all types, of all sizes, and one may add, of all races. Black, blond, or brown haired; white, olive, or black skinned; they intermingle in the blending of charity. There is a pause in the happy games of the innocents. Hundreds of expressive big eyes are fixed on us. All crowd up around the priest as around a loving father pulling his cassock, moving in front of him, addressing their question and petitions to him. The smallest ones seem the most insistent.

- Do they speak Portuguese? - We ask our guide.
- *Yes! Portuguese and Italian!*

A handsome little blond boy, about 7, comes up to the priest and asks of him in fact with a pure accent from Lucca: - Father, let me out of here....

The priest explains to us that the little one, named Attilio Bandettini, still has his mother and would like to go and spend time at the carnival with her....

We pay a visit to the carpentry 'laboratory' -let us call it so - perfect in its kind; the printing shop; the dining hall; the kitchen; the classrooms; all so clean, airy, bright.

We make our acquaintance with the prefect, custodian of the boys, a valiant veteran, wounded in the war, named Bixio Ciocci, and with his assistant Nino Casale. All orphans are entrusted to their supervision. At the conclusion of our visit, which we will always remember, the kind and congenial Fr. Simoni returned insisting with us to have lunch with him, and unable to make us change our decision prompted by circumstances beyond our control, he continues to entertain us in friendly conversation. Before taking our leave we addressed the priest with the following

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'tendentious' question:

- What was your impression at the news that the Italian Government had decided to discontinue the subsidy to the orphanage?
- *Mussolini* - the worthy and generous priest answered - *is a man of great merit, and if he acted that way he must have had his good reasons. He has adopted a measure of general interest for reasons of economy and to eliminate, perhaps, eventual abuses or to stop the government's protection of unworthy cases, thus fatally involving in the provision also some others, like ours, very worthy ones. Such is the law. Often it cannot account for the single cases and the just pay for the unjust ones. However,* - the priest continues - *Mussolini does not even know perhaps about our Institute.*

It is our hope that the subsidy may be restored to us for no other reason at least than for its moral value. In fact, we are sure that our good Italians of São Paulo will know how to replace the government in supporting it, as with noble enthusiasm they indeed have begun doing in response to the '*Piccolo*'.

Satisfied with discovering the good priest's fascist leaning - let's call it so - we congratulate him with a vigorous handshake. Our congratulations are directed also to the Director, Fr. Faustino Consoni - a strong and sturdy man from Brescia like the famed '*Leonessa*' of Carducci - to the Provincial Superior and Administrator of the house, Fr. Giuseppe Martini, and to all those who cooperate with them for the welfare of the orphanage and in an ever wider providential range of influence. With the enlargements underway, the latter will be extended very soon to at least some other hundred orphans. The race amongst the generous is on, so that all the little 'human fledglings' stricken by the storm may find again the nest that misfortune destroyed. Besides these humanitarian considerations, Italians should be mindful of the fact that the orphanage carries an Italian name, its founder was Italian and his successors in this beneficent institution are also Italian. The most elementary patriotism demands that we be not second to anyone in supporting it.

Ettore E. Mosca."

Likewise, in offering also its valid contribution to the noble initiative of the '*Piccolo*', the Paulist-Italian newspaper '*La Voce d'Italia*' wrote:

"Certain initiatives need the support of all, the good-will of all. One such is that taken by our colleagues of the '*Piccolo*' with giving start to a subscription drive for the '*Cristoforo Colombo*' orphanage, a thoroughly Italian institution of charity. It's decades since the orphanage located on the hill of Ipiranga has been carrying out its charitable work for the protection of children deprived of the most precious beings, their parents. This work is being done in silence, that is, without blowing trumpets, and with a great sacrifice of strenuous work on the part of the staff members, who, even considering the importance of the institution itself, did not receive too much financial help. Though this institution that hosts so many children of our fellow-countrymen be Italian, our community has done very little to help the '*Cristoforo Colombo*' orphanage; indeed, a wholly regrettable apathy.

Now that our colleagues of the '*Piccolo*' have taken the initiative of subscription for this charitable institution our community has the duty to make reparation for the neglect of the past by vying with each other in making donations. The '*Cristoforo Colombo*' orphanage needs the support of all; any small offering represents a help and any smallest help benefits an orphan for one day, a child which has the right to life, a decent life, a life of work it could never unfortunately be offered were it not for the charity of good people in the period of its infancy. The institution of the '*Cristoforo Colombo*' orphanage is a humanitarian and a social enterprise, as well. Institutions such as these must be supported and helped by anyone in a position to do so. Our community does not lack such people, and there are those in its midst who never turned a deaf ear to appeals of this kind. We only needed someone to take the

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initiative: and this was done by our fellow newspaper the '*Piccolo*'.

In order that the initiative may have the character of unanimity and bring good results, our press should act in perfect accord in carrying on this charity drive."¹¹

This time the initiatives taken for the orphanage met with a good response:

"By God's Grace, all is well here at the orphanage. We have received two donations for 20 'contos' each from two Italians; one already in our hands, while the other will be used at the end of the year for the construction of four new buildings for the orphanage. The government also, and other benefactors, as well, have helped us in an extraordinary way with 20 more 'contos'.

*True, everything here costs a lot and prices are sky-high, but with the good Lord's help, this year to we will conclude with a surplus."*¹²

The Apostolic Visitation of Fr. Giuseppe A. of Persiceto in 1924-1925, pointed out the aspects, both positive and negative, of the administration as singled out by the Archbishop of São Paulo: the institution was certainly excellent and directed with much charity, but it left much to be desired as to discipline, hygiene and education. Such shortcomings were continually underscored, after all, especially in regard to the boys' section, by all missionaries, except Frs. Consoni and Simoni. Nevertheless, the final judgment of Archbishop Leopoldo e Silva, which points out the fundamental character of the institution, remains highly positive:

"One must admit, however, that the orphanage provides an invaluable service for abandoned children, who would otherwise be left to die or to swell the gangs of juvenile delinquents. This situation is even more worthy of consideration if we consider that that, in spite of the great resources in this Archdiocese, the Institutes once founded for the poor, and now transformed into boarding schools for the rich, have become inaccessible to them because they cannot afford the tuition. With all its shortcomings, the '*Cristoforo Colombo*' orphanage is still the only institution or daycare facility accessible to poor children."¹³

The Regional Superior, Fr. Martini, lamented that following the departure of Fr. Preti the Board of Directors installed by Fr. Chenuil in 1923 had never held the monthly meetings, "*because they were considered restricting the will of the Director and Vice-Director, who for many years had been accustomed to do everything on their own, or, worse yet, have been reluctant of any type of control.*"¹⁴

As we know, in November 1925, Frs. Domenico Canestrini and Sante Bernardi were appointed to direct the orphanage with the specific scope of giving way to a radical reform. Fr. Canestrini's first impressions were so negative that he deemed it necessary to resort to a drastic reduction of the number of orphans who were crowded together in unimaginable quantity, since when, at the time of the famous Spanish flu - so he was told -, the Archbishop had sent in 105 orphans in one day, and no subsidy. As to the state of the buildings, he said:

"It's useless to do patch up work here and there. We would always have to start

¹¹ "I nostri orfanatrofi di S. Paulo", "L'Emigrato Italian in America", a. XVIII, n. 3 (July-September 1924), pp. 16-23.

¹² M. Simoni to Rinaldi, São Paulo, November 29, 1924 (Arch. G.S., 396/18).

¹³ Report of Apos. Visitation by Persiceto, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 396/19).

¹⁴ Martini to Persiceto, Santa Felicidade, January 27, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 396/19).

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over again! What would be needed is to draw up a plan for a new building, not very costly, but in keeping with the style of institutions of this kind and to be carried out little by little according to needs and means. This is also the viewpoint of the Rev. Frs. Martini and Bernardi. Of course, Frs. Faustino and Marco cannot be too enthusiastic about it, because such plan would almost appear like a destruction of so much labor, though they themselves admit that this should have been the way to proceed from the very beginning (...).

There is plenty of land around the orphanage on which to build, but what is holding us back is the doubt on whether we can prove our legal title to that property."¹⁵

Cardinal De Lai remarked:

"The real and undeniable difficulties that have been pointed out prove without a doubt the need for a new hand in the administration as had been requested(...). First of all, it is absolutely necessary that a large shelter be built in which to house those poor orphans. As to dismissing them right off, we should not even think of it.

You tell me that the land is not lacking though its title of ownership be not clear. In this case, the matter must be ascertained, possibly within 15 or 20 days, as I wrote to Fr. Simoni. Otherwise, the land must be bought. In any case, the problem must be solved within 20 days either to secure the ownership or to buy the property. And then, the shelters should be immediately built to serve as a dormitory, regardless of cost. The Pious Society will help, and Fr. Faustino Consoni shall do his best, as well." ¹⁶

To Fr. Consoni, who had asked how he should act in regard to his own capacity relatively to that of Frs. Canestrini and Simoni, the Cardinal answered:

"I shall tell you: like good brothers, working together in harmony for the welfare of the institution. You have been until now the 'humble providence' that was providing the means for so many expenditures and needs. Well, then, continue so! Besides, since there will be the need for works of enlargement of the pious institution, multiply your activity, if possible, but with discretion such as is befitting the saints."¹⁷

As to the properties of the institution, Fr. Simoni simply answered:

"As to the properties of the orphanage and to the land donated or purchased by us, we are in possession of regular writs and of legal titles for them all and so no property of ours is at risk."¹⁸

On the occasion of the opening of the 1926 school year, Fr. Canestrini wrote the following report:

"The financial situation is neither good nor bad; no cause for complaints! The bad part of it is found in its precariousness as it is dependent for its revenues on conditions of governments and benefactors who are here today and may not be tomorrow, though, so far, this hasn't happened yet. To these revenues must be added also donations in kind (sacksful of rice, beans, potatoes, cornflower,

¹⁵ Canestrini to Card. De Lai, São Paulo, December 3, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 396/21).

¹⁶ Card. De Lai to Consoni, Rome, January 3, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 396/22).

¹⁷ Card. De Lai to Consoni, Rome, January 3, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 396/22).

¹⁸ M. Simoni to Card. De Lai, São Paulo, February 24, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 396/22).

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clothing materials, blankets, shoes and the like), all things equally to be appreciated of course.

At the present time, the orphanage houses 230 orphans in the boys' section, ages six to fourteen, and 128 in the girls' section. These are the most we can host in the present premises. We have dismissed a few of those we had last year because either their families could afford to support them or they were affected by ailments that could not consent their presence in an institution of this kind (scabies, rickets, trachoma). The boys have six teachers who abide by the State's school programs. Three disciplinarians keep steady watch with the assistance of older boys. The Missionary Sisters of Saint Charles (10) take care of all the girls' needs at the Vila Prudente section, about two miles away. One of the Fathers at Ipiranga says Mass there every day.

With residence in the boys' section, Fr. Canestrini is responsible for the general supervision, for the outside contacts and for the girls' section. Fr. Bernardi, who is indeed doing an excellent job, has the care of the most delicate internal discipline, as it were: in particular, the supervision of teachers and disciplinarians, and an almost steady presence with the boys themselves. Fr. Martini was in charge of the administration, or kept the books, rather, with the greatest precision..... but was not doing more than that. He will now be replaced by Fr. Antonelli, who besides keeping the books will have also to supervise works and laborers. Furthermore, he will have the task of teaching catechism and substitute for teachers who for any serious reason should not be able to hold classes (...).

The documents of the various properties of the orphanage are little by little being legally set in order, so that we may know for sure which ones they are and how many they are and what obligations they entail, since a few of the properties have been donated (...).

As soon as we are sure about the properties, I will send in a detailed report on what I would deem opportune and necessary to do to set everything in good order once and for all also in regard to the new construction."¹⁹

Following the Apostolic Visitation conducted by Archbishop Cicognani in August - September 1926, Cardinal De Lai endeavored to remove the main cause of friction between the "provider" Fr. Consoni and the "Director" Fr. Canestrini. Fr. Consoni pretended that applications for admission were also to be accepted of orphans who, for hygienic or moral reasons, could not be taken into the orphanage, so as not to displease benefactors and friends. Fr. Canestrini, instead, did not intend to come to terms on this point: there were to be no more than 200 orphans in the boys' section, and 25 additional applications were to be reserved for requests from the City Hall and benefactors; no children were to be admitted who were affected by contagious diseases or had been dismissed earlier from the institution. Archbishop Cicognani had decided that Fr. Consoni should not interfere in the direction and in the internal discipline; Fr. Marco Simoni was to be transferred to another task because he hindered the program of reform. To the steady complaints by Fr. Faustino, Card. De Lai replied:

¹⁹ Canestrini to Card. De Lai, São Paulo, March 28, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 396/22).

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"As to the 'Cristoforo Colombo' orphanage, I have only to confirm the decision taken during the Apostolic Visitation. I admire and praise your great charity for the poor unfortunate; but charity, as Saint Paul teaches us, must be well orderly.

The present building of the orphanage cannot shelter more than 225 children; to accept more than these would mean to run against the most elementary rules of hygiene and morals, to which we have to conform, if we want that the good which is being done may turn to the true advantage of a sound and Christian education of youth.

Should Divine Providence help us - Your Paternity could well be a worthy instrument in this - and should we be sent the means necessary to enlarge the building as demanded by the needs of that great metropolis, then with your particular satisfaction and to the benefit of all, it would be possible to accept your requests, which are justified, I repeat, by your living in constant contact with the people."²⁰

Archbishop Cicognani and Fr. Canestrini discussed a project of enlargement with an architect: Fr. Marchetti's building would remain and be used for classrooms and offices or as living quarters for the Sisters, with kitchen and wardrobe services. The construction of a building with 3 wings, each 102 meters long, with the church in the middle, was projected at the left side of the existing building. The whole problem was finding the funds needed, for which they were advised to have recourse to benefactors and to sell some pieces of land belonging to the orphanage. As to the girls' section, it was decided that it should not house more than 125 orphans. A few Sisters asked Archbishop Cicognani for assurance to use the house while still owned by Fathers. Their request was justified, because right then Fr. Consoni had proposed the idea of assigning Vila Prudente to the boys: but it was just a polemic proposal in opposition to the direction of Fr. Canestrini. Archbishop Cicognani advised that a deed be drawn up by which Scalabrinians were to pledge the use of the house of Vila Prudente to the Sisters as long as they were to continue the direction of the orphanage. Both Sisters and Archbishop of São Paulo were happy with the proposal.

A detailed study was also made about the ownership's titles of the various properties, land and buildings of the institution: the existence of the legal titles of most of them were ascertained; only a few were still doubtful at the close of Fr. Canestrini's administration. Fortunately, in 1928, Senator Vicente de Azevedo made out a regular writ for the 85,000 square meter property of the boys' section he had donated in 1895.²¹ In May of 1928, sickness forced Fr. Canestrini to return to Italy; his resignation as Director of the orphanage was accepted in November of the same year, and Fr. Sante Bernardi was named pro-rector (acting Rector).²² Later on, on November 29, 1930, he was appointed director, while Fr. Milini was made Vice-Director. In April 1931, Fr. Sante Bernardi wrote to Cardinal Rossi:

²⁰ Card. De Lai to Consoni, Rome, January 4, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 396/23).

²¹ Canestrini to Card. C. Perosi, São Paulo, May 30, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 396/24).

²² Card. Perosi to Martini, Rome, November 29, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 396/26).

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"The scope of this letter of mine is to inform you about the present state of the 'Cristoforo Colombo' orphanage. Frs. Giuseppe Martini and Carlo Porrini have recently sailed for Italy. To replace the latter the Provincial Superior has sent us Fr. Francesco Milini. With that Father gone, there remain at the orphanage: Fr. Sante Bernardi, Frs. Ernesto Consoni and Sblandiano Simoni (both sickly) (...). Some help is provided by Brother Francesco Prevedello, as prefect of discipline for the children; but to do a good job we would need four of them. And as to me in particular, I cannot act as Director, Administrator, Prefect of discipline, and teacher, at the same time. There should be a priest for each of these tasks, and he would still have his hands full. As it is, we have to do the best he can. In such conditions, an orphanage cannot be reorganized, developed, and raised up to the moral, educational, and material levels demanded by the context of São Paulo. We are at a standstill; our institution is the most miserable and the most backward of all. Even on the material level things are very bad!"²³

After Fr. Porrini's return from Italy, Fr. Milini resumed his place at the orphanage in September 1931. A visitation was then under way that the Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Aloisi Masella had begun in 1930 to reorganize the institution, giving it a new statute as a charitable corporation, and writing out an internal rule. Fr. Milini had this to write on the matter in October of 1931:

"I do not recall whether in my last one I made any mention of a long, diligent, and kindly visit of the Nuncio to the orphanage. The practical conclusion comes to this, I believe, that neglecting all useless bickering and setting aside all squabbles over ridiculous precedencies we get down to hard work with full force. And so we had decided to put back in use our printing shop, which had been left there to deteriorate for years. In fact, we were able to print a few little things, just today. We will soon begin work on our new publication 'La Fiamma' ('The Flame'), as already mentioned to you before. It will be printed in our shop with full permission and kind blessings from the Archbishop of São Paulo."²⁴

The weekly "La Fiamma" was planned by Fr. Carlo Porrini with the help of Frs. Milini and Bernardi, and its founding date was set on October 5, 1931:

"Whether it will be a success will depend on our spirit of sacrifice and on the help of God who will not abandon us in this holy enterprise so deeply felt by our still very numerous Italian population. It would represent some kind of a first manifestation of our true apostolate."²⁵

The first issue was dated December 8, 1931:

"Three issues have been published already and the fourth is being prepared. It looks as though it will be getting to the people.... so much so that a day doesn't go by that we do not receive subscriptions or assents. Among them we must number those of Bishops, and, most important of all, that of the Apostolic Nuncio, who deigned to send us his portrait with a most comforting dedication."²⁶

In the minutes of the meetings held by the orphanage's Board of Directors we

²³ S. Bernardi to Card. Rossi, São Paulo, April 5, 1931 (Arch. G.S., 396/30)

²⁴ Milini to Prevedello, São Paulo, October 24, 1931 (Arch. 396/30).

²⁵ Milini to Prevedello, São Paulo, October 2, 1931 (Arch. G.S., 396/30).

²⁶ Milini to Prevedello, São Paulo, December 28, 1931 (Arch. G.S., 396/30).

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find Fr. Porrini's report on the precedents:

"It is perfectly superfluous to state that *'La Fiamma'* was founded with no intention of competing with other Catholic newspapers, especially *'La Squilla'*. The Rev. Capuchin Fathers of São Paulo for good reasons of their own deemed it convenient in 1931 to set themselves free of *'La Squilla'* - a weekly that had been circulating for a good 26 years already (coincidentally, in 1906, Fr. Faustino had granted the use of the printing machine to Fr. Damiano for that newspaper). The Rev. Father Commissar, Frei Thiago, had charged Fr. Aurelio da Scarano with the task of drawing up a deal with the Rev. Fr. Francesco Navarro, Superior of the Missionaries of St. Charles, concerning the sale of *'La Squilla'*, with preference for the Missionaries of St. Charles, in view of the fact that one of them (precisely Fr. Porrini) had been directing *'La Squilla'* for four years, from 1925 until 1929. But Fr. Aurelio did not budge. *'La Squilla'* was not supposed to be given over - God forgive this judgment - to Italian missionaries, the very *'La Squilla'* that was always betraying rather anti-Italian feelings before, during, and after the war. In August 1931 the Pauline Fathers of the Good Press (Alba, Piedmont) arrived in São Paulo and they were directed by Fr. Faustino to the Capuchins. They immediately engaged in negotiations for the purchase of *'La Squilla'* and its printing presses at the cost of a hundred 'contos'. Fr. Porrini had offered 25 contos for the newspaper, presses excluded. Before founding the newspaper, Fr. Porrini deemed it proper to inform the Pauline Fathers, from whom he received the following textual word: *'There is room for everybody.'* And the field is indeed there, open to all."²⁷

With the assistance of the Apostolic Nuncio, the question of new statutes for the orphanage began to be studied in 1932. As seen above, it was resolved in 1936 with the recognition of the orphanage as a "corporation". Scalabrinians were thus assured ownership of all its properties as sole "associates".

Fr. Faustino Consoni died on August 12, 1933. To the loss of this missionary, highly esteemed in the city of São Paulo, and therefore always surrounded by a large number of benefactors, was added the crisis provoked by the coming into power of Getulio Vargas:

*"This charitable institution is passing through a rather serious crisis. City Hall and State have taken away the subsidies they were supplying. Our benefactors, especially the 'fazendeiros' and businessmen have deprived us of their donations for lack of means. We will have to contain expenditures, and for this we will need to reduce the number of orphans. It is my opinion, however, that with a good and able personnel we will be able to resume our way to the improvements."*²⁸

And the number of orphans at the boys' section was actually reduced to 160 in 1934. The "*way to the improvements*" could not be resumed above all because of lack of personnel. Two Vice-Directors followed each other in quick succession after the tenure of Fr. Milini: Frs. Girolamo Angeli and Paolino Rizzi. The latter fell sick in 1937, and for the nth time the whole responsibility of that great institution fell back on the shoulders of its director, helped only by Brother Francesco Prevedello. Fr. Severino Fei was all taken up, in fact, with the direction of the weekly *'La Fiamma'*, after Fr. Porrini had returned to Italy. The other three Fathers, G. Chiappa, E. Consoni, and S. Simoni, were invalid.²⁹

²⁷ Minutes of São Paulo's meetings. Years 1932-1934, p. 5 (Arch. G.S., 360/7).

²⁸ Bernardi to Card. Rossi, São Paulo, December 16, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 396/32).

²⁹ Bernardi to Card. Rossi, São Paulo, May 29, 1937 (Arch. G.S., 396/36).

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The project for the enlargement of the boys' section was delayed for too many years and concretely resumed only in 1939; the study of it was entrusted to Architect Bianchi-Gavina.

In that same year the number of orphans stood at the average of the previous six years: 170 boys at Ipiranga and some 90 or 100 girls at Vila Prudente.

In March 1940 Fr. Bernardi informed:

*"Conditions at the Orphanage are slowly getting better. With an added little effort I hope to be able to succeed in putting together a sum that may allow me to start construction on the new house. The project has not been completed as yet: we are nearly in full agreement, however, on the distribution of the various tasks (...). In the course of this year we had in the house 167 boys, and 105 girls. We held classes also for some children of poor laborers: 78 boys and 115 girls."*³⁰

The laying of the foundation stone of the new building took place only on the December 6, 1942. Beginning with 1938, Fr. Sante Bernardi had more help with the presence of Fr. Isidoro Bizzotto, Vice-Director, of Fr. Antonio Cugliana, in charge of collecting revenues, and of Brother Leone Criveller. The weekly 'La Fiamma' was changed into a monthly "bulletin" in September of 1939.

2. The Church of Santo Antonio in São Paulo

In May 1926, Fr. Faustino Consoni, rector of the Church of Santo Antonio in the "Praça do Patriarca" at São Paulo, wrote to Card. De Lai:

"Allow me to inform Your Eminence, our Superior, about something of the greatest importance to us the Missionaries of St. Charles and to so many poor people, whom we support here at the Church of Santo Antonio by means of donations from the benefactors of the 'Bread of St. Anthony'. It has to do with a company, I would call of iconoclasts, which wants to acquire at all costs the Church of Santo Antonio for the sum of five thousand 'contos' and build a big garage and storage for automobiles, etc. in its place. The church we have been serving for the past 18 years goes back to Portuguese Colonial times and following a lapse of 200 years it passed under the 'jus patronatus' of the Viscounts Entre Rio, and Baroness di Tatuí, our great benefactress, had it entirely restored, later on, with the addition of a new steeple and bells and established a benefice for a chaplain. I accepted the Church from Counts Edward and Antoinette de Prates, our great benefactors for the past 30 years. My confrere Fr. Marco Simoni has been its chaplain for 12 years, and it is now six years I am here as chaplain. This is the most frequented church of the city: to it the faithful come for their devotions to St. Anthony, and Bishops, Canons, Priests from the country, Senators, Representatives and all the people, one may say, of the high society of São Paulo, go to make their confession. Every day 5 or 6 Masses, even more, at times, are said, so that we must have recourse to other priests in order to satisfy the intentions of the faithful who want Masses at the altar of the Saint.

Counts De Prates are very disturbed by the rumors about the demolition of the

³⁰ Bernardi to Card. Rossi, São Paulo, March 9, 1940 (Arch. G.S., 396/37).

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church, to which they are particularly attached, but they do not know how to face up to the ideas of Archbishop Dom Duarte Leopoldo, who served me notice the other day, which I hereby enclose to Your Eminence, to allow the architect of the City Hall to measure the church and its premises.

Believe me, Eminence, it would be a great mistake to do away with a church in the center of the city, much frequented by all classes of people, with two flourishing Confraternities, which are doing a lot of good especially among the nobility. People would be very sad about it, if not embittered. Since it is being said that Archbishop Dom Duarte is all set on having his "Mitre rights" prevail as he did with three other churches, we will remain utterly destitute (...). Briefly, everyone says it will all depend on him. Tomorrow I will call on the President of the State pleading with him to intervene in a matter of such importance in the hope to obtain favorable results."³¹

Cardinal DeLai immediately cabled the Apostolic Nuncio to ask the Archbishop of São Paulo to withhold all decisions concerning the Church of Santo Antonio; and then wrote a letter to the Archbishop himself, who answered he had already previously decided to bring the case to the Holy See in hope of securing the funds needed for the completion of the cathedral from the sale of the church with the intention to build a larger one in place of Santo Antonio's, pointing out, however, that the people who wanted to purchase the land had not confirmed their request within the set date, and therefore the deal had fallen through of itself.

In his visitation of August-September 1926, Archbishop Cicognani found out that the church was the property of the diocese and that no "jus patronatus" existed: Counts Prates behaved as patrons without any juridical basis. The importance of the church, Archbishop Cicognani pointed out, did not derive from its dimensions or other extrinsic values, small and poor as it was, but from the fact that it was most centrally located and that under the rectorship of Fr. Consoni it had become a center of piety and charity. Fr. Faustino was very popular, heard the confession of a great number of people, also in politics and high social classes, and visited almost daily the sick. He succeeded so very well in winning the respect and trust of many people that they used him for their charities either to the "Cristoforo Colombo" orphanage or to the poor who in numbers of 20 to 50 were lining up everyday noon and evening along the hall to the side of the church for a meal of soup, bread, and meat, supplied in great part by the monastery of São Bento, close by, that owed its survival to Fr. Faustino.

In Archbishop Cicognani's opinion, Fr. Consoni could very well carry on his charitable apostolate also in another church, and the Archbishop was not wrong as owner of the church, if he had plans for selling Santo Antonio's in hope to get enough out of it to establish seven or eight more parishes or to complete the construction of the cathedral. In fact, in September of the same 1926 the Archbishop asked the Holy See for permission to sell the church of Santo Antonio and use the proceeds for the construction of the cathedral and

³¹ Consoni to Card. De Lai, São Paulo, March 9, 1940 (Arch. G.S., 395/3).

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of another church to be entrusted to the Scalabrinians. His petition was studied in the General Meeting of the Consistorial Congregation and it was accepted on condition that the Archbishop would give first another church to the Scalabrinians. In November 1927, the Archbishop assured Card. DeLai that he had left things as they were, as he had no church at that time to entrust to the Missionaries of St. Charles.

In 1929 fears returned. The Regional Superior, Fr. Navarro wrote in May to Card. Perosi:

*"Countess Prates has charged a person of her trust with the task of informing the Regional Superior about the impending sale of the church of Santo Antonio, here in São Paulo, presently served by Fr. Faustino Consoni, as Rector, and by Fr. Corrado Stefani, as his assistant. I got the information today with recommendation not to say anything to Fr. Faustino Consoni, because he would turn the whole of São Paulo upside down, as he did the other year, when the same rumor of a sale had been set in motion."*³²

Archbishop Rossi replied to Fr. Navarro:

"In reference to your letter of last May, I informed you that this Sacred Congregation did not neglect taking an immediate interest on the question of Santo Antonio church in São Paulo. The Apostolic Nuncio is now reporting that, in answer to his request on how much truth there was to rumors about a sale of said church, the Archbishop replied in the following terms: 'As to the question Your Excellency presented to me in your last letter of the 4th of this month, I must inform You that there is no intention whatsoever of selling the church of Santo Antonio.'" ³³

Another cause for concern arose by the end of 1932:

*"The Rev. Fr. Faustino Consoni fell sick with the flu shortly before the revolution, and from his bed he sent out to the newspapers an appeal for help to the orphans on such a critical and trying time. The response was great! Be it enough to say that enough money came in from all sides to pay impending debts and save some for the future; many sacksful of coffee, rice, beans, corn, flour, sugar, potatoes, meat, eggs, poultry, etc.... all kinds of God's goods, poured in from all directions (...). Fr. Faustino Consoni is still sick at the Vila Prudente orphanage and we cannot count on him. The church of Santo Antonio, so important and remunerative, is left with only Fr. Stefani (helpless as to administration) and an Olivetan Fr. It is feared that for lack of personnel of our own, the same fate may befall St. Anthony as Rebeirão Preto; the Olivetans will take over that, too."*³⁴

Card. Rossi hastened to answer:

"Finally, I serve you notice that the Church of Santo Antonio must absolutely remain with the Pious Society. Your letter of October 17 last, confirms the importance of said church for the Scalabrinian Institute. It is, in fact, the only center that the Pious Society has in São Paulo in which to exercise the ministry on behalf of Italians; it has many good and holy traditions of service and charity

³² Navarro to Card. Perosi, São Bernardo, May 18, 1929 (Arch. G.S., 395/2).

³³ Rossi to Navarro, Rome, September 2, 1929 (Arch. G.S., 395/2).

³⁴ Navarro to Card. Rossi, São Bernardo, October 17, 1932 (Arch. G.S., 360/3).

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due in great part to the priestly zeal of good Fr. Faustino; it represents the providential means for the economic life of the two orphanages and of so many poor people turning to it for support; it is necessary therefore that said church be provided for in the most proper way possible with personnel of the Pious Society itself.

I ask Your Paternity, therefore, to accord this question the correct and serious importance it deserves studying it in all details also together with the Councilors, if you should see it so fit, to the end, as I told you, that the church may remain with the Pious Society; no outsiders be admitted, especially if belonging to other religious congregations; have a Father of your region transferred there whom Your Paternity should judge most fit for the place."³⁵

On December 20, 1932, Fr. Consoni fell sick again and in March 1933 he had to undergo a surgical operation. Fr. Sante Bernardi was placed temporarily in charge of its direction on the 19th of the same month:

"It was the only way out and everything has been saved; not only that, but with Fr. Faustino still out, things have been set in order, many parasites were dismissed, the place has been well organized. Sorrows, many and serious, were not absent, but all things were overcome by the greatest prudence and patience."³⁶

There is a hint here at one of Fr. Faustino's shortcomings: his negligence in the administration. But these defects do not tarnish the splendor of the personality of the most popular priest of São Paulo and of the most beloved benefactors of the poor and derelicts of all kinds. From amongst the innumerable eulogies pronounced by the most different personalities at the time of his death on March 12, 1933, we quote the statement of Cardinal Raffaello Carlo Rossi, the more meaningful, considering the well-known frankness with which he used to call that missionary's attention to certain aspects of doing things:

"A new loss has befallen the Scalabrinian Pious Society and the missions of Brazil with the passing of one of the most meritorious and active missionaries: Fr. Faustino Consoni, the Father to the poor, the beneficent man who has given in profusion whatever Divine Providence was placing in his hands, is no more with us; his soul has gone to Heaven to receive his reward from the Lord, the Giver of all goods.

First among the missionaries in responding to the appeal of Bishop Scalabrini, with the soul of an apostle and of a true disciple of his Venerated Founder, he left Italy without ever returning to it, and went to Brazil where he devoted his whole life for the welfare of Italian emigrants. Many Italian communities in the "fazendas" and elsewhere saw him as their untiring missionary, and the Indians themselves experienced his active zeal and great charity.

The Church of Santo Antonio has witnessed his piety, his love for the welfare of afflicted and sorrowful souls who were finding in Fr. Faustino a good Father, a healer, who knew how to cure their innermost wounds, a spiritual director who could wisely and prudently direct souls even in the saddest instances of life."³⁷

Another meaningful witness was borne by Archbishop Duarte Leopoldo e Silva, who had often reasons for complaining against Fr. Faustino, and yet held him

³⁵Card. Rossi to Navarro, Rome, November 23, 1932 (Arch. G.S., 360/3).

³⁶Navarro to Card. Rossi, São Bernardo, June 19, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 395/2).

³⁷Card. Rossi, Circular of August 17, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 1535/2).

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in high esteem, often visiting him when sick:

"By order of the Most Excellent and Reverend Metropolitan Archbishop, I convey to you, the Most Rev. Clergy and the faithful, the sad news of the passing of Fr. Faustino Consoni on the 12th of the current month at the 'Santa Catarina' sanatorium where he had been lying sick for a long time.

Greatly venerated and deeply loved by the citizens of São Paulo for his rare virtues, Fr. Faustino was above all a great apostle of the poor (...). The 'Orfanotrofio Cristoforo Colombo', the shelter of so many children who have too soon lost the protection of their father or mother, was the special field in which Fr. Faustino gave extraordinary marks of the magnanimity of his priestly heart, of the greatness of his soul, and of his boundless love of the poor. It was right there that Divine Providence had set aside for him a number of trials. Endowed with solid virtues, Fr. Faustino belied with his whole life, made of piety, charity, detachment, and self-denial, the ignoble accusations levelled at him, thus becoming the object of a most deep veneration on the part of the people of São Paulo, who did not let any occasion go by without showing him the most vivid and sincere marks of love and respect. The most meaningful tribute was certainly accorded him in the course of long years by the endless line of the poor who were flocking to the Church of Santo Antonio to kiss those blessed hands as of an affectionate father and friend, who knew how to distribute every day and at all hours charity and blessings.

His Most Reverend Excellency warmly urges the clergy and faithful of this Archdiocese to offer prayers and good deeds for the repose of this model priest who was in São Paulo the great apostle of Charity, the Father of the poor and of orphans."³⁸

Fr. Sante Bernardi continued to direct the Church of Santo Antonio for about one more year. Its rectorship was entrusted to Fr. Francesco Navarro on July 5. Countess Prates, to whom the assigning of Santo Antonio's church to the Scalabrinians was due, died in April 1937. In 1935 Fr. Navarro had founded the "Marian Congregation" for the young, while Fr. Milini established in 1939 the "Association of Our Lady of Peace", with seat there until it was transferred to the new parish of Our Lady of Peace in 1941.

3. The Parish of São Bernardo

Father Navarro, Pastor of N. Sra. da Boa Viagem and São Bernardo, (São Paulo), since 1917, gave the following report in 1923:

"The great majority of the people are Italian. They still follow the same customs, the same way of life and language (so much so that even our preaching was in Italian; but it is difficult now because church authorities justly want it to be done in the language of the country, understood by all at the present time). According to the annual directory of the Archdiocese of São Paulo, the people of the parish amount to almost 8,000 scattered over a very vast territory. It has a very beautiful and gracious Portuguese colonial style parish church, it boasts also a magnificent parish house, built in the past two years with donations from the people, and completed just a few months ago at the cost of 15 'contos'.

The same directory reports 244 baptisms; 40 weddings; 92 funerals; 137 sermons preached both in the Mother Church and the missions; 10,116 Communion, which keep steadily increasing from 6,000 in 1918; 52 sick-calls, many of whom in distant places. I wish Your Most Rev. Paternity would come to

³⁸ De Paula, Circular of March 12, 1933 (Arch. Province of São Paulo, C.S.).

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see for yourself the spiritual activity of the parish.

With the help of other priests, we celebrate here in a very solemn manner the entire Holy Week, the feasts of the Immaculate Conception, Titular of the parish; St. Bernard, St. Anthony, St. Joseph, N. Sra. da Boa Viagem, sponsored by the parish's carters; and others, of lesser importance, are celebrated at distant missions. But the feast of the Sacred Heart excels above all others for all its spiritual results. The funds needed for these feasts are solicited by a committee of two or four people chosen by lots every year for this purpose. The Apostleship of Prayer has very many members and it does a lot of good; we have also the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament for men, and the Pious Union of St. Anthony. The catechism classes for boys and girls are conducted by the Sisters of St. Charles, who staff here a parish school with more than 100 students. The revenues of the church are wholly made up of the offerings that the faithful give in church at the two Masses of the feasts and of a small fee allotted from each family (...).

I want Your Paternity to notice that this parish, as also the other two entrusted to the Missionaries of St. Charles, are counted among the least profitable of Brazil, so much so that a Brazilian priest could hardly live by them; instead, as religious, we manage rather comfortably; there is enough, that is, to get along without any worry."³⁹

In another report of 1923, Fr. Navarro wrote:

"On a piece of land donated to the parish, and with the generous contributions of the people, the present pastor had the rectory built. The total cost was 16 'contos of rei: the population supplied free work and material for its construction.

The parish has now about 7,000 people, Italians, originating in greater part from the 'Veneto', that is, from Vicenza, Treviso, Verona and Venice. We have also in the parish some families from Tuscany, Bergamo, and Southern Italy. As a whole the population is good, religious, and laborious (...).

Besides, there is perfect harmony between Italians and Brazilians, as with Germans, Syrians, and the French: but these are very few. All acknowledge and love their pastor in the Missionary of St. Charles. The greater majority of parishioners live distant from the parish church, many of them even six or seven hours walk away; yet, besides frequenting the chapel of their missions, they attend also the mother church whenever they can. Each distant mission has its own chapel where the Pastor goes to say Mass and carry out his ministry several times a year. The missions scattered around the parish are eleven: Capivary, Río Acima, Río Grande, Alvarenga, Casa, Zardo, Ponto Alto, Battistini, Meninos, Costa, Priaipirinha; this last one has become a little shrine, dedicated to the 'Good Jesus', and is often visited by people of other missions and parishes (...).

The Religious Associations were and still are the salutary leaven and the potent and effective help for our spiritual life. The Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, which adds so much splendor to the sacred services, has been canonically erected and has already a membership of 100. The Apostleship of Prayer counts now 1,200 associates. The parish Pious Union of St. Anthony has been founded recently and is engaged in the distribution of the Bulletin of St. Anthony in Italian. Fr. Dolci opened a coed school for the instruction and education of youth which he entrusted to the care of the untiring Missionary Sisters of St. Charles. It is attended by 100 pupils. Besides the elementary education, the Sisters impart also classes of tailoring, embroidery, singing, music, and provide the church with a young choir for the singing of the sacred

³⁹ Letter of Fr. F. Navarro to Fr. S. Cimino, São Bernardo, September 13, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 20/1).

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services. They teach catechism to the young in church; with the help of good lay people, they supply effective help for the good celebration of the religious services, which, I would dare say, are being conducted in a perfect and edifying manner (...).

Material and economic conditions of parishioners are very good and are progressing steadily. All Italians residing here are small owners, and many of them enjoy excellent positions. They have been here some 40 years now, and have succeeded in buying houses and land. Others own beautiful stores of foods, clothing, etc... In these last years, the more fortunate among them have become the owners of ironwares, of chair factories, furniture, silk products, providing work for thousands of workers (...).

The population is growing steadily, so much so that within a short while this small city will become part of the city of São Paulo by reason of its new building boom."⁴⁰

Archbishop Cicognani, during his 1926 visitation found out that with regard to preaching in Portuguese and to assisting Brazilians, the Archbishop of São Paulo, when he was Bishop of Curitiba, wanted all preaching done in Portuguese also at Santa Felicidade and Rondinha, where the people, who had continued to remain very attached to their customs, were still speaking Venetian and had almost no knowledge of Portuguese. He was complaining that the Scalabrinians neglected Brazilians altogether; Archbishop Cicognani, however, when he was asked to point this out to Fr. Navarro and the others, realized that the pastors of São Bernardo, Santo André, and Ribeirão Pires had been explaining the Gospel both in Portuguese and Italian, and caring with the same concern Italians, Brazilians, Poles, Germans, and Syrians, who were entering especially the parish of São Bernardo, attracted there by the factories. Chosen at random, an issue of the parish bulletin, edited by Frs. Porrini and A. Rizzi, for the parishes of São Bernardo and Ribeirão Pires, had ten pages in Portuguese and three in Italian. The Regional Superior, Fr. Canestrini, had twice visited São Bernardo without previous notice and had found Fr. Navarro preaching in Portuguese. Actually, the Archbishop had not visited those parishes in years; the last time confirmation was administered at São Bernardo was in 1920 by a delegated canon.

Archbishop Cicognani underlined also the need of assigning an assistant to Fr. Navarro, because the parish was already up to 9,000, it was 40 kilometers long, and 30 kilometers wide in some points. It had 14 missions, 5 to 6 kilometers from each other. Fr. A. Antonelli went there as assistant in 1928, and was replaced by Fr. Pietro Rigo in 1929. Important restoration works were done on the church between 1925 and 1928 at the cost of 60 "contos". In 1928 the population had already grown to 12,000. Fr. Navarro, who had been appointed Regional Superior since 1929, moved to the church of Santo Antonio in downtown São Paulo on July 5, 1934, and was succeeded by Fr. Carlo Porrini, who remained there until April 1937, when he returned to Italy. Fr. Porrini brought many changes to the church:

"He closed up doors; opened new windows, demolished walls, raised arches, remodeled the facade of the church and had a new entry to the choir-loft built. Out of this courageous reform came a well aired and lighted church, with the addition of two

⁴⁰ Navarro, "Origine e sviluppo della Parrocchia di San Bernardo", "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. XVII, n. 3 (July-Sept. 1923), pp. 24-27.

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new chapels (...). He founded the school of St. Joseph, entrusting its direction to the Pallottine Sisters. The school has an attendance of 150 day students. On January 31, 1937, he blessed the cornerstone of the new school buildings, a munificent gift of the rich industrialist Mr. Italo Setti."⁴¹

Fr. Porrini was succeeded by Fr. Girolamo Angeli, who built the large parish hall and promoted the general renewal of the Catholic associations.

4. The Parish of Santo André

In March 1920, Fr. Luigi Capra was succeeded as pastor of Santo André by Fr. Augusto Rizzi. On November 14, the delegate of the Archbishop administered Confirmation to 676 parishioners. In giving a report of it, Fr. Rizzi added:

*"With the coming month of December, or in the beginning of next year at the latest, work will start on the new church that had been held up following the passing of the late Fr. Luigi Capra. With these works in progress, I have plans for the realization of another work with God's help and with the cooperation of my parishioners, that is, to call in the Sisters and place them at the direction of the kindergarten and of the Catholic Center for women. This is all in the plans, so far: what we have done in this regard is the purchase of the needed land: it has an extension of about 5,000 square meters."*⁴²

The Superior General, Fr. Chenuil, in the visitation he made in early 1923, had the following to say about the parish of Santo André:

"The city has now about 2,000 families, while the other suburbs of Saint Gaetano, Pilar and Santa Cruz have about 1,500 more. Fr. Rizzi is very zealous and active; but he cannot cope all alone with so much work and has need of an assistant. In the meantime thought has been given to the erecting of another parish in the suburb of São Gaetano, that boasts already a beautiful church and a modest residence for the priest. The formation of this new parish has been entrusted to Fr. Giuliani. During last year, the parish of Santo André recorded 500 baptisms and 100 weddings. There are various confraternities such as the Apostleship of Prayer with 1,700 members, 200 men and 1,500 women; the Children of Mary, 300 strong; the Society of St. Aloysius with 150 members; the association of the Ladies of Charity, with 100 associates. Communions were about 15,000."⁴³

In 1920, 385 baptisms and 59 weddings were administered. The population was mostly made up of workers and was fast growing. For this reason Fr. Rizzi kept asking for an assistant, but only in 1925 he could have Fr. Porrini's help from February to August. Fr. Pietro Negri was assigned to him in 1926.

In 1927, Fr. Rizzi could already boast quite a few accomplishments: he had raised by more than a meter and restored the parish church; he had built the rectory at its side; the construction of the new mission church of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel was well underway, a donation of Mr. Bernardino Queiroz dos Santos; close to it he had constructed the first section of the school, titled "Education Centre Fr. Luigi Capra", with six classrooms and capacity for 540

⁴¹ Sofia, "Missioni Scalabriniane in America", (Rome 1939) pp. 161-162.

⁴² A. Rizzi to Rinaldi, Santo André, November 1920 (Arch. G.S., 391/3).

⁴³ Chenuil, "Breve relazione, etc." cfr. above.

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children, and the convent for six Salesian Sisters; he was building a large theatre-meeting hall for parish gatherings and meetings; he had founded on March 19, 1925, the Charitable Society "Cristoforo Colombo" for the religious and social development of the parish.⁴⁴

Another piece of land, 3,000 square meters in size, had been purchased for the "Fr. Luigi Capra Center". Work on it was started in 1925 after a project of Architect Achille Pallini and of Fr. Rizzi himself. The Salesian Sisters took residence in it on June 19, 1927, and classes began on July 14 with 250 students. Founded by Fr. Capra, the monthly "Mensagem Paroquial" began publications in 1925. But it lasted only two years.

On July 7, 1928, Fr. Porrini was named rector of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and so Fr. Rizzi was relieved in part of an excess of work that had affected his health. Fr. Rizzi resigned the parish on August 20, 1931. Fr. Porrini was then named pastor, but kept residing at the Carmel Church, while Fr. Giuseppe Mottino was appointed as his assistant, with residence by the parish church. Fr. Mottino's place was taken by Fr. Giuseppe Chiappa from early 1932 till November.

Besides caring for the construction of the Church of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Fr. Porrini busied himself also with erecting mission chapels in the various sections of the parish: on August 14, 1932 he laid the foundation stone of St. Anthony mission at Vila Alpina; on March 30, 1933 he blessed the new chapel of the Sacred Heart in the property of Dr. Erasmo de Assunção, and on May 21 of the same year he blessed the chapel of St. Teresa in the neighborhood, that later on took that name.

On December 4, 1932, Fr. Milini took possession of the parish of Santo André:

"Upon entering the parish that Fr. Augusto Rizzi organized and directed for many years, I have found a good religious set-up, represented by the Apostleship of Prayer, Pious Union of the Children of Mary, and the Association of St. Aloysius.

The Mother Church of S. André (there is also in the parish the new Church of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, directed by Fr. Porrini) is rather small for the population, but in such good state as not to have us plan any substitution, until the debt of 20 'contos' weighing on the church is paid. The house, instead, is in excellent condition (...). Another serious problem comes from the 'Pe. Luiz Capra' day school, where the parish school and kindergarten are housed. The institution is due to Fr. Rizzi, who because of the prevailing crisis had to complete the building with a debt of 30 'contos' and an added mortgage of another 100 'contos'. The mortgage is due to expire next April, and we do not know as yet how to extinguish it, for the reason that the parish revenues are hardly enough to pay the Sisters' salaries, and not always the interest. And so, I am afraid to have to witness the public auction of an institution that cost our Fathers and a whole parish so much hardship and sacrifice, and see it handed over to the highest bidder.

Such in a word is the situation in which I find myself, without mentioning the

⁴⁴ Canestrini to Card. De Lai, São Paulo, August 30, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 391/3).

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burden of the responsibility weighing on me for more than 20,000 parishioners, not all of them Catholic, and even these, living in a context being corrupted by the not so good emissaries of different parties."⁴⁵

All attempts to save the "Day School" were in vain: a few years later it was handed over to the Salesian Sisters. In order to keep in contact with the working classes, Fr. Milini reorganized the "Cristoforo Colombo" charitable society, for which he thought of building a social center. The cornerstone was laid on October 22, 1933, and the center was dedicated on April 8, 1934. In January of the same year, the "*Mensageiro Paroquial*" resumed publication for 1,000 subscribers. In view of the 25th anniversary of the parish to the Fall of 1936, extensive restoration works were done in the parish church.

Fr. Porrini was transferred to the parish of São Bernardo. His place at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel was taken by Fr. Mario Rimondi. In June of 1935, Fr. Milini was accorded another assistant, Fr. Luigi Corso, replaced a year later by Fr. Fiorente Elena, when he was appointed to Santa Felicidade in Paraná. To assist Fr. Rimondi was sent Fr. Girolamo Angeli. Favored by the presence of four priests it became possible to intensify the religious activities of that difficult parish of 25,000 people, and a sensible increase of attendance to Mass and the sacraments was soon noticed, together with a rebirth of the parish associations. In addition, they were able to provide more regular religious services for the various chapels, especially for that of Mauá. On October 23, 1933, Fr. Milini had the association of the "Saint Teresinha" Ladies of Charity canonically approved. It had been founded in 1922 by Fr. A. Rizzi. This association merited very highly in taking upon itself responsibility for the support of the "Fr. Luigi Capra School". On May 24, 1934, he founded the Marian Congregation for the young, named after the "Aparecida and Santo André". February 24, 1935 marks the "Christian Mothers'" turn, and on July 7 of the same year, the "Conference of Saint Vincent" began functioning.⁴⁶

Provincial Superior since August 1935, and strongly involved by now in the organization of the new parish of Our Lady of Peace in São Paulo, Fr. Milini asked in 1937 to be relieved of the direction of the parish of Santo André, which was assigned to Fr. Giuseppe Foscallo, called in from Rio Grande do Sul. He made his entry on November 21, 1937.

In October 1939, Fr. Foscallo asked Archbishop Gaspar de Alfonseca e Silva of São Paulo for permission to divide the parish in two, thus creating the chapel of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel into a parish. This way he was fulfilling - we do not how aware he was of it - the desire oftentimes expressed by the Archbishop. As visitator of the Scalabrinian missions of Brazil, Fr. Tironbola had been received in audience a year and a half before by the Archbishop and had given the following report:

"In regard to the parish of S. André he clearly told me that in due time - he did not set any definite date as yet - he will reserve his full right to entrust the

⁴⁵ Milini to Card. Rossi, Santo André, December 30, 1932 (Arch. G.S., 391/5).

⁴⁶ Cf. "A Paroquia de S. André" no seu 25º ano. Numero extraordinario do Mensageiro Paroquial, s. 6, #60.-61 (November-December 1936).

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parish to a diocesan priest, and with this he had no intention to antagonize the Scalabrinians, etc... as he is only availing himself of his right, etc."⁴⁷

On December 26, 1939, Fr. Milini wrote to Cardinal Rossi:

*"In an audience granted to the superiors of the Pious Society, Archbishop Dom José Gaspar de Alfonseca e Silva of São Paulo, after congratulating them for the new enterprise, the erection of the Church of N. Sra. da Paz, which he approved and blessed, made us understand that it was his intention to detach from our parish of Santo André the Church of O.L. of Mt. Carmel, presently directed by Fathers Rimondi and Elena, to make it a parish, which he did not deem opportune, however, to have in our hands. As though to confirm this, a few days later, Msgr. Vicar General invited me to call on the Chancery for suggestions on how the division should be made."*⁴⁸

Fr. Milini asked the Archbishop to delay the measure also because of pending financial disputes; but he did not receive any response. On February 12, 1940, he had to notify the following:

*"I must inform you that, disregarding altogether my report and without deigning to give me previous notice, the Archbishop of São Paulo has created today the parish of O.L. of Mt. Carmel in Santo André, ordering me to remove Frs. Rimondi and Elena so as to be able to entrust it to a priest of his own diocese."*⁴⁹

A few days later he added:

"The people who well know how much our Congregation has done in that place, rebelled against the sudden action of the Archbishop of São Paulo, and while continuing to give signs of love for our priests, they have adopted an attitude of near hostility to the new pastor. Because of this, the Archbishop had me summoned by the Vicar General to warn me that we were responsible for the disorders, and that he would be ready also to suspend some other Father should it become necessary.

*As his first retaliation, the Archbishop will no longer turn into a parish the territory where we will build the Church of Our Lady of Peace, as he had previously promised, so as to make it possible for me to place the Fathers that were to be taken away from the Church of O.L. of Mt. Carmel in S. André."*⁵⁰

The threats of the Archbishop were retracted following an intervention of Card. Rossi and the good offices of the Apostolic Nuncio, who had been solicited by the same Cardinal to take care of the matter for a solution of the dispute.

Besides, the parish of O.L. of Mt. Carmel, which in 1954 became the Cathedral of the new diocese of Santo André, the Archbishop Alfonseca e Silva detached from the parish of Santo André the churches of the Senhor do Bom Fim at the Park of Nations, Santa Teresinha, and Blessed Ignatius of Vila Alpina. All measures made necessary by the large increase of the population. The parish of São Gaetano had already been detached in 1924; in the last years it had been taken care of by the missionaries of the orphanage together with

⁴⁷ Relazione della visita fatta C....) alle missioni Scalabriniane del Brasile dal P. F. Tirondola," (January 6 to May 13, 1938) (Arch. G.S., 368/4).

⁴⁸ Milini to Card. Rossi, São Paulo, December 26, 1939 (Arch. G.S., 410/1).

⁴⁹ Milini to Card. Rossi, São Paulo, February 12, 1940 (Arch. G.S., 410/1).

⁵⁰ Milini to Card. Rossi, São Paulo, February 21, 1940 (Arch. G.S., 410/1).

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the pastor of Santo André, especially by Fr. Corrado Stefani, Fr. Silvano Giuliani, and Fr. Eugenio Medicheschi for the last months. The parish of São Caetano was assigned to the Stigmatines. Scalabrinians terminated their presence of 28 years in São Caetano with the last services celebrated on December 22, 1923.

5. São José Parish in Ribeirão Pires

Fr. Salvatore Leonardi, newly arrived from Italy on March 26, was appointed pastor of Ribeirão Pires on April 2, 1921. He was 50 and had been pastor for 24 years in Mariano in the Diocese of Piacenza,. In 1922 he wrote:

"By God's help, I am satisfied with the parish given me, and neither have I any contrast with my parishioners. It is a rather large one: it measures at least 600 square kilometers. I had Fr. Porrini provide me with a portable altar to enable me to go and say Mass at the farthest corners of the parish at least once a year. I recall that on the first day of my ministry in Ribeirão Pires a young bride and a girl came up to me who had never heard Mass or seen a priest. They heard then their first Mass and made their First Communion. There is the need of a rectory at Ribeirão Pires, São Bernardo-Station, and São Caetano; we will try our best about this, but it is hard as of now to collect the funds we need."⁵¹

In December 1922, Fr. Leonardi was transferred to Santa Felicidade, Paraná, and on January 10, 1923, Fr. Carlo Porrini, who had passed from the Province of Rio Grande do Sul over to that of São Paulo, was called to succeed him as pastor of Ribeirão Pires. He had been assisting, from June 29, 1919 till January 1, 1923, Canon Igino de Campos, pastor of Jundiaí (SP) in charge of the care of the many Italians of that city, especially of the 600 families, almost all from Veneto in the Barão de Jundiaí colony.

The Societies of the Children of Mary with 100 members, Christian Mothers with 50, and Pages of St. Aloysius with 30 boys were founded on December 8, 1923. Restored and enlarged, the rectory was dedicated on July 16 of the same year. Extensive improvements were also wrought on the church which was thus redecorated and enriched with the altars of the Sacred Heart and of the Blessed Mother. In the beginnings of Fr. Porrini's tenure, the Superior General, Fr. Chenuil had remarked in the report of his visitation:

"The town has 200 families, mostly Italian; they are not as fervent, however, in the practice of their religion as those of the parishes of Santo André and São Bernardo. Last year there were 200 baptisms, 30 marriages, and some 2,000 communions. There are various communities and chapels scattered throughout the countryside, like those of Alto da Serra with 200 families, almost all of them Brazilian; Rio Grande with 50 families; Campo Grande with 10 families; Pilar Estação with 50 families; Pilar Velho with 50 families; and Santa Ana with 30 families. The moral and financial conditions of this parish are not as flourishing as those of the other two parishes, because its people had been neglected for too long."⁵²

⁵¹ Leonardi to Rinaldi, Ribeirão Pires, July 19, 1922 (Arch. G.S., 383/4).

⁵² Chenuil, "Breve relazione, etc...., cfr. above.

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From November 1, 1924, to October 28, 1925, the parish was directed by Fr. Pietro Negri. On November 1, 1925 Fr. Porrini returned, after having been for a while assistant to sickly Fr. Augusto Rizzi at Santo André. From March 19 to May 10, 1926, Fr. Negri was in charge again, and from this date until July of 1928 it was once more Fr. Porrini's turn. In a report to Archbishop Cicognani, on his Apostolic Visitation of August 25, 1926, Fr. Porrini stated:

"The religious life is fair. It could be better if the pastor had to care only for the town of Ribeirão Pires, but parish's vast extension demands his presence, especially in Alto da Serra. This is a community of laborers employed with the English Railroad Co. (São Paulo - Santos). It numbers 4,000 souls (Portuguese, Spaniards, Brazilians...very few Italians). There is a little church and small room for the priest. I travel to Alto da Serra three Sundays a month and on the days when the Mass is ordered by the faithful. On Sunday I leave by train at 6:30, arriving at 7:15. I say Mass at 8, returning at 9 for the second Mass at Ribeirão Pires. And so it is not possible for me to carry on a satisfactory ministry: in fact, on Sunday, the faithful of Ribeirão Pires cannot go to confession at the most convenient hours between 6 and 9, and neither is it possible to do so for those of Alto da Serra, because my stay there lasts only an hour, and sometimes that does not even give me enough time to perform the baptisms (...).

In my modest opinion, the parish of Ribeirão Pires should be divided in two: Ribeirão Pires and Alto da Serra. The first would retain Pilar-Station, N. Sr. do Pilar, Santa Ana, Ouro Fino, St. Anthony (7,000 souls). The latter could have Río Grande, Campo Grande, and Taquarussu (5,000 souls). Should not the division be considered practical, at least another priest will be needed. Alto da Serra absolutely cannot go on with a miserable religious assistance like this: Spiritism and Protestantism have inflicted their toll already. Should we not urgently provide, those people will suffer the total loss of their Catholic religion."⁵³

Archbishop Cicognani opted for the appointment of an assistant: Fr. Marco Simoni was assigned to this post, but he continued to reside at the Orphanage "Cristoforo Colombo", going to Alto da Serra (today's Paranapiacaba) on feast days.

The report of 1927 registered 200 baptisms, 40 weddings, 120 first communions, and about 6,000 communions.

On July 7, 1928, Fr. Marco Simoni was appointed Pastor of Ribeirão Pires, and Fr. Porrini was transferred to the church of Mt. Carmel in Santo André. Fr. Simoni took residence at Ribeirão Pires and on feast days he had the help of Fr. Sblandiano Simoni. Fr. Marco was 61 already when he was made a pastor. He headed the parish till 1941, and in spite of his advanced age he succeeded in carrying on an intense activity notwithstanding the great distances he had to run to reach the various chapels. He founded the association of St. Teresinha and the Sodality of St. Mary; rebuilt the roof of the church; but he must be credited above all for the founding of the kindergarten "Nerina and Adolfa Ugliengo", thanks to the generosity of Comm. Ugliengo. Kindergarten and

⁵³ Porrini "Relatorio della Parrocchia di Ribeirão Pires, August 27, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 383/6).

school were entrusted to the Daughters of St. Joseph in early 1932.

6. The Parish of Our Lady of the Assumption in Cascalho.

Here is what the Superior General Fr. Chenuil, in the report of his visitation conducted in 1923, wrote about the parish of the Assumption at Cascalho directed by Fr. Luigi Stefanello since 1911:

"This town has a population of only 40 families, with only one mission dedicated to Santa Teresa which numbers 30 more families. Last year there were 145 baptisms, 17 weddings, and about 4,000 communions. The Pastor, Fr. Luigi Stefanello is zealous and active, and his parishioners, almost all Venetians like him, respect and love him. The Church has been enlarged and embellished a little, but the rectory, the same old one, is small and shabby. All parishioners are property owners, hardworking colonists, and practicing Catholics, so good that none can be found who does not make his Easter duty."⁵⁴

Due to its smallness and isolation, the parish of Cascalho was called into question from time to time, but the Bishop of Campinas pleaded that it not be abandoned, because he did not have anyone to replace the pastor; on the other hand, Bishop and people were happy with Fr. Stefanello. In 1929, the Regional Superior, Fr. Navarro, wrote:

"I have visited this parish, very distant from São Paulo, on September 28-29 of this year 1929, on the occasion of the pastoral visitation of the diocesan bishop. He remained very satisfied with this small parish both for the rectory and the works underway on a new church. He left written on the parish Register beautiful words of high praise. He also stated to me that if Fr. Stefanello were not there, he would not know what other Father to assign to it, because the parish is too poor to make a living from it. The fact is that Fr. Stefanello is well loved, gives a helping hand to other parishes around, and so he gets by fairly well."⁵⁵

It seems as though the church was completed in 1936 with a bell-tower 35 meters in height. The body of the structure is 35 meters long, 18 wide, with three naves.

7. Early beginnings of the Parish of N. Sra. da Paz, São Paulo

In retracing the early history of the parish titled to Our Lady of Peace in São Paulo, Fr. Milini, its founder, offered the following observations on the activities carried on at that time by the Scalabrinians in the State of São Paulo:

"This work was not enough, however, for the spiritual needs presented in São Paulo by our steadily growing community. It became necessary to create a center of action, where a true and genuine apostolate could be carried on with a wide range of activities subdivided in various sectors, so as to reach our Italians in their various needs, in whichever part of the city they may be found. And so the idea was born of a church for Italians. With the blessing of

⁵⁴ Chenuil, "Breve relazione, etc...", cfr. above.

⁵⁵ Navarro to Card. Rossi, São Bernardo, December 9, 1930 (Arch. G.S., 403).

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the major superiors of the Scalabrinian Pious Society and approved by the Church Authorities of São Paulo, this initiative took hold in 1936 with the purchase of a large piece of land on Glicerio Street where in 1940 the foundation stone was laid of that construction that was to be and is the life center of the whole movement, the Church dedicated to Our Lady of Peace.

With the effective help of Countess Elizabeth Castruccio, this writer had in those three years of fervent preparation the opportunity to organize a religious association titled to Our Lady of Peace, in which to unite the ladies of the most important families of the Italian community of São Paulo. These associated ladies, presently presided over by Countess Marina Regoli Crespi, who has also become our most generous benefactress, were the ones who provided us with the first means needed to build the church (...).

But the program of assistance we want to offer our community is of quite wider proportions and is based on a series of structures that may really give us the opportunities for contacts and open the way to arrive at the souls of all. According to plans, schools are to be built for all courses from elementary to higher grades, with night classes for the children of laborers. Charitable organizations for helping the poor will be set up: how many Italians feel overpowered in their struggle for life! The working classes will have access to relief organization of a juridical, social, medical, and recreational nature so that they may not be swept away by other currents. Among the structures of the Church of Our Lady of Peace there must be found room for an organization fit to face the problems of an eventual immigration."⁵⁶

In July 1936, Fr. Milini had sent a "memorandum" to the Archbishop of São Paulo:

"Desiring to achieve its main purpose, which is the spiritual assistance to Italian emigrants in the city of São Paulo, the Pious Society of the Missionaries of St. Charles comes to Your Most Reverend and Illustrious Lordship in the person of its Regional Superior to humbly express its intentions, as follows:

- a) The erection of a religious house of its own to serve as residence for the missionaries with permission to install in it the headquarters of the institutions the Congregation intends to organize.
- b) The building of a church in which to organize the religious assistance not in a parochial form, but as a Catholic social action, not limited to a territory but that may extend to all elements of the Italian community so to draw Italians to attend Sunday masses; to listen to special instructions (that is, made for them in our language); to fulfill their Easter duty, etc. The Fathers will have the right, besides, to visit the various Italian associations or institutions, and to carry out their propaganda by means of the press, radio stations, and all those means that may be necessary for arriving at the moral education of consciences and for having these people also participate in the Catholic life.
- c) The construction of the headquarters for a future organization of Catholic action among Italians themselves with a theatre and all those departments that will be needed by the association itself.
- d) The founding of a school for children, but especially for gathering in it our

⁵⁶ Milini, "Relazione" (Arch. G.S., 110/10).

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fellow countrymen in need of instruction.

e) The opening of a dispensary for the help of poor families.

To the Archbishop I pointed out the need that this institution be located in a rather central place and that an area of no less than six or seven thousand square meters will be necessary. The needed funds will be supplied by the modest resources of the Congregation and by the offerings of the Italian community itself.

Lastly, it is hereby stated that the Congregation, while willing to cooperate with the Italian authorities, shall abstain from any political connections that might hinder its scope: the salvation of souls and the spreading of the Kingdom of Christ in this great nation for whose progress our religiously formed Italians will certainly concur."⁵⁷

Archbishop Duarte Leopoldo e Silva granted with no restriction the permission to build the religious house and the church.⁵⁸ The land was bought in September of the same year 1936:

"Yesterday I have concluded the deal for the purchase of the land on which will rise our new institution: the church for the Italians of São Paulo. The area is 50 meters by 90, bounded by roads on three sides; it is located in an almost central section (some twenty minute walk from the Cathedral) including at the same time also the most important zones inhabited by Italians; the total cost amounts to 450 contos (something like 500 thousand Italian liras of 1936), plus an interest of 6%; payments are to be made in installments of 90 contos every six months (...). As the revenues of the Province will not be enough, we will need then to have recourse to the generosity of our colony of São Paulo.

So that this may be done with some success, I would have plans for the forming of a committee from among the best of our elements, sponsored by the excellent lady Countess Elizabeth Adamoer Castruccio, wife of our General Consul, Comm. Giuseppe Castruccio, who has also pledged his whole support for this praiseworthy enterprise."⁵⁹

A publicity campaign for the initiative was launched in July 1937, the press announced the forthcoming construction of the "Church of the Italians" and an appeal was made for the cooperation of the public.

"Not all doors were opened to the touch of the 'magic wand' and reality appeared harder than one would expect. Difficulties on the part of the government were not lacking in granting the permits needed to build a church for an alien community (or Italian rather, as the other communities had already a church of their own). But the one who, in difficult times had noted in his diary "*my trust is in God and not in man,*" did not become discouraged. And, he got down to work again in silence and almost in hiding; a very active campaign was organized, without ostentation and the usual decantation of the press (...). Following a year of almost complete silence, the press woke up to discussing topics concerning the church about which there had been much talk. But there is some change to it: no mention is made any more of a church for Italians, but of the Church of Our Lady of Peace. A change of program, of

⁵⁷ Milini, to Card. Rossi, Santo André, July 22, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 394/1).

⁵⁸ Milini, to Card. Rossi, Santo André, July 8, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 361/2).

⁵⁹ Milini, to Card. Rossi, Santo André, September 29, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 394/1).

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scope, of collaborators? It does not seem so; in fact, the contrary can be stated."⁶⁰

The association of Our Lady of Peace was founded on June 2, 1938, and canonically erected by the coadjutor Bishop José Gaspar de Alfonseca e Silva on the following October 31, with temporary headquarters at the Church of Santo Antonio. Another piece of land contiguous with the first one was purchased at the same time to prevent the rising of other buildings alongside the church. And so the property reached the area of 10 thousand square meters.

Presented in 1937, the first project met with a variety of criticism and much perplexity on the part of Card. Rossi, who kept on recommending prudence and moderation, in view of the critical financial state of the Province of São Paulo. By the end of 1938, Fr. Milini wrote to him:

"It's about time that after erecting and organizing the Association of Our Lady of Peace we begin to have its members work for main scope for which it was founded: 'cooperation in the construction of our Church that shall always be the Church of the Italians in São Paulo.'

All things considered, I think we should discard the first project, of which Your Eminence has the drawings, a grandiose and monumental one that could be realized only if our colony were in a condition to freely and openly devote itself to this enterprise. Now that we have to work on another level and with a certain urgency, we must think about something more modest. And so we had another project made whose drawings Your Eminence must have received by now. Though still contemplating a church of not so small proportions, the architect attained himself to utmost simplicity, but not without a certain artistic taste at least for the equilibrium between masses and harmony of lines. In addition, it seems to me that the architect has given the construction and elegant modern style without getting away from the traditional Italian Romanic style while avoiding the usual imitations that give life to anachronistic styles of bad taste. As to the rest, like the set-up of the naves and chapels, measurements, decoration arrangements respondent to the architecture, etc...; I do not deem it necessary to come to the details because Your Most Rev. Eminence will be able to see them all in the drawings and photos.

Should Your Eminence deem it opportune to choose this second project, kindly let me know, adding all the observations you should judge fitting. I shall then urge the Associates of Our Lady of Peace to start work by organizing a first propaganda campaign for the collection of the funds necessary to begin work on the building."⁶¹

Signed by Architects Pettini and Pennacchi, the second project anticipated a church of 1,500 square meters with 3,000 seats. Work was entrusted to the "Salfati and Buchignani" firm. In September 1939, Fr. Milini presented also the project for the residence that was contemplating living quarters for 17 religious, a sacristy, and meeting halls. In November he reported:

"The campaign for the construction of our church in São Paulo has grossed 60

⁶⁰ Mensageiro de N.S. da Paz, December 1950, p. 7.

⁶¹ Milini to Card. Rossi, São Paulo, December 21, 1938 (Arch. G.S., 394/1).

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contos, to which must be added the donation of Countess Philomena Matarazzo who has pledged 25 contos. I am still waiting for the donation of Countess Crespi, who has promised not to be less generous than the Matarazzos. And so by the end of this year we will have realized about 100 contos, as are enough to start something: the enterprise is favorably looked upon also by the new Archbishop of São Paulo."⁶²

We have already seen how shortly afterwards the good relations with the new Archbishop Gaspar de Alfonseca e Silva were marred by the dispute over the division of the parish of Santo André and the assignment of the new parish of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel to the diocesan clergy. After a particular stormy period, due to the fact that the Archbishop had stated that he would no longer grant permission for the erection of the parish of Our Lady of Peace, the waters grew calm:

"On March 24 last, His Most Reverend and Illustrious Excellency, the Archbishop of São Paulo has created the parish of Our Lady of Peace as a compensation for the loss of the church of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Santo André. All things considered, even though the territory assigned to us is not very extended, I still deem it proper to accept it: at least we will have a free field of action. The Venerable Curia urges us besides to build on that property a provisional chapel so that the new pastor may soon be residing there. We are of the opinion that the desires of the Venerable Curia of São Paulo be followed, unless Your Eminence may have something to the contrary (...).

We are asking ourselves rather whether it would not be the case for soliciting of the church authorities of São Paulo some guarantees: that is, that the parish will be assigned to us for good, for the reason that the church and its premises belong to the Pious Society."⁶³

Cardinal Rossi sent back the following reply:

"His Excellency himself informed me he has erected this new parish. You have certainly thanked him, I hope. Under certain aspects the new parish could remain independent as a church for Italians, but if it was judged better this way, so be it. You plan to propose Fr. Rimondi as the new pastor! It is okay with me, but make sure that after the incident of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel this dear Father be acceptable to the diocesan authorities.

Another thing, and an important one! I have always approved the project as you described it to me, but I have steadily recommended prudence as to finances. Do not venture ahead if you do not have the money, and do everything with calm, wisdom, well founded estimates, and keep me informed, as is required after all by Canon Law and the Constitutions. Besides, draw an insurance policy on the property. The Pious Society has invested a good capital on the land: you shall let me know the exact amount. However, the constructions shall be raised with the offerings of the faithful, who in turn belong to the diocese, not to the Pious Society. We will have a property with two owners. Something that has to be immediately well defined to avoid disputes when it will be impossible to correct them. Let's hope His Excellency may grant you the parish "pleno jure". As of now, I do not know! But it seems to me that things should be made clear. I wrote

⁶² Milini to Card. Rossi, São Paulo, November 14, 1939 (Arch. G.S., 361/5).

⁶³ Milini to Card. Rossi, São Paulo, April 24, 1940 (Arch. G.S., 394/1).

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His Excellency in support of the "pleno jure". But I insist that you get busy to make sure that it may result as the property of the Pious Society. The "pleno jure" is a beautiful thing, but this is not all. And, indeed, should this be taken away one day because of exceptional circumstances or by decisions from higher authorities, the Pious Society would then have to lose everything it has invested in the land or in anything else."⁶⁴

The Archbishop assigned the parish of Our Lady of Peace to the Scalabrinian Congregation "*ad nutum Sanctae Sedis*", an expression, as he himself explained it, he preferred to adopt so as to avoid contestations on the part of civil authorities, but which was the equivalent of "*pleno jure*". On March 29, 1940, the Archbishop named Fr. Mario Rimondi as pastor, who did not make his entry right away, for lack of a proper residence. He celebrated the first Mass on the first Sunday of July in the little chapel of the Holy Cross at Conte de Sarzedas Squar, that served the spiritual needs of the parish for the first two months. On August 21, the Mass was celebrated for the first time in a provisional wooden chapel, built on the land of the future church and blessed by the Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Aloisi Masella. On September 8, Fr. Rimondi was officially installed in the parish by Vicar General Msgr. Ernesto De Paula, later Bishop of Piracicaba. By that time the digging for the laying of the foundation stone had already been started: it was blessed by the Archbishop on October 20, following a procession that had carried the statue of Our Lady of Peace, the work and a gift of sculptor M. Del Favero, from the church of Santo Antonio.

⁶⁴ Card. Rossi to Milini, Rome, June 1, 1940 (Arch. G.S., 361/6).

CHAPTER XIII

Our Missions in the State of Paraná

1. Santa Felicidade

Fr. Silvano Giuliani was pastor of Santa Felicidade from 1919 until 1922. He rebuilt the entrance staircase and reinforced the foundations weakened by the lowering of the street's level. In regard to his visitation of 1923, Fr. Chenuil wrote:

"Together, town and villages count about 3,000 families. Among the Confraternities the following are represented: Blessed Sacrament with 150 members; Apostleship of prayer, 250; Conference of St. Vincent de Paul, 50; Children of Mary, 80; and the Third Order of St. Francis, 40 members. There were (in 1922) 130 baptisms, 25 weddings, and about 9,000 Communions. We have in this parish two priests, Fr. Salvatore Leonardi, pastor, and Fr. Pietro Negri, assistant. During the week both reside at Santa Felicidade, while one goes to the mission of Campo Comprido on Sunday. This is an important community that will soon be made a parish. There is a fine church dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes.

The main town has 105 families, while the dependent mission of Ferraria has 50 families and that of Timbotuva 45."¹

Fr. Pietro Negri had arrived to Santa Felicidade on January 3, 1922, in place of Fr. Giuliani. Fr. Salvatore Leonardi began directing the parish in early January 1923. The two priests found a very religious population but reluctant to support the church, and especially the parish school, about which Fr. Leonardi wrote:

"The kindergarten is directed by six Sisters (...). The children enlisted are 185, and their families, though not all, pay one milreis a month (...). In the past the trustees were supplying some help; but not anymore. Many families do not send their children to a Christian school not to pay the miserly amount of one milreis a month; and many who had been already sending them, will not do so anymore. What happens, then? Either the pastor supports it out of his own pocket or the schools remain closed. In Santa Felicidade a Christian school is absolutely necessary: children attending public schools do not receive any instruction or religious education (...).

I plead with Your Paternity to do what you can, that another priest be sent to Santa Felicidade so that I may be left free to collect funds not only to pay the expenses and promote other schools, but also to provide the school with a decent building. Presently, just two wooden large huts serve as a school. It is necessary, besides, that the new building may serve on Sunday as a place where to gather and entertain these neglected young people in honest

¹ Chenuil, "Breve relazione della mia visitor alle nostre missioni del Brasile dal 18 Nov. 1922 al 26 Marzo 1923" (Arch. G-S., 368/1).

amusements."²

In 1924, however, the situation got better: the trustees decided to pay the salaries to the Sisters of both school and kindergarten. In that same year there were 134 baptisms, 200 first communions, 26 weddings, 10,300 communions. The parish had a population of 3,100 souls. Fr. Leonardi began giving signs of mental unbalance and grew disliked by the people. This fact and the isolation of the two missionaries, Fathers Leonardi and Natale Pigato, pastor of Rondinha, led to call into question whether the presence of Scalabrinians should be continued in Paran . The then Provincial Superior, Fr. Preti, wrote to Fr. Martini on October 29, 1925:

*"Fr. Davide Angeli, just arrived, told me on your behalf to take provisions for the parish of Santa Felicidade, by replacing Fr. Salvadoti (sic) with another priest because the Bishop threatens to pass on or entrust the parish to the Passionists. I regret the loss of that old colony of ours, but I cannot dispose of any man now, especially because the Consistorial Congregation intends to discontinue the system of leaving the priests isolated as is the case in this parish, because it is a source of great evils, and so much so that, all things considered, it is still preferable, after all, to lose the place."*³

Fr. Martini pointed out to Card. De Lai:

"In my opinion, I deem it a mistake and a dishonor to abandon it. To me, the reasons given by the Superiors do not hold. It's true: Santa Felicidade is 27 kilometers away from Rondinha - where we have another residence - but it is only 4 kilometers from a Polish parish with a Passionist priest, and just another 6 from Curitiba; all places accessible also by car.

*The Bishop did not make any threats at all; he only wrote that that priest has to be removed because he is disliked by the people. And that's the way it is indeed."*⁴

In 1925 there were 115 baptisms, 85 First Communions, 24 marriages, and 14,500 communions. In early 1926, the new Provincial Superior, Fr. Canestrini, went there in person to find out for himself what the situation was in Santa Felicidade. The Bishop of Curitiba insisted on the removal of Fr. Leonardi, by then hopelessly insane, and requested the return of Fr. Giuseppe Martini, who in spite of his 67 years of age and his poor health, assumed once more the direction of that parish on May 13, 1926.

In his visitation of September 7, 1926, Archbishop Cicognani was impressed by the popularity and exemplary life of Fr. Martini, but he noticed at the same time that his health conditions only allowed him to care for the central town, while the faithful of the chapels, who wanted a priest were neglected. He advised, therefore, to send another two missionaries, one of whom was to take the place of Fr. Natale Pigato at Rondinha, who had died almost suddenly on September 11. He was decidedly of the opinion that the parishes of Paran  should be retained. Fr. Giorgio Bertolero, newly admitted into the

² Leonardi to Cimino, Santa Felicidade, October 14, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 20/1).

³ Preti to Martini, Dois Ligeiros, October 29, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 390/9).

⁴ Martini to Card. De Lai, S o Paulo, November 13, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 390/9).

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Congregation, was sent to help Fr. Martini in October 1926, and the parish was entrusted to him at the end of 1927, when Fr. Martini fell sick. In February 1928, on the occasion of the 50th of the parish, the enlargement of the parish church, lengthened of one arch and given with a new façade, was inaugurated. From March 1928 to December 1929, Fr. Bertolero had Fr. Pietro Rigo as his assistant. Fr. Bertolero abandoned the parish in July 1930. At that time he had the assistance of Fr. Giovanni Morelli. The Provincial Superior decided that the latter should take the parish of Rondinha and that Fathers Rigo and Giovanni Mottino should care for that of Santa Felicidade. Fr. Mottino was made pastor in August 21, and then Fr. Pietro Rigo in April 1931, with Fr. Severino Fey as his assistant. For some time then, the Fathers were being helped by Bro. Angelo Gheno.

In 1932 the parish of Santa Felicidade had about 6,000 people and it included the mission chapels of Campo Comprido, Ferraria, Gabriela, Neu-Roemerstadt (Romastaque), Mossanguê, S. Biagio, Monte Berico, Passaúna.

Among Fr. Rigo's accomplishments we must mention the construction of a new building for the school, the restoration and decoration of the church, and the remodeling of the rectory. In 1936, Fr. Milini reported:

"Santa Felicidade: it is still our largest parish of Paraná. The Colony does not exceed 3,000 people in all; steadily in good order it is sufficiently well organized. Only concern is that some chapels (as Campo Comprido and Ferraria) would need better attention because of their importance; but this is not possible at the present time.

All problems would be solved if we only could fix our residence in Curitiba, with which the parishes might have easy connections. In such case the Fathers could then branch out on Sunday and feast days from the central house to bring help to parishes. But this will not be possible till the new enterprise of São Paulo will be well underway.

As to the material help which Paraná can supply, there is little hope, as Your Eminence will already have noticed in the various reports; to save the little they do the Fathers must live miserably and make great sacrifices. These are places of a far off future. On the other hand, they are also the ones that best respond to our scope. In the week I spent there I relived the days I had been in the Venetian countryside."⁵

In 1936-1937, the new Archbishop of Curitiba, His Excellency Attico Eusébio da Rocha, proceeded to a new set-up of the parishes: strangely, the city of Curitiba and all the surrounding towns formed until then one juridical parish, that of the cathedral. And so Santa Felicidade, Rondinha, and all the other communities we have called parishes, for the sake of simplicity, were actually only branch missions of the cathedral. Santa Felicidade was made a parish on April 2, 1937, and the following chapels were taken away from it on that occasion: Ferraria, incorporated in the parish of Rondinha; Campo Comprido, Mossanguê and Passaúna, attached to the parish of Santo Antonio di Orleans; Pilarzinho and Gabriela, assigned to the parish of Abranches. Fr. Milini

⁵ Milini to Card. Rossi, Santo André, September 30, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 390/13).

observed:

"In resetting the territorial divisions of his diocese for the formation of new parishes, the Archbishop of Curitiba (Paraná) has modified our situation in those places.

He has detached Rondinha from Santa Felicidade, making it a parish. Our Fr. Morelli was allowed to continue there as pastor; Rondinha has lost in turn the chapel of Campinas, which was united with the parish of Campo Largo, directed by a diocesan priest. From Santa Felicidade he has also taken away the colony of Campo Comprido (and this is a serious loss) making it a parish with the name of 'New Orleans', directed by a Polish priest, who had been running a church so far devoted exclusively to the assistance of the Polish immigrants residing there. Your Eminence can imagine how the Italians of Campo Comprido must have felt in finding themselves dependent on a Polish priest! Protests were made; the Archbishop then thought of granting our Fr. Corso, former assistant at Santa Felicidade, also the faculty of assistant for Rondinha and Campo Comprido so to quiet down the people's feelings. Besides, he gave our Fathers permission, at the same time, for freedom of action in this parish of 'New Orleans' with all rights and revenues.

*It appears clearly, however, that these measures are only temporary in nature; and do not exclude at all the possibility of having us lose also that mission."*⁶

Fr. Domenico Carlino was named pastor of Santa Felicidade in December 1939.

2. The Parish of Rondinha

Fr. Natale Pigato had been pastor (or curate, rather) of Rondinha since December 1915 when in 1920 he wrote:

*"I wish I were thirty with today's health; I would not be afraid to work in any parish as big as the whole of Paraná. The people are good, they do not pretend of me too much, because they see that I am alone and old; it is therefore quite a comfort also for me; it urges me to continue until a breath remains in me and a drop of blood runs in my veins."*⁷

In the report of Fr. Chenuil's visitation of 1923, as Superior General, we read:

*"There is here a beautiful church, built only a few years ago, but the rectory is still made of wood and in a very poor and miserable state. Fr. Natale Pigato, from Vicenza, has been heading for long years this population, and is respected and loved by all his parishioners, all of them from the Veneto region. The main town counts some 106 families; the mission of Campinas, 66; Caratuba, 38; Río Verde, 30; and two other smaller missions with 15 families each. Among the Confraternities we find those of the Blessed Sacrament with 60 members; the Children of Mary with 60 associates. Last year, the baptisms were 172; marriages 59; funerals 17; and communions about 6,000."*⁸

In 1924, the same Fr. Chenuil transcribed for Card. De Lai a letter by Fr. Natale Pigato:

⁶ Milini to Card. Rossi, Santo André, January 16, 1937 (Arch. G.S., 390/13).

⁷ Pigato to Rinaldi, Rondinha, May 28, 1920 (Arch. G.S., 387/2).

⁸ Chenuil, "Breve relazione, etc. - Cfr. above.

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"I ask you to speak to His Eminence on my behalf so that he may help and relieve me a little. Tell him that I am an old man now, with 63 years on my shoulders, 27 of them in the missions, caring all alone for seven colonies, one of which (that of St. Charles) with 45 families. Refer to him that the colonies are growing fast, the families are more numerous than in Italy, and the "Veneti" (in fact, all of them from Vicenza) steadily ask and require the visit of the Missionary day or night, for good or for bad. The distance between the first and the last colony is 48 kilometers, and it does not represent a walk in the garden for sure, especially in rainy weather! Point out to him that there were ten missionaries here in Paraná ten years ago, while now we are only two, and old at that! If we cannot take care of the young, they will be easily lost with the ways of the Brazilian nationals or on account of amusements, etc.... with little or no attendance to Church and Sacraments.

With the passing of the few remaining old people, the chapels will be abandoned and the Missionaries will have to disappear. In order to save this mission I did all I could by helping my nephew, a cleric, and our Institute, giving whatever I was able to save of the expenditures necessary for my room, board, and clothing, and even with some sacrifice, in hope that my Superiors would send me the help of a companion so to insure the little that has been accomplished in the midst of our fellow countrymen in more than 30 years of missionary toil with the life of sacrifice and of much sweat of our Missionaries who, worn out and old, had to return to Italy and thus to abandon 5 colonies. Lastly, tell him that help is needed to strengthen this mission; not to weaken it more, so that we may not lose the field of our work and make ourselves the laughing stock of others."⁹

In 1925-1926, when the idea first began circulating to abandon the Scalabrinian positions in Paraná and the Sacred Consistorial Congregation asked the opinion of Bishop J. F. Braga of Curitiba, this is the reply received:

"Fr. Pigato has now been here for the past 30 years and works very hard. People of all nationalities think of him as a saint and I am convinced that to have him removed would mean his end."¹⁰

Fr. Pigato had the wooden chapels built of Our Lady of Grace at Alto de Ferraria and of São João in Capão (Miqueletos) in 1920, and the stone one of Campina. In 1925 he built the chapel of Río Verde Acima. He died at the age of 65 on September 11, 1926, after a one day sickness:

"On September 6 he had the visitation of Archbishop Cicognani. The 9th was all taken up by his works of ministry. On the morning of the 10th he woke up experiencing a certain malaise, but was forced to go back to bed after the Mass with very sharp pains in the stomach and persistent vomiting. A doctor was summoned and a pastor nearby assisted him from 8 in the evening to two in early morning of the 11th, when he seemed to recover, but he succumbed to his intense pains at seven in the morning. His body was brought from Rondinha to Santa Felicidade, where Fr. Martini is pastor, and there he was given the tribute of really grandiose demonstrations by the people. The funeral was celebrated by

⁹ Chenuil to Card. De Lai, Rome, August 4, 1924 (Arch. G.S., 387/2).

¹⁰ Archbishop Braga to Card. De Lai, Curitiba, January 18, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 387/2).

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*the Bishop of Curitiba on September 13, 1926.*¹¹

He was succeeded by Fr. Giorgio Bertolero until 1928, and then by Fr. Giovanni Mottino until August 20, 1930, when Fr. Giovanni Morelli arrived there from Santa Felicidade. A year later, Fr. Morelli wrote:

*"What a change this parish has undergone, from 18 years ago, when I was here as an assistant of the late Fr. Brescianini, until today! 18 years ago there were two priests here with plenty to do and enough to make a living. And now that I am alone I have hardly enough to live. Few are the months in which I save something for the Mother House. Few, very few people, frequent the Sacraments; two, three, four Sundays, one after the other, go by without seeing one single soul go to confession. Out of 90 or 100 children who should attend, I have only 15 or 20. I tried time and again to set up the Pious Union of the Children of Mary: but so far all in vain."*¹²

Fr. Morelli attempted to give an explanation of such decline:

"It is three years now that I have been living here in Paraná, and to tell the truth, I did not find among our fellow countrymen the religious practice of twenty years ago. Nowadays it is not possible to hear two Italians in any store of this state who would speak Italian. The contrary is true, instead, with the Poles and the Germans, whom I find still very religious.

*I do not know with what instructions our new Missionaries are coming here. What I see is that they immediately seek to learn the language of this country, and then even in our very churches, where Italians are 99½% of the population, they preach in Portuguese; with what fruit, only God knows. This same observation I made to Your Eminence, was told also by a Polish pastor. Whoever discards his mother tongue ends up with abandoning also his religion."*¹³

A few months later, however, he pointed out also other causes:

*"What a difference between Rio Grande and here in Paraná, or rather, to be more exact, between Nova Brescia and here at Rondinha. At Nova Brescia, with a settlement of 60 families there were 4000 or 5000 communions a year; on the other hand, here at Rondinha, with 120 families, last year there were only slightly over 1000 communions. I think that the cause of this little concern over the most important matter is found in ourselves. Apathetic as we are, how can we stir others up? Another cause is the scarcity of priests. On the 30th of this month there will take place here in Rondinha the inauguration of the bell tower with its four meter statue of Christ the King on top of it, 44 meters tall in all! Would you believe it? I wanted to have this community attend a triduum in preparation! I could not find a priest."*¹⁴

Actually, Fr. Morelli was not "apathetic", but old and run-down in health, reason why he could not attend to the chapels. In 1936, in the report of his visitation to the missions of Paraná, Fr. Milini wrote:

"Rondinha, where Fr. Giovanni Morelli resides, is a community of 135 families, encircled by the following mission chapels: Campina with 30 families; Rio Verde

¹¹ Canestrini to Card. De Lai, São Paulo, September 17, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 1603).

¹² Morelli to Rinaldi, Rondinha, August 15, 1931 (Arch. Vescov. Rieti - Carte Rinaldi).

¹³ Morelli to Card. Rossi, Rondinha, January 4, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 387/3).

¹⁴ Morelli to Rinaldi, Rondinha, October 12, 1933 (Arch. Vescov. di Rieti-Carte Rinaldi).

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30; Caratuba 90; Timbotuva 30; 2,500 people in all, scattered over a vast territory.

True, the actual pastor, by reason of advanced age and poor health, cannot fully respond to the needs of these people; on the other hand, only a young man of great spirit could make a go of it...in those solitary places. Religiously, it is not bad."¹⁵

His Excellency Dom Pedro Fedalto, appointed Archbishop of Curitiba in 1970, who was baptized by Fr. Pigato (the last baptism administered by him) and who received first Communion from Fr. Morelli, wrote the following about him:

"On January 20, 1931, feast of St. Sebastian, he blessed the foundation stone of the bell tower. Forty-five meters high and topped with a statue of Christ the King, it was at that time the tallest one of all Paraná. It was inaugurated on October 29, 1933, the centennial of the Redemption, with a celebration presided over by Archbishop João Francisco Braga of Curitiba. On May 10 of the following year, Archbishop Braga returned to Rondinha to bless the five bells of the steeple.

The old missionary did not give up! He began collecting donations for the interior decoration of the church and a wall around it. On August 16, 1936, the decoration, the work of artist Anacleto Gabarcio, was inaugurated. On top of it all, he began construction on stone chapels. On April 10, 1931, he blessed the cornerstone of the chapel of Our Lady, which was dedicated on March 25, 1932, by Fr. Anselmo, a Capuchin. Though a little boy of six at that time, I still remember that grandiose, beautiful, very beautiful feast. In early 1937 he restored the chapel of Reboucas.

Fr. Giovanni Morelli experienced a great sorrow by the end of his life. Rondinha was more like a personal parish than a territorial one. Six chapels, till then under the care of the priests of Rondinha, were attached to the parish of Campo Largo, with a total of 130 families, so that Rondinha was left with only 4 chapels and 2,500 people. The people reacted strongly with signed petitions which are now kept in the archives of the Curia.

Fr. Morelli suffered a lot from it! I recall that Prof. Luigi Lorenzi organized a feast in honor of Fr. Morelli. On May 16, 1937, all the students of the school of Reboucas went to Rondinha where they took part in a Mass, and then made addresses, recited poems, and sang their songs with much consolation of Fr. Morelli. He enjoyed and appreciated their homage, but he was at the end of his life. He did not even last long enough to witness the official canonical installation of the parish and to take possession of it as its pastor because he died on June 5th."¹⁶

With the canonical erection of the parish according to the new territorial set-up, Rondinha lost the chapels of São Benedito do Salgadinho, Santo Antonio and São João do Capão, Santa Ana do Figueiredo, São Sebastião do Rio Verde Acima, Butiatuba and Campina. The chapel of Ferraria, formerly attached to Santa Felicidade, was incorporated with Rondinha. The chapels of Reboucas, Timbotuva, Alto da Ferraria, Rio Verde Abaixo, and Santa Ana remained with it. Fr. Luigi Corso was named pastor of Rondinha in June 1937. He built a new sacristy in Rondinha and the new chapel of Timbotuva, inaugurated by Archbishop Da Rocha on February 26, 1939; and he established various religious associations both at Rondinha and at the chapels.

¹⁵ Milini to Card. Rossi, Santo André, September 30, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 361/2).

¹⁶ D. P. Fedalto, "O centenario do Pe. Morelli", "Voz do Paraná", January 30, 1972.

3. The Parish of Umbará

The parish of St. Peter the Apostle in Umbará was directed by the Josephites of St. Leonard Murialdo from 1920 till 1928 and then by the Capuchins, who planned the construction of the new church after a project by architect Giovanni De Mio. But only the foundations were laid. On account of a sacrilegious assault made on a priest by some fanatics, the church was under interdict from 1931 to 1934. The Capuchins were again in charge for a time from 1934 until 1936. Immediately after lifting the ban, the Archbishop had been offering it again and repeatedly, in the meantime, to the Scalabrinians. Card. Rossi did not accept the offer at first for lack of personnel. The new Archbishop Da Rocha insisted:

"On the occasion of his pastoral visitation to Santa Felicidade, the Archbishop of Curitiba had a meeting with Fr. Sante (Bernardi) and took the opportunity to insist with him that we accept our old parish of Umbará: I know of the existence of a negative answer from Your Eminence; but, all things considered, I would be of the opinion that we should accede to the desire of that most Rev. Archbishop of whose support we will have great need later on for our organization in Paraná. Besides, that parish has been founded by us, and those people remember us and want to have us back."¹⁷

Cardinal Rossi gave his approval by a telegram of April 27, 1936, and Fr. Oreste Tondelli took possession of the parish on June 7. Shortly afterwards Fr. Milini reported:

"Umbará is the new parish we just took back. It has 2,500 souls. Religiously things are fine in spite of a five year interdict. The parish has no mission chapels, so that the parishioners have no choice but to attend the mother church. People love their new pastor Fr. Tondelli and they place high hopes in him."¹⁸

In two years Fr. Tondelli could raise the walls of the new church to the roof, he called the Sister Apostles of the Sacred Heart back to the parish, entrusted them with the direction of the parochial school, and organized the Associations of Our Lady for men and women. On December 11, 1939, he was succeeded by Fr. Primo Bernardi, who completed and furnished the church.

¹⁷ Milini to Card. Rossi, Santo André, April 7, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 399/1).

¹⁸ Milini to Card. Rossi, Santo André, September 30, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 361/2).

CHAPTER XIV

Provincial Government of Rio Grande do Sul

1. Fr. Enrico Preti and Fr. Giovanni Costanzo (1919-1925)

As seen above, by a decision of the General Chapter, beginning with August 1919, the direction of all Scalabrinian missions of Brazil was entrusted to Fr. Enrico Preti, who fixed his residence at first in São Paulo. Right from the beginnings contrast started between Fr. Preti and a few missionaries of Rio Grande do Sul, caused by the different attitudes held in regard to the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles (Scalabrinians), who were about to split into two groups: those of Rio Grande do Sul were seeking the support of the Scalabrinian missionaries of Bento Gonçalves, Fathers Poggi, Porrini and Costanzo for certain claims of theirs in regard to the new Superior General, while Fr. Preti was siding with her.¹

For reasons of health, Fr. Costanzo returned to Italy in 1920, returning to Brazil in March 1921 with the task of Regional Superior of Rio Grande do Sul. In the report of the visitation conducted by the Superior General at the end of 1922, we find the following compendious appraisal:

"This Province depends on the government of a Regional Superior and includes 15 parishes, which, though not much densely populated, are however very vast in extension, some of them as much as 600 square kilometers. In this vast and all hilly region, all our immigrants are employed in tilling the land that is very fertile and generously rewards the toil of the farmhands, who have all become big landowners by now. All of them originate from northern Italy, in great majority from the provinces of the Veneto.

They have very little contact with Brazilians and have preserved intact their Italian identity. By their untiring work they have transformed those empty lands and virgin forests into as many flourishing estates, strewn all over with boundless agricultural fields, orchards and vineyards. In the span of forty years of hard work they succeeded in creating innumerable villages, towns, and a few cities.

To give you an idea of their good morals be it enough to say that in the whole state, almost the size of Italy, no theft or murder happen among the Italians. They remained excellent Catholics and attend the Sacraments with deep fervor. They respect and love their priests, considering them as their best benefactors. There is not one group of homes, no matter how small, in whose midst they did not build at least a small wooden chapel, dedicated to their patron saints.

But we have to take notice of a sad reality! As long as these villages are increasingly gaining in importance, they likewise end up with becoming little cities to be soon transformed into as many centers of political and commercial

¹ E. Preti to Rinaldi, São Paulo, June 22, 1920 (Arch. G.S., 414/4).

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life, where our colonists, little by little, lose the purity and the simplicity of their morals to allow themselves to be perverted by the indolence, indifference, and bad ways of Brazilians, who indeed call themselves Catholic, but in practice do not observe the duties of their religion. In my short visit to those parishes I have witnessed scenes that consoled and edified me very much, and moved me very deeply.

The present Regional Superior of this Province is Fr. Giovanni Costanzo, who is residing at Dois Lageados (...). The town is not very large, but it has the advantage of being centrally located. From here the Regional Superior can more easily supervise the state of things in the other missions around him."²

A few months later, Fr. Costanzo wrote to the Apostolic Visitor Fr. Serafino Cimino:

"All my missionaries of R o Grande do Sul and I would be very happy if Your Most Rev. Paternity could come to see us in person. This way you would see for yourself that there here there are no gossips and other human frailties that have provoked the appointment of an Apostolic Visitor for our Institute. In fact, you would find missionaries here that work even too much in this immense field in want of laborers. It seems almost impossible that a missionary could withstand so much hardship. With the newly arrived one, in our Province there are now 16 Fathers at the direction of 15 parishes and with the care of a Catholic weekly newspaper. By God's grace, each one is doing his duty to the greatest satisfaction of his parishioners and enjoys the esteem of the archbishop who is insistently asking us for new missionaries. Even lately when I called on him together with the Superior General, he told us that he needed at least ten missionaries of our Institute, and the Superior pledged for him seven of those that will be ordained next year. And so we will have at least some twenty parishes in this Province (...). My only complaint is not being able to do more and being forced to leave so many people to themselves for lack of laborers. Besides caring for the parish almost, all my confreres are now busy with the construction of a new church or rectory or school, and certainly they do not find time for gossip."³

In November 1924 Fr. Costanzo asked again to return to Italy to cure the rheumatism that prevented him from effectively attending to his tasks. He was promised he would soon be replaced by Fr. Preti, then rector of the General House. In the meantime there was the visitation by Fr. Giuseppe Antonio da Persiceto. This is what Fr. Costanzo had to say about it:

"He made us understand that he was in a hurry to conclude his task, and, due also to his age, he could not visit all our houses of R o Grande. He visited only those that could be reached by car because he did not think it safe for one who was not an expert rider to go along certain dangerous roads on the back of a horse. And so he was able to visit only half of our missions."⁴

Fr. Preti returned to Brazil in March 1925, with the responsibility of Provincial Superior of all the Scalabrinian missions of Brazil, but he remained actually

² Chenuil, "Breve relazione della mia visita alle nostre missioni del Brasile dal 19 Nov. 1922 al 26 Marzo 1923"(Arch. G.S., 368/1).

³ Costanzo to Cimino, Dois Lageados, August 15, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 20/3).

⁴ Costanzo to Card. De Lai, Dois Lageados, March 10, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 415).

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only fifteen days at São Paulo, and then he went on to Rio Grande do Sul, and took charge of the parish of Dois Lageados and practically left the responsibility of the missions of São Paulo in the hands of Fr. Martini, until the arrival of Fr. Canestrini at the end of 1925. On November 12, 1925, the division in two provinces was officially restored.

Fr. Preti was charged with the implementation of the Statutes of 1925, especially in regard to the formation of small communities, thus putting an end to the isolation of the missionaries. But there still remained the ever present problem of lack of personnel. Fr. Preti pinpointed the situation in September 1925:

"Fr. Poggi has left for Italy already, as I wrote you before; I have provided for Bento Gonçalves with Fr. Foscallo as Pastor, and Fr. Antonelli as assistant, the two priests best fit, as Fr. Poggi himself can testify, for that place for the time being at least, and so that mission may be considered a 'casa formata' (formed community), sufficient enough for that service. In regard to establishing some other communities, it seems to me that we should go ahead following the criterion based on valid reasons related to the scope of the Institute, in conformity with the new Statutes, C.I.; aa. 2-3, etc., in which, while underscoring the scope, they also seem to allow that the distribution of the personnel should be done on the basis of need. As I told Your Eminence before leaving and I can now better confirm, our mission of Dois Lageados is a small one, if not the least important of our parishes, when compared with them. It has only about 300 families, and though provisionally, I can perform all by myself and with ease my whole ministry and carry out at the same time all my duties as a Superior such as the visitation to all confreres, etc., etc. Why should we then prefer it all the others as a 'formed house' with so many confreres in such great need in quite more important houses for population and of far greater distances, among which we must mention two besides that of Bento Gonçalves: Guaporé (presently, with Fr. Rizzi, who is doing very well, provisionally in place of Fr. Angeli) with about 1,000 families, seat of a municipality, a day school run by the Sisters, and soon, God Willing, a day school underway to be directed by the Christian Brothers; and São Luiz da Casca with 1,400 families and with the heavy burden of the construction of a new parish church. As said in the letter of Your Eminence, these two missions have so far, and are still destined to have, only one priest, and therefore insufficient, with such a hard work as would wear out the strength of the missionaries....

Leaving Dois Lageados aside (...) would it not be better, instead, now that the new Statutes have been published, to seek to implement it effectively and in a manner the most respondent possible to the real needs of the mission? This is the plan I am preparing, whose project I submit to Your Eminence: the appointment of at least two priests each in the most important places such as Bento Gonçalves, Guaporé, and São Luiz da Casca, according to their more or less urgent needs. This way we would already have at the same time three 'formed' or 'almost formed' houses, according to the Statutes. As to the other places: always in agreement with the Archbishop, to hold on to those missions that are nearer to each other and more apt for the missionaries to keep in touch, so as to make their relations easier and give them the opportunity to look after, comfort, edify, each other, and, above all, to receive the Sacrament of Penance,

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as is also prescribed by the Statutes, the most needed and necessary means in these places for preserving the spirit of the missionary. All this would foster the observance of the Statutes, make easier the task of the Superior as to visitations, etc., and, what counts most, the general welfare of our missions and Institute.

As to the particular means to achieve this scope (such as the distribution or transfer to the different places of the members who can be better known here on trial) they should be left to the discretion of the Superior and his Councilors concerning the Institute and to the agreements by them taken with the Ordinaries in regard to the parishes, with reservation to refer everything to this Sacred Congregation.

By the way, since I was appointed "ad nutum" I asked whether I'd be scheduled to remain (though with sacrifice). Should this be the case, I propose Fathers Angeli and Bogni as Councilors, otherwise I would suggest Fr. Angeli as Superior, and Fathers Bogni and Carlo Pedrazzani. I bring forth the name of Fr. Angeli as one of the best priests here who came out from the Seminary of Piacenza and because Guaporé, where he should return, is one of the most central locations of our Missions." ⁵

It is to be pointed out that following the Apostolic Visitation, the Sacred Consistorial Congregation had proposed the appointment of three missionaries each to Bento Gonçalves and Dois Lajeados. This explains why Fr. Preti remarked that the apostolic visitation, too quick and limited, could not have furnished but a generic idea of the state of the missions⁶ and asked for a greater autonomy in the distribution and transfer of the personnel: something which the Sacred Consistorial Congregation did not intend to grant in order to be able to dispose of the missionaries according to the most urgent needs of the provinces.

After his second visitation of the missions, Fr. Preti insisted:

"In my visitation to the confreres just ended I found the following:

- 1. The parishes (besides Bento Gonçalves, already with two priests, Foscallo and Antonelli, sufficient for that parish of Guaporé and São Luiz da Casca, absolutely need, as I wrote you already, two priests because of their large populations. To give you a more accurate idea, let me observe that both the present pastors, alone in the parishes, must leave their parochial residence many weeks of the year on Monday to return on Saturday, to the evident detriment of the central community of Guaporé especially where the Sisters and their students must go through the week without the Mass and the Sacraments, not counting the spiritual damage of the missionaries for whom the provisions of the new Statutes would be of no help in this respect: pluribus intentus....*
- 2. The absolute need, besides the rules, of the frequent visit of the Regional Superior especially with regard to their religious spirit, the only moral support of the missionary and also for maintaining the indispensable relations necessary to preserve the most closed union possible among the*

⁵ Preti to Card, De Lai, Dois Lajeados, September 6, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 414/6).

⁶ "He has visited only half of the houses, stopping for only a quarter of an hour at some of them to ask a few general and hurried questions about the administration." (Preti to Rossi, Dois Lajeados, September 30, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 414/6).

members of our Society.

3. *It was impossible for me to visit Fr. Medicheschi because of the great distance: a seven hour back-and-forth horse ride, plus a few days stay (...).*

As to the establishing of a 'formed house' with residence at Dois Lageados, besides the reasons expressed in my last letter, Your Eminence may examine the topographic map of Rio Grande do Sul (...), in which you will easily see for yourself what the importance and how great the population be of that place in comparison with the others."⁷

At the same time Fr. Preti kept asking to be relieved of his responsibility. On November 12, 1925, Cardinal De Lai relieved him and named him Councilor of the new Regional Superior, Fr. Aneto Bogni.

2. Fr. Aneto Bogni (1925-1931)

Fr. Bogni, pastor of Casca, was named Regional Superior with decree of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, dated on November 12, 1925; Fathers Preti and Angeli were made his Councilors. After his first visitation of the houses, Fr. Bogni sent in a brief report on the state of the region:

"The Mission of the Missionaries of St. Charles has been in existence for the past 30 years (1896-1926). At the present time it numbers 14 parishes staffed by 16 priests. It covers an area of 3,380 square kilometers and has a population of 69,000 people with 290 chapels at an average distance of a two hour horse ride from their relative centers (12-14 kilometers). There are six private schools directed by 32 Sisters, with 67 boarding, and 612 day students (Bento Gonçalves, Monte Belo, Encantado, Nova Bréscia, Guaporé and Nova Bassano. The mission numbers 25 associations, confraternities, and pious unions with 6,461 members. All parishes (except Nova Bréscia) have closed the financial year on the credit side with the cumulative amount of 200.34 contos, equalling 665 thousand liras.

In 1925 there were administered 3,708 baptisms, 748 marriages, and 127,297 communions. The visits to the chapels were 1,970 with 3,285 sermons, talks, exhortations, etc.: catechism instructions were imparted directly or through catechists to 5,700 attendants. In their 30 years of mission work the Fathers of Saint Charles built six parochial churches in masonry (Nova Bassano, Encantado, Monte Veneto, Guaporé, Nova Bréscia, Undici) and six rectories (Monte Veneto, Nova Bassano, Encantado, Guaporé, Monte Belo, Protásio Alves). They built also six schools conducted by Sisters (Bento Gonçalves, Nova Bassano, Encantado, Nova Bréscia, Anta Gorda, Guaporé). At the present time, there are three parish churches under construction in masonry (Casca, Dois Lageados, and Anta Gorda) for an estimated 670 contos of reis; a school for boys (Guaporé) and the reconstruction of another one for girls (Nova Bassano). The projects are under study for two bell towers (Bento Gonçalves, Encantado), a school (Monte Veneto) and the remodeling of the facade of two churches (Monte Belo and Guaporé) (...). Only at Bento Gonçalves, Guaporé, and Casca two priests are living together, and the accord between pastor and assistant is

⁷ Preti to Card. De Lai, Dois Lageados, September 21, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 416/6).

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perfect so far. It is impossible to perform the practices of piety in common, because these parishes are very large and one of the priests is always around visiting the various chapels, thus having the chance to be together only on Sunday or feast days, when the services at the parish church require the action of both.

I am informed that the Archbishop is pleased with the Scalabrinian priests. Upon my request, the Chancery answered me that all our Fathers were in order as to diocesan taxes, etc...⁸

In a more detailed report he observed:

"The number of priests is small: 16 in all. Very great is the need of priests especially in the new colonial communities, where thousands of Italian families too distant from the Fathers can only seldom be visited by them. All our parishes, except for Protásio Alves, are one way or other connected with each other. A fact that makes my task easier because we can in this way help one another and avoid so many of those little disputes that may usually occur between parishes. All our Fathers are living in good harmony with the diocesan and religious clergy, in excellent relationship with the church and civil authorities, and they enjoy a well-deserved esteem on the part of their parishioners.

The main group of our parishes is found in the municipalities of Guaporé and Encantado: we also have two parishes in the territory of Bento Gonçalves, one each in those of Alfredo Chaves, Prata (Capoeiras), and Lagoa Vermelha. Five of our 14 parishes have a population of over 5,000 people; another five, over 3,000; 2,000, the remaining four. All of them are rather difficult parishes because of the physical configuration of their territory (hilly and uneven) and of the bad state of the secondary roads. As each parish has a vast extension, for the convenience of distant parishioners, a certain number of chapels were constructed as dependent missions. They are often visited by the priest for the exercise of all rites of his ministry. The activity conducted by our missionaries in these first thirty years is immense. Besides the strictly spiritual work, they volunteered their efforts to have roads opened and worked hard for the construction of parish churches, chapels, rectories, colleges, schools, cooperative stores, savings banks; for the establishing of municipalities and districts; for the installment of telephone systems, postal offices; and for anything conducive in some way to the improvement of the religious, moral, intellectual, and material life of the immigrant, so as to render themselves deserving indeed of the spiritual and civic progress of this region entrusted to them. The bishops are the first to acknowledge this praiseworthy action as is testified by the remarks, true laudatory commendations to the missionaries left written in the parish registers on occasion of their pastoral visitations."⁹

In 1927, the Archbishop of Porto Alegre came to the decision of taking the parishes of Bento Gonçalves and Monte Belo away from the Scalabrinians. Bento Gonçalves was by far the most important center of all Scalabrinian missions: and to be told to leave that position represented a very hard blow. We shall see, in due time, all the circumstances of the event; but more than its details and fortuitous reasons, we deem it our duty to point out the cause underlying it, which we think results from the natural evolving of the migratory phenomenon. Just because it was an important center, Bento Gonçalves became "Brazilian" more rapidly than the "other Italian colonies". And it seems

⁸ Bogni to Card. De Lai, Casca, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 416/1).

⁹ Bogni, "Relazione della Missione Scalabriniana in Rio Grande do Sul (Brasile) nel trentesimo della sua esistenza," Casca 1926 (Arch. G.S., 416/1).

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to us that the Scalabrinians did not sufficiently evaluate this reality, while continuing to hold on to a "colonial" mentality, which, though so necessary until the moment of assimilation into the immigration country, yet resulted anachronistic once this process was completed. In our opinion, in the rather heady disputes that took place between the Diocesan authorities and the Scalabrinian missionaries, the fault with the first was that of wanting to excessively speed up the process of integration or as it used to be called of "*Brazilianization*", while the fault with the others was found in the excessive effort to delay it, ill resigned to this natural evolution, to which they themselves had so effectively contributed, after all, in the most appropriate manner by helping the Italians to become a people, to remain "a people of God," and gradually to become "Brazilian" people. As proof of these impressions, we shall quote two documents, the first by one of the most sincere supporters of the old Scalabrinian system, Fr. Massimo Rinaldi, and the other by one of the most authoritative promoters of the process of "*Brazilianization*", Archbishop João Becker of Porto Alegre, (some were saying that he wanted ...to be forgiven ...for being of German extraction).

Based on his own experience and strong on the reports he kept receiving from Fr. Costanzo, Fr. Massimo Rinaldi wrote in 1923:

"Not because of the fact in itself good and praiseworthy, but for its negative effects under certain aspects on the Italians, we have come to know to our greater sorrow that in the State of Rio Grande do Sul the teaching of the Brazilian language has been made compulsory in all Italian private schools now subsidized by the Federal Government or by the municipalities of Rio Grande. And so what had been foreseen and we had sought to avert by soliciting our government to support those schools did indeed happen. Unfortunately, we were not heeded.

Generally founded and supported by the action of the priests for our migrants, these private schools waited in vain long years for some help from the Italian government.

Today they receive it from Brazilian authorities with the obligation to teach the Brazilian language and with the exclusion of Italian, a fact that will hasten the decline of our noble idiom.

The schools of our parishes are still immune from the misfortune, but though they are 200, still they are relatively rather few when compared with all the Italian private schools of Rio Grande.

When the Brazilian Episcopate will join forces with the action of government and municipalities in regard to the teaching of catechism now still done in our language, Italy will lose the strongest bond with its emigrant sons. Evidently, the consequences would be extremely damaging for us. With sad memories I think to myself: if some 20 years ago when in Rio Grande do Sul not only the mentality of immigrants but that of their children as well was still purely Italian and had not felt as yet the influence of Brazilian teaching, those born in Brazil to the vivid and moving stories of their parents about the beauties and greatness of their fatherland were answering if not with a sense of derision, certainly of distrust: 'If Italy is so beautiful and glorious why did you leave it?'....How far greater will not be the distrust of the children of immigrants for the ancient glories of their forefathers? I still recall with renewed sorrow the indifference of those born in Brazil for the land of their origin!

I still remember our difficulty in convincing them that Italy was superior to Brazil in its landscape, arts, culture and progress, and I foresee how far more difficult it will become one day to instill in the minds and hearts of the new generations the correct

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information about our country and the love for it. If it's true that the mind of the young can be molded like wax, then is it more so than ever before today of the children of our migrants, who on account of the new factor of the teaching of the language and history of Brazil, will grow estranged from us, if not with some prejudice against us, artificially engendered in their minds by those who have an interest in belittling us.

Though writing and seeing it this way, we candidly state however that, far from wanting to diminish the natural beauties and the marvelous growth of Brazil, and more so from disapproving the governments' and municipalities' action concerning the schools, we highly praise rather the concern of Brazilian authorities for the civil instruction of the citizens while wishing that the Italian government would do the same, convinced as we are that the Italian schools in foreign lands form an indispensable means for insuring our national interests.

Fully aware by experience of the serious difficulties of the government in promoting Italian culture abroad we shall not pretend - as the distinguished writer Mrs. Ferruggia was claiming - that the state establish the Italian school system among emigrants from kindergarten up to higher learning courses to be attended in the Universities of this country by sending to them regularly salaried professors; we will rather only limit ourselves to ask through repeated instances a subsidy for the functioning of Italian private schools, at least of those in greatest need. How many a time did we plead for this cause on this periodical since 1890 until now!? But, it was all in vain! And to our unspeakable regret we experience every day more the damaging consequences thereof.

Even with no fear that there may be people endowed with so little intelligence as not to see the truth of our point, still we like to remind our kind readers that the knowledge of the language and history of our fatherland, and above all the love of the immigrants and their children for our country of origin gains us, living in a foreign land, the admiration of others, helps us to keep in touch with other nationalities, especially through commerce and industry, shields us from difficulties and political schemes, merits us the respect and good-will of nations. Besides, any citizen of Italian extraction in a foreign land, who should not know, or worse still, not appreciate Italy, will never take its defense, and much less, will never help it even materially through commercial deals, bank operations, or saving accounts in our credit institutions, etc. Should they not know the Italian language, the very children of our immigrants will have great difficulty in establishing relations with us and in holding on to bonds of affection even for the relatives who remained in Italy. The terrible World War has openly proven also these truths. To convince ourselves of this it would be enough to examine the complete report on the contribution given by emigrants to their fatherland for the nation's needs, especially for the relief of war victims. Should we compare the financial help supplied from the United States, that is by our fellow countrymen residing there, with that sent in from Brazil, we would discover that the emigrants living in Brazil, though in much lower social and financial conditions than those of our migrants in the United States, have shown themselves relatively more generous than they. In fact, considering that the Italians in Brazil hardly form one-third of those in North America; considering that the income of immigrants in North America is at least ten times higher than that of those in the South; considering the places of residence of the greater part of Italians in Brazil - scattered isolated in very vast regions mostly in the woods and without communications - and those of Italians in the North almost all of them living in the cities in contact with people who certainly urged them daily in many ways to come to the help of our nation in need; considering that the commissions of the Italian government had visited during the war only the American cities, and therefore that the greater part of our fellow countrymen in Brazil did not even see them, we will certainly find out that the modest contribution given to

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our country by the poor Italian migrant living in Brazil is superior in financial and moral value to that offered by the six million of our countrymen of North America, many of whom are multimillionaires; we will discover that the rough and humble Italian workers of Brazil, living only with the priest at his side, with the vividness of their country's language on their tongues and with a most intense love for their fatherland in their hearts, because generally isolated hundreds of kilometers away from the cities and therefore from the natives, felt and feel more strongly than other compatriots the need to love their land of origin and to help it in time of trial, exclusively because of the most vivid feeling of true love for one's country, nourished - it gives us pleasure to say so again - by the preservation in himself of his language and religious faith especially by the action of the Italian Catholic priest. In fact, with no fear of being mistaken, I add that the use, in a foreign country, or the knowledge, at least, of one's native language and above all the esteem and love for one's fatherland of origin helps in maintaining in emigrants the Catholic faith and its practice. Actually, no one in the world will dare deny that the Italians of Brazil, especially on the farms, enjoy a strong first place also in regard to religious practice. To prove it, we would only need to recall the words, - at other times by us reported, - that Bishop Antonio Pimenta, former auxiliary to Bishop Gonçalves of Porto Alegre, addressed to Italians on the occasion of the pastoral visitation:

'We Brazilians, have given you Italians the land, and you gave us the faith.'

We should only remind you of what I wrote in the past on this periodical; that is, that not only the priest, but hundreds and hundreds of immigrants as well, have evangelized and still instruct scores of Brazilian families wandering in the forests of Brazil. I would gladly retell the edifying and moving scene I repeatedly was a witness to, when I could see for myself the loving care and the not so small sacrifices of our humble Italian immigrants in teaching catechism to broods of little Brazilians and (often to) their parents, as well as their solicitude in feeding, dressing, and presenting them to the priest so that he might administer to them Baptism and the other sacraments he found them ready for. No one in the world will be able to deny that with the decline of the language of any country, its traditions and customs little by little will also disappear. And so with the decreasing use of their native language by immigrants of Brazil, their children will abandon little by little also the beautiful religious traditions of their forefathers, live the Christian faith after the Brazilian manner, that is with little care and spirit, get used to reducing all their religion to a mere act of presence in church, and practice a worship fitting their whims, rich in external expressions and superstitions. Populations living a religion of this kind will surely never be able to do the efforts and sacrifices encountered and born with admirable strength and perseverance by our immigrants in building their churches and schools, in providing them with what was needed for their functioning, and in according religious celebrations the splendor of a right solemnity and of a Christian piety that truly edify and contribute to the beauty, the progress, and especially to the truth of the Catholic faith.

I do not deny the existence among Brazilians, especially in certain communities farther North, of truly fervent populations, but they are rare, unfortunately. One of the most eloquent facts of the religious primacy of the Italian colonies in Brazil is found in the religious vocations, of both men and women. Even limiting ourselves only to the state of Rio Grande do Sul we can say that the seminaries and religious houses, especially of women, get their largest quota from the Italian parishes, so much so that the greater part of the priests and sisters of Rio Grande originate today from the families of our old immigrants. Today's diocesan and religious priests are the boys of yesterday to whom some 20 years ago the missionary, together with the teaching of catechism in words full of love for the church and country, spoke of the beauty of the Catholic priesthood, of its usefulness and of that of the Church, of the greatness of the Roman Pontificate. He was then implanting in the hearts of those young boys the little

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mustard seed that was to render them, with God's Grace, the apostles of Jesus Christ.

The numerous Sisters of Río Grande of today are the small girls of yesterday to whom their good mothers, mindful of the beautiful institutions for girls of their hometowns spoke with moving voice and visible pride of their usefulness in all kinds of charitable activities, and so they moved, even without knowing it, the girls to consecrate themselves to God for the good of society. *'The Lord'* - I often heard Italian parents in Brazil tell me - *'the Lord has indeed blessed our marital union by granting us numerous and strong children, and most important still, quite respectful besides; how happy we would be, however, if some one of them were to consecrate himself to God.'* Their wish was granted, and today I have the satisfaction to know that more than one of those virtuous Italian families has a son who is a priest, or even more than one of their daughters who is a Sister engaged in the education of youth. If our immigrants had not a strong faith and the Italian priest did not take care of it and of their minds and hearts as well, the dioceses of Río Grande would suffer today from even a greater scarcity of diocesan and religious priests, and of Sisters. If, then, the preservation of the faith, and of national traditions and language have matured such copious and beneficial results, why should they not continue to do so in the future? Someone could say, perhaps, that the good seed sown by the old Italian exiles will bring forth good fruits. Would God grant that it were so! But, who does not know that even the best seed must be renewed every few years if it is to keep producing a good harvest? In our case, the best way for renewing this seed is to preserve the longest possible the generating powers of the old seed by channeling new migratory flows into the midst of old immigrants. Otherwise, let's not forget it, for lack of new blood among old migrants the spiritual bonds with their country of origin will relent, their vivid enthusiasm for it will also die out, and their integration's process into the new environment will be speeded up. We exhaustively expressed this point at other times and particularly in the December 1921 issue of this periodical. Today we feel the need to remind our country's government of its duty to subsidize Italian private schools abroad, to get the consuls interested in following the migratory movement into the hinterland of the country they reside in, and in reporting what new colonies the children of emigrants are establishing here and there in Brazil.

Should anyone not know it, we point out that as of now, especially in Río Grande do Sul, the children of our immigrants' children, grown extraordinarily numerous, abandon the land of their parents, already too limited for them and almost completely exploited, and move on to settle in new regions where, for quite a few years unfortunately, they will live the hard and difficult life of their old parents, in absolute isolation, deprived of roads, schools and churches. The priest will be their only comfort, but for the time being they will have him only occasionally, that is, once or twice a year, relatively to the extension of the territory and to the difficulty of the road system.

Hence the need that our Institute be promoted so that it may readily and effectively extend its assistance to the new immigrants and open among them churches and schools, both indispensable to keep alive as long as possible our national language, because, - we state it once again - while centers of religious and civil education, they are in foreign lands also sources and places radiating Italian influence: this is especially true in regard to those established by us, the sons of the great Father and teacher, Bishop Scalabrini who founded his Institute on the duty of protecting the emigrant and preserving in him the faith and the love for our country. But the churches and schools, opened and directed, are still very few when compared with the great mass of Italian migrants, and for this reason also, in order to reach other Italian communities, we would like to witness, with the help of all good people, an increased number of confreres and of the means for a more effective and extensive assistance among immigrants of Brazil.

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We deem it our duty, therefore, to recommend in a special way that our country's government support by all means the sending abroad of Italian priests and grant them to voyage for free, placing them on the level with its envoys, or at least with the professionals or lecturers, men or women, to whom reductions of trip expenses are readily accorded; while they are quite long delayed, should they be granted to a missionary!

The privilege of a free voyage for priests going overseas to assist Italian emigrants should be granted by law so to avoid that someone may find a thousand empty pretexts to deny it to them. Let the government show in deeds that it knows how to appreciate and acknowledge the usefulness of the priests among the emigrants by according them its moral and material support.

Only this way, any private action, of the clergy, especially, will be able with the help of the authorities to form and render ever stronger the first of the bonds that will have to be nourished in an organic, steady, and intelligent way between Italy and the countries of immigration, the spiritual one. *'In a greater way than is generally admitted today, this forms the base, the dignity, and the security for all the others. All of them, in fact, such as a renewed cooperation between workers, the economy, the industry, the commerce, etc., depend on and are vivified by it.'*

A true synthesis and defense of our thesis, these correct statements made by sociologist Francesco Bianco in a most beautiful lecture given in Rome on May 10th last, offer us cause for good hopes in the success of the noble and just mission we inherited from our Venerated Founder, Bishop Scalabrini, and we unceasingly defended, as he did, with zeal of apostles and love of devoted sons of Church and country, the noble and useful task of preserving in the emigrants the faith, language, and identity of their nationality."¹⁰

And now we quote the ideas of Archbishop Becker in 1927:

"As with others, the municipalities of the Italian colonial region are steadily growing, and so now they are generally flourishing small cities, where numerous Portuguese-Brazilians also settle, mostly public functionaries assigned to teaching and governing. This way, little by little these cities acquire a national character and you also to the not secondary contribution of the very children of Italians because of social positions they are progressively occupying. It is necessary, therefore, that for the sake of good social and religious harmony, the priests charged with the care of souls in those places know and be willing to attend to the special conditions of their parishes. But it so happens instead that complaints are reaching me from many of the parishes directed by the priests of Saint Charles because they do not preach in the national language and despise Brazilians. One of them went even so far as to declare - according to the testimony of persons worthy of trust - that he hated Brazilians. This holds true especially in regard to Bento Gonçalves, from where frequent complaints came to me since the time of Fr. Poggi, so that I had difficulty in trying to set things straight again and prevent new frictions. This is the reason why I intend to assign diocesan priests to that parish. And I am of the opinion that prudence will demand that also other more populous centers in analogous situations be entrusted in the future to diocesan priests of Italian extraction, who can currently speak both languages, that is Italian and Brazilian (...)

A good number of students, children of Italian families, are making their

¹⁰ Rinaldi, "Un nuovo e gravissimo pericolo per i nostri interessi nazionali in Brasile," "L'Emigrato Italiano in America" a.XVII, n, 3 (July-Sept. 1923), pp, 1-6.

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studies in our Provincial Seminary. In virtue of their solid preparation and integration into the society they live in, they will be able to offer an excellent contribution. Besides these, many others have already graduated from the Seminary and now occupy places of importance in the whole administration of the Archdiocese. This way I believe I am proceeding in accord with the intentions of the Holy Father, who insists in his recent Encyclical on the need to have native clergy."¹¹

Certain statements of the Archbishop need clarifying. For example, according to the testimony of Archbishop Cicognani, who had been there only a while earlier, only twenty Brazilian families were found living in Bento Gonçalves, a community of 8,000 people. But we must also point out the importance of the error made by Scalabrinians right from the beginning of neglecting to open seminaries in Brazil, as was the desire of our Founder.

The core of the problem, however, continued to be the validity of the Scalabrinian presence at that particular moment of the historical evolution of emigration.

Fr. Bogni had written in March 1926:

"Should the Archbishop hesitate a while longer, my opinion would be to put everything on the table right away. Either Bento Gonçalves like the rest of the parishes or we leave Monte Belo, Turvo, Nova Brésia, Dois Lageados, Esperança, that is, all the small parishes; of course, provided Rome approves! I would deem it to be this the time for securing our positions. The Archbishop told me some time ago that our Institute had already fulfilled its purpose and that its existence is no longer necessary, since there is no new immigration. Would it not be the case to explore the diocese of Santa Maria (Aqua de Mel, Fortaleza, Xiargee, and Santa Rosa) and begin founding there some parishes of ours? Why hold on to so many little parishes here from where we will be ungratefully kicked out some day, while neglecting thousands of families that are also Italian? Would not Santa Catarina be a place for us? Here in Rio Grande it would be enough to have Bento Gonçalves, Monte Veneto, Encantado, Anta Gorda: We could reach the new colonies moving up from Encantado through Guaporé, Casca, Passo Fundo, and Sarandí. This, however, is only an idea that was tossed around among ourselves at the close of our retreat held at Dois Lageados; it is not a plan yet, nor a project."¹²

Though taking care of a small and rather relatively isolated parish, Fr. Domenico Carlino himself already in 1924 wrote:

"Children here have the greatness of their republic in their blood and want to roam in the open, free like birds in the woods.

This is the reason why towns that in the past had made a name for themselves are reduced today to very little. The land grew barren, the colonists abandoned the old places and moved on to new ones where though so far away still they hoped to find greater abundance. Here at Putinga the land is still sufficiently productive and the colony is flourishing, but as time goes on it will probably begin to decrease. Well did our saintly Founder provide for such an event when

¹¹ Archbishop Becker to Card. De Lai, Porto Alegre, January 15, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 467/1).

¹² Bogni to Costanzo, Dois Lageados, March 30, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 467/1).

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he willed that his missionaries be not fixed to one place, but that they go to the assistance of migrants wherever they may be. And so, why don't we start to think about following our colonists into the states of Santa Catarina, Paraná, Santa Rosa, etc.? True, we are few, but let us place our trust in the Lord, and let us hope that in the future we may indeed do a real missionary work."¹³

And two years later:

"What a pity that our number be so limited. Had we a larger group of missionaries, what field would be open today to our activities. Santa Catarina's population keeps increasing daily,...and every day entire families move out of Río Grande into Santa Catarina, You keep praying and have cloistered nuns do so that the Lord may keep the true spirit in the Missionaries of St. Charles."¹⁴

In these observations, one certainly cannot underestimate the extreme scarcity of personnel. In 1928 the missionaries were only 17, of whom only eleven were young enough and healthy.

"In these last years the Scalabrinian mission of this Province has remained about stationary. The lack of priests affected us and still does so now more than ever; it is not always possible to provide help for our confreres in need of it. We hardly have one priest at our disposal (Fr. Rizzi in Guaporé) but we cannot always avail ourselves of his services, because his presence is necessary in Guaporé as assistant to Fr. Stefano: we would need at least one more priest with residence in Casca. Animated by a good spirit, the Fathers indeed do all in their power and burn out all their energies for the welfare of these communities, and unable to avail themselves of the needed rest they end up suffering its consequences; Fr. Morelli and Fr. Guglieri will not be able to do very much any longer; Fathers Serraglia, Pandolfi, and Preti, are now quite advanced in years and will have to be soon replaced. In compliance with the desire of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation I have given charge of the parish of Itapuca to Fr. Flesia and appointed Fr. Trincheri to take his place; Fr. Luigi Pedrazzani has not completely recovered and has still to take care of the parish all alone. I begin feeling tired a little myself.

We do not get discouraged, however, and we seek, each one in his parish, to fulfill our duties to the last. Our individual relations with the Archbishop are excellent: the relationship of the Institute with him has somewhat cooled off but not through our fault because we have always sought to do everything possible to please him and he cannot find any complaints about us as pastors. He would like to deal with the single cases directly with the local Superior, but this is not always possible, since I personally have to abide also by the directives of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation. Due to distances and the isolated life of our confreres, even the spirit of the Institute is suffering. We should have assemblies of our confreres, but this presents some difficulties; or better still, we should make our own annual retreat together as was already the custom years ago. But it would not be looked at favorably by the Archbishop who prefers that we make it with the priests of the diocese, though it may mean a rather heavy expense for the Institute (close to two contos of reais)."¹⁵

¹³ Carlino to Rinaldi, Putinga, April 6, 1924 (Arch. Vescov. Rieti, Carte Rinaldi).

¹⁴ Carlino to Rinaldi, Putinga, May 8, 1926 (Arch. Vescov. Rieti, Carte Rinaldi).

¹⁵ Bogni, "Relazione generale della Missione Scalabriniana in Río Grande do Sul, Brasile," 1928 (Arch. G.S., 416/4).

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Cardinal Rossi replied exhorting to multiply their efforts in expectation of the new missionaries that were to arrive in a few years: in the meantime he was figuring out how he could send them the help of some diocesan priest.¹⁶ A short while earlier he had inquired whether it were possible to open a mission at Cruzeiro, in the diocese of Florianopolis, impressed as he was by a report of Captain Seghetti, who had found there about four thousand abandoned families, so much so that in a community an old immigrant not only had thought of calling together his fellow-countrymen in a small church for prayer, but was also sitting in the confessional to hear confessions as well.... Fr. Bogni answered:

"I also had received a short while back a communication from the Sacred Consistorial Congregation about a letter sent to Fr. Costanzo by the Italian families of the municipality of Cruzeiro in Santa Catarina asking that some missionaries were given to them. It is true, sometime ago I had expressed the opportunity for the Missionaries of St. Charles to join Rio Grande and Paraná together through the territory of Santa Catarina, where there are colonial communities formed by Italians from Rio Grande, but this can be carried out only with new missionaries (impossible to have for the time being), or by transferring there some priests from Rio Grande (also physically impossible at this moment for scarcity of priests, as well as for the opposition we would meet with on the part of the Archbishop). On my part, however, I insist on the opportunity of accepting parishes also outside of the diocese of Porto Alegre, because from all indications I foresee that in this diocese we will not be able to obtain any other important parish."¹⁷

The end of his second three-year term was fast approaching for Fr. Bogni who asked to be relieved of his responsibility:

"It was very difficult for me to be able to fulfill properly the duties of such a post. Nearly always alone in a very vast parish, which completely absorbs by itself the action of a missionary, on whom rests the tasks of attending to the spiritual and moral needs of a very sparse population with the steady administration of the comfort of the Sacraments, of the word of the Gospel, in the midst of hardships of all kinds in order to succeed also in the material efforts to provide them with a parish church that might be a witness to their faith and a memorial of the apostolic zeal of Scalabrinians, I could not care for the good order of our houses with all the attention demanded by my office.

Certainly, good Fr. Stefano of Guaporé will do what I could not, both because that parish is more centrally located and, therefore, it would be easier for him to visit often and quickly our confreres, and because he could absent himself from the parish for longer periods of time as he has a confrere in residence who can substitute for him."¹⁸

3. Fr. Stefano Angeli (1931-1932)

On April 11, 1931, Fr. Stefano Angeli, Pastor of Guaporé, was named Regional

¹⁶ Card. Perosi to Bogni, Rome, July 12, 1929 (Arch. G.S., 416/4).

¹⁷ Bogni to Card. Perosi, Casca, July 7, 1929 (Arch. G.S., 416/4).

¹⁸ Bogni to Card. Rossi, Casca, March 20, 1931 (Arch. G.S., 416/5).

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Superior and was given Fr. Aneto Bogni and Fr. Guido Foscallo as Councilors. All that remains of his few months in office all documents relating to the anxious requests for personnel, due to the ever increasingly critical situation of the region. Two diocesan priests had been sent from Italy, but it would have been better if they had not been sent. In early 1932, Fr. Angeli returned to Italy to recuperate his energies worn out by 20 years of exhausting ministry; but immediately after his return to Guaporé he was stricken with a sickness that brought him to the grave within two months. He died on July 22, 1932, age 46. His name had been proposed for the Apostolic Prefecture (now a diocese) of São Mateus, in the State of Espírito Santo.

4. Fr. Domenico Carlino (1932-1938)

Fr. Domenico Carlino, Pastor of Putinga, was appointed Regional Superior on December 17, 1932; Fathers Aneto Bogni and Antonio Serraglia were named Councilors. The first act of Fr. Carlino was a trip to the region of São Paulo to solicit some help:

"I am at São Paulo and I am writing from the orphanage where I came to see whether it may be possible to have some Fathers for the missions of Rio Grande do Sul. Fr. Giuseppe Rizzi, presently at Guaporé, is sick and doctors advise that he leave the ministry and take care of his health. He would accept, but only provisionally, to substitute for some Father at São Paulo, and then be able to repatriate. Fr. Aneto Bogni is worn out and exhausted; he is in absolute need of an assistant. The parish of Guaporé demands two priests for both the development of the Villa with its two schools and the vastness of the parish itself. My parish of Putinga, today especially, with its church under construction, calls for a zealous, strong and active priest. At a meeting with Fathers Navarro, Bernardi, and Porrini, we decided as follows:

Fr. Giuseppe Rizzi would temporarily pass to Santa Felicidade, Paraná, in place of Fr. Fey, who should then be the Vice Rector of the orphanage of São Paulo; Fr. Girolamo Angeli, the present Vice-Rector, would move in with me at Guaporé. Should the Archbishop of Porto Alegre consent to it, Fr. Giuseppe Chiappa could go to Casca as an assistant of Fr. Bogni. What remains, Your Eminence, is meeting the need of the parish of Putinga! Who could be my successor? And who is to continue work on construction of the church?

All Fathers of Rio Grande have charge of parishes and they cannot be moved; or rather, the parishes cannot be abandoned. I proposed the idea of letting go of the missions of Paraná, but we could not agree."¹⁹

Neither did Cardinal Rossi accept the idea of abandoning the parishes of Paraná, but he cabled the Apostolic Nuncio inviting him to inquire with Fr. Navarro whether it were possible, as Fr. Carlino was suggesting, to send to Rio Grande do Sul Fr. Pietro Rigo, Pastor of Santa Felicidade. But Fr. Navarro deemed this transfer impossible and Fr. Carlino had to be content with accepting Fr. Beniamino Rosato, who had arrived in May of 1933.

In July of the same year, Fr. Carlino completed his first visitation of the

¹⁹ Carlino to Card. Rossi, São Paulo, January 23, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 418/1).

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missions and summed up thus his impressions:

"In general I found that the parishes entrusted to us have a flourishing religious life. Everywhere there is attendance to the sacraments, new religious associations, and large attendance to parochial functions (...) I was particularly glad also to discover that all the Fathers are generally strong enough and full of good will. I showed them all correspondence received from Your Eminence, I read to them in particular some letters from Fr. Francesco Tironola, and all remained satisfied and better disposed to support our seminaries. What pleased our confreres most of all was to know that in the years to follow new missionary priests will come to join us to work in the field."²⁰

Fathers Augusto Rizzi and Bruno Paris were added to the missionaries of Rio Grande do Sul in 1934. In the meantime the Archbishop of Porto Alegre, His Excellency J. Becker, stated clearly that he had no longer need of Scalabrinians, since he had 200 students in his archdiocesan seminary, many of whom of Italian extraction. In Italy for his vacation, Fr. Bogni reported that the Archbishop would not openly take the parishes away from us, but dismember them, rather, little by little, as he had done before with a portion of the parish of Casca, which he made into a new parish, entrusting it to a diocesan priest without even informing the Scalabrinians. On the other hand, he also realized that Archbishop's move was prompted by the situations of the moment and he only wished that the opinion of the missionaries should also be sought. He suggested to start thinking about other places where our Congregation would be better welcome, especially in the dioceses of Santa Maria and Lages, where internal migrations were forming new Italian communities, and that, in the existing parishes, institutions of a permanent nature were established as properties of the missionary Fathers, such as boarding schools, kindergartens, etc. staffed by our own personnel and by Scalabrinian Sisters, so as to provide the parishes with a stronger and more stable base, since it would not be possible that these were surrendered "*pleno jure*" to our Congregation.

Cardinal Rossi wrote a very diplomatic letter to the Archbishop of Porto Alegre pointing out that the Congregation had returned to the religious life and was offering greater reliability than before; and Archbishop Becker with equal touch replied that he would have continued to accord the Scalabrinians the favor and esteem of which they had always showed themselves worthy. In July 1934, Fr. Carlino took possession of the parish of Guaporé. At the same time proceedings were started for establishing a Scalabrinian seminary in Rio Grande do Sul with an early plan to build it in the parish of Bento Gonçalves. The approval of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation came in November, welcomed enthusiastically by the missionaries. We have seen already that on this occasion the Scalabrinians asked to have back the parish of Bento Gonçalves and how Archbishop Becker had consented to give them Bento Gonçalves, Faria Lemos, and Monte Belo on condition that the Scalabrinians would concede the parishes of Guaporé, Serafina Corrêa, and Casca. But the

²⁰ Carlino to Card. Rossi, Putinga, July 23, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 418/1).

exchange was not accepted:

"I follow-up my two earlier telegrams sent to Your Paternity through the Apostolic Nuncio, and I inform that the deal proposed by the Archbishop of Porto Alegre and by you, has been the object of a careful study on the part of this Sacred Congregation, being a question of great importance for the future of the Pious Society in that region. And the conclusions reached are that the three parishes of Guaporé, La Casca, and Linha XI^o cannot and should not be abandoned. Guaporé is today the most important parish of the region for the number of Italians that live there, and for its geographic position in relation to the other Scalabrinian missions that make it the center of all their activity; without forgetting, besides, that Guaporé represents the first fruit of the Scalabrinian ministry in that region, and that it has a tradition so deeply rooted in the Pious Society that it would hardly be willing to resign itself to the loss of what is considered today to be 'jewel' of the missions of the Pious Society in Rio Grande do Sul.

São Luiz da Casca: how many sacrifices it cost good Fr. Bogni, who with the efficient and faithful cooperation of his parishioners and by his burning apostolic zeal was able to build in a few years a magnificent church, considered the most beautiful and the largest one in the whole state! To give it up would, no doubt, create a painful and discomfoting impression in the Fathers, who do not spare hardships and sacrifices anywhere even for the material construction of the churches. I do not mention Linea XI, because Your Paternity himself expresses to me what Fr. Pedrazzani is planning on the matter, in the letter of the 16th of February.

Besides, the fact cannot escape your attention that by the surrendering on the part of the Pious Society of the three parishes mentioned above, the importance of our missions in the Archdiocese of Porto Alegre would be markedly reduced, because the other three of Bento Gonçalves, Faria Lemos, and Monte Belo will be, and are actually, in the new diocese of Caxias, and so the Pious Society would not have any more even one main central municipality in the Archdiocese of Porto Alegre. Neither can we understand what reasons should the clergy of Porto Alegre have to complain when, I repeat, with its request for the parish of Bento Gonçalves, the Pious Society would not, and actually it does not, take anything away from them. In case, it is the clergy of the new diocese of Caxias who should actually have some complaints about it.

In the last analysis, the practical conclusion of the deal would be that the clergy of the Archdiocese of Porto Alegre would get three parishes presently headed by Scalabrinians without surrendering any of his, and the Archdiocese would give in return what does not belong to it any longer. These considerations will help you in carrying on the negotiations with the Archbishop to whom has been entrusted the administration of the new diocese of Caxias. In doing so, you will abide by the following instructions:

- 1. Do not consent to surrendering the three parishes of Guaporé, La Casca, and Linha XI^o;*
- 2. Keep asking to have the parish of Bento Gonçalves, that was once a Scalabrinian one. Should the Archbishop find it difficult to make this concession, there will not remain but to suspend for the time being all negotiations, reserving to resume them later on with the future bishop.*

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3. *Limit your request to said parish and do not accept the other two of Faria Lemos in view of the scarce availability of personnel and of the greater work that will have to be done in the eventual new parish of Bento Gonçalves and for the Apostolic School.*"²¹

Fr. Carlino called on Archbishop Becker to negotiate the deal on these new conditions:

*"In conformity with the venerated instructions of Your Most Rev. Eminence I went to Porto Alegre to ask again the Archbishop for the parish of Bento Gonçalves. The Archbishop was absent, but he telephoned me that he had left the whole matter in hands of Your Eminence in order to forestall any criticism from people saying: now that it does not belong to him anymore he surrenders it to the Fathers of St. Charles."*²²

A few months later the attitude of the Archbishop of Porto Alegre, administrator of the new diocese of Caxias do Sul, grew totally contrary to the idea. From Bento Gonçalves strong protests had come up on the part of clergy and laity against the return of Bento Gonçalves to Scalabrinians, and the future Bishop of Caxias, Msgr. José Barea, declared he would refuse his appointment.

Confronted by such reactions, the more unexpected as quite different was the tone Archbishop Becker used in discussing the matter with the Scalabrinians and the Consistorial, the Consistorial did not insist any more on Bento Gonçalves, and gave Fr. Carlino the permission to open the seminary in Guaporé, which was granted also by Archbishop Becker in March 1936. With the new division of the dioceses in 1934, the parishes that continued to be in the Archdiocese of Porto Alegre were those of Guaporé, Serafina Corrêa, Casca, Dois Lagedos, Vespasiano Corrêa, Encantado, Nova Brésia, Anta Gorda, Itapuca, Putinga; and to that of Santa Maria the parish of Sarandí and the new one of Rondinha; while those of Nova Bassano, Protásio Alves, and Monte Veneto came to be a part of the new diocese of Caxias do Sul.

In early 1937, Fr. Carlino took a trip through the regions of Santa Rosa and Palmeira:

"There still are immense plains of virgin forests and emigrants, and the children of both Germans and Italians have started to inhabit those extremely vast regions cutting down trees, building houses, thus creating new centers where either Germans or Italians predominate. As to the Germans, they have had the religious assistance of German congregations, the Italians, instead, except for a few praiseworthy instances, were left to themselves, and for their religious needs they had to get along with the Germans and speak Portuguese as they could.

For some time already, I had decided to visit those regions and see whether something could be done on behalf of our fellow-countrymen, and I have finally realized a plan. A priest of Piacenza, Fr. Vincenzo Testani, kept writing to invite me to pay a visit to those places, etc., etc., saying that he wanted to retire to Italy with the agreement with the Bishop of Uruguaiana to leave the region in our hands. I departed from Guaporé and after a three day trip I arrived at the

²¹ Card. Rossi to Carlino, Rome, March 23, 1934 (Arch. G.S., 416/2)

²² Carlino to Card. Rossi, Guaporé, May 21, 1935 (Arch. G.S., 418/2).

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municipality of Santa Rosa. Fertile lands, beautiful places, with a great future, and then people, a lot of people. I was enchanted!

Bishop Dom Hermete José Pinheiro of Uruguaiana, happy with my proposal, is not contented with only one missionary, but is asking for a few of them, and is getting ready to give us those regions. As of now it has been decided that I will send two missionaries: one, Fr. Bruno Paris (he has a good command of the languages, and he knows a little German and Polish) will serve temporarily as an assistant to Fr. Testani at Buricá do Santa Rosa. Within a few months Fr. Testani will retire and Fr. Bruno will succeed him. Buricá is a large and very extended place (more than a thousand baptisms) with a school directed by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Bergamo, a hospital, the new churches under construction, etc. The parish has more than 15 thousand souls. The other missionary would be Fr. Rinaldo Zanzotti with the task of Pastor of Cinquentenario, a parish now being organized. Besides, there would be some other important settlements in the territory of Santa Rosa in Santa Rosa itself, at Tucunduva, Rio Branco, Municipal, etc., etc.

True, most Eminent Father, the Lord allows doors to close at us in Porto Alegre, but He opens them big and wide in the Diocese of Uruguaiana.

On my way back I passed through Porto Alegre where the answer of the Vicar General Msgr. Neis to a question of mine was that no new parishes would be given for the time being to the Fathers of St. Charles (they adopted the same policy with the Jesuits). Next Sunday, March 7, two new parishes will be inaugurated in the territory between Casca and Linha XI and two diocesan priests will take possession of them as pastors. And so, Casca will remain small, and small and poor will be also the parish of Fr. Pedrazzani."²³

Cardinal Rossi replied:

"Your letter of last March 5th, in which you present the situation of the Scalabrinian parishes and missions in the Archdiocese of Porto Alegre has been a source of sorrow for me, though not of wonder. For some time now, in the various parishes and missions, the Curia of Porto Alegre is gradually substituting priests and religious of other nationalities with its own clergy. The parish of Casca itself has been dismembered once before, and during his vacation in Italy, Fr. Bogni regretted such painful situation. This is all in the plans of Divine Providence, perhaps, that also in this case reminds us of the expression 'alius est qui seminat, alius qui matit' ('One man sows; another reaps') (Jn 4, 37), The Pious Society has the merit before God of having given everything in the years when the Italians of the early emigration were completely neglected; it has followed them in their various, and often sad, vicissitudes; it has made quite great sacrifices, contenting itself with humble and poor hovels; and now that by the help of God and the cooperation of the good faithful it has succeeded in building large and artistic churches, comfortable rectories, schools, colleges, hospitals, etc... it deserves even greater merit in relinquishing to others the positions gained, to proceed on somewhere else where everything is to be done. But, this is, after all, the life and scope of Scalabrinians. The Lord provides for all things: while one activity ²⁴ ceases,

²³ Carlino to Card, Rossi, Guaporé, March 5, 1937 (Arch. G.S., 418/4).

²⁴ At this point, in the draft we read the following insertion, cancelled afterwards: "...:From where perhaps the Scalabrinian spirit was beginning to diminish."

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*behold, another immense field of work lies wide open before you! Blessings and thanks be given to God, therefore, who also at this particular time is showing his special love for the Pious Society. For these reasons I wholeheartedly bless the new missions the new and brave missionaries chosen by Your Paternity to bring to those lands the Word of God, the comfort of the Faith, in sure hope that there also the Scalabrinian name may be blessed. I am writing at the same time also to the Bishop of Uruguaiana to thank him for the particular attention he accorded the Scalabrinian Pious Society."*²⁵

Following the division of the parish of Casca, reduced to 300 Italian and 200 Polish families, and to 16 chapels, down from 54, it was the turn of Itapuca, Putinga, and Anta Gorda:

"The past week I had to go in a hurry to Porto Alegre on behalf of Anta Gorda, Putinga, Itapuca, three parishes of ours in the municipality of Encantado to protest against the boundaries of a new parish (Ilópolis) created by the Venerable Curia, and naturally entrusted, like Alto da Figueira, to the diocesan clergy....I doubt whether they will pay any attention! I took the opportunity to present more complaints to the Venerable Metropolitan Curia:

- 1. The parishes are entrusted to the Pious Society not to individuals; if in creating all these new parishes in the municipalities of Guaporé and Encantado the Curia had consulted the Provincial Superior as to their boundaries, opportunity, etc., etc., there would not have been raised so much protest and confusion, so many rumors....; instead, the Fathers and their Superior have been treated in this matter as lepers; totally ignored as unworthy of any consultation.*
- 2. I protested the conduct of the solicitor of funds for the seminary of (Porto Alegre), archiepiscopal appointee for the creation of these new parishes, because he keeps slandering the Missionaries of St. Charles and discrediting us before the people, etc., etc., adding also that these new parishes were created to punish the priests of St. Charles and so force them to leave Porto Alegre.*

Msgr. Vicar General... did not answer to the first point, and as to the second one.....the Curia was not responsible for such rumors.....I should present my protests in writing. All our Fathers are a little fed up, Most Rev. Eminence, and they did not expect to be treated like this in compensation for 40 years of hard work. All the missionaries speak with one voice. Either we will pass (Guaporé and Encantado) under the prelature of Passo Fundo, or we will always be tolerated....

*As to the rest, Most Rev. Eminence, all is well. The Prelate of Palmas (Paraná) wrote me a letter asking for our priests in his prelature. He would like to entrust us with a very vast region: Chapecó in Paraná, Rio Grande do Sul, Argentina; and Rio Chapecó in Santa Catarina..... But what can we do if the Fathers are so few! (...) With our Seminary of St. Charles things are well, but we did not solicit anything from our parishes in order to avoid annoying the chancery."*²⁶

Contacts with the Archbishop of Porto Alegre were resumed by Fr. Francesco Tironbola in March 1938 in the course of his visitation of those missions:

²⁵ Card. Rossi to Carlino, Rome, April 26, 1937 (Arch. G.S., 418/4).

²⁶ Carlino to Card. Rossi, Guaporé, May 22, 1937 (Arch. G.S., 418/4).

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"On the 22nd of this month I had an audience with the Bishop at Porto Alegre. He welcomed me very cordially to a conversation of an hour and a half. With great respect and much frankness I discussed the affairs of this Province. The Archbishop was kind and condescending; we have ironed out all difficulties. Fr. Carlino will remain at his post with the trust of the Archbishop, the register of the parish of Guaporé will be sent in as soon as possible and His Excellency will correct the notorious page written on the occasion of the pastoral visitation. He assured me he has nothing to say against the Fathers of St. Charles, whom he not only loves for what they have done for his Diocese, but wants to take under his protection as well, etc., etc.

As to the little seminary, he is glad that we build it, and that we have a Novitiate and a house for the students of philosophy and theology, as other Religious Orders who entered the Diocese after the Fathers of St. Charles.

He also told me that he had been thinking to give us a church for Italians in Porto Alegre. Yesterday morning, March 23 he sent the Vicar General with a car to take us at the hotel, and then together with his Vicar he drove us himself to see the new Seminary in Gravataí. During the ride he told me that in the course of the night he had thought of the church he would give in Porto Alegre to the Fathers of Saint Charles and that he had spoken about it with his Vicar; on our way back he brought me to see it. It is a beautiful little church, most centrally located in the city. The house, instead, is a little too small, but it can be enlarged. In any case, His Excellency will come to Rome next year, and then he will discuss the conditions, etc. with Your Eminence.

His Excellency the Archbishop gave me the impression that my visit has relieved him of a great load. I repeat, he showed himself kind, benign, well-disposed with our Pious Society, and he seems to me a zealous and humble man. The dispute was raised with Fr. Carlino because of misunderstandings and gossips; on my return the rest with all the details, etc.

In the meantime, let us give praise to the Lord for everything. Formerly in turmoil, this Province is now in peace, Fr. Carlino is satisfied, he made his peace with his Archbishop and has received from him the blessing as Pastor of Guaporé and Superior of the Fathers of St. Charles."²⁷

In order to reach a settlement, even the removal of the Provincial Superior had been prospected; but the Archbishop confirmed his trust in him. However, three months later Fr. Carlino presented his resignation, which was accepted.

4. Fr. Angelo Corso

On July 23, 1938, Fr. Angelo Corso was named Superior Provincial, and he left Italy in August directed to Guaporé. In 1939 Fathers Antonio Serraglia and Davide Angeli were made his Councilors.

In his first audience, Archbishop Becker told him that he could not give a church for Italians in Porto Alegre because they were not many and because at *"a time of exaggerated nationalism like this it would be looked upon as a provocation. He would have been disposed to accept a priest whom he could*

²⁷ Tirondola to Card. Rossi, Porto Alegre, March 24, 1938 (Arch. G.S., 419).

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name chaplain of some Institution or parish with the task of contacting the Italians and making preparations for their Sunday Mass."²⁸ Shortly afterwards he reported:

"Conditionally to the approval of Major Superiors, I have accepted the parish of Vila Nova d'Italia in the outskirts of Porto Alegre, almost exclusively inhabited by Italians; and the church of the 'Bom Fim' in the city for the care of Italians in the capital. Fr. Zanzotti will take possession of the parish of Vila Nova on the 15th of this month, while for the church of the 'Bom Fim' I do not know when I will have the Father available for it (...). The day will come when we will have to abandon the parishes of the Italian colony that will be in turn taken up by the diocesan clergy, For the greater good of souls the Bishops dismember and will evermore frequently do so whenever they will have the clergy for them... It would be in our interest if we held on only to some of them, the most important ones, such as Guaporé and Sarandí, where three priests could work together and so live also the religious life, and then enter the major cities, accept a parish on the outskirts, employ there two priests, and reserve a third one to work for Italians who will never be lacking in the large cities. If we only had the missionaries, we could also migrate with the children of immigrants to Santa Catarina and Paraná, build churches and rectories, and within 30 or 40 years move on to other places again. I may be mistaken, Your Eminence, but I am of the opinion that the direction, the way we must proceed with our missions in South America is the twofold one I just mentioned."²⁹

The opening of the residence in Porto Alegre suffered delays and mishaps:

"His Excellency told me at the last moment that due to the present political conditions and the new nationalization laws he could not permit us to preach in Italian in the church of Bom Fim. Unable to secure the primary purpose for which the church was to be open, I did not deem it opportune not even to give it a try. Fr. Zanzotti should be at Vila Nova, but he is not there yet: The parish had been entrusted to us by the Curia with a letter of January 2. He was supposed to take possession of it on February 15(...). The chancery (...) asked me to be patient for three months.

In the meantime, Fr. Zanzotti has remained, and is still at Porto Alegre as provisional chaplain of the Marist Brothers. Two months were enough for him to gain the love and esteem of all for himself and our Congregation. In the past our missionaries have kept themselves too distant from superiors. The Archbishop told me that he has a liking for our Congregation and that if we have the personnel, he is willing to give us other parishes in the outskirts, where Italians are found in great numbers."³⁰

By the end of 1939, Fr. Corso was given the task of making exploratory visit in the Diocese of La Plata in Argentina for the opening of a new mission that would have momentarily depended on the Province of Rio Grande do Sul.

The first Brazilian Plenary Council was celebrated in July of the same year at Rio de Janeiro. Among other things, it fixed the policy to be adopted by the bishops in the problem of nationalization and language. We read in this regard

²⁸ Corso to Card. Rossi, Guaporé, December 12, 1938 (Arch. G.S., 420/1).

²⁹ Corso to Card. Rossi, Guaporé, January 4, 1939 (Arch. G.S., 420/1).

³⁰ Corso to Card. Rossi, Guaporé, January 4, 1939 (Arch. G.S., 420/1).

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an article of Fr. Corso in which we can read between the lines the delicate moment the missionaries of emigrants were going through:

"With the rise to power of President Getúlio Vargas and following the dissolution of the political parties, the abolition of parliament, the strengthening of the army, the consolidation of the government, and the preventing or repression of revolution at its onset, things changed. The government understood that left to themselves with their schools, language, ways and customs, the colonies could become a state within the state and undermine the unity of the nation. Nationalization entered as a part of the Government's program; press and radio were employed in enforcing it. All must be Brazilians, with the same rights and duties, all must speak the same language: Portuguese. Nothing, or just a remote memory, must remain of the German, Italian, Polish, Arab, Syrian or Japanese languages.

To this end, the schools were multiplied, especially in regions of immigrants, so that, though imperfect because at their beginnings, an opportunity be offered to the young for learning something. Brazil must accomplish in a few years what other nations have done in half a century, and one must admit, a great step forward has been taken.

Hardly anyone is there who could not realize the great influence exercised on the masses by the priest and the contribution he gives to the knowledge of the language for his preaching and catechizing. Naturally, the clergy also were invited to contribute with their precious cooperation to the work of nationalization, of the formation, that is, of one nation, the Brazilian nation, by securing its spirit by means of the Portuguese language. The problem of the language concerns especially the South of Brazil where Germans and Italians live in great numbers. In compliance to the directives of their bishops inclined to go along with the wishes of the National Government the missionaries began to preach in Portuguese at one of the Sunday Masses, while performing the other functions in the language of the people. Everyone was satisfied. But lately, press and radio spread the rumor that in Europe, Brazil was considered a land for a possible and easy conquest, and that Germany especially has plans for it and was supporting a Nazi party. Rightly or wrongly, a worried Government hurriedly adopted remedies by the enacting of new laws aimed at controlling, restricting, and suppressing those institutions and initiatives, which did not tend to nationalization. And so, from what I know, all Italian and German schools were closed. Clubs and Mutual Societies had to disappear or change their title and modify their scope, admitting everything and everyone into their ranks.

Press and radio insisted that also the priests should make exclusive use of the official language, Portuguese, in the exercise of their ministry. Rumors had it that the decree of a law forbidding the use of foreign languages was ready and that it could be momentarily enacted with immediate binding force. In fact, certain subordinate authorities, imbued with the spirit of nationalism to a greater degree than the National Government, were already enforcing its observance... But, His Excellency Getúlio Vargas, President of Brazil and a son of Rio Grande, understood that all things need time, and as wise a diplomat as he is, sure of the support and consensus of the whole Episcopate whose patriotic spirit he well knew, deemed it his duty that the provisions should be taken by the bishops themselves. During the Plenary Council the policy to be followed was decided upon by the religious and civil authorities together. The following are the decisions taken and conveyed to us by the Metropolitan Chancery Office of Porto Alegre.

"The moment has come for the Rev. Clergy to effectively cooperate with the esteemed Government of our country in the important work of nationalization. As ever in the past, so also today, it is necessary that we accord it our decisive and steady support. We, therefore, decree:

1. *All sermons and talks held in churches and chapels of this Archdiocese be given in Portuguese.*

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2. *After the sermon in Portuguese, the Rev. Priests will be allowed to repeat the same in the language of the foreigners present provided their number be large enough and they deem it opportune.*
3. *If in certain colonial centers the faithful do not know Portuguese well enough yet, the Rev. Priests will have to repeat the Portuguese sermon in their language.*
4. *To make it easier to preach in Portuguese for non-Brazilian Priests or for those who should not know how to express themselves correctly enough as yet, they will be permitted to read the sermons and the talks published in books approved by church authorities.*

This program was agreed upon by the Supreme Church authorities of Rio de Janeiro and of the Federal Government and must be carried out by order of the Government of the State of Rio Grande do Sul in common accord with the Metropolitan Curia of Porto Alegre.'

We must give credit to Church authorities who in their concern for the spiritual welfare of the faithful in general, and for their religious instruction in particular, have done everything possible... as we have equally to admit that the highest authorities of the state have been indulgent. Someone, however, would have preferred things to continue as they were before when for the 300 thousand Italians of Rio Grande all one needed to know was only the Venetian dialect.

For truth's sake, one must admit that they are not demanding, they know how to be tolerant, and how to be satisfied with our goodwill. In Italy they would be stricter.

Little by little the Portuguese language will enter all homes also by the cooperation of the priest. In municipalities, in little towns, in factories, it is understood and spoken by all...; in the colonies instead it is rarely heard. They say that Italians speak Portuguese when fighting or when they are drunk. But in due time they will learn, too, through trades, schools, the press, the radio, and obligatory military service. In many homes where both languages are equally spoken we are careful to use Portuguese when speaking to children. Someone would wish that children also should learn the language of their parents and with the language remember that Italian blood is running in their veins. That's true, but we must remember that they live in Brazil where they will also have to create a position for themselves. Even in Italy it is recommended that in the homes Italian be spoken as the main factor for correct writing and good success in one's studies. With all this spirit of nationalism, a foreign priest is generally at good terms with civil authorities. If the Prefect, the Judge, the Police Commissioner, the Supervisor, etc... are not masons or fanatics of 'spiritism', the missionary is left completely free in the exercise of his ministry, he has free entry to schools for the teaching of catechism, no one hinders his mission of charity; in fact, he finds support in uprooting or containing vices. Of course, he must be mindful that he lives in Brazil, that other is the flag which hangs from the windows of public buildings or waves on top of towers, and that the Brazilian civil calendar is not that of his own country. When he works and follows the politics of God and souls, he is esteemed, loved, and revered by all, white and black, practicing and non-practicing, alike. But when the power is in the hands of men affiliated to secret or anti-Catholic sects, the foreign priest is up against serious difficulties under the pretext that he is not a Brazilian (...). All this proves how providential the founding of our Scalabrinian seminary for Italian-Brazilian has been."³¹

³¹ Corso, "Lingua e nazionalizzazione secondo le norme del I° Concilio Plenario Brasiliano," "Le Missioni Scalabriniane tra gli Italiani all'estero", a. XXIX, nn. 1-2 (January-March 1940), pp. 8-10 and 31-32.

CHAPTER XV

The Missions of Rio Grande do Sul

1. Encantado

Appointed to succeed Fr. Giorgio Cavigiolo, Fr. Carlo Pedrazzani took possession of this parish on February 17, 1920. This is what Fr. Chenuil says of it in the report of his visitation of 1922-1923:

"In the main town there are fifty families and 500 more throughout the smaller communities, all with their chapels. It has the confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, the Sodality of the Children of Mary and the Apostleship of the Sacred Heart. There were 200 baptisms, 35 marriages, and some six thousand Communions. The pastor is Fr. Carlo Pedrazzani, from Cremona, who, being an artist himself, has embellished the church with decorations of a certain value."¹

The parish of St. Peter in Encantado was canonically erected on September 13, 1924: earlier it was only a quasi-parish. In his visitation of September 20-21, 1926, Archbishop Cicognani observed that the parish, with an extension of about 200 square kilometers had 4,600 people of whom only 150 resided in the central town. In that year, there were 211 baptisms, 38 marriages, 196 first communions, and about 10,780 Communions. Catechism classes were attended by 450 children; the parish school of Santo Antão, directed by the Sisters of the Most Pure Heart of Mary, had 11 boarding student girls, and 104 day ones. Fr. Pedrazzani built a new wooden bell-tower and had the bells sent from Padua, which were blessed on June 31, 1926. He had also a water fountain built in front of the church as a memorial for the 50th anniversary of Italian colonization. He was not well liked by the people for his rough ways and severity in exacting the stole rights. In 1928 Fr. Pedrazzani was transferred to Dois Lagedos and his place was taken by Fr. Giuseppe Foscallo who right away drew up a project for the construction of the facade of the church with two bell towers and a staircase. The foundation stone of the facade was blessed on November 15, 1928. When work on the facade was completed, the interior of the church was entirely restored and a new roof replaced the old wooden one. In his 1933 report Fr. Carlino stated:

"Said Father started the restoration work on the church beginning with the facade, that came out imposing and greatly striking for the two outstanding towers. He continued restoring the interior, which also resulted modern and elegant. All the work will be blessed on the feast day of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus. The church entrance is through a monumental stairway, sided with elegant railings, having the Grotto of Lourdes on one side and the Calvary of St. Teresinha on the other, with an altar in a grotto representing the death of

¹ Chenuil, "Breve relazione della mia visitazione alle nostre missioni del Brasile, dal 12 nov. 1922 al 26 marzo 1923"(Arch. G.S., 368/1).

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the saint. Whoever saw the old church would not recognize it today: it is completely transformed. People and authorities volunteered their generous contribution in helping their excellent pastor. The church is dedicated to St. Peter the Apostle. At the present moment the parish borders with those of Muçum, Roca Sales, Arroio de Meio, Nova Bréscia, Gramado, and Anta Gorda; it has 20 chapels, distant 4 to 20 kilometers, and a population of about 6,000 souls. The religious activities are comforting. A school directed by the Sisters of the Most Pure Heart of Mary provides education and religious instruction for about 140 boys and girls."²

In 1936 Fr. Foscallo was sent to Sarandí. The parish was directed for a time by Fr. Antonio Cugliana, who had been his assistant a few months. He endowed the church with a new main altar in marble and a mosaic floor for the sanctuary. Fr. Alfredo Antonelli was named its pastor in December 1937. He gave a particular boost to the associations of Catholic action. On September 13, 1939, the parish of Doutor Ricardo was created out of seven chapels of Encantado and five or six of Anta Gorda, and detached from Encantado.

2. Nova Bassano

The parish of the Sacred Heart at Nova Bassano in 1922 recorded 230 baptisms, 48 marriages, and about 8,000 communions. The main town had then 40 families, while another 700 were scattered around in 25 chapels. These were reduced to 18 when the new parish of Paraí was detached from it in January 1925. Its population amounted to about 4,500 souls. All alone, Fr. Pandolfi did not have an easy job.

*"I feel like a dog tied to a chain. I say Mass every day at the chapels around, the closest half an hour distant, the others up to four hours."*³

In March 1926, Fr. Pandolfi returned to Italy and returned to Nova Bassano in early 1927. In the meantime, the parish had been left in the hands of Fr. Ernesto Consoni, who arranged the construction in wood of a new school in place of the old crumbling one. Staffed by six Sisters of the Most Pure Heart of Mary, the school had 78 girls, eight of whom were boarders, and 70 day students.

In 1926 there were 299 baptisms, 160 first Communions, 68 weddings, and 9,207 communions. The day students of the parish school increased to 110. The new structure was completed in 1928. In the following years Nova Bassano experienced also a good material growth by the establishment of a cooperative, especially for manufacturing pork products, and by the introduction of electricity in 1933. In 1935, Fr. Pandolfi celebrated his 50th anniversary as a priest. For a long time he had felt the need for an assistant: finally, since early 1936, he could avail himself of the help of Fr. Aroldo Murer, who reported the following in March of that year:

"Here also the devotion to the Sacred Heart is very deep! Even this morning

² Carlino, "Relazione - Encantado" July 15, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 442/6).

³ Pandolfi to Cimino, Nova Bassano, Sept. 24, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 20/4).

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many people took three or more hours riding a horse to come to confession and Holy Communion (...). With love and great admiration I think of the hardships and of the work done by our early Fathers. To convince ourselves of this, we must see the territory and the roads they had to travel on. But even now, do not think that we can take it easy! The parish still has about six thousand souls, and 19 chapels, some of them a three-hour horse-ride from here. This work of the chapels is hard and tough and, let me say so, poorly remunerated (...). The taxes exacted by the Chancery are incredible and in the meantime nothing happens in the school and nothing has been done in the parish. What a desolation! What a church, what vestments! (...). The church, built on a weak foundation, with poorly baked bricks put together with mud, will not last long. I am afraid to be caught like a rat in a trap if someone will not provide soon (...). I received the pictures of Bishop Scalabrini. 'This is the one who confirmed me. It is he who blessed our church. He came to visit us from Italy! What a wonderful man! How good he was!..' - these settlers exclaim when I show them his picture, even before they read his name. How many praises! They remember the smallest details of his visit."⁴

Built after a project of architects Zani and Bettamin, 30 meters tall and topped with a statue of Christ the Redeemer, the new bell tower was blessed by Bishop Barea of Caxias on January 16, 1938.

In the years 1939-1940 a persecution broke out against Fr. Murer on the part of a few people, members of one of the two factions or parties that had been dividing the small town for a long time.

In 1940 the missionary wrote:

"It's more than four years I have been here at Nova Bassano with Fr. Pandolfi, who is still going strong and working hard at age 78. A hospital is about to be completed that will be a parochial one, if the bishop should so allow (...). By order of the bishop I must start getting busy on the construction of a new parish church."⁵

A short while afterwards, Fr. Murer received threats on his life, but he remained at Nova Bassano with Fr. Pandolfi until 1942.

3. Protásio Alves

Headed by Fr. Antonio Serraglia since 1910, the parish of Our Lady of the Rosary in Protásio Alves had, in 1921, 232 Italian families and about 70 Brazilian ones; it registered 141 baptisms, 86 first communicants, 19 marriages, and 12 funerals. Up to that time it had been a quasi-parish; it was canonically erected into a parish by decree of the Archbishop of Porto Alegre, published on September 8, 1921. On the situation of the parish at the time we read:

"The present financial situation is much improved as compared with that of 20 years ago, to which the untiring action of our confrere has greatly contributed, especially by soliciting from the authorities many improvements, especially on the roads. So small

⁴ Murer to Tirondola, Nova Bassano, March 6, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 448/7).

⁵ Murer to Card. Rossi, Nova Bassano, February 1, 1940 (Arch. G.S., 448/7).

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in population (300 families in all, 232 Italian, and 68 Brazilian) yet so vast in territory, that parish extends in the plains (that is, over immense natural prairies, with few or no inhabitants). It is, therefore, quite difficult for the priest (...).

The richest resource of that territory consists in the pine forests because following the establishment of water or fuel sawmills they represent a great gain. It was not possible to give start to this industry before, for the absolute lack of roads of any kind in the past (...). The Italians residing in that region are mostly from Friuli, and, like all the Italian colonies of Rio Grande do Sul, they hold on to the Italian language and customs: a fact to which the Scalabrinian priest, no doubt, has much contributed, as he has never abandoned them and has assisted them also on the civil level by founding schools, though only, or a little more than, elementary, and keeping them alive through the exclusive contributions of poor immigrants."⁶

A wooden steeple was built, and its three bells, ordered from Hamburg, were blessed on March 25, 1926. Shortly afterwards, the new pavement of the sanctuary was made, the altar railings, the pulpit, the choir loft were installed, and the new roof of the church was built.

On his apostolic visitation made in September of the same year, Archbishop Cicognani wrote the population numbered 2,400 residents, 1,600 Italians, and 800 Brazilians who lived scattered in the fields, that is, in the immense prairies towards Lagoa Vermelha. Fr. Serraglia had been taking care until then of them also. But in accord with the chancery, he left at this time their three chapels to Fr. Giuseppe Sanson, Pastor of Nova Prata, while he continued to care for the seven chapels of the Italians, visiting them regularly every three months and every time the faithful called for him. However, since the Italian chapels were not very far from the parish, many settlers went there to hear Mass on Sunday; while in the afternoon they gathered together in the chapel for the rosary and the religious instruction given by a layman appointed by the pastor.

In his effort to contribute to the civil progress of Protásio Alves, in 1931 Fr. Serraglia founded a society that constructed a small plant to supply electricity for the community; he took care that a road was built between Protásio Alves and Nova Prata, and a telephone line installed with Nova Prata.

4. Anta Gorda

Fr. Erminio Catelli, pastor since 1912, returned to Italy in 1921 for a period of vacation and rest. Fr. Domenico Carlino had substituted for him in the meantime. On returning to the parish in February 1922, Fr. Catelli wrote to Fr. Rinaldi:

"Nothing new in Anta Gorda that may interest you. It grows under your eyes materially... and a little also spiritually! It seems so, at least from the number of confessions and from the intense work we must do. I do not know how Fr. Carlino could take it for seven months all alone! Itapuca (six linhas, from Anta Gorda to Rio Lageado Ferreira) has been attached to Anta Gorda. We used to have 1,250 families before; now there are about 2,000; with the subtraction of

⁶"Chiesa del Santo Rosario Protásio Alves", "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. XV, no. 2 (Aprile-Giugno 1922) pp. 20-21.

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*Putinga, I will still remain with 1,200."*⁷

Putinga was made an independent parish and entrusted to Fr. Carlino in 1922. While Fr. Catelli was in Italy, one Mr. Michele De Patta, a doctor from Calabria, went to take residence in Anta Gorda. Because of his oppressive ways and arrogant manners he incurred the hatred of the people and the hostility of the mayor. In March 1923, a near revolution broke out in which also Fr. Catelli was unwittingly involved. Fr. Serraglia tells us the story:

*"A month ago at Anta Gorda, together with other ruffians, a doctor from Naples (Michele De Patta) had tried to strangle Fr. Erminio with a silk handkerchief in the middle of the night. But courageous and prompt in spirit and body, he cried out loud for help, and so the criminals could not attain their goal. The following day 300 armed colonists appeared in the square ordering De Patta to leave town within six days. The reckless man did not pay any attention to them, but six days later some 700 armed settlers came out to tell him to go. But he, together with other brigands of his kind, entrenched themselves inside the house and the colonists kept shooting for three hours. Thinking they had killed the criminals, they forced the doors open, and the most furious ones roamed around the rooms, and there ensued a shooting in which a certain Bortolo Burtolini, whom you surely know, lost his life, and ten people were wounded."*⁸

A slanderous libel, published by Mr. De Patta in Porto Alegre in April 1923, and titled "*The Lions of Calabria in the Land of Rio Grande. The Savagery of Anta Gorda. Historical Notes*" traced the causes of that people's riot to instigations on the part of the mayor and of the pastor, who would have acted to take revenge for the nocturnal attack, due - according to the libel - only to a few parishioners angry over Fr. Catelli's refusal to bless the body of a child who had died in the hospital of Dr. De Patta. During his hasty apostolic visitation, the Apostolic Visitor, Fr. Giuseppe Antonio of Persiceto, must have heard of the action brought against Fr. Catelli, and he asked an account of it from the Regional Superior, Fr. Costanzo, who offered the following reply:

"Your last letter about the action brought against Fr. Catelli, pastor of Anta Gorda, surprised me very much. As I have been informed, Fr. Catelli has been summoned as a witness together with many others at a trial that has been going on for two years now concerning the bloody events of Anta Gorda, and I believe also that he has stood as a witness in Porto Alegre a short while ago. And in a few words here is the story of Anta Gorda's riots. about two years ago there lived in Anta Gorda for the exercise of his trade a doctor, the notorious Dr. De Patta, who through his arrogance, exaggerated fees, undue appropriation of the Hospital, the property of the colonists, and finally, through his conduct, had exhausted the patience of the people to such a degree as to prompt them to decide his expulsion from town. Instead of attributing to his misdeeds that people's attitude in his regard, he decided to place all the blame for it on the pastor of Anta Gorda against whom he had libels and articles published in newspapers, abusing him with indignities (...). One day a telegram came to me containing threats to Fr. Catelli, if I did not take provisions against him. The telegram, undersigned by others, had actually been sent by Dr. De Patta some

⁷ Catelli to Rinaldi, Anta Gorda, March 10, 1922 (Arch. G.S., 435/2).

⁸ Serraglia to Rinaldi, Protásio Alves, April 5, 1923 (Arch. G.S., 435/2).

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*two years ago. While I was seeking information so that I might take the necessary steps in case they should be needed, I was given the news that on his way back home across Anta Gorda's square, late at night, Fr. Catelli had been attacked and knocked down to the ground by four men. Fortunately, he got out of it just a little scared, because his loud shouts for help drew people and the attackers fled. Fr. Catelli did not recognize anyone of the four, but it is almost certain that Dr. De Patta had something in it, if not present himself in the assault. Informed about the attack, I protested to the Italian Consul and to the Archbishop, who was in turn very quick in protesting to the Police Delegate of Encantado. The Consul, instead, did not even deign to give me an answer! It seems in fact as though he was siding with Dr. De Patta. Following the attack, Fr. Catelli told the people that, since he was no longer feeling safe in Anta Gorda, he was forced to withdraw, for a time at least, from that town. At this point, already fed up with the behavior of Dr. De Patta and suspecting him also for the attack on Fr. Catelli, in fear perhaps of losing their pastor, the people of Anta Gorda rose in arms and went up to the house of Dr. De Patta giving him a certain period of time to leave. As Dr. De Patta had not heeded the order of the people, these flew into a rage and began shooting wildly at the house where Dr. De Patta had entrenched himself. Standing inside the house, Dr. De Patta started firing at the crowd, a few were wounded and two killed. After these deplorable events, Dr. De Patta got out of Anta Gorda, accompanied by the Delegate of Police and a few others, and following a short stay at Lageado, he went to fix his residence in Porto Alegre (...). From information given me by witnesses worthy of trust, Fr. Catelli has no fault in that shooting incident against the house of Dr. Patta, and I cannot understand why any action should be taken against him at all. On the contrary, it should be the right of Fr. Catelli, instead, to bring Dr. De Patta to trial for the slanders he published, if that sleazy Calabrian had only undersigned them."*⁹

In his visitation of September 27, 1926, Archbishop Cicognani found that the parish covered a territory of 250 square kilometers, had 4,500 people and 23 chapels, eight of which had been assigned to the new parish of Itapuca that had already been erected but did not yet have a pastor. Fr. Catelli had agreed to the creation of this parish as it would have allowed him some respite, considering that he had to pay 200 visits to the chapels every year, some of them a horse-ride of many hours away. In 1925 there were 415 baptisms, 70 marriages, 4,832 communions, and 440 children attended Catechism. But he was not in favor of creating the parish of Gramado, which would have deprived him of three of the most important chapels. He had already prepared the convent for the Scalabrinian Sisters, to whom he intended to entrust the school, and the material for the construction of the new stone church, 31 meters long by 14 wide. He would have planned also the rectory, later on. He had even taken care that schools and roads were opened, and he had founded the cooperative of Paredão. Work on the church was started in 1927, and it was inaugurated on June 13, 1929. The Scalabrinian Sisters had at first about 100 girls. The parish school, named after St. Teresinha, had been opened in 1930. The new rectory was built with masonry in 1933-1934. The parish of

⁹ Costanzo to G.A. da Persiceto, Dois Lageados, March 17, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 435/2).

Itapuca was dismembered from Anta Gorda in 1939, and in 1940 that of Doutor Ricardo was created from Anta Gorda and Encantado.

5. Vespasiano Corrêa

The Scalabrinians returned Vespasiano Corrêa (Esperança) on February 1, 1922, with Fr. Filippo Flesia. The rivalries between the two parties that divided the parish since the time of the sad events of 1905 were still lingering. The retaking of the parish was decided by Fr. Costanzo, against the advice of some of the Fathers, in order to enhance the importance of the parish of Dois Lagedos he himself had founded; with this in mind he requested that the six chapels pertaining to Vespasiano Corrêa be assigned to his parish. The colonists had recourse to the Archbishop against this scheme, but Fr. Costanzo insisted so much that the Archbishop let him have it his way on condition that he should take also full responsibility over the difficult parish of Vespasiano Corrêa. At that time the parish had an area of 160 square kilometers with a population of 2,000 Italians, 400 Brazilians, 260 Poles and a few Germans. Fr. Flesia was received with hostility, especially by the people of the central community, some 200 of them; but little by little he gained the affection of the colony. He often visited the eleven chapels, appointing in each a layman to teach catechism on Sunday. He completed and decorated the interior of the church, endowed it with two new side altars, and brought improvements to the rectory.

In 1922 there were 150 baptisms, 25 weddings, about 4,000 communions; in 1926 respectively, 212, 33, 3,500; in 1927, 208, 30, 2,550; in 1928, 231, 28, 3,900.

On March 18, 1929, Fr. Flesia was transferred to the new parish of Itapuca, and that of Vespasiano Corrêa was entrusted to Fr. Alfredo Trincherro until August 1933; he is credited for the provisional pavement of the church, the pulpit, the stairway, the choir loft and the pews. He was succeeded for three years by Fr. Alfredo Antonelli who installed the electric systems of both church and rectory. During his tenure the chapels increased to 13 and the people to 3,500. From March 5 to November 16, 1936, the parish was temporarily directed by Fr. Bruno Paris, who was able to collect the funds for the new tile pavement of the church. His successor Fr. Davide Angeli laid the pavement, acquired a new wooden altar, had the altar railings and the rectory's entry staircase made of artificial granite. On November 12, 1939, the Provincial Superior, Fr. Angelo Corso, blessed the three new bells.

6. Nova Bréscia

The quasi-parish of St. John the Baptist of Nova Bréscia was canonically erected into a parish on September 13, 1924. On February 3, 1920, its first curate and pastor, Fr. Giovanni Morelli, resumed the construction of the Church begun in 1916. The works were slow because the parish was very poor

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and small; but it kept true to its original word, and within the limits of its possibilities it helped constantly the pastor especially by supplying many days of work free of charge. Finally, in 1927, the rustic building was complete and its inauguration was celebrated on April 24-26. Fr. Chenuil visited Nova Bréscia in 1923 and these are his remarks:

"This parish will be famous in the history of our colonies of Rio Grande, for the monumental church the present pastor Fr. Giovanni Morelli from Bergamo is now building (...).Unable to find there the proper clay for making the bricks, and having discovered, on the land, a rich quarry of granite he decided to build the new church with that material. This implied a huge effort but the generosity and steadfastness of those brave colonists was such as to make the arduous enterprise possible in a few years. The rectory is a wooden structure like all the others in town. There is also a handsome parish school staffed by the Sisters of St. Charles. The main town has 60 families: 300 more live scattered around in 13 missions. Baptisms this year have been 250, marriages 30, and about 6,000 communions."¹⁰

According to a 1926 report, the total population of the central community and of its 16 chapels amounted to 4,000 over an area of 180 square kilometers. In 1925 baptisms had been 331, 50 weddings, and communions 9,925. Catechism was attended by 350 children. The four Scalabrinian Sisters staffing Sacred Heart School for girls had three boarding and 70 day students.

In 1928 there were 254 baptisms, 50 marriages, and 10 thousand communions.

In 1928 Fr. Morelli became serious sick, but he recovered, although he was no longer in a condition to undertake the hardships, especially of the long horse rides through that mountainous territory. And so he asked to be transferred to Paraná, much more so because he received the death threats for having allowed church burial to a person who had expressly refused the sacraments even at the moment of death.

Fr. Morelli was then transferred to Paraná and his place was taken by Fr. Antonelli, who continued his predecessor's tradition, especially in training the people to frequent the sacraments. By the way, among other things he had the pavement of the church made of cement. In 1933 the parish counted 22 chapels, 3 to 25 kilometers away, with an overall population of 7,000 people. Civilly, it belonged to the "distrito" of Encantado since 1922; in 1935 it was incorporated into the municipality of Arroio de Meio. In 1932, the parish school of the Sacred Heart became a "center of studies" and was attended by 110 students.

In 1935, the parish of Relvado was carved out of Nova Bréscia. Fr. Filippo Flesia was made pastor of Nova Bréscia in 1932 and in 1934 he was succeeded by Fr. Beniamino Rosato whose immediate concern was to rebuild the church threatening to fall into ruin. It had been raised, in fact, without architects or constructors and on insufficiently solid foundations. In 1939, the Provincial Superior, Fr. Angelo Corso, wrote as follows from Nova Bréscia:

¹⁰ Chenuil, "Breve relazione, etc." cit.

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"On my arrival at Muçum, 50 kilometers from Guaporé, I hear someone tell me: *'Father, the river does not consent crossing it either today or tomorrow (...).'* I had already decided to return to Guaporé, when an inspiration came to me to modify my itinerary and detour through Nova Bréscia. I asked for a means of transportation. At the worst, I will go there on a horse. I was told there was a truck, and if I so wanted I had to take the opportunity and leave immediately because the driver could not wait....the roads were horrible, the sky dark and threatening. The trip might have taken us an hour and a half, instead it took us close to five hours. The roads untraceable, mud half a meter deep, holes and puddles everywhere and many times we had to get off. At last, at four in the afternoon I arrive at Nova Bréscia. Due to the erection of the new parishes, this one hardly reaches 4,000 souls (...). It is now known as Tiradentes, the nickname of Joaquim José da Silva Xavier, a flagbearer of the Brazilian army condemned to the gallows by the imperial authorities in 1792 and thought of as the pioneer martyr of Brazil's independence (...). To better succeed in its plans of nationalization, the government makes all efforts to have people forget anything foreign. And so Nuova Trento is now called Flores da Cunha; Nuova Vicenza, Farroupilha; Nuova Bréscia, Tiradentes. So far, Tiradentes has not caught on with the people; they still all call it Nuova Bréscia (...). The rectory of Nova Bréscia is made of wood and is already in run down conditions. Built in the early years of the colony, no one did anything to it since (...).

- Pay attention, Fr. Beniamino, you should do something ... you have a rectory, a kitchen, that look really indecent to me.

- You are right, I see it myself! But I can't do it now, I have the church, the hospital... later on I will think also about the rectory!

Not contented with the church, Fr. Beniamino began getting busy about the construction of a hospital. He put together a committee, collected funds from the people, and the hospital is now almost completed and within a few months it will admit the first patients, who will be entrusted later on to the care of the Scalabrinian Sisters. The sum spent so far amounts to about 80 thousand liras.

Like the rectory, the house of the Scalabrinian Sisters also leaves much to be desired. Nova Bréscia owes very much to these Sisters! They have the care of all schools in town; they do a lot of good! They also run some kind of a boarding school with 20 student girls. There could be more if they had a modern fitting, stone building. It is desirable that in his zeal Fr. Beniamino, once he's done with the church, may get busy on this so necessary an institution, and may provide a healthy and decent house for the good Sisters as a token of gratitude for their disinterested contribution in the religious and moral formation of youth."¹¹

Built with the stones of the old demolished building, the new church was ready in two years, except for the refinishing work.

7. Monte Belo

In 1920, Fr. Luigi Guglieri, pastor since 1911, had three bells come from Italy, which he placed on a wooden tower. On that occasion he wrote:

"In retracing the early years of that colonization, we recall the sacrifices of all kinds suffered equally by all migrants. Be it enough to know that when they arrived there the poor wretched had to resign themselves to live in the forests, deprived of homes, roads, schools, bridges, to walk whole days before finding a store where they could buy some flour! Yet, in a relatively short while, they were able to cut down trees, open

¹¹ A. Corso, "Una visita a Nuova Bréscia", "Le Missioni Scalabriniane tra gli Italiani all'estero", a. XXVIII, no. 5 (September, 1939), pp. 149-150.

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roads, build houses and churches, though made of wood, respondent to their material and moral needs. The transformation of those places was admirable indeed especially when after only a few years one could witness the present village of Montebello rising up as though by magic, where, besides all comforts of life, from amongst the various structures there stands out today the parish church in a good roman architecture, a decent rectory, and on a hill a grandiose school building for elementary classes and a boarding school for girls, who under the direction of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary attend to studies and work. And as though all this were not enough, those good colonists have opened and support other schools in their vast territory, alongside their modest and yet so devout and adorned chapels, that would inspire piety and consolation also in the heart of unbelieving visitors. And they did all this work, all these great and manifold works and support them out of their own pockets; in fact, not contented with this, they took upon themselves the heavy expense of 40,064.80 liras for the purchase of new bells from Padua and for which they have given us 34,598,80 already. And now by the courage and generosity they are distinguished for, they are thinking of replacing the wooden bell tower with another one made of stone. Our admiration still grows deeper when we think that the parish does not even have 500 families, and all of them working the land. Few, indeed, especially in trades and industry, have reached a degree of affluence."¹²

Here is what the Superior General wrote in 1923 about the parish of St. Francis of Assisi:

"This little village has also the advantage of having a parish school directed by the Sisters of the Most Pure Heart of Mary, who, besides their ordinary teaching, help also the pastor in preparing children for their first Communion. There are only 22 families in the main town, while another 345 of them live scattered in 15 other communities of the parish, with their relative chapels. Last year there were 100 baptisms, 10 weddings, 5,000 communions."¹³

In 1926, baptisms were 112, first communions 85, marriages 29; 6,875 communions. The Sisters had 81 girls, 11 of them boarding, and 70 day students. The parish was given up by Scalabrinians in 1929, not to leave it in complete isolation after Bento Gonçalves had been surrendered to the diocesan clergy.

8. Monte Vêneto

From February 16, 1921 until September 1922, the parish of Our Lady of Good Health of Monte Vêneto (today's Cotiporã) canonically erected on April 4, 1921, was directed by Fr. Giovanni Ginocchio and from February 1923, by Fr. Giuseppe Chiappa. In his report of 1923 Fr. Chenuil says:

"There is no parish school yet but there is a good Catholic teacher who holds catechism classes for the children and plays the harmonium in church. In the central community there are 50 families, and 300 more live scattered through 12 missions with their respective chapels. There are the confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament, Sacred Heart, and Children of Mary. There were 155 baptisms this year, 35 marriages and 5,000 communions. Parishioners are

¹² "Vita e progresso della Colonia di Montebello nel Rio Grande do Sul (Brasile)", "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. XV, no. 1 (January-March 1921), p. 17.

¹³ Chenuil, "Breve relazione, etc." cit

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rather good, but lately they have been somewhat neglected."¹⁴

In 1926 the parish had 2,600 people; 600 in the central town, the rest scattered throughout in 19 chapels. In the previous year there were 156 baptisms, 32 weddings, 4,300 communions. In 1927, respectively 186, 27, 4056. Fr. Davide Angeli, successor of Fr. Chiappa since February of 1926, by the end of that year he had bought a house that was to serve as a school. He intended to entrust it either to the Scalabrinian Sisters or to those of the Most Pure Heart of Mary, but neither of them accepted it for lack of personnel and the house was rented out. In 1928 Fr. Angeli began the construction of a tall stone bell tower. To his initiative is due also a hospital, inaugurated in 1933. Fr. Angeli was moved to Vespasiano Corrêa in November 1926. Fr. Bruno Paris followed him for four months; then came Fr. Vittorio DeLorenzi, pastor until October 1939; and lastly Fr. Aneto Bogni until 1942.

9. Guaporé

Fr. Stefano Angeli entered the parish as pastor on August 5, 1920. At that time it was the most important parish among those directed by Scalabrinians in Rio Grande do Sul, after that of Bento Gonçalves. In 1921, it had 250 baptisms, 31 weddings, 20 funerals: in 1922 they were respectively 201, 38, 18. In 1925 it was thought to have about 7,500 people, including, however, also those living in the seven chapels of the parish of Pulador, vacant at that time. It covered an area of 340 square kilometers; the chapels belonging to Guaporé were 27. The central town had 1,200 residents. In 1928, it registered 365 baptisms, 89 weddings, 230 first Communions, and 21,454 communions. Fr. Angeli immediately had a project drawn for a new facade of the parish church of St. Anthony; but his main concern turned to the construction of a boarding school for boys which was entrusted to the Marist Brothers and began functioning in 1928. In 1925, the Scalabrini School for girls directed by Scalabrinian Sisters was attended by 27 boarding girls and 170 day students.

There were no catholic associations at the time. Fr. Angeli was convinced that neither the Children of Mary nor the Boys of St. Aloysius Society would have observed their Statutes, especially the prohibition to dance, which was a part of the traditions of the local families. Instead, the Apostleship of Prayer was very flourishing, with over 800 members; attendance to the Sacraments was remarkable, especially on First Fridays and on visitations of the chapels. Long and hard was the struggle the pastors of Guaporé had to sustain against brothels and gambling houses; their relations with political authorities were not always easy. As seen above, Fr. Angeli was named Regional Superior on April 11, 1931; but he died only 15 months later, on July 22, 1932. The parish was headed for two years by Fr. Giuseppe Rizzi, a cousin of Fr. Angeli and his assistant since 1920. The Regional Superior, Fr. Domenico Carlino, took possession of the parish in July 1934. A month later he wrote:

"The parish, both center and missions, is good and religious, and even though

¹⁴ Ibidem

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*there is some rot, I still find a lot of good; it has been neglected a little (...). Already the attendance to the church and the Sacraments has increased. They expect much, even too much, of us poor priests."*¹⁵

Fr. Carlino took great care of the Pious Union of St. Teresinha that took upon itself the expenses for the construction of the main marble altar; he founded the Pious Union for Priestly Vocations; reorganized the Apostleship of Prayer; he established the Catholic Workers' Union; began works on the restoration of the parish church and on its grandiose facade sided by twin towers. He devoted much of his time and resources to the construction of the Scalabrinian Seminary of Guaporé. On May 1, 1939, the new Provincial Superior assumed the direction of the parish. He had arrived at Guaporé in August 1938, but he expressed the desire that Fr. Carlino should remain a pastor a while longer:

*"It is not possible to fulfill at the same time, and do so well, the duties of pastor of Guaporé and Provincial Superior. Guaporé is a town on its way to becoming a city and if it is to be cared for properly a man must devote to it all his energies. The pastor cannot absent himself: the rectory is like a seaport... and in fact he should be given the help of an assistant, who may remain for a long time so to be able to know and assist our 33 mission chapels (...). The two tasks seem to me incompatible also in cases of conflict with the chanceries... and finally, to be in a position to tend, especially in the beginning, to the Seminary (...). Knowledge of the language is necessary especially in the town seat of the Municipality, where, though all understand Italian, authorities want us to preach in Portuguese, and we must do so in order to avoid reports and gossips."*¹⁶

The main institutions Fr. Corso devoted himself to, besides the spiritual renewal of the parish, were the completion of the facade of the church and the planning of the new "Scalabrini" boarding school of the Scalabrinian Sisters to replace the old wooden one, insufficient and crumbling.

10. Bento Gonçalves

From Fr. Chenuil's report of his visitation to the parish of Bento Gonçalves in 1923 we learn:

"This is not just a little country town anymore, but it has entirely assumed the appearance and importance of a small city with its brick houses, railway station, hotels and shops (...). By his zeal, activities, and above all by the example of his eminent priestly virtues, Fr. Enrico Poggi succeeded in transforming completely that community into one of the most exemplary parishes of the Archdiocese. This miracle of grace is due to the Sacred Heart of Jesus to whom he consecrated the parish with a public solemn celebration that is commemorated every year in that church in the month of February. This solemn manifestation of faith and devotion is preceded by an entire night of adoration attended by all people. On this occasion there were 3,500 communions this year, and 18 priests attended it from neighboring parishes. It was a veritable triumph of the Sacred Heart, whose statue was solemnly

¹⁵ Carlino to Card. Rossi, Guaporé, August 27, 1934 (Arch. G.S., 418/2).

¹⁶ Corso to Cardinal Rossi, Guaporé, September 28, 1938 (Arch. G.S., 420/1).

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carried through the streets of the town.

The people are so well disposed towards their church that this year they have chosen to spend no less than 70 'contos' of reis, that is more than 150,000 liras to restore and embellish it. It is a most beautiful construction in Romanesque style with three naves, an artistic marble altar donated by the pastor, and good bells from Padua. There is also a nice parochial school, directed by the Sisters of St. Charles. The confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, the League of the Sacred Heart, the Children of Mary, etc. are flourishing. 350 families live in the main town, while another 900 live scattered around in 25 chapel missions. It counted this year 350 baptisms, 100 weddings, and 20,000 communions. Here to help the pastor we have another missionary from Biella, Fr. Foscallo, who is also in charge of the 'Corriere d'Italia' a catholic weekly, founded by Fr. Poggi for our colonists. This newspaper has three thousand subscribers and does a lot of good among our immigrants."¹⁷

Fr. Poggi had become a Scalabrinian on September 30, 1921. In poor health, he asked to return to Italy in 1924. Only in 1925 it was possible to grant his desire: in fact he went back in September of that year, and Fr. Guido Foscallo was appointed to head the parish in his place. During his visitation of Scalabrinian missions in Brazil, Archbishop Cicognani was present at the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the first Mass celebrated at Bento Gonçalves by Fr. Bartolomeo Tiecher, of Trent, on September 29, 1876. Fr. Tiecher was still living and pastor of Torres. The celebrations were preceded by a mission of ten days, preached by the Capuchins. There were 9,000 communions; five of ten Protestants still living in town reneged; 700 young men gave their names to the association of the "Knights of the Cross", affiliated to the "União dos Moços Catolicos". In the public square of Cruzinha, original location of the Italian colony, a memorial, made of a marble cross placed on a granite pedestal, was inaugurated.

According to data gathered by Archbishop Cicognani in 1926, Bento Gonçalves had 8,000 people, of whom 3,500 in the main town; and excepting about ten Brazilian families, all the others were Italian or children of Italians. Excluding, therefore, the extraordinary missions, the communions distributed between January 1 and September 15 of that year had been 30,740. Naturally, Archbishop Becker and the diocesan clergy of Porto Alegre longed for this parish, certainly one of the most flourishing and best organized parishes of the State of Rio Grande do Sul. Besides, it had never been exactly entrusted to the Scalabrinian Congregation, even though Fr. Poggi had become, at one time, a Scalabrinian and Scalabrinians were his assistants since 1916. In the archdiocesan review "*Unitas*" of April-May 1926, among the official letters there is the following:

"To the Rev. Fr. Aneto Bogni, Regional Superior of the Missionaries of St. Charles: the appointment of the Rev. Pastor of Bento Gonçalves is made with the understanding that the Chancery is free to name at anytime to that post a

¹⁷ Chenuil, "Breve relazione, etc." cit.

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diocesan priest. February 5th."

And, in fact, in the same issue, among the appointments of pastors, assistants, and chaplains, that of Fr. Foscallo shows him as acting pastor, not a pastor.¹⁸ Upon receiving the letter of the Archbishop of February 5, 1926, Fr. Bogni wrote to Rome:

"I hurried immediately to Porto Alegre to talk to the Archbishop insisting that the parish be entrusted to the Scalabrinians, who for many years have been working there with sacrifice and fruit and showing him that the loss of this parish meant the suppression of the newspaper. He remained impressed and promised to study the problem and give an answer soon. I hope the reply will be favorable and that he will let us have the parish on equal conditions with the others, naming their respective pastors and assistants in accord with the prescriptions of our Superiors."¹⁹

On November 18, 1926, Fr. Bogni reported:

"Lately the situation of this parish is becoming somewhat critical: the dispute arisen between two Italian doctors and their supporters is getting worse every day: the neutrality of the pastor, already so difficult of itself, is often misinterpreted: the national element (Brazilian) wants a national pastor, and all know that the Archbishop is of the same idea; it is our general opinion that the time has come for us to move out of Bento Gonçalves with dignity, since we are not sure whether we can do so later on, thus leaving it and Monte Bello in the hands of the Archbishop by the beginning of the new year."²⁰

And to Fr. Costanzo he wrote:

"All our difficulties spring forth from Bento Gonçalves and the newspaper. Since the Archbishop does not want us to have Bento Gonçalves, I had proposed almost an immediate withdrawal from there, but I did not receive any authorization so far. And this would be right now a necessary provision. What do we do at Bento? Should we be the indifferent onlookers of a fierce struggle between two parties bitterly seeking by all means, moral or otherwise, to hurt each other and to involve both church and newspaper in it? The situation has reached such a point that the pastor does not spend nights in Bento anymore, and the C.G. resides there as delegate of police, protected by a good number of policemen. The position of the pastor is critical: on our side there are the L., the M., the C., the T., etc., on the other are the G. and the B., the lots and the colony: the struggle is at loggerheads with each other and it is the talk of the town. All want the pastor on their side, and no wonder if in such fury they should sooner or later involve in this even the pastor. And so, considering that the parish is not ours and that the Brazilian element continues to insist in pretending a national priest, let us leave Bento, and.... that's that. The newspaper is still in worse circumstances because the two parties would want to use it for their reciprocal insults, but as it does not lend itself, its doomsday is at hand!"²¹

On December 30, 1926, Card. De Lai sent the following telegram to Fr. Bogni:

"Confirming instructions of November 20 and 25, prepare surrendering to

¹⁸ Cfr. "Unitas", Revista eclesiastica da Arquidiocese de Porto Alegre, a. XIII, no. 4-5 (April-May 1926), pp. 124 and 133.

¹⁹ Bogni to Card. De Lai, Bento Gonçalves, February 27, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 467/1).

²⁰ Bogni to Card. De Lai, Casca, November 18, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 467/1).

²¹ Bogni to Costanzo, no date (Arch. G.S., 467/1).

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Archbishop the parishes of Bento Gonçalves and Monte Belo. Discontinue publication of newspaper and sell the printing shop on best terms possible." ²²

On March 2, 1927, Fr. Foscallo informed Archbishop Cicognani he had arranged the sale of the typography to the parish administration, adding he had spoken to the Archbishop about the parish:

*"He told me loud and clear that he did not have anyone to send here this year and, therefore, we had to remain on for this time (...). In the meantime, we wait out the last chapter of our history here, which will mark the departure of the missionaries of St. Charles for other fields of work. This year also, the feast of the Sacred Heart has been a great success: only at the first distribution of communions at night the communicants were 1,150. Altogether 2,200 people received communion in the course of the feast. In 1926, communions at Bento Gonçalves amounted to 49,000. However, due to the disputes of the doctors, who do not intend to desist at all, but are reaching very high peaks at times, life is nearly impossible."*²³

On July 25, 1927, Fr. Foscallo wrote again to Archbishop Cicognani, complaining he had remained alone because his assistant, Fr. Salvetti had been sick two months and had been assigned to the parish of Casca. The work throughout the 27 chapels demanded so much of his time that in the period between June 13 and July 25 he had been only one day in residence. He could not say Mass, therefore, at Tacchini's Hospital, regularly preach the monthly day of recollection to the Novices of the Scalabrinian Sisters, who were eleven and hoped to soon have a new house by the boarding school. And he added:

"Forgive my complaint and liberty, Most Rev. Monsignor, but I think that all this is to the detriment of our Congregation because they may say that we pretend to hold on to the parish while we are unable to do all the work. Much better, perhaps, to surrender it right away than to be condemned to a miserable life till the end of the year all by myself, without being able to do all the work that should be done, giving cause for criticism or for complaints at least, to our disadvantage. I have also the works of the bell tower in very advanced stage, because it's natural that as long as we remain here the work should be continued, no matter what the cost, for the welfare and progress of the parish, so as to avoid giving the impression that in view of our departure we are neglecting it. The dispute of the doctors has given rise to a most serious division in the community of Bento Gonçalves, unfortunately an incurable one and growing ever more bitter each day. As is my duty, I have absolutely decided to keep neutral between the two parties, only seeking to be on good terms with all. But the supporters of Dr. Tacchini accused me of abandoning him; hence their fury, though showing themselves obsequious in appearance.

*In any case, their behavior and their steady criticism and schemes do not make me change my point of view, unless I receive higher orders."*²⁴

On November 9, 1927, after reporting that they wanted to put the blame on him for the Archbishop's prohibition to say Mass in the open on the occasion of the inauguration of Doctor Giorgi's hospital, a rival of Dr. Tacchini, Fr. Foscallo

²² Telegram Card. De Lai to Bogno, Rome, December 30, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 467/1).

²³ Foscallo to Cicognani, Bento Gonçalves, March 3, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 467/1).

²⁴ Foscallo to Cicognani, Bento Gonçalves, July 25, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 467/1).

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informed Archbishop Cicognani of a strange move by the Archbishop:

*"In all sincerity I must inform you that the Archbishop would like me to remain here. To the trustees he said that he would write to Rome to have me stay here. To me he stated that I was not a missionary of St. Charles, because, he added, he had admitted me into his Diocese before I entered the Institute. I told him, however, that now I belong to it and that I am entirely dependent on my superiors (...). Besides, I received information these days that it is being said in the seminary of São Leopoldo that he would give me one of his new priests as my assistant and that I would stay as pastor of Bento Gonçalves."*²⁵

The Sacred Consistorial Congregation wrote to Archbishop Becker soliciting a decision that might help in solving a state of uncertainty harmful to the parish and the Scalabrinian Society. The Archbishop answered on February 1, 1928, saying he had appointed Fr. Antonio Zattera as pastor of Bento Gonçalves and Fr. Luigi Simonaggio as his assistant.

As seen above, with Bento Gonçalves the parish of Monte Belo also passed into the hands of the diocesan clergy. The publication of the "*Corriere d'Italia*" had ceased in June 1927. We know that the weekly had been founded by Fr. Poggi. Fr. Giovanni Costanzo had been its chief editor, followed by Fr. Carlo Porrini in August 1921, and then by Fr. Foscallo. In 1918, Fr. Giovanni Franchetti, a priest from Trent, pastor of Garibaldi and founder in 1911 of the weekly "*Il Colono Italiano*", with a South Tyrolian slant.... that is, with an Austrian bent, left newspaper and parish in the hands of Capuchins, who changed the heading of the weekly to "*Staffetta Riograndese*". In 1920 there was an inconclusive attempt made at merging the "*Corriere d'Italia*" and the "*Staffetta*". In 1924, Fr. Foscallo complained about some hostility on the part of the "*Staffetta Riograndese*". In 1925, attorney Cesare Bompard, inspector of Italian schools in Brazil, wrote to Archbishop Beltrami, Prelate of Italian Emigration, about the "*Corriere d'Italia*":

*"In the beginning it was rather good. Now it does not offer anything. I send you an issue at random. But the fact is, besides, that 14 kilometers from here, in a parish that used to be a part of that of Bento, another paper is printed by the Capuchins, of which also I send you a copy. Its main concern is limiting itself to compete with this of Bento, and so that also does not amount to anything. But the bad aspect of it is that their respective newspapers often carry the polemics between Scalabrinians and Capuchins, not over ideas but about facts concerning their conduct. This scandalizes the people and sickens the clergy alien to both. Many priests have expressed to me the desire to found a newspaper of their own in case the other two should not agree on a merge."*²⁶

Fr. Preti was charged by Cardinal De Lai with treating the merger of both newspapers with the Capuchins of Garibaldi, but the result was negative because of various reasons of which only the most important one is mentioned:

"Both born in important towns and in difficult times for the main purpose of defending Religion against the bad press, should either one of them be

²⁵ Foscallo to Cicognani, Bento Gonçalves, November 9, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 467/1).

²⁶ C. Bompard to Beltrami, Bento Gonçalves, March 7, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 467/1).

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discontinued there would be the danger, as is being threatened already in some places, of seeing other evil newspapers being born to the greatest harm of all. It would be proper, instead, that each should exist within its own environment, respecting one another, rather, as good brothers, and helping one another for the common cause, etc. The difficulty, however, is all with us: the Capuchins are in a better position as to prepared personnel for the direction of a newspaper, unlike ourselves who are short of it; and it is because of this that a proposal was made to surrender it to the 'Italica Gens' on conditions, however, that we receive serious assurance that it will maintain its religious character."²⁷

In 1926, as seen before, an attempt was made to involve the newspaper in the disputes between the two parties of Bento Gonçalves and Fr. Bogni wrote:

"The two contending parties of Bento Gonçalves would want to use the newspaper for their aims and personal diatribes: the newspaper has orders to refuse, but this irritates the most furious ones who have already made some veiled threats. The 'Staffetta' of the Capuchins has been given a larger format and is being technically improved, while ours remaining the same and is losing ground: the report sent me by Fr. Foscallo shows a sensible deficit: on the other hand being a pastor, Fr. Foscallo himself can do very little now for the newspaper. The 'Tribuna d'Italia', a fascist paper of Porto Alegre, with the support of the Archbishop, is seeking to get in touch with the parishes with the intent of becoming a Catholic daily and is making a lot of propaganda among our colonies. For all these reasons, I propose the suspension of our newspaper on January 1 of this coming year."²⁸

Fr. Bogni added that the director of "Tribuna d'Italia" had called on him to propose a merger with the "Corriere d'Italia", asking also the collaboration of Scalabrinians; something Fr. Bogni himself did not intend to agree on except on very clear conditions, and above all without taking upon himself the responsibility for one page, as had been suggested. Cardinal De Lai sent him a telegram, as we said above, telling him to sell the printing shop to the best bidder, and then added:

"I approve your views on no cooperation between the newspapers by refusing any direct or indirect responsibility."²⁹

In July 1927, Fr. Foscallo informed Archbishop Cicognani:

"At last, with the end of June, I was set free of the work with the newspaper; but what a nuisance to conclude the deal with these blessed friars! Even yesterday Fr. Salvetti had to go to Garibaldi to solve a few points of the administration, without being able, however, to get neither any money nor promissory letters for the surrendering of subscribers, etc.

Scheduled to report definitely to Casca, Fr. Salvetti will inform the Superior of it this week, sending him also the last payment of the printing shop."³⁰

²⁷ Preti to Card. De Lai, Dois Lajeados, August 25, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 414/6).

²⁸ Bogni to Card. De Lai, November 18, 1926, Casca (Arch. G.S., 467/1).

²⁹Telegram Card. De Lai to Bogni, Rome, December 30, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 467/1).

³⁰ Foscallo to Archb. Cicognani, Bento Gonçalves, July 25, 1927 (Arch. G.S., 467/1).

11. Serafina Corrêa

The quasi-parish of Linha Onze (Line XI^o) of Guaporé, that later on took the name of Serafina Corrêa, was created on November 10, 1905, by Bishop Ponce de Leão of Porto Alegre, who had visited that new colony from January 17 to 19 and had decided to send there a priest in spite of the opposition of the curate of Guaporé. The quasi-parish included Guaporé's "Linhas" 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14. Its first curate was the Genoese Fr. Stefano Noce, who made his entry to Serafina Corrêa on November 15, 1905, and remained until death, on January 4, 1917. Dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, the church, a wooden structure, had three naves. The second curate, Fr. Nicola Nuotri arrived there on February 15, 1917. In 1920, Archbishop Becker pleaded with the Scalabrinians to assume the care of Serafina Corrêa, and Fr. Preti assigned to it Fr. Ernesto Consoni, who took possession of it on August 15, 1920. The quasi-parish was made a parish on May 9, 1921. Fr. Consoni immediately started work on the construction of the stone church:

"I am building the new parish church of Serafina Corrêa, 44 meters long, nearly a cathedral; we have laid the foundation already."³¹

That's what he was writing to his cousin Fr. Faustino in September 1921. A month later he wrote again:

"On the 2nd of this month we had a beautiful feast; bingo, raffle, and auction brought in for the church the total of two contos and 815 milreis. Thanks to the Blessed Mother, as all my parishioners say! In fact, never have so many people been seen at 'Linha Onze'. On the third, with the Archbishop's permission, I blessed the foundation stone of the great church now under construction (...). Once the roof has been completed, I hope I will be able to start work on the construction of the convent of the sisters."³²

In the report of his 1923 visitation, Fr. Chenuil says:

"For the time being, services are still held in the old wooden church, but the new brick church, which will turn out much more beautiful and spacious, will soon be inaugurated. There is also a wooden steeple with three nice bells arrived here from Savoy. The rectory also made of wood, is very poor and shabby. The pastor, Fr. Ernesto Consoni, from Brescia, is zealous and active and well loved by the people. Here, too, one finds the usual confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament, Sacred Heart, and Children of Mary. The main town has 50 families, while the 17 mission chapels number altogether another 400. Baptisms were 266, weddings 62, and 7,000 communions."³³

Fr. Consoni was soon able to complete the roof of the church, so much so that, Archbishop Becker, on the occasion of his pastoral visitation of October 14, 1924, could say Mass in it for the first time. To Fr. Consoni are due also the founding of a cooperative and the construction of the rectory, designed by Fr. Carlo Pedrazzani.

On February 8, 1926, Fr. Consoni was succeeded by Fr. Luigi Pedrazzani, who

³¹ Consoni to Fr. F. Consoni, Serafina Corrêa, September 14, 1921 (Arch. G.S., 464/1).

³² E. Consoni to F. Consoni, Serafina Corrêa, October 27, 1921 (Arch. G.S., 464/1).

³³ Chenuil, "Breve Relazione, etc." cit.

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continued work on the completion of the church, slowly, however, because of the economic depression weighing down on Brazil. At that moment the parish had 4,500 people, 400 of whom in the center: including also those of Pulador's seven chapels, then without a pastor. It was possible to complete the facade of the church within 1926, and immediately afterwards work was begun on the fixing of the square in front of it; the church was plastered and the ceiling of the sanctuary was completed in 1927. Following restoration of the roof, in 1928, the ceiling of the sanctuary was refinished in stucco. In January 1928, Fr. Luigi Pedrazzani suffered a fracture of a tibia in a fall from the horse: he had to stay still for some time, while Fathers Giuseppe Rizzi and Alfredo Trincherero were there to help him. A few months later he had to undergo another operation to reset the fracture which had healed improperly. Only more than a year later was he able to resume with great courage and sacrifice the visitation of the chapels making use of a horse driven coach. He never completely recovered, but he continued just the same to direct the parish alone for many years with an exemplary spirit of sacrifice. The association of the Knights of the Cross, with a membership of 284, was founded on September 3, 1933. On January 29, 1937, the chapels of Evangelista and Montauri were detached and made parishes; on March 30, 1938 it was Vila Oeste's turn. The new rectory was completed in 1933 to replace finally the three huts that had served as the residence of the pastor.

12. Casca

The territory of about 1,000 square kilometers forming the northern part of the municipality of Guaporé began to be settled in the beginning of this century. The majority of the colonists were Italian, who arrived there from older colonies, especially from Caxias do Sul; but from the very beginning there had been also a high percentage of Poles, who found in Casca a refuge from the persecutions inflicted on their daughters by the revolutionaries in Caxias. The land was purchased by the government at a very low price: but it was all woods with no sign of roads. The first paths opened by the strokes of axes, were wide enough to let a horse through. The closest mills stood at Bento Gonçalves, some 100 kilometers away, which could be travel only by horse. In 1904, Casca was made a "distrito" of Guaporé. The first small chapel goes back to the first settlers: some sporadic religious assistance was given them in early years by the Jesuits, who were arriving there from far away Porto Alegre. But the colony made such a fast progress, that already on April 10, 1907, it was made a quasi-parish, carved out partly from Serafina Corrêa, and partly from Passo Fundo. The parish of Passo Fundo was staffed by the Pallottine Fathers. In August 1907 they appointed pastor of Casca the Polish Fr. Augustine Sarasa, who spoke Italian also, and in December of the same year they gave him also an assistant, Fr. Domenico Nostro. In December of 1913, Fathers Sarasa and Nostro were succeeded by Fathers Giovanni Zanella and Giovanni Schmidt. On March 27, 1921 the parish of Casca passed from the Diocese of Passo

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Fundo to the Archdiocese of Porto Alegre: the Pallottines, who were committed to Passo Fundo, moved out of the parishes assigned to Porto Alegre and, therefore, also from Casca, which was canonically erected into a parish on the March 31, 1921. The new parish was entrusted to the Scalabrinians and Fr. Aneto Bogni took possession of it on April 12, 1921. At that time it included a territory, which later grew into seven parishes: São Domingos, Vila Maria, Montauri, Evangelista, Santo Antonio (Palmas), São Braz, Marau. A few months later, Fr. Bogni described his activity thus:

"To give you an idea of my daily routine, I call your attention to the fact that I have to care all alone for the manifold needs of some 10,000 people residing on a territory covering more than 500 square kilometers, almost entirely deprived of roads and bridges, rich only in virgin forests. And so, in order to provide our fellow-countrymen with the benefit of the priestly ministry I must keep steadily on the go like the gypsies of 'happy' memory. I do all in my power to be all things to all, by the admission of the people themselves, who complain only about one thing, that is, my being here alone to do the work of three; this is far from sufficient, and it may lead me soon to the grave.

All houses around here are made of wood, and of wood are made the parish church itself as well as all other little chapels opened here and there in this immense territory. I am in the process of forming a committee of people who may raise the funds necessary for the construction of a stone church and of the facilities that are indispensable for the carrying out of Catholic action, especially by the young. I strongly wish that in this center at least, where 40 families live together, and in the whole colony in general, the industrial and commercial growth may go on hand in hand with the development of the parish. I have no illusions, and I candidly admit, without losing heart, that this is a hard enterprise. To succeed more easily and accomplish the plan, I will start in a short while to visit each single family to bless homes and urge all to contribute effectively to the improvement of the parish institutions. Because of the vastness of the territory, I will not be able to bring to an end this hard work in three months. The population is good, in fact it has a sound religious foundation; I have, therefore, serious reasons for hope and it sustains me in my unceasing work.

Neither the people nor I lack what is necessary for our life, though none of us is affluent. The colony is still in its beginnings and a good many years will still be needed to see it reach at least the affluence of older colonies. If I were not alone but had here other confreres with me, I could give a little impulse also to the economic life of the colony, I could try, at least, to set up cooperatives, I could get the government's authorities a little more interested in building roads."³⁴

In 1926, Fr. Bogni pinpointed the reasons of the situation:

"Part of the vast parish of Casca is actually administrated by the pastor of Marau in expectation of being made an autonomous parish (...). The total area covers 500 square kilometers, of which 380 belong to the parish proper and 120 to the future parish of Vila Maria. The total population of the parish amounts to 9,200, of whom 7,500 belong to Casca, 1,700 to Vila Maria. It is a mixed community: 5,900 Italians, 1,300 Poles, and about 300 Brazilians. The main

³⁴ Bogni to Chenuil, in "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", a. XV, #4 (October-December 1921), p. 29.

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town has only 240 people. The Polish community is assisted from time to time, by a priest of their own, when called.

The chapels pertaining to Casca are 41, at the average distance of about 12 kilometers from the center. In the territory of Vila Maria there are ten chapels at an average distance of 7 kilometers from it and of 25 kilometers from Casca."³⁵

In 1921, baptisms were 569, marriages 68, first Communions 110, communions 5,000.

It is difficult to figure out how Fr. Bogni could go around the parish on roads or paths of that kind, leaving ordinarily on Sunday night for the chapels almost all founded by him, and returning to his residence on Friday night. Besides, he had at the same time to attend to the construction of the monumental Gothic style parish church, and to the duties of Regional Superior. In the early years there was not even a doctor, and Fr. Bogni wrote to Fr. Rinaldi:

"Listen, dear Fr. Massimo: we have no doctor here; couldn't you have some popular medicine books sent to me? It would be a good help to me! When I attend the sick person something must be done; they believe the priest knows as much as a doctor, and then?"³⁶

In July 1922, he informed:

"If I am a little negligent in writing, you have to forgive me considering the work still ever extraordinary in which I find myself involved, something that, as of now, does not give signs of diminishing. I do what I can to keep always on the par with my mission also in the hope that some other help may come my way from Rome. It seems as though the Archbishop of Porto Alegre may intend to create, however, a new parish out of my territory in the direction of Marau or Passo Fundo, before the end of the year. Only then will my work diminish, though not much, because this last section of my territory is already now administrated by the pastor of Marau, and São Domingo gives me little concern, because people there are beginning to get along...by themselves. Though reduced in size, the parish will still have some 1,000 families. The good-will is still strong and the energies still very efficient, yet some help would be welcome. Now I am collecting...the day I had fixed on November 11 for the benefit of the church to be built as soon as possible; but since it has been a bad year, so I insist that instead of corn they give me a fattened pig. Some 700 families have pledged one, and the little I have grossed so far from the sale amounts to an average of 15 milreis each pig. This will give me at least 10 contos, which added to the ten obtained since I am here, would bring in twenty contos in 15 months. Last week we signed a contract for the construction of a brick factory that will supply us with some 500,000 bricks for 50 milreis and a 1000 for 50 reis. I do not let any occasion escape me that may help me to succeed well in the construction of a beautiful parish church made of bricks."³⁷

The foundation stone of the church of São Luiz da Casca was blessed on April 1, 1925. It was designed by architect Zani of Porto Alegre, but the works were directed personally by Fr. Bogni and brought to an end in four years without

³⁵ Bogni "Relazione della Missione Scalabriniana nel Rio Grande do Sul-Casca-1926"(Arch. G.S., 416/1).

³⁶ Bogni to Rinaldi, Casca, March 10, 1922 (Arch. G.S., 440/2).

³⁷ Bogni to Rinaldi, Casca, July 23, 1922 (Arch. G.S., 440/2).

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the help of any motor. It came to 47.50 meters long, 20.50 wide, 27.50 high. It was inaugurated on April 11, 1929 with four days of celebrations. Named Regional Superior on November 12, 1925, Fr. Bogni could be successively helped at last by Fathers Chiappa, Salvetti, and Margara: this last one studied the Polish language to be able at least to hear the confessions of some 1,000 Poles residing in the parish. Fr. Salvetti died suddenly on December 27, 1927, and Fr. Bogni remained alone.

"It has been several months now since I was left alone in this great parish with an immense and exhausting work. My parish is one of the largest of those entrusted to us and has a population of 7,000 people scattered over an area of 400 square kilometers. The people live grouped in different villages with their respective chapels to which the priest ministers for the convenience of the faithful. Since there are 42 of them, to satisfy the desire and the need of the people I must be absent from my residence almost always for five days of each week. Besides, I am attending to the construction of one of the most grandiose churches of our Italian colony and, due to lack of qualified personnel, I was and still am forced to act as organizer and director of all the work, something which, would require time and sweat in other places, but here it demands much more of both since the ease transportation is lacking and we are so far removed from cities and railroads. Even the raising of funds is all on my shoulders.

To all this I would like to add the exceptional rainy winter of these days with roads absolutely impassable for any kind of transportation. Furthermore, some kind of typhoid fever is now going around among the people of this parish."³⁸

In 1930, Fr. Bogni had the assistance of a certain priest Boccacci. In April 1931, he was relieved of his responsibility of Regional Superior, because he could no longer take on both tasks, and more so because he had never been able to take a period of vacation. In 1933, the parish of Vila Maria was detached from his territory together with those of Montauri and Evangelista. On that occasion Fr. Bogni wrote to Card. Rossi:

"To the dismay and dissatisfaction of almost everyone, two new parishes were suddenly created out of mine, and the boundaries of a third one, also carved out of my parish about five years ago, was retouched to my disadvantage. With the creation of these two new parishes, I remain with some 300 Italian families and 200 Polish ones, thus losing about 20 chapels and retaining with only 16. This way, with the excuse of the Polish people, the Archbishop will soon end up with taking the parish away from us. I stated that the creation of the two parishes took place to the surprise and dissatisfaction of almost everyone, and I explain. One could understand why a parish should be created out of the territory most remote from my parish residence, but to establish on the same day a second parish located at only 13 kilometers from Casca and 10 from Linha Onze, no one would have expected it, considering the fact that in the creation of the other parishes the people were prepared to it little by little, the opinion of neighboring pastor was sought and the new pastors were appointed after the rectory had been built and all furnishings of the church purchased. This time, instead, everything took place in a few days. The two pastors arrived, took possession, read the decrees of creation and boundaries; and all this happened only on one

³⁸ Bogni to Card. Perosi, Casca, July 2, 1928 (Arch. G.S., 416/3).

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week's notice, with no rectory and with chapels in want of everything.

I said also that the creation of two parishes was done to the general discontent of almost everyone. In fact, apart from the quite natural displeasure of my parish, the major portion of the people, who previously belonged to my parish pleaded in vain with the Archbishop not to be detached from Casca. What else could I do, Your Eminence? They had helped me to build the church; it had cost them good many sacrifices, and by now they had grown to love their church and felt displeasure in having to abandon it and to undertake new sacrifices in helping new parishes, where everything is to be done. I myself feel sympathetic with them and my parish. I was preparing to build a rectory in masonry (we have already part of the funds at hand) and had hopes to be able to bring it to completion in a year. And, now I will have greater difficulties, but I would still hope to finish it without debts. But when I applied for permission from the chancery, I was refused because the solicitor of funds for the seminary had to come by first. He was here, but was not satisfied with our contribution. (While raising funds for the seminary, he had also been charged with organizing the two parishes within a few days. When the news became known, unhappy about it, the people did not show themselves as generous as they should have). I have yet to receive any permission, so far; in case it should be denied, what would I do? The stones for the foundation are ready, and so also the bricks. The present rectory begins to deteriorate; and the people agreed to help me in building it."³⁹

Fr. Bogni was taken aback, and more so when the Poles began to oppose him. Besides, he was experiencing the consequences of the excessive hardships of so many years. For a while there was thought of abandoning the parish of Casca, but then the Provincial Superior deemed it better to continue to hold on to it, but he transferred Fr. Bogni to a less demanding parish and on October 22, 1939, he appointed Fr. Ermenegildo Amianti to take his place.

13. Dois Lageados

The community of Dois Lageados traces its origins to a few families arrived at the place from Bento Gonçalves, Veranópolis, and Garibaldi in 1911. The following year a chapel of wood was raised and dedicated to St. Rocco. However, some chapels of the parish territory are older, like that of St. Vincent at the First of March Linha, built in 1891 by some families from Vicenza, and the chapel of Our Lady of Good Health, raised by the families of Arsiè and Rocca d'Arsiè (Belluno), who had moved to Linha Emilia from Veranópolis in 1892. The oldest tombstone of the cemetery carries the date of 1893. Various shrines were built in the years 1893-1896, transformed later on into chapels. All of them belonged to Vespasiano Corrêa, but were detached from it to form the parish of Dois Lageados on May 9, 1921 by initiative of Fr. Giovanni Costanzo, Regional Superior:

"I had no intention to accept parishes, but due to the great scarcity of priests and considering the neglect in which so many good people, who desired to have

³⁹ Bogni to Card. Rossi, Casca, March 29, 1937 (Arch. G.S., 418/4).

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*a pastor, were left, I decided to risk a little of my health for the welfare of souls and so I accepted the care of a small parish of 300 families that, located at the center of our missions would have allowed me to attend to the care for souls and to my office as Regional Superior."*⁴⁰

In a 1923 report we read:

"This parish depended from that of Esperança. However since the pastor Esperança had difficulty in assisting his entire vast parish, diocesan authorities decided to divide it in two parishes. But where could a pastor be found with such a scarcity of priests? Upon hearing that the Provincial Superior of Scalabrinians had arrived from Italy with three missionaries, the most influential leaders in town went and called on him at Bento Gonçalves, almost sure to obtain from him a priest for their parish. But the three new missionaries had already received their assignment, and so those poor people were again disappointed after undergoing so many sacrifices. The Superior Provincial, who had no intention of assuming the burden of a parish, on seeing those people lave dejected, was deeply moved for them and decided to make the sacrifice by accepting himself the direction of the parish of Dois Lageados, where he took residence after a short visitation to his confreres. Much had to be done there too: to enlarge the church, build the sacristy, install the choir loft and the pulpit, supply the vestments and the sacred vessels, build the kitchen and the stable, buy the beds and the other furnishings for the house, bring in the drinking water; and many other things one does not need to mention. In a short while what was most necessary was done for about 18 contos of reis. And now they are fast working already at making the bricks for the new church which we soon hope to see started."⁴¹

On May 11, 1921, Fr. Costanzo made his entry into the parish that had 30 families in the main town and 300 more scattered throughout nine chapels. In 1922, baptisms were 152, marriages 31, communions 6,500. The pastor took an immediate interest in preparing for the construction of a brick and stone church. With a certain difficulty, as seen above, he obtained that other seven chapels be attached to the parish that used to belong to Vespasiano Corrêa. For reasons of health, Fr. Costanzo left the parish on April 12, 1925 and returned to Italy. His place was taken by Fr. Enrico Preti, just returned from Italy on April 15. Fr. Preti worked assiduously for the construction of the church. Having gathered all the material, he gave start to the works in 1927 and carried them out with greater energy than his age allowed. On March 28, 1928, Fr. Preti was sent to head the parish of Sarandí and Fr. Carlo Pedrazzani was transferred to Dois Lageados on March 4. The new church was inaugurated in August of the same year:

*"On August 16, I have inaugurated the new parish church. I had invited 20 priests; because of the rainy weather they did not show up, except one, the Rev. Fr. Filippo (Flesia). The church is in Gothic style, 33 meters tall, the steeple rises up from the center of the facade. We are waiting for the three bells to arrive any day; their total weight, 2,600 kilos., In a few years this little parish (about 350 families) has offered to the church more than 400,000 lire."*⁴²

Fr. Pedrazzani directed the parish for 20 years.

⁴⁰Costanzo to Card. DeLai, Dois Lageados, Nov. 11, 1924 (Arch. G.S., 415).

⁴¹ Cavigiolo, "Attività e benemerienze del Missionari di San Carlo nel Rio Grande del Sud," "L'Emigrato Italiano in America," a. XVII, n. 3 (July-September 1923), p. 20.

⁴² Pedrazzani to Rinaldi, Dois Lageados, September 24, 1928 (Arch. Vescovile di Rieti, Carte Rinaldi).

14. Putinga

By the end of the 1800s Putinga was inhabited only by a few "caboclos" escaped from the farmlands of Soledade following the revolution of 1893. The earliest Italian settlers arrived in 1900, while a few small groups joined them in later years from Caxias, Garibaldi, Monte Belo, Bento Gonçalves. Those who settled in the center of Putinga arrived in 1912. In their first years they were visited by Fathers Vicentini and Rinaldi, pastors of Encantado; and then by Fr. Erminio Catelli, pastor of Anta Gorda, who, on May 29, 1914, blessed the first humble chapel, later on transformed into a parochial carpenter's shop. Fr. Catelli visited it once a month riding a horse and carrying a huge knife to open his way through the forest; he often slept on the skins he was using as his saddle. In 1919, when it was visited by the Archbishop of Porto Alegre, the people were still leading a hard life tilling the fertile land and breeding swines. Their only trade was represented by the sale of lard, which was transported on the back of mules in a two day journey to Lageado and Arroio de Meio, where motorboats were arriving. The new wooden chapel, 15 meters by 8, was inaugurated in 1920, and in 1921 it began to be served regularly by Fr. Domenico Carlino, the assistant of Fr. Catelli. In his pastoral visitation of 1919, the Archbishop had already decided to create the parish of Putinga. While Fr. Catelli was in Italy on his vacation, in August 1921 Fr. Carlino wrote to Fr. Rinaldi:

"As you well know, at Putinga people are working full strength to raise the funds needed to meet the expenses for building the rectory and for remodeling the parish house. Probably it will be my parish on Fr. Erminio's return. A short while ago I was there to celebrate the feast of St. Rocco, co-patron saint. In spite of very bad weather, in the morning I gave communion to many people and the church was fully packed also for the high Mass. Should the weather have been more propitious, it would have surely turned out a triumph! Patience! And yet with so many people, and out of a modest raffle we grossed 400 milreis for the benefit of the construction of the new parish church. Putinga is an excellent district in all respects: good and morally sound people, already reaching 750 families now, and rich land. The 'superintendent' is Mr. Antonio DeConti, whom you well know."⁴³

Fr. Carlino fixed his residence at Putinga in early May 1922. During that year 400 baptisms, 30 marriages, 4,000 communions were registered. In that same year the rectory was completed and the colonists contributed generously with money, foodstuffs and animals, to the enlargement and embellishment of the church. Fr. Carlino did his share also in providing that roads and schools be built. The parish was canonically erected on September 13, 1924. On November 1, 1924, Archbishop Becker made the pastoral visitation and ministered Confirmation to 1,187 people. The parish church, made of wood, entirely remodeled, was blessed on February 26, 1925. The new cemetery was inaugurated on September 14. In 1925, there were thought to be in the parish

⁴³ Carlino to Rinaldi, Anta Gorda, August 28, 1921 (Arch. G.S., 456/2).

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about 6,300 people over an area of 187 square kilometers. In 1928 baptisms were 417, marriages 58, first communions 350, communions 4,350. On May 10, 1932, work was started on the demolition of the wooden church and on the construction of a new one of brick and stone. In 1933, the church, titled to Our Lady of Seafarers, had its new roof, and on August 16, the statue of Christ the Redeemer was blessed; it stands now on top of the 37 meter tall central bell tower. The new construction, with a surface of 42 meters by 18, was afterwards completed little by little by the successors of Fr. Carlino, who moved to Guaporé in July 1934. The parishes of Relvado, Ilópolis and Arvorezinha were created in the same year and a few chapels of Putinga were incorporated in the new parishes. To the initiative of Fr. Carlino is due the opening of a hospital, founded by a society in 1929. In 1932 he summed up his activity as follows:

"I have been at Putinga for 12 years now; I am the first pastor, and my good people responded to my efforts. With God's help, I built the old wooden church, I furnished it with altars, vestments, harmonium, etc. I built the rectory: I took an interest in the little town, the chapels, and the single families. In this parish I founded the confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, with very numerous members, first seed of Catholic action. Though much still remains to be done, the parish is today well organized: the families increased, the chapels doubled... first Fridays have 350 atoning communions; and by God's help and the Archbishop's approval, the walls of the new Mother Church are majestically rising higher every day."⁴⁴

From 1934 until 1940 the parish was directed by Fr. Filippo Flesia; Fr. Vittorio DeLorenzi succeeded him on May 11, 1940.

15. Pulador

The first Italian families arrived at Pulador from Bento Gonçalves in the beginning of the 1900s. In 1905, the first mayor of Guaporé, Vespasiano Corrêa, decided to transform into a carriage road the mule track of 70 kilometers which joined this place with Soledade, a trade center for the products of the colonies. In 1900, a wood chapel was built, dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary. The chapel was then rebuilt larger in the place where now stands the present parish church which was built in 1940. In the years 1918-1919, the families Faccio, Breda, and Rossetto called several times on the Archbishop to plead for the creation of the parish and Archbishop Becker decided to accept their request during his pastoral visitation of October 15-16, 1919. The decree of erection carries the date of August 25, 1922; its territory was partly dismembered from the parish of Guaporé, and partly from Serafina Corrêa. Fr. Giovanni Ginocchio made his entry into it on the following day:

"The central community has only 15 families while another 190, or there about, live scattered throughout eight mission chapels. Both church and rectory need to be enlarged and embellished. In a year about 100 baptisms and ten marriages may take place. This parish is not yet well organized and it will need some time still for it. It has been entrusted on trial to Fr. Giovanni

⁴⁴ Carlino to Card. Rossi, São Leopoldo, January 15, 1932 (Arch. G.S., 418/1).

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Ginocchio, a priest from Genoa, who had been at Monte Vêneto before, but was removed from that parish by order of the Archbishop." ⁴⁵

Fr. Ginocchio did not give good proof of himself in Pulador either. On April 23 he was relieved of all his responsibilities in the Archdiocese of Porto Alegre, and the parish was entrusted to the care of the pastor of Guaporé. Only seven years later, on July 8, 1931, Pulador was given again a pastor of its own, Fr. Luigi Guglieri, who had been dispensed from his bond with the Scalabrinian Congregation and incardinated in the Diocese of Porto Alegre. He headed the parish until 1948 when it was returned to the Scalabrinians.

16. Sarandí

In the first decade of the 20th century the overflow of the people of the old Italian, German, and Polish colonies moved into the vast territory of Passo Fundo, still covered in great part by very thick forests. The "Companhia Colonizadora Gomes e Schering," known afterwards as "Gomes, Schering e Sturm," was formed in 1918. It had a few partners, among whom there appeared the name of the Scalabrinian Fr. Eugenio Medicheschi, for the colonization of Sarandí. The first Italian colonists arrived on March 3, 1919, and the first chapel was built in 1920, served by the Pallottine Fathers of Passo Fundo. In 1921, Fr. Medicheschi had received permission from the Regional Superior Fr. Preti to fix his residence in that place for a year, and to entice people to settle there, Fr. Medicheschi promised he would take care that it might become a parish. When the time elapsed, he petitioned the Bishop of Santa Maria for another year's extension, but the Bishop did not grant it because he did not approve of priests who were too involved in temporal matters. But since the Bishop had been transferred to the See of Olinda soon afterwards, Fr. Medicheschi took advantage of it and remaining at Sarandí. During his visitation of Brazil, between the end of 1922 and early 1923, Fr. Chenuil ordered Fr. Medicheschi to sell his shares in the "Colonizadora" company. Shortly afterwards Fr. Medicheschi had to flee because of the "borgist" revolution, which lasted ten years. At the end of the revolution he returned to Sarandí, and the new Bishop of Santa Maria, Dom Attico Eusebio De Rocha, granted him the faculties. In November 1924, Fr. Medicheschi's life was again in danger, as Fr. Costanzo tells us:

*"A few days ago the "Correio do Povo" published the news of the death of Fr. Eugenio Medicheschi. I immediately wired to the Head of Police in Passo Fundo, who replied that Fr. Medicheschi was at Carazinho with two wounds, one in the mouth and another wound in the leg, but that he will recover soon. The community of Sarandí was attacked and sacked by 500 bandits and in that confusion Fr. Eugenio was wounded."*⁴⁶

A witness of Sarandí testifies:

"The missionary did not want to abandon his flock not even in the most dangerous times, thus becoming a victim of all hardships and dangers connected with the period

⁴⁵ Chenuil, "Breve relazione, etc." cit.

⁴⁶ Costanzo to Chenuil, Dois Lageados, Nov. 26, 1924 (Arch. G.S., 415).

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of these last revolutions; and so like his whole people, Fr. Eugenio was robbed of all his clothes, foodstuffs, animals, and even ran the risk of losing his life on two occasions. The presence of the priest in our midst sustained our courage until the fatal day when 600 rebels, who had no other idea of a revolution than that of blood and plunder, suddenly stormed into town where the first victim was Fr. Eugenio at whom they fired more than a hundred shots at close range; all believed him dead, but God took care that only two shots might reach him, one in the cheek and the other in the leg, neither serious. This same group savagely killed three colonists and I, taken prisoner by them, could miraculously escape."⁴⁷

Fr. Medicheschi took refuge at São Paulo waiting for peace to be restored, and then return to Sarandí where the people considered him a hero. In fact, he returned in 1925 against orders from his superiors. He was suspended, therefore, but following information gathered by Archbishop Cicognani, he was reinstated the following year after a plan proposed by Fr. Bogni upon consultation with the Archbishop of Porto Alegre, the Bishop of Santa Maria, and the pastor of Passo Fundo:

“Proposing to Bishop Dom Eusebio Attico da Rocha of Santa Maria the creation of the parish of Sarandí to be entrusted to the Scalabrinians; sending away Fr. Eugenio Medicheschi for a short while; installing one of our experienced missionaries as pastor; then, a few months later, assigning him an assistant in the person of Fr. Eugenio Medicheschi. The reasons for making this proposal of mine are the following:

1. *It is good for us to accept parishes in the Diocese of Santa Maria, where there are very important communities of Italians both to assist them and to have a place to fall back on in case, for particular reasons, we should abandon or lose any of our parishes in the Diocese of Porto Alegre.*
2. *I am informed that the Bishop of Santa Maria has intentions of creating the parish of Sarandí: that parish is peopled by some 700 Italian families originating from our parishes of Porto Alegre.*
3. *Fr. Medicheschi seems to be little disposed to accept the responsibility of a pastor and he would prefer to remain there as an assistant.”⁴⁸*

Cardinal De Lai wrote to this line of thought to the Bishop of Santa Maria proposing Fr. Preti as pastor. The Bishop expressed some difficulties especially at having to take away from the Pallottines of Passo Fundo the care of a chapel that had been until then under their care; but then, in April of 1927, he arranged both with Pallottines and Fr. Bogni to create the parish of Sarandí and to entrust it to the Scalabrinians. The parish of Our Lady of Lourdes in Sarandí was canonically erected on December 26, 1927; on the following day, Fr. Preti was named its first pastor.

Fr. Medicheschi had a vacation of a few months in Italy, and then returned to Sarandí as an assistant. In 1927, Sarandí had already 5,000 Italian people, and owes its origin in greatest part to him. Some opposed him, but the great majority of the Italian settlers acknowledged Fr. Medicheschi as the main author of their welfare. Besides his interest in the church, he took an interest

⁴⁷ Dante Mosconi to Fr. David Mosconi, Sarandí, Nov. 3, 1925 (Arch. G.S., 460/1).

⁴⁸ Bogni to Card. De Lai, Casca, June 2, 1926 (Arch. G.S., 1178).

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in the school and in the roads, and was always very generous with anyone in need of his help: and so he is not considered without cause the founder of Sarandí. Fr. Preti took possession of the parish in early February 1928 and immediately began the construction of a new wooden church, and in spite of his age and poor health he worked zealously for the growth of the new parish. In his report of 1933 the Regional Superior, Fr. Carlino, wrote:

"The present crisis, strongly experienced in the old colonies, is felt even more here at Sarandí, where many settlers are in debt for their land. In spite of all, there is no religious crisis here, and the Mother Church, and the chapels as well, are always crowded. Remarkable is the growth of the main town, about 130 homes, and there is rumor of making it the seat of a municipality (...). It numbers some 20 chapels, as far as 30 kilometers from the residence. The creation of a new parish is now being considered: Rondinha. As of now it is a part of Sarandí. The parish numbers 4,500 souls: we do not have a parochial school, and so catechism is taught in the public school."⁴⁹

In a report of 1935 we read:

"As much as one may search on any map, he will hardly find Sarandí on it, a beautiful and charming village of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, lost in the midst of a limitless extension of land, still wild in part, but so fertile and yielding an almost fantastic produce (the wheat may reach a yield of a hundred or a hundred and fifty fold); a still little known and almost forgotten town that was born, it grew, and prospered prodigiously within a few years. The main town has electric lighting, a vast school, a beautiful hospital, a well-furnished pharmacy, two tanneries, various inns, a co-operative, a public mill, a workers' union canteen, a large delicatessen factory endowed with a refrigeration system operated by the most modern equipment, a mutual aid society, seven trucks, several cars; and better yet, to the great credit of this community, created a parish with 25 chapels and two Scalabrinian missionaries, Fr. Enrico Preti and Eugenio Medicheschi, it boasts a beautiful and vast three-nave church."⁵⁰

quite exhausted, Fr. Preti was given permission in 1936 to return to Italy, and Fr. Giuseppe Foscallo was appointed pastor in his place. In November 1936, the new parish of Rondinha was detached from Sarandí and entrusted to Fr. Medicheschi. Fr. Augusto Battaion succeeded Fr. Foscallo on October 19, 1937. The first sisters, Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, had arrived at Sarandí 5 days before. They had been called to staff the "Gemma Galgani" school, the foundation of which is due to Fr. Preti and Fr. Medicheschi. Fr. Battaion devoted himself with enthusiasm to his parish which he endowed with a hospital cared for by the Scalabrinian Sisters. An epidemic of typhus broke out in 1938 and he contracted it while assisting the sick; his strong constitution withstood it for fifty days, but his heart gave out on August 31. He was 25 years and 11 months old. He was succeeded by Fr. Bruno Paris who took over the parish, named Julio Mailhos for a few years. Both Fathers Battaion and Paris had Fr. Ermenegildo Amianti as their assistant. On June 27, 1939, Sarandí became a municipality.

⁴⁹ Carlino, "Relazione-Sarandí", June 23, 1933 (Arch. G.S., 460/2).

⁵⁰ "Sarandí. Un gigante di 14 anni", "L'Emigrato Italiano" a. XXIV, no. 3 (July 1935), p. 24.

17. Itapuca

In 1908 an Italian family from Bento Gonçalves and two from Caxias do Sul arrived at Itapuca, a wild and uncultivated place belonging to the township and parish of Soledade. Another four families moved in from Garibaldi in 1909. The first Mass was said by a Scalabrinian missionary of Encantado in 1909 at the house of the first settler, Angelo Mezzolira. The first wooden chapel in honor of St. Joseph seems to have been built in 1910; it was replaced in 1919 with a larger one, 24 meters by 14, also made of wood. In 1916, Itapuca became a "district" of Encantado. On February 17, 1917, it was made a quasi-parish. The second pastor, Fr. Alfredo Trincherro, tells the origins of the parish this way:

"The parish (dedicated to St. Joseph - Itapuca -3° Distrito of Encantado) was created by decree of Archbishop Dom João Becker of Porto Alegre, on September 1924, detaching it from that of Anta Gorda. The difficulties derived from the lack of priests, so much so that only in March 1929 it was possible to give it a regular pastor, the Scalabrinian missionary Fr. Filippo Flesia, transferred here from Esperança. The place was not visited by our Venerated Founder, because it was then just in its beginnings. It was visited and scoured, however, time and again by Fathers Rinaldi, Antonio Serraglia, Giuseppe Pandolfi, and above all by the pastor of Anta Gorda, Fr. Erminio Catelli, who administered it until the entry of the first pastor. For a short while it depended on the diocese of Santa Maria, and therefore attended to by the nearest pastor of the town of Vittoria, Fr. Luigi Strippoli, who visited it once a month on Sunday, not counting the times in the course of the week, at the end of a seven hour horse ride each time, and back. Made a parish, though still without a pastor, as said before, the missions were held here in May 1925, by the Friars, nearest by, giving the whole people a salutary shake-up."⁵¹

In the beginning, the chapels dependent on it were 12; in 1937 they were 22, with 6,240 people. Some chapel, rather decentralized, was at a distance of 25 kilometers. Fr. Flesia was named pastor on December 21, 1928, and took possession of the parish in March 1929. He endowed the church with three bells and in 1931 he had a tall bell-tower made of wood. At the distance of three kilometers from the residence he had a Grotto of Lourdes erected, one of the most beautiful and imposing of Brazil, inaugurated on February 11, 1934. On August 1, 1933, Fr. Flesia was transferred to Nova Bréscia, and Fr. Trincherro replaced him. The new pastor wrote in 1937:

"At the present, works are proceeding fast on the construction of the new mother church, for which I have a reserve fund of 30.000 liras and its own brick factory already with 100,000 bricks ready for use and another 200,000 to come, such as are needed for church and rectory. It's an enterprise sufficient by itself to employ the whole activity of any pastor, but that I hope to bring to an end in a few years with the help of God and of my good parishioners. The parish has had two pastoral visitations already, one in 1929 and the other in 1933, and it will soon have its third one, still by Archbishop João Becker (...). The religious practice responds to the nationality and character of the people.

In the Italian homesteads (four-fifths of them) it is very intense; not so with the

⁵¹ Trincherro to Sofia, Itapuca, March 10, 1937 (Arch. G.S., 446).

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natives for a hundred reasons and one. Anyway, they tend either to shun away evermore from us or to integrate in the religious practice of the descendants of Italy (...). Communions are rather numerous, especially on All Souls' Day and at Easter, on the feast days of the Societies, when nearly all receive the sacraments; these last two days each. The annual number of communions amounts to an average of 7,000, baptisms to 270, and weddings to about 40. The hardest difficulties spring out of the enormous distances from the residence and of the roads often cut off by rivers in flood, and therefore impassable, due to almost total absence of bridges."⁵²

The parishes of Ilópolis and Arvorezinha ('Gifueira') were created in 1937, and so that of Itapuca was reduced to 200 square kilometers with seven chapels and 2,000 souls. On May 27, 1938, Fr. Trincheiro was transferred somewhere else, and the parish remained vacant for two years. Fr. Emilio Rosa was the third pastor from May 1, 1940 to September 20, 1948. We must mention that the parish of Ilópolis was organized by Fr. Preti, who, though retired in Italy since June 1936, decided to return to Brazil in October or November and went to Ilópolis, just when the parish was created, in spite of his 74 years of age. But, stricken with painful headaches he was forced to abandon it in early 1937 and return to Italy during the following June.

18. Rondinha, RS

As already mentioned above, the parish of Our Lady of the Rosary at Rondinha (also called Aguas de Rondinha) was erected on October 24, 1936, by Bishop Antonio Reis of Santa Maria who had planned the creation of that parish already in 1934. The township of Rondinha covers an area of 262 square kilometers; it was well known already for its mineral waters, of which Fr. Eugenio Medicheschi had made use to cure his ailments. The parish had been a part earlier of that of Sarandí. Fr. Medicheschi himself was its first pastor; he took possession of it on November 22, 1936, and immediately he built the parish church of wood, which was blessed on April 4, 1937.

19. Missions in the Diocese of Uruguaiana

As seen before ⁵³, in early 1937, Fr. Carlino visited some localities of the diocese of Uruguaiana, precisely the districts of Santa Rosa and Palmeira, and agreed with Bishop Pinheiro to send there two missionaries, Fr. Bruno Paris for the parish of Buricá, and Fr. Rinaldo Zanzotti for the future parish of Cinquantenario. Fr. Paris went to Buricá in April 1937, as an assistant to Fr. Vincenzo Testani, a priest from Piacenza. At the end of that year he wrote to Card. Rossi:

"I am here, then, at Buricá, at about 500 kilometers from Guaporé in a very vast zone, with boundaries at an average distance of 25 kilometers to the North and West, 60 to the South, and only 50 to the East. Scattered in the North and West

⁵² Ibidem.

⁵³ Cfr. above

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among Portuguese Brazilians, Poles and Germans, Catholic and Protestant, hundreds of Italian families form the moral and financial support of religion. To the East, there is a zone not with as many Italians, but very thickly inhabited. No one returns from those places without having first performed from 20 to 50, 70, or even 107 baptisms, including children and adults of course. These people, though much more refined by the untiring zeal of Fr. Vincent Testani, are still quite rough. Just to give an example, only yesterday, one dead and two wounded shot with a revolver at a dance. Maybe with time "ab Oriente et Occidente venient" they will become better than the others. At fifteen kilometers to the South, there is the limitless extension of the so-called 'campo' (open fields): less people, less money, but just as attached to their priest; Brazilians, Blacks, Mulattoes, all simple and pliable people. This, too, like the whole East zone, a real mission country. We say Mass in private homes and try to teach these people the main truths of faith insisting on the necessity to learn the most important prayers, to get married in church, and to get instructed in the faith. In some places they have made an admirable progress. They come in, these husky men, after a march of ten or more kilometers, with a loaf of bread in their pockets, to hear Mass, attend Catechism with their children, spend the night on cold boards, and to receive devoutly their Holy Communion in the morning of the following day.

This town is a community of 200 homes and is steadily growing. As of now, a large wooden pavilion serves as the church, but we are building a most beautiful one, in the form of a latin cross, and Italian style. It is half way up already, and we hope to finish it next year. There stands, on one side of the square, the protestant church and school combination building, looking up in wonder at the progress of Catholics. Protestants make up about one-fifth of the population; there are quite a few of them also in the main town, but they do not give us much trouble; in fact, they seem to be losing ground, so much so that lately their pastor felt the need to adorn the chairs with ribbons and tassels to attract women to his church. In the rectory, the priests practically live the community life. The good Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus act as our 'Marthas' (housekeepers): registered cooks, diligent wardrobe keepers, they specialize in instructing and educating the children. Besides, they staff the parish hospital, a large and most fitting building constructed by initiative of Fr. Testani to forestall any Protestant move. The religious life of the parish is very flourishing. You should see these poor colonists coming in from distances of 15 or 20 kilometers, and not just a few of them, to hear Mass on Sunday. The overwhelming majority of those in church are Italians: Italians by language, customs, strength in faith, and.... 'incredibly' not as much blasphemers. Some 70 or 80 men, young and adult, gather together here on Friday night from distances of three or four kilometers to animate each other and to attend the instruction of the priest. Even at greater distances from here, very numerous groups get together in private homes, and admirable indeed are the constancy and interest of adults in learning their catechism at these sessions, in reading the bible, the lives of the saints, and the Catholic newspaper they get from the priest every Sunday. The spiritual fruits they derive from it cannot be measured: marriages righted, baptisms and first communions of adults, new faces at Sunday Mass; in a word, a revival of the spirit of faith, also and particularly, among those who were most distant from any sense of religion. And now some

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statistics, if you wish! Only in this semester of 1937, 10,000 communions, 615 baptisms, 95 marriages. Besides, Buricá could serve as an important center of irradiation for our Institution: immense regions of this diocese, exclusively or almost, inhabited by Italian colonists, in the hands of priests of German origin who have little or no knowledge of the character of our people. Imagine, Your Eminence, what impressions, what conclusions would these people draw from hearing from the pulpit: 'dancing not advisable for young people below the age of 14.' Our arrival here was like a bomb's explosion for this environment: if you only knew what a discrediting campaign they are waging against us. Unable to do anything worse, they attack good Fr. Testani raising opposition in the schools and the surrounding chapel, bringing by car their sick to the Protestant hospital, etc.... On his recent pastoral visitation, the Bishop was informed of all this by the people and promised to remedy it. His expressed intention would be to found other parishes for the Germans, and to entrust our Italians to Italian priests. From all this you can see, Your Eminence, what an immense field of work is now being opened to our apostolate. In Buricá four priests could have all the work they want."⁵⁴

Fr. Tirondola visited Buricá in March 1938 and took away the two missionaries, as he himself tells us in his report:

"In the diocese of Uruguaiana, Buricá is a vast parish with 12,000 souls. The church is of wood and insufficient; but a new artistic one is under construction, however.

The rectory is a stone building but small and humid. The Rev. D. Testani is the pastor. He is a priest from Piacenza, good and zealous, though a little peculiar. The Provincial Superior, Fr. Carlino, had given him as his assistants Fathers Paris and Zanzotti, good, and fervent missionaries, replenished with a spirit of sacrifice.

Fr. Testani himself confesses that they could not be better. He had promised that he would leave the parish to the Pious Society and retire as soon as possible. Now, a year later, he brings up other reasons for not leaving the parish. I wrote to the bishop of Uruguaiana to solicit an assurance that on the departure of Fr. Testani the parish would be passed to the Scalabrinians and that such surrendering should not be delayed beyond the month of August of this year. I made also the proposal that he would assign at least a zone of his Diocese to the apostolate of Scalabrinians, where they could work amongst the children of Italians, otherwise I would take away the missionaries. This letter of mine was brought directly to the Bishop by Fr. Testani, who assured me that he would insist personally that a field of work was assigned to the Scalabrinians in that diocese. Fr. Testani brought back the answer by word of mouth saying that the Bishop advised to be patient and to leave the missionaries where they were, and in time he would think of something, etc. Seeing that they were seeking to drag it along, I ordered Fr. Zanzotti and Fr. Paris to leave Buricá right away, also because they were materially poorly treated, subjected to excessive hard work, had to go eight, ten days around from house to house to sleep on the ground, etc., besides I could not leave those two young priests at the dependence of a diocesan pastor. Furthermore, they were economically exploited, etc. A few days after I had recalled them, the Bishop cabled, sent

⁵⁴ Paris to Card. Rossi, in "L'Emigrato Italiano", a. XXVII, no. 1 (January 1938), pp. 24-25.

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*letters, and telegrams, to Fr. Carlino, promising to be willing to give the parish of Cinquantenario, entirely peopled with children of Italians, while asking that Fr. Zanzotti at least were sent to him right away. Clearly, the Bishop did not expect that I would go so far as to recall the Fathers. Anyway, I sent him word to wait until June because I wanted to hear the opinion of His Eminence Cardinal Rossi."*⁵⁵

It must be pointed out that Fr. Zanzotti had departed for the Diocese of Uruguiana with Fr. Paris on April 8, 1937, and had stopped at São Gabriel da Fronteira to learn Portuguese:

*"The Bishop of Uruguiana needed an assistant at São Gabriel da Fronteira (a community of 15,000 people over an area of 130 kilometers in diameter) where there was only a priest always sick. I remained there six months and learned Portuguese; they were all Brazilians and loved me very much. Knowing that I was in a field of work alien to our scope, Rome wrote to Fr. Carlino to take me out, but the Bishop opposed it; hence there ensued a tug of war of insistence until the Bishop had to give in, but he did not give us Cinquantenario, as he had promised."*⁵⁶

Fathers Zanzotti and Paris remained at Buricá from October 25, 1937, to early March 1938. Fr. Zanzotti was sent to take possession of Cinquantenario on June 5, 1938: he arrived on June 9, but the Provincial Superior Fr. Corso recalled him to Guaporé on October 5 of the same year, not to leave him so isolated without hope of help, and also because the young missionary, who used to ride the horse as much as 12 or 15 hours a day and to administer even 150 baptisms in one day, gave early signs of exhaustion.

20. Beginnings of the Parish of Vila Nova (Porto Alegre)

We know that at the end of 1938 Fr. Angelo Corso had asked the Archbishop of Porto Alegre to have a church for the Italians of the capital of the State. The parish of Vila Nova, in the outskirts of Porto Alegre, was entrusted to the Scalabrinians on January 2, 1939. The first Italian, Luigi Dalla Riva, arrived at Vila Nova in about 1890, and he bought a piece of land from General Barreto Leite, then the owner of all lands where Vila Nova would rise later on. Shortly afterwards, others arrived: Giacomo Pastro, from Riese (Treviso) and Valentino Moresco from Crosara of Marostica (Vicenza), Giuseppe Dalla Riva, a brother of Luigi, and Angelo Passuello. The location for the colony, however, was chosen by Vincenzo Montaggia from Lave (Varese). He had worked for the construction of railroads at the San Gottardo, in Africa, and in Brazil. Because of political strife he had to escape by night inside a barrel from Veranopolis, where he had married, and he arrived at Porto Alegre. He bought land right in the locality which he himself called "Colony of Vila Nova" on March 19, 1897. He chose the place for the church and the school, traced the first streets. He died in 1933. In his memory the obelisk was erected in 1935, which stands in the square of the

⁵⁵ "Relazione della visita fatta per ordine dell'Eminentissimo Sig. Card. Raffaello C. Rossi, Segretario dell S.C. Concistoriale, alle missioni Scalabriniane del Brasile dal P. Francesco M.G. Tirondola, 6 Gennaio-13 Maggio 1938." (Arch. G.S., 368/4).

⁵⁶ Zanzotti to Rizzi, Buricá, January 28, 1938 (Arch. G.S., 1647).

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old church. This was built between 1902 and 1909 and lasted until 1926. In its place there stands the parish hall. The chapel, dedicated to St. Joseph, depended on the parish of Tristeza until 1927; it was made a parish on June 24, 1927 by Archbishop Becker. The Pallottine Fathers William Stamsen, Alphonse Theobald, Pedro Kolling das Neves, and Pedro Bernardes Rech were the first four pastors in that order. Fr. Rinaldo Zanzotti arrived at Port Alegre in February 1939, and while waiting for the solution of all difficulties connected with the concession of the parish, he acted, as we've seen, as chaplain to a boarding school of the Marist Brothers. He could take possession of the parish only on June 9. In informing Cardinal Rossi of it, Fr. Corso wrote:

"Fr. Rinaldo is now at Vila Nova, an immense parish with more than 20,000 souls. The town is all inhabited by Italians; the remaining few are Brazilians who have always been neglected (...). Spiritism is rampant, reason why I need another priest as soon as possible to allow Fr. Rinaldo the time for arriving at places where no other priest, or almost none, ever did."⁵⁷

In his early days, Fr. Zanzotti wrote:

"So far I have no one with me; the house is old, but a new one will be built as soon as possible (...). The church is tiny and dedicated to St. Joseph. People are very cold, indifferent, and the people of color are extremely superstitious. At times on seeing me passing amongst them, they sign themselves to keep away the bad spirit the priest may seek to send into their bodies; when encountering the priest, the young girls infallibly turn up the rim of their sleeves (when they have them) otherwise they would lose their boyfriends (...). The other day, while I was saying Mass at a place where people had never seen a priest, a big man with boots on and a handkerchief around his neck came up to the altar and lit his cigar at a candle. With patience and kind manners one can obtain all he wants except the giving up Spiritism and superstitions."⁵⁸

And, shortly afterwards he wrote:

"Indeed we are on the firing line; we wage our hardest war against spiritism, an almost incurable disease, that could make its inroads not just among the Negroes, but that by means of diabolic wiles has ruined immense zones of excellent families, as well. Located on the outskirts of the capital of Rio Grande do Sul (...), the new parish of Vila Nova is very vast, more than 50 kilometers, the most extended of all our missions. A few kilometers from downtown, astride of a tall hill, there stands the gigantic sanatorium "Belem" which is about to be completed. A colossal leper hospital, destined to house many patients, is rising at the far end of the parish.

The center of the parish is made up almost entirely of people of Italian birth or extraction (...). The remaining enormous expanse is inhabited by Mulattoes, and Negroes, imbued with all kinds of superstitions and Spiritism. The priest is marked as an enemy of Spiritism: he is made the object of their strongest attacks. Listen to the last one.

I was on my way back home, drenched to the bone, and not wishing to be caught out in the night, I spurred my "sisois" (this is what I named my horse)

⁵⁷ Corso to Card. Rossi, Guaporé, July 12, 1939 (Arch. G.S., 420/1).

⁵⁸ Zanzotti to Students of Piacenza, Vila Nova, June 11, 1939 (Arch. G.S., 1647).

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through a swamp to shorten the way (...). On regaining the better road with my big boots full of mud, I happened to come across a strange procession led by an old woman, as black as the bottom of a kettle, and with no teeth, besides. The procession stopped at the bank of a stream.... An old man, only dressed with trousers, tied the wrists of the old woman meant to receive her third baptism. They threw on her a big overall, and in all solemnity they lowered the old woman into the water (...). A high scream.... What happened? The woman is attacked by strong convulsions. Where is the medicine man? This time there was one at a close distance.... They looked around and spotted me.... and they armed themselves with sticks. When I saw that army coming at me, I too lifted my whip. At that gesture of mine they disappeared like devils from holy water for fear that I might launch at them another evil spirit.

A few days later I was told that the old woman had died of bronchitis (cold baptismal water). Such instances are the order of the day. In this vast territory where ignorance has ripened its fruits, two arms only are not enough to eradicate this weed and to sow seeds of good trees."⁵⁹

In regard to the Sanatorium "Belem", completed in 1940, Fr. Corso wrote in July of that year:

"The great Sanatorium "Belem" has been opened in the parish of Vila Nova where Fr. Zanzotti is residing. I deemed it a good thing to accept its spiritual care, both to give Fr. Rinaldo an assistant and to show in these difficult times of sharp nationalism that we pursue the politics of souls. I sent Fr. Guadagnini there."⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Zanzotti to Prevedello, Vila Nova, July 13, 1939 (Arch. G.S., 1647).

⁶⁰ Corso to Card. Rossi, Guaporé, July 8, 1940 (Arch. G.S., 420/2).

PART FOUR

Beginnings of Scalabrinian Missions in France, Switzerland and Argentina

CHAPTER XVI

FRANCE, SWITZERLAND AND ARGENTINA

1. Paris, France.

The United States and Brazil took up all energies of the Scalabrinian Congregation in the first 48 years of its existence. Bishops Scalabrini and Bonomelli had divided in a certain sense the field between themselves when in 1900 the latter founded "*L'Opera di assistenza degli operai italiani emigrati all'estero specialmente in Europa*". Asked for his opinion, Bishop Scalabrini had written to his friend in Cremona on March 2, 1900:

*"No doubt, your proposal concerning temporary emigrants deserves our highest praise; but I would not wish that because of too much attention on the part of your friends it may assume the character of a political enterprise. If this can be a help on one side, it may also be very detrimental on the other. You are wise and you will understand more than I may tell you. I would have preferred you had done it yourself, only you, in accord with Rome, free of any ties with people who though excellent and willing to do good, still always entertain prejudices, and quite a few of them, against us. I am speaking of political involvement, of course."*¹

Bishop Scalabrini was right: the "Opera Bonomelli" was dissolved only 28 years later just because of its political involvement that became fatal due to the way the Institution was devised by which the missionary was to be, - not by the will of Bonomelli but by force of circumstances, - not just a representative of a nation or of ethnicity, but of the Italian government as well. In fact, as though on purpose, the first trouble came, still unwittingly, at the hands of Ernest Schiapparelli, first and most active secretary of the "Opera Bonomelli". The Bishop of Cremona wrote actually to Scalabrini on April 23, 1900:

"Schiapparelli has called twice on me telling me he is very hurt that you look upon the new Institute for Emigrant Workers in Europe as something in opposition to yours. Heavens, no! Do not even think of it! You may well be sure that if there was even a hint of an opposition, I would have rejected it in horror. No, no, there is no trace of opposition! They are two most distinct things that can and must support each other. If you wish, Schiapparelli will call on you and explain everything. In the latter half of May I will hold here in Cremona a private meeting of the main promoters of the Institute. I plead with all that I know and can, that you would participate in it also, both because you will be able to contribute precious advice, and see for yourself how things are; and so all will publicly understand that our two Institutes do not carry any sign of the slightest opposition. For you the permanent emigrants in America, for me the temporary emigrants in Europe, by different means: independence for you, membership in the 'Associazione pei Missionari Cattolici Italiani', for me. I expect you without fail and I plead with you for our friendship's sake.

¹ Scalabrini to Bonomelli, Piacenza, March 2, 1900, photocopy (Arch. G.S., 3021/1).

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Did you find out what has been obtained with the war ships? It certainly is a beautiful and holy victory! You mistrust having lay people. You must have your reasons. I would like to have him as a member of the Institute because he represents a double gain as both the moral and material means would thus be assured. I have a deep conviction that nothing will come out of the famous 'Congress!'.²

Bishop Scalabrini replied the following from Tollara:

"I am writing you from this little town where I am for the Pastoral Visitation, and I do so immediately to assure you that I am not liable, by God's Grace, to certain mean pettiness. The members of St. Raphael's Society complained, and highly so, because they did not judge correct the way employed by the very able Schiapparelli. When I will have told you the details you will understand that the suspicion of an opposition move was not unjustified at all. Neither do I disdain the cooperation of the laity, but only in things strictly religious; I do not look happily upon lay people as promoters because they hardly rid themselves of second intentions, especially political. Did we not highly object to 'top hat' bishops? I love equity and clarity with all people. The more I grow in years the more convinced I become that genuine good is indeed accomplished when each one keeps his own place. If I am to be in Piacenza, I certainly will attend the meeting; but I inform you that I will depart for Rome on May 14, and I will not be back till after the 25."³

A few days before the meeting, which had been scheduled a few days earlier, Bishop Bonomelli renewed the invitation:

"Next Friday and Saturday (18-19), two meetings will be held here concerning the 'Opera dell'Assistenza agli Operai, etc.'. Of course, they will be private and attended, so I hope, by several prominent personalities of the Church and the laity. Should you come (and I plead with you ardently) you would be the 'dux verbi'! I admit it candidly, in things practical I count for very little and I have an absolute need for someone to guide me. And you are indeed that guide for me! I insist, then!"⁴

But Bishop Scalabrini went to Rome, instead, as he had previously planned. At the meeting of Cremona a provisional Statute was approved whose first paragraph said:

"Under the auspices of the Associazione Nazionale for the support of Italian Missionaries, the Opera di Assistenza degli Operai Italiani, emigrants in foreign lands, is hereby founded with the intent to assist Italian emigrant workers in Europe and in the Middle East by means of institutions of religion, education, social security, cooperation, and charity. This Institute achieves its aim through the employment of Missionaries and Sisters."

The "Opera Bonomelli" was in accord with that of Bishop Scalabrini in a fundamental idea: the missionary as the representative, in the eyes of emigrants, of one's religion and country at the same time. There was a difference, however, in the roles assigned to priests and lay people. Its government was actually in the hands of the "National Association for the support of

² Bonomelli to Scalabrini, Cremona, April 23, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 3021/1).

³ Scalabrini to Bonomelli, Tollara, April 24, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 3021/1).

⁴ Bonomelli to Scalabrini, Cremona, May 3, 1900 (Arch. G.S., 3021/1).

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Italian missionaries": its secretary, Mr. Schiapparelli, was also the secretary of the "Opera Bonomelli". This did not mean only a preeminent place of the laity, but the markedly nationalistic course of the "National Association": something that aroused an attitude of perplexity on the part of the Holy See for fear of implications with the Italian Government. It was because of this that Bishop Scalabrini pointed out to Bishop Bonomelli the danger of political involvement. The "Bonomellian Institution" was dedicating greater attention to the social aspects, so much so that the so-called Missione Cattolica Italiana presented itself above all as a "Segretariato Operaio" (Workers' Secretariat), that is, as a center of social assistance. This responded to the ideas of Bishop Bonomelli, who was proclaiming the "Socialism of Charity" as opposed to the socialism of state or international socialism, which was cutting ever wider inroads into the masses of emigrants in Europe, almost all of them pertaining to the working class. The missionaries, who got the upper hand eventually, though remaining rooted to a certain mentality born of their origins, were the ones who had "to contribute" to the achievement of the scope of the "Opera", and exercised their ministry "as helpers of the parochial clergy under the local bishops." The activity of the missionaries and the Sisters was directed and controlled by an ecclesiastical council presided over by Cardinal Richelmy, Archbishop of Turin, and was formed by a few priests of the same archdiocese. They adopted a pastoral action marked by three characteristics:

1. As a Secretariat, the "Missione Cattolica Italiana" had to become the point of reference for all religious, social and recreational activities of emigrants;
2. It made open profession of its Italian identity in a patriotic sense;
3. The missionaries exercised their sacred ministry by seeking out the migrants in their homes rather than having migrants go looking for them. And so they devoted themselves to exhausting "missionary" visitations of all groups of Italians, calling on families from house to house by day, and gathering then in the evening in some church for the sermon or religious instruction, and closing the "mission" with the administration of the Sacraments.

In its first ten years of life the "Opera Bonomelli" opened 17 Secretariats in Switzerland with 21 missionaries; 9 in Germany with 21 missionaries; 2 in Luxembourg; 4 in Austria; 5 in France with 7 missionaries. In a 1909 memorandum, the Bonomellian missionaries declared:

"The persons who worked together ten years ago for the founding of the 'Opera di Assistenza' obeyed a wise and providential inspiration when in its program they combined the religious ministry of the missionaries with the activities for the social and civil assistance of emigrants. The action of the Institute had to be exercised everywhere in great measure on the social level by means of Workers' Secretariats, frontier offices, schools, kindergartens, etc., and only in this way could it achieve precious fruits also in the religious field and secure for itself that degree of attention and consideration on the part of national and foreign authorities without which the missionaries could not accomplish an effective and lasting work (...). Nowadays more than ever we realize the need for not separating these two fields: the religious ministry and the social action

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(...). Unfortunately, on the religious level successes are far short of the efforts! The lack of an elementary education, the religious ignorance, their distrust, the dehumanizing of workers, the revolutionary propaganda, alcoholism, and sometimes their economic strictures, all this contributes to render our religious ministry in foreign lands more difficult and discouraging."⁵

With this memorandum the missionaries intended to defend themselves from the accusations of the foreign bishops who reprimanded them "*for not doing enough work on the religious field and for giving too much attention to the material interests of emigrants.*" C. Bellò remarks

"Conflicts could and were bound to happen: interference of lay authorities in things ecclesiastical, the juridical position of the missionaries, the eventual political manipulation of the "Institute" (...). Someone wanted to discover liberalism in this action of charity; and neither the reason for it or the pretext was lacking. Ernesto Schiapparelli, its able and active secretary, used the Institute for furthering patriotic sentiments. Besides, he tended to give it a prevalingly lay character through certain undue interference on the religious personnel (...). In 1908 the Institute suffered a crisis from within that caused the elimination of Schiapparelli and the transfer of its Ecclesiastical Council to Milan. Cardinal Ferrari, from whom it now depended, intended to give the action of the Missionaries a religious character and the constraints of discipline."⁶

When Bishop Bonomelli died in 1914, Bishop Ferdinand Rodolfi of Vicenza was named honorary president of the Institute and Actual President of the Ecclesiastical Council; its reorganization along the instructions imparted by Card. De Lai with letter of January 18, 1915, was interrupted by World War I. During the conflict the Bonomellian missionaries devoted themselves to the assistance of half a million emigrant repatriated, of soldiers, prisoners, and refugees. In 1920 the Institute was placed at the dependence on the Prelate of Emigration, represented in the Higher Council of the Institute by Msgr. Orsenigo of Milan. In the years 1920-1926 the influence of the laity grew evermore pressing. The Institute was being used by the Fascist government for its aims of a politically nationalistic infiltration among Italian communities in foreign lands. Consuls felt authorized to arrange the transfer of missionaries not liked by the regime and tried to force them to take part in all political demonstrations organized by the Fascist party in foreign countries, under pain of blackmail and retaliation. In spite of protests from the missionaries, the Institute fell under the control of the "*Commissariato dell'Emigrazione*", headed at the time by Hon. De Michaelis, a notorious mason, and the weekly "*La Patria*" published by it and directed by Mr. Celentani, became a true political tool controlled by Fascism. On March 26, 1926, Card. De Lai promulgated the norms that were to replace the old Statute. Among other things, they forbade participating in political manifestations. As a reaction, the lay Board of Directors of the Institute tendered their resignation on September 22, 1926, into the hands of Mussolini, who appointed a Royal Commissar in the person of Hon. Pedrazzi, assigning him Msgr. Lombardi and Prof. Pestalozza as his

⁵ "Memoriale dei Missionari Bonomelliani" to Cardinal Ferrari, 1909. Dfr. C. Bellò. "Geremia Bonomelli" (Brescia, 1961), pp. 316-320.

⁶ C. Bellò, op. cit., pp. 165-166.

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assistants. On November 18, 1927, the Sacred Consistorial Congregation sent Msgr. Ferrario, then director of the missionaries, the decree of dissolution of the Institute by Pope Pius XI. On the following day the missionaries were served notice that whoever of them intended to continue on the work of assisting emigrants had to either place himself under the direction of the S. Consistorial Congregation, or return to his diocese. In June 1926, the Bonomellian Priests were 26: 4 in Italy; 10 in France, at Reims, Joeuf, Hayange, Marseille, Saint Claude, Longwy, Vernon, Lyons, Moyeuve Gr. and Chambery; 6 in Switzerland, at Naters, Loucerne, Uster, Martigny, Geneva, Basel; 2 in Luxemburg, at Esch-sur-Alzette. On November 27, 1927, Msgr. Costantino Babini was named Visitor of the former Bonomellian priests by the S. Consistorial Congregation and after the visitation he was appointed their superior, a task he held till 1948. Msgr. Babini soon turned to the Scalabrinian missionaries for help and began working to insure that the Scalabrinian Congregation would take over, as it were, the heritage of the Bonomellian missions. He had frequent contacts with Fr. Francesco Tirondola, who had to contend, however, with the problem of personnel, and with Card. Rossi who more than once was tempted to have many missions of America closed, especially in the North, seeing the specific mission of Scalabrinians there already in a phase of termination, and to send the missionaries in the midst of emigrants in Europe, evermore numerous, after America had closed its doors to immigrants, and extremely in need of religious assistance. The initial presence of Scalabrinians among emigrants in Europe carries the date of May 28, 1936, with the arrival of Fathers Mario Ginocchini and Mario Pellizzon at Paris, precisely at the "Missione Cattolica Italiana", at 46 rue de Montreuil. Msgr. Babini had founded that mission. By the end of 1928 he had moved from Auch to Paris, and there he opened an "Italian Chapel" at #8b Rue de Ternes. Shortly afterwards he transferred to the 7th Arrondissement, at 114 rue Briançon. In January 1931, after another transfer to a locale by the "Porte de Versailles", the mission was given the present location in a building belonging to the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul, which was purchased in 1933. On April 22, 1936, Msgr. Babini wrote to the S. Consistorial Congregation:

"With venerated letter of the tenth of this month, the Most Rev. Fr. Tirondola informs me: 'As I already told you in a letter of mine (a letter which never reached me, however), I have found the Most Eminent Card. Rossi in complete accord in regard to sending our young missionaries to the missions of France; and so, also in line with our previous plans, two newly ordained missionaries have been placed at your disposal, who are animated by the best resolutions for good and who under your wise and experienced guidance will bring much fruit. These two will be available by the 15th of next month: I would be grateful if you were pleased to let me know precisely the time of their departure and definite residence. It is my hope that these may be the first ones of a long line that in the not too distant future may be able to provide for all the needs of our fellow countrymen in France.'

Thanks be to God! I immediately informed him that I had not received the letter to me in Bucarest, that I was happy about the communication, and that I would

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have liked to make a short visit to Rome to receive well detailed instructions so that their insertion may take place without misunderstandings or possible difficulties on the part of any confrere.

All things considered, however, I believe that, for the time being, it will be enough that the Sacred Consistorial Congregation give us some instruction and good advice, even if only in writing, and I am convinced that the two new confreres could come to France even right away. I would suggest to send them directly to Paris: both would remain here for a while, and then one could go to Joeuf, perhaps, and the other could stay here with me. But, as to their further placement we will see at a later date. Of course, I pledge myself to do all I can to assist, sustain, and direct the young confreres in their new field of Apostolate."⁷

Cardinal Rossi replied:

"I confirm to Your Most Rev. Paternity that the Pious Society of the Missionaries of St. Charles will soon place two good young priests at the disposal of the Catholic missions for Italians in Europe. Reserving the right to give you more detailed information on the candidates and their departure from Italy, I express to you my idea in regard to their placement and utilization in the field of the missions. At first they will have to reside in Paris and under your personal direction.

As you see best, you shall take along with you one or the other to train them in the sacred ministry. Later on, as soon as you deem that having acquired enough practice and experience, they should be assigned both together to some new foundation for the following reasons:

- 1. a first house, a first nucleus, must be formed. They must not be separated one here and the other there;*
- 2. this way they will not arouse suspicions. No one of the present missionaries, in fact, will think or presume to be present everywhere himself in such a way that another priest in another place may give him competition."⁸*

On May 29, 1936, Msgr. Babini reported the arrival of the two Scalabrinians:

"My first impression is very good, and let's hope that with God's help and much patience and good-will the desired graft may succeed well (...). Already a few days ago I had informed His Excellency Bishop Chaptal about the impending arrival at Paris of the two religious missionaries: even though, it seems to me, (but I could be mistaken) not enthusiastic about it, still he granted them all the necessary faculties and he was glad that the two new confreres should be a part in our modest mission. In a few days I will take them to pay their due respects to His Excellency. Even though there may be some missionary who may hold to some reservation with regard to the newcomers, there are others who are very happy about it. For example, this is what Fr. Dosio writes to me:

I foresee that such missionaries will be our successors at Geneva, and so they will get some experience right from now of our mission that has a certain importance on account of its three institutions. The system must be absolutely abolished of scraping up here and there priests tired of living, who had difficulties with their ministry in Italy; I am a witness to this, myself. I hope and pray with all my heart, therefore, that

⁷ Babini to Consistorial, Paris, April 22, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 475/2).

⁸ Card. Rossi to Babini, Rome, April 29, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 475/2).

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the new Congregation of St. Charles may extend all over Europe. Only a Congregation can solve the Gordian knot and save our missions for the future"

And so, Fr. Dosio goes on asking right away for one of the new confreres to spend a month in Geneva (...). And now, I take the liberty to ask how I should go about the salaries for the two young confreres."⁹

Card. Rossi answered indicating that the Scalabrinians should be given the same economic treatment of the other missionaries and granting that one of them should be allowed to reside temporarily at Geneva with Fr. Dosio. By the end of 1936, Msgr. Babini expressed the desire that a Scalabrinian should take the mission of Annecy, but Card. Rossi insisted that it would be detrimental for the Scalabrinians to be separated and placed at the dependence of old missionaries: as for Paris, it could be accepted, but as to other places, no. Either an independent mission of their own, or they are sent to Brazil:

"In regard, besides, to what you propose about the Scalabrinian Fathers, I must confirm what I have said by word of mouth and in writing. Due to the character of the Scalabrinian Institute and its present form as a Religious Congregation, I do not deem it opportune to disperse the Fathers here and there in a type of ministry too isolated from each other or under the direction of priests who, though so much of good spirit and active zeal, still could not be in a position to have the young priests persevere in the religious formation they have received in Seminary. Should you, therefore, continue in the intent of making use of Scalabrinian priests for the missions in Europe, it would be proper as agreed in the beginning, that they be entrusted with a mission of their own so that, united among themselves, they may persevere in the spirit of piety, of attachment to their Constitutions, which will help, after all, in making their very holy ministry among emigrants more fruitful."¹⁰

On April 30, 1937, Msgr. Babini asked for two missionaries for Basel, and two more for Geneva. Cardinal Rossi replied:

"Your requests for young Scalabrinian missionaries for the missions in Europe are justified by the ardor of your zeal which would want to see all the Italian communities in foreign lands well provided with an adequate religious assistance. But I have to provide also for the serious needs of Scalabrinian parishes and missions, especially in Brazil, that are nearly daily clamoring for help."¹¹

And now let us see how the two Scalabrinians appraised the situation:

"In conformity with what promised in our last letter of the 21st of this month, we come to you with due information on our actual situation in Paris and on what could be our prospects for the future. Our hasty letter is prompted by the fact that this information should reach you before your meeting with Msgr. Babini so that you may know beforehand and discuss matters with clearer views. Already for some time we had the intention to write something to you, and the time seemed to have come for us to take advantage of the occasion. And here is our situation after eight months of missionary life in Paris:

1. The work is not lacking, and on this account you may well send other

⁹ Babini to Card. Rossi, Paris, May 29, 1936 (Arch. G.S., 475/2).

¹⁰ Card. Rossi to Babini, Rome, January 20, 1937 (Arch. G.S., 475/2).

¹¹ Card. Rossi to Babini, Rome, May 15, 1937 (Arch. G.S., 475/2).

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confreres, and there will be enough for all. Our action consists of helping our confreres, in preaching some missions, visiting the sick, devoting ourselves to the ministry of confessions wherever the need may be, calling on some poor family, helping in the diffusion of the good press by appeals and by articles in the "Corriere", etc. These last activities do not amount to much, but they are enough to show our goodwill to work; if we are not doing more important work, this is because there already is someone who does it. We could not do a really organized and vital work for the mission without invading the field of our confreres, who, though burdened with work over their head would be ready for anything rather than ask for our help and having us share in any responsibility. It is not possible, in general, to work of our own initiative, without provoking unpleasant scenes or replies that in the form of compliments make us know even too clearly their real meaning. Lately, due to the departure of a missionary we had necessarily to be given the task of taking care of the choir, of the Catholic men, and of the press. In a word, there is plenty of work (as Msgr. Babini will rightly tell you), but even the hours we young missionaries should spend in our room are not in vain.

2. *Secondly, we add that the range of our relations with the emigrants is already rather wide and both here at the mission and outside we are much appreciated and loved. Lately, we have also called on the Cardinal and the Ambassador and both of them had promising words of praise for our Congregation.*
3. *As to our spiritual life we try to keep faithful to the exercises of piety of the seminary, but due to the activities of the mission it is not possible to perform all of them together at the same time because besides being religious we are also missionaries, and certainly we cannot let a mission's duty go in order to say the rosary together. Recently, we have made our acquaintance with Fr. Fugazza, a Vincentian, who is our confessor, and from now on he will hold also the monthly recollection day for us.*
4. *Msgr. Babini has suffered much in these eight months, on account of us especially, because he really has a great love for us; he does not hold any secrets with us and he does not let any occasion go by without giving us his precious advice....but, in practice, not wishing to irritate anyone, he is afraid of any move that might even in the least arouse the susceptibility of the others.*
5. *The confreres with whom we live (there are two of them now; we do not include the Monsignor, because he is one of us) are excellent priests, who have done and do a lot of work, have deserved much, and, we would say, have worked even too much, as they are already somewhat worn out given their age (one is 42 year old and 29 the other). It is not our business to pass judgment on their methods and intentions in all this work. As you see, there is much to be happy about; but this is not all! And here we are anxious to bring to your attention with all sincerity and frankness what interests us most. Before our arrival, Msgr. Babini heard all kinds of things on the part of the priests who are here. They accused him of bringing the Scalabrinians to France to get them out. Caught in the middle, to satisfy everyone he said that we would have come here only for a time (rather short) to study the place, etc. He told us to keep quiet, to be patient, etc. (something we did so*

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far with God's Grace; and in future, we hope). So far, they have said nothing seriously offensive to us except some indirect remarks on our being religious; but they are nothing to worry about. A few months later, when they saw that our stay was continuing, they began accusing Monsignor again, and the transfer of a missionary to one of the most important missions has been interpreted as a first move to expel them. Well now, this is how we stand practically in regard to them: we are watched and spied upon in all we do and in all our contacts with our fellow countrymen for fear we may surround ourselves of capable people so to undermine them and to force them to leave the field tomorrow. As mentioned above, they hold in their hands all associations and organizations, and each has so many tasks as not to be able in conscience to expedite them with honor, but they do not allow us to share their affairs in the least (save making us understand afterwards that we are here to do..., and being prodigal with their attentions, which, not being sincere, it would be better they not be given). To have to be patient would not be so bad, but for how long is it to last? In fact, believe us, dear Father, these two priests will never go of their own accord from here, not even if they were offered a place of distinction, such as they indeed deserve. The graft Msgr. Babini had in mind was an excellent idea perhaps, but it is impossible because they will never fully feel at home with us, and this not because of us personally, but of our origin.

As a first conclusion of this long chat, we deem it our duty, so it seems, to point out that to send here another confrere with the present situation, would make things worse perhaps (though the work, as we said, is not lacking and may help us to gain from this experience and practical novitiate).

Another conclusion: should we leave Paris? This would be the worst mistake of all! Better to be contented to carry on with one or two, this way in obscurity, and to start from the beginning in the meanwhile in other places, because to abandon Paris now would mean not to be able to return to it in who knows how many years. The mission of Paris is much too vast and important; even just to hold on to the existing institutions and actual positions in the proper way, there is enough work for six or seven missionaries who, assisted by some lay brother, would do a lot of good. The field is difficult, but not as one might think; a lot of initiatives could easily be realized if the workers in the field were united. And this very accord is what is lacking today, which is bound to hinder our work itself.

A third conclusion: to insure a good assignment for confreres, when asking them in all charity to retire. This is what also Msgr. Torricella was proposing to us, thus leading us to realize that success can easily be achieved. Besides, had he been though only indirectly consulted, he would have willingly volunteered his help with sure hope of success.

From our position we can only supply information on how things stand and pray to the Lord that he may provide a solution. There would be very little impression here (even especially among people supporting them) if the two missionaries should be removed, and with a justified reason the whole problem would be solved. Rome (His Eminence the Cardinal) writes it is satisfied with us, it recommends us above all to be good religious, it would not like us to mix things up, but it practically lets us stay here; and it wrote recently to Monsignor refusing to grant the Pious Society two very important missions where the

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missionaries either have died or are about to retire (of course, Rome must have its good reasons for doing it). As said before, Msgr. Babini is a saintly man, but he does not have the courage, perhaps, to take a step, also because he tried it before but with no success. He would be very happy if he could find someone willing to help him provided he did not hurt anybody. As of now he views the settling of our situation difficult and far off in the future. Lately he told us he knows what is to be done but that we must be patient for a few years yet. He is convinced that we must remain in Paris and that this mission will certainly be ours; but when? Dear Father, you may be sure that if we are to develop our missions in France, it is not possible to go on like this without a clear understanding or a clear separation with a field of action all our own. We should not wait too long, either, (we're talking about years) because people see things, after all, and should they later on discover that there is no accord between us priests, what good could be expected of our hard work? On the other hand, good positions are not lacking (Marseille-Lilla, etc.). With this problem resolved, many others would be solved, as well."¹²

Here we have the first report from the "Missione Cattolica Italiana" of rue de Montreuil for the missionary year 1936-1937:

"The number of Italian emigrants in the region of Paris did not show this year any marked decrease; though unable to supply exact statistics, and considering somehow the many among them who do not show in the official lists of foreigners, because they could not obtain the residency permit, and those very many who have naturalized, Italians and other Italian-speaking Catholics in Paris and suburbs, exceed, by much perhaps, 150 thousand units. Unfortunately, too few of them fulfill their religious duties or can be sufficiently assisted in their spiritual and moral needs.

A consoling note, however, is found in the fact that the great majority of them even in Paris, live with their families, to which they are still very devoted, and in spite, very often, of their difficult financial conditions they have usually a good number of children. Due to restrictive laws on foreign workers, quite a few of them have no steady jobs, but Divine Providence generally does not abandon them after all at least for their most immediate needs, and so they can manage somehow. Lately they are being made the object of an intense and hostile propaganda. Forced, in most part, to live in the poorest and most neglected neighborhoods, they often harbor a bitter and troubled heart, though their inner self is still naturally good and religious. Contacts of our emigrants with the local parishes and their institutions are extremely rare: even the best of them feel themselves spiritually emarginated, uneasy, and misunderstood on account of their different mentality, psychology, and language. Priests should take all this into serious consideration; which very rarely happens, with the unfortunate result that emigrants get even farther away from the religious practice, which cannot be imposed like the other duties of the civil and material life. Made up of a group of five Missionaries, and together with some other Italian religious and priests residing in the city for work in various institutions, the 'Missione Cattolica Italiana' of Paris does all it can to help the local clergy of the various parishes in Paris and suburbs; but all this is little indeed in view of so many great needs. It must be pointed

¹² Ginocchini and Pellizzon to Tirondola, Paris, Jan. 28, 1937 (Arch. G.S., 498/1).

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out that to the difficulty of the immense number of emigrants one has to add that of their dispersion and of the bad environment they are in. One finds Italians in all sections of Paris as well as in all its small or big suburbs: however, Italian communities are most numerous and characteristic in the 5th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 19th, and 20th districts, in places like Petit-Yvry, Vitry, Pantin, Aubervilliers, Choisy le Roi, Nogent, Boulogne S.S., Levallois, Bagnolet, St. Ouen, Les Lilas, Porte de la Villette, etc. In this situation, though provided of a center of action with a large chapel and meeting halls at 46 rue de Montreuil in the 11th district, the principal activity of the missionaries consists in giving frequent and brief annual missions in numerous parish churches of the cities and dioceses of Paris and Versailles in which the most important of the Italian communities live. Except for special occasions, the greatest majority of them do not make any effort to take the time for a trip to the mission in search of the missionary, hence the absolute need that we do everything possible to seek them out, if we wish to do them some good. Already for several years now, to accomplish, this the priests of the mission hold each year some forty or more brief courses of sermons for Italian-speaking Catholics in different places of the region of Paris. (We point out that there are no less than another 800 thousand emigrants of Italian nationality or origin scattered over the rest of France. Some forty or more priests do all possible in the various regions for their spiritual welfare.)

The cycle of the short missions opens with a pilgrimage and solemn religious celebration at Notre Dame de Paris, presided over by the Cardinal Archbishop who is always so willing to address his Italian children. And so, the following missions were preached this year to Italians of the region of Paris from September 1936 to June 1937:

1) Patina Ste. Marthe, 2) Vitry sur Seine, 3) Fonenai sur Bois, 4) St. Yve la Courneuve, 5) Gagny, 6) Chesnay, 7) Gargan, 8) Asnieres, 9) Sannois, 10) St. Denis la Chapelle, 11) Puteaux, 12) Kremlin Bicetre, 13) La Croix St. Simon, 14) Neuilly Plaisance, 15) Corbeil, 16) Mouilles, 17) Issy les Moulineaux, 18) N.D. de la Croix, 19) St. Joseph du Tremblay, 20) Rueil Malmaison, 21) Bagnolet, 22) Poissy, 23) Argenteuil-Colonies, 24) Chapelle rue des Hais XX, 25) Eglise des estrangers VII, 26) Nogent sur Marne, 27) Boulogne sur Seine, 28) Choisy' le Roi, 29) La Villette XIX, 30) St. Eloi XII, 31) Levallois Perret, 32) Les Lilas, 33) Evrey Bourg, 34) Aubervilliers, 35) Paray Contin, 36) Petit Yvry, 37) Ivry Plateau, 38) Vigneux, 39) Bobigny Vieux, 40) Bobigny Nouveaux, 41) Chapell rue Antoinette XVIII, 42) Montmorency, 43) Malabry Chatenay, 44) Livry Gargan, 45) Montreuil sur Bois, 46) St. Medard V, 47) St. Ilaire la Varenne.

Besides, other missions were preached to our fellow countrymen by the priests of the of Paris Mission at St. Etienne, Lille, Longwy, Troyes, Chaumont, Algeri, Basle, Saint Gaul, and Bern. This year also, the great mission has been concluded with a really most solemn celebration on Sunday, June 9, at Notre Dame Cathedral, attended by about 6,000 fellow countrymen and headed by the Italian Ambassador and his wife, the royal Consul General, and all the Authorities of the colony. The celebration was presided by Card. Verdier, while Bishop Agostini of Padua preached a moving sermon. He had arrived from Italy on purpose, and had visited, in the preceding days, our communities of Esch, Villerupt, Differdange, Poissy, Argenteuil, and Boulogne Sur Seine.

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This activity of the missions for adults is no doubt the most important of all. It must be further developed and better prepared not just in the region of Paris, but in the rest of France, as well, due to the fact that our immigration assumes more the character of stability each day. Because of this, the priests of the of Paris Mission insure all year round a regular religious assistance at the Mission Chapel at 46 rue de Montreuil, where two Masses with sermon in Italian are celebrated every Sunday at 7:30 and 9:00 A.M. Vespers with catechism for adults and benediction are sung at 2:30 in the afternoon.

On weekdays the Holy Masses are said at 6:30 and 8:00 o'clock in the morning; religious services in the evening at 8:30. At least one priest is always available each day for the confessions of the faithful. About 11,000 communions were distributed in our chapel last year, and all the most important religious feasts, so dear to emigrants, have been celebrated rather solemnly. Said priests take care also that a Mass be said on Sundays and feasts, with sermon and confessions for Italians who gather at the great catechism chapel of Villette (XIX), at 7, and at the Church of 'Etrangers' (VII) at 11:15. Very important meetings of the groups of Catholic Action are held every month at the mission's headquarters. The members come in even from the farthest centers of the suburbs. These men and women are the brave and generous cooperators of the missionaries. And so, the men and women of Catholic Action hold their meeting on the first Sunday of each month at 3:30 in the afternoon, and the young boys and girls on the third at the same hour. The mission also has a flourishing recreational center for young and older men, open every night; a modest amusement park for children; a male theater group, well worth praising, that offers frequent performances in the mission's theater, and on occasion, also in other parish halls; a more modest group of women for academic recitals on certain special circumstances; a rather efficient choir. This way, out of the groups of Catholic Action there were born two Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul, one of men, and the other of women who, though by means of their scarce economic resources, are doing a lot of good for a large number of poor families. A secretarial office is open daily at the mission and is of great service for so many of our fellow countrymen in the laborious procedures for the celebration of weddings valid for both church and state. A few hundred marriages are regularized and blessed in the chapel of the mission every year. Each Monday night, at 8:30, a course of religious instruction is held for men and women, young and older. As to children, we cannot do very much because they hardly understand any Italian and must conform to the local custom of attending catechism in the parishes. This represents a very serious problem as it involves the whole question of the education and instruction of the children of emigrants in France. Besides the charitable work carried on by the two Conferences of St. Vincent, the Mission distributes, twice a week -Tuesday and Friday morning, - abundant portions of soup, bread, and when possible, also some clothing, to a good number of poor people, helping them according to our possibilities even with bonuses for bread, milk and night shelter...., about 150 of them a week. As much as time and circumstances permit, the missionaries visit a certain number of sick people in hospitals and homes; they also lend their spiritual assistance to two Italian orphanages of Noisy-le-Grand for girls and Vitry for boys, founded and directed by the Rev. Sisters of Ven. Cabrini, the Missionaries of the Sacred

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Heart. In assisting the sick the priests are helped very much by the Italian 'Sisters of Charity', who have a house at rue Viollet, #10, and for many years now have been working in Paris assisting the poor. The Sisters of Ven. Palazzolo, the 'Poverelle' of Bergamo, lend their very precious help to the mission in taking care of the chapel, the organizations of girls, the mailing of religious literature, the direction of the house. Besides the Priests of the mission, there are some other ten Priests and Religious of Italian nationality or origin who though busy in parishes, communities, or special institutions, were involved in various degrees in the religious and moral assistance of Italians in the region of Paris. Contacts between mission and emigrants are kept mostly by means of the weekly *'Il Corriere'*, organ of the missions in general, and of the monthly bulletin *'La Buona Parola'*; the first with a distribution of 2,500 copies in the region of Paris, and the latter 12,000. The good literature is certainly the most effective means of apostolate among Italians of the Diaspora. It deserves a much greater attention and development and therefore of more adequate personnel and means. The rapport of the Mission with the local Church's authorities are good and generally excellent with the pastors: these become convinced that the missionaries are not pursuing any political action, but that they are instead a link of unity between Italian-speaking Catholics and their respective parishes; and so they willingly welcome the missionaries to their churches or chapels, or they do not hinder them, at least. Some even help financially, and offer their zealous services to prepare the mission, taking part in it also. As to relations with Italian Authorities, they are very correct at present and even cordial, though very careful not to mix our missionary action with other activities that may give place, in these moments especially, to serious misunderstandings, or offer any pretext for the campaigns of extremists who try all ways to bear upon immigrants to turn away not only from national organizations but from the little contact they have with the Mission and the parishes, as well. The local civil authorities leave us free in our action, and, from what I know, do not oppose any obstacle to the activities of the Mission. A comforting note: in spite of the massive propaganda of subversion of these years, of the last months especially, among emigrants, at the brief missions of the last cycle and at the first one of the present period 1937-1938, that had its start with the pilgrimage to Montmartre on Sunday, last September 19, and with a Solemn Mass at the Italian Altar in the church of the Pontifical Pavilion at the 'Exposition', Sunday, October 11, there has been, and we have been noticing a greater attendance than in the past years both to the sermons and to the Sacraments of Confession and Communion, and not just of women, but of men, as well. Many of them had not set foot in church for years; there were cases of real conversion. And by God's Grace, this consoling fact has been repeated in various other missions of ours in France."¹³

At first, while working with former Bonomellians, the Scalabrinians followed their pastoral methods. The "Mission", one each week, was typical of France. It was preached to Italian communities distant from main residence. To get a more exact idea of it, let us read the report of one of the first missions

¹³ Ginocchini, "Relazione anno missionario 1936-1937. Missione Cattolica Italiana, 46 rue de Montreuil, Parigi XI" (Arch. G.S., 498/1).

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conducted by Scalabrinians in 1936:

"A mission here in Paris is the equivalent of a day with no possibility of a free moment for other things: the whole morning is spent in doing office work; in the afternoon one leaves for the mission. Its great work consists particularly in the visitation of the families of Italians who for years had no interest in religion. This way we enter little by little into this difficult and delicate argument with people who are now all imbued with so many anti-Christian ideas. One must be very brief, and many a time, our trouble has as its fruits the legalization of marriages, baptisms postponed for years, the blessing of homes that have generally never been blessed by a Priest, nor by the local Pastor who most of the time considers foreigners as foreign to his flock; before leaving we give them some holy picture to hang on the walls of the house, and finally they are invited to the mission in the evening with a leaflet of the program. It is indeed a difficult task especially for one not accustomed to it; yet it must be done if we wish to be sure of positive results; but one needs a thousand precautions and kind ways not to spoil anything. One may well get an idea of the state of the practical faith of our poor Italians from the very simple fact, understandable after all, that being this a general occurrence, it may shed some light on the reality of our mission: sometimes we visit 150 or 200 and more families, very often with many children, yet we open the mission with the presence of only twenty or thirty people in all. And to think that we preach the mission at times in place where 600 or 700 Italians reside and who responded with the dicer's oath to the Missionary's visit. Then we have to go back and try it again until by the last evenings we get the church filled up at last.

The Mission of Viry-Chatillon. In my last mission preached at Viry-Chatillon, between one thing and the other, I may have gotten in touch with or invited at least some 300 families: well, almost nothing the first night. I returned the following day: some more came that night. We go back and repeat the invitation...., we strike while this blessed iron is still hot..., until we finally had the church all filled in the last nights to the great surprise of the pastor who could not believe the Italians had so much faith. The mission was successfully concluded with one hundred communions: and this is much, considering that for lack of religious assistance these people had never had the opportunity to get in touch with a priest who could understand them.

The Lord blessed the hard work of his missionary who tried to do all he could for his glory; it is entirely the work of God, and the missionary experiences it every day and at every moment; without God indeed we cannot do a thing: experience counts more than a course of sermons on such comforting subject.

Among wolves. One can very well imagine to what condition our fellow countrymen are exposed without religious assistance. Little by little they suffer deep changes in their faith because of sectarian doctrines, with consequences detrimental to the family and consequently to Society, which has reached such a state (I am speaking of the French one with which I am daily in contact) as not to allow us to know its aspirations, provided it still has any....or whether we can call such the directives it is animated by. The families that are still good or not so bad number very few: the education of the young is conditioned by the environment; and strangely enough, sectarianism finds its most faithful proselytes among Italians who many times, with minds and consciences obscured, lose all human and personal sense. But the worst is that Italians became aware of it only when, convinced of having achieved their aspirations of freedom and justice, will discover they have been bridled in life, mouth and mind: unfortunate Italians, who very often ready to sacrifice their honor for the sake of a less miserable life, are then unable to rise from the condition of slavery into which they have plummeted.

Misery is a bad adviser! It happened just a while ago! An Italian had unfortunately been arrested at the border with a double-bottom suitcase, full of antifascist books and leaflets; I knew him myself because he used to frequent the mission and attend

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Mass. The desperate conditions he had fallen into plunged him into a worse one: allured by the socialists he took the risk that cost him a number of years and the worsening of the miserable conditions of his children, indeed deserving of all compassion; one of them is only a few months old. True, misery has always been a bad adviser, when confronted by the allure of pleasure and the glittering of gold. This is also the story of almost all the Italians who are languishing in Parisian prisons; and they are not few! The conclusion is evident: if our mission is at the same time very delicate and providential, it falls also very short of the need which is ever increasing because of the changes of the society in which they must live. You should see, for example, how inadequate religious assistance in hospitals is! You would get then the correct idea about Christian life here! Priests are allowed in hospitals only one hour a day, and when there to administer some Sacrament they must do it so as not to be seen by anyone! There was a case when Communion was given in all secrecy to one wishing for it together with a slice of orange! The Anointing is given sometimes by feigning to touch the forehead as though to check the fever, etc. We need not go to persecuted countries to find such things; the struggle France is now facing and going through is more subtle, but results are the same; even more damaging, because latent. The dangers of a clash may be summed up in two: to be a Catholic and an Italian. In fact, a Catholic is persecuted because of his faith and morals which stand in opposition to sectarian doctrines; and Italians are disliked because of their not very honorable past history and on account of the recent great events that seem to weigh in and are being viewed with envy that often degenerates into spite.

The Mission in Paris. The Mission of Paris has a community of six Missionaries, Superior included; four Sisters; a receptionist, and an errand boy, who is very capable and a very good young man. The premises includes six rooms, three mid-size halls for entertainment and meetings of Catholic associations, a rather modest chapel, a beautiful and well equipped theatre hall, a courtyard, that in the heart of Paris is indeed an enviable asset, the house for the Sisters of the Ven. Palazzolo of Bergamo. As a whole, not bad; in fact we have all reasons to thank God! The activity of the mission is also quite abundant, especially as regards to the office: it deals always with matters concerning marriages to be performed or regularized and legalized; passport practices; identification papers; unemployment; jobs, repatriations; subsidies, etc. All things requiring us to deal with the political authorities of Italy and France; and they must be carried out in all precision. Besides, on all Tuesdays and Fridays food is prepared for the poor amounting to about a hundred and several dozens of abandoned families. There is also the visit to the hospitals, to families in trouble, the mission's mail to take care of, and a thousand other little matters, which taken together do not allow us much extra time for anything else. Rarely have we been able to go to bed before midnight, since we first arrived in France. When we hold the missions, for instance, at a distance of 20 or 30 kilometers from Paris, in places at times no means of transportation late at night to return home, the missionary must travel a lot of kilometers on foot, and so, after the conclusion of a mission which began at 8:30 to give Italians time to attend and the French the time to use their church for earlier religious services, he is bound to arrive home at a rather late hour. As of now, however, the cycle of true missions is over and it will be resumed in September in the Basilica of Montmatre. There is enough work here not for just six priests, but for sixty times as many, and more. The field is immense, also because the dioceses of France now have a hard time in replacing the priests who die in a year."¹⁴

In summer 1937, Fr. Pellizzon was transferred to the United States and his place was taken by Fr. Enrico Larcher. In 1938, as the international situation worsened, its repercussions began to be felt also by the missionaries on

¹⁴ Pellizzon, "Attività Missionaria in Francia", "L'Emigrato Italiano", a. XXV #4 (October 1936), pp. 26-28.

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account of some members of the French clergy, and in the beginning of 1939 here is what Fr. Ginocchini wrote concerning Msgr. Babini:

"Unfortunately his worries have increased lately and become more serious. The missionaries, in general, and some in the province in particular are being targeted because of the time we are going through. The reason why some were or are in some trouble in continuing their ministry among immigrants is this: no need is seen here of foreign priests for the assistance of immigrants in hope that by subtracting also the religious link that holds them united together they may sooner integrate in the country that hosts them so generously."¹⁵

Fr. Giovanni Triacca, who had been sent to the mission of Paris in May 1939, wrote on the matter:

"In my first mission I preached in a suburb of Paris, Levallois Perret, half of the people that came to confession had not done so in quite a few years (...). How many would return to church if only they could meet an Italian priest. In fact, our statistics show that at least 80% of those who attend our missions would not do their Easter duty in French churches."¹⁶

When World War II broke out, the mission of Rue de Montreuil was rather disarranged in its ordinary activities, such as the missions in the suburbs, the associations, etc. because of the departure of many Italians; the office work instead increased for charitable assistance and legalization of marriages, because many had decided to get their status in order due to the danger and the prospect of being deprived of all assistance.¹⁷ In November 1939, Fr. Ginocchini reported:

"Since the middle of September work has resumed its normal, if not speedy, course. As of today we have held twelve short missions with more than satisfactory results (...).

These missions are taking place in the afternoon because we cannot keep the lights on any more in church after nine at night. Besides, almost no one would come anyway for fear of being caught in the street or in church by sound of alarms. It's a real pity now, to see so many of our families bewildered... others broken up; some men on the front line, others far away at work, and still others in Italy, perhaps (...). Many Italian families have returned and keep returning to France. Not many have left: some say that about 30,000 have repatriated, but the number does not seem exact. The great mass is still here: and we realize this from our few acquaintances. Many young people left from the area around the mission, but few whole families. In fact, before the war we used to print 13,000 copies of our modest bulletin, now we still print 12,500 of them. The work at home has also resumed its course: still very numerous Italians and French attend our chapel. Every day a slow but steady procession knocks at our office door for a subsidy, a piece of bread, pasta, bread and milk bonuses, used clothing of rich people, etc...Others come to find out what to do in the present situation, how to settle their situation, etc.

Many come, besides, seeking help in preparing the papers for their marriages,

¹⁵ Ginocchini to Tirondola, Paris, February 16, 1939 (Arch. G.S., 498/1).

¹⁶ Triacca to the Clerics of Piacenza, Paris, May 20, 1939 (Arch. G.S., 498/1).

¹⁷ Ginocchini to Prevedello, Paris, September 25, 1939 (Arch. G.S., 498/1).

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(...). Since I have been working at this office I was able to bless some 50 marriages (...). Baptisms also are numerous, though at very irregular intervals. Sometimes parents come asking for alms, and in order to have more, they take along their "tribe" that has still to be baptized for lack of money (...). Our associations have been decimated, but they are not dead; rather, they are already beginning to show new life.

At the sight of so many broken dreams and of such a vast field so battered by the storm, one may be tempted to get discouraged, but we must not forget that the good Lord does not reward achievements, but the sincerity of our efforts."¹⁸

In August 1939, Fr. Enrico Larcher was transferred to the Italian mission of Geneva. On June 10, the date of Italy's declaration of war, Msgr. Babini was summoned to the police commissariat and then sent to a concentration camp, where he continued his apostolate:

"On July 10 Fr. Ginocchini wrote from Paris: 'I am happy to inform you that we are still here in Paris, enjoying good health, and at work in our post. Our life has always been as usual and we did not have the least trouble from any source; after a few days of dismay, our good people have resumed their normal life, and attend our mission in still good numbers (...). We did not receive any further news about Msgr. Babini; a telegram from San Remo, on July 23, announced his release and his repatriation. On the 25th he was in Rome. We have seen him with a thin and emaciated face, and his hair cut off, but with the same ardor in his eyes. He had suffered, but he was not broken. He could be said he was returning from an exhausting mission rather than from a quarantine spent in one of the strictest French concentration camps. And indeed, Msgr. Babini's mission had been conducted in an unusual environment with an exceptional audience. My presence in the camp, - he often says - as well as that of other priests (they were three in this camp) was truly providential. Were it not because of our support, the prisoners would have been greatly affected in their morale and their discouragement could have put them in danger. Monsignor was glad to refuse the offer made to him by Ambassador Guariglia to return to Italy on a diplomatic train. He had replied giving thanks for the proposal while declaring himself glad to be able to remain in Paris with his Italians, ready to follow them, if need be, into a concentration camp. In the same evening of the declaration of war, when two policemen arrived at the Italian mission looking for him he was neither surprised nor frightened. He bid farewell to the other priests, imparted his last instructions, and placed himself immediately at the disposal of the French authorities. We shall not spend time in retelling all his vicissitudes from the 'Buffalo' stadium of Paris to the concentration camp of Vernet on the foothills of the Pyrenees, during an unending trip of four days and five nights; we would like, however, to recall some stories of his priestly ministry among those unfortunate ones who had him at their side as a consoling angel. During the trip he was passing from car to car, and his serene countenance open to the deepest trust, with his word of faith, with his invitation to prayer, he was soothing the agony of those tragic hours of dismay and dejection (...). At Vernet, in a concentration camp that in its three sectors provided room for 5,000 people of 38 nationalities, our Italians felt lost while their noble sentiments of patriotism were being mocked by Spanish communists and by displaced persons of all shades. Their only comfort consisted in the presence of the missionary. He had begun to organize some form of religious activity: every night prayers were said in common, but as soon as the head of the French guards discovered it, he ordered him: "Any religious and political propaganda is forbidden!" He had no choice but to obey, but his inventiveness found a way to continue his good work. And so, look at him passing

¹⁸ Ginocchini to Prevedello, Paris, Nov. 23, 1939 (Arch. G.S., 498/1).

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from one barrack to another to bid the prisoners goodnight and with it also a "Hail Mary" which our Italians answered with a whispering voice. During the first days it was not possible to say the Mass, but they were allowed to have a portable altar later on, so as to celebrate Mass on it in a barrack apart. From here the Monsignor walked over to the section reserved for the sick, thus to bring them a word of comfort and faith: two of them, seriously ill, were comforted with the last Sacraments. On Sunday there was Mass in the camp. This task was the domain of a French chaplain. On the Sundays in which our fellow Italians remained in that camp, the Mass assumed a note of solemnity (...). Besides Msgr. Babini and Fr. Carlo Consoni, the following missionaries of France were also interned in concentration camps: Fr. Filippo Maglio from Auch, Fr. Domenico Forte from Chambéry, Fr. Benzoni from Annecy, Fr. Michele Magni from St. Etienne, Fr. Giovanni Gazzola from Nimes, Fr. De Biasi from Marseille, and Fr. Brondolo from Toulon."¹⁹

2. Geneva

We had occasion to mention that already in 1936 Msgr. Babini had asked that the Scalabrinians go to the help of Fr. Alfonso Bosio, and how Card. Rossi had promised he would send them as soon as it was possible. The promise could be kept in August 1939, when Fr. Enrico Larcher was transferred from the mission of Paris to that of Geneva. It had been founded by Fr. Luigi Motti, sent there in May 1900 by Bishop Bonomelli. At that time, 100 thousand Italians were residing in Switzerland, 18,000 of them in Geneva.

"Assistance to emigrants was at that time in an embryonic state: the missions of Geneva and Albula were then tracing their first furrows. No definite plans, no concrete initiative: it was all a question of taking the first steps (...). Abbot Garret, then pastor of St. Joseph, welcomed the missionary to his house and placed the church at the disposal of Italians every Sunday between his Masses for children and for the people of the parish. This way a start was given to the first religious services for Italians in Geneva. A few months later, due to the little amount of time available in this church, Sunday services were transferred to the crypt of the Sacred Heart. Fr. Motti could exercise in it the ministry until 1902, when, consequently to the decision for the construction of the new Chapel of St. Margaret, religious services began to be held in the main hall of the 'Cercle de l'Esperance', a few steps from the future mission (...). Thanks to the deeply Christian spirit of Cav. Giovanni B. Ponti and Mr. Zoppino, the true founders of the mission, who wanted to take upon themselves the financial burden for the purchase of the Chapel and the residence for the missionaries, our colony of Geneva was, in the very sense of the word, the first in Switzerland to have a mission of its own (...). Born at the same time in 1900 in different places of Switzerland, the Bonomelli Institute was developing from year to year in a truly consoling manner. Each center of immigration had its particular needs, and therefore a particular character also. In certain places greater stress had to be given to emigrants' religious assistance, while a great need was felt in other ones also for social activities. In such cases, the workers' secretariats became a necessary completion of the Priest's activities. This need was strongly felt also in Geneva, and upon insistence of Fr. Ruche, pastor of Carouge, the Bonomelli Institute decided to provide with sending there in November 1903 as a Missionary, Fr. Dosio, for the religious assistance to those Italians and for operating a provisional secretariat at Rue Pecolat (...). The suburb of Carouge was and still is today Geneva's poorest and the most densely populated by the working classes. More than 1,500 Italians lived there

¹⁹ Sofia, "Apostolato missionario in campo di concentramento", "Le Missioni Scalabriniane tra gli Italianiani all'Estero", a. XXIX, #5 (Sept. 1940), pp. 100-102.

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completely left to themselves (...). In 1905, three Franciscan Tertiary Sisters from Susa arrived from Italy to devote themselves totally to the free assistance of the sick in their homes and of the poor families of the place. To fill in for a serious need, in 1908 the local missionary founded a kindergarten with the help of a group of good Italian ladies for the day-care of children whose mothers had to absent themselves from home for reasons of their work (...).

In early January 1910, the Missionary Fr. Motti, on in years and in poor health, resigned (...). The Missionary of Carouge, Fr. Dosio, was then called to the Mission of Geneva with another priest from Cremona (...). This was in 1912: a serious problem demanded a prompt solution. It concerned our poor orphans. With the help of a group of volunteers headed by Ernesto Ponti, son of the lamented Battista, the missionary decided the founding of an orphanage (...). To this end, a large building, quite fitting the scope, was rented at Hermance on the lakeshore. Its inauguration took place on the November 24 of the same year (...). When the war broke out, the Orphanage had to provide assistance also to the children of those countrymen of ours, who had been called to arms. For this purpose, a decision was made to buy another building at Pommier, Grand Sacconex (Geneva), and on that occasion the committee constituted itself into a legal Corporation (...).

Once the problem of assisting the orphans was solved, there still remained that of caring for the aged of our colony, the disabled, and the destitute. Our mission could not remain indifferent to this state of things. Warmly and effectively supported by our Royal Consul, Count Carlo Senni, the Committee of the Orphanage purchased for about 90,000 Swiss Francs a magnificent property at a short distance from Geneva (...). It was decided that the hospice should be entitled to the august name of H.M. King Victor Emanuel III."²⁰

In 1936, the Committee, or the "Société de la Chapelle Italienne" acquired the property of Carouge, and there, besides the kindergarten, it organized the assistance for unemployed or homeless girls, a rest home for old ladies and a cafeteria for workers. Fr. Enrico Larcher arrived at Geneva on August 28, 1939, and he was entrusted especially with the spiritual care of the Chapel of St. Margaret on Rue de la Mairie and of the "Flying missions", while Fr. Dosio was caring for the direction and the administration of the three Houses of Charity.

3. Argentina - Pergamino

With the United States and Brazil, Argentina represented one of the first and most important outlets of Italian mass emigration. From 1876 until 1940 it absorbed 26% of the entire Italian emigration overseas, with 2,718,000 units, equal to 47.4% of all immigrants in Argentina. It is estimated that one-third of the population of Argentina is of Italian extraction; in fact, in the so-called Great Buenos Aires, which, besides the capital, includes the cities of Rosario, Cordoba, Mendoza, Santa Fé, Bahia Blanca, the percentage of people of Italian origin or extraction exceeds 50% of the total population.

On June 8, 1888, a letter came to Bishop Scalabrini from the Committee of the Colony "Villa Libertà" of Chajari, near Concordia in the Province of Entre Rios:

"We, the undersigned Committee for the construction of a church we began building last year and hope to see finished shortly, deem it our duty to inform

²⁰ "L'Opera Bonomelli a Ginevra nei suoi venticinque anni di lavoro (1900-1925) (Como, 1925), pp. 5-11.

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you that here in America, in the Argentine Republic, province of Entre-Rios, a community has been in existence since 1875, which now counts 400 Italian families, with only one small church in the whole district, some two, three or even four miles distant from the great majority of the population, so that most of them cannot fulfill the religious duties demanded by our holy faith. So also many of our children, for lack of instruction because of distance, are still deprived of Confession and Communion. Unfortunately, in these difficult times, some had to die without the Sacraments, because due to distances we could not get the priest on time for their last hour.

In consideration of our miserable condition, since 1883 we are pledged to great efforts for the construction of a house for use as a rectory, while three houses of ours, blessed for this purpose by order of the Bishop, have been provisionally adapted for the religious services. But we have always remained without a priest. Last year we daringly committed ourselves to start building a church we hope to see with its roof on within August of this year. Already completed now, we have also built a school for the education of our children. We had recourse to our Bishop of Paraná, asking that he would send us a priest but we were told that there is scarcity of priests in this Republic and that we should provide for an Italian priest ourselves. We did not waste time and immediately wrote to friends and relatives of different places of ours in Italy to solicit the arrival of a Minister of God, who would remain here to help us in our miserable situation, but it was all in vain. However, through a friend of ours we received information that an Institute has been founded in Piacenza, your city, for priests who should feel called to come to the help of our countrymen in America. We informed of this our Bishop of Paraná, asking him for a letter of recommendation to go along asking that you send us a priest. And so, our bishop told us by a letter of the 21st of this month that you have pledged sending us a priest as soon as possible. We have no doubt, therefore, that our Bishop will keep his promise, but our great need and desire for a priest urges us also to send you this petition of ours, and prostrate at your feet we implore you to send us a priest at the earliest date."²¹

On behalf of Bishop Scalabrini, Fr. Roller answered:

"The Bishop, my Superior, has received and read with pleasure your letter requesting to have with you a missionary of this Institute. Unable to answer personally because of his many occupations, the Bishop has asked me to reply in his place and to convey to you, first of all, his satisfaction at hearing that, not only you keep intact the deposit of faith and the glorious traditions of your fatherland, but that also with a praiseworthy enthusiasm you embrace so many sacrifices for the construction of a church, a school, and a house as a fixed residence for the missionary. All this is a source of much consolation to the fatherly heart of His Excellency, who asks me to send you his most cordial congratulations not only for what you have done but also for the trust you have placed in him.

And, so, as a mark of his gratitude he promises that, in a short while, he will think also of you, provided this be the desire of your most zealous Bishop, from

²¹ Letter of F. Masetto, A. Squarzone, etc., to Scalabrini, Colonia Villa Libertà, no date, arrived at Piacenza on June 8, 1888 (Arch. G.S., 301/1).

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*whom we did not receive as yet any instruction on the matter."*²²

In September 1889, from the same province of Entre Rios, another petition reached Bishop Scalabrini, written this time by Mr. J.F. Boyd, representative in Europe of the Argentine Company for Colonization "La Agricultora", that had been founded in that same year with the scope of establishing "Christian colonies formed of virtuous families and grouped according to nationalities". The central colony was that of Balvanera. J.F. Boyd wrote to the Bishop of Piacenza:

"Recently arrived from Buenos Aires with charge to treat in Europe the interests of 'La Agricultora', an Argentine Company for Colonization, whose Statutes I have the honor to present to you, and desiring above all to provide for the religious and educational needs of our colonists, I come to you according to the advice and particular recommendation of Titular Archbishop Stonor of Trebisonda and of the Secretary of Propaganda Msgr. Dominic Jacobini. The latter informed me that His Holiness Pope Leo XIII has entrusted you by a special 'Brief' with the spiritual care of emigrants in America, and that to carry out the solitudes and projects of the Holy Father you have founded in 1887 the Congregation for the Missions of America. I was told, therefore, that this Congregation will probably be able to give us an effective help.

*Besides, after examining the 'testamur' (we testify) of the Archbishop of Buenos, dated August 22, 1889, His Eminence Card. Simeoni, Prefect of the S.C. of Propaganda Fide, has recommended 'La Agricultora' in a special way with letter of September 26, 1889. I have visited on this very day the seminary of the Congregation of the Missions in America, I have had a long talk with the Superior, and now I turn to you, Your Excellency, that you may bless our Catholic enterprise and to pledge the spiritual assistance of said Congregation so as to make sure that the Catholic religion may be preserved in the midst of all our colonists and that the schools we will build for the civil and religious education of their children of both sexes are to be regularly assisted. 'La Agricultora' takes it formally upon itself (I myself take the responsibility for it right from this very moment on behalf of the company) to obtain for you the written permission of any bishop of Argentina, who in line with the growth of our colonization will be interested at one time or another in the introduction in his diocese of the priests of the Congregation of the Missions for America."*²³

Bishop Scalabrini answered:

"I have diligently examined the letter you wrote to me, dated September 20, and also the Statutes of the Society 'La Agricultora' founded in Buenos Aires, and the declaration of the general Assembly of its shareholders held last June 25th. Having at the same time taken cognizance of the letter of the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, and of that of Card. Simeoni, Prefect of the S.C. of Propaganda, in which we are asked to assist, as far as possible, the Society you represent so worthily, in the interest of Italian colonists of America deprived of all religious assistance, I have decided as follows: I pledge the spiritual assistance by the Congregation of the Missions in America recently founded in this city for Italian emigration and to place at the disposal of the 'La Agricultora' Society the number

²² Rolleri to Masetto, Piacenza, June 17, 1888 (Arch. G.S., 301/1).

²³ Boyd to Scalabrini, Piacenza, September 29, 1889 (Arch. G.S., 301/1).

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of priests and brother catechists I will be able to supply for the primary education of the colonists' children; and as of now I commit myself to providing, by the next spring, two priests (one who should be in a position to preach in French in addition to Italian) and two catechists. However, I my cooperation is subject to the following conditions:

1. *Let the Society obtain from interested bishops a written approval, which shall be sent to me, for the sending of the Religious of said Congregation of the Missionaries in America into their dioceses.*
2. *It should let me know six months beforehand the number of priests and religious catechists it will need from time to time.*
3. *Lastly, the Society must build at its expense the churches, the schools and the houses where the priests will reside, taking upon itself also the furnishing of the rectories, the vestments of the church and religious services, the expenses for their voyage, and the economic support of priests and lay brothers as said in the letter you wrote to me this very day.*

In compliance with your request, I accept the spiritual direction of the Catholic Society 'La Agricoltora' in virtue of the faculties conferred on me by the Holy See.

I bless the Society and all its praiseworthy intents, and I pray that God may prosper it and give it all the help necessary to achieve its noble scope."²⁴

On February 22, 1890, Mr. Boyd informed Bishop Scalabrini of the authorization of the Bishop of Paraná, who had canonical jurisdiction over the colony of "Our Lady of Balvanera", close to Villaguay.

And so Bishop Scalabrini assigned to that colony Fr. Luigi Wagnest and Brother Camillo Chiassoni, who embarked at Genoa on March 24, 1890. In his first letter, delivered personally by Mr. Fernand Bourdieu, director of the colony, Fr. Wagnest wrote on May 29:

"Thanks to Mr. Fernand Bourdieu we will soon take residence in our rectory, at whose side there will be the church, where we will be able to keep the Blessed Sacrament. I also hope to soon open the school, and then I will be happy indeed."²⁵

On July 11, 1891, Brother Camillo Chiassoni died, perhaps of a traumatic pneumonia provoked by a fall off a horse. He was 51.

In 1891, the society "La Agricoltora" sold all its land to the Society "Escrina Bounge". The new owner, on seeing that the harvest of wheat was not enough to cover expenses, resold all the land for which a written contract had not been drawn, and the colony of Balvanera was bought by a Jewish company presided over by Baron Hirsch. Fr. Wagnest asked the chancery for an opinion and he was told to remain at Balvanera until the Italian families remained; when immigration of Jewish families should start moving in, as is expected, then the chancery would give him a parish of Italian people; in fact, most all colonies in the province of Santa Fe were inhabited by families from Piedmont, Lombardy, and the Veneto, and there was no priest. Instead, the Colony of Balvanera was made up of 11 families from Trent, 12 from Germany and Russia, 21 from

²⁴ Scalabrini to Boyd, Piacenza, October 2, 1889 (Arch. G.S., 301/1).

²⁵ Wagnest to Roller, Colonia N.S. de Balvanera, May 29, 1890 (Arch. G.S., 301/1).

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Belgium, 6 from France. Besides, they were expected to leave the place following the new grain harvest, and more so because the locusts had destroyed the whole crop of corn and there was hunger around.²⁶

To Balvanera 200 Jewish families arrived and another 1,800 were expected from Russia and Poland. Fr. Wagnest left the colony on May 4, 1892, and the Bishop of Paraná sent him to Helvecia, some one hundred kilometers to the North of Santa F . It was inhabited by immigrants from Friuli, Piedmont, and Lombardy; in the colonies around it there lived also people from Switzerland, France, etc.: all together a population of ten to twelve thousand. Fr. Wagnest made immediate plans for a church to be dedicated to Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, and asked the help of another priest and four Sisters for the school and the hospital a rich man was building.²⁷ Fr. Peter Colbacchini was assigned for Helvecia in 1896²⁸, but he was routed to R o Grande do Sul, instead.

In 1898, Bishop Scalabrini called Fr. Wagnest back to Italy because he had many political opponents for quite some time and serious accusations were being levelled at him. In his answer of March 21, 1898, Fr. Wagnest asked for a delay because he had an "Institute of Education" under construction.²⁹ In 1899 he was taken out of Helvecia by order of the Bishop. Fr. Giacomo Annovazzi also worked in the province of Santa F  from 1900 until 1906. After residing a year in Argentina, he wrote to Bishop Scalabrini:

"When I arrived at Buenos Aires, Archbishop Castellano had died already, and therefore I could not present him Your letters of recommendation. But I did not neglect my duty, and with these letters I presented myself right away to the Vicar General Msgr. Romero. I had a warm welcome, and I left there with high hopes. He told me that he would try to get the Federal Government to grant the subsidies needed to establish the Mission and to support some Missionaries. This hope was a disappointing one because the newly elected Vicar Capitular Canon Louis Dupr , whom I asked to take an interest in the matter, came to the conclusion that nothing could be decided before the new Archbishop will have taken possession of his See. Furthermore, when the Apostolic Internuncio, Archbishop Sabatucci, arrived, I paid him a visit also. He realized the need for a Mission and approved of it, but he hesitates in giving his support and help. Archbishop Sabatucci pointed out to me, besides, that it would be a good thing if I remained in Buenos Aires. But in order not to remain here like a vagabond around the city, and to respond to my duties as Pastor in the diocese of Santa F , as Your Excellency well knows, I deemed it proper to go to my post in the colony entrusted to me by the Diocesan Ordinary, Bishop Boneo. In the meantime, I had become well acquainted with a certain Spanish lawyer, Pio Sastra, a resident of Buenos Aires. To him I entrusted my task. He desired to become a missionary and to retire from the practice of law. This led him to a diligent work with excellent results. And so, I went to La Plata to present myself to the new Archbishop Espinosa, and then again to Buenos Aires, where I have been kept waiting until this past January. Finally, he told me that as of now he

²⁶ Wagnest to Rolleri, Colonia Crespo, April 1, 1892 (Arch. G.S., 301/1).

²⁷ Summary of a letter of Wagnest of June 17, 1892 by Rolleri (Arch. G.S., 301/1).

²⁸ Cfr. Draft of letter of Scalabrini to the Bishop of Paran , Piacenza, August 14, 1896 (Arch. G.S., 301/1).

²⁹ Wagnest to Scalabrini, Helvecia, March 21, 1898 (Arch. G.S., 301/1).

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did not see the need of other priests for the reason that this mission, that is, the care of emigrants, had already been placed in the hands of the Salesian Fathers, who are already doing so with distinction. He gave me hope for the future! But when? During this time, a certain lawyer Eteocle Lorini, a friend and former fellow student of mine, and a professor at the University of Pavia, arrived here in America on a mission for the government and he called on me at Arroyo Seco. I made use of his services, and through him also of those of Marquis Malaspini, a native of my hometown, Minister Plenipotentiary of Italy to the Argentine Government. The minister would have certainly helped me to bring my task to a sure and successful conclusion, were it not for the short stay of Lorini in Argentina and the imminent departure of the minister and consequent relinquishing of his office. With the Archbishop's refusal and no sure support of sort, I got somewhat discouraged and I limited myself to the care of my new parish of Arroyo Seco in the Province of Santa F , waiting here for new orders and instructions from Your Excellency.

I seem to be still enjoying the esteem of the Archbishop, but I want to call your attention to the following: for some time now, a great number of priests are entering Argentina from Cuba, the Philippines, and Spain. All of them are more or less well accepted by the Bishops of this country, to the detriment of Italian priests who are thus much less appreciated by local church authorities. And as it is true that Argentine Bishops never had much liking for Italian priests, this dislike now seems to be on the increase. As for myself, I repeat, I have no complaints, but I thought I should tell you all this that you may judge for yourself. Excellency, this is the brief report of my actions. I did not achieve the goal but I have worked hard! I did everything possible, at first, and with all my strength to have the authorities understand and support my mission. When this failed, as pastor I resolved to be useful to all Italians by counsel and works. In this I have somewhat succeeded, always observing the rules of the Congregation of which I am honored to be an active member."³⁰

We have three more letters of Fr. Annovazzi, all of them dated from Sunchales in 1904: in them he expresses the desire that Bishop Scalabrini may visit his parish when he will visit Brazil, his disappointment for having received news of Bishop Scalabrini's arrival at Buenos Aires too late, and his intentions to take residence in the capital according to the plans made at the time of his departure for Argentina. In 1906 he returned to his diocese of Tortona.

Bishop Scalabrini arrived in Buenos Aires from Brazil on November 9, 1904, and left on the 11. He had meetings with Archbishop Espinosa, with Auxiliary Bishop Romero, and with many other personalities; but it was a private visit, devoted especially to his brother Pietro, professor at the University of Buenos Aires. Scalabrinians returned to Argentina in 1940. Negotiations began in 1938; on March 25, accompanied by Fr. Carlino, Fr. Tirondola went to Buenos Aires:

"I called on the Apostolic Nuncio, who encouraged me to send missionaries to that land where many Italians reside; he warned me, however, not to have the Cardinal Archbishop suspect that our mission is for Italians. I paid also a visit to the two auxiliary bishops Devoto and(?) who recommended the same

³⁰ Annovazzi to Scalabrini, Arroyo Seco, May 30, 1901 (Arch. G.S., 301/1).

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thing, though assuring me that there was a vast field of work there for our missionaries. I was received by Card. Copello with great kindness: he told me that his diocese, which has been including lately only the delta of Buenos Aires, has many religious, but the dioceses including the suburbs of the city were in great need and Scalabrinians would be well accepted there, etc. During my voyage back to Italy I travelled with Bishop Giovanni Chimento of Mercedes, who told me he would be happy to assign a district of his diocese where Italians make up 80% of the population, all left to themselves for lack of priests, etc.

He would like to have at least three priests before the end of the year; the district is endowed with church, house, and chapels, and located along the railroad where towns are in steady growth."³¹

Once appointed Archbishop of La Plata, His Excellency Chimento wrote to Fr. Tirondola on November 3, 1938:

*"Next December I will take possession of my new See, and I have no doubt that there will be room for the missionaries you so kindly offer me."*³²

On July 22, 1939, Cardinal Rossi wrote to Fr. Angelo Corso, Provincial of Río Grande do Sul:

*"Archbishop Chimento had Father Superior interested in a foundation in his diocese. Promoted to the Archiepiscopal See of La Plata he has renewed his request offering church, rectory, etc. The Superior has deemed it opportune to accept, as a new field is thus being opened to the missionary action of the Pious Society. The new mission will be opened next December: Fr. Tondelli will be sent there together with a young priest and a brother. Fr. Carlino shall take the place of Fr. Tondelli in the Province of São Paulo. The desire of the Superior would be that Your Paternity would see whether it were possible to take a trip to the place, to call on the Archbishop, to look over the location offered, to take care of the project, etc. I send you my blessing so that when the Fathers will arrive they may find all things straightened out, in a general way at least, with the Diocesan Authorities. As to the rest, active as they are, Fr. Tondelli and his assistant will naturally know how to fence for themselves. Short of changes, Fr. Lino Ceccato has been assigned as the assistant."*³³

With letter of November 18, 1939, the Cardinal informed Fr. Corso of the arrival in Guaporé of Fr. Oreste Tondelli and Brother Eugenio Fagher:

*"Be pleased, Your Paternity, to send them on to their destination with letters of presentation to Archbishop Chimento, the more authoritative as the new foundation will be a part of the Province of Río Grande, until it will be necessary, if it is to be so, to establish an autonomous province of Argentina."*³⁴

Fr. Tondelli fell sick with ulcers and had to postpone his departure: he and Brother Fagher arrived at Buenos Aires on March 5, 1940, and on March 13 at Pergamino:

³¹ Relazione della visita fatta per ordine dell'Eminentissimo Sig. Cardinale Raffaello C. Rossi, Segretario della S.C. Concistoriale, alle missioni Scalabriniane del Brasile dal P. Francesco Tirondola, 6 Gennaio - 13 Maggio 1938 (Arch. G.S., 368/4).

³² Archbishop Chimento to Tirondola, Mercedes, November 3, 1938 (Arch. G.S., 301/2).

³³ Card. Rossi to Corso, Rome, July 22, 1938 (Arch. G.S., 420/1).

³⁴ Card. Rossi to Corso, Rome, November 18, 1939 (Arch. G.S., 420/1).

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"Following a cordial, Italian-style welcome by the Archbishop of La Plata, we took off for Pergamino (50 or 60,000 people) and precisely for the Church of Saint Rocco. Here we lived two weeks together with the priest who was here, and then, on Easter day I took possession of the parish. Wishing to face immediately up to the difficulty of the language I preached my first sermon in Spanish. With the arrival of Fr. Lino Ceccato on April 19 we can now attend also to the grandiose hospital for patients with tuberculosis, and to another beautiful chapel dedicated to St. Teresita. The Archbishop of La Plata has promised that he will give us another parish in the city of La Plata itself. Other priests will therefore be needed soon, and I hope they will not be denied us. The population of our quasi-parish may amount to about 8 or 10,000 people. As to religion, they are wholly indifferent. In spite of their indifference, however, we already have in mind to build a new church, because the present one is small and old."³⁵

The mission, which was made a parish on December 17, 1941, is located in the ward Acevedo, that began to be settled by the end of the 1800s. Almost all Italian, the first inhabitants had the first Mass celebrated there on May 17, 1901 by the pastor of Pergamino, Fr. Bartolomholomé Ayrolo in a hall owned by the brothers Primo, where a provisional chapel had been opened. A committee of ladies and young women was set up. It purchased a bell, and organized the first feast of St. Rocco on August 16, 1907. On November 1 of the same year another committee of men was formed for the construction of a church. In 1912 the land was bought and in 1915 works were started on the chapel of St. Rocco which was blessed on August 10, 1917, by the pastor of Pergamino, Fr. J. Amondarain. Fr. José Scaravelli was its first administrator until 1919, followed by the assistants of the parish of N.S. de la Merced. Fr. José Del Campo was named administrator on March 21, 1933, and the chapel was made a "Cappellania Vigaria del Pueblito San Roque Barrio Acevedo de Pergamino". Fr. Del Campo organized the confraternities of Saint Rocco and of Saint Michael, the "Italian Catholic Society", and the "Children of the Infant of Prague". In 1934 the chapel of St. Teresita was built in Barrio Otero. When Fr. Del Campo was transferred to the city of Rosario, the chapel of St. Rocco remained without a priest for a while until the arrival of the Scalabrinians.

The beginnings were hard because only 3% of the people frequented the church. As we have seen, the bishops were reluctant at first to accept other missionaries, saying that the Salesians were enough. In fact, in places where these and other zealous priests had worked, the religious practice was holding good; but the great mass of Italian emigrants had been practically abandoned and had fallen into religious indifference.

³⁵ Tondelli to Card. Rossi, Pergamino, May 15, 1940 (Arch.. G.S., 301/2).