



# HISTORY OF THE

## SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATION - VOLUME I

INITIAL PHASES OF THE SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATION 1886 - 1888



**INITIAL PHASES OF THE SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATION  
1886 - 1888**

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**VOLUME I<sup>1</sup>**

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# History of the SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATION – VOLUME 1

## INTRODUCTION

The General Archives of the Scalabrini Fathers in Rome are endowed with a rich, though not exhaustive, collection of documents on the first years in the history of the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles for Emigrants, founded on November 28, 1887, by Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini of Piacenza, Italy. This collection was edited in part by His Excellency Marco Caliaro, Bishop of Sabina e Poggio Mirteto in a dissertation submitted to the faculty of Canon Law at the University of St. Thomas Aquinas, Rome, and published as a manuscript in 1956 under the head-title "*La Pia Società dei Missionari di San Carlo (Scalabriniani)*." (Pious Society of the Missionaries of St. Charles.)

This publication intends only to integrate the mostly juridical study of Bishop Caliaro, thus placing a series of documents, so far known only to a few, into the hands of all scholars interested in the institutions devoted to promoting religious and social assistance for Italian emigrants.

The present volume embraces only the period of time intercurring between the Summers 1886 - 1888, when plans were drawn up, the Scalabrinian Congregation was founded, mission fields were prepared, and the first missionaries departed for America.

Limited to this short period of time, it does not even intend to exhaust all historical and social aspects that were at the root of this Institute: it wants, rather, to provide researchers with a chronological and clear order of the documents, only supplying as much explaining as deemed necessary for a logical sequence of exposition, or should be required by the objective evidence of the facts.

This is true especially for the historical evaluation of some personalities and of certain inspirations that will help us to capture, right from the start, the physiognomy of the Congregation founded by the Apostle of Migrants. In the period under study we shall be given the opportunity to see in what way and with what rapidity a project began to take shape, bold and timely at the same time, yet still uncertain and undefined, as it was facing a series of new problems within the framework of an unpredictable social and psychological context. The first responses to the arduous question were prompted by an urgent need for quick action.

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It was Bishop Scalabrini's foremost merit to have responded with promptness and generosity to this calling. No less praiseworthy was his effort to envision the problem in all its implications, and to draw up immediate plans for an organic program that would not allow his action to remain a palliative, but that would rather bring about a radical solution, though on so small a scale as consented by the poverty of means.

*"On my part"* - he wrote to the Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith on January 11, 1887 - *"I would be ready to get down to business, and give it an immediate start, on a small scale, to be sure; yet, right away, indeed."* We underline the phrase *"to give it a start."* In fact, by July 12, 1888, when the first missionaries were departing for America, one could say that the project of Bishop Scalabrini had become a reality, but it did not possess a clear form. Much probing, attempts, and experimentations, will lead in time to a better structural organization and consolidation of some initial ideas while laying others aside. Besides, we have to remember that up to the end of his life Bishop Scalabrini did not deem it opportune to solicit the final approval of the Rules of the Institute, as he wanted further light from experience. It is not necessary, therefore, to insist on the fact that, while they help us to discover its original inspiration, the documents here published do not offer us a complete vision of the Scalabrinian Congregation.

We present this work in a provisional form inviting our readers to express their suggestions, to submit any inedited documents they may be able to supply us with, and to give an answer to a question that seems obvious; whether and how should a complete history of the Scalabrinian Congregation be written?

**CHAPTER ONE**

**DIMENSIONS AND CONDITIONS OF ITALIAN MIGRATION  
AS SEEN BY BISHOP SCALABRINI**

The years 1880 - 1891, responding approximately to the time when the Scalabrinian Society was founded and consolidated, certainly marked the hardest period for Italian Emigration, practically uncontrolled and deprived of all protection.<sup>1</sup>

The dramatic situation of the "wandering misery of their fatherland" was brought to the attention of the government and the public opinion by the research and study of scholars beginning in 1853, and more so since 1870, as well as by the denunciations of many representatives and senators from 1868 on.

Some viewed the phenomenon as a threat to the interests of the established social order; others upheld the free right to migrate as the only "safety valve" against overpopulation; still others intended to exploit the social reaction against the "rich" of Italy, as clearly evidenced already in the uncontrollable exodus of "Italian blood" to foreign lands.

The agricultural crisis, brought to the fore by the famous Lacini's report in 1884, revealed the true cause of the migratory phenomenon; it was the main determinant of the sudden flood of expatriations.

Bishops Scalabrini and Bonomelli were disturbed by the impressive increase shown in 1885: "*Statistics just published on Italian emigration in 1885 report 83,786 Italian emigrants: that is 23,297 more than in 1881. Not to mention the preceding years. Italian emigration that had reached 28,717 units in 1881, already then considered an enormity, kept going up to 58,290 in 1882, 62,794 in 1883. We notice a slight decrease in 1884 with 60,489, but in 1885 the increasing trend resumes to reach 83,786 expatriates!*"<sup>2</sup>

A new sad component in the pattern had Bishop Scalabrini concerned: "*Were, at least, those unfortunate ones all adults! Alas, what saddens our spirit most is to know that no less than 15,642 children of either sex are included in that number 83,786. We are concerned here with the supplanting of homes, and the separations of families that will help to strew white the lands of America with their bones.*"<sup>3</sup>

Bishop Scalabrini was referring only to the permanent migration to America, exclusively taking stock of departures from Italian ports, as he did not have at hand the statistics of emigrants sailing from Marseille, Tolone, Le Havre, or

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<sup>1</sup> Renzo De Felice, "L'emigrazione e gli emigranti nell'ultimo secolo", *Terzo Programma*, 3 (1964), p. 184.

<sup>2</sup> John Baptist Scalabrini, "*Progetto di una Associazione allo scopo di provvedere ai bisogni spirituali degli Italiani emigrati nelle Americhe*", document enclosed in the letter of the same to Cardinal John Simeoni, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, February 16, 1887. (Archivio Sacra Congregazione, Propaganda Fide, Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, ff. 1491 ss.; Archivio Generalizio Scalabriniano, B, IV, 1887, n. 5, copy).

Notabene: The two Archives will be indicated from now on with their respective initials: Arch. S.C.P.F. and Arch. G.S.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem

other foreign ports.

In the simplistic opinion of some statesmen, and even of not a few ecclesiastics, the causes of the phenomenon were to be sought in the tormenting greed for quick gain that had corrupted the Italian character from the top echelons to the lower classes made up of the great mass of the wretched poor.

Scalabrini did not share this point of view; rather, he could discern the causes *"in the changed conditions of the times and the social life, in the unbalance between production and demand, in the natural desire to improve one's conditions, in the agricultural crisis that for so many years is weighing down on our farmers as an unavoidable heavy burden, in the exorbitant taxation that harasses and thwarts both agriculture and small industry."*<sup>4</sup>

The goal for permanent emigration, or *"properly called emigration,"* as Bishop Scalabrini termed it, was America. "Indeed those uncultivated vast lands granted by the governments or by the great societies in lease or ownership for a very small compensation when compared with the high value set on our land, present a true fascination for our farmers; the feverish activities of North America, where all ideas find an experimenter, all proposals a capital to invest, whole fortunes are gained or lost at a vertiginous pace, irresistibly draw emigrants that seek their luck in aleatory risks; there in the Americas, either in the solitude of the pampas, or in the hustle of the cities, honesty, desire of success, unused talent, misfortune, or guilt, compel those who leave their native towns to seek for riches, peace, glory, oblivion, and sometimes, rehabilitation."<sup>5</sup>

However, the great majority of their dreams went unfulfilled, because no legal or social, private or public protection was provided to defend those masses that, left to themselves, became easy prey for merciless exploiters, *"veritable brokers of human blood."*<sup>6</sup>

On the evidence of the facts as reported in the newspapers, official statistics and daily reports, Scalabrini denounced the shameful recruiting agents, who were dealing in *"an authentic slave trade of the whites."*<sup>7</sup>

On false promises of great gains, they allure the farmers to *"strike it rich in America,"* and then despoil them, sometimes at the very moment of embarkation, of all things, and have them, so despoiled and deprived, reach destinations others than expected, or lead them into the trap of oppressive contracts.<sup>8</sup>

Then he adds:

*"Generally, this is the way their trip is made. Stowed away like animals in much greater numbers than the laws and the capacity of the steamer would allow, they make that long and uncomfortable crossing literally piled up on each other, to how much detriment of good morals and health anyone can very well*

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<sup>4</sup> John Baptist Scalabrini, *L'emigrazione italiana in America* (Piacenza, 1887), p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 15

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 42

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 43

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 29-32

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*imagine! Yet, the sorrowful ordeal of their woes is far from ended upon reaching the long desired port. Often swindled by deceitful trickery, deceived by a thousand promises, urged on by poverty, they bind themselves to contracts that are true bonds for slavery, while their children end up roaming the streets either begging or on the road to crime, and the women are cast into the abyss of dishonor."*<sup>9</sup>

Such moral and social evils befall them because

*"our fellow countrymen in foreign lands are the least protected, because on account of their ignorance or naiveté they fall often victims to infamous speculations, and care the least to have recourse to the consular authorities for their needs or to defend their rights. All this can very well derive from a spirit of independence, or from not having been trained to consider their own country's government as their natural and effective protector. On the other hand it could also represent a serious evidence of lack of confidence deriving from the habitual neglect and unwillingness on the part of authority so that our countrymen would find it easier to take things in their own hands rather than expect any help from the tardy and ineffective patronage of a far-off government."*<sup>10</sup>

Many were in fact the Italians that succeeded in getting themselves out of a difficult situation. This was true especially for those who had land leased to them by the government or by private firms on easy terms of yearly payments towards eventual ownership.

*"These settlers take up their permanent residence in those lands often turning them into beautiful and fertile farms. Mostly from the same region, sometimes from the same town in Italy, they even name the place to where their good luck has brought them after their native village."*<sup>11</sup>

Many however, too many, were also those who ran

*"the risk of being led by speculators to waste their lives away on unproductive land, in unsanitary places, ill defended from wild animals or uncivilized tribes."*<sup>12</sup>

After reporting some cases of lynching<sup>13</sup>, the author, in order to explain the "Padrone" system quotes a bill presented in 1886 to the United States House of Representatives:

"We quote in its entirety article 3, because it indicates to what extremes of barbarism this system leads:

- Art. 3. 'Any immigrants' recruiter, or Italian "padrone" or his representative, or any other person or persons that should attempt to bring into the United States, its territories or the District of Columbia, any man or woman, boy or girl, street dancer, jester, acrobat, fake blind and sick person to employ them at street or church corners as beggars, or rag, waste paper, spoiled meat, stale bread, or other like foods collectors, or in any other vile and degrading and

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<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, p. 30

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, p. 25

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem, p. 31

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, p. 31

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, pp. 36-39



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unstable job, or to engage them either separately, or in groups or in masses, for work along railroads, canals, reservoirs, in museums at unjust wages, or should compel them to surrender to the "padrone" or his accomplices, or any other person or persons, two thirds, or any other fraction of their wages, shall be condemned to prison for a period of time no longer than five years, and shall pay a fine no higher than five thousand dollars."<sup>14</sup>

Conditions of present day migration, quite different in spite of the still many discomforts and difficulties accompanying it, must not lead us to lightly regard as exaggerated rhetoric the picture drawn by Bishop Scalabrini on the evidence of the facts -

*"showing how bitter the hard earned bread of the emigrants tastes, of the unhappy ones who are attracted either by illusory dreams or false promises, find an Iliad of woes, abandonment, hunger, and death even in the lands, where they expected to find a paradise on earth. Led on by the promising mirage to succeed in providing for their want, they see in it their golden opportunity, not suspecting that the cruel discovery of the truth would destroy in a moment the enchanted castles of their dreams! Oh, unhappy ones, weakened by hardships, climate, insects, they fall disconsolate on the land made productive by the sweat of their brow at the edge of virgin forests! How well did they know that they were tilling it neither for themselves nor for their children, always tormented by that gentle and fatal disease we call homesickness. They were dreaming perhaps of their native country that could not provide their livelihood, imploring for the ministers of their ancestors' religion to mitigate the terrors of agony with the immortal hopes of faith!*

*Gentlemen, the picture is not a happy one; yet this is the true saga of thousands and thousands of our migrant countrymen, as I could gather from the reports of my missionaries, and those written and recounted by witnesses and participants in that saddest exodus of all! However, I do not wish to be misunderstood or seem pessimistic. The sad facts mentioned cannot apply to all our Emigrants. Many of them have found in the host countries sufficient means, much well-being, even riches, and form now a total complex of communities of which their mother country can be rightly proud. But many are also the unfortunate ones, mostly through their own ignorance or because of our lack of concern."<sup>15</sup>*

Was there anyone trying to come up with some solution for all these problems and sad conditions? After mentioning the policy of protection for emigrants adopted with good success in England, France, and Germany, Bishop Scalabrini asks:

*"What about Italy? Italy did nothing of all this, it chose rather to confiscate all the properties of "Propaganda Fide" by an unjust and politically unwise act of Congress. In so doing, and I say it with deep sorrow, the state found a way to steer away from our country the generous contributions that were flowing to Propaganda from all parts of the world and to impoverish it, thus hindering freedom of action of an institution that of itself alone would be a great honor for*

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<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 39

<sup>15</sup> John Baptist Scalabrini, *L'Italia all'estero*. Lecture held at the Esposizione Generale Italiana in Turin in 1898. Cfr. Special Publication about it, "La societa' italiana di fronte alle prime migrazioni di massa", *Centro Studi Emigrazione*, V, 11-12 (1968), pp. 278-279.

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## CHAPTER 1

*any time in history; an institution honored by hundreds of apostles and martyrs that sent its heroic vanguards to the most inhospitable peoples to bring them to the Cross and conquer them to civilization."*<sup>16</sup>

*"Now and then, when some sad event is brought to public attention, a certain commotion, some debates are carried on in the Chamber of Deputies, some journalist's articles create a stir; but for all this questioning the government has only ineffective promises, to all the protests of the newspapers only the sentiments of some pious people are aroused for a while, then complete oblivion sets over all this, and calm returns, the deceiving tranquility of the wave that carries away its victim down into its deep recesses. This is the story year after year, as though nothing could be done for our emigrants besides much talking though ever so spiced with rhetoric to soothe the unfortunate expecting help; and distract the attention of those who in obedience to the most noble aspirations of human life and Christian charity would put all to fire and sword to do away with egotism, this cancerous sore of modern society.*

*"To say, however, that nothing has been done to improve the conditions of our emigration is not quite correct, as there has been much talk about it and some practical attempts. I wish to take into account words, since words also reveal good intentions, at least, if not a firm will to act. They help to know that the problem I propose for public discussion has commanded from time to time the attention of men in authority over the destinies of the nation, and, by indicating through the little already accomplished that much remains to be done. They may move generous souls, which are never lacking, to action, to quick action, to effective action."*<sup>17</sup>

Actually public opinion had been stirred up:

*"In the first debates in parliament (1868 and 1872) the government seemed to place the blame on capitalists and contractors who would not create a sufficient number of jobs; in practice, however, as is clearly shown in the restrictive circulars of the freedom of emigration (1868 and 1873), it appears manipulated by the land owners who, hit by ever heavier taxes, sought to compensate their losses at the expense of their farm hands and workers, and were now afraid that a diminution of laborers would provoke a raise in wages. The government will continue for many years on this policy of repression, rather than of protection, thus working for the interests of the landlords against farmers and emigrants, even when a code of provisions was enacted to suppress the frauds of recruiters, and so prevent an "artificially inducted" emigration. In reality, it did not go to the roots of the problems: Agents were not doing anything else but to speculate on an already existing evil condition: too many Italians, farm hands especially, had no other alternative but to migrate or starve to death."*<sup>18</sup>

In the meantime:

*"The migratory phenomenon was taking unforeseen proportions: 290,736 Italians migrated in 1888, 307,482 in 1896, 352,782 in 1900. In typical liberal mentality it was considered almost fatalistically at first as an inevitable*

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<sup>16</sup> G. B. Scalabrini, *L'emigrazione...*, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 25-26

<sup>18</sup> Marco Caliaro e Mario Francesconi, *L'Apostolo degli emigranti: Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, Vescovo di Piacenza. La sua opera e la sua spiritualità* (Milano, 1968), p. 241.

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*phenomenon, the result of natural laws that were beyond the competence of the state. Such was the attitude of Agostino De Pretis: The only effective remedies, according to his opinion, would be the charitable institutions and private relief associations. Such hands-off policy recognized only the need of laws for public security, not of a special legislation for protection of emigrants. (1883) Amid much uncertainty and many contradictions, Crespi took a more active interest in the problem!*

*To him, emigration is no more a question of public order, but of foreign policy. He promotes Italian schools and patriotic celebrations to enhance the prestige of emigrants, a useless effort; he favors help for their missions in the orient and to catholic schools in foreign lands, but for nationalistic motives. By the same token, he disapproved of the National Association for assistance to catholic missionaries (about which later) and to the Institution of Bishop Scalabrini for Emigrants because they did not place themselves at the service of the government. Finally, in 1887, Crespi presented and proposed a bill that would affirm the freedom to migrate, impose a limitation to recruiting of migrants, the obligation to obtain a permit from the government and a security bail for recruiting agents, the penalties against clandestine recruiting operations. The other bill of Rocco De Zerbi, "more liberal", was upholding the free right to migrate and recruit; in other words, it protected the agents."<sup>19</sup>*

In regard to private initiatives Bishop Scalabrini points out:

*"Private action has not been more successful than government's and, it could not be, perhaps. Some years ago a Society for the protection of Migrants was founded, but regardless of the best intentions, it accomplished little or nothing. By its timid and cautious action it hardly succeeded in making itself known by a very restricted number of people. Nor to this time could I establish whether it is active, or, whether an account of its inactivity is still in existence. No wonder! It limited its work to a negative action! It warned the migrants about the dangers they were up against, and it occasionally protested against the weak and ineffective repression of frauds and abuses of swindlers employed today by our legislation."<sup>20</sup>*

The author hints here at the Society of Patronage instituted by Senator Torelli of the "Società Geografica Italiana" in 1875. At first, it had obtained the cooperation of some important statesmen, the consent of public opinion, and the free contributions of its members and sympathizers; however, it ceased to exist five years later, either for lack of a positive program, as we heard from Bishop Scalabrini, or for insufficient means.<sup>21</sup> A similar initiative was attempted by the "Opera dei Congressi." In 1882 Count Aquaderni had a discussion "on the protection of migrants in foreign lands with the institution of the Society of Saint Raphael" included in the platform for the Third Catholic Convention. However, the Convention, held at Naples in 1883, did not reach any practical decision, even though Leo XIII had invited the founder of the St. Raphael Verein, Peter P. Cahensly (1883 - 1923) to organize a branch of his

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<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, pp. 243-244

<sup>20</sup> G. B. Scalabrini, L'emigrazione..., op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> Cfr. Antonio Perotti, "La società italiana di fronte alle prime migrazioni di massa", Special Issue of Centro Studi Emigrazione, pp. 20-21.

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society also in Italy.<sup>22</sup>

As far as the church is concerned, her initiatives were more concrete and effective. We can read a brief history about this in the "Apostolic Constitution *'Exsul Familia'*." After pointing out the continual concern of the Church "*for the care, especially spiritual, of pilgrims, strangers, exiled, all migrants*"<sup>23</sup> it abides, particularly for what concerns Italian migration, on the work of Saint Vincent Pallotti:

"We are pleased also, to remember the venerable person Saint Vincent Pallotti, founder of the "Società dell'Apostolato Cattolico." We have defined him "decor and honor of the Roman Clergy," and were happy to enter him into the resplendent host of the Blessed on the impending opening of the last jubilee year! Replenished with zeal for souls, and wishing to strengthen in the faith the Italian emigrants to England, he sent some of his companions to London to take spiritual care of their fellow countrymen, and humbly asked the Pontiff Pius IX, our predecessor, for permission to collect funds to be used for building in the city of London itself a sacred temple in honor of St. Peter especially for Italian emigrants."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Cfr. A. Perotti, op. cit., pp. 57-58; M. Caliaro and M. Francesconi, op. cit., pp. 303-304.

<sup>23</sup> Pius XII, *Apostolica Constitutio on the spiritual care of Migrants* titled, "*Exsul Familia*", Italian translation by "*La Civiltà Cattolica*" and printed in summary (Roma, 1952), p. 4, n. 5

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, pp. 8-10, n. 17. Regarding United States, cfr. Chapter VI

CHAPTER TWO

**THE PROGRESSIVE "BRINGING INTO FOCUS"  
OF THE MIGRATORY PROBLEM  
IN THE MIND OF BISHOP SCALABRINI**

The first indications of Bishop Scalabrini's concern for the spiritual problems posed by emigration go back to the time when he was pastor of Saint Bartholomew parish in Como (1870 - 1875). In his "Project for an Association with the Scope of providing for the Spiritual Needs of Italian Emigrants in America" sent to Cardinal Giovanni Simeoni, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, on February 16, 1887, he is thus reminiscing:

*"The first task in preventing the corruption of migrants should be the concern of pastors for opposing migration and employing all means to persuade their parishioners not to expatriate. Unfortunately, however, in most cases they will not succeed, and migration must be endured as a necessary evil. Many a time I heard uttered by the lips of poor artisans and peasants this terrible dilemma: "There is no other alternative for us, either stealing or migrating."*

*Under these circumstances the pastor is not to allow anyone to leave for foreign lands without providing him with a letter of recommendation to the clergy of the parish where he will take up his residence. In the years when I was a pastor I made constant use of this practice and have obtained good results."<sup>1</sup>*

It's wise to take notice of the pessimistic attitude in regard to emigration prevailing then as expressed in the concern for "*the ruination of many unfortunate Italian Catholics that wander into exile on the other side of the ocean, often with their children.*"<sup>2</sup> Hence the invitation to take steps, not only towards "*the reconquest, as it were, of souls lost in the vast regions of the New World*"<sup>3</sup>, but also towards prevention of this evil. However this attitude is short-lived in him; and one could say that he yields quite soon to the reality of an irrepressible movement. The idea of the "*letter of recommendation*" will recur often both in the Bylaws of the Society of St. Raphael<sup>4</sup> and in many letters and writings of Bishop Scalabrini.

Once Bishop of Piacenza, a diocese which included almost all the province of the same name, and part, mostly mountainous, of the province of Parma, all zones heavily suffering from the agricultural crisis, in the same year 1876 he began the pastoral visitation. In taking vision of the state of souls he could ascertain that many towns, especially in the mountains, were rapidly

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Complete text, Ch. 3, pp. 21-26.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. Agenda of the International Conference of Associations for the protection of Emigrants, held at Lucerna in 1890, and accepted with some adaptations by the Committee of the Society of St. Raphael in Piacenza: "*Before leaving, emigrants shall be given a letter of recommendation to men of trust at the ports of embarkation and debarkation.*" Cfr. A. Perotti, c.s. - op. cit., p. 84.

decreasing in population, and he was able to establish that the diocese of Piacenza, then counting two hundred thousand souls, had twenty-eight thousand emigrants in foreign lands. The immediate result of this census was the promulgation of a decree by the First Synod celebrated in 1879.

*"When I was made a Bishop" - as Scalabrini remarks in the above quoted project - "even to my greater concern, in the course of my pastoral visitations I could see the serious evils of emigration, and in the diocesan Synod in 1879 I enacted an appropriate decree that whenever observed is bringing abundant spiritual fruits."*<sup>5</sup>

At this point he quotes the decree which we now report in English:

"Aware of the dangers for one's faith born of emigration, which we found very real at the time of our Sacred Visitation, desiring to spare as far as possible our sons this ordeal I call to the attention of the pastors the dispositions of Pope Clement XIII which discourage Italians from moving on any pretext to places where they will never, or almost never, be able to fulfill their religious duties. We invite them to do all in their power to dissuade from their resolution the parishioners whom they know to be about to expatriate by entreaties, advice, and effective persuasion. Should they find them still resolute in their decision, as we anticipate for most cases, they do well to remember that the main cause of migration is the hope to find a fitting remedy to their poverty! Then, pastors must not abandon them altogether! In their fatherly concern, they should warn them as to the way of life and culture of those far away places with the scope of preparing them to defend in earnest and preserve firmly intact the deposit of faith they possess. They should invite them, besides, to get strength, before leaving, in the salutary reception of the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist. Let pastors be diligent to provide them with a letter of recommendation to the pastors of the parishes where they are to settle, with the request to take vigilant care of them, to constantly assist them in their spiritual needs, and to give them a testimonial letter on their Christian life when they return to their fatherland."<sup>6</sup>

The first concrete signs of the apostolic concern for emigrants of Bishop Scalabrini go back to the same year 1879. Unfortunately there remains only an indirect record of this in a letter of Cardinal Secretary of State Lorenzo Nina in answer to the proposal by the Bishop of Piacenza that a church in Paris be assigned to the Italian community of the city.

Here is the content: -

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<sup>5</sup> Cfr. Complete text, pp. 25-31. In an interview in 1901 Bishop Scalabrini will recall: "From the beginning, whenever I made the pastoral visitation through the 368 parishes of my diocese after giving my attention to the spiritual needs of my diocesan faithful I would concern myself also about their material conditions. I kept a special notebook. In it I had the list of the couples married in court, and later on I would follow proceedings to bless their unions; I annotated how many deaf and dumb, and I would have them admitted to an Institute recently opened in our city; I marked down the names of the blind providing that they were accepted on easy terms into the great Institute for the blind in Milan; I took also the census of those that had migrated abroad. In my first visitation I could establish that there were 28 thousand emigrants, while I had also the opportunity to read the sorrowful letters they were sending to pastors, relatives and friends. As a priest, before all else I deplored the fact that these unfortunate emigrants, lost in unknown lands, were left without religious assistance; as an Italian citizen, I deplored that all bonds between them and Italy, their common mother country, were cut off forever. I believed it to be my duty to have recourse to the Most Eminent Cardinal Simeoni, then the Prefect of Propaganda..." ("I Missionari italiani all'estero" - Un'intervista col Vescovo Mons. Scalabrini, Il Corriere della Sera, 1 giugno 1901, as reported in Trent'anni di apostolato. Memorie e documenti. (Rome, 1909), pp. 362-363.

<sup>6</sup> Synodus Dioecesis ab... Johanne Baptista Scalabrini... primo habita... anno 1879. (Placentiae, 1880), pp. 16-17.

*"As to the wise consideration presented by Your Excellency that a church in Paris should be assigned to the spiritual assistance of Italians residing there, especially of the working class, I assure you that I will not neglect to call it to the attention of the Apostolic Nuncio to solicit his action in dealing with His Eminence the Archbishop on the matter."*<sup>7</sup>

In the following years we find a sign of the increasing concern for emigrants of Bishop Scalabrini in the famous introductory page of his pamphlet:

"L'Emigrazione Italiana in America."

Year 1887; the author recalls:

*"Many years ago, in the city of Milan, I was the witness to a scene that left an impression of profound sadness in my spirit. Travelling through that station, I saw the vast hall, the porticos alongside of it, and the surrounding square, crowded with three or four hundred poorly clad persons, separated into different groups. On their faces tanned by the sun, furrowed by premature wrinkles privation usually imprints, there transpired the tumult of affections that troubled their hearts at that moment: old men bent by the years and toil, men in the prime of manhood, women pulling along or carrying children in their arms, boys and girls, all drawn together by the same aspiration, all directed to the same goal."*

*"They were emigrants, they had come from the various provinces of northern Italy, and were waiting with trepidation for the train that was to take them to the mediterranean shores from where the steamer would carry them to far away America in the hope to find there a less adverse luck and a land less ingrate to their toil."*

*"Unfortunate ones, they were leaving, some called by relatives that had preceded them on that voluntary exile, others without knowing where precisely they were directed to, all drawn by the overpowering instinct that urges birds to migrate. They were going to America where, as they had heard it repeated many times, there was well paid employment for anyone with strong arms and good will."*

*"Not without tears they had bid their beloved birthplace goodbye. Many sweet memories were travelling away with them. Yet, without regrets they were getting ready to leave their country which they had come to know only through two odious facts: military service and taxes. Sadly, to the destitute, one's country is the land that gives him bread. There, in those far away places, they hoped to find a less scarce bread, though not earned by less toil."*

*"I departed deeply moved! A flood of sad thoughts brought a lump to my throat! Who can tell, I thought, the amount of privations and misfortunes that makes this sorrowful decision seem so sweet to them! How many delusions, how many new sorrows has in store for them the future!!! How many of them, in their struggle for survival, will succeed? How many will succumb in the uninhabited plains? How many, having secured the bread for the body, will lack the spiritual nourishment for their souls no less necessary, and lose the faith of their fathers in a materialistic way of life!!"*<sup>8</sup>

We will do well to mention here a meeting, that could be considered

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<sup>7</sup> Letter Card. Lawrence Nina to G.B. Scalabrini, May 27, 1879. (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1879, n. 1)

<sup>8</sup> G. B. Scalabrini, *L'emigrazione...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 3 and 5-6.

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providential, with a priest who has played a fundamental role in helping Bishop Scalabrini to carry out his projects, Father Francis Zaboglio, a one time student of his at the seminary of Como, and now aggregated without vows to the fathers of Somasca. We have only the rough copy, with no date, of the first letter of Father Zaboglio; doubtless, however, it goes back to July, or to the beginning of August 1886, at the latest. It reveals that the Bishop and the priest had been in touch for some time already. Father Zaboglio expresses his intention to place himself at the complete disposal of Scalabrini for the apostolate among the Italians in America.<sup>9</sup>

He was well acquainted with the spiritual problems of emigration, because he had been pastor of villages in Valtellina, depopulated by expatriations, and belonged to a family of migrants himself; his parents, his brother with wife and children, were living in Genoa, Wisconsin, U.S.A.; while other relatives of his had settled in the Dakotas. Besides, he paid them a visit in America, thus getting a first hand idea of the actual religious and social conditions of Italian workers in the United States.

He writes:

*"Most Illustrious and Reverend Bishop,*

*May Your Excellency bear with me if I take the liberty to come to you with this letter of mine. Its scope is to show you that I am persisting and more than ever firm in my intentions. I had the good fortune and consolation to express to you by word of mouth.*

*As soon as I got back to Campodolcino, I had right away started to jot down, as well as I could, a few ideas in the sense expressed by Your Excellency, and I had written three or four short articles. But then, I had to pay a visit to my brother at Grosio, and my former parishioners at Grossotto, mostly on foot and through mountains, and so I could not continue. Saturday I returned to my paternal house, and now I will have them ready in a few days, and mail them to you. Certainly, there are urgent reasons for devoting ourselves to the salvation of so many of our fellow countrymen.*

*To reports and facts already known, others are ever added and made public by*

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<sup>9</sup> Cfr. letter G.B. Scalabrini to Card. Simeoni, Piacenza, January 11, 1887; op. cit., Ch. 3, pp. 16-17

Father Francis Zaboglio: Born at Campodolcino (Sondrio) on February 25, 1852, was ordained a priest at Como in 1875. He had been a student of Scalabrini, and prefect of discipline at the Gallio College. He was pastor at Menarola and Grossotto, in Valtellina. He resigned as pastor and joined for a time the Congregation of the Somasca Fathers without taking the vows. In 1886 he is known to be corresponding with Bishop Scalabrini on the common project of providing religious assistance for Italian emigrants in America. In 1887 he went to the United States to take back home his father and sister who had migrated to Wisconsin. On April 10, 1888, at last he was allowed to enter the Scalabrinian Congregation. On June 4, 1888 he returned to America to get things ready for the first missionary expedition to New York. Thus he became the founder of the Scalabrinian Missions in New York, and, later on, in Boston, where he served as pastor of Sacred Heart parish from September 1888 to February 1889. During this time he appears as the General Secretary, or Vice Superior General of the Congregation.

He returned to Italy in October 1892, was rector of the Mother House from 1893 to 1894 when he was assigned to open the Mission at the port of Genoa. At the end of 1894 he went back to the United States as Visitor. For three years he made the visitation of the missions acting also as Superior Provincial, in substitution for Father Dominic Vicentini, who had gone to Italy at the end of 1895. He was pastor of St. Michael's, New Haven, Connecticut, and of Our Lady of Pompei, New York. Here, in the Summer 1897, he was almost killed in a gas explosion. He succeeded in getting better, but he never regained his health. Upon returning to Italy in 1900, that same year he was sent to Rome to open a Scalabrinian residence. In February 19, 1901 he was appointed Procurator General of the Congregation. Always in very poor health, he retired to his native village. There he served as chaplain to the "Opera Pia Sommariva of Tremezzo (Como), where he died on September 11, 1911.



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*the newspapers. Right these days a letter by Capt. Celso Cesare Moreno to Architect Giuseppe Geri was published in the "Unione of Bologna." He computes in the ninety thousands the Italians in America, who, while wailing under the yoke of a horrible enslavement of the body, languish in a far more dreadful neglect of their souls. Still, who knows how many more thousands of Italians are not included by Moreno in this number of "slaves" who lie abandoned, alien to all practice of religion and in the grip of vice. And yet, they were perhaps good farm hands and honest workers imbued with a sound Christian spirit! What will be of their children! Would not men of good heart be moved to compassion? Should we allow so many thousands of our brethren, doubly such, lose their souls, while in great majority they would be saved with such relative ease! It seems to me that men of good will should get together, decide what to do, and get down to work. Every passing day may spell, perhaps, eternal damnation for hundreds of our fellow countrymen! How can we remain indifferent?*

*Your Excellency will forgive me if with true filial confidence I dared to express in writing, as I did by word of mouth, the sentiments for a long time deep in my heart that have filled me with sadness since when I had the opportunity to experience and see with my own eyes so many miseries. Believe me, Your Excellency, my heart rejoiced the day you granted me an audience, and I began to feel my spirit relieved of a heavy burden. But I will not be happy until I will see men in authority organize, with the help of God, a vast program of assistance, in whatever form, in favor of our unfortunate brethren. God will not allow the desires and prayers ascending to Him from many hearts to go unanswered!*

*In the meantime, as for the little it depends on me, I pledge my life and all myself to this holy cause, ready with the grace of God for the day of His calling. However, to assemble together and organize a group, someone must take the initiative, leaders are needed. I allow myself to express the cherished hope that Your Excellency be one of these leaders.*

*Once again I ask your pardon and your blessing.*

*I humbly express my respects.<sup>10</sup>*

At the end of August he sent in the "short" articles Bishop Scalabrini had invited him to write<sup>11</sup>, insisting on the project of assistance:

*"As a first step, it would seem to me necessary to find out at what stage is the project of catholic assistance for Italians (a project long in effect for immigrants of other nationalities in the United States) proposed by the American Bishops at their meeting in Rome some years ago. In regard to this, as we read in the "Osservatore Romano", His Eminence the Cardinal of Naples and His Grace the Archbishop of Genoa had received special instructions.*

*In general, if I have to express my humble opinion, I believe we should not hesitate any longer and act promptly. Also at the Catholic Convention in Naples there was discussion on how to provide social and spiritual assistance for our countrymen. By this action it acknowledged the urgency of the problem. But*

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<sup>10</sup> Letter Zaboglio to Scalabrini, Campodolcino, August 1886. Arch. G.S.,B, IV, 1886, n. 1, rough copy).

<sup>11</sup> These Articles were published in L'Amico del Popolo, triweekly catholic newspaper of Piacenza, in September 1886. We report them in Appendix no. 1, pp. 142-148 because they serve as one of the sources for the succeeding writings of Bishop Scalabrini, for instance, the pamphlet L'emigrazione.... op. cit.

*whether words were put into action, I do not know!*<sup>12</sup>

What is meant by the term "Catholic Colonization" can be found in what Bishop Scalabrini writes in the above quoted "Project" on February 16, 1887:

*"Catholic communities' after the pattern already in existence for the Irish and English in the United States would turn to great advantage. From what I am given to understand, they are but regular parishes, with their priests and catholic schools, where the faithful are cared for spiritually, thus avoiding to let them wander like sheep without a shepherd. By a like system, our emigrants would feel in their own environment among Catholics, benefiting of all, or at least of the essential helps of their faith."*<sup>13</sup>

In other words, it was a project for national parishes practically nonexistent in the United States for Italian, German, Belgian, and Polish, etc.

immigrants. On the other hand, they were strongly opposed by that part of the clergy Italians would have singled out as "liberals", in so far as they tended to eliminate any distinction based on religion to such an extent as to prefer public to Catholic schools under the pretext of advocating greater participation of Catholics in public life. Consequently they favored the immediate assimilation of immigrants. The "conservatives", whom Italians would call "intransigents" did not favor too close ties with the American civil life, informed to a protestant and liberal spirit. Interesting enough, the "liberal" leader, Archbishop Ireland of St. Paul, Minn., and the "conservative" one, Archbishop Corrigan of New York, were both great friends of Bishop Scalabrini.

Later on in 1886, when some German priests presented a protest against the treatment of inferiority reserved to ethnic groups of foreign languages and to national parishes, the "progressives", among whom Card. Gibbons and Archbishop Ireland, opposed it so strongly as to induce the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith to reject it. (June 8, 1887).

The controversy recurred in February, 1891, when the representatives of the St. Raphael Societies of Europe and Canada sent a petition to Leo XIII asking him to acknowledge and support national parishes and schools, and expressed the desire that Catholics of different nationalities might be granted their representatives in the American Episcopate.

*"The Pope and Propaganda" - Marquis Volpe Landi wrote - "welcomed favorably their appeal, declaring however that the problem at issue required much deliberation before taking any mature decisions."*<sup>14</sup>

In America instead, the reaction was strong, especially against the proposal for a representation of foreign nationalities in the Episcopate. The strongest contester was Archbishop Ireland. Archbishop Corrigan protested directly to Cahensly who had Marquis Volpe Landi read the letter. He, in turn, hastened to send a copy to Bishop Scalabrini. The Bishop of Piacenza wrote to

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<sup>12</sup> Letter Fr. Zaboglio to Bishop Scalabrini, Campodolcino, August 20, 1886. (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1886, n. 2).

<sup>13</sup> Cfr. Ch. 3, pp. 24-25.

<sup>14</sup> Letter Giovanni B. Volpe Landi to Fr. Zaboglio, Piacenza, June 18, 1891 (Archivio Storico del Centro Studi Emigrazione-Roma, cart. II, doe. No. 10. Cfr. A. Perotti, op. cit., pp. 88-91; M. Caliaro and M. Francesconi, op. cit., pp. 276-277.

Archbishop Corrigan of New York trying to tell him that the proposals of Cahensly had been interpreted beyond his intentions, Corrigan replied proving instead he had understood them rightly!<sup>15</sup>

The idea of Scalabrini, however, was to see represented the different nationalities of emigrants in the American hierarchy by bishops of their same origin, but of American citizenship, as had been done already with some bishops of German, and one of Italian extraction. We have mentioned these polemics as a means to understand why "the catholic colonization" was facing opposition, or at least, serious difficulties at the third Council of Baltimore in 1884 especially on the part of Bishop McQuaid of Rochester, New York, who was "second" in the leadership of the "liberals". The debate concluded with a report to the Pope in whose hands was entrusted the solution of the problem.<sup>16</sup> These facts explain why in 1886 the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide had not yet found a way to put into effect the project in spite of the desires expressed in 1883 and 1884 both by some American bishops and the Holy See. Bishop Scalabrini and Father Zaboglio mention it in connection with the news going around in 1884 as briefly reported by the 'Civiltà Cattolica':

"While the Italian government leaves these unfortunate citizens in the most desolate abandonment, when, unable to find in their mother country the means for their livelihood, they migrate to America, the Church, so much harassed nowadays by it, has nothing more at heart than to provide for their well being, temporal also. In fact, the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith without wasting time in idle words goes down to the practical, and acting on the advice and with the help of the American Episcopate, decides to provide assistance for those poor people left without protection and defenseless in those distant regions of the New World. Plans are being discussed with the "American Colonizing Society" to the end of establishing an Italian community in the interior of America. To get these plans immediately underway, it was decided to form appropriate committees in Naples, Genoa, New York, Baltimore and New Orleans with the scope of assisting the emigrants without any intention either to promote or to discourage emigration from taking place for some years, now.

The Archbishop of Naples had already responded to the noble summons of catholic charity, and, inspired by the same ardor he displayed at Casamicciola (destructive earthquake) he now founded the Neapolitan committee.

These facts respond more eloquently than words to the false accusations continually hurled at the Church and the Pope as enemies of progress and civilization, oppressors of the people, opposed to social and economic improvements.

The high ideals of the Holy Father Leo XIII set the pace for ever new forms of apostolate in all parts of the globe.

In fact, upon mature deliberation on the unhappy conditions of Italian emigrants, without ostentation of humanitarian displays, by the persevering

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<sup>15</sup> In Appendix No. 2, pp 109-111, we quote the letter of Scalabrini to Arch. Corrigan on August 10, 1891, and the answer of the letter on August 31, 1891.

<sup>16</sup> Cfr. Frederick James Zwierlein, Bishop McQuaid of Rochester, N.Y. 1925, Vol. I, p. 330; John Schiavo, Italian-American History, New York 1949, Vol. II, p. 477.

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action of one who really loves the people, he has patiently attended to this salutary work, together with his learned and venerable councilors and executors of his noble plans.

This new institution, besides greatly benefiting Italian emigrants, will contribute, no doubt, to the strengthening of the bonds of friendship now existing between the Holy See and the United States on account either of the extraordinary progress of Catholicism in that great republic or also of the great contributions catholic institutions and missionaries have rendered and still render to the different states of the Confederation. So much so that the day will not be far, we hope, when we shall see an official representative of the United States at the Vatican."<sup>17</sup>

As to the Convention of the "*Opera dei Congressi*" at Naples (1883) we have said already that the proposal of assistance to emigration spent itself out in the order of the day.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The *Civiltà Cattolica*, year XXXV, series XII, Vol. V, fasc. 808, Feb. 7, 1884, pp. 503-504. Bishop Scalabrini will insist on the necessity of national parishes. His underlying reasoning he did not openly express, out of respect and his well-known regard for the hierarchy was this: "If there are now so many Catholics in America it is because of the European immigrants, especially the Irish, who remained faithful to their religion, by immediately establishing their own parishes." For this reason he considered unjust and fatal any attempt at forced assimilation. "Not many years ago great efforts were being made in the United States to americanize, if I may say so, the immigrants from the various European nations. Religion and mother country had to cry over their lost children. Only those nationalities shall survive such attempts that have for their motto: 'Our Church, Our School, Our Language.'" (*L'Italia all'estero*, op. cit. p. 289).

<sup>18</sup> Cfr. above, Ch. 1, p. 6

**CHAPTER THREE**

**THE PLANNING PHASE OF THE SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATION**

On Christmas 1886, Father Zaboglio once again insists in a letter to Bishop Scalabrini from Rosi College of Spello:

*"In this holy season I cannot get out of my mind the thought of so many souls, redeemed by Christ's blood and purified by the waters of regeneration, wandering in faraway lands, left alone in great or almost sure danger of being led astray from the saving sufferings of Christ, only because they do not have priests to minister to them. These innocent souls' only guilt is having left their own country in order to survive. My wish is that by next spring an institution be opened with the scope of keeping them faithful, if so found, or drawing them back to the fold, if gone astray.*

*This year ends with a like great institution in Belgium. There a new seminary has been founded for the Missions in Congo. Its scope is to convert those barbarous tribes, and to keep the faith of the many Belgians migrating to those regions. And why should the next year close before a similar institute could be established.*

*True, some time back, thirty missionaries, priests, nuns, and lay brothers, of Don Bosco sailed for America; but what are they when compared with the needs! Just a few grains of sand thrown into the vast Ocean."<sup>1</sup>*

The dream of this zealous priest was about to come true! In the beginning of the new year, on January 11, 1887, Scalabrini, setting aside all hesitation, wrote to Cardinal Giovanni Simeoni, Prefect of "Propaganda Fide":

*"Most Eminent Prince,*

*Be pleased to allow me to discuss with you a matter of utmost importance and of interest to you, so solicitous for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.*

*A few months ago, an old student of mine, now a priest and professor at the seminary in Como, came to see me a number of times. He had taken a trip to America for a visit to his parents and family living there, and was deeply moved and saddened at seeing the state of religious neglect in which hundreds of thousands Italian emigrants are left. These communities could form parishes with many hundred souls. Instead they live secluded without seeing a priest, hearing any religious instruction, receiving the Sacraments, and die like animals. Enough to rend our hearts when we think about it!*

*The priest I mentioned, visited several of these small settlements, and described the joyous welcomes he has received, reporting at the same time the great need they have for at least an occasional visit of the priest of God.*

*Oh, Most Eminent Lord Cardinal, is not there any way we could go to the assistance of so many unhappy souls?! Many a generous effort is being made for the conversion of infidels; will we let our fellow countrymen perish who already are catholic? Is not this the time, Most Eminent Lord, to consider founding an association of Italian priests with the scope of the spiritual care of*

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<sup>1</sup> Letter Zaboglio to Scalabrini. Spello, Dec. 12, 1886 (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1886, No. 3).

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*Italian migrants in America. They would supervise departures and arrivals, and secure to the best of their ability the Christian future of the emigrants.*

*I know that some years ago some plans to this effect were discussed by the Archbishops of Naples and Genoa! I believe, however that nothing, or very little came of it!*

*I, on my part, would be ready to get down to business and give it an immediate start; on a small scale, to be sure; yet, right away, indeed.*

*I have here with me that holy man Mons. Belasio, well known to Your Eminence, who would be ready to leave even today willing to go from community to community evangelizing those abandoned souls ready to die in the wilderness there when the Lord should be pleased to call him. There would be others to follow his example, and God certainly would not withhold his blessings from their toil.*

*What is your opinion on the matter, Your Eminence? I hope you will be pleased to make it known to me. Meanwhile I pray to God to keep you in good health for many years to come for the glory of God and Holy Church.*

*I confirm myself of Your Eminence  
humble and devoted servant,  
+John Baptist, Bishop of Piacenza<sup>2</sup>*

At the foot of Bishop Scalabrini's letter we read a note handwritten by an official of the Sacred Congregation. It says:

*"December 31, 1887<sup>3</sup>: Answered with instructions (for Scalabrini) to draft a plan. Sent (to Scalabrini) copy of the Statute of the Society of St. Raphael."<sup>4</sup>*

Card. Simeoni answered to the Bishop of Piacenza on February 3, 1887:

*"Most Illustrious and Reverend Lord,*

*I received your most welcome letter in which you treat the question of the Italian migration to America. I am much saddened also over the unhappy conditions they live in. The reports sent to this Sacred Congregation by the Archbishops of New York and New Orleans, and by the Fathers of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore present a very discouraging picture of their spiritual and religious state. There is no need to let you know here, even so briefly, the sad information received. This Sacred Congregation did not neglect attempts to establish committees for the assistance to Italian emigrants. Unfortunately efforts have so far obtained no satisfactory results.*

*Archbishop Ireland, of St. Paul, Minnesota, currently in Rome, proved himself quite willing to use his influence that a committee be established for the protection of the religious and temporal interests of Italian emigrants.*

*We were considering to carry out this project when, very much at the right time, your letter came in. I hastened to discuss your project with the Holy Father who is pleased with your initiative and proposal."<sup>5</sup>*

Bishop Scalabrini immediately transmitted this piece of news to Father Zaboglio:

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<sup>2</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Card. Simeoni, Piacenza, January 11, 1887 (Arch. S.C.P.F., Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, ff. 1489-1490).

<sup>3</sup> An evident slip; it should read January 31

<sup>4</sup> It deals with the Bylaws of the St. Raphael's Verein.

<sup>5</sup> Letter Simeoni to Scalabrini, February 3, 1887, quoted by Scalabrini himself in pamphlet, *L'Emigrazione italiana* - *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50.

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*"Dear Father Francesco,*

*At last an answer reached here from Rome. The Holy Father blesses our project and invites me to comprehensively expound our intentions. I have need of you, therefore. Leave right away for Piacenza, if you can: if not, send me an extended exposition of your ideas and proposals for the evangelization of Italian emigrants.*

*Still, I insist that you come here at least for a few days. Plead with your superiors in my name.*

*Greetings. Let us pray for one another.*

*Most affectionately yours,*

*+ John Baptist Scalabrini,*

*Bishop of Piacenza."*<sup>6</sup>

The priest from Como left promptly for Piacenza, but could not speak to the Bishop who was absent. He had to be back at Spello in a hurry; so, he expressed his ideas to a priest anxious to play a part in the birth of the new institution (probably the apostolic missionary Mons. Belasio), but then he decided to reaffirm them in a letter to the same priest. We are in possession of the original copy. This document is of special interest because desiring to take advantage of the information therein contained, Bishop Scalabrini made use of it for the draft of his "project". On the other hand, his pastoral duties were allowing him very little time. These were the proposals of Father Zaboglio:

Draft of Fr. Zaboglio's proposals:

*I do not see any need to insist on the necessity of bringing spiritual help and assistance to the hundreds of thousands of our emigrant countrymen, especially in America! The priests and religious in these lands are far from being sufficient to the need; on the other hand thousands upon thousands of Italians continue to depart without any priest to go along with them.*

*In a number of newspapers we were reading some time ago as follows: (An article of "Osservatore Romano", Sept. 1-2, 1886, number 200, is here quoted in part). This much for newspapers.*

*However, are the migrants sailing from foreign parts, such as Marseille and Le Havre, included in the number 83,786 Italians that departed in 1885? In fact, it seems to me that the newspapers seem to report the statistics compiled by Commendatore Bodio which include only the Italian migrants leaving from Italian ports.*

*Thus hundreds of thousand Italians live scattered in cities, farmlands, and forest of America deprived of religious assistance. Besides, many more will join them! Evidently, it is urgently necessary to provide for these immigrants, emigrants, and their children. But how shall it be done?*

*Bear with me for expressing my humble opinion, we need above all a strong and effective strategy for the conquest, or reconquest, rather, of so many souls from slavery to sin back to God.*

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<sup>6</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Zaboglio, Piacenza, February 5, 1887 (Arch. G.S., Scalabrini, Manuscripts).

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*In order to wage this offensive, soldiers are needed, that is Missionaries; Italian priests for Italian emigrants. As in the United States missions exist for the Indians, and in London and other important cities for the Italians, why should not there be missions for the unfortunate Italians scattered all over the immense regions of the New World? How will these missionaries be found? This is the difficult task: to find missionaries in a number adequate to the need. But with God's help and good will, why should we not succeed?*

*I am convinced that an institution should be founded to train and prepare Missionaries for these missions. Or, we should find out whether an institution already exists in the Church that could be exclusively charged with this responsibility, thus giving it a new impulse of life, as the case may be.*

*Unless a word from the head of the Christina people, the Holy Father, would rather direct all available forces, priests and religious to the often more difficult reconquest of the souls of our fellow countrymen in the New World than to the conquest of other nations.*

*I would be happy, should my humble word provide an occasion for others, more wise and influential than I, to undertake this task. I would consider myself highly rewarded.*

*Besides this work of reconquest, as it were, of souls dispersed in the vast regions of the New World, we should concern ourselves also with warding off the ruin of so many unfortunate Christians and their children continuously leaving beautiful Italy for other shores.*

*The first to help correct this evil situation should be the missionaries that shall be sent to regain to Christ the souls of those already straying from the fold.*

*Catholic colonies after the pattern of those already instituted for the English and the Irish in the United States would benefit our emigrants!*

*As I understand, these "colonies" are just catholic parishes, run as such, with their priests and schools. Thus, kept together from wandering like lost sheep, emigrants live with other Catholics benefiting from the spiritual assistance they receive, and have the feeling of life in their mother country.*

*As I had the honor to tell you in person, in regard to the project of such colonies for Italians discussed at the meeting of the Bishops of the United States in Rome a few years ago, reported by the "Osservatore Romano", the Holy See has been considering forming special committees for the assistance of emigrants. We should see and find out what has been done, so far.*

*These, and others, experiences and further study would suggest, could be the direct and immediate means to obtain the scope. There should be recourse to publications, newspapers, and widely circulated pamphlets, as they say, to keep the Italian Catholic public informed.*

*To mention an example from another field, Lord Gladstone, unable as minister of government to obtain freedom for Ireland, is striving to achieve it now by keeping the English people informed with his pamphlet: "The History of an Idea".*

*If others could find it proper to promote, and more easily so, their scope, in this case the liberation of a nation from political subjection by means of the press, why should it not be employed also to promote the liberation of our countrymen from a far more deplorable and sad enslavement?*

*Above all, we need not waste any more time! We must work hands and toes*



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*and do something about it, more than has ever been done up to now. If not, we will be too late! Incredulity, heresy, freemasonry, so powerful in America, will take hold of the minds and hearts of our emigrants; so that while it would now be only a matter of leading neglected Christians back to virtue, later on it would mean having to convert freemasons, heretics, atheists, and unbelievers.*

*Once again I beg your pardon. With all good intention, I dared express to you, well or not, these ideas of mine more or less pertinent to the scope. However, what counts most is that there be influential people to get busy on this matter, and certainly you for one. Then, other eminent persons in the Church will certainly cooperate, and something will be done; much more so, should the whole project be placed under the patronage of our heavenly Mother who in similar circumstances has always exercised her protection over the Church.*

*Be pleased, Monsignor, to convey my humble, but sincere respects to the Bishop, and my regards to his worthy secretary. In the hope, at least, to see my dreams crowned with happy success, I profess myself*

*Your most humble servant."*<sup>7</sup>

A few days later, precisely on February 16, Bishop Scalabrini could write to Cardinal Simeoni:

*"Most Reverend Eminence,*

*I am sending you the project, or rather, the draft of a project for the assistance to Italian emigrants in the Americas, prepared in obedience to the desires expressed to me by the Holy Father and your most illustrious Eminence.*

*As you will easily notice, I wrote it in a rather unorganized manner, especially in regards to details, such as, for instance, where and how to form the committees here mentioned. On purpose, however, I did not want to elaborate on this point, as I did not wish to create difficulties for another similar institution just founded in Florence. As I see it, when approved by the Holy See, it could be of great help. Among other things, all the material aspects of our institution could be entrusted to it to the benefit of both. I hope the illustrious persons heading it made it their duty to keep the Holy Father and you well informed about that institution and that they have received a word of support and encouragement from you. In any case, I deem it proper to send you a copy of their Statutes and letter forwarded to me. In the latter, especially, you will find their scope expressed.*

*I would be very grateful if Your Eminence would give me any suggestion as to attracting supporters for our work and good candidates to fulfill our scope.*

*It is my intention, Your Eminence, to publish also a pamphlet on this subject. I would be very grateful if you would send to me the reports given in by the Bishops of America on the state of Italian emigrants, and whatever else could have any reference to the matter at hand.*

*It goes without saying that I would feel highly honored to be of service any time Your Eminence should intend to make use of me either in preparing an appeal to the Italian bishops, or a circular letter to the American hierarchy.*

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<sup>7</sup> Rough copy of Zaboglio (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 3).

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*The initiative for this institution, however, should come from the Holy See, and all documents related to it should carry the signature of Your Eminence.*

*This way, the Italian clergy would certainly respond with enthusiasm. I have already talked about it confidentially as a remote possibility, with a good number of priests. They are willing to leave any time for the missions.*

*I profess myself of Your Emirience devoted and affectionate servant,  
Piacenza, February 16, 1887*

*+ John Baptist, Bishop"<sup>8</sup>*

Enclosed with the letter was a draft of the project:

**Outline of an Association  
with the Scope of Providing for the Needs  
of Italian Emigrants in America**

**1. Gravity of the need.**

I do not believe I should say much on the necessity of giving aid and providing spiritual assistance for Italian emigrants in America, because the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda is better than any other acquainted with the problem, on account of reports presented by the Archbishops of New York, New Orleans, and by the Fathers of the third Council of Baltimore. Similar reports, more discomfiting perhaps, must have been sent in, no doubt, also by the Bishops of South America and Australia.

Statistics just published on Italian migration in 1885 report 83,786 Italian emigrants, that is 23,297 more than in 1882, and 56,563 more than in 1881. At the port of Genoa, alone, seventy thousands of them embarked; the rest at Naples, Savona, Messina, and others. The largest number took the direction of Montevideo and Buenos Aires; 12,493 went to Brazil, 13,092 to New York and New Orleans; 351 continued on to Valparaiso and Callao on the Pacific.

Not to mention the preceding years; Italian Migration, that had reached 28,717 units in 1881, and was considered a terrifying enormity then, kept going up to 58,290 in 1882, and to 62,794 in 1883. We notice a slight decrease in 1884 with 60,489, but then in 1885 the increasing pattern resumes to reach 83,786 expatriates. Were at least those unfortunate ones all adults! Alas, what saddens our spirit most is to know that no less than 15,642 children of either sex are included in those 83,786. We are concerned here with the supplanting of homes and separation of families that will help 'to strew white the lands of America with their bones'.

So far for Italian statistics. However, in the number 83,786 of 1885 those emigrants who sailed from foreign ports, such as Marseille, Tolone and Le Havre are not included. Since so many thousands of Italians live scattered in the cities, the planes, and forests of America, deprived of all religious assistance, while many more will join them, evidently we must provide for immigrants, emigrants, and their children.

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<sup>8</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Card. Simeoni, Piacenza, February 16, 1887 (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 4, authenticated copy Arch. S.C.P.F., Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, ff. 1491-1492).

**2. Urgency to provide assistance.**

We must provide for the spiritual needs of the many thousands of our countrymen, and do so as soon as possible. Should there be any further delay, irreparable would be the harm done. Incredulity; heresy, and above all, masonry, so powerful in America, are actively engaged to control the minds and hearts of emigrants. If it is now only a matter of calling abandoned Catholics back to the right path, it will not be long before we shall have to convert heretics, free masons, and atheists.

These unfortunate ones, who on account of poverty and other sad causes, had to leave their native country, implore and entreat us to go to their help.

An Italian nobleman, returning from an extensive exploration trip to America, told me he had met groups of families from the Piacenza mountains. With tears in their eyes they inquired about their Bishop and recommended to tell him not to forget them, asking to have a priest with them for a few months! It was a very moving scene, the nobleman said, to hear those poor emigrants lament their lost happiness, remember their feasts, their little church, and their liturgical services. Would the Bishop, somehow, provide also for their salvation! As far as they were concerned they were willing to make any sacrifice, to spend the sum necessary for the priest's trip, etc... If he does not move to pity for us, they were telling him, we will grow worse than the heathen, and worse yet, many will die without reconciliation with God.

These simple words flowing from hearts still imbued with faith, truthfully express the very sad conditions in which almost all emigrants live. The urgency for providing is quite obvious! Oh, let's do it, let's do so!

**3. How to provide.**

Before all else, it seems to me necessary to send priests to those regions where our emigrants live, who without fixed residence and in accord with the local ordinaries, may give 15 to 20 day missions, as needed, exhort them to build a chapel, to provide the means for supporting a priest, take a survey of the place and conditions they live in and the number of people. Then, they should send in all the reports to the Superior whom the Holy See will appoint to head the pious institution.

These apostolic men, who could be called precursors of the permanent missionaries, should be placed under the special protection of the Holy See; be dispensed from obligation of a residence, in case they be canons or titled to a benefice; be given back their former posts when they return, while retaining during their absence all rights, including, when possible, the ordinary choral fees, as if they were present.

It seems to me that, due to the new conditions of the social order and of the Church, to the causes already listed in the Canon Law for dispensing from the obligation of residence, this most grave and urgent one should also be added.

As to priests that have no benefice, as I see it, they should be always considered members of their respective dioceses, and their service could and should be accounted as rendered to their native diocese. Besides, upon equal merits and circumstances they should be given preference over others! All this would serve as an incentive to encourage and spur them to carry out their mission with greater zeal.

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The Holy See should order, or, recommend, at least, the bishops to support these vocations, rather than oppose them. Italian bishops should not complain if some talented vocation is taken away from their dioceses since it is a serious matter of providing spiritual assistance to their faithful emigrants, beyond all comparison in far greater need than those who remain, who even in dioceses where greatest is the scarcity of priests, can always have the means of salvation, if they so wish.

The proposals here suggested will have the following results:

- a) They would immediately provide a certain number of good and zealous priests, ready and fit for the holy undertaking.
- b) Give information on how and where to provide.
- c) Prevent the corrupted environment of those places to exert its deleterious influence upon the priests, the young ones especially, who will be sent to any of the missions without having gone through a long period of training practically impossible now, due to the urgency of the need.
- d) Prepare the way for the permanent missionaries in line with what the Lord will inspire, and time, prayer, and reflection will teach.

**4. Norms for Admission of Missionaries**

1. Any priest from any diocese can be admitted to be a member of the pious association, provided he is approved to hear confessions, has reached the age of thirty, and exercised the ministry for three years.
2. No examination of any kind is required, and no health certificate. Experience has taught that most of the times, one who is frail in his own country becomes stronger by the apostolic ministry in a foreign land.
3. It is absolutely indispensable that the applicants be remarkable for piety, endowed with a docile disposition, irreprehensible in conduct, apostolic in their zeal for the salvation of souls. A certificate from their bishop testifying the presence of these qualifications is required.
4. The missionaries shall conform their personal life to the norms the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide issues for missionaries of each religious order in mission fields.
5. They are not required to stay with the Italian communities in America longer than a year. However, it is left up to them to decide whether to remain for a more extended period of time, or even for their whole life, should they feel called by God to devote themselves without any reservation to this most holy mission.
6. Before leaving for America, the missionaries shall make together a month-long spiritual retreat, to strengthen their spirit in meditation and prayer, as the Apostles once did in the Cenacle before setting out to evangelize the world. If there is no objection, I myself would take care of this matter either with the Vincentian, or the Carmelite Fathers, until a permanent and definite system will be worked out.
7. During this retreat, special lectures on dogmatic and moral theology, related to the special needs of Italian emigrants, will be given in order to instruct the missionaries on all particular cases the Holy See might have exempted from the general law in consideration of the exceptional conditions emigrants live in.

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8. Before leaving, the missionaries shall be made to take a vow not to retain as their own any property either money or other that should be offered to them. Rather, they shall give all in to the Superior of the Pious Association, thus re-entering their respective diocese in the same financial condition as when they left it.
9. The missionaries shall not be allowed to concern themselves with anything else but teaching catechism, preaching, giving instruction, and administering the Sacraments. They shall be immediately recalled back to Italy in case they should give their heart and action to activities not related to the scope intended by the Holy See.
10. As to places and ways, the missionaries shall exercise their ministry entirely dependent on the Ordinaries in whose diocese they will be, and they shall have recourse to them for any dispensation or faculty, just as it is usually done in Italy for the diocesan clergy.
11. Every three months, if possible, they shall meet in groups of five or six, as distances and local difficulties will permit, but not on a day of obligation, to provide for their personal spiritual life and to exchange ideas, mutual help and comfort.
12. Upon returning home, the missionaries shall obtain from the Bishops in whose diocese they reside a certificate testifying as to their irreprehensible conduct.

**5. How to Proceed in Founding the Institution In Italy:**

1. An appeal be sent to the Italian Bishops, and through them, to the priests, inviting them to actively support the noble project and to make known the intentions of the Holy See and the norms for admission.
2. Priests wishing to dedicate themselves to this holy mission shall send their petition to the Superior of the association, accompanied by a letter of recommendation from the Bishop.
3. Committees shall be established, especially at sea ports, to help the missionaries, direct the emigrants to them, provide funds etc.

**6. In America:**

1. It would be advisable to send a Circular Letter to the Bishops of America asking them to send in reports on the needs of Italian emigrants, as soon as possible, with information on how they intend to provide for the support of the priests available to be sent to them.
2. Invite them to support their work with special collections for this scope, especially for the founding of an Italian seminary in some American city for the formation of a native clergy devoted to the ministry among Italian emigrants. It does not seem difficult to find vocations if we consider that 15,642 Italian children have migrated in 1885.

**7. Means to Prevent the Corruption of Emigrants**

Besides the work of reconquest, as it were, of the souls scattered throughout the immense regions of the New World, it would be proper to consider by what means we could prevent the ruin of so many unfortunate Italian Catholics, who, often with their children, migrate to the other side of the Ocean.

The first means for preventing the corruption of emigrants should be found in the

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zeal of pastors in opposing emigration and in attempting by all ways to persuade their parishioners not to expatriate. Unfortunately, in the great majority of cases, one does not prevail, and emigration must be endured as a sad necessity!

*"To migrate or to steal"*, thus goes the terrible dilemma as I heard it more than once repeated on the lips of poor farmers and workers.

Such being the situation, the pastor must not let anyone leave for a foreign country without providing him with a letter of recommendation to the clergy of the place where they will take residence. In the years when I exercised the parish ministry I constantly made use of this method always obtaining good results from it. Once made a bishop, during the pastoral visitations I came to know more clearly the very serious evils of emigration.

In the diocesan Synod held in 1879, I enacted an appropriate decree. From what I could verify in the second visitation, its observance is producing good spiritual benefits.

Here I quote the Synodal decree:

"Aware of the dangers for one's faith born of emigration, which we found very real at the time of our Sacred Visitation, desiring to spare as far as possible our sons this ordeal, I call to the attention of the pastors the dispositions of Pope Clement XIII which discourage Italians from moving under any pretext to places where they would never, or almost never, be able to fulfill their religious duties. We invite them to do all in their power to dissuade from their resolution the parishioners whom they know to be about to expatriate by entreaties, advice, and effective persuasion. Should they find them still resolute in their decision, as we anticipate for most cases, they do well to remember that the main cause of migration is the hope to find a fitting remedy to their-poverty!

Then, pastors must not abandon them altogether! In their fatherly concern, they should warn them as to the way of life and culture of those faraway places in order to prepare them to defend in earnest and preserve firmly intact the deposit of faith they possess. They should invite them, besides, to get strength, before leaving, in the salutary reception of the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist.

The pastors are to be diligent to provide them with a letter of recommendation to the pastors of the parishes where they are to settle, with the request to take vigilant care over them, to constantly assist them in their spiritual needs, and to give them a letter testifying to their Christian life when they return to their fatherland.

Catholic communities similar to those already instituted for the Irish and English in the United States would be of great help in the pursuit of this noble end. As I seem to understand, they seem to be Catholic parishes with their own priests and schools, to which their fellow countrymen are directed instead of being left to wander like lost sheep. This way, emigrants would feel very much at home as in their mother country in the midst of Catholics, with all the religious aids, at least the essential ones.

In addition, to insure that the fruits of the missions remain, all Italian communities without resident priests, should be exhorted not only to be faithful to their daily devotions in the family, but also to get together on all days of obligation for the common prayer in a church or a chapel, to sing praises to the Lord, to teach catechism to the children, to read the Sunday's Gospel, to perform those spiritual exercises that are allowed to be performed by laymen. This is how not only the faith, but the religious fervor as well, were preserved in Madagascar for a number of years during the absence of the missionaries.

The reading of opportune books and religious periodicals adapted to the special needs of those Catholics will, also effectively fill in for the lack of priests. Not without spiritual fruits the "Catechista Cattolico" I publish for the schools of Christian

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Doctrine is already sent regularly to the emigrants of my diocese. With opportune modifications this also will contribute to the scope, and the Directors would be very glad to cooperate in this beautiful work.

**8. How to Make This Project Known**

It is very important to make known to the public, especially to men of the Church, the gravity of the spiritual neglect afflicting Italian emigrants in America, and the urgency to provide for them.

Immensely helpful would be the sending of priests, founding of committees, as mentioned above and other means usually employed in propaganda. Besides, the Italian catholic public could be very well informed by a widely spread distribution of religious periodicals and pamphlets on the problem.

Lord Gladstone, to mention an example from another field, unable as minister of government to obtain the liberation of Ireland by the most powerful means he could dispose of, he tries to promote it now by informing the English people with his pamphlet: "The History of an Idea".

If others judge it proper to promote and obtain easily their goal, in this case, the liberation of Ireland from political subjection by means of the press, why should it not be employed for the liberation of our fellow countrymen from the greatly more harmful slavery of sin?

Piacenza, February 16, 1887

+ John Baptist Scalabrini

Bishop of Piacenza."<sup>9</sup>

Instead of proceeding on his own authority as a Bishop, as is customarily done, Bishop Scalabrini preferred to solicit the support of the Holy See, above all because his missionaries would enter territories then dependent on the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Besides, they would have need of the support of the American bishops in whose territories the parishes were. Lastly, as Bishop Scalabrini himself was saying, the Italian clergy, confronted with a pontifical initiative, would surely respond with enthusiasm.

We find interesting the proposal of preparing first the permanent missions with an on-the-spot investigation by priests who while giving 15 or 20 day missions to the Italian communities of emigrants, would gather useful information for founding permanent parishes. Worth noticing is also the distinction between these "precursors" and the permanent priests. Should they settle there without a sufficient preparation, they would have been exposed to danger. On the other hand, the succeeding priests assigned there for permanent residence, would have benefited from a long training. However, in the first draft of the project, these priests also had an obligatory service of one year. They were to be prepared during a month of intense programs of pastoral and technical lectures on the new apostolate, in meditation and prayer, the soul of all ministry, after the example of the apostles in the cenacle.

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<sup>9</sup> Arch. S.C.P.F. Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, ff. 1491 ss. The entire text is also quoted in the historico-juridical study of Bishop Marco Caliaro. La Pia Società dei Missionari di San Carlo per gli Italiani emigrati - Scalabriniani. (Roma 1956, as a manuscript, pp. 156-163).

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A more precise bond was represented by an oath to pledge themselves to a disinterested apostolate, that is to evangelical poverty, another essential condition, according to Scalabrini, for an effective ministry. In case they should engage in interests other than their sacred priestly ministrations and preaching they would immediately be called back to Italy.

The other two requirements the Founder would never cease insisting upon, were complete dependence on the local bishops in the exercise of their ministry and as to where to exercise it, provided the missionaries be given the necessary freedom to carry out their specific mission; and a minimum of community life *"to benefit their spiritual life and as a means for an exchange of ideas, counsel, help, and mutual comfort."*

From a pastoral point of view, worthy of notice is the suggestion that Italian communities without a resident priest should *"on holy days of obligation gather in churches or chapels to pray in common, sing the praises of the Lord, teach catechism to children, read the Sunday's Gospel, and to perform all other spiritual functions allowed a laymen."*<sup>10</sup>

A great number of our parishes now extant in regions of America, owe their origin to these churches built by the faith of simple people as their first places of worship.

On behalf of Bishop Scalabrini, Father Zaboglio had requested Father Philip Valentini, a Vincentian, director of a seminary in Rome, for his opinion on the "project". The wise priest replied predicting the political difficulties Scalabrini would be confronted with on account of prejudices preventing many from concrete good deeds. Scalabrini would face them decisively and courageously in due time, as he considered them to be on a level much too inferior to his goal.<sup>11</sup>

Valentini wrote:

*"As to my opinion in regard to this project, whatever it will be, above all it must be approved by the Holy Father for three reasons, especially:*

- 1) that it may not otherwise be accused of liberalism;*
- 2) that it may be presented to the public with the mark of authority;*
- 3) because Your Excellency is suspected of liberalism. I had to defend you at length to my wits' best before a high official of the Holy Office."*<sup>12</sup>

He suggested, besides, a college be opened in Rome for the gratuitous education of the candidates to be directed by a religious order or congregation with houses in lands of immigration so that the missionaries be considered like *"oblates"* under the guidance and protection of religious superiors, as dependence only on the local bishops would not sufficiently insure their interests. In any case, Valentini excluded the idea that the missionaries be

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<sup>10</sup> Bishop Caliaro, *ibidem*, pp. 19-22.

<sup>11</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Valentini, 5, d. (Arch. G.S., Scalabrini, Manuscripts, rough copy): "My liberalism is a very simple thing; while greatly sensitive to false doctrine, I do all the good possible, with peace of heart I keep my eyes looking up to heaven in spite of all the injustices of men."

<sup>12</sup> Letter Valentini to Scalabrini, Rome, February 22, 1887 (Arch. S.C.P.F. Letters and decrees of Sacred Congregation and "Bigliettos" of Secretary, 1887. Vol. 383, f. 130; Arch. G.S., IV, 1887, No. 6, authenticated copy).



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religious, because, in his opinion, their mission would not last longer than ten years.

This Vincentian Priest was perhaps the first of several people to dissuade Scalabrini from founding a religious congregation in the strict sense: we know that Scalabrini deliberately took the opposite course, thus proving the importance he was attributing to religious consecration for such a difficult and demanding apostolate as the assistance to emigrants. Complete detachment, poverty especially, and the unity of common life were to constitute the warranty for apostolic dedication.

In the beginning of March, Archbishop Dominic Jacobini, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide and titular Archbishop of Tirus, wrote to the Bishop of Piacenza:

*"Not long ago I have received your letter together with the "project" elaborated by Your Excellency for the founding of a society devoted to the assistance of Italian emigrants in America.*

*My most sincere thanks. It is now under thorough examination and study. As soon as this work shall be concluded, I will convey to you the decisions taken."*<sup>13</sup>

While the project was under study at Propaganda, Bishop Scalabrini and Father Zaboglio got busy preparing the ground for both the Holy See and public opinion. The Bishop carried out his project for the publication of a pamphlet<sup>14</sup> on the problem of emigration, and Father Zaboglio gathered information in Rome and reported them to Scalabrini:

*"Most Illustrious and Reverend Bishop,*

*During the Easter holidays, I had the occasion to travel to Rome. I paid a visit to Father Valentini who informed me he had mentioned the project for the emigrants to the Holy Father, in an audience that included other matters. He did so briefly also to Cardinal Parrocchi. One of our good priests, Father Savaré, a native of Sant'Angelo Lodigiano, with whom I discussed a few times the miserable plight of our emigrants, decided to present me to Archbishop Jacobini with whom he is in close contact. Jacobini seems seriously committed to the project. He is said to have held two meetings to discuss the matter with the Bishop of Saint Paul, Minnesota, on the occasion of his arrival in Rome. Having asked him why the previous project for Italian catholic colonization had not been put into effect, he answered that it was due to the fact that the great majority of the emigrants of America had gone there under bonded contracts. He added the project needed further study as more information on conditions of migrants before departure and at ports of arrival in America was necessary!*

*Father Valentini had told me last February he had no problem finding vocations, but he had no fitting place. I am almost positive that, God willing, I will travel to America next summer to take my father back with me.*

*I have already written for permission from the Superior General, pastor of Saint Mary Magdalene in Genoa, and I have reasons to believe he will not deny it. If I*

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<sup>13</sup> Letter Jacobini to Scalabrini, March 5, 1887 (Arch. S.C.P.F. Letters and decrees of Sacred Congregation and "Bigliettos" of Secretary, 1887, Vol. 383, f. 130, Arch. G.S., IV, 1887, No. 6, authenticated copy).

<sup>14</sup> Cfr. Letter Scalabrini to Card. Simeoni, February 16, 1887, pp. 21-21.

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*should be able on that occasion to be of any help in the cause of our unfortunate Italians, please, Your Excellency, do not hesitate to let me know, and I will offer my services with all my strength. My departure is scheduled for the end of June, or more probably, for the beginning of July, and on my way through Piacenza it will be my honor to pay you a visit."*<sup>15</sup>

On his part Bishop Scalabrini worked so intensely on the study and writing of the pamphlet "L'Emigrazione Italiana in America" that the newspaper "L'Amico del Popolo" was able to publish its first edition in the beginning of June.

In fact, on June 13<sup>th</sup> he was able to send a copy to the Pope:

*"Most Holy Father,*

*The project to hasten to the help of migrants is ripe. The press is insistently urging this or that personality in government to raise their voices that something be done. What evil consequences, should masonry take over the field the Church had!*

*In order to prevent this from happening, I, the least of bishops, thought it proper to write a few pages on this important matter, having in mind to better dispose the spirits in favor of the project of evangelization I presented by the expressed desire of the Holy Father to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, when it will be approved.*

*I place a copy of my humble work at the feet of Your Holiness in the hope You will deign to approve it.*

*Imploring Your Apostolic Blessing, as an obedient subject and affectionate son, I confirm myself of Your Holiness*

*most humble and devoted servant*

*+ John Baptist Scalabrini*

*Bishop of Piacenza*<sup>16</sup>

As to the first and most notorious publication of Bishop Scalabrini on emigration, we limit ourselves with pointing out the passages that deal with the history of the "Scalabrinian Congregation". After examining the conditions of emigrants in America under their statistical, social, legal, and political aspects, the author proceeds on to the practical part, to the contribution, limited but concrete, he intends to offer toward the solution of the problem. We believe one of Scalabrini's great merits is not to have let himself either be frightened or to turn away from the magnitude of the problem. Like many others he did not say: "It is impossible to find a remedy for so many evils, let God take care of it. The Holy See will provide." Instead he decided: "Let us do right away what we can. Any delay would be fatal."<sup>17</sup> Neither did he allow himself to be scared by the financial difficulties that had even Bishop Bonomelli concerned: "*If I have the money, full speed ahead! If not, I will stand by and wait! Oh, the curse of money!*"<sup>18</sup>

Scalabrini intended to start right away with two institutions:

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<sup>15</sup> Letter Zaboglio to Scalabrini, Spello, April 24, 1887 (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 8). Rough copy.

<sup>16</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Pope Leo XIII, Piacenza, June 13, 1887 (Arch. G.S., B, IV, No. 8).

<sup>17</sup> Scalabrini, *L'emigrazione, etc., op. cit.* p. 48.

<sup>18</sup> Letter Bonomelli to Scalabrini, Cremona, June 26, 1887 (Arch. G.S., Scalabrini, Epistolario Bonomelli-Scalabrini).

- a) An Association of Patronage
- b) An Institute of Priests.

The Association of "Patronage" was thus described:

*"The needs of emigrants can be divided into two classes; moral and material. I would like see an "Association of Patronage" established in Italy with lay and religious members to fully respond to the double need. Considering the matter in its religious aspect, the field offered for action is very vast; no less vast however, is it from its economic point of view. It would be the job of this Association, as pointed out already, to provide for the religious and economical needs of the unfortunate ones leaving their birthplace to go across the Ocean. Therefore:*

1. *To turn emigrants away from the shameful speculations of certain immigration agents who, for personal gain, are morally and materially ruining the unaware that fall into their nets.*
2. *To establish an agency that would prepare all that is needed for the employment of the immigrants newly arrived at the ports of America. This way, any time an Italian turns to the Association he could be assured of a profitable occupation in case it should result impossible to dissuade him from migrating.*
3. *To wage an unrelenting war, pardon the expression, against the "brokers of human flesh", who, for the sake of gain, do not stop short of having recourse to the most sordid means.*
4. *To provide relief, should disaster or infirmity strike during the trip or following their arrival.*
5. *To secure religious assistance during the trip, after debarkation, and at the places where they will settle."*<sup>19</sup>

Proceeding to the second institution, the author writes:

*"I have mentioned what kind of religious assistance must be provided for emigrants during the trip. However, it is much more important to provide it for them once they are settled in America. Since this is the main purpose of my humble writing, it should not displease the readers, I believe, if I abide a little more extensively on this point, as I shall indeed do so in the two following chapters."*<sup>20</sup>

Still, the reading of the last two chapters, leave us, in a certain sense, disappointed. The author limits himself to general considerations, very true as pastoral directives, but equally vague as to their implementation in his project. He only says that he deemed it his duty to ask the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda Fide how he should provide in a permanent way for the needs of the many thousand emigrants from "his diocese". He quotes the answer of Cardinal Simeoni, on February 3, 1887<sup>21</sup>, and continues:

*"I will not enter into the details on how to secure a less sad future for so many thousands of Italians. It should now be enough to know that His Holiness Pope Leo XIII, in the solicitude of his paternal heart, has designed to welcome a humble project on the problem, and is wisely giving it his wholehearted*

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<sup>19</sup> Scalabrini, *L'emigrazione*, etc., op. cit., pp. 41-42).

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, pp. 44-45

<sup>21</sup> Cfr. above p. 17

*attention.*"<sup>22</sup>

The reason for this discrete restraint is revealed in the following letter to Cardinal Simeoni:

*Most Eminent Prince,*

*I have the honor to send you a copy of my modest pamphlet on Italian migration, of so much interest to both of us. I judged it necessary to publish it in a hurry so as not to be outdone by masonry, and to prepare the ground for carrying out the measures the Holy See should find opportune to take for this purpose.*

*As Your Eminence will see, in order not to hinder the work of the Holy See, I just touched briefly on the religious aspect of the problem. All is done only in a way of preparation, and nothing more.*

*Be pleased, Your Eminence, to accept my humble sentiments of deep respect, while I confirm myself*

*Your most humble and devoted servant,  
John Baptist Scalabrini*<sup>23</sup>

This way, while urging with a certain impatience the decision of the Holy See on one side, he did not want by imprudent anticipations to hinder its plans or pretend a solution that did not represent the true and genuine intentions of the Church.

But in the same month, and precisely in an audience on June 26, Cardinal Simeoni could present six concrete proposals to the Holy Father:

"In order to bring some help to the increasing Italian migration, cause of ruin for so many souls, it would be necessary to establish:

1. in three or four of the most important Italian ports a committee of priests and laymen to supervise embarkation and spiritually-assist the emigrants.
2. a central committee in Rome to receive all information from the committees, and provide them with the required instructions and directives.
3. similar committees at the main ports of North and South America, composed of priests and laymen, who would spiritually assist the emigrants and direct them with their counseling.
4. in Italy, one or more, associations of priests who would go to America to preach missions to the emigrants and strengthen their faith upon consultation and mutual accord with the local bishops.
5. in suitable places of the United States and Latin America, a house for these priests from where they would go from place to place preaching missions that would strengthen the faith of emigrants.
6. to entrust the direction of the central committee into the hands of a Superior who keeping in very close contact with *Propaganda* could take full responsibility for such an important work."<sup>24</sup>

With the same expressions of appreciation contained in the letter of Cardinal

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<sup>22</sup> Scalabrini, *L'emigrazione, etc., op. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>23</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Card. Simeoni, June 13, 1887 (Arch. S.C.P.F., Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, f. 1505. Arch. G.S., B, No. 6, authenticated copy).

<sup>24</sup> Arch. S.C.P.F., Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, f. 1382; (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 24. Authenticated copy).

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Simeoni to Bishop Scalabrini, on February 3, 1887, the "*Ex Audientia Sanctissimi*" (from the Audience with the Holy Father) note contains the second generic approval of the Pope, who intended to give Bishop Scalabrini full authority to provide, under his own direction, assistance for Italian emigrants by means of priests. But one can also read in it two points of concern. The first responds to the prudent and realistic evaluation of the local American hierarchy's directives. We can very well understand the reason for prudence, if we remember that eighteen days before the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda had rejected the protest of the German priests against the second-class treatment reserved, in their opinion, to groups of foreign languages and to national parishes.<sup>25</sup> The second point concerns the direction of the committees of the associations of patronage that, according to the mind of Scalabrini, had to be composed in greater majority by laymen. The Holy See was unfavorable to a lay direction and required that both central and local committee be presided over by the bishops. Here is the document:

"The Holy Father has directed that Bishop Scalabrini of Piacenza be invited to take for some time a tour of America with the scope of providing assistance under his own authority for Italian migrants by means of priests to be supplied by those bishops of northern Italy who can do so. However, the bishops of the Americas must be previously informed that the urgency of providing assistance to emigrants has moved the Holy See to act; it intends to grant Bishop Scalabrini full, but not absolute, authority to proceed in the matter; it wishes to know the juridical arrangements the bishops will suggest for consideration.

He, the Pope, approves what has been therein expressed, but he desires that a bishop preside in Italy over central and local committees. He orders a first report on the matter."<sup>26</sup>

Scalabrini sends his answer to Archbishop Jacobini on July 2, 1887. In agreement on the need of a bishop's supervision dependent on Propaganda for the central committee, he still insists on the necessity of the "*secular power*" as more effective in the work of preparation "*that should precede the project of evangelization*". He is convinced, in fact, that assistance to emigrants should necessarily include also their legal and social protection as a needed premise to evangelization, which always remains the ultimate goal of this project. To be sure, the "*humanitarian aspects*" must be kept distinct and separate; on the other hand without them, the project would risk failure if it should "*encounter difficulties and oppositions*" in the social field, in case, that is, it should remain removed from the social context in which it is to operate. In other words, according to Bishop Scalabrini, the Church should not take care of emigrants as though it were only a religious problem; it was a human problem that had to be faced with all the components bearing on the migrating person, and therefore it had to be resolved as a whole, though with clear distinction of tasks, by Church and State, priests and laymen, *Religion and Country*. This is

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<sup>25</sup> Cfr. above Ch. 2 pp. 12-13

<sup>26</sup> Note of June 26, 1887 (Arch. S.C.P.F., Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, f. 1383. (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 24. Authenticated copy).

why the last chapter of the pamphlet *L'Emigrazione in America* carries the motto "*Religion and Country*" concluding with a prayer for "Reconciliation":

*"Religion and Country", these two supreme aspirations of every sincere heart, are interwoven, integrate each other, blend harmoniously, in this work of love that spells protection of the weak.*

Miserable barriers built by hatred and anger will disappear, arms will open to a fraternal embrace, hands will clasp in warm friendship, lips will shape to smiles and kisses of peace, all distinction of class and party will be eliminated, in all will shine with Christian splendor the motto: "*Man to man a brother*".

May these humble words of mine be the seed of great works to the glory of God and His Church, for the salvation of souls and the honor of our country, for the protection of the unfortunate and abandoned.

May Italy, sincerely reconciled with the Apostolic See, emulate the ancient glories and add this one of guiding its emigrants, also, on the path of true civilization and progress."<sup>27</sup>

Probably, Scalabrini wrote these words right after Leo XIII had pronounced his famous allocution on May 23, 1887, when he expressed the wish that "*the spirits of all Italians may attain security and tranquility, and the dissension with the Roman Pontiff be removed*".

But he did not cease insisting even when the dissension favoring Conciliation vanished, and the intransigence of the Holy See had become more stern than ever. In fact, in 1888 he will declare:

*"My Institution, so quickly founded and inspired to the admirable union of religious and patriotic ideals, would fail in part in its scope, nor could it overcome the innumerable obstacles confronting it, and provide effective help for the manifold moral and material needs of Italian emigrants, without the constant cooperation of all good people. It is for this reason, my good friend, that through your help I call to the attention of the government and of all people interested in the common good, to this institution, so dear to my heart. I do not consider it only an effective means for carrying out my episcopal responsibility over so many unfortunate people, great part of whom from my diocese, but also a task for the united cooperation of Church and State. All this, in my opinion, will serve as a practical means, a beginning, towards the conciliation which is always the most earnest desire of my heart."*<sup>28</sup>

In 1891, in one of his personal audiences with the Holy Father, when those two minds and hearts had the opportunity to confide in and understand each other beyond the barriers of politics, the Bishop obtained from the "intransigent" Leo XIII an unofficial, but none-the-less meaningful, approval of his ideas:

*"When the Pope expressed the desire I should give a lecture on Italian emigration also in Rome, I called to his attention that I would have necessarily to speak of our fatherland, the attachment to one's country, Italy, etc., and that I would express the wish for Conciliation between Italy and Holy See." "By all means, yes", interrupted the Pope; - "everywhere, especially here in Rome, it must be said". However, as I had in mind the episode of Father Augustine, I*

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<sup>27</sup> G.B. Scalabrini, *L'emigrazione, etc.*, op. cit., pp. 53-54.

<sup>28</sup> G.B. Scalabrini, *Il disegno di legge sulla emigrazione italiana*, Piacenza, 1888, p. 46.

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*wanted to make sure. So I read the most daring sentences to the Pope (Pope, or Cardinal Vicar Parocchi?) who approved almost enthusiastically."*<sup>29</sup>

These ideas are underlined by Scalabrini in a letter to the Secretary of the Propagation of the Faith:

*"Most Reverend Excellency,*

*I take the liberty to send you a copy of a humble work of mine on Italian migration as a token of my profound esteem. I know how much this problem interests you: It is my confident hope that in your intelligent good will you may accord it your support. These ideas were welcomed, as it were, with enthusiasm everywhere. A number of very distinguished personalities of the clergy and laity have already volunteered to form a committee with the scope of collecting funds, and asked me to assume the leadership. I am convinced, most worthy Monsignor, that we give full attention to these wonderful dispositions of spirit and get down to work right away, before others outrun us. I believe it necessary to form a committee of laymen, who under the supervision of a bishop and in dependence of Propaganda would prepare the vast amount of groundwork that must precede the actual project of evangelization being now planned by this Sacred Congregation. Above all, it is urgent to rescue our emigrants from speculators that lead many unfortunate souls, boys and girls especially, to perdition. To me, in order to obtain this scope, the help of the laity seems necessary.*

*To this committee emigrants could have recourse with greater probability of success than if they went to an ecclesiastical one. Besides, it seems to me that the lay committee charged with the humanitarian aspect, should be kept separated from the ecclesiastical project dealing with the religious problem. It should perform all the preparatory work and provide all means necessary to carry out the religious program.*

*With the consent of the illustrious Bishop of Cremona, who would also be a member of the general committee, I would be willing to open a house for Priests that should be inspired by God to devote themselves to this work of charity, here in Piacenza. I have no doubt that the committee's members and sympathizers will support me with material means: Above all else, I trust in the providence of God.*

*Propaganda's project will thus find the way open and will not fail, as it would certainly happen if, once entrusted to just a few clergymen, the program should face difficulties and opposition.*

*What is your opinion, Most Reverend Archbishop? I will be obliged if you would deign to let me know how on my part I should go about it, that things may proceed in the right order.*

*Be pleased to accept my sincere respects as I profess myself of Your Excellency  
most devoted and affectionate servant  
+John Baptist, Bishop of Piacenza."*<sup>30</sup>

An explanation is now in order in regard to Bishop Bonomelli of Cremona. We can truly say that the idea of providing assistance to emigrants had almost

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<sup>29</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Bonomelli, Piacenza, March 22, 1891 (Arch. G.S., Scalabrini, Manuscripts, rough copy).

<sup>30</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Archbishop Jacobini, Piacenza, July 2, 1887 (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 25, authenticated copy. Arch. S.C.P.F., Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, ff. 1507-1509)

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simultaneously come to the minds of the two bishops, unknown to each other.<sup>31</sup> We wonder, besides, why the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, aware of Bishop Bonomelli's interest in the project, did not get him in touch with Scalabrini, who was informed only by Father Marcellino Moroni d'Agnadello, a priest recruiting helpers for the work he had begun in 1883 among Italian emigrants in Brazil. Cremona was his diocese and he had already appealed to Bonomelli, who right away informed Rome of the urgent need to provide religious assistance to emigrants, and then directed him to Bishop Scalabrini with the evident scope of obtaining help. In fact thus writes Bonomelli on June 26, 1887:

*"Father Marcellino, an excellent priest, missionary in Brazil among Italian emigrants for over three years, will present to you this letter of mine. He has returned in search of priests to help him, and will go back in a short while. He is a priest of talent, with a generous heart, all love of God, most obedient, but as all or almost all saints, somewhat eccentric. Propaganda wrote urging me to open a house where priests be trained for missions among emigrants. I am seriously thinking about it I have asked "the Association for Italian Missionaries" for help, and will do the same with Propaganda. If I have the money, full speed ahead. If not, I shall wait and see."<sup>32</sup>*

His friend answered immediately:

*"I would like to know when you were invited by Propaganda to open a house for the training of missionaries for Italian emigrants. It is a very good idea but it presents neither small nor few difficulties."<sup>33</sup>*

Unfortunately, Bonomelli's answer to Scalabrini's cautious inquiry on the date when Propaganda had sent him the invitation is not extant. Evidently, Scalabrini was surprised to discover that the Roman Congregation should turn to two different directions at the same time, keeping one in the dark about the other. Two days later, Bishop Scalabrini revealed his intentions and projects to his friend through the services of Professor Ernesto Schiapparelli, the famous

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<sup>31</sup> Cfr. Guido Astorri, "Mons. Scalabrini e Mons. Bonomelli fraternamente uniti nell'assistenza agli emigranti italiani", Studi Emigrazione, V, 13 (1968), pp. 579-586.

<sup>32</sup> Letter Bonomelli to Scalabrini, Cremona, June 26, 1887 (Arch. G.S., Scalabrini, Letters Bonomelli-Scalabrini). Father Marcellino Moroni: Born at Agnadello (Como) in 1828, entered the Order of Capuchins in 1846 and resided at the monasteries of Crema, Milan, Brescia, Borno (Brescia), Cremona, and on the Island of Corsica. He obtained permission to leave the Order probably in 1870, and exercised the priestly ministry in the diocese of Cremona till 1884, when with the approval of Bishop Bonomelli he went to Brazil to give assistance to Italian emigrants in the State of Espirito Santo. In 1887 he returned to Italy to summon help. By Bishop Bonomelli he was directed to Bishop Scalabrini who spoke to him of the need to prepare for the missions in New York. With permission from Bishop Bonomelli he reached New York in 1887, and remained there until the following June as assistant for Italians at the parish of the Transfiguration.

He joined the Scalabrinian Society on June 12, 1888, and made his five year profession of religious vows exactly a month later, the day he left for Brazil.

He spent the first years in the Scalabrinian Missions of the State of Espirito Santo, but when his quinquennium expired, protesting he was not getting help from Italy, he obtained incardination in the diocese of Rio de Janeiro. There he continued to carry on an intense apostolate among Italians in the territory of Vitoria.

In 1907 he returned to Cremona, and died there a few months later.

Letter Scalabrini to Bonomelli, of same date, but in all probability, on June 27, as on that day Bonomelli had sent him a letter by courier, soliciting an answer within the same day by means of the same courier. (Arch. G.S., Scalabrini, Letters Scalabrini-Bonomelli, photostatic copy).

<sup>33</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Bonomelli, of same date, but in all probability, on June 27, as on that day Bonomelli had sent him a letter by courier, soliciting an answer within the same day by means of the same courier. (Arch. G.S., Scalabrini, Letters Scalabrini-Bonomelli, photostatic copy).



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egyptologist, co-founder and secretary of the "Associazione Nazionale di Soccorso ai Missionari Cattolici", founded several months before at Florence together with Professor August Conti. We know this from a letter in which, alien to all jealousy, the Bishop of Piacenza, on June 29 proposes to proceed in good accord:

*"I wish to know a little in detail what is your idea with regard to the founding in Cremona of a house for missionaries to emigrants in America. As I myself entertain similar ideas, already presented to Propaganda, and besides, proceedings are underway to implement them, I don't want us to be in each other's way! It would be good if we came to an understanding and proceeded in common accord also in this."*<sup>34</sup>

The Bishop of Cremona answered enthusiastically right away, happy that his confrere of Piacenza was actually to carry out the project:

*"I have received your most welcome letter through dear Professor Schiapparelli. What a beautiful soul! Since you have a building available, the new foundation for assistance of emigrants should be established there, as two foundations with the same purpose so close to one another might create a problem. I am, and will be with you all the way! We understand each other perfectly!*

*Most willingly I accept to be a member of your Committee, and place my name right after yours. The objectives of the project are beautiful and replenished with practical wisdom. New times, new apostolate, and let us not mind what people might say!"*<sup>35</sup>

On July 18, Cardinal Simeoni thanked Scalabrini for his pamphlet on emigration, and informed him of a standstill in the proceedings for the founding of the new institution both for need of further study, and on account of Archbishop Jacobini, who, due to poor health, had to leave for a period of rest.<sup>36</sup>

More explicit was a letter from Annecy by Jacobini, on July 6:

*"I received your most welcome letter of the second, current month, on the Committee for Emigration and your pamphlet on emigration.*

*While I thank you for your goodness to me, I pray you earnestly to wait before taking any decision on this matter until my return to Rome in the first part of August. The Holy Father is already giving his attention to this difficult problem; it is therefore necessary to refrain from taking any initiative before I make known your intentions, which are somewhat at variance with those of the Pope. Meanwhile take care that you do not get this project entangled with the National Committee for help to Italian missions that has not been approved by Propaganda and does not enjoy its support."*<sup>37</sup>

The difference of the Pope's ideas concerned, as we will see, the participation of lay people who were not to intrude even in the administration of the religious institution projected by Scalabrini, especially, those connected with the

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<sup>34</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Bonomelli, Piacenza, June 29, 1887 (Arch. G.S., Scalabrini, Letters ScalabriniBonomelli, photostatic copy).

<sup>35</sup> Letter Bonomelli to Scalabrini, Cremona, June 30, 1887 (Arch. G.S., Scalabrini, Letters BonomelliScalabrini). Letter Jacobini to Scalabrini, Annecy, July 18, 1887 (Arch. G.S B, II, 1887, No. 25).

<sup>36</sup> Letter Simeoni to Scalabrini, July 18, 1887, Prot No. 3110 (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 13).

<sup>37</sup> Letter Jacobini to Scalabrini, Annecy, July 18, 1887 (Arch. G.SB, II, 1887, No. 25).

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troubled history of the "Associazione Nazionale di Soccorso ai Missionari Cattolici." The Supreme Pontiff had not wished to approve it in order not to hinder the "Society for the Propagation of the Faith of Lyons", and above all on account of the presence of some "clerico-liberals" in the association. Bishop Scalabrini had no choice but to abide by this advice also because he had been affected by a debilitating fever that troubled him in the last days of July to the beginning of August. It seems however that in the beginning of August, the first two missionaries, Father Joseph Molinari of Piacenza, and Father Domenico Mantese of Vicenza, had already placed themselves at Scalabrini's disposal. It so appears in a letter of Bonomelli, on August 7:

*"My dear Father Marcellino will present to you this letter and a man from the Tirol, an emigrant just arrived from America with the precise task of finding a priest. Read the petitions, they will draw tears from your eyes. It is necessary to convince your two priests to go ahead to America along with Father Marcellino. Further, a subsidy should be obtained for their trip from the "Associazione dei Missionari Italiani". In any case, see to it that you help in the matter; it is a most noble work of charity."<sup>38</sup>*

Bishop Scalabrini answered assuring him he would do all possible to come to the help of Father Marcellino while waiting for an answer from Rome.<sup>39</sup> Actually, in hope he might have returned to Rome, Scalabrini had solicited a word from Archbishop Jacobini a few days before:

*"Most Reverend Excellency,  
I am still waiting for definite and clear news on the subject of emigration well known to both of us. If the little interest now alive in public opinion is left to grow cold, I doubt whether the project will amount to anything and we shall see this all important work also fall into the hands of people opposed to the Church. There are priests willing to leave.  
It seems wise to me to gather them first in some institute and fittingly prepare them; but, as I said, I am waiting for instructions: I entrust myself to you, most*

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<sup>38</sup> Letter Bonomelli to Scalabrini, Cremona, August 7, 1887 (Arch. G.S., Scalabrini, Letters Bonomelli-Scalabrini).

Father Domenico Mantese, born at Torrebelvicino (Vicenza) on April 25, 1847, was ordained a priest at Vicenza on August 8, 1875. He served as an assistant at Torrebelvicino from 1875 to 1879, and then at Quinto Vicentino. In 1881 he was appointed pastor at Poianella (Vicenza). From 1886 he corresponded with Father Peter Colbacchini, preparing to join him in Brazil, but having come to know about the Institute founded by Bishop Scalabrini he entered it in November 1887. He made his first profession of the religious vows together with Father Molinari on November 28, 1887, and his quinquennial profession on July 12, 1888, the day he left for Brazil. After spending two years in the state of Paraná in the parish of Santa Felicidade, on account of ill health he was transferred in 1890 to the United States, at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He fell ill the following year and was admitted to a New York hospital, where he died on June 13, 1891.

Father Joseph Molinari, born in Piacenza on August 21, 1856, completed his studies at the seminary of the same city and was ordained a priest by Bishop Scalabrini on May 22, 1880. After spending some time as assistant in the parishes of Sarmato, and Sant'Antonio in Piacenza, he entered the Scalabrinian Society in November 1887. With Fr. Mantese, he was one of the first two members of the Institute founded by Bishop Scalabrini in whose hands he took his first vows on the day of the founding of the Congregation, November 28, 1887. He made the quinquennial religious profession on July 12, 1888, and took perpetual vows on December 8, 1894. He left for Brazil on July 12, 1888 and spent two years at the parish of Santa Felicidade in Paraná. In 1890 he had to go back to Italy to regain his health. He sailed again in December of the same year for the United States, where he exercised the sacred Ministry in New York, New Haven, Connecticut, and especially in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In poor health, he returned to Piacenza and in 1894 was appointed rector of the Mother House. In 1900 Bishop Scalabrini named him Vicar General of the Congregation. He died in Piacenza on May 31, 1900. Following his death, many people were invoking his intercession and testified to have received special graces.

<sup>39</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Bonomelli, Piacenza, August 16, 1887 (Arch. G.S., Scalabrini, letters Scalabrini-Bonomelli, photostatic copy).

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*reverend Archbishop.*

*I ask you to present my respects to His Eminence Cardinal Simeeini.*

*With sentiments of particular esteem I profess myself of Your Excellency*

*most devoted confrere*

*+ John Baptist Scalabrini, Bishop.*"<sup>40</sup>

Meanwhile, Father Francis Zaboglio, who had left for the United States to take his father and sister back to Italy and had been asked by Scalabrini to inquire about the possibility for sending missionaries, wrote to the bishop from Genoa, Wisconsin:

*"Most Illustrious and Reverend Bishop,*

*Railroad and ship disasters happen with such frequency that Your Excellency will perhaps be well pleased if I sent you a report of my trip.*

*We sailed from Liverpool on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July, and reached New York on August 9, at nine in the morning. I had enough time for a brief tour of the city and a visit to the new magnificent cathedral of St. Patrick. In the evening I took the train. It took fifty-five hours, with only a four or five hour stop at Aurora, Illinois, before I could see once again my father, sister, brother and his family, on August 12, at one thirty after midnight.*

*As for conditions of emigrants in Paris, where I visited several people of my home town and others, at one time my parishioners, except for a certain number of young men who strive to cling to the religion of their fathers, the situation of Italians from the religious point of view is deplorable.*

*There is reason for consolation in London, where I was for several days a guest of my classmate and fellow countryman Father Martinucci. The Pallottini Fathers are doing a lot of good in their parish of St. Peter. -There exist a flourishing Catholic school and a night school for Italian adults. I noticed that on the feast of St. Ann, though a weekday, many people had attended mass.*

*There I had also the good fortune to see and talk to the Superior General of the Pallottini, Albert Faa di Bruno, who was conducting his canonical visitation. On my way back, I hope to pay a visit to the Italian parish in Chicago, and to the new one of New York conducted by the Pallottini Fathers.*

*In this small town of Genoa, Wis., religion is sufficiently practiced by Italians. For the past several years a priest has resided here almost uninterruptedly. However, great harm was caused by the loose conduct of a priest from Naples, who afterwards had to be suspended by the Bishop. He left the parish two years ago.*

*Also in other small cities of the area there are many Italians, but from what I could see, as far as religion is concerned, conditions are pretty bad and many are members of the masons. A pious old man, from the countryside of Como, whose two of his sons, married and with family, were behaving like unbelievers, said to me: 'What sin did I commit to have to come to America and have children that do not pay any attention to me and live like animals?' Poor man! He had come to give them an opportunity for better living conditions! In this town, though there are some who do not want to hear of the Church, the*

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<sup>40</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Jacobini, Piacenza, August 10, 1887. (Arch. G.S.,B,IV, 1887, No. 26 copy).

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*great majority practice their faith. Among those that do not practice a fellow from Turin, father of many children, several married, had attended church till twelve or thirteen years ago, but has not done so since. He did not have his last child baptized, and none of his family go to church either. The excuse for all this was an imprudent abuse by his pastor, a piedmontese. And so, his children and numerous grandchildren now have no faith.*

*Such cases are much more frequent among Italians who almost never have the occasion to see a priest! Last week I paid a visit to a pastor in La Crosse, the diocesan see. There I had an audience with the Bishop and Vicar General. Both spoke about the Italians. Among other things the bishop said "I do not understand why Italy did not do anything for its emigrants!" Perhaps he meant to say "little or very little". In fact, something is being done! Only a few days ago I read in the newspapers that in Brooklyn the cornerstone of a catholic church and school for Italians was being blessed. The Bishop told me that at the Council of Baltimore there was discussion about Italian emigrants and recourse had been made to Don Bosco, who, however, was unable to provide missionaries for them. At last, they had to ask the Congregation of Propaganda for help. I do not know what came of it, he said, as I have only a few Italians in my diocese. Other priests of the diocese of La Crosse also told me: 'Generally, here, Italians are bad, very bad'.*

*The present pastor of this town is a zealous German priest, who was for a long time a missionary in Canada. He is now trying to cure the wounds inflicted by the Neapolitan priest. He spoke to me very much about what should be done in America for the Italians, and suggested what locality, in his opinion, would be most fitting for Italians to settle in, especially for its climate: the state of Kansas.*

*Let's hope the good Lord may soon provide for these unfortunate sons of a mother that up to now has left them roaming the streets, as we would say in Lombardy, not caring for them as though they were nobody's children.*

*Tomorrow, I will leave with my father and sister for the state of Dakota, about a day's train ride from here, to bid farewell to several relatives of mine. Between coming and going and a short stay. I think it will take about seven or eight days. Afterwards, we shall leave almost immediately for Italy. I expect to be there by the end of September, or perhaps, the beginning of October.*

*I ask your Excellency to give my respects to Mons. Belasio, and my regards to Mons. Secretary.*

*I present my devoted respects, and ask for your blessing also that God may grant us a good trip.*

*I profess myself of your Excellency  
most humble servant  
Father Francesco, Genoa, Wisconsin  
August 29, 1887*

*P.S. In case what Your Excellency told me personally should become true, I would like to ask you to make sure that my present religious superiors come to know what to expect"<sup>41</sup>*

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<sup>41</sup> Letter Zaboglio to Scalabrini, Genoa, Wisconsin, August 29, 1887 (Arch. G.S., D, I, 1887).

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**FOUNDING OF THE CONGREGATION**

Following the vast interest aroused by his pamphlet on emigration, great pressure was now already being brought upon Bishop Scalabrini from all sides. Father Marcellino Moroni d'Agnadello was growing impatient, and it was now the bishop's turn to moderate his premature enthusiasm. On September 19th he wrote to Bishop Bonomelli:

*"I am keeping in touch with Archbishop Corrigan of New York, and am expecting a letter from him in a few days. I am of the opinion, therefore, that we should wait sometime before giving an answer to Rome; Father Marcellino should not venture all alone into the immense city of New York, unacquainted as he is with the English language; he should wait, rather, for a companion to go with him, whom I could appoint. He will extensively expound to you by word of mouth my intentions. If you wish, I will write on the matter to Propaganda also in your name"<sup>1</sup>.*

Bishop Bonomelli, instead, was more accommodating:

*"Father Marcellino came to me yesterday and delivered your letter. He is a pearl, a true man of God, but he has his own ideas also, and it's better we go along with them. He is now all enthusiasm for New York and cannot wait. He wants to leave right away and I grant him permission to leave with a letter for that Archbishop. Should I not allow him to go, he would feel like "a man frustrated over his cause". You, too, would do well to recommend him to the Archbishop, sure that you will not be disappointed. Father Marcellino has the Heart of an apostle, but we have to moderate him and warn him as Job's horse: "Hey, be careful!"<sup>2</sup>*

Actually, Father Marcellino left for New York in the month of October. As promised, Bishop Scalabrini had written to Cardinal Simeoni on September 21.

*Piacenza, Sept. 21, 1887*

*"Most Eminent Prince,*

*A good laborer came to me from America expressly on behalf of six hundred Italian families residing there. A petition was presented to me. I forward it to Your Most Reverend Eminence that you may, if you consider it advisable, direct it to its high destination (the Holy Father). The moral miseries of those unfortunate people this gentleman described to me drew tears from my eyes especially at the thought that more than ten thousand souls of my flock are living in such miserable conditions. O, Most Eminent Lord. when will someone decide to provide a remedy? I gave him my word that I would write about it to Your Eminence, as I am now doing so, and I hope it will not be in vain.*

*I am continuously asked by many people to solicit the carrying out of the well-*

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<sup>1</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Bonomelli, San Polo, Sept. 19, 1887 (Arch. G.S., Scalabrini, Letters Scalabrini-Bonomelli, photostatic copy).

<sup>2</sup> Letter Bonomelli to Scalabrini, Nigoline, Sept. 22, 1887 (Arch. G.S., Scalabrini, Letters Bonomelli-Scalabrini).

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*known project for Italian emigrants. I have been holding back any action in this regard in expectation of an answer the Most Worthy Archbishop Jacobini had promised me for by the beginning of August.*

*Having received no response so far, I would appreciate knowing whether it would be alright to open here, as is my intention, an Institute for priests that wish to devote themselves to the evangelization of Italian emigrants in America, and for those young men from the colonies that should show signs of a vocation to the religious life.*

*I am very anxious to have some positive news as a means to know whether I should accept or not any gift of money given for this purpose. I would like to come to Rome myself and expound more extensively my ideas on this matter to Your Eminence; but I will wait for your orders.*

*Meanwhile, my deepest respects to Your Eminence, and my heartfelt reverence. I profess myself*

*your most humble and devoted servant,  
+ John Baptist, Bishop of Piacenza."*<sup>3</sup>

Besides his intention of a house for training priests destined to the missions among emigrants, another element comes into view. For the first time the Founder expresses the desire to open the Institute of Piacenza also for the priestly formation of the children of emigrants. Before, his intention had been limited to founding seminaries in America, as we have read in the project on February 16.<sup>4</sup>

Upon receiving this letter 'of Scalabrini, Card. Simeoni presented the matter directly to the Pope, whose directives appear in the "*Biglietto ex Aud Sanctissimi*" (from an Audience with the Holy Father). They were pointing towards a clear separation of the Institute for priests, that is, the future Congregation, from the Association of Patronage, that was to be the object of further study. The Holy Father was willing and ready to approve first the Institute. We quote the directives of the "*Biglietto ex Audientia Sanctissimi*":

*September 25, 1885*

*"The Holy Father grants permission for Bishop Scalabrini to send priests to the assistance of Italian emigrants in America who will ask for them. He desires that the names of the priests chosen for this task be made known to him together with the name of the Bishop of the place to whom they will be recommended by the Holy See.*

*He wishes to know the project of the Institution Bishop Scalabrini intends to found. The Holy Father desires it to be wholly ecclesiastical also in regards to its administration.*

*N.B. - Be it added that Your Excellency may be pleased to bear with us for the delay on the study of the Association for Patronage due to the poor health of the Archbishop Secretary. It will be done, however, as soon as possible."*<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Simeoni, Piacenza, Sept. 21, 1887 (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 27, authenticated copy. Arch. S.C.P.F., Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, ff. 1513-1514).

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. above at page 24

<sup>5</sup> Ex Audientia SS.mi (From Audience with Holy Father), September 25, 1887 (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 27, authenticated copy. Arch. S.C.P.F., Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, f. 1514).

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On September 28, Cardinal Simeoni conveyed the following to Bishop Scalabrini:

*"To the Most Reverend Bishop of Piacenza.*

*September 28, 1887*

*"I acknowledge receiving your letter, and I have to praise you first of all for your concern for the welfare of the unfortunate Italians in South America, and for your solicitous care that spiritual assistance be provided for them. This worthy cause will be blessed by God and a great honor to Your Excellency. For the time being, it would be wise, and Father Marcellino agrees, to send at first only one of the three priests available, to Rio de Janeiro. He should be assigned precisely, to the State of "Espirito Santo" which is most in need of priests. For a greater effectiveness of your plans for Italian emigrants, it is necessary that he remain for at least a month with the Salesian Fathers for training in all things needed in the exercise of the sacred ministry among them. The other two will be allowed to go, later on, also. In any case, the departure of the first one should take place next October 12.*

*Your Excellency will do me the favor to send me the names of the three priests. There is no need for me to tell you that the priest you choose for this task be endowed with sufficient knowledge and proven virtue. Well you know the dangers to which they are exposed in those regions. As soon as the Secretary will be back in Rome, I shall send you an answer on the Committee."<sup>6</sup>*

The petition that interested Bishop Scalabrini the most, that is, the permission to open a house for training Missionaries, had not received an answer, perhaps because Rome had not quite understood the intention of Bishop Scalabrini to found a true and authentic missionary Institute. Naturally, he asked to be granted to explain better by word of mouth his intentions to the Holy Father and Cardinal Simeoni, with whom he insisted:

*"Most Reverend Eminence,*

*On my return to the city after an absence of two months, I hasten to give an answer to your venerable letter of last September 8. The priests willing to devote themselves to the evangelization of Italian emigrants in America are quite a few. From information received, I believe them to be sufficiently learned and truly informed to the ecclesiastical spirit, wishing nothing else but the glory of God and the salvation of souls.*

*Our Institute, however, that, with God's favor, I hope will bear good fruits, must be initiated with utmost prudence for a thousand reasons. On my part, most Eminent Lord, I would never assume the responsibility to send priests into the midst of so many dangers and difficulties of all kinds without training them first for a certain length of time in some pious institute, here or wherever else the Holy See should think advisable, under the direction of an able and experienced missionary. This is why I was lately asking Your Eminence whether independently of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda I could open here a house for this purpose.*

*I would have many things to explain, Your Eminence, to the Holy Father and to*

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<sup>6</sup> Letter Simeoni to Scalabrini, September 28, 1887 (Arch. S.X.P.F. Letters and Decrees of Sacred Congregation. "Biglietti" of Secretary, 1887, Vol. 383, f. 508; Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 27. Authenticated copy).

*you, but I am becoming aware that it is very hard to understand each other by letter.*

*I would be willing, I repeat, to take a trip to Rome, if I could only be sure that action on this matter could be speeded up with some hope of good results.*

*Should Your Eminence be of the same opinion all you need do is send me a telegram or a personal note, and I will come right away. This way I will also have the long desired opportunity to see you once again and express to you in word the sentiments I now render in writing.*

*While waiting for your orders, with deep reverence I profess myself of Your Most Reverend Eminence*

*Most humble and affectionate Servant,  
+John Baptist, Bishop of Piacenza"<sup>7</sup>*

Archbishop Jacobini informed him (Scalabrini) that, due to their summer vacations, "some of the personalities charged with this matter were absent from Rome. A more opportune date would be set in the month of November.<sup>8</sup> (8) Actually, Scalabrini left for Rome on November 7, on the ninth, in the evening, he had an audience with Jacobini from which the following resolutions resulted:

**"Proposals presented to the Holy Father  
to remedy the evils of Italian emigration.**

1. Opportunity to establish in Italy an Institute for training priests under a rule approved by Propaganda where for a certain period of time they would be prepared to go to America to assist Italian emigrants for at least five years. They should place themselves at the disposal of the local bishops for this purpose and from them they are to receive the needed faculties. The Bishop of Piacenza has at hand the means to provide a house for the Institute, the rest would come through free contributions.
2. To dispense with the decision to send a Bishop to America to inquire about conditions and needs of emigrants, as these are in most part known in so far as the United States and Brazil are concerned, while also easy to find out by correspondence in regard to other nations of America. Instead, a circular letter be sent to the Bishops of those regions requesting still further information. It would let them know that the Holy Father, in his desire to remedy as much as possible the evils of emigration, would invite Italian bishops to send zealous priests to assist the emigrants; a house would be open in Piacenza with the scope of preparing priests for this difficult task to be placed at the disposal of the Ordinaries when they arrive; the Bishops in need of such priests would be invited to request them from Propaganda which would present the request to the above Institute. As to the Bishops of Brazil, it should be added that they grant the faculties directly to the missionaries independently of the local

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<sup>7</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Simeoni, Piacenza, October 13, 1887 (Arch. S.C.P.F., Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 27, copy).

<sup>8</sup> Letter Jacobini to Scalabrini, October 19, 1887 (Arch. S.C.P.F., Letters and Decrees of Sacred Congregation and "Biglietti" of Secretary, 1888, Vol. 383, ff. 540-541. Arch G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 27, authenticated copy).



pastors or vicars, separating also the territories of Italian emigrants from the rest of the parish, if necessary.

3. To send letters to Internuncios and Papal Delegates of the Americas for information on emigrants while advising them of the above circulars.
4. A letter to the Bishop of Piacenza commending the new Institute to be opened there, while reminding Italian Bishops that it is the wish of the Holy Father that they allow entrance into this Institute their priests who manifest a vocation to devote themselves to the assistance of emigrants.
5. To establish in America several central houses for missionaries who could attend to the preaching of missions to emigrants isolated from the others, and for whom it should be impossible to provide a permanent priest.
6. To postpone for the time being the institution of the Committees in Italy and in America.
7. To admit to the Institute of Piacenza also young Italians from America showing promising dispositions to the ecclesiastical vocation to be trained there and ordained Priests for assisting the colonies."<sup>9</sup>

The first resolution clearly outlines the idea of a missionary Institute with its own rule approved by the Holy See,

and with a stronger bond of stability than had been envisioned in the former plan; instead of one year, the members of the Institute were to commit themselves to the ministry to Italian emigrants at least five years. As to the second resolution, we find an enclosure written in his own hand by Bishop Scalabrini. In it he jotted down some pointers for the circular letters to be sent to the Bishops:

"Main Points.

1. The primary mission of the Catholic Church is to lead souls to God. Its secondary mission, intimately connected to the first, is to guide society on the path of true civilization, etc.
2. Praiseworthy, then, beyond all saying, is the idea to come to the assistance of Italian emigrants in America by founding an Institute of Missionaries with this mission.
3. It is the most earnest desire of the Holy Father that the Bishops of Italy be not slow in granting permission to enter such Institute to those priests who should feel called to this charitable ministry.
4. Rather, they shall suitably provide for them, when, after donating their ministry in a praiseworthy manner, they return to their country.
5. No doubt, the Bishops of America will be happy in the Lord at this sign of divine Providence, and will warmly welcome these missionaries, and entrust them with the care of Italians in their respective dioceses, and give them ample freedom of action in this respect."<sup>10</sup> (10)

On November 13, the Bishop of Piacenza had an audience with Leo XIII, and he could express his satisfaction to Bishop Bonomelli:

*"I just came from an audience with the Holy Father whom I found extremely benevolent. Our discussion, rather long, dealt in most part with the matter for*

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<sup>9</sup> Arch. S.C.P.F., Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, f. 1384. Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 28, authenticated copy).

<sup>10</sup> Arch. S.C.P.F., Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, f. 1385. Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 28, authenticated copy).

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*which I came: 'Emigration'. Provided the devil does not stick his tail into it, matters are well up to a good start! The good Lord be praised."*<sup>11</sup> (11)

In fact, the following day, the Secretary of Propaganda Fide had an audience with the Pope who approved the resolutions taken at the November 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, except the suggestion not to send a Bishop to America in order to gain information on the conditions of Italian emigrants, and the discipline directives to be given the Missionaries. The Pope, against the proponents' opinion, insisted on the opportunity of this initiative which, however, was never carried out.

Here is the text of "*Ex Audientia Sanctissimi*" of December 4, 1887, added to the document quoted in the preceding page:

*"The Most Holy Father, having listened to the report, approved the resolutions, but at the same time gave orders that at the as soon as possible a Bishop "in partibus", to be chosen by him, be sent to America to diligently investigate the conditions of Italians scattered all over those regions, and to find out, especially what advice to give the Holy See in regard to the canonical discipline of Italian priests sent there."*<sup>12</sup>

Still at the margin we read the list of the documents being prepared:

Brief to the Bishops of America.

Brief to the Bishop of Piacenza.

Letter to the Bishop of Piacenza reporting the resolutions.

Letter to the Bishops of Brazil.

Letter to the Papal Nuncios in America.

Letter to the Bishop of St. Paul, Minnesota, U S.A. reporting the resolutions and inviting him to prepare a house for the missionaries.

A "Biglietto" to Mons. Carlo Nocella inviting him on behalf of the Holy Father to prepare a Brief to the Bishop of Piacenza on the basis of the ideas presented to him. Mons. Nocella shall have an audience with the Pope for a more detailed information on the matter."<sup>13</sup>

The "*Ex Audientia Sanctissimi*" of November 14, 1887, was later published in a more extensive and complete text in Italian:

"*Ex Audientia Sanctissimi*, Nov. 14, 1887.

Consequent to the report of the Archbishop Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, the Holy Father was pleased to make known the following resolutions:

1. He highly recommends the founding in Piacenza of an Institute for Priests who under a rule approved by the Holy See will be trained for a period of time to assist Italian emigrants in America for at least five years. They shall place themselves at the disposal of the Bishops and receive from them the faculties necessary for this purpose. The Bishop of Piacenza, therefore, is hereby authorized to use the means at hand to open a house

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<sup>11</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Bonomelli, Rome, November 13, 1887 (Arch. G.S., Scalabrini Letters, Scalabrini-Bonomelli, authenticated copy).

<sup>12</sup> Arch. S.C.P.F., Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, f. 1384, margin.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

for the Institute.

2. He orders that in due time a Bishop "in partibus" (= for mission territories) be sent to America to investigate the conditions and needs of emigrants, and especially to report to the Holy See whatever concerns the discipline of Italian clergy sent there.
3. He directs that a letter be sent to the Bishops of America to solicit still needed information, declaring that in his desire to remedy as far as possible the evils of emigration, the Holy Father invites the Bishops of Italy to send there good and zealous priests to assist the emigrants. Besides, they are to be informed that a house has been opened to train priests for this difficult mission in Piacenza, from where they shall leave to place themselves at the disposal of the Ordinaries in America. Should Bishops need priests, they shall have recourse to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, that will in turn request them of the said Institute.

As to the Bishops of Brazil, the Holy Father directs that they grant the needed faculties directly to the Missionaries independently of native pastors and vicars, giving them authority, when necessary, to separate the territories inhabited by Italians from the parishes entrusted to the direction of these missionaries.

4. He orders that a letter be sent to the Bishop of Piacenza commending the new Institute to be founded there, and declaring it to be his expressed desire that Italian Bishops not only permit, but also encourage with all zeal, to enter the Institute, those priests who show a vocation to devote themselves to this mission. The Bishops shall give their missionary priests all deserved consideration for this praiseworthy ministry as if they rendered it to their respective diocese, when they return.
5. He desires that in America several central houses be opened for Missionaries, who shall attend to the preaching of missions to Italians too isolated from the others and for whom resident priests cannot be provided.
6. He believes that the forming of Committees in Italy and in America should be postponed for the time being.
7. Finally, he wants that those young men from America should be admitted to the Institute of Piacenza who show good dispositions for the priesthood to be trained there and ordained Priests for the communities to which they belong."<sup>14</sup>

This text responds, except for a few variants in form, to the officious document sent to Bishop Scalabrini by Propaganda Fide on November 15.<sup>15</sup> The decisions of the Holy See were officially transmitted to him in a letter in Latin.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ex Audientia SS.mi. November 14, 1887 (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 29, printed copy).

<sup>15</sup> Letter Jacobini to Scalabrini, June 15, 1887 (Arch. S.C.P.F., Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, f. 1388. Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 30).

<sup>16</sup> Letter Jacobini to Scalabrini, 1887, (Arch. S.C.P.F., Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, f. 1489. (Arch. G.S., B, II, 1887, No. 31, authenticated copy).

Here are the most important points:

"Your zeal and solicitude for the good of souls, also of the Italians living in those regions, are well known to this Sacred Congregation. Even now you employ your meritorious efforts in suggesting several remedies, prompted by your personal experience of these places to contain the evils of migration. I deem it just and right, therefore, to make known to you the main resolutions adopted by the Holy See. In the audience of the fourteenth day of this month, which seems practically useful for the intended scope, while postponing to an opportune time the institution of the committees in Italy and in America.

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Already on November 15, Mons. Nocella had been charged with writing the Brief to send to Bishop Scalabrini:

*"The undersigned Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, by order of the Holy Father, invites Monsignor Secretary of the Latin Letters to write a "Brief" to the Bishop of Piacenza in the following terms:*

*The Holy Father, urged by the desire to provide for the spiritual needs of Italian emigrants, especially in America, accepting Bishop Scalabrini's praiseworthy offer of his services to this purpose, highly approves the opening in Piacenza of an Institute for priests who intend to devote themselves to the missions among them.*

*The Holy Father has no doubt that the Bishops of Italy inspired by the same desire, will not only let free, but also encourage with all their hearts, the Priests of their dioceses to follow this vocation, and will accord them, when they return, the same consideration for their deserving service as if they had rendered it to their respective dioceses.*

*The Holy Father has no doubt that the Bishops of America will rejoice at the news of this providential Institute designed to bring them help in this difficult mission, and lovingly welcome the Missionaries. They will assign them to assist Italians in their diocese, and grant them the freedom of action needed for the effective ministry expected.*

*As to the Institute to be commended, you shall pay a visit to the Bishop of Piacenza, who will inform you in greater detail. I take this opportunity to express to you my sentiments of high esteem, while I profess myself, etc."<sup>17</sup>*

At last, on November 25<sup>th</sup>, the Papal Brief "Libenter Agnovimus", dated for the 15<sup>th</sup>, was published. It represents the Pontifical Decree of Approval "for the Scalabrinian Congregation".

*"My Venerable Brother, Salutations and Apostolic Benediction. Willingly we gave you credit for having initiated the charitable project of establishing in the See of your episcopal ministry an Institute for consecrated men who have the intention and the will to go to far away regions, especially America, to bring the service of their sacred ministry to the multitude of Italian faithful who are compelled by adverse conditions to emigrate from their native land and settle there.*

*In virtue of our Apostolic Office, we consider the salvation of souls our most important responsibility, and diligently take care of all means necessary to this purpose.*

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First of all, the approval to open a new Institute at Piacenza where those pious priests from various regions of Italy are to be trained, who, endowed with a special vocation, intend to devote themselves for at least five years to the missions for the assistance of Italian emigrants, under the jurisdiction of the Bishops of the diocese where they will exercise the ministry.

Besides, since among emigrants are often found young men who show signs of a vocation to the ecclesiastical state, His Holiness desires that they be admitted to the Institute of Piacenza with the hope to train and ordain them for service in the colonies they belong to. Finally, it is the mind of our Most Holy Father that in America itself there should be opened a central house for Italian missionaries who would devote themselves to the preaching of missions to emigrants far isolated from the others for whom it should be impossible to provide a resident priest."

In Appendix No. 3, pp. 112-113, we quote the letters of the S.C. of Propaganda Fide to the Bishops, Nuncios, Internuncios, and Apostolic Delegates of America.

<sup>17</sup> Letter Jacobini to Nocella, September 15, 1887 (Arch. S.C.P.F., Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, f. 1386. Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 36, authenticated copy).

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*To the end that it may provide for the spiritual needs of the faithful, Venerable Brother, we believe your charitable project to be useful and opportune. We will hold very pleasing to us the zeal and love of all those who, moved by the Spirit of Christ, shall devote themselves to this holy ministry.*

*No doubt, Our Venerable Brothers of Italy, by their eminent love for religion, will support this pious Institute, and promote its religious work with their full and total goodwill.*

*Praying, therefore, to Almighty God, from whom holy thoughts and just works proceed, that he may inspire with his Spirit this Institute and help it to send fitting laborers into his harvest, with great love we impart, as a token of our benevolence, the Apostolic Benediction on you, our Venerable Brother, and on all those united with you for the glory of God and salvation of souls.*

*Given at Rome, at St. Peter, on November 15, 1887, the tenth year of Our Pontificate.*

*Leo P.P. XIII.*<sup>18</sup>

No sooner as he received the "Brief" of approval, Bishop Scalabrini gave start to his Congregation. In fact, in the beginning of the few pages of the "Chronicle of the Papal Institute of the Missionaries for Italian Emigrants, especially in America", written by Father Giuseppe Molinari, we read:

"November 27. - On this day, Nov. 27, 1887, Bishop Scalabrini of Piacenza, calls in Mons. Dominic Costa, Papal Chamberlain to His Holiness Leo XIII, provost of the Basilica of Sant'Antonino, Martyr, to express to him the desire that the new Institute be born by the tomb of the renowned Patron Saint of the city and diocese of Piacenza. Monsignor the Provost, a man of true apostolic zeal, willingly consents to the wish of the Bishop, and, even more, he places his parish house at the disposal of his Excellency to temporarily host his missionaries. The Bishop accepts the offer naming him at the same time superior of the new Institute.

November 28. - At about 11 in the morning, the Rev. Superior, together with the two Rev. Priests, Father Joseph Molinari of Piacenza, and Father Dominic Mantese of Vicenza, presented themselves to His Excellency, the Bishop, who had the following provisional rules read to them:

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Fundamental Rules:

1. Unconditional obedience to the Roman Pontiff Christ's Vicar.
2. Perfect obedience to and dependence on the Bishop, Founder, Protector, and Immediate Head of the Institute.
3. Obedience and respect to the Superior.
4. All prayers and good deeds, private or public, be directed to the glory of

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<sup>18</sup> The original copy of the Pontifical Brief is found in the Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 37. Any doubts, then on its date expressed by Bishop Caliaro in op. cit., p. 15, No. 31, are thus cleared away.

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God, the salvation of souls, and especially to obtain good and holy missionaries.

5. The aspirant Missionaries will make all efforts to always maintain harmony and reciprocal charity.<sup>19</sup>

"At noon" - Mons. Costa testifies - ", with the doors closed, the three candidates made their religious profession at the tomb of Sant'Antonino."<sup>20</sup>

The first three professed religious, then, were Mons. Dominic Costa, Superior of the Institute, Father Joseph Molinari, and Father Dominic Mantese. Mons. Costa continued on as Superior over the small Community until the beginning of March of the following year when it was transferred from the rectory of Sant'Antonino to the "Pio Ritiro Cerati", still located in the ancient monastery of the Carmelites by the Church of St. Teresa: he was then succeeded by Father Bartolomeo Rolleri.<sup>21</sup> Mons. Costa kept considering himself a member of the Congregation, even though he did not belong to it by any juridical bond. He rendered to it his services as spiritual director until death (1904). Upon resigning as Pastor in 1893, he had retired to the "Istituto Cristoforo Colombo". Five days after that "first profession", the conditions for admission into the "Papal Institute of the Missionaries for Italians in foreign lands" were published in a pamphlet:

"As a norm for Priests intending to take part in the holy and patriotic work of evangelization of our nationals in foreign lands, especially in America, and join the Institute founded for this scope in the city of Piacenza, we deem it indispensable to make known the main conditions required by it:

1. Candidates must send their application to the Bishop of Piacenza together with the necessary documents, first among them, a letter testifying to the integrity of their conduct and to their proven fidelity to the principle of authority and to obedience to one's Bishop.
2. Once admitted to the Institute, for a period of no less than six months, they shall live in community, attending to prayer, first of all, and then to the study of the languages spoken in the regions where the Italians live who will be entrusted to their care.
3. Since this Institute depends on Propaganda Fide, the Missionaries will be provided with special faculties at the moment of departure.
4. They pledge themselves to devote the services of their sacred ministry for five

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<sup>19</sup> "Cronaca dell'Istituto Apostolico dei Missionari per le Colonie Italiane all'Estero, specialmente in America" (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 39)

<sup>20</sup> Autographic note of Mons. Dominic Costa found on a personal card of Canon Camillo Mangot, Bishop Scalabrini's Secretary, asking "the most worthy and Reverend Mons. Costa to be pleased to indicate in this note the precise date of the founding of the Istituto Cristoforo Colombo." (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 38).

<sup>21</sup> Father Bartolomeo Rolleri, born on June 10, 1839 at Pione di Bocolo dei Tassi (Piacenza), was ordained a priest by Bishop Ranza on June 14, 1862, and served for several years as an assistant at Salsomaggiore. In October 1868 he joined the Comboni Fathers without taking vows. In February 1869 he was assigned to the Comboni Institute in Cairo [Egypt], where he was superior from 1870 to 1885, except for a short period of time when he accompanied Bishop Comboni in central Africa, as his secretary. For reasons of health he had to return to Verona. At the beginning of March 1888 he entered the "Istituto Cristoforo Colombo" and was immediately made its superior. He took his quinquennial vows on July 12, 1888. On November 19, 1892 he was appointed Vicar General of the Congregation. In February 1896, as he himself wrote, "aspiring to a more perfect way of life", he joined the Capuchins, and became a tertiary. But on account of ill health he retired to the "Pio Ritiro Cerati" (home for retired priests of the diocese of Piacenza). On June 10, 1900, he re-entered the "Istituto Cristoforo Colombo" as its superior. He took perpetual vows on March 13, 1902, and three months later, on June 26, 1902, he died.

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years. When these elapse, the Missionaries are allowed to petition and obtain permission to return to their native country, sure that, once they have fulfilled their commitment, their work will be taken into special consideration by their respective Superiors.

5. Expenses for their trip, clothing, and sustenance will be the responsibility of the Institute. However, the candidates shall apply their Masses for the intentions of the Institute.
6. Before departure, they shall take a vow never to retain anything as their own, but to remit, rather, any money, gift, and whatever is given them, to their local Superior.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FIRST STRUCTURES OF THE CONGREGATION**

At this point of our study we have to ask ourselves under what juridical form the Scalabrinian Congregation was born.

First of all, what legal meaning is to be ascribed to the "profession" of November 28, 1887. In the provisional rules read before the "profession", obedience to the Pope, to the Bishop, Founder and Superior of the Institute, and to the local Superior is stressed. In the above quoted norms for admission two more very important elements are entered: a) Obligation of community life, b) Vow of retaining nothing as one's own, to be taken, however, before departure for the missions. No mention is made of the vow of chastity as the first three members were priests.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, some elements proper to the religious life are here present, not all of them, such as the public profession of religious vows. This could not take place, because the Institute, as we shall see, had not been approved as a religious congregation by the Holy See, nor had it received diocesan approval, because Rome in accord with the desire of the Founder, had agreed that the rule should be approved by the Holy See.

Consequently, based on the provisional nature of these rules and norms for admission published on December 3, 1887, we may well affirm that, in expectation of its approval, the Founder intended to present the Institute "as an improperly called religious Congregation", in line with the definition given by canonists at that time.<sup>2</sup>

This structure will be perfected in the following months that will serve as a "novitiate" for the first members<sup>3</sup>; in fact, on July 12, 1888, the day of departure, the first ten missionaries, including Fathers Mantese and Molinari, professed their five-year vows according to the rule presented to his missionaries on March 6 by Bishop Scalabrini with his episcopal canonical approval, and later approved by Propaganda on September 19, 1888. Only then, in March and September 1888, the Institute became "an improperly called Religious Congregation", first by diocesan and then by pontifical approbation.

Instead, on November 28, 1887, though the Founder's intentions were quite clear in this respect, no approbation had occurred, except the one represented by the pontifical Brief "*Libenter Agnovimus*". Now, both the Brief and the "Ex Audientia SS. mi" of September 14, 1887, approve only "the opening in Piacenza of an Institute of Priests" for the assistance to Italian emigrants with no indication as to the form of life to be followed by its members.<sup>4</sup>

Nor is there any mention either of community life or of the vow not to keep as their own any retribution for their ministry in the mission fields. Strictly speaking, then, one must say that the approval of the Holy See did not go beyond the concept of a "Pious Society"<sup>5</sup>, a term which in the then existing Canon Law indicated an Institute organically structured with an internal way of life all its own to reach a common purpose through the coordinated action of its members, but without all the so called proper elements of a religious congregation such as vows and community life.

We believe, therefore, that the expression "first profession" used by Mons. Costa for the rite that marks the birth of the Congregation, should be simply understood as a promise, a solemn pledge to consecrate one's life to the glory of God and the salvation of souls in the new "Apostolic Institute" under the

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<sup>1</sup> Also in the very first "Regolamento" of 1888, the vow of chastity will be spoken of only in reference to the lay brothers.

<sup>2</sup> D. Bouix, *Tractatus de Jure Regularium*: (Paris, 1857), Vol. I, page 202: "We call "improper religious congregations" those that, lacking the essentials of the religious state, as for example, the stability of the vows, still are in some way patterned after the religious life, like living in community under a rule, taking temporary vows, and other such things."

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Letter of Molinari to Zaboglio, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, June 17, 1891 (Arch. G.S., B, I, 3): "Our dear Father Mantese, my indivisible companion in novitiate and in the missions, has died, then?!"

<sup>4</sup> See above pp. 45-46.

<sup>5</sup> Caliaro, ap., cit., p. 43.



standard of an unlimited obedience to Pope and Superiors and of zeal for souls.<sup>6</sup>

On December 16, 1887, Bishop Scalabrini sent in his first report on the beginning of the Institute:

*"Most Reverend Eminence,*

*The inner consolation I experienced at the audience you deigned to grant me on the occasion of my last trip to Rome has not faded away, now another opportunity is given me to come to you if only in writing! The project Our Lord deigned to inspire us with for the good of our unfortunate emigrant countrymen in America may be said with God's help successfully initiated.*

*Immediately upon my return from Rome I got down to action. For the time being I have rented a sufficiently comfortable house, and have almost completed its furnishings, such as beds, utensils, linen, etc. Twelve people could be right away accommodated. As of now, there are five, the Superior, the bursar, who shall remain, and three aspirants, just admitted in the past few days. Priests desiring to be admitted are not lacking, especially after the publication of the "Brief" addressed to me by the Holy Father. However, I proceed very cautiously in granting their wish, as I intend to make sure, especially in the beginning. I am very pleased with the first three; they show a true vocation, and I trust they will do quite well.*

*Judging from the public consensus, the project has been widely accepted with approval, and the expressions of assent forwarded to me by illustrious Bishops furnish sufficient cause to give thanks to God. To be sure, there needs be a great deal of patience, courage, spirit of sacrifice for the undertaking to fully achieve its scope. On my part, at least, goodwill is not wanting. The Lord will do the rest.*

*Proceedings are now under way for the purchase of a building fit for this scope. In my opinion, it should be titled to "Propaganda Fide". I trust the means will be supplied by divine Providence, and, in such case, who else could play the part of Divine Providence but Propaganda itself!*

*Enclosed with this letter Your Eminence will find:*

1. *The letter, or rather, the draft of a letter, such as I attempted to prepare for the Bishops of America, as I was charged to do.*
2. *The main norms for candidates.*

*In the near future I will submit to Your Eminence a "Rule", also. I was charged with it by this Sacred Congregation that reserved to itself the right to examine and approve it. A science proven by experience to be of great help, if not almost indispensable, to missionaries, destined to such widely scattered regions, would be medicine, at least in its most elementary notions. However, before including it in the curriculum, I will wait to hear your opinion on the matter.*

*May the Lord bestow his blessings on You, etc."<sup>7</sup>*

The same day he wrote a letter also to the Secretary, Archbishop Jacobini:

*"Piacenza, December 16, 1887*

*"Most Illustrious Excellency,*

*I consider it my duty to send you at last some news on the new Institute. Please, forgive me, if to spare myself the time I refer you to what I wrote on this matter to the most Eminent Prefect. He will inform you on how I have carried out the orders received. The house is almost ready, but my financial means, as Your Excellency can very well imagine, are running low!*

*The building we are in the process of buying sells for about seventy thousand liras. On my part, besides a down payment, I hope to collect in between ten to fifteen thousands. Divine Providence will supply the rest. I am counting also on what you promised me by word of mouth. The house should be titled to Propaganda and remain its exclusive property. This way, many benefits will be gained! What is your opinion?*

*It would be my intention to name the house after the man who first brought the faith and civilization to America, Christopher Columbus; more so, as he has a totally special relationship with the diocese of Piacenza, being his family originally came from here.*

*Besides, this name would attract much support, as apart from the help of God,*

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 26-42.

<sup>7</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Simeoni, Piacenza, December 16, 1887 (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, No. 46). "Superior is Mons. Dominic Costa; Bursar, Canon John Lusardi; Aspirants, Fathers Dominic Mantese, Joseph Molinari, and Seminarian Henri Degrenne." As to the last one, cfr. Appendix No. 6, pp.123-130.

*we well know, man's favor is also needed.*

*I ask you kindly to read the ideas jotted down for the Papal Letter to the Bishops of America. I do not know whether I did it right; in any case, I hope for your understanding.*

*So also, please, have an answer sent to me as soon as possible to my question about the study of the elementary notions of medicine. Was a letter dealing with the articles needed for the liturgy sent out? Any news from Naples? Is there any hope for a union?*

*Wishing you merry Christmas tidings from the bottom of my heart, I commend myself to your prayers, and with sentiments of sincere esteem, I confirm myself of Your Excellency*

*humble confrere  
+ John Baptist Scalabrini,  
Bishop of Piacenza.*"<sup>8</sup>

On the same date, the Archbishop of New York wrote to Bishop Scalabrini requesting priests for Italians in his city, and expounding a plan of his own for Italo-American seminarians:

*"Most Reverend Excellency,*

*With great satisfaction I gather from the Catholic press that Your Excellency is now engaged in opening a Seminary for training zealous Missionaries destined to the spiritual welfare of Italian emigrants in Brazil. Should your Excellency wish to come to my aid also with some priests for Italians in this city, I would be very grateful and much obliged to you! Quite willingly would I meet the expenses for their seminary training! Also, after completing two years of theology, the students could enter our seminary to spend here the remaining two years. This way, they could learn at the same time the English language, and become better qualified to help in the missions by acquiring a sufficient experience of the customs of the people.*

*In cases when the Missionaries did not wish to remain permanently here, exiles from their native land, they could stay only five years, for instance, and then, upon their return to Italy, they should not be denied a possible well deserved promotion to some parish responsibility, when an opportunity is present. Such is also the idea of Father Marcellino Moroni, recently arrived to this country. I propose it to your kind consideration.*

*By all means, send me some good Italian priests! Strong on your great zeal for your fellow countrymen, I dare sincerely speak to you my mind and implore your help.*

*Wishing you a most merry Christmas, I profess myself*

*of Your Excellency humble servant,  
+ Michael Augustine,  
Archbishop of New York.*"<sup>9</sup>

Only on the following January 27 did the Secretary of Propaganda Fide respond to the letter of Bishop Scalabrini on December 16, 1887:

*"With great pleasure I have read the consoling news forwarded to me on the happy occasion of the founding of the Institute for training Italian missionaries who intend to devote themselves to the evangelization of their fellow countrymen in foreign lands.*

*I admire your great zeal and energy displayed in this undertaking that have already achieved effective results. My sincere congratulations.*

*I am confident that, with God's blessings and by your zeal and hard work, this "Institute" will achieve great growth and bring about the abundant results expected.*

*You inform me you are in the process of purchasing a building for this purpose, which Your Excellency would like to title to this Sacred Congregation. To this effect, as far as the Congregation is concerned, there is no objection, unless there should arise some difficulties on the part of the Italian government. Any way, you may start negotiations on the matter with the government.*

*It would also be my earnest desire to financially contribute to the foundation*

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<sup>8</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Jacobini, Piacenza, December 16, 1887 (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1887, 45, copy). Mention of Naples is explained on pp. 54-55.

<sup>9</sup> Letter Corrigan to Scalabrini; New York, December 16, 1887 (Arch. G.S., D, I, 1).

*and development of an Institute in which this Sacred Congregation has taken such a keen interest. I am sorry, however, that the means at our disposal should be so very inadequate to the innumerable needs of the single missions scattered all over the world. I am, therefore, regretfully compelled to point out that you can count very little on any financial support from this Sacred Congregation.*

*As to the union you mentioned with the Institution of Naples, Your Excellency has already received the desired information from Father De Martinis. We shall keep in mind your Institute in the distribution of articles for the liturgy when there will be some available.*

*On the project for teaching Missionaries the basic elements of medicine, a decision will be taken when the rule to be adopted by this Institute will be submitted for examination by this Sacred Congregation.*

*The outline prepared by you for a letter to be sent by the Holy Father to the Bishops of America has also been received. However, this Pontifical Document cannot possibly be made ready at the present time. As you well know, he is now caught in the midst of his jubilee celebrations".<sup>10</sup>*

In answer, Bishop Scalabrini speaks mainly about the "Collegio di Napoli" ("Asian College of Naples"), an institution founded in 1732 by Matteo Ripa, a missionary and a painter from Eboli, together with a Society of secular priests for the specific scope of training Chinese and Indian seminarians for the missions. Subsequently to 1860, due to changed political conditions, Society and College underwent a series of difficulties, and all their assets were lastly confiscated and transferred over to the present "Istituto Orientale di Napoli" foundation (Institute for Oriental Studies). In the period of time 1887-1888, the "Collegio Asiatico" was threatened with confiscation, and Bishop Scalabrini was trying to save it by transforming it into a seminary of missionaries for emigrants, as we understand from this letter to Card. Simeoni, intended as an answer to Archbishop Jacobini:

*"Most Reverend Eminence,*

*First of all, I thank you for your most kind letter. The Institute is proceeding well: but about this on another occasion. The purpose of this note of mine is to let you know that as of now I have received no information of any kind from Father De Martinis, Rector of the Asian College of Naples. However, I have written to him a few days ago, and I am waiting for an answer. Meanwhile, I deem it opportune to inform Your Eminence that plans are underway to suppress that important institution, as you will see in the enclosed correspondence from Naples sent to the "Perseveranza" newspaper of Milan.*

*An idea came to my mind which I shall be pleased to submit to your prudent judgement, Your Eminence.*

*In my estimation, a very good move would be to hasten the fusion of that Institute with the new one of Piacenza. The support the project of assisting our emigrants enjoys with all political parties could very well help in forestalling the danger threatening that institution. Surely, should the government still have any sense of decency left, it would not dare in any way oppose assisting the emigrants now in the midst of so much public interest in their plight. It was, perhaps, in the designs of divine Providence that the Institute of Piacenza should be founded to save the College of Naples. Anyway, the union would not be detrimental at all, because while serving the purpose of preventing thieves from stealing what is ours, it would not take away the right of the Holy See to restore things as they were before.*

*What counts is to act now, and possibly, I insist, by the beginning of January. If it should help better in coming to an understanding, De Martinis could come up here, and we would prepare a legal document on the matter. In case, however, the transaction should be carried out there, though so very busy, I would spend a few days in Rome.*

*In .expectation of your desires*

*I express my deep respects, etc."<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>10</sup> Letter Jacobini to Scalabrini, January 27, 1888 (Arch. S.C.P.F., Letters and Decrees of Sacred Congregation and "Biglietti" of Secretary, 1888, Vol. 384, f. 36; Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1888, No. 1). Authenticated copy.

<sup>11</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Card. Simeoni, Piacenza, February 23, 1888. (Arch. G.S. Scalabrini, Manuscripts, rough copy. We believe the Rector of the "Collegio Asiatico" to be Mons. Roberto De Martinis. In 1878 he had published a notorious book against the anticlerical laws of the new kingdom of Italy: Del regio patronato della Chiesa di Napoli. (Royal

We have no further information in regard to the "Collegio Asiatico of Naples" because the project probably failed in its very beginning. At about this time Father Zaboglio reenters the stage. Upon his return from America he had been transferred from the "Collegio Rosi" of Spello to the Orphanage of Piazza Navona, Rome, also run by the Somasca Fathers. On January 15, 1888, he wrote from here to Bishop Scalabrini to inform him that he had petitioned the Procurator General of the Somasca Congregation, Father Lorenzo Cossa, for permission to join the Institute of Piacenza:

*"Most Illustrious and Reverend Excellency,*

*I presented your personal note to me to my Rector and to the Procurator General, who, naturally, was not happy with it. On the other hand, he is well aware of the fact that, strictly speaking, I am not bound to the Congregation by any canonical bond. Before showing it to him, I had Father Savaré read it, letting him know right away the response I had received.*

*Father Savaré told me he would write himself to Your Excellency on the matter. As far as I am concerned, I would be willing to leave for Piacenza right tomorrow. However, since "melius est nomen bonum quam divitiae" (a good name is preferable to riches), and experience teaches what a bad impression would give its members one who leaves the Congregation after wearing its habit even for a short while, I intend to withdraw from it with the consent of my present superiors, if possible, upon making them fully aware of the supreme need for assisting our unfortunate emigrants.*

*In any case, count on me, Your Excellency, for the little I can do. Be pleased to accept my respects. I ask your blessing, and confirm myself your most devoted servant,*

*Father Francis Zaboglio.<sup>12</sup>*

*Rome, "Collegio Orfani" Piazza Capranica*

*January 15, 1888*

The "Somasca" Father Savaré told Bishop Scalabrini how difficult it was to let Father Zaboglio free to go since the rector of the orphanage would be left without help right in the middle of the school year: would he be pleased to allow him to leave three or four months hence? The Bishop would do well to write to the Superior General, Father Nicola Biaggi, and to Archbishop Jacobini.<sup>13</sup>

The Superior General of the "Somasca" Fathers implored Bishop Scalabrini not to take away Father Zaboglio before the end of the school year on account of the lack of personnel afflicting his Congregation.<sup>14</sup>

Father Zaboglio was already growing impatient to devote himself to the new mission of which he had been the strongest supporter:

*"As far as it depends on me" - he wrote on February 9 - "I shall try to obtain permission to leave as soon as possible, convinced that in this matter to let spring go by is in many respects the same as wasting a whole year."<sup>15</sup>*

Few days later he suggested to Bishop Scalabrini:

*"Most Illustrious and Reverend Bishop,*

*A thought occurred to me which I dare express to you. Could perhaps a circular letter be sent to all Lenten preachers of Italy exhorting them to launch an earnest appeal to their listeners by a special sermon at the close of Lent, to be followed by a collection? The letter would provide some statistics focusing their attention on the conditions and continual increase of emigration, on the evils resulting from it, especially the immense loss of souls, on the moral and religious harm brought upon the good and morally-sound families of our countryside by so many of the returning emigrants, and on the dishonor it bears upon the Italian name.*

*I would inform them about the approval, commendation, and blessing of the*

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Patronage over the Church in Naples). Naples, 1878. For information on the Collegio Asiatico, cfr. N. Tchang Ti C'Ien, La fondazione del Collegio cinese di Napoli e la formazione del clero fatta da Matteo Ripa. (Founding of the Chinese College in Naples, and the Formation of the Clergy conducted by Matteo Ripa), a dissertation for the doctorate in Biblioteca Athenaei Urbani de Propaganda Fide.

<sup>12</sup> Letter Zaboglio to Scalabrini, Rome, January 15, 1888 (Arch. G.S., B, I, 4).

<sup>13</sup> Letter Savaré to Scalabrini, Rome, January 15, 1888 (Arch. G.S., B, I, 4).

<sup>14</sup> Letter by Biaggi to Scalabrini, Genoa, January 23, 1888 (Arch. G.S., B, I, 4).

<sup>15</sup> Letter Zaboglio to Scalabrini, Rome, February 9, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B. IV, 1888, No. 13).

*Holy Father upon the new Institute for the protection of our unfortunate countrymen in foreign lands.*

*This way, two results would be achieved: the first, temporal but very effective, the raising of a good sum of money to benefit the pious Institute; the second, lasting and of permanent effect, to make it known to all social classes throughout Italy. I am convinced, hardly a more effective way could be found.*

*This letter should be mailed, right away, through the Bishops to the sacred Orators that they may have the information and news needed on time to adequately prepare their sermons.*

*Should Cardinal Alimonda succeed in having Father Agostino di Montefeltro preach one such sermon at the Cathedral of Turin, and the same were done all over Italy, donations would pour in on all sides, a larger number of Missionaries could be sent right away to the missions, more young men admitted to the new Institute, and other activities could be undertaken for emigrants, as other nations are doing.*

*If the idea should meet with your approval, I am sure that even in the midst of your pastoral activities you would find the time to write a warm appeal, all inflamed with charity, as only you can do, and send it right now to the four corners of Italy.*

*Pardon me my presumption, Your Excellency, and, please, feel free to do with these ideas what in your judgement you think best. The Superior General did not show up as yet.*

*Asking for your blessing, in sincere respect I profess myself your most humble servant and son,*

*in Christ,  
Father Francis Zaboglio.<sup>16</sup>*

Bishop Scalabrini immediately mailed the following circular letter to a hundred Italian bishops, and some bishops in Holland, Belgium, and Germany:

*"Most Reverend Excellency,*

*It is not without apprehension of causing you some inconvenience that I dare send you this letter. I trust, however, that in your good heart you will bear with me.*

*A year ago, fully aware of the many moral and religious evils besetting our emigrants in the Americas, I addressed myself by means of a pamphlet to the clergy and laity of Italy pleading for support of a "Society of Patronage" on their behalf.*

*This proposal, which had no merit other than interpreting the sentiments present deep in all hearts, met with the keen interest of all good people, and a vast consent in the catholic press.*

*However, the financial means this new Institution has at its disposal, are limited, Your Excellency, while the needs to be attended to are immense and urgent. Almost daily I receive moving letters, signed by the family heads of entire communities, insistentlly imploring for Priests, ready to make the small financial sacrifices consented by their poor economic conditions if only they could be granted their request.*

*Statistics show, and I have all reasons to believe them correct, that, aside from emigrants living in the cities where they have the opportunity to avail themselves of a priest's services, more than a million Italians scattered in the various countries of America live and die like "animals", to use their expression, without the comfort of a word about God to keep them faithful to the religion of their fathers. But, not only do they need priests!*

*They lack also the church, sacred vessels, vestments, furnishings, everything! With God's blessing, in a few months eight priests and four brother catechists shall depart for the Americas. However, it is obvious that the effectiveness of their apostolate will be proportionate to the means at their disposal.*

*For these reasons, I deemed it very opportune, Your Excellency, to ask you to invite the zealous Lenten preachers to commend the new Institute to the prayers and financial support of the faithful to implore God's blessings and secure the temporal means it is in need of.*

*Such, Your Lordship, is the intent of this letter of mine. Should you find it*

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<sup>16</sup> Letter Zaboglio to Scalabrini, Rome, January 15, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B. IV, 1888, No. 13).

*opportune, I have no doubt that you will accord it the favor and support which all good enterprises carried out for the glory of God and the salvation of souls find in Your Excellency.*

*Thanking you warmly in advance and commending myself to your prayers, with sentiments of high esteem, I profess myself of Your Excellency*

*most devoted servant,  
+ John Baptist Scalabrini,  
Bishop of PiacenzaPiacenza."<sup>17</sup>  
February 23, 1888*

By the end of the month he had already received some responses:

*"Dear Father Francis,*

*I have in part carried out the suggestion you expressed to me in your most welcome letter on the fifteenth of this month. I sent a letter to the bishops of the most important dioceses of Italy, about a hundred. It was written in the form of an appeal: Some answered most kindly: Let's wait and see: Did your superior general visit you in Rome, as yet?*

*Has anything been decided about your coming up here?*

*Things are proceeding quite well with our new Congregation. Let us pray to the Lord that he may send "laborers into his vineyard."*

*My regards to dear Father Savare'.*

*Greetings and my blessings."<sup>18</sup>*

Of the hundred answers we have, we like to quote the letter of the Bishop of Sarzana, remarkable for his correct evaluation of the problem both for the emigrants' and for the Italian bishops.

It is representative also of the modest financial help Bishop Scalabrini was able to receive from his confreres.

*"Most Reverend Excellency,*

*Most willingly and with all my heart I will recommend to the Lenten preachers the Institute initiated by your Excellency at the opportune time and with such great zeal for the assistance of our unfortunate Emigrants in America.*

*Only with regret I have to advise you that my diocese will not be able to supply such contributions as the worth and the sanctity of the cause would call for.*

*This diocese is in its greatest part located on the unproductive mountains of the "lunigiana", reason why it has no small share of emigrants. Anyway, it shall be like the widow's mite which will help in obtaining the gracious favor of our Lord upon the new Institute. From this point of view, the little will have its value, also.*

*Certainly, your deed is meritorious with God, and deserves the gratitude of the bishops of Italy because all of us have emigrants in those immense regions to whom we could not offer anything more than the help of our prayers.*

*In a certain sense, Your Excellency is giving them back to us as we are now given the opportunity to cooperate in their salvation by the more effective and sure means of the Sacred Ministry. We know, the Institute is in its beginnings, but you can be sure, Bishop, by such endorsement as the Holy Father's, this undertaking will not fail. It is too intrinsically connected with our holy religion, too much in harmony with the manifest designs of divine Providence, not to succeed and produce the expected good results.*

*You will be confronted with many difficulties, as the times are of very little help, if not obtrusive at all, but everything done in the Church and for the Church shares in the nature of the mustard seed. In spite of all contradictions from the spiritual enemies, the Lord will see to it that it may grow into a strong and healthy tree.*

*Most devoted servant and brother in Christ,  
+Giacinto, O.P. Bishop."<sup>19</sup>*

We deem it opportune to quote also the answer of the Most Reverend Rocco Cocchia, Archbishop of Chieti, who by personal experience of certain critical situations was especially aware of the behavior of numerous priests that had migrated together with the people of their own parishes. The letter proves that Bishop Scalabrini and his missionaries - Frs. Maldotti and Colbacchini, for

<sup>17</sup> Circular Letter of Scalabrini to Bishops of Italy, Piacenza, February 23, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B. IV. 1888, No. 15, copy).

<sup>18</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Zaboglio, Piacenza, February 28, 1888. (Arch. G.S., Scalabrini, Manuscripts).

<sup>19</sup> Letter Rossi to Scalabrini, Sarzana, February 27, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B. IV, 1888, No. 101).

example, in their reports on the conditions of emigrants in Brazil<sup>20</sup> - were not exaggerating when writing about such priests. Besides, it helps explain the cautious reception accorded the first Scalabrinian Missionaries by some American bishops, especially in Brazil.

*"Most Reverend Bishop,*

*I have served ten years as an Apostolic Delegate to the Antilles, and three as Internuncio to Brazil, from where I returned only last June. I welcome, therefore, your charitable undertaking to provide spiritual assistance to our abandoned emigrants. In the cities, in their quest for gain and with none to remind them, they neither go to church nor receive the sacraments. In the country where they live together in settlements, the situation is different. Here they remain religious and desire the priest. There is a good number of priests, mostly from the Cilento and some dioceses of Calabria; but it would be better they were not there! Except for some, generally they have no faith and no sense of responsibility. They are, rather, a scandal and a shame for the faithful. In Brazil, this was the problem that caused me most of the troubles, and I was instrumental in having the Sacred Congregation of the Council issue the restrictive circular letters, unknown to you perhaps, but well known to all my confreres of the provinces to which I myself belong.*

*Therefore, providing to fill in the void by substituting so many ravenous and scandalous wolves with good and zealous priests is such a work that if it met the support of those who see the facts from afar, much more can it draw the admiration and gratitude of one that by personal experience is fully aware of its necessity.*

*To one thing you should pay attention especially that the missionaries be provided with extensive faculties. Generally, the Bishops are not opposed, but they have their reservations as they do not want to constrain the jealousy of local pastors. To be, therefore, in possession of effective faculties from the Holy See, if only through Propaganda, is absolutely necessary.*

*While imploring God's blessing on your undertaking, I offer my respects, and with all esteem and reverence I profess myself*

*Your most humble and devoted servant,  
+ Rocco, Archbishop of Chieti.<sup>21</sup>*

Quite interesting also is the following passage of the letter from the Bishop of Policastro:

*"I am not the only one to admire and support as much as I possibly can your truly inspired project, since so many of my people have emigrated, and still are doing so, to the Americas. Almost a hundred diocesan priests have gone along with them; and still others were planning to leave, had not the Holy Father in his provident concern, put a stop at last to this easy exodus of Priests."<sup>22</sup>*

Let's go back to the small community of Piacenza. The first chronicle of the Institute marks March 5, 1888 as the day when the four aspirant missionaries, two priests (Fathers Molinari and Mantese) and two lay brothers (Pietro Pizzolotto and Giovanni Ferrari) moved from the rectory of Sant'Antonino to the "Ritiro Cerati"; one section of it had been rented to provisionally accommodate the new Institute while waiting for a permanent residence. "*The following day -*

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<sup>20</sup> For instance, Fathers Maldotti and Colbacchini in their reports published in the "Special Issue" of Studi Emigrazione, op. cit. pp. 325-480.

Father Pietro Colbacchini, born in Bassano del Crappa (Vicenza) on September 11, 1845, at the age of 18 entered the Jesuit seminary, but had to leave a year later for reasons of ill health. He continued his studies at the seminary of Vicenza, and was ordained a priest on July 26, 1869. At 28 he was appointed pastor of the Church of Santa Corona in Vicenza, and while there he brought into the diocese the Ursuline Order. Later on he served as pastor in the town of Cereda (Vicenza) for five years.

He left for Brazil on November 1, 1884, and took his residence at Montserrat, not far from San Paulo, in the midst of a community of Italians from Mantua. In the beginning of 1886 he moved to the state of Paraná and settled at Agua Verde, close to Curitiba, thus giving start to the sixteen missions for the Italians living in that region, and in the central mission he built the Mother Church of Santa Felicidade. By the end of 1888 he decided to join the Scalabrinian Congregation, and made his first quinquennial profession on August 12, 1888.

In 1894 he returned to Italy, wrote the Guida dell'emigrante italiano (Guide of the Italian Emigrant), and an extensive report on Italian emigration, directed to the Foreign Minister of Italy.

On September 1, 1896, he re-entered Brazil, reaching the state of Rio Grande do Sul, where he founded the city of Nova Bassano (February 15, 1897) and built the church of the Sacred Heart. He died at Nova Bassano on January 30, 1901.

Father Pietro Maldotti, born at Vidalenzo di Polesine (Parma) on March 14, 1862, after teaching ten years at the seminary of Fidenza, joined the Scalabrinian Congregation on July 13, 1893, and was assigned by Bishop Scalabrini to the mission of the port of Genoa on August 2, 1894. He died in Genoa on February 1, 1939.

<sup>21</sup> Letter Cocchia to Scalabrini, Chieti, March 10, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B., IV, 1888, No. 100).

<sup>22</sup> Letter of Bishop of Policastro to Scalabrini, Policastro Bussentino, March 13, 1888. No. 39)

so continues the chronicle - *His Excellency the Bishop came to visit us. After a few words prompted by the occasion, he presented us with the new "Rule" and daily schedule.*"<sup>23</sup> The chronicle is here dealing with the "Regolamento" that carries the ecclesiastical approval of Bishop Scalabrini:

"Piacenza, March 6, 1888." Upon mature examination and deliberation in the Lord, we approve (these rules), liable to those changes that shall be deemed necessary and opportune."

+John Baptist, Bishop of Piacenza."<sup>24</sup>

From a legal standpoint, the "Regolamento" of 1888 stands half way between "Constitutions" and "Rules"; besides the fundamental laws, it contains practical rules on the scope, the means to achieve it, and the disciplinary rules for community life. "In content, it represents a code of ascetico-pastoral life rather than a body of laws. Its author sounds more like a saint than a jurist."<sup>25</sup> Such impression is proven by the fundamental importance attributed to the exercises of piety, and to the spiritual and apostolic formation of the members.

"As apostles of the Gospel, the missionaries must remember that their mission is to spread the good presence of Christ by their way of life and preach his message by example rather than by word. They shall be diligent, therefore, to keep the rules, etc."<sup>26</sup>

On the juridical aspect, instead, we have to admit that we can discern only an outline, with particular stress on some points while leaving others undetermined.

"This can be easily understood, however, if we keep in mind that, confronted with the urgency of providing for the salvation of the hundreds of thousands of Italians in need of religious assistance, what mattered most to him was to have right away many priests inspired by true apostolic zeal and ready for any sacrifice. Hence the reason why in the "Regolamento" greater attention was given to the ascetico-pastoral aspect than to the juridico-constitutional one.

In any case, an Institute still in its beginning stands in need of pioneers willing to take the challenge in the spirit of the Founder. Too strict a rule could thwart and extinguish enthusiasm, thus risking the future of the Institute.

It stands to reason, however, that Bishop Scalabrini would move along with the general law of the Church as to the juridical requirements. In fact, there are, in some instances, direct references to it, as, for example, in Chapter Nine, where, after stating that the missionaries, while depending on the superiors of the Institute, have the obligation to be wholly obedient to the local bishops in the exercise of their ministry, he points out: "As prescribed by the canon law for Religious in care of souls."<sup>27</sup>

The specific scope of the Congregation is "to keep the catholic faith alive in the hearts of our emigrants."<sup>28</sup>

To achieve it, the members pledge themselves to the religious life by the quinquennial profession of the evangelical counsels:

"All those admitted to be members of the Institute must be thoroughly imbued with the idea that for five years they will pledge themselves to a life as true religious, motivated by zeal for the salvation of souls."<sup>29</sup>

The vows were "simple and temporary." The "Regolamento" speaks of vows of poverty and obedience for priests, while it explicitly includes the vow of chastity for lay brothers, for the obvious reason that priests are already solemnly pledged to it when ordained subdeacons. However, even from the beginning, that is, from July 12, 1888, the form of profession used by priests expressly

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<sup>23</sup> "Cronaca dell'Istituto Apostolico dei Missionari per le Colonie Italiane all'estero, specialmente d'America", March 6, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B. IV, 1888, No. 39).

<sup>24</sup> Arch. G.S., B, III, 3, II exemplar. It responds to the "Regolamento della Congregazione dei Missionari per gli Emigranti," approved by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide in 1888 "ad experimentum" (on trial) for five years, published in Marco Caliaro's op. cit., pp. 167-180. The only differences are: Chapter V, No. 5. Addition of vow of chastity for lay brothers. Chapter XII, No. 8. Some slight variations of form. Chapter XIV. Addition on appointment of Superior General and other Superiors.

<sup>25</sup> Marco Caliaro, Ibidem, p. 49.

<sup>26</sup> Regolamento 1888, Chapter XII, No. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Marco Caliaro, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

<sup>28</sup> Regolamento 1888, Chapter I, No. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, Chapter V, No. 5.



spells out all three religious vows.<sup>30</sup>

"Before departing for the missions, all missionaries, both priests and lay brothers, shall take the following pledges:

1. To remain in the Congregation for five continual years, whatever destination and duties they will be assigned to by their superiors.
2. Not to remain in the mission fields after the five years expired. They will not be allowed to return there unless readmitted to the Congregation."<sup>31</sup>

Besides the disciplinary norms dealing with the exercises of piety, which "shall always be performed in common"<sup>32</sup>, and the meals, "the same for all and in common"<sup>333435</sup>, the "Regolamento" singles out the hinge of common life:

"They shall always take care that the most perfect unity with their brethren be preserved in the Congregation, treating each other with open hearts and sincere affection."<sup>36</sup>

On March 7, Bishop Scalabrini submitted the "Regolamento" to the Sacred Congregation of "Propaganda Fide":

*"March 7, 1888 to Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda:*

*Most Reverend Eminence,*

*Herewith enclosed, I submit to Your Eminence the "Regolamento" of the Missionaries for Italian Emigrants. I ask you kindly to examine whether it responds to the scope and can be approved, if only provisionally, as previously agreed, by this Sacred Congregation.*

*Should approval be soon granted, besides other benefits of no little importance, I would be spared much toiling, since, as things are now, I have to write continuously long letters explaining things to the various priests who inquire about the Institute before deciding whether to join it or not.*

*Once printed, a copy of the "Regolamento" could be sent to them. This way, it seems to me, no information requested would be left out for them to know.*

*I would also very much appreciate if the Holy Father would write, as agreed upon, a letter to the Bishops of America to pave the way for the mission and render it more effective.*

*I hope to send the first missionaries, eight priests and four brother-catechists, within the year. As you will see for yourself in the "Regolamento", I deemed it opportune to include in the Congregation also the religious-brothers, who will go with the priests to assist and help them with the teaching of catechism, etc. Besides, and much for the better, this way there will be no need for the priests to hire women for their household.*

*I have the consolation of assuring you, Most Eminent Prince, that God is favoring our project, and I am confident that before the end of the year I will have acquired a building with a beautiful church attached to it to be served by the priests of the Congregation.*

*Be pleased to keep me in your prayers! Accept my sentiments of devoted respect.*

*Your humble servant,*

*+ John Baptist, Bishop of Piacenza."<sup>37</sup>*

The "Regolamento", examined by the Sacred Congregation, did not present "serious difficulties" for approval, so much so that it was directly transmitted to Card. Mazzella, president of the Commission for the Revision of Rules and

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<sup>30</sup> Here, for example, the formula for the vows of July 12, 1888, signed by Father Dominic Mantese: "I, Father Dominic Mantese, a priest of the Congregation for the Missions among Italian emigrants, especially in America, desiring with all my heart that God be honored and worshipped by them, in the presence of the Blessed Trinity and of all the heavenly Court, I vow poverty, chastity, and obedience, according to the Constitutions of the Congregation. May Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Most Blessed ever Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles, Saints Joseph, Francis Xavier, Peter Claver, Antonino Martyr, All Angels, and Saints, whom I most humbly pray and implore, be always at my side that I may take inviolate to the same Christ, Judge, the vows and resolutions I took by the inspiration of God. Piacenza, July 12, 1888. Father Dominic Mantese."

We have also the formula of the annual devotional renewal of the vows: "I, Father Dominic Mantese, intend to renew, as I now do, the vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, taken by me in accordance with the spirit of the Congregation. Piacenza, Dec. 8, 1890. Fr. D. Mantese. (Arch. G.S., B, I., 2).

<sup>31</sup> Regolamento, 1888, Chapter V. 1-2.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem, Ch. II, 5.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, Ch. VIII, 2.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, Ch. III, 5-7.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, Ch. IV, 10.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, Ch. XII, 3.

<sup>37</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Simeoni, Piacenza, March 7, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B, III, 3, rough copy).

Constitutions of New Institutes and Congregations, without having it go through the ordinary process of examination by the commission itself, as it appears in the accompanying letter of Cardinal Simeoni:

*"To Most Eminent Card. Mazzella*

*June 16, 1888*

*The undersigned Cardinal Prefect is pleased to present to your most Rev. Eminence for your kind consideration the attached Rules of the Congregation of the Missionaries for the Italian emigrants, so as to have your wise opinion and to know from you whether the approval can be granted on a trial basis for five years. In addition, since it is urgent to reach a decision and in my opinion said rules do not seem to present serious difficulties, I ask your Eminence to post those observations you believe appropriate even without going through the examination of Commission established for the revision of Constitutions of new pious Institutes. The undersigned which is also to bring to your attention the plan of appointing Bishop Scalabrini of Piacenza as delegate of this sacred congregation for the government of the newly established Congregation."<sup>38</sup>*

Cardinal Mazzella responded on June 24

*Most Eminent Prince,*

*In obeisance to your wishes conveyed to me with the letter of last June 16<sup>th</sup>, I express to your Eminence my humble opinion on the Rules of the Italian missionaries for emigrants.*

*This Institute which is called the "Congregation of Missionaries" cannot be considered a "Religious Institute" at all. None of its members is bound to perpetual vows, and the year of quasi-novitiate can be shortened by the superior. There is no need, therefore, to go through all the formalities required for the approval of a Religious Congregation.*

*Considering it only as a Pious Union, I would have no objection to commend its scope and approve its "Rules" "ad experimentum" for five years.*

*As it is now, I would like to present the following observations:*

- 1. It does not seem opportune to insist in the rules that "the Italian language and culture should be kept alive" in the schools. In each mission and parish a school be opened in response to the needs, could be the Italian language, should the case demand it, but this should not be said in or imposed by the rules.*
- 2. I would eliminate number VIII. The obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days is already understood, while the Solemn Mass spoken of in the preceding number is prescribed only on these days.*
- 3. In number XII, page 6, I would expressly point out that the obligation stems out of the Rule, which does not bind under pain of sin.*
- 4. "Among the lay brothers, some shall be assigned to teaching". I would not introduce a third class of religious, the catechists, between priests and lay brothers, as is being done at page 8, number VI.*
- 5. Some provisions should be added to number IX, at page 8.*
- 6. In order to avoid confusion and scruples, I would not indicate as a vow of poverty what is said at page 10, number IV. Rather, I would clearly specify that the vows involve only the pledges there expressed.*

*C. Cardinal Mazzella."<sup>39</sup>*

In spite of the urgency acknowledged by Card. Simeoni in the above quoted letter to Card. Mazzella, the examination of the "Regolamento" was protracted for three more months; in fact the document that must be considered to be the approval of the "Regolamento" carries the date of September 19, 1888.

*"Most Illustrious and Reverend Bishop,*

*The "Schema (outline)" of the Constitutions and Rules of the Institute of Missionaries for Italian emigrants has been examined. I am hereby sending them to you together with the suggested modifications. I took care to submit them to the wise judgement of the Most Eminent Cardinal Mazzella, president of the Commission for the revision and approval of new religious rules and Institutes. I enclose a copy of the suggestions presented by Cardinal Mazzella*

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<sup>38</sup> Letter Simeoni to Mazzella, June 16, 1888, Vol. 384, f. 318. Arch. G.S.B., III, 3, authenticated copy).

<sup>39</sup> Letter Mazzella to Simeoni, June 24, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B., III, 3, copy).

*himself.*

*In the meantime, the "Constitutions" as here amended, may be applied, and stand "approved ad experimentum" for five years.*

*Lastly, I wish you all good from the Lord.*

*Of Your Excellency  
most affectionate brother,  
John Cardinal Simeoni, Prefect."<sup>40</sup>*

A cursory reading of the document could lead one into error. It would seem, in fact, that the phrase "the Constitutions thus amended" refers to the observations attached by Card. Mazzella. Instead, it is to be linked to the first lines of the letter: *"I am hereby sending them to you together with the suggested modifications."*

The copy of the "Regolamento" sent back to Bishop Scalabrini, compared with the original submitted by him to the Sacred Congregation for examination, had undergone three modifications:

1. Chapter III, No. 5 - Meditation, reduced from one to one-half hour.
2. Chapter V, No. 3 - Addition of vow of chastity for lay brothers.
3. Chapter V, No. 4 - A grammatical change: "Would possess, could possess, - changed to - will possess or will be in a position to possess."

One may safely conclude, then, that the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda shared in full the ideas of Bishop Scalabrini, and was approving the "Regolamento" without any reservation. Thus, the five year vows, as they appear in Chapter V, were acquiring the status, of vows approved by the Church."<sup>41</sup>

Consequently, the "Apostolic Institute" of Piacenza was listed among the "improperly called religious congregations."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Letter Simeoni to Scalabrini, Sept. 19, 1888. (Arch. S.C.P.F. Prot. 3441/88. Arch. G.S.B. III, 3).

<sup>41</sup> Marco Caliaro, op. cit. p. 63

<sup>42</sup> Cfr. ibidem, pp. 62-63, 65-66.

CHAPTER VI

PAVING THE WAY FOR THE FIRST  
MISSIONARY EXPEDITION TO NEW YORK

Upon confirmation from Bishop Scalabrini of the founding of the Congregation of Missionaries for Italian Emigrants, Archbishop Michael Augustine Corrigan of New York, hastened to request their services for the tens of thousands of Italians residing in that American metropolis.

*"Dearest Bishop,*

*With great joy and a heart replenished with gratitude to the good Lord, I received your letter reporting the news about your Institute, the rules to be observed by the Missionaries, and the benevolence accorded it by the Holy Father. This represents an insurance policy for the salvation of Italian emigrants.*

*Blessed be God a thousand times: Now I can breathe freely! There is a well-founded hope we can do something for these beloved souls perishing by the thousands. I could not find a way to come to their salvation! Now I am glad and at peace!*

*Allow me, Your Excellency, to present you, as my personal contribution, with this one thousand dollar check for your Institute. So far, I had no occasion as yet to talk about it with my very zealous priests, who, I am sure, will not fail to sustain my modest offering with their generosity. All of them, I hope I am not mistaken, will readily contribute, once the Institute will take practical and concrete steps in our direction.*

*Meanwhile, I recommend to you my neglected Italians. Were it possible, I would like to have two missionaries as soon as possible.*

*The zealous Bishop of Saint Paul, Minnesota, was here two days ago. He will do his best, also, to have priests from Piacenza to go about all over providing for the salvation of souls that are perishing.*

*Commend me to our Lord and the Blessed Virgin Mother,*

*Believe me your most affectionate brother,  
+Michael Augustine, Archbishop."<sup>1</sup>*

Evidently, the problem of religious assistance to Italian emigrants had not found a solution in New York, even though some priests had already taken an interest in it.

The first attempt at organizing an Italian parish in New York goes back to Father A. Sanguinetti, who in 1859 gave life to the parish of St. Anthony of Padua at the old French church of Canal Street. It failed a few months later for lack of financial resources, that is, lack of contributions on the part of the faithful. The parish was reorganized on Sullivan Street in 1866 by the Franciscan Father Leo Pacilio, who turned a methodist church over to catholic worship, and opened it to a mixed congregation of Italians and Irish.

In 1878, in the basement chapel of the Transfiguration parish, offered by the pastor McGean, Father Giulio Arcese, O.F.M., founded the confraternity of the Precious Blood for Italians. It was taken over by the Scalabrini Fathers who had opened a provisional chapel on Mulberry Street, and later on, transferred it to the crypt of the Precious Blood Church on Baxter Street. Lastly, in 1894, the confraternity returned into the care of the Franciscans. In 1884 the Pallotine Fathers founded the parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in East Harlem.

Probably, the first to provide religious assistance for Italians in Brooklyn was Father Fransioli, a priest from the Swiss Canton of Ticino. In 1882 he built the Church of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary for Italians. Its first pastor was Father Thomas De Fina, a priest from Sicily.<sup>2</sup>

Bishop Scalabrini decided to entrust Father Francis Zaboglio with the

<sup>1</sup> Letter Corrigan to Scalabrini, New York, February 10, 1888, quoted by F. Gregori in *La vita e l'opera di un grande Vescovo*, Mons. G.B. Scalabrini, (Torino, 1934) PP. 373-374.

<sup>2</sup> All these parishes, however, were actually mixed. The first church exclusively for Italians in New York, was St. Joachim, founded by the Scalabrini Fathers in 1888. Cfr. G. Schiavo, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 468-472, 758-759.

preparation for the first missionary expedition to the United States. He had finally obtained permission to enter the Scalabrinian Institute upon solicitous insistence of Archbishop Jacobini:

*"With satisfaction I am informed of your desire to go to Piacenza for the purpose of being assigned later on to the missions for Italian emigrants in America.*

*Such being your desire, I exhort you not to delay any further your departure for that city and to present yourself as soon as possible to Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini, who is requesting priests to this end."*<sup>3</sup>

Father Zaboglio entered the Scalabrinian Congregation on April 10, 1888. On April 14, Bishop Scalabrini wrote to Cardinal Simeoni as follows:

*"As far as the United States is concerned, I keep in steady correspondence with the pious and learned Archbishop of New York. The Italian community there has written twice to me already, willing to make no small sacrifices, though so poor, in order to be adequately assisted in their spiritual needs.*

*I considered it necessary to send an answer only to the Archbishop and Father Marcellino. For the Archbishop I posed two conditions:*

*To provide: 1) a church, or a church basement, as they call it, to be used as a place of worship; 2) living quarters for the priests where they may live together as a community.*

*I am expecting a response from the Archbishop. As soon as I shall have it, and before consenting to any final agreement, I will write to Your Eminence."*<sup>4</sup>

Now we report one of two letters sent to Bishop Scalabrini by emigrants in New York, precisely the one written by the collectors of the Transfiguration's basement frequented by the Italians and served by Fathers Marcellino Moroni of Agnadello and Joseph Ansanello of Salerno. Such letters prove what an important part the faithful themselves always played in founding Italian parishes in America:

*"Most Illustrious and Reverend Bishop,*

*A short while ago, some persons, sure to be the sincere interpreters of the majority of the Italian community living in this parish of the Transfiguration, addressed a letter to the two priests who serve the church basement under the jurisdiction of the zealous pastor Father Lynch.*

*In it we expressed the desire to have two priests of your Institute. We feel confident that through their efforts the collections would rapidly increase to make possible the building of a church exclusively for Italians.*

*We know that these priests presented our petition to the proper church authority, but we do not know the results. Our high hopes gave way to a sense of distrust that cast the spirit into a state of indifference. One of the most influential periodicals of New York, published by the famous missionaries of St. Paul, who can claim among their ranks converts from Protestantism, men noted for their learning and virtue carried an important article on Italian emigrants by the worthy brother of our Pastor. In it he expands on the holy plans of the Bishop of Cremona and Your Lordship for providing to the spiritual needs of Italians going overseas to America in search of better chance. At the same time, Father Marcellino informed us that through your zeal a house has already been opened in Piacenza where priests are admitted and prepared for this abundant harvest very poorly attended by religious priests, even of Italian extraction, and neglected by the missionary orders.*

*Besides, he referred to us that you have two or three priests ready, and proceedings are in progress between this most zealous and learned Archbishop and Your Lordship to carry out your noble and pious project. At what point these proceedings are we do not know, only we are worried about the difficulties to overcome.*

*We entrust ourselves into the hands of those whom Our Lord has appointed to rule His Church. However, since anyone, though so humble, can very well become an instrument in the hands of God to give course to generous undertakings, we, for prudence sake a small group, decided to get together and prepare, upon serious deliberation this letter of ours to you. It purports the sentiments of the majority of Italians residing here in hope it will respond to the*

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<sup>3</sup> Letter Jacobini to Zaboglio, March 5, 1838. (Arch. S.C.P.F. Letters and Decrees of Sacred Congregation and "Biglietti" of Secretary, 1888, Vol. 384, F. 118. Arch. G.S.B.I., 4, authenticated copy).

<sup>4</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Simeoni, Piacenza, April 15, 1888. (Arch. G.S., Scalabrini, Manuscripts, rough copy).

*plans of God's Providence, and help to fill with courage and strength the hearts of Your Excellency and of the priests willing to come to us to assist us and our children.*

*We acknowledge the zealous Pastor Father Lynch for his concern on behalf of us Italians. Our esteem and love for him kept growing since when he took it upon himself to ask the Archbishop to provide us with a priest from northern Italy in order to help better the emigrants from those regions. But our Italians will never be contented till they will have a church of their own and Italian priests will be assigned to serve it who would insure its continuation through a seminary or religious Institute.*

*So far this idea was for us an impossible dream; but not any more now! We hear what Your Excellency is doing for the good of our souls! We have here with us Father Marcellino, who, in all his zeal and concern for us, shares our aspirations, knows how to keep them alive by convincing words, and strengthens our spirits to get ready for the great task of building a church exclusively for Italians. Surely, we should not be considered dreamers if we fondly hope to see this noble project become a reality!*

*Judging from experience, there will be people to forecast as impossible the building of a Church all by our own means! But, up till now, who was there to take an active interest in us? The meager collections taken up in church also, helped in forming a bad name to our discredit; but who took pains in finding the cause? May Your Excellency be pleased to present our great dream to the Archbishop of New York. Let the venerable prelate challenge us with: - "Go ahead and try", - he will find out what we can do. It is a long time since we are away from our native country, but our faith is still alive and strong in our hearts. O blessed and religious sentiments instilled in us by our parents through the ministry of our zealous pastors sustained by the zeal of our Bishops after the example of St. Charles Borromeo; no, they are not fading from our hearts!*

*We are people of modest means, but through our efforts and with the help of the fervent Irish Catholics, always willing to contribute generously to good causes, we assure you that within a short while a beautiful church will rise also for us.*

*On another occasion, there has been an attempt at this noble undertaking, and five thousand dollars had been collected already, but it is two years now, and still we do not hear a word about it. It is only by the impartial concern of the Archbishop if they are still in the bank to be used when the project should be resumed.*

*We only hope it may not be too late, and that the propitious presence among us of Father Marcellino, who inspires in us courage and strength by his persuasive word, may not let it go unheeded.*

*Be pleased to accept our deepest respects while we ask for your pastoral blessing and take the liberty to undersign ourselves as true spokesmen for the religious sentiments of this community.*

*New York, March 27, 1888*

*Your Devoted Servants,*

*Lorenzo Perona, Turin, Piedmont*

*Fortunato Peirano, Genoa, Liguria*

*Andrea Casazza, Pavia, Lombardy*

*Giovanni Rapuzzi, Genoa, Liguria*

*Giovanni Casazza, Pavia, Lombardy*

*Gerolamo Ferrari, Genoa, Liguria*

*Giuseppe Barbieri, Pavia, Lombardy*

*Francesco Isola, Novara, Piedmont"<sup>5</sup>*

Before dealing with the work done by Father Zaboglio in paving the way for the first missionary expedition of the Scalabrini Fathers to New York, we have to pay due attention to the pioneering activity of Father Marcellino Moroni. As we know, he had been in the American metropolis since the month of October, recommended to the Archbishop of New York by Bishop Bonomelli. His laborious work of preparation with which he had been charged by Bishop Scalabrini is expounded in his numerous and verbose letters written to the Bishops of Cremona and Piacenza and their Secretaries from January to May 1888.

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<sup>5</sup> Letter by committee of Church Collectors to Scalabrini, New York, March 27, 1888. (Arch. G.S.D.I., 2). The two priests mentioned in the letter are Marcellino Moroni d'Agnadello and Joseph Ansanelli.

Bishop Scalabrini made use only in part of the information received from Father Marcellino, especially to demand absolute independence for his missionaries from local pastors, and full freedom of ministry under the equally unquestioned jurisdiction of the bishop of the diocese, within the specific scope of their vocation.

Father Marcellino fell sick unexpectedly with bronchial asthma contracted during the harsh winter of New York in an unheated attic to which he had been confined by "order of seniority." He summed up the activities of his task in two final reports, one, to the Bishop of Piacenza, expressed in no minced terms; the other, more diplomatic and objective to Card. Prefect of Propaganda Fide: Here we report the latter:

*"New York, May 16, 1888 Most Eminent and Reverend Lord,*

*The writer of this letter who dares disturb you is the humble priest that in the month of October was granted permission by this Sacred Congregation to come to the metropolis of New York in order to provide spiritual assistance for these unfortunate Italians. I will take diligent care to be as brief as possible in the truthful expounding of the conditions of our Italians living in this city. Be pleased, Your Eminence, to read this letter and have others do the same.*

*On my arrival to New York, I was received with kindness and respect by the Archbishop.<sup>6</sup> He told me he had to provide for two parishes and I would be assigned to one of them. I asked him to send me to the poorer one and in greater need.*

*The pastor of the Church<sup>7</sup> to which I had been assigned came to meet me at the hotel and took me to his rectory, where, in accordance with the praiseworthy local custom, other priests live, two Irish and one from Naples.<sup>8</sup>*

*On the very first day I was disillusioned by three facts that clearly spelled out my stance.*

*First: When early in the afternoon I entered the church while the Pastor was busy around the altar, he came down straight to my place and chased me out judging me, as he told me later, a five dollar worth priest.*

*Second: the place set aside for use by Italians, is not a church, but a basement<sup>9</sup> where the Italian priest serves under the strictest control of the Pastor who takes in all the collections and pays the priest a salary proportionate to what comes in.*

*Third: I found here a priest from Salerno. He came to this place seven years ago, and later on sent for his relatives, one a doctor, the other a bank agent. Besides, with the consent of the pastor, negotiations were underway to have a cousin of his, a priest, come to this diocese.*

*Right from the beginning, he made his intentions known, that is, that I should be at his command. Since he had to go out often on calls he pretended me to take note of name, and address of anyone that might come in looking for him. Later, the pastor was kind and polite with me. However, he told me one day that other priests had applied to come here, but the Archbishop did not bother to answer as Italian priests, should they wish to be accepted, must be the servants. The basement, served by this Neapolitan who did not enjoy the trust of north Italians, was all but deserted, small collections were taken in, and the pastor was complaining about it. Having, by God's favor, the ability to preach plainly to the people, the attendance of the faithful at church has greatly increased. When he took notice also of the large increase of contributions, the pastor began to accede to my requests.*

*We cannot perform the liturgical services with due decorum because the locale is not fit and I am not free to act. However, with the help of God I was able to obtain permission to preach at two Masses, celebrate Vespers, hold instructions on morals, and, with some difficulties, teach catechism to the children every Sunday. As he disclosed it to me upon insistence, the objection brought up by the pastor for not letting me teach catechism in preparation for First Communion was that, since the Irish are moving out,<sup>10</sup> he intends to substitute them with the*

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<sup>6</sup> Corrigan, Archbishop of New York.

<sup>7</sup> Father Lynch, Pastor of Transfiguration's parish.

<sup>8</sup> Father Joseph Ansanelli.

<sup>9</sup> Basement, sotterraneo or cripta, in Italian.

<sup>10</sup> In other letters Father Marcellino points out that the neighborhood was filling in with Chinese, reason why the Irish were moving elsewhere. Hence, the concern of the pastor for "americanizing Italian children to insure a sufficient number of parishioners.

*Italians moving into this area. With this idea in mind he forbade me to teach catechism to children frequenting public schools. My observation to him was that these children are being instructed in Italian by their parents and want to improve their Italian; besides, among them there are those who intend to return to Italy, and it would avail them little to have learned their prayers and catechism in English.*

*At first the pastor opposed it saying that Italian priests teach in a superficial manner; so, he assigned six qualified catechists. Later on, however, he consented, but he absolutely forbade the parish school children to come for catechism in Italian, even though some parents who wanted a catholic education for them, wished they were taught religion in Italian by a qualified priest. Actually, there exists a good and valid reason for this. Since they are in the catholic school, they are expected to go along with the others, be contented with it, and seek no exceptions.*

*Meanwhile, I was able to perform other devotions in the basement, such as some novenas, the month of May, benediction with the Blessed Sacrament on first Fridays in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The pastor bought Cope, Monstrance, and the Stations. He wanted a special collection for this, but a pious lady donated forty dollars to meet the expenses. At Eastertide he called in three Jesuits who helped with confessions, and did very well. Still he complained that Italians do not give much! But he should keep in mind that the Neapolitans, the great majority here without wives or children, employed from day to day, have no interest in giving to churches they occasionally go to. One can safely say that ninety percent of the offerings collected come from Italians of northern Italy. Be not tempted, Your Eminence, to think that I may be partial or prejudiced! By neglecting to consider these circumstances one may well be mistaken, and all Italians are thus judged with the same yardstick, and despised to the point of being harshly refused entrance by the ushers should they attempt to gain it to the upper church, if only for a standing assistance at the services.<sup>11</sup> It did happen, since I am here, to three north Italians, who highly incensed by it, began frequenting the Episcopalian church nearby served for Italians by an apostate Franciscan priest. Such cases happen continuously here and at other churches.*

*But there is cause for this: Italians do not dress neatly, so in the churches other people do not like them to join in to avoid associating with lower classes. As a matter of fact, even Italians of northern Italy refuse to go down to the basement that they may not mingle with the dirty and ill clad Neapolitan street workers.*

*They are frequenting it now because I am here, but the great majority choose the Mass celebrated by the priest from northern Italy, while the Neapolitans take satisfaction in attending the first Mass served by their priest. All this is a source of marked divisions.*

*But enough of this Now I come to the plans for carrying out the project of Bishop Scalabrini of Piacenza to provide resident priests for Italian communities in foreign lands.*

*Right from the very beginning, well aware of the great need of open-minded and sound missionaries for this mission in America, speaking one day to the pastor, I came up with the idea that young priests from the best seminaries of Italy would be needed here, or even better, that young seminarians should be sent to spend their last years of theology in the seminaries of America, then, upon ordination be required to serve for ten years in parishes where Italians are present.*

*To my surprise, the idea caught on; more than that, it was brought to the attention of the Archbishop. His Excellency thought it was a worthwhile project, adding he had spoken to Cardinal Alimonda about having some of his seminarians trained in this seminary; lastly he directed me to write to the Bishops of Cremona and Piacenza. Both answered. The Bishop of Cremona said he would do his best; the Bishop of Piacenza was more positive saying he had in mind to send his priests who were by now good and ready. The Archbishop welcomed the proposal of the Bishop of Piacenza, and on February 10<sup>th</sup>, he wrote to him enclosing a contribution of one thousand dollars.*

*Spurred on by this favorable attitude, when I heard that the pastor had told certain north Italians this church could be the parish for Italians once the Irish*

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<sup>11</sup> In line with the American custom, a door fee was required to enter a church, at least for a seating place. Collectors are the laymen in charge of collecting the offerings of the faithful.



*moved away, as he himself had repeatedly said to me, lamenting they would otherwise never move a finger on account of their avarice, I encouraged the most prominent among them to petition the Bishop of Piacenza to send two priests who on arrival would be provided with their own house, given a free hand in serving the basement, and permission to raise funds to be used in due time for building a church.*

*Before informing the pastor about the petition, I sought the advice of the Archbishop. Having secured not only his consent, but his wholehearted approval as well, I told the pastor about it. For sometime afterwards, I kept hearing a lot of promises from him. However, he was posing certain conditions, for example, they should live in his rectory, and be dependent on his jurisdiction. Efforts were being made to come to an understanding; at last, however, he told me the Irish were opposed to the project. It was then that the exponents of the community wrote to the Archbishop for permission to build a church for themselves. In hope of greater effectiveness, they sent it to the Bishop of Piacenza asking for his mediation.<sup>12</sup>*

*A few days later, about the middle of April, a protestant church, with buildings attached to it, was up for sale for seventy thousand dollars. Immediately they petitioned the Archbishop whether he would allow them to buy it. At first he seemed to favor the idea, but later he objected that the price was too high, and the pastor of Saint Patrick had in mind to provide a house and a church for Italians in his parish. When I reported this proposal to the elders of the community they requested me to write to His Excellency pointing out to him that in St. Patrick's parish only Neapolitans were residing, while the bulk of the Neapolitans and north Italians lived here, and a church there would not do for them.*

*I did write, but I had no answer. Actually, I did not wait for an answer, because on April 13<sup>th</sup> I had advised the Archbishop that I intended to relinquish the whole matter into his and Bishop Scalabrini's hands. Besides, I think this will serve as a test of his prudence in keeping what is being planned from anyone that could interfere with it.*

*I want you to know, besides, that an American in high places told my fellow priests from Salerno that the pastors were opposing the presence here of the priests from Piacenza: I could not believe it. But then, a good priest from northern Italy, residing at St. Patrick's rectory, came to me reporting:*

*'Oh Father, I have to advise you that certain persons have been charged with finding out from you what is being planned in regard to the priests of Piacenza, because, as soon as they do, they intend to begin scheming that it may not be carried out.' My answer was that I knew about it, but I preferred to let the pastor in it rather than to proceed behind his back. After all, it was a give and take question!*

*I must also report to you a certain statement of this pastor: "They open churches for Italians and then they serve the Irish, thus dismembering the parishes."<sup>13</sup> This is quite true, and it justifies the unwillingness of pastors to accept Italian churches in the midst of their parishes.*

*However, it is not the fault of Italians in general; it results, rather, from founding parishes in places where there are small communities of Italians from northern Italy who come here, as I said before, with wives and children, and are more generous. Besides, the number of priests may be higher above the means of the emigrants they serve, as is the case with the Franciscans of the Parish of St. Anthony. In June these Fathers will open a new church, and the Archbishop will be there for the dedication. Last Sunday, though, they announced from the pulpit that the fee of one dollar will be requested for admission at the church's entrance on that day. On the other hand, they cautioned that rather than missing it, all those who could not afford the contribution requested should attend Mass in the basement. Those priests have certainly good reasons! If the church were open to all, the poor also would gain entrance, with resulting financial loss. The people, however, did not see it that way and reacted with insults. They would have accepted the idea of paying a dollar, as long as they*

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<sup>12</sup> Cfr. above pp. 64-65.

<sup>13</sup> Such concern, so often underlined by Father Marcellino, was based on the fact that all, or nearly all churches till then established by Italian priests, religious included, were mixed. American priests were accusing Italian priests of doing so only to secure for themselves larger contributions. The accusation was not without cause. This explains why the Congregation of Bishop Scalabrini did not just join up with other congregations. It was, rather, the only one to be really and actually planned and organized for Italian emigrants, with structures and pastoral programs, especially concerning the poor, all its own.

*were allowed to be in church, if only for a standing attendance. Anyway, I am sure, should permission be granted for priests of northern Italy to build or run a church, these things would not happen. Well, these are the causes of the pastors' opposition. We have to try to understand their point of view, as they judge things from past experience.*

*At last, yesterday, exceeding my authority perhaps, I took the liberty to tell the pastor: "My friend, upon much deliberation it seems as though I have found a way to solve the problem. Here it is:*

- 1. A house for the priests from Piacenza in the parish.*
- 2. One hundred dollars a month to the parish for a free hand in the use of the church basement." And I gave him the reasons.*

*He seemed to welcome the idea, but he brought up other difficulties. In short, it is an intricate situation.*

*In the meantime thousands of Italians are lost. Evangelical and Episcopalian churches are being opened for Italians, while catholic ones are not. All this right within the confines of the parish of St. Patrick, where the two Italian priests are not allowed to teach catechism, or perform weddings of Italians.*

*Last Sunday there were eight-nine Neapolitan children for Sunday school at the Episcopalian church, and they bring their children to the kindergarten of the Evangelical church close by where they are served a meal, while, should I decide to open one here, I would not be allowed to do so.*

*I submit this my report to the discerning judgement of Your Eminence, and should you wish to do so, please, have the Archbishop investigate the matter. He is a very holy and learned prelate; should he, however, meet with the opposition of the pastors, there is very little he could do! If I were entrusted with this task, would I dare go ahead and buy or build a Church? By God's grace, I would accept the challenge! On the other hand, I feel confident that the pastor, out of his deep respect for the Archbishop, would consent a house to be opened in his parish for the priests from northern Italy with a free hand to run the church basement under the jurisdiction of the pastor, if Rome should take the initiative. He would give them even greater autonomy! I say this because he showed before a ready willingness to give a generous retribution to these priests if they should live in his rectory, while I can say for myself that, since I was always respectful and dependent on him, he allowed me to do so much good! Perhaps, considering the task of Americanizing Italians impossible, we might revert to the project proposed in the beginning.*

*I do not wish to neglect informing you that the protestant church has been rented out with the proviso, I was told, that in case we should decide to buy it we were to let the leaser know about it four months in advance. I was also told of the danger it may be bought by some other sect! That would be tragic! An Evangelical church in the back of us, an Episcopalian one in front, and still another protestant one, for Italians, to the side! Protestants are very much at work among Italian emigrants! If you add to them Masons and Anarchists, with their quarters in the territory of St. Anthony's parish, one can very well imagine, Your Eminence, how serious may be the impending danger for these unfortunate people.*

*I close this report with a consoling piece of news. Securing permission to hold catechism classes, I was able to prepare a hundred children for First Communion. In the evening there were public examination and dialogue in catechism, with music and songs. I was told people never witnessed such a celebration among Italians in New York, and many shed tears. This morning two children went up to the pastor to present him with a hundred dollars, the combined small contributions of the children for Holy Childhood.*

*All goes well, now; but if there are not to be resident priests here as planned by the Bishop of Piacenza, the situation will always continue to be a precarious one. As to myself, I am quite sick now, due to the intense cold of this winter. As the last arrival, I had been assigned a small room in the attic without heat! Should I get real sick, it would mean a return to the rut for these Italian migrants. Be pleased to accept my sincere respects, bless me and keep me in your prayers.*

*Your most devoted servant,  
Father Marcellino Moroni d'Agnadello"<sup>14</sup>*

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<sup>14</sup> Letter Moroni d'Agnadello to Simeoni, New York, May 16, 1883. (Arch. G.S.D.I., 2, autographed copy transmitted by the author to Scalabrini.

Taught by these experiences, Bishop Scalabrini, as we said had requested of Archbishop Corrigan as fundamental conditions for sending his missionaries a house and a church of their own, though ever so humble, and full jurisdiction for an independent ministry among Italian emigrants. Negotiations were carried on by the Bishop of Piacenza, not so much through the services of Father Marcellino, whom he considered lacking in practical sense, as rather by mail with the Archbishop himself and his secretary, whom he had hosted on the occasion of their visit to Italy.

Archbishop Corrigan, urged on by a sincere zeal and conscious of his pastoral responsibility towards immigrants - far superior on this point than the vision of the great majority of the American clergy of his time - found the proposals of Bishop Scalabrini reasonable and wrote to him on April 13, 1888:

*"Most Venerable Bishop,*

*Due to my all demanding schedule, only now I have time to thank you for the kindness shown my dear Secretary. He cherishes a respectful memory of Your Excellency, and does not cease speaking of you.*

*I am every day more concerned about our Italians! It is my strongest desire to provide them with their own national church where they will enjoy full autonomy. This is my firm decision. Only we have to proceed prudently so to secure the necessary means. The pastor of the old Cathedral, who is ministering to a community of ten thousand Italians, is of the same mind together with the Vicar General. Father Marcellino is worried and doubtful, but with God's help, we shall succeed, though not perhaps, as he would wish it to be.*

*There are very many difficulties, but we are viewing and considering all things, and will never cease our efforts until the project be carried out.*

*Some able person, experts in such matters, are now looking for a good site for the future church and we shall proceed as speedily as circumstances will allow us. We are also getting the house ready for the priests from Piacenza.*

*By God's grace, Your Excellency and I shall do something for the eternal salvation of Italian immigrants; and now more than ever I feel encouraged to go ahead.*

*I have to close now. Father Charles will write to you in a few days.*

*Meanwhile, once again, I give you my sincere thanks, and at your service I remain*

*your humble and devoted servant*

*+Michael Augustine, Archbishop<sup>15</sup>.*

Several days later, Father Marcellino confirmed:

*"Once again I was invited in by the Archbishop to discuss the project of our interest. He decided against buying the protestant church because too costly and in a less central location. He told me negotiations were underway for a site within the territory of the parish bordering with this one of the Transfiguration. In the meantime he would have now ready, if I am not mistaken, a large school to serve temporarily as a church.*

*Your letter obtained good results! The priests of the Institute shall have their own church and full jurisdiction! Thanks to the good Lord."<sup>16</sup>*

In the same letter Father Marcellino disclosed his intention to retire, as he considered his task finished. In fact he returned to Italy in June, crossing on his way with Father Zaboglio who had left Piacenza on June 4<sup>th</sup>, with the following instructions from Bishop Scalabrini:

1. Founding of the mission. Father Francis Zaboglio is hereby authorized to negotiate with the Archbishop of New York for establishing our missionaries in his city on the following conditions:
  - a. In the churches, oratories, or church basements to which they are now assigned to assist Italians, the missionaries must be granted a free hand in the performance of the duties of their ministry, except for those provisions the Archbishop should deem opportune to take in regard to Baptisms and Weddings.
  - b. The missionaries should have free and independent living quarters,

<sup>15</sup> Letter Corrigan to Scalabrini, New York April 13, 1888. (Arch.1).

<sup>16</sup> Letter Moroni to Scalabrini, New York, April 19, 1888. (Arch. G.S.D., I, 2).

- even rented, to stay together in community life.
- c. They must be allowed to take in collections, in accord with the Archbishop's instructions, for the purpose of building a new church for Italians.
  2. To Father Marcellino d'Agnadello. Father Zaboglio shall notify him to be the desire of the Bishops of Piacenza and Cremona that he remain in New York to act as an advisor to the missionaries who will be sent there. Whenever, following the founding of the Mission, he should wish to return to Italy, the Bishop of Piacenza will be glad to take him into the Mother House of the Congregation where he shall employ his zeal in whatever capacity His Excellency should appoint him to.
  3. Regulations. Father Zaboglio together with Father Marcellino shall draw up a provisional code of regulations for the missionaries of the house of New York, to be observed until it will be amended, changed, or approved by the Bishop of Piacenza to whom they shall send a copy as soon as possible for inspection. This last provision must be made known to the missionaries by the time they shall depart from this city of Piacenza."<sup>17</sup>

Father Zaboglio wrote to the Bishop from Paris:

*"The second night after leaving Piacenza, I arrived dead tired at Basel. I took a good rest, and I am now enjoying perfect health. An old priest, who made his studies in Milan, informed me that many Italians live here. The majority of them marry protestants. A society for Italians exists. President and Vice President are protestants and free-masons who do not spare either effort or money to induce these poor Italians to abandon their faith.*

*How great is the need everywhere of our missionaries or others to do the work that is being planned: And what about Paris? I got acquainted a little with this city, a new Babylon, this Ocean of the most turbulent depth, where almost all Italians, the many I know at least, are miserably going shipwrecked."<sup>18</sup>*

Before reaching Paris, Father Zaboglio had stopped over in Luxembourg for a meeting with Prof. Hengesch, a priest. We shall report about him later.<sup>19</sup>

Having obtained a thirty percent discount with the "Transatlantique" company, for the price of four hundred and fifty liras he sailed on June 9<sup>th</sup> from Le Havre on the ship "La Bourgogne".

During the trip he wrote down all information and observations useful for the missionaries to follow, such as how to cope with seasickness, what to wear, whom to turn to in Paris, where to buy a good provision of religious articles and books that would "help us to do good and be welcome" by distributing them in York, how much tipping, etc.<sup>20</sup>

On arrival in New York on June 17<sup>th</sup>, he wrote:

*"Hour: 3:00 P.M. - I am informed that Father Marcellino has left for Italy. Useless to say that I felt, pardon the expression, like a fool.*

*Hour: 7:00 P.M. - This morning I went to see the Vicar General, to obtain permission to celebrate Mass. As to our Missionaries he tells me that much has been said with the Archbishop who has come to some decisions.*

*I have to wait for his return. I rented a room for a few days, while I take my meals at an ex-parishioner of mine from Grossotto."<sup>21</sup>*

On June 21<sup>st</sup>, even before he could see Father Zaboglio, Archbishop Corrigan wrote to Bishop Scalabrini:

*"In regard to our beloved Italians, an agent of mine is now looking around to buy a large building that would serve as church and living quarters for the priests*

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<sup>17</sup> Scalabrini, "Istruzioni per il Molto R.do Signore Don Francesco Zaboglio," Piacenza, June 4, 1888. (Arch. Seminario Maggiore di Como, letters Scalabrini-Zaboglio).

<sup>18</sup> Letter Zaboglio to Scalabrini, Paris, June 8, 1888. (Arch. G.S.D.I., 3).

<sup>19</sup> Cfr. Appendix No. 6, pp. 162-171.

<sup>20</sup> Letter Zaboglio to Superior General and Confreres, Atlantic Ocean, June 14, 1888. (Arch. G.S.D.I., 3).

<sup>21</sup> Letter Zaboglio to Scalabrini, New York, June 16, 1888. (Arch. G.S.D., I, 3). Bishop Scalabrini answered through his secretary Mons. Camillo Mangot, who in turn did so in a post scriptum added to a letter addressed by Fr. Moroni d'Agnadello to Fr. Zaboglio on July 3, 1888 from Piacenza: "Dear Father Francis, His Excellency received your first letter. He is waiting now for the other one explaining the telegram. He is of the opinion that you abide by the wishes of the Archbishop. Father Felix Morelli can hardly wait to depart. The others, Father Marcellino included, shall leave for Brazil on the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 24<sup>th</sup> of this month. A solemn celebration is being prepared for this departure in the Basilica of Sant'Antonino. Too bad, you cannot be here too! And how disappointing for Father Felix! He will not be able to leave with the others. Most heartfelt greetings from His Excellency and from your most affectionate Mons. Mangot, Secretary." (Arch. G.S.D., I, 3).

*from Piacenza. This building will cost 350 thousand liras; a forbidding sum, it's true, but we have no choice.*

*Some friends will lend us the money if our Italians commit themselves to pay it back in due time. On my own I cannot do a thing, or almost, as I lack the necessary means. I very much wish to have two or three good priests from Piacenza. I would have much to say about the pamphlet of Mons. De Concilio on the matter; but I lack the time.*

*My secretary, Father Charles, sends his most humble respects. I recommend myself to your prayers, while I confirm myself*

*Your devoted servant,*

*+ Michael Augustine,*

*Archbishop of New York. "<sup>22</sup>(22)*

Mons. De Concilio<sup>23</sup> supported the idea that every parish should be provided with a resident priest who would speak the language of immigrants. But he went further than that! Not only was it necessary that Italians should do by themselves, but also, as he will write to Bishop Scalabrini, that "Apostolic Vicariates" be established on their behalf on whose exclusive jurisdiction those priests should depend who devoted themselves to the spiritual assistance of Italians. This idea absolutely contrasted not only with the policy adopted by American bishops in the pastoral care of immigrants, but with Bishop Scalabrini's principles, as well, who always insisted on the direct dependence of his missionaries upon the local bishops. His ideas were also acceptable to Archbishop Corrigan, as already seen above and it clearly appears in the first report sent in by Fr. Zaboglio:

*"Most Illustrious and Reverend Bishop,*

*Here I am to explain my telegram I sent you two days ago.*

*As I have already written to you, when I arrived in New York, the Archbishop was absent. I went for him again last Saturday, and still he was not back. At last I could see him on Monday.*

*He gave me a friendly welcome, and told me to be his intention that our priests have a church and a house of their own, and that negotiations were underway for the purchase of a property valued seventy thousand dollars (350 thousand liras). Very busy, he was about to refer me to Father Kearney, pastor of St. Patrick, for further information, when he entered the room.*

*The Archbishop left me with him saying he would be back in a short while. However, the fact is that at noon the Archbishop had not shown up as yet! So Father Kearney took me to his rectory for dinner. As to further information, I could not gain any for several hours!*

*At last, under pressure by me, he made it clear to me that he had in mind to take our Missionaries into his rectory as assistants; exactly as is the position of Father Marcellino at the Transfiguration parish.*

*Two things particularly impressed me: first, unwilling to give in return, he wanted only to take, that is, to find out what our plans were; second, he put a certain amount of moral pressure upon me to take up residence in his rectory. I chose to go back to Mons. De Concilio, who is inspired by a sincere concern for the true good of Italians and is all kindness to me. No sooner did he find out about my arrival than he invited me in to live in his house. It became evident that the pastor of St. Patrick wanted me and my companions at his rectory as assistants. Upon returning home, I reported everything to Mons. De Concilio, and we both agreed on the decision to send you a telegram advising to suspend the departure of our priests, and we did so on the following morning. And mind you, on the preceding day the Archbishop had also told me that the Saturday before he had written asking Your Excellency to send the Missionaries. One thing is certain, now; nothing is ready.*

*The following day, I returned to the Archbishop to report the incident. He answered that the diocese is not run by the priests, but by him. Then I replied I could not understand why on the previous day he had referred me to Father*

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<sup>22</sup>Letter Corrigan to Scalabrini, Ellenville, N.Y. June 21, 1888. (Arch. G.S.D., I, 1).

<sup>23</sup> Mons. Gennaro De Concilio, born at Naples in 1836, was ordained a priest in Genoa in 1859. Sometime afterwards he arrived in the United States, and in 1865 was appointed pastor of the new Parish of St. Michael in Jersey City, N.J. He gave life to numerous parochial activities, and took spiritual care of Italians. He is the author of many publications on philosophy and theology, acted as treasurer for the Society of St. Raphael, and wrote several pamphlets in denunciation of the miserable conditions of Italian immigrants. He died in 1898.

*Kearney as to the man of his trust who would give me the opportune information in line with his plans. I asked him whether the building being negotiated would be ready within two or three months. He did not specify. Again, I inquired where he wanted the Missionaries to have their residence. His answer was that they would be guests in some rectory. This is then the situation as of now: on one hand the Archbishop said: "Your priests shall have a church and rectory of their own" -on the other, nothing is ready for the time being.*

*Mons. De Concilio will let Your Excellency know what he thinks of the whole business.<sup>24</sup> In any case, I deem it advisable to hold back for now the Missionaries' departure. Should the situation get entangled it would be a hard and long process to disentangle it! Much safer to clear the matter ahead of time! It's true, the burden could be eased off our backs later, but Mons. De Concilio does not think it likely to happen too soon! Still, it's much better not to carry it for a single moment.*

*Your Excellency well knows what Father Lynch affirmed, that is, Italian priests, ours included, must be the servants here. He may not have said it, but judging from his attitude on Monday, Fr. Kearney is surely attempting to put it into practice; yet, he is thought to be a fair-minded priest!*

*The Archbishop does not know about the telegram we sent you, nor do we wish him to find out. Your Excellency will not lack in excuses for justifying the delay of the Missionaries' arrival. You could openly tell him I have written to you, as it is now my duty to do so, that, although the Archbishop may be negotiating the purchase of a place to be our own (I quote his very words), still the fact remains that it is not ready, and our Missionaries would have to remain as guests in some rectory. It does not seem right, then, to send priests now. It seems to me that this piece of news presents a sufficient cause for delaying and waiting for further information, and more so because the Archbishop did not know of my arrival in New York when he wrote to you the last time.*

*I believe we will be able to send more news in a few days! This Saturday the Archbishop will go on a month's vacation. He told me that he will leave the Vicar General in charge of matters regarding our mission.*

*Since Father Marcellino left, a great part of Italians, especially from the north, have deserted the Transfiguration church; the rest go to Mass to neighboring churches.<sup>25</sup>*

*Last Sunday, two policemen were posted at the entrance of St. James to keep Italians out. Many of them for sure did not make good resolutions on that day!! I hear this happened sometimes also when Father Marcellino was here in New York, but then, only the ragged ones were excluded. This time all Italians were denied entrance, and were told to go to the Transfiguration church.*

*Father Lynch is not collecting as much as when Fr. Marcellino was here. Poor Father Marcellino, how much he must have suffered! This should be a good lesson for us!*

*I came to know almost all the Italians that undersigned the letter I took along with me for you, and others. All of them wonderful people who ardently desire to have Father Marcellino back here in their midst.*

*Two days ago, Father Girimondi was here. He told me he would write some articles for the "Osservatore Romano" and the "Palestra del Clero".*

*I better close for now, as I am being too long already. Only I want you to know that in regard to the founding of this mission for assisting Italian emigrants, the Archbishop has appointed a committee composed of the president of the "Society for the Irish", two pastors, and me. However, Mons. De Concilio tells me it will be a long process. Shortly, I will write to you again on the matter.*

*P.S. -- Most important. Morning, June 29<sup>th</sup>, I open this letter to add the good news that between yesterday and today the question has taken a totally new turn.*

*This morning an answer from the Archbishop has reached Mons. De Concilio, and there is hope a church of our own will be opened soon. A telegram will be*

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<sup>24</sup> Letter De Concilio to Scalabrini, Jersey City, May 28, 1888. (Arch. G.S.D., I, 3). Cfr. Condensation of pamphlet by Wins. De Concilio, *Sullo Stato Religioso degli italiani negli Stati Uniti*, New Jersey, 1886, in an article of *Civiltà Cattolica*, Series XIII, Vol. XI, Issue 918, Sept. 3, 1888, pp. 641-653. This article closes by pointing out the Institute of Bishop Scalabrini as a "practical and effective means to resolve this most important problem of preserving the religious faith and the ancestral heritage of the emigrants. In this holy undertaking the most noble and cherished human and christian sentiments of man's heart are interwoven: zeal for the glory of God, love for our unfortunate countrymen, for the Church of Christ, and for our common fatherland."

<sup>25</sup> Cfr. Letter Moroni to Scalabrini, New York, May 25, 1888. (Arch. G.S.D., I, 3).

*sent to you, but do not let the Missionaries leave before you receive it.*

*A serious difficulty has been overcome, and already we have drawn up the boundaries of our parish that will be half New York. But there are others. Let us not fool ourselves; it will take months. Now that we have a freer hand, Mons. De Concilio and I will work full strength! We shall send clarifications as soon as possible.*

*In the meanwhile let us thank God, the Saint Apostles Peter and Paul, for sending us good tidings.*

*May Your Excellency be pleased to bless us.*

*Father Francis Zaboglio.*<sup>26</sup>

The second report was written when the first Scalabrinian missionaries assigned to New York were already on their way, and Father Zaboglio had to rush preparations:

*"Most Illustrious and Reverend Bishop,*

*If I am not mistaken, in my last letter I told you we were informed about plans to buy a building for seventy thousand dollars. Such was the project of the Archbishop, or rather, of the agents appointed by him. The person mostly responsible to the Archbishop for carrying out this task is Father Kearney, pastor of St. Patrick, about whom I spoke to you on other occasions. I have reason to believe at this moment that the Archbishop is as acquainted with the proceedings as King Humbert is!!! In fact, he had told me that the building to be purchased was situated at the corner of Elizabeth and Canal Streets! Sometime later, Father Kearney said it was on Hester Street! Then the Archbishop went on his vacation (no address given) after directing me to have recourse to the Vicar General who, in turn, referred me back to Father Kearney. Clearly, it is the mind of Father Kearney that the Italians themselves should buy the building on Hester Street.*

*But there is difficulty. The "Five Corners" Italians - I presume Father Marcellino brought along to you a map of New York - objected that the building on Hester Street is too far for them and served notice they would not contribute a penny. Where, then, could we find the 20 or 25 thousand dollars we counted on collecting among our Italians, since particularly those living at the-"Five Corners" had committed themselves to do so! Besides, even Mons. De Concilio, with all his insisting that church and house should be at the "Five Corners", changed his mind, and was putting moral pressure on me to make all efforts that the building on Hester Street be bought. He said that we have to lead the people, and not let ourselves be led by them! My answer was that there is not much we can do when the people cannot be induced to dig deep into their pockets! Anyway, Hester Street is far removed from the bulk of Italian Emigrants.*

*I had the impression that after escaping servitude from the Irish I was falling into the hands of Mons. De Concilio. I politely took my leave of him, and returned to the little room I had rented on my arrival. Here I am now writing this letter of mine to you.*

*Fortunately I had my Guardian Angel in a good old man, a holy person, the best I found so far in New York. He has given me much useful advice, already. The Archbishop also had spoken very well of him to me, so also all whom I know, do the same. He is a German priest, for many years a resident of New York, and pastor of the Immaculate Conception parish; his name is Father Edwards. Among his many good suggestions, he always insisted, and still does, that I should not buy now. He says: "Just rent a modest place, then the Lord will do the rest. This is the work of God, not man's".*

*I went also to see the Pallottine Fathers who staff the Italian Church on the north side of town. They repeated the same thing, warning us to avoid letting the Missionaries be under the jurisdiction of the pastors of New York. Several days ago I got acquainted with Father Massi, a Jesuit, mentioned by Father Marcellino in his letters, and he insists on and suggests the same thing.*

*I am convincing myself that the Hester Street deal is only a put-up to have the whole project shelved and keep our Missionaries as his assistants and servants. I hear that his church is deep in debt, and the Missionaries could become very useful in paying it off. Do you wish to know what kind of person this Father Kearney, our benefactor and special agent charged with this project by the Archbishop and his Vicar General, is? Only a few days following my*

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<sup>26</sup> Letter Zaboglio to Scalabrini, Jersey City, June 28, 1888. (Arch. G.S.D., I, 3).

*arrival, that holy soul and gentleman, Father Edwards, received a physical, not a moral, slap in the face by Fr. Kearney. I inquired from him what the reason was, and whether it was because he had spoken with me. He answered he could not remember distinctly, but it could very well be so. Fr. Edwards told me all this in strict confidence.*

*The intentions of Father Kearney clearly unfold from the following incident. A young man, a certain Mr. Mazza, well-known to Father Marcellino, went one day to Saint Patrick's and met with Father Kelly, the assistant priest of the parish. He said: "I heard there is an Italian priest here charged with the building of a church for Italians." "Yes," - Father Kelly answered - "but he does not have the money, and nothing will come of it."*

*It was a question, therefore, of finding a modest place to serve as a church. Mr. Cuneo offered, for the time being, the basement of his house, until a more suitable place could be found. I went to see the Vicar General; he refused permission giving the reason that it was in the territory of the Transfiguration parish, and he did not wish to risk any trouble with Father Lynch. He authorized me, however, to look for a place outside this parish.*

*By the way, I ask myself, why should Father Lynch, who does not know Italian and is resented, if not hated, by them, take charge of the Italians living in the territory of his parish? Here they swarm around like bees, so many of them! Right these days the Italians of Mulberry Street made the headlines of all the newspapers, and their plight came up in Congress so much so that it may give rise to an international crisis. All show concern for their conditions, and they are right by me!*

*We, Italians, therefore, nominated a committee charged with finding, outside the limits of the Transfiguration parish, a suitable place to rent. The committee was still negotiating the deal, when, last Saturday, Father Felix sent us a telegram from La Havre: "We are sailing". No one can describe the anguish this telegram caused me! Father Massi, S.J. suggested that I: "Rent a few rooms to accommodate them if only to avoid that the Fathers may have to spend even one day only in a house as guests of the Irish priests. As to church, later. "With the help of Mr. Cuneo, the day before yesterday I rented four rooms and a kitchen for a month. In the evening we appointed twelve solicitors to go around the streets of the "Five Corners" this Sunday, collecting contributions to buy furniture for the apartment of the Missionaries. Mr. Cuneo loaned us two hundred and fifty dollars, and today the purchases are being made. That's how things are at the present time.*

*Yesterday I saw Father Girimondi. He also approves of the course taken. Meanwhile we keep looking for a place to stay and work. On the same day I went to see the Vicar General, who was not in. I found, instead, Father Kearney, just back from a week-long vacation. He inquired about the Missionaries. I let him know that this Sunday, or on Monday, at the latest, God willing, they would be in New York. As to his question where they were to stay, I answered that the Italians had rented four rooms and a kitchen for them. "Do you have a church?" "No, but we hope to have one shortly, though provisional for now." "Where will they celebrate Mass?" "Oh, well, anywhere!" "I would need some priests for my parish." I replied that our rule does not allow us to live apart; and the conversation ended there.*

*"Yours is God's work " - said Father Edwards - "and He will help you!" We need a priest from Naples, but a truly qualified one, even if we should resort to ask some bishop of those regions for one. About this I will talk to Fathers Morelli and Astorri, and we shall write to you again, in case.*

*The project for a "Committee for Assistance to Emigrants" is at a standstill, as I had no time to take care of it. Once the question of our parish will be resolved, I shall do so.*

*The problems of these last days in regard to overcrowding and threatening epidemics in Mulberry Street have set in motion the existing Italian lay charitable societies, and now I hear that something will be done.*

*I considered it my duty to let you know these things. When the ship of the "Transatlantique" shall pull into port, I will be there with other friends at the dock to welcome my confreres."<sup>27</sup>*

The reason why the departure of the Missionaries was hastened is given by

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<sup>27</sup> Letter Zaboglio to Scalabrini, New York, July 19, 1888. (Arch. G.S.D., I, 3).



Bishop Scalabrini:

*"Dear Father Francis,*

*Do not be surprised at the arrival of your confreres. The Archbishop requested them and Rome decided they should be sent despite the existing difficulties. We obey, and "an obedient man shall speak of victories". Continue on your prudent and cautious course, coordinating the good of souls and our Congregation with the wishes of the Archbishop.*

*Tomorrow we shall hold here a solemn celebration for the departure. May Divine Providence assist and provide us with the means necessary to meet our heavy expenses."<sup>28</sup>*

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<sup>28</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Zaboglio, Piacenza, November 7, 1888. (Arch. Seminario Maggiore, Como. Letters Scalabrini-Zaboglio).

**CHAPTER SEVEN**

**PREPARATIONS FOR THE FIRST MISSIONARY EXPEDITION  
TO BRAZIL**

The pioneering missionary of the Scalabrinian Missions in Brazil was Father Peter Colbacchini.<sup>1</sup> This priest from Vicenza, moved by letters of Venetian emigrants, petitioned and obtained permission from the Pope to go to their assistance with a "Brief" qualifying him as an "Apostolic Missionary" and letters of recommendation from Cardinal Simeoni and St. John Bosco.

On arrival in Brazil at the end of 1884, he was appointed chaplain to a community of immigrants from Mantua at Montserrate by the bishop of San Paulo. After a few months of hard work, as the "bosses" of the community prevented him from establishing a center of true worship and ministry, he chose to move on to the state of Paraná: he had, actually, preferred to go there from the beginning, because many Venetians had settled in that state.

He took residence with the community of Agua Verde, three miles from Curitiba, and founded there a mission for the Italians of that region. The excessive work made him feel every day more the pressing need of help.

He turned to some priests of Vicenza, and in February 1887 he wrote to one of them.

*"You tell me you are contemplating to join a Religious Congregation and planning to spend some time with a community. We will form a congregation here, and a religious community as well. Living for some time with the Salesians, even though in America, would be of little help to this mission. The Salesians of Rio, San Paulo, Montevideo, Buenos Aires, as Salesians all over the world, except for a few stationed in Patagonia, are not engaged in missionary work.*

*They come as teachers and directors of the Craft and Trade Schools they have established in these places. They live in cities, no less than in Italy or in France. The life of a missionary is something altogether different!"<sup>2</sup>*

Father Colbacchini, then, had in mind the founding of a congregation of missionaries for assisting Italian emigrants in Brazil, as he will express more explicitly to Father Domenico Mantese, who was to be one of the first two priests to join the Scalabrinian Institute, and had previously decided to reach him in Brazil.

*"Not more than three priests should come now. It is necessarily understood that the three or four priests assigned to this mission shall form one body, that is, a Religious Congregation to be approved later on by the ecclesiastical authority. We shall establish here a seminary to provide for the future of these communities of immigrants."<sup>3</sup>*

A short while later Father Mantese informed him that he would join him with two other priests from Vicenza in October.<sup>4</sup> In fact, while still pastor at Poianella, diocese of Vicenza, he had booked a ship reservation for the trip, but then he cancelled it, and in the middle of November had a meeting with Bishop Scalabrini in Rome. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of the same month, Bishop Scalabrini asked him to inform Father Colbacchini about the founding of his Institute. Father Colbacchini answered on December 26, 1887.

*"I received your letter. Let us give thanks to the Lord who has been pleased to fulfill our desires. Judging from what you tell me, the missions for Italians in America will be prosperous and lasting.*

*I was earnestly waiting for you. I kept sending to the telegraphic office for information in the hope to hear of your arrival at Rio de Janeiro!*

*Now, I rejoice in my disillusion, because, the good expected, though delayed a while, will be greater."<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. note No. 20, page 58

<sup>2</sup> Letter Colbacchini to a priest in Vicenza. Curitiba, February 28, 1887. (Arch. G.S.D., III, 1).

<sup>3</sup> Letter Colbacchini to Mantese. Curitiba, June 26, 1887. (Arch. G.S.D., III, 1).

<sup>4</sup> Letter Colbacchini to Mantese. Curitiba, August 21, 1887. (Arch. G.S.D., III, 1).

<sup>5</sup> Letter Colbacchini to Mantese. Curitiba, December 26, 1887. (Arch. G.S.D., III, 1).

On the same day he wrote to Bishop Scalabrini.

*"Curitiba, Paraná  
December 26, 1887*

*Most Reverend Bishop,*

*Under the auspices of the Child Jesus I received yesterday the consoling news you were conveying to me through Father Mantese with letter from Rome on last November 20<sup>th</sup>. Thanks be to God for granting me the fulfillment of my long cherished dreams and fervent desires.*

*To provide for the great needs of our Italians in America no less than a congregation of missionaries is necessary if only to stop once and for all other Italian priests, Neapolitan especially, from moving into the midst of this flock, where now, except for a few, they play better the part of wolves than of shepherds.*

*I, the last of all in merits, have the right to claim to be among the first to desire the founding of this necessary congregation. For many years I concerned myself with America where I knew thousands of Italians were living deprived of all sources for salvation. I had attempted all ways possible to form a group of companions and muster the necessary means, but confronted with very serious difficulties; at last I resolved to come here alone in the name of the Lord.*

*The past three years I have been exercising the ministry in this place, and the Lord enriched my efforts with his blessings. At first I had taken charge of Italian communities in the state of San Paulo as the field of my apostolate; but, then, lacking the means for my sustenance and on account of difficulties created by the private proprietors running those communities, many of whom are ill disposed towards religion, I thought better to move to Paraná, where I am now for two years and find no difficulty other than being unable to reap this rich harvest. The services of at least four priests would be needed for these communities, (about 25) only. In the state of San Paulo, ten priests would not be enough for more than fifty far-flung colonies. The bishop is good, but a Brazilian, that is, he lets things go their way. However, he is happy about whatever good is being done, always willing to give his moral support.*

*Financial help? None. So far, even the offerings for Baptisms and Weddings performed by me, all go to the local pastors who do not have even the decency to thank me for the service. The situation could not go on like this because I am in need of funds to continue my mission. For this reason I solicited and obtained from the bishop the separation of Italians from the Brazilian parishes, effective shortly, with parochial jurisdiction and all the stole rights.*

*Your Excellency deigned to inform me that you count on my cooperation in founding a central house for the Missionaries of your Institute. With all my heart I respond to your desire and I place myself as a faithful servant at your service for life and all, in a cause that fulfills the purpose for which I am here. Besides, in wonder I admire the mysterious ways the Providence of God, who, directing all things in gentleness, provides me with the opportunity to offer you a mission residence just these days completed. Though not quite adequate for a central house, yet it will certainly serve as comfortable quarters for the Missionaries assigned to this holy task.*

*While waiting in great eagerness for my priest companions, I did all in my power to get accommodations ready for them, as I consider it necessary that the Missionaries, on account of the conditions and loose morals of this country, have a community house to come back to from any place where their ministry is needed. I went broke building this house, as I had to spend eight thousand liras I had left over of the money I had brought along with me from Italy.*

*Furthermore, in this community of Agua Verde, close to the provincial capital Curitiba, a beautiful church is being built, in Italian style, costing us ten thousand liras already, and just much more when completed. I am undergoing all kinds of hardships in this undertaking, especially in consideration for the poverty of these settlers. Also in the other settlements, less pretentious, to be sure, churches, sixteen of them already, have been built or are under construction. Then I spent a lot of money to supply them with vestments, sacred vessels, and furnishings, and still owe four thousand liras to Mr. Antonio Sterni, a dealer in Bassano. I provide all these things at cost, and believe me, I do not make one penny! Yet, I remain steadfast and keep going. I had recourse twice to His Eminence Cardinal Simeoni, prefect of Propaganda asking for some help from the Holy See, but all I got so far was good words. Yet the need of these*

*churches is far exceeding any words of support!! The last expedition of these supplies should have been carried out by Fathers Mantese and Bonato, and now I do not know whether my instructions to them were followed. They would have spared me any proceedings with the government to secure exemption from custom duties.*

*Now I may risk paying four to five thousand liras to pass customs, a sum amounting to the real value or more, of the merchandise. On their arrival, by telling custom officials the supplies were for their personal use, they could pass through free of taxes. This happened to me with supplies valued in excess of three thousand liras. I tell you all this so that you may know about it.*

*The means for my livelihood are supplied by the stole fees, and by the free offerings of these settlers who, for the most part, are doing what they can. When the missionary is out engaged in the ministry each colony provides for his sustenance, and in all communities there is a room, with all furnishings necessary for lodging the priest, attached to the church.*

*The geographic position of the state of Paraná deserves preference for a central mission house over any other state of Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina. Its climate is even healthier than the very healthy one of Italy! Here one can hardly experience what sickness is, except perhaps for a few places by the sea. We are all enjoying sound good health!!! I, myself, always a weakling “flosso”<sup>6</sup> in Italy, hold out quite well in spite of my daily and nightly steady toiling, the long horseback rides, and the disastrous trips in the rain and inclement weather. Though in the tropic, due to the elevation of nine hundred meters, or more, above sea level, the climate is mild. It is a high plateau that extends miles and miles to the Andes of Paraguay; never too hot or too cold, with only an occasional frost, and no snow or freezing. The soil of the interior is very fertile. It produces grains and fruits almost as in Italy! This state is very suitable for Italians. Should the government adopt a more enlightened policy in regard to emigration this state would be most sought by our countrymen. As of now, Italians in this state do not exceed twenty thousand. This region is central to all others in Brazil where Italians are found between the states of San Paulo, Santa Caterina, and Rio Grande do Sul. Italians live here by the thousands: over one hundred thousand in Rio Grande, thirty to thirty-five thousand in Santa Caterina, and over one hundred in San Paulo. A railway running between Curitiba and Paranaguá allows one to reach that seaport in five hours; from there ships sail for other ports of Brazil and Argentina once or twice a week. Means of communication are easily available. It takes one day to sail from Paranaguá to Santos, and three hours by train from here to the capital city of San Paulo! So also, only one hour sailing to Santa Caterina, and two days to Rio Grande do Sul. I would not advise a central house to be established in the state of Rio Grande do Sul on account of the great distances of the colonies from each other, and of the hazardous horseback trips one has to take. In the state of Paraná all the main roads are suitable for transportation by wheel, and the population live closer together. Your Excellency is free to give this information the consideration you think it may deserve, and then let me know your desires and commands. Regardless of my opinions, I shall always be willing to carry them out to the best of my ability.*

*For a freer and easier exercise of the ministry, special faculties (I have been able to obtain quite a few, already) are needed from the Holy See, because, though still under the jurisdiction of the local bishops, those obstacles must be avoided that could obstruct the work of these missions. On this point I will report to you at a later date.*

*As much as I can, I humbly entreat Your Excellency to hasten the departure of the two priests who were already preparing to leave! I cannot any longer bear all alone the responsibility of this mission where labor and hardships increase more and more every day. At one colony alone, on Christmas Eve and night I ministered the Sacraments to more than seven hundred persons! I should be everywhere!*

*A sufficient number of priests, sound in mind and body, will be able to render an immense service for the progress of the Church in Brazil, that, in the words of the ex-papal internuncio Bishop Nocenni, is at present "all but a dead body". One should see for himself to believe what and how dreadful are conditions in these regions! I am convinced that the good Lord has provided this immigration*

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<sup>6</sup> Flosso; Floscio = Weak.

*of Italians into Brazil as a means to revive this nation that has almost completely lost the faith once brought to it by the zeal and toil of the Jesuits. The practice of the faith is unknown here. A few go to Mass on Sunday, no one receives the Sacraments, except for some and for the first and last time, on the occasion of their wedding. In Curitiba, a city with thirty thousand people, hardly fifty Holy Communions are ministered. And what about the priests? They look after money and leisure and then? May the good Lord have pity on Brazil!*

*Not much learning is required of those that come here; they must rather be endowed with proven virtue and courage to endure all kinds of difficulties. Even some Italians are carried by the devil to sow cockle, and one has to endure their insults and slanderous tongues!*

*Be pleased to bless one who humbly undersigns himself as*

*Your most devoted  
servant and son in Christ,  
Father Peter Colbacchini."<sup>7</sup>*

We point out that Bishop Scalabrini was in no hurry to send missionaries as he wished to provide for them the best possible preparation consented by the urgency of the need. Father Colbacchini received an answer only in the beginning of March 1888. In fact, on March 6<sup>th</sup>, he wrote to Father Mantese:

*"Your most welcome letter came in yesterday together with the most venerated one of His Excellency the Bishop of Piacenza. I have been waiting for a long time! I regret your delay in coming, in great a need of help as I am. I am exhausted! However, what the superiors decide is always for the best. I am praying, and have others do the same, for the success of our Institute. Only Your Reverence knows how long I yearned for an institute like this! May our Lord make good of our desires!"<sup>8</sup>*

On March 10<sup>th</sup>, he wrote also to the Bishop, completing his first report with information on the conditions of Italians in the states of Rio de Janeiro and Espirito Santo. To the latter the first expedition of missionaries had been assigned, perhaps on recommendation of Father Moroni, who had been there <sup>9</sup>, but above all upon direct invitation of Propaganda Fide. Colbacchini insisted especially on the need to separate Italian communities from the jurisdiction of Brazilian parishes, and described again, with some exaggeration perhaps, the harsh environment the missionaries had to be prepared for.

*"I had forgotten to include the regions of Rio de Janeiro and Espirito Santo in the information I sent you on the number and conditions of the Italian communities. There, too, are many Italians, but I have no information as to how much the bishop, on whose jurisdiction they depend, allows them to do. He is well known for his odd ways, but he is a man of apostolic zeal, and I have no reason to complain about him. Actually, he was always very good to me!*

*Effective as of this March the Sixth, the Italian communities of Curitiba and the territory around it are canonically separated from the Brazilian parishes, and on me and my collaborators now rests the responsibility for their spiritual welfare. In compliance with the laws here, I must pay also for the expenses to have the canonical registers stamped and accredited. Certain paragraphs of the bishops' decree, too verbose for me to send you a copy, need to be changed or eliminated, but prudence prompts me to wait a while for the right moment and to employ all precautions that in doing so I may not be denied the benefits already obtained. The Vicar General of this diocese was promoted Secretary to the Bishop, an appointment highly rated here. Another priest from this region was summoned to take his place, and I hope, he will be in a position to understand the work of our Congregation and support us.*

*In any case, as all do here, I cannot count much for help on those, who look upon their priestly ministry only as a means for their livelihood. Nor can one here consider pastors anything else but government employees for statistics.*

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<sup>7</sup> Letter Colbacchini to Scalabrini, Curitiba, December 26, 1887. (Arch. G.S.D., III, 1).

<sup>8</sup> Letter Colbacchini to Mantese. Curitiba, March 6, 1888. (Arch. G.S.D., III, 1).

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. Letter Marcellino Moroni to Corrigan, New York, May 24, 1888, (Arch. G.S.D., I, 2) in which he describes the welcome given him by the Bishop of Rio de Janeiro, comparing it with the manner Father Lynch in New York received him: "But, the Bishop of Rio de Janeiro did not behave like this when I went to him with recommendation from the Bishop of Cremona who was sure to do him a favor by sending a priest requested by the faithful of his diocese who live in the State of Espirito Santo. The good Bishop, a thousand times disappointed in recommended priests, and very disgusted over unfavorable reports about him to Rome by priests who had gone to Brazil with second intentions, sent me away, and with two liras left over, I took to the house of a shoemaker from Calabria."

*They say Mass when they please or have to, and most of them hurry through it in ten, or so, minutes! Confessions? Not even the dying! Ninety-nine percent of them, in city or anywhere, die without the sacraments! Right now I am waiting for someone who asked to take me to a dying Brazilian two miles from here. They do not even try to call on the Brazilian priests; well do they know their priests would not move.*

*One faculty needed by the Missionaries is certainly to bless marriages of people (Brazilians of course) living in concubinage, with power to dispense not only from bans, but also from impediments of consanguinity and affinity, whatever the case may be, as it is often necessary.*

*I received this faculty from the bishop which I put to good use on at least fifty occasions. But, it was revoked by the decree of separation, certainly under pressure of the local pastors who are rather willing to tolerate such disorders than to lose out on their rights to contributions. *Quaerunt quae sua sunt!* (they look after their own interests). I will have a good talk with the bishop on this; but it would be better if it came from the Holy See. The faculty to administer Confirmation could also be quite practical "*servatis servandis*" (under certain conditions.) Besides, the decree of the Bishop creates for me an embarrassing situation in regard to the weddings of Italians. It requires that immigrants who entered the diocese at ages 14 (for boys), and 12 (for girls), should submit proof of their freedom to marry, to the Vicar General together with a 38 liras tax. It used to be 76 liras before I objected to it.*

*The poverty of many, and ill will on the part of others, may lead them to follow the general trend of Brazilians, and get into natural unions without the sacrament. Besides others, the diocesan-tax for weddings, at 18.25 liras, is quite high. It sure is an unjust requirement when we consider that the young people who came to Brazil within twenty years of age would not be required to prove their freedom to marry by the laws and provisions of Italy. In any case, it would always be the duty of the Missionary to make the necessary investigations and accept the oaths. Certainly, he would be more competent than an outsider who knows neither the persons nor the laws and customs of our regions. We shall see what will come of it.*

*This law existed all the while for the whole diocese; however, since I had never directly been informed of it, I acted independently, contented to comply with canon law.*

*Rumors reached here that the Vicar General, just transferred, was complaining for the loss of three thousand liras because I had neglected to send the parties to him for their certificate of freedom to marry.*

*In any case, whenever I had sufficient reason to suspect the existence of some impediment, in compliance with the ordinary practice and upon payment of the required tax, I sent them to him to be granted their freedom to marry, thus sparing myself the investigation's proceedings.*

*I give Your Excellency this information that you may put it to use as you see fit for the good of this mission.*

*The new Church of Agua Verde depleted all my funds, and now I live in evangelical poverty. Besides I am seven thousand liras in the red with Bassano for vestments and the bells:*

*But I do not worry about it neither for the priests who will be arriving, nor for myself; well do I know that I deal with a Master who never allowed me to go without what I need.*

*Should Your Excellency be in a position to provide some funds for when the Missionaries will reach here, they would be mighty handy for the most urgent expenses; if not, do not worry, the priests shall have at least what is needed, just the same.*

*Yesterday, I returned to Timbituba, where Father F. Bonato<sup>10</sup> resides. I went there to settle a dispute that had landed two people in the hospital for two days, to be treated for wounds received. It was brought about by envious resentment against the person I had placed in charge for directing the building of the new church. With God's help, order has been restored, and the building continues on; the roof is completed and the main altar is underway.*

*The church is eighteen meters long and eleven wide, made of stone and brick.*

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<sup>10</sup> Father Francis Bonato, one of the priests recruited together with Father Mantese by Father Colbacchini in Italy.

*There, too, a niche is waiting for the statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Father Bonato, though well shaken up for a while by the quarrel, is happy and doing well.*

*Next week he will spend a few days here with me. He still entertains the intention of joining our Apostolic Institute. If he succeeds in resisting the influence of his relatives who intend to settle here soon, he will turn out to be a valuable asset for this mission. On the occasion of my visit to that community I inquired of a Brazilian gentleman for a certain piece of land, close to the church to serve as residence and source of income for the colony's priest: my request was accepted right away. The land, very good, will offer sufficient work and provide enough bread for a large family. For the time being, the property will remain titled to my name as interim superior of this mission. Since all church properties belong to the state and their administration is subjected to capricious ways and harassments of all kinds, it did not seem wise to title it to the parish. Neither is it advisable to title it to Father Bonato who, either through his own free choice or other reasons, is likely to be transferred from there. I trust Your Excellency will approve of my course of action and hold on to this donation as to a real estate property of the Institute.*

*I have decided to buy a house and twenty six acres of land at Santa Felicidade, centrally located and with the largest population, for the construction of an orphanage for all Italian colonies around, so much needed here on account of their miserable conditions. It cost one thousand liras or close to it, not all paid as yet. We will have to build there a residence for the Missionary also. The community cannot turn its attention to this project for the time being, all taken up, as it is now, in building a solid and beautiful church, 33 meters long and 14 wide. As the place of my residence, so also this one shall be the property of the Mission, in line with the instructions Your Excellency will be pleased to give me.*

*Construction on this hostel or orphanage shall begin as soon as we can. I am of the opinion of entrusting its direction into the hands of two or three able young ladies from Vicenza, religious of the secular order of St. Angela Merici, known also as Ursulines. But this is no concern of mine any longer: do as you think best, Your Excellency."<sup>11</sup>*

In two subsequent letters, March of the same year, Father Colbacchini elaborates on the same points, especially on his first attempts at opening a mission for the Italian community of Santa Leopoldina, in the state of Espirito Santo. Already the previous year, they had sent a messenger, a certain Tomaselli, to Bishop Scalabrini, in quest for a priest.

*"I cannot express to you in words my joy in seeing my dreams come true in the Institution of Missionaries founded by Your Excellency for the assistance to those unfortunate countrymen of ours. This is the only way to provide them with an effective and permanent help in their needs. Thanks be to God: Father Francis Bonato, just in from Timbituva, shares my joy in the vision of soon being a member of this institution. Truly, as Your Excellency writes, his good qualities warrant him to become, with God's help, a fit instrument for the salvation of souls.*

*Now I come to what you were saying in regard to the community of Santa Leopoldina. Two are the colonies known by this name, one in the region of Minas, if I am not mistaken; the other in the state of Espirito Santo. It takes about fifteen days over land and sea to reach it. It is wise, then to wait till Mr. Tomaselli will report to you again in April about the situation. I do not see it too clear. I am under the impression that the community in the state of Espirito Santo is large enough to provide support for a priest. As to Minas, I do not think many Italian settlements are in that region. Those settlers promise anything to get a priest, but then either through poverty or negligence they do not keep their promises. If I did not have along with me six thousand liras, I would not have any change to settle in these regions. Excellency, your prudence shall advise you as to the provisions to adopt on this matter.*

*As I gave you to understand already, I accept, in the meantime, the assignment you were pleased to charge me with. The Lord will help me for His glory.*

*What I would never cease to recommend is that you let the Holy See know the urgent need to grant the missionaries, or at least the superiors of the missions, those special faculties which help in facing the difficulties raised in many places*

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<sup>11</sup> Letter Colbacchini to Scalabrini, Curitiba, March 10, 1888. (Arch. G.S.D., III, 2).

*by priests and pastors, Neapolitans especially, who will never consent to allow anyone to interfere with what they may think to be their rights.*

*Once effected, the separation of Italian communities from the local pastors' jurisdiction will help a good deal. In any case, it is necessary to take exception to the canonical law of the Council of Trent prescribing the territorial division of parishes, because here natives, Italians, and immigrants from other nations live mixed together. It would be impossible to determine territorial boundaries. Much more so when we consider that many Italian families are scattered around in city and country, either by themselves, or in small groups. The decree of separation (though not adequate) of the Italians around the region of Curitiba, deals with people, not with territory, and grants Italians their freedom to choose joining, or not, the parish conducted by the missionaries. This way, it will be less difficult to reach our scope."<sup>12</sup>*

A few days later he wrote:

*"On my return from Alfredo Chaves, where I have spent six days, I take the little time I can spare to write once again to you, before leaving this very day for the colony of Santa Felicidade to preside over the Holy Week's Liturgy.*

*I wrote to good Mr. Tomaselli. We shall see. Promises are easily made, but seldom kept! Fortunately, this is not so important!*

*However, it will be always necessary that the missionaries conquer the field inch by inch, and inspire, by their exemplary conduct, zeal, and detachment, the people who, scandalized by the bad example and sordid greed for money of certain priests, Italian also, Neapolitan especially, are not easily led to believe that there can be priests who come here only to do them good.*

*No matter how few may be the people living in Santa Leopoldina who wish to have a priest, it will be opportune just the same to send one even without previous arrangements; little by little everything will be provided, what is necessary, at least. We must take into account, however, that being the community located in the State of Espirito Santo, it would not be wise to send the missionaries directly there without having them spend some time first in a moderate climate. The tropical climate of Santa Leopoldina would be dangerous for newcomers.*

*My humble opinion would be to establish well first the missions in Paraná, San Paulo, and Rio Grande do Sul, and then extend them into other provinces. In the state of San Paulo there are more than eighty communities without priests, while those of the state of Espirito Santo are more or less provided with priests (though not always good ones).<sup>13</sup>*

Upon receiving news from Father Colbacchini that he accepted to be superior of the first group of Scalabrinian Missionaries to be assigned to Paraná, the Bishop of Piacenza sent to Cardinal Simeoni for approval of his plans:

*"Your Eminence will certainly remember Father Peter Colbacchini, who is doing missionary work in the province of Curitiba, Brazil. He had insistently asked to join our new Congregation and I accepted him wholeheartedly.*

*He could very well be the Superior of the Missionaries in Brazil, experienced as he is of men and customs of that nation. He advises me that the most indicated location for a central house would be the city of Curitiba. It is located on a high plateau in the diocese of San Paulo, in the state of Paraná, that give hospitality to fifty thousand emigrants, especially from Italy, Poland, Germany, and France.*

*The climate is healthy, the land, fertile, and almost all the fruit trees of Italy grow there! The city, though only 20 years in existence, has twenty-four thousand inhabitants! In its surrounding area there are about twenty Italian settlements, about ten thousand souls. It is a place not far from Argentina or Paraguay, and the sea, to which it is connected by a railroad, built a short while ago.*

*Should Your Eminence approve my plan I would send soon two or three missionaries and some catechists, who, in the opinion of Father Colbacchini himself, will be of great help. The settlers of the Timbuy Valley, who forwarded to you through me a moving petition, have built a church and a house, and now, according to the promise made to them, they expect two priests.*

*I conveyed their request to Father Peter Colbacchini charging him to go and inquire about the conditions of those communities, and once assured of no*

<sup>12</sup> Letter Colbacchini to Scalabrini, Curitiba, March 22, 1888. (Arch. G.S.D., III, 2).

<sup>13</sup> Letter Colbacchini to Scalabrini, Curitiba, March 27, 1888. (Arch. G.S.D., III, 2).



*objections on the part of Your Eminence, I shall see what I can do to send them help as soon as possible.*

*I am informed from Brazil that there is a great revival going on among those settlers, and they are in a hurry to build chapels in the hope of soon having the priests. But, since besides the priests, there will also be the need of sacred pictures, statues, vestments and bells, we must hope that Divine Providence will soon supply all help necessary."<sup>14</sup>*

The approval from Propaganda was granted to Bishop Scalabrini on May 7<sup>th</sup>.<sup>15</sup> A few days before, the Bishop had travelled to Milan to pay his respects to Pedro II, Emperor of Brazil, and plead with him on behalf of Italian emigrants and his missionaries.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, he had asked Queen Margherita of Italy to be the interpreter for the same concerns with the Empress. The Queen answered him so:

*"Viareggio, April 27, 1888.*

*"Your Excellency,*

*I received your most welcome letter of the 26<sup>th</sup> of April, and I do not want to let one day pass by before I answer you.*

*The Empress of Brazil, not only did she listen to me with much benevolence when I told her what you have in mind to do with your Italian Missionaries, but told me also:*

*"Put everything down in writing to me" - and then had Princess Massima repeat it to me by saying: "Tell Margherita not to forget to write to remind me of the Missionaries of the Bishop of Piacenza." I did not neglect to do so.*

*I believe, therefore, that you will do the right thing to pay a visit to the Empress, who is all kindness and to remind her that your Institute is the very same one about which I spoke to her in Florence, and that it is now a question of Italians under her protection!*

*Believe me, Your Excellency, I am happy if in any small manner I have been able to cooperate in helping your newly founded Institute.*

*Do not forget me in your prayers, and be pleased to accept me as always your most devoted and affectionate,*

*Margherita."<sup>17</sup>*

We do not know the reason why Bishop Scalabrini delayed answering Father Colbacchini who was pleading with him to send him missionaries now absolutely needed on account of the impatience of emigrants and of their priest's physical exhaustion.<sup>18</sup> At last on July 25<sup>th</sup>, Father Colbacchini received the so much desired news, and he wrote this letter to Fr. Roller:

*"Today, at last, together with yours and Father Mantese's letters, I received the long expected news of the Missionaries' departure for these regions! During all this time Your Paternity must have received other letters of mine in which I was arguing and almost resentfully trying to prove to you the need for their prompt arrival!*

*Everything is ready, here; a comfortable home for four or five priests, beds, and all furnishings necessary. At the other colonies also (not all as yet) there are small living quarters, that is a room, a bed and all, the like of it not even the prophet Elisha could boast of at the house of the widow from Sarepta.*

*Anyway, what counts most is that the Missionaries will find here a field ready, and, for the greater part, well seeded. There are communities that could be called models of religious life, such as Santa Felicidade, for one, with 130 families. They have now a spacious and fine church made of wood, but they are planning on building another one, vast and beautiful, that would cost about one hundred thousand liras if the people did not donate material, their time, and work.*

*The church of Agua Verde cost me great sacrifices because the emigrants here are faced with harsh conditions, and cannot help much, except for the masonry work. However, at the cost of a little more than 12 thousand liras (I paid eight thousand of them, with little hope of getting them back) a church was built that*

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<sup>14</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Simeoni, Piacenza, April 15, 1888. (Arch. G.S., Scalabrini, manuscripts, rough copy).

<sup>15</sup> Letter Card. Simeoni to Scalabrini, May 7, 1888, Prot. No. 2033. (Arch. G.S.B., IV, 1888, No. 4).

<sup>16</sup> Cfr. Letter Scalabrini to Bishop of Rio de Janeiro, Piacenza, June 26, 1888, quoted.

<sup>17</sup> Letter Queen Margherita of Italy to Scalabrini. Viareggio, April 4, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B., IV, 1888, No. 172).

<sup>18</sup> Cfr. Letters Colbacchini to Scalabrini, May 1, 1888, May 26, 1888, and July 3, 1888. (Arch. G.S.D., III, 2).

*in the opinion of the experts could be valued at fifty thousand. I had to be the painter, the carpenter, and other things, besides. I believe the priests will be happy with the Mother Church of their colonies. It is dedicated to the Sacred Heart, as all the colonies! Its paintings, and all else, confess to the faith in the Blessed Sacrament, a faith sadly not found in these regions, where one makes more of a ten centimeter black statue of St. Benedict than of the Lord in the Eucharist, who is to all the unknown God!*

*You can imagine how curious your letter made me! Besides the news most expected, it does not tell me anything else about our newly born Congregation! In any case, it's easy for me now to patiently wait for the arrival of my most desired companions.*

*Upon arrival of the Missionaries I will write to you again and give other information.*

*My respects and obedience to my most reverend Superior, the Bishop, and keep me in your prayers.*

*Your devoted servant and brother in Christ,*

*Father Peter Colbacchini.<sup>19</sup>*

We report now the letter we consider the conclusive summary of the intense and meritorious period of preparation conducted by Father Peter Colbacchini:

*"Most Rev. Excellency,*

*Jesus be with us! Here I am doing my duty! On the twelfth day of this month I took my religious vows at the hands of Rev. Father Dominic Mantese according to the rules of our Congregation, though in an impromptu form, because we did not have the original one, nor did the confreres remember it by heart! I enclose it, keeping a copy for myself. All Fathers and Brothers are well and seem to be happy.*

*They began immediately to exercise their ministry here and there, gaining strength to overcome all reluctance, or, to express it in clearer terms, to face the difficulties they were anticipating.*

*Be pleased, Your Excellency, to commend to God and bless your most devoted son in Christ,*

*Father Peter Colbacchini.<sup>20</sup>*

On the preparation for the arrival of the first Scalabrinian missionaries to the State of Espirito Santo we do not have much information. We know already that Mr. Luigi Tomaselli had gone to Italy in 1887 to ask Bishop Scalabrini to send two priests to those colonies, and had obtained assurance that his request would be granted as soon as possible.

Father Marcellino Moroni, who, before returning to Italy and departing for New York, had been for over three years in that region, reported to Bishop Scalabrini on conditions there in a "pro-memoria" (a manuscript report of information).

*"Verba volant sed scripta manent" (words fade away, but written words remain). Consequently I choose to put down in writing what I would have to tell by word on the missions in the state of Espirito Santo that hosts over twenty-six thousand Italian immigrants who have no other religious comforts than Baptism and Matrimony, if they can pay the tax.*

*In order to spare myself repeating what I already said and wrote in Rome to you and to the Internuncio, who for three years gave so much of himself to the assistance of emigrants in vain, I will briefly relate the following:*

- 1. The good Bishop of Rio de Janeiro has to contend with the opposition of the pastors that in those regions are powerful on account of the support afforded them by the factions. He told me: 'Go ahead, have three or four priests sent here; but I am in no position to write to and go against the pastors. Come to an understanding with them yourself.*
- 2. In regard to immigrants, the Vicar General gave missionaries the faculty to baptize them, and many times to perform their marriages (Casamento)<sup>21</sup>; but under cover he attempted all means to obstruct my ministry.*
- 3. Among immigrants there are grocers and bartenders that are retailers for*

<sup>19</sup> Letter Colbacchini to Rolleri, Curitiba, July 25, 1888. (Arch. G.S.D., III, 2).

<sup>20</sup> Letter Colbacchini to Scalabrini, Curitiba, August 21, 1888. (Arch. G.S.D., III, 2).

<sup>21</sup> Casamento= Marriage.

*gross suppliers of their products. Their patrons are friends of the pastors, and to secure their protection and avoid persecution these retailers side with them in causing disputes between immigrants and their priest, especially if he does not reside in their midst (sessione)<sup>22</sup>, as they count very much on his presence to attract a greater number of customers.*

4. *Local authorities of Alfredo Chaves, provincial capital of all territories of the ex-colonial province of Rio Novo, presented a petition to the Bishop to have the new community made a parish; but it did not obtain anything. The Vicar General and his supporters of the pseudo-conservative party have always opposed the idea. The local authorities of San Antonio in Rio Novo, which depends on Itapemerim and includes other settlements of emigrants around it, presented the same petition, but without results.*

*At last they had recourse to the Papal Internuncio telling him that to provide a priest for emigrants under the jurisdiction of the local pastor could not work, and were amazed at the Holy See for being unable to find a solution. While Protestants had their church and worshipped in all decor, the poor catholic immigrants, both German and Italian, cannot have a priest on account of the jealousy and greed of the pastors, and of the Bishop's hesitation.*

*The weak Bishop, a giant in appearance, is a man of prayer, occasionally meticulous, and quick tempered! He curses at the masons, and then deals with them kindly out of propriety; he condemns to hell priests with wife and children, and then he admits their children to the seminary! On one occasion, during the pastoral visitation of the colony he was moved to tears upon discovering that an Italian lady, a day's walk away, lay gravely ill, and wanted to send me to assist her! Yet, he lets these emigrants be without a priest rather than face the opposition of the pastors.*

*The people of Guaporé wanted me as pastor, and I was happy about it! But the Bishop asked for a petition from me in three copies to send one to the Bishop of Cremona, another to Rome, and the third to the chancery office. He did not wish to be accused (he told me later) of having cast me out of the colony. In short, the poor Bishop finds the emigrants a big problem on his hands, and does not know which way to turn. He is afraid of Rome, and is distressed; afraid of the pastors, and caters to them; afraid of emigrants, and is irritated; afraid of me, also, and at times he reprimands me, while flattering me, to others.*

*One day he told me: 'Oh, would it be that the immigrants were directly dependent on Rome, what a relief for me!'*

*I had better draw to a close now. With permission from the Bishop, I left Brazil in search of three priests after agreement with the pastor that he would grant them the faculties to baptize and perform marriages (basare)<sup>23</sup> in the whole fifth territory. But, who can be sure?*

*In other territories, people, especially Brazilians despise the priest who does not baptize. I do not know what faculties are now granted the priests of this Institute, but I venture to say that if Rome does not keep them independent under an Apostolic Vicar for a septennium (seven years), or, if the new colonies are not separated, at least, from the local old parishes, they will find themselves in a very awkward position.*

*Your Humble Servant,  
Father Marcellino d'Agnadello.<sup>24</sup>*

Bishop Scalabrini did all in his power to pave the way through a tactful letter to the Bishop of Rio de Janeiro:

*"From Father Marcellino d'Agnadello, well-known to Your Excellency, I have heard with pleasure about your concern and affection for the unfortunate Italian immigrants, and your desire to provide priests to assist them.*

*He spoke also of the many difficulties Your Excellency has to face in this regard with the local pastors who oppose as much as possible the Italian priests and do whatever in their power to harass the exercise of their ministry with resulting serious harm to souls.*

*So also he informed me about the hardships you are confronted with that prevent you from employing the zeal you are inspired by.*

<sup>22</sup> Sessione=Fazenda=Plantation=Farm

<sup>23</sup> Basare=benedire matrimoni=to bless a marriage

<sup>24</sup> Letters Moroni d'Agnadello to Scalabrini, S.D. (Arch. G.S., Missions closed, Espirito Santo).

*Father Marcellino made known also in Rome that Your Excellency is very zealous and willing, but much harassed and opposed by the pastors, who, under the protection of state laws, are not always submissive to their Bishop. These conditions have also been brought to the attention of the Holy Father, by persons in authority outside of your province, where Father Marcellino was residing.*

*Many petitions reaching here from the state of Espirito Santo, Alfredo Chaves, Santa Leopoldina, etc., all speak of these troubles, deplore them, ask for remedies and for Italian priests. For all these reasons, the Holy See is seriously considering taking effective measures with the help and prudent cooperation of the Bishops.*

*The Holy Father, who for the purpose of providing assistance for Italian migrants gave the initial impulse to this Congregation, wishes that the priests sent by him be supported by their lawful protectors. He well understands the difficult position of the uneasy bishops who many times do not have a free hand in their pastoral ministry and are unable to do all the good they so ardently desire.*

*Confronted with such difficulties I would not even consider the possibility of sending priests to that province; however, Father Marcellino assures me he has been charged by you to get some priests, if only by word of mouth, (as you do not retain it advisable to do so in writing for reasons of prudence, which I, a Bishop, can very well understand and appreciate). For this reason, by the expressed desire of the Holy Father, I send you the same Father Marcellino with two other priests. They are strongly urged to depend on and obey you in all things, to respect the rights of pastors and vicars; even more, to get along with them as much as possible, for the salvation of souls.*

*I have no doubt that Your Excellency will give your wholehearted welcome to these priests; I feel most sure of it, and as of now I inform His Holiness, who will hold as done to himself what is being done to his missionaries.*

*However, in case Your Excellency were not in a position to take them in, for reasons beyond your control, I will be compelled to send them to other regions from where many requests are coming in.*

*Sure to have a most welcome answer from you soon that may relieve me of all anxiety, and assure me of your protection for my priests, I present you my thanks in advance, and I profess myself etc."<sup>25</sup>*

We know through Father Marcellino that the Bishop of Rio "was very pleased with these conditions: subject to the Ordinary, obedient to the diocesan laws, to proceed in accord with the pastors. Only, at this last condition he began to laugh! Oh, this is going to be tough!"<sup>26</sup>

Under so little encouraging auspices the missions were thus opened in the state of Espirito Santo. Obstructionism from pastors, lack of directives from diocesan authorities, no intervention from Rome, Bishop Scalabrini had hoped for, the strange temperament of two (Fathers Marcellino and Venditti) of the first four missionaries (three priests and a brother catechist), were all causes which made the presence of the Scalabrinian Missionaries in that state so troubled and short-lived. Rightly, Bishop Scalabrini had this to say to Cardinal Simeoni:

*"Most Reverend Eminence,*

*In obeisance to the desire expressed to me in your letter of last August 30th, I am here conveying to you more detailed information on the sad conditions in which our missionaries and fellow countrymen are living in Brazil.*

*In those regions, where according to recent statistics Italian immigration amounts to 350 thousand persons, it is so distributed: one hundred thousand in the various cities, the rest scattered in the territories of several states of the empire, especially San Paulo, Rio do Janeiro, Espirito Santo, Minas Gerais, Paraná, Santa Caterina, and Rio Grande do Sul, that is over an extension as vast as Europe, where distances are limitless, rivers, virgin forests, and the uninhabited plains are often impervious, and always difficult.*

*Means of communication are few or lacking not only from province to province,*

<sup>25</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Bishop of Rio de Janeiro, Piacenza, June 26, 1888. (Arch. G.S., Missions closed, Espirito Santo, copy).

<sup>26</sup> Letter Moroni to Scalabrini. Alfredo Chaves, August 29, 1888. (Arch. G.S., Missions closed, Espirito Santo).

*or city to town, but also from community to community of the same colony! Roads are unpassable most of the year and present difficulties too hard to overcome. It is, thus, much easier to reach the coast of Brazil by sea from Europe than to travel over land from place to place in the same province.*

*Furthermore, Italian emigrants are employed as hired hands in the fazendas, or farmers tilling land leased to them. They live in isolated communities, each one busy with the piece of land assigned to him or in groups of fifty or eighty families far apart from each other, so that, on account of the harsh and chancy conditions of the roads, a trip from one settlement to another of the same colony, from one to another family of the same group, becomes a veritable ordeal.*

*The work of the missionaries, already so hard of itself for these miserable conditions, becomes utterly impossible and ineffective whenever it does not enjoy full freedom of action and they are not allowed to freely move from place to place to exercise their ministry without limitations of jurisdiction wherever they should find it necessary. In other words, they should be acting as pastors to our fellow countrymen whenever requested and wherever they go. In fact, in their missionary peregrinations through the colonies our priests come in contact with many emigrants: The approaching of God's messenger is announced from lip to lip as the good news, and those unfortunate ones hasten on his footsteps shedding tears of joy. Through the ministry of the Italian priest, not only do they relieve the experiences of their religion and country, but they know also that they can bring to his understanding heart the burden heavy on their consciences without defraying from their children's daily bread.*

*Against their will, they live in concubinage, their children go unbaptized, innumerable cases of conscience are brought about by conditions alien to almost all forms of social life. Unfortunately, the poor missionary does not have the faculties; the pastor, either cannot be reached or does not want to grant them, because in two or three years, when he feels like it, or when he thinks the emigrants to be better off, he intends to go himself, not to reap a holy harvest of souls, but to transact a disgraceful trade of God's ministry. This way, the unhappy missionary has to witness helplessly such miserable sights; nothing else remains for him to do but to mingle his tears with the emigrants', and pray with them that conditions like these may cease. Such actions degrade the holy priestly ministry and prevent its exercise on the part of missionaries who in true apostolic spirit and love for one's country have abandoned relatives, friends, and comforts, in one word, all things that render life beautiful and easy.*

*I would not want to risk offending your zeal and wisdom, Your Eminence, by elaborating any longer on this deplorable state of things, but it is necessary that it ceases right away, as such indignities render religion odious and are used by unbelievers and enemies to fight and ridicule it. Besides, they also cast doubt and disbelief into the unsuspecting and simple souls of immigrants who are thus induced to do without priests since they have no means to generously pay for what they have a right to receive free.*

*Such being the conditions there, it appears impossible to obtain full freedom of action and the pastoral faculties for our missionaries from the episcopate. It is better, then, to take them out of Brazil and assign them to another destinations, as I am convinced it to be a grave loss and responsibility to let precious energies go to waste in a holy work rendered ineffective by the ill will of men."<sup>27</sup>*

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<sup>27</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Simeoni, S.D. (Arch. G.S., Scalabrini, Manuscripts, rough copy).

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **DEPARTURE OF THE FIRST MISSIONARIES**

On April 5, 1888, Bishop Scalabrini wrote to Archbishop Jacobini:

*"Most Reverend Excellency,*

*With pleasure I read in the newspapers that the Holy Father has allocated a million liras for Propaganda. Reminding you of what you told me personally, I, too, count a little on this allocation in support of our congregation, rather, of your Institute of Piacenza.*

*Therefore, I dare ask Your Excellency to let me know whether any, when, and what amount is set aside for it. This in order to find out how I should go about the expenses necessary for definitively buying the house.*

*With God's help, the Institute proceeds well and enjoys the approval of all the bishops. Within a few months I hope to take a trip to Rome and present to the Holy Father the first ten or thirteen missionaries to send to the Americas. This will afford me the occasion to see you and receive instructions and advice.*

*My respects to His Eminence the Cardinal Prefect. Be pleased to accept the expression of my affectionate esteem.*

*I profess myself your devoted servant,  
+John Baptist, Bishop of Piacenza"<sup>1</sup>*

The new missionary congregation was gaining strength in number also, and the first group was being readied for departure through a period of formation, that was called "novitiate" by the Founder and by the candidates, as it served at the same time as their preparation for the profession of the religious vows for five years. Number four of Chapter three of the Regolamentoo just presented was immediately put into effect:

*"The candidates living in community at the mother house shall devote themselves during the "novitiate" to examining their vocation and the purpose that has led them to the Institute in preparation to the apostolic life by the practice of piety, the exercise of meditation, and study."<sup>2</sup>*

On March 7<sup>th</sup>, Father Bartolomeo Rolleri was appointed Superior. He was an austere priest, who had been for sixteen years a missionary in Africa as a member without vows of the Verona Fathers (Institute for African Missions of Verona), and for some time secretary to Bishop Comboni. Back in his native diocese of Piacenza on account of ill health, he had soon petitioned Bishop Scalabrini to be allowed to join his Institute.

Father Rolleri was considered a "benevolent curmudgeon". In his strict asceticism he could certainly give a very austere tone to the formation of the first missionaries. By some he was accused as being too strict. Hi reply to this was:

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<sup>1</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Jacobini, Piacenza, April 5, 1888 (Arch. S.C.P.F., Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, f. 1523; Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1888, No. 5).

<sup>2</sup> Regolamentoo 1888, Chapter III, No. 4.

*"Up to the first half of April, His Excellency, the Bishop, showed himself always much stricter than me in regard to discipline and thrift, and it was I who invited him to relent in everything."<sup>3</sup>*

In June, besides those already mentioned, Fathers Rolleri, Molinari and Mantese, five other priests were members of the community - Fathers Felix Morelli, Joseph Venditti, Remigio Pezzotti, Amos V. Astorri, and Marcellino Moroni. The lay brothers, or, Catechists, were four: Francis Pizzolotto, Vincent Spada, Angelo Armani, and Victor Gabuardi.<sup>4</sup>

On May 22, 1888, the *"Osservatore Romano"* published a short article titled: "L'Episcopato Italiano e l'Istituto dei Missionari per gli Emigranti". (*Italian Bishops and the Institute of the Missionaries for Emigrants*):

"God has blessed the efforts of the most zealous Bishop Scalabrini of Piacenza. Among the proposals suggested in his acclaimed pamphlet on *"Italian Emigration in America"* was the founding of an Institute of Missionaries for the assistance to our countrymen compelled to leave their homeland. The charitable prelate was not contented with the proposal! He employed all means and put to good use the fame and influence of his name to overcome all obstacles, neither few nor small, and so carry through this holy and patriotic project.

As far as we know, the Institute in question is now a reality, and to Piacenza befell the honor to be the seat of an institution that will undoubtedly render an incalculable service to church and country. To the new Institute, inspired by the true spirit of Christ, several zealous priests have already given their names, some with experience of the mission fields, and from various dioceses of Italy. After completing a period of time in spiritual preparation and in the study of subjects most fitting for the scope, they will shortly sail across the sea to where the Lord's voice and our abandoned countrymen's sorrow shall call them.

The press unanimously applauded the noble initiative of the Bishop of Piacenza, and all the bishops of Italy, with the zeal that distinguishes them when the salvation of souls is concerned, have willingly endorsed it by word and deed, thus responding to the sentiments expressed by the Holy Father in a Brief praising and supporting the providential Institute. It honors Bishop

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<sup>3</sup> Letter Rolleri to Zaboglio, Piacenza, July 3, 1888 (Arch. G.S., B, I, 7).

<sup>4</sup> Father Remigio Pezzotti, born August 28, 1834 at Sovere (Bergamo), was a missionary in India, then pastor in the diocese of Bergamo. He entered the Scalabrinian Congregation on April 12, 1888, made his quinquennial religious profession on December 12, 1888, and departed the same day with the group assigned to the State of Espirito Santo in Brazil. He died in San Paulo in 1913.

Father Vincenzo Spada, born at Compieto (Campobasso) on April 15, 1864, joined the Scalabrinian Congregation as a lay brother on April 29, 1888, made his quinquennial religious profession on December 7, 1888, and took perpetual vows on December 8, 1892. He was in the first missionary expedition of missionaries to Espirito Santo. Later he was granted permission to study for the priesthood, and was ordained at Piacenza on May 24, 1902. He died in the same city on September 10, 1905.

Brother Angelo Armani, born at Settima (Piacenza) on February 10, 1850, joined the Scalabrinian Congregation on May 28, 1888. He sailed for New York with the second missionary expedition on January 24, 1889. He spent the greater part of his missionary life in humble and appreciated service at the parish of St. Michael, New Haven, Connecticut, where he died on August 3, 1903.

Fathers Morelli, Venditti, Astorri, and Brother Pizzolotto and Father Gabuardi, left the Congregation when their temporary vows expired.

Scalabrini, the Italians, and Pope Leo XIII."<sup>5</sup>

Pressed by requests from American bishops, Fathers Zaboglio and Colbacchini, and the emigrants themselves, Bishop Scalabrini decided to go ahead with the expedition of his first missionaries, leaving behind at Piacenza only the superior, Father Rolleri, and Brother Armani. On July 11<sup>th</sup>, before departing, they implored the Pope's blessing by telegram.

*"First priests and catechists Congregation Missionaries Italian Emigrants, on eve of departure for America, implore apostolic blessing to confirm them in will to gratefully repay you with love, loyalty, and devotion for benefits granted by gaining to your cause other grateful hearts. Rolleri, Superior."*<sup>6</sup>

A second telegram was sent to Cardinal Simeoni.

*"First group of Institute Missionaries for Emigrants, on eve departure for America send grateful respects to you, their Superior, benefactor, and father; praying God to keep you long years to our affection for good of Church, progress of the missions, they implore your blessing. Rolleri, Superior."*<sup>7</sup>

The rite of departure took place on the morning of July 12, 1888, in the basilica of Sant'Antonino. Received at the main entrance by the chapter and the students of the diocesan seminaries, the ten missionaries walked down the middle of two lines of admiring crowds, and took their places at the right side of the altar. The Founder made his entrance immediately following them. He celebrated mass, and at the end the "Veni Creator" was chanted. Then the chancellor signaled the missionaries to stand before the altar; one by one they knelt in the Bishop's presence and pronounced the religious vows for five years. The Bishop blessed the crucifixes, and presented them to each one pronouncing the words that would become the ritual formula:

*"Receive, my son, the inseparable companion of your apostolic peregrinations: receive your unfailing comfort in life no less than at the hour of death."*

Then, exultant and visibly moved, the Apostle of Emigrants pronounced the first of his farewell addresses.

*"In the midst of the trying tribulations the Church is enduring today, and confronted with still worse ones to come, it is reassuring to be able to gaze at the peace and the unperturbed tranquility with which it continues to carry on its work of civilization in the world! Sure of God's assistance, almost every day it singles out some groups of its army of soldiers, chosen from amongst the most generous ones, and sends them to the four corners of the world, hurls them to remote shores, across the seas, through deserts more dreadful than the sea, to spread the faith, save and strengthen it in those who possess it already, to save souls.*

*My most beloved sons, this is a unique mission in the world, a mission that continues for twenty centuries, of which we, ourselves, have even now an eloquent proof before our very eyes! These are generous souls who, espoused to the poverty of Christ and leaving behind comforts, honors, homeland, domestic*

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<sup>5</sup> "L'episcopato italiano e l'Istituto dei Missionari per gli emigranti", L'Osservatore Romano, May 22, 1888, reported in Trent'anni di Apostolato. Memoirs and Documents. (Rome, 1909), pp. 423-424).

<sup>6</sup> Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1888, No. 130, rough copy.

<sup>7</sup> Arch. S.C.P.F., Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, f. 1539. Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1888, No. 131, authenticated copy.



*joys, and anything else most tenderly cherished in this world, eagerly sail across the Ocean to the assistance of our emigrants. They have harkened to the cry of sorrow of these far away brethren of ours, and now they depart!*

*Oh! Go forth, new apostles of Jesus Christ; go like swift angels to the people who are oppressed and await you! (Ite, angeli veloces ad gentem expectantem et conculcatam). Enter all regions of the new world; nowhere in the world is any other race more despised than ours; all these souls in need of you are waiting: Our emigrants, our very race, are in quest for their spiritual sustenance, and there is no one to give it to them! Proceed, you, the merciful, to satisfy their thirst for salvation! Go in haste, the Angel of Bolivia is calling you, presenting you with over one hundred and ten thousand neglected Italians! Depart, the Angel of Brazil is summoning you to assist no less than three hundred and forty thousand abandoned emigrants! Leave these shores, the Angel of the United States is inviting you to a field where over half a million Italians lay forgotten! Direct your steps towards Paraná, Peru, Argentina, Colombia, and other lands, where one million and three hundred and sixty thousand Italians, thirsty for truth, are in continual peril of falling into heresy! Oh, with what eagerness they are awaiting you! How many of them, lying gravely ill dream of your approaching steps in hope to experience the touch of your priestly ministry, and implore your blessing to sooth the anxieties of their agony! May God speed you! Ite angeli veloces ad gentem expectantem et conculcatam!*

*Vast, limitless, is the field open to your zeal! There are churches to be built, schools to be opened, hospitals to be founded, institutions for the aged to be opened! You will preside over the liturgical worship, teach the children, provide for the widows, the orphans, the sick, the aged! You will find there all the tribulations and needs which the beneficial influx of Christian charity must reach!*

*But how is it possible to provide for so many serious needs? Go forth in confidence! Divine Providence, watching as a tender mother over the works it inspires, will supply a solution for the hard challenges. Only, take care that you respond to its loving inspirations! Take care that all may experience how merciful the Lord is! Never lower the standard of religion, never debase it to the level of human interests! Hold it up high and unblemished, always and everywhere! Anywhere and at all times, provide that together with the sign of religion, the flag of our country also be honored and respected, the flag of this Italy of ours, where the heart of the Church throbs, and God has chosen to place the center of his religion and the See of Christ's Vicar on earth! This land, this beloved country of ours, has urgent need to regain its good name, by the trust and esteem accorded its children in the lands of America. You can contribute much in all this by forming them to the spirit of Christ, the only one who can elevate, ennoble and give value to all things!*

*I am very well aware that much toil, many dangers, contradictions, struggles, and sacrifices are awaiting you, but by faith we know they are sure signs of success in the mission you are about to begin as means to enhance and sustain the zeal within your spirit. May you find your strength, your safest guidance and refuge in the Cross I just placed in your hands: "The Cross - St. Chrysostom exclaims - is light to the humble, strength to the weak, the tree of life, the key of heaven, the standard of victory, the terror of Satan, the might of God". I am sure, with this sign in hand you will conquer! Sant'Antonino, the titular patron of this*

*Basilica, from his glorious tomb, seems to remind us - "You shall win". He witnessed the seed of this Institute germinate by his sacred relics, and now he will, no doubt, be at your side with the help of this protection. Depart, therefore, in gladness and trust! The prayers and well wishes of those you leave behind go along with you: Upon you rests the blessing of God, of Christ's Vicar, and mine!*

*Separated as grains of dust by His Spirit, to us perhaps will not be granted to see each other on earth again; but this separation, if all of us shall have responded to our vocation, will have its end; the farewell of pilgrims on earth shall one day be transformed into the ineffable reunion as citizens of Heaven.*"<sup>8</sup>

After a few brief words of thanks by Father Marcellino Moroni, the hymn of the Apostles "*Aeterna Christi Munera*" was chanted, and the Bishop concluded the rite with a prayer to the Blessed Mother and Sant'Antonino. Then, Father Venditti turned to the people for a farewell address on behalf of the missionaries.

At the end, after imparting the benediction with the Blessed Sacrament, Bishop Scalabrini led the missionaries in solemn procession to the door of the Basilica, while the "Benedictus" was being sung. In the famous vestibule of the Basilica, known as "the Paradise", the Founder embraced his ten missionaries, who immediately climbed into the coaches, which were lent by the most prominent families of Piacenza who vied with one another for the honor. They moved in the direction of the railroad station from where they departed; seven for Genoa directed to Brazil, the other three for Le Havre to New York! While the former had been recommended in advance to the bishops of Brazil with a letter by Bishop Scalabrini, quoted above<sup>9</sup>, the latter two priests and brother carried along with them to New York a letter of recommendation to Archbishop Corrigan.

*"I present to you two missionaries assigned to your Italian community accompanied by a brother catechist who will serve church and rectory. I entrust them wholeheartedly to the fatherly benevolence of Your Most Reverend Lordship.*

*They are zealous, prudent, and learned priests, such as you requested through Fr. Zaboglio. They shall depend in everything on the commands of Your Excellency as their father and shepherd, and they shall consider it their duty and glory to carry out with filial docility even the least of your desires.*

*May the good Lord keep you, Lord Archbishop, for many years to come, for the salvation of souls and the honor of the Episcopacy.*

*Humbly presenting my sincere respects, in deep esteem I profess myself,*

*Your devoted servant,*

*+ John Baptist,*

*Bishop of Piacenza.*"<sup>10</sup> (10)

Archbishop Corrigan replied:

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<sup>8</sup> Scalabrini. "Parole recitate per la prima partenza dei Missionari per l'America." (Words pronounced at the first departure of Missionaries). (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1888, No. 139, copy).

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. above Ch. 7, pp. 86-87.

<sup>10</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Corrigan, Piacenza, July 12, 1888. (Arch. G.S., D, I, 1. Rough copy).

*"As a Bishop and Father, you can understand in your heart better than anyone else my joy and gratitude over the arrival of the new missionaries for Italian emigrants!*

*Last Sunday they said Mass in an improvised church. As they themselves must have written to Your Excellency, for the time being, they have rented a storehouse, and there they placed an altar, on which they celebrated four Masses. Now they are conducting the Novena for the Assumption. Last Sunday they had a \$300.00 collection, while they collect another fifteen to twenty, or more, dollars every night. As you see, Your Excellency, the place may be very humble and small, but the people are starting to frequent it already! Truly, it seems to me, from its very beginning the mission is succeeding beautifully!*

*This piece of news will bring you joy and consolation, as it does to me! This way, little by little, we shall be able to gain our dear Italians back, and lead them all to the Lord. Even better, couldn't we open several such small chapels where they would at least attend Mass and hear the Word of God? There is room for many Italian churches, and Your Excellency will do me a great favor by sending me, when you can, another priest.*

*On October 15<sup>th</sup>, five Pallottine nuns will depart from Rome directed to the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in this city. This church is about five miles from the priests of Piacenza, and the pastor told me a few days ago that he would like to start building a new church there if he should have a sufficient number of parishioners.*

*I thank you very much for your letter of July 12<sup>th</sup>, and I sincerely commend myself to your kindness and prayers."<sup>11</sup>*

In turn, Bishop Scalabrini reported the first news about the arrival and founding of the mission to the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.

*"Most Reverend Eminence,*

*From the letters I hastened to send you since last July, you have been able to know the success, by God's Grace very rewarding, of the first expedition of missionaries. I limit myself, this time, to convey to you only some more recent news about it.*

*The missionaries assigned to New York have already succeeded in opening a church, humble if you will, but totally autonomous and much attended. The Archbishop wrote to me all enthusiastic about the mission, which by the way, enjoys the approval of the American press of all creeds and races.*

*If Your Eminence has no objection, it would be my intention, in agreement with that Archbishop, to open another autonomous church there. I have two priests ready for this project. Unfortunately, to say nothing of other dangers, there exist two protestant churches served by apostate priests and monks who use all skills to attract our ignorant Italians into their nets. It seems to me we should direct our efforts to that city especially*

*I am not aware whether you know that there is in Boston a community of Italians with a church of their own that does not want, I do not know why, to depend on the local clergy. On Sundays and Feast days, these disgruntled*

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<sup>11</sup> Letter Corrigan to Scalabrini, New York, August 10, 1888. (Arch. G.S., D, I, 1). Cfr. Appendix No. 5. Letters Scalabrini-Ireland, pp. 119-122.

*people, counted in the thousands, gather together in that church to sing the Kyrie, the Gloria, the Creed, and to recite the Rosary. They return in the afternoon to sing Vespers and recite once again the Rosary. All this is done without the services of a priest: They don't want to have anything to do with the churches to which they are directed by the Archbishop.*

*For this reason, upon repeated requests from those immigrants, I deemed it wise to send Fr. Zaboglio, Vicar General of our Congregation, to find out whether and how he could remedy the serious situation. Let us hope for the best! Should the Archbishop consent to it, I shall hasten to send there two missionaries and several catechists. I will not neglect to inform you on new developments next time.*

*As to the other missionaries I assigned to Brazil, I have right here the news sent to me yesterday! Those that went to Curitiba were received with demonstrations of great joy by the immigrants. They immediately began their work under the direction of Father Colbacchini who, upon taking the prescribed religious vows, became a member of our Congregation and was appointed superior of that house.*

*I cannot report anything about the three priests who landed at Rio de Janeiro, in the State of Espirito Santo! They did not reach their destination, as yet. I only know that the audience they had with the Bishop of Rio was not too encouraging or promising. He told them that their mission was very difficult and nothing could come of it! On his part he would gladly prefer send all Italians away and he did not intend to come into conflict with his pastors in their behalf... and other similar remarks. However, he granted them the faculties to say Mass, preach, hear confessions, and administer the holy Anointing for the whole year 1889. As to baptisms and weddings, it was left up to the pastors.*

*In my opinion, from the whole situation two things result as indispensable: First, that the Holy Father publish the letter to the Bishops of America which is lying on Archbishop Jacobini's desk for the past several months. I spoke about it lately with the Holy Father himself; he invited me to tell, as I did, the same Archbishop to show it to him as soon as possible. This much for your information.*

*Second, that, as the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda had decided from the beginning, a letter be sent to the Bishops of Brazil, urging them to separate the territories inhabited by Italian immigrants from the jurisdiction of local pastors so as to render our priests independent in the exercise of the sacred ministry.*

*The house here is filling up with new very promising priests and lay brothers, that is, four priests and two theology students to be ordained soon. I am waiting for more. Just the lay brothers to be admitted are six.*

*A few days ago, I closed the deal for a building, all of their own, sufficiently comfortable, spacious, and above all, with a beautiful public church attached to it. And now I am waiting for the sum of twenty thousand liras, allocated for me by the generosity of the Holy Father, as you informed me in the beginning of last August.*

*I am expecting, with a certain degree of concern, the suitcases for the missionaries, and other religious articles you gave me reason to hope for.*

*I have nothing else to say than to express to Your Eminence the sentiments of*

*my heartfelt gratitude and deep veneration.*"<sup>12</sup>

Bishop Scalabrini was insisting then, on the need of a Papal intervention aimed at showing that the Church itself was committed to endorse and direct the religious assistance of emigrants regardless of any particular interests or local conflicts. So also, he returned once more to urge the intervention of the hierarchy in removing all obstacles, caused for practical but not apostolic reasons, by the local jurisdictions.

At last the Holy Father decided to send the Apostolic Letter "*Quam aerumnosa*" to the American Bishops, which we report in translation from the Italian version made public by Bishop Scalabrini:

### **Venerable Brothers**

#### **Salutations And Apostolic Benediction**

So well known are they to you that there is no need for us to bring to your attention the miserable and hard conditions of Italians migrating every year by the thousands to the Americas in search for their livelihood! Furthermore, you are first-hand witnesses to the evils they are beset by, as so many of you on several occasions have informed us with expressions of sincere concern. It is indeed deplorable that so many unfortunate sons of Italy, constrained by poverty to expatriate should, most of the time, encounter worse evils than those they intended to leave behind! Quite often, the hardships of all kinds wearing out the body are the cause of the incomparably more dreadful ruin of their souls. Their very first crossing is strewn with losses and dangers, as most fall prey to greedy speculators whose slaves they become. Indiscriminately hoarded together into the ships and inhumanly treated, they are progressively dragged into moral corruption!

Upon arrival, new to the country and its language, and employed in casual jobs, they become easy targets for the snares of evil and powerful men under whose control they fall. Besides, those who through their own ingenuity were able to secure for themselves a comfortable position, having lost all sense of values in the steady contact with people concerned only with money and self-interest, little by little they end up by living like the ones who place all their thoughts and hopes in the goods of this world. To all this, one must add the many and easy allurements to vice, the deceptions of the dominating protestant sects endangering their faith and leading not a few down the path of death.

What is most deplorable, however, is that in the middle of so many nations, vastness of lands, and difficulties of places, it is not easy for emigrants to enjoy, as they ought, the salutary assistance of the ministers of God to announce to them the Word of life in their own mother tongue, administer the Sacraments, and provide the needed help in directing their souls to hope in heavenly goods, in fostering and strengthening their spiritual growth! And so, in many places very few adults have the assistance of the priest at their death bed, not a few babies die without Baptism, very many get married disregarding the laws of the Church. Consequently, children grow up in all things like their

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<sup>12</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Simeoni, Piacenza, September 8, 1888. (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1888, No. 9, rough copy)

parents! This way, in the midst of conditions such as these, Christian customs disappear to soon be replaced by evil ones.

Considering all these facts and concerned with the hard fate of so many, who, like sheep without a shepherd are wandering along harsh and precipitous paths, conscious at the same time of the love and teachings of the Eternal Shepherd, we deem it our duty to go to their help with all means at hand, nourish them with the saving pastures, and promote their eternal salvation and temporal welfare.

We have committed ourselves to this cause, and more willingly so as more earnestly our love urges us for those who have in common with us the same fatherland. The sure hope that your effective cooperation shall never fail us, comforts us.

We provided, therefore, that a meeting should be held on this matter by the Sacred Congregation of "Propaganda", and I ordered it to study and seek the means to remedy and alleviate all these evils and difficulties, and to advise us on which ones would be the most opportune for the double purpose of obtaining the salvation of the souls, and lessening as much as possible the tribulations of the emigrants.

Since the most serious cause of so many ever increasing evils is found in the lack of spiritual assistance of priests whereby heavenly grace is given and increased, we resolved to send many priests from Italy to minister to them in their own language, teach them the truths of faith and the commandments, unknown or neglected, of Christian life, dispense the sacraments, instruct the children in religion and social living, generous to all, regardless of condition, with their help and counsel, lovingly assisting them with all the means of the sacred ministry.

In order to accomplish all this more effectively, with letter sealed with the Fisher's Ring (Pope's personal seal), on April 15<sup>th</sup> last year, through the zealous action of our venerable brother Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini, we have established in the Episcopal See of Piacenza an Apostolic Institute of Missionaries where all those priests from all over Italy inspired by God's Charity shall gather who intend to attend to and be trained in the studies, duties and activities that will help them to carry out effectively and zealously the message of Christ, and become fit stewards of God's mysteries among Italian emigrants.

We wish those young men of your dioceses be admitted to join the students and be trained in this Institute we intend as a seminary of sacred ministers for Italians in America, who, called by God to this mission, desire to prepare themselves for Holy Orders, so that, following ordination, they may exercise, wherever needed, all duties of the pastoral ministry under your jurisdiction.

No doubt, upon their return they will be welcomed with fatherly love, and given all faculties necessary to perform, after duly advising the local pastors, the duties of the sacred ministry in the assistance of their compatriots; they will come as your helpers in the exercise of their priesthood, each one under the authority of his diocesan Ordinary.

Certainly, with the Institute in its beginnings, help will not be adequate for a while to the needs and circumstances; neither will this Institute be in a position to respond to the needs of the emigrants as to place resident priests

in care of souls in every single and remote location.

Therefore, we consider it a most wise provision to establish, in the dioceses where the number of Italians is greater, central houses for priests, who, living in community, will move around in care of souls by preaching missions.

As to manner and places best fit for establishing these houses it shall be decided by your prudence.

On our part, by this letter we have sought to express to you what we judged to be the duty of our apostolic office. But, if any of you, either each by himself, or after consulting with his brother bishops, should find it advisable we did some other thing on behalf and for the good of those for whom we are writing, let it be known that he will do us a great favor to advise with all diligence about it the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda. We expect abundant fruits from this work undertaken for the assistance and protection of so many souls deprived of all comforts of the Catholic faith, especially if, as we hope, the support and contributions to sustain and strengthen it will come from people whose prayers are equal to their generosity.

Finally, praying to the most merciful God, who wills all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth, in order that he may propitiously gaze on it and give it steady growth, with all our love we impart on you, Venerable Brothers, on your clergy, and on the faithful entrusted to your care, our Apostolic Benediction in the Lord, as a token of our heartfelt benevolence.

Given in Rome, by St. Peter's, on December 10, 1888, the eleventh year of Our Pontificate.

Leo, PP. XIII.<sup>13</sup>

Comparing the "Apostolic Letter" with the outline prepared by Bishop Scalabrini in December 1887 when he was charged to do so by the Holy See<sup>14</sup>, we notice some variations worth pointing out. First of all, the papal document softened the notes describing the temporal and moral misfortunes to which Italian emigrants were subjected. So also it omitted purposely the paragraph in which Scalabrini had pointed out "the unceasing cry...from the hearts of the emigrants themselves: (Priests, good priests be sent to their assistance.) No imploration could be more responding to the intentions and desires of the Holy See. If great indeed must be our concern over the lot of so many unfortunate souls, much greater is the compassion for them of the Church, this loving mother, defender of the poor and suffering."<sup>15</sup>

Somewhat different in form, not in content, is the presentation of the Institute of Piacenza. The Pope calls it an "Apostolic College of Priests": this expression, carrying a meaning equally juridical, indicates the papal approval of the Institute, in a more direct sponsorship of the Church, perhaps, than Bishop Scalabrini had less formally hinted by the words: "Under the Rule by us

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<sup>13</sup> Cfr. following note.

<sup>14</sup> Cfr. Ex Audientia SS.mi, (Audience with the Holy Father) on November 14, 1887, reported on pp. 55-56, and letter Scalabrini to Simeoni, Piacenza, December 16, 1887, reported on pp. 20-21. In Appendix No. 4 we report side by side in Latin the text of the Papal Letter *Quam Aerumnosa* and the outline prepared by Scalabrini and sent to Rome on December 16, 1887.

<sup>15</sup> The words between quotation marks are taken from the first copy in Italian composed by Scalabrini himself. (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1888, No. 167).

approved and ratified," - and - "Already highly recommended in our letter." It is interesting to notice that, almost contrary to the facts, at the time when Scalabrini wrote these words, the approval of the Regolamento was still only a project, and worse yet, it was not ready, while the "Apostolic Letter" was issued several months after the approval of the Regolamento on a five year trial basis. Probably, the Founder had wanted to express the desire that the letter should openly speak not only about the pontifical approval of the Institute, but about the Regolamento, as well; a detail the Holy See preferred rightly to sidestep since no final canonical sanction had been given, as yet.

We believe it necessary to single out another point in which some proposals of Bishop Scalabrini seem to have been sidetracked, in spite of his insistence in recommending them time and again, even as late as in his letter to Cardinal Simeoni on September 8, 1888.<sup>16</sup>

In fact, while Bishop Scalabrini speaks of the "necessary faculties American bishops should grant the missionaries of his Institute, the Pontifical Letter seems to limit the request of the faculties for the children of Italian emigrants who, upon completion of their training and ordination in Piacenza would return to carry out their ministry among Italians as priests incardinated in the American dioceses.<sup>17</sup>

Also, no mention is made in the Papal Letter about inviting Italian bishops to willingly grant their priests permission to devote themselves to the apostolate among emigrants. Omission the more unexpected as Bishop Scalabrini was placing in the unity of the ecclesial body the strength of his argument in urging Italian bishops to accord their consent, and the American ones to welcome the missionaries with all good will.<sup>18</sup> Anyway, Bishop Scalabrini was quite satisfied that his desire for seeing published the letter lying for so many months on the desk of Propaganda's Secretary had at last been fulfilled. He immediately expressed his gratitude to the Supreme Pontiff with letter on January 6, 1889:

*"Most Holy Father,*

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<sup>16</sup> Cfr. above, pp. 87-88

<sup>17</sup> It does not quite respond to truth to say that Scalabrini had in mind to admit the American seminarians as members of the Scalabrinian Congregation. Actually, some students sent by the Bishop of Hartford, Connecticut, as they could not take the climate of Piacenza, were made to have their training at the Seminary of Bedonia (the diocese of Piacenza had three seminaries, then), and later on exercised their ministry in that American diocese. We know some names. Francis Nola, professor at the Seminary of Hartford, Pastor in the same city; Mons. Edward Morrison, Pastor in Waterbury, Connecticut. He died in 1953; Father Joseph Daly, who died as Pastor in New Haven, Connecticut. Father William Krauser, Pastor in New Haven, where he died in 1954. Cfr. L'Araldo della Madonna di San Marco, Bedonia, XXIX, 7-8. (July-August 1955), p. 5. We do not know, however, whether the priests mentioned responded to the ideal of Bishop Scalabrini of forming some kind of "native clergy" for Italian emigrants!!

<sup>18</sup> Three days before the publication of the "Papal Letter" Bishop Scalabrini wrote to Cardinal Simeoni:

"Priests are needed! Unfortunately we do not have a number adequate to the needs! At the present time, I have here available seven priests, six lay brothers, and three students of theology. Vocations would not be lacking if the bishops, aware of their mission, were not forgetful of so many hundreds of thousands souls that are perishing, among whom a good number is counted from each of their dioceses. They would not oppose, then, any of their priests who should wish to go to the aid of emigrants. What is one more priest or less for dioceses like ours! Oh, Most Eminent Cardinal, what a lack of generosity even with the Lord! It is urgent we start thinking on how to remove this obstacle! You would render the Church a good service, Your Eminence, if you sent a circular letter to the bishops of Northern and Central Italy! It would be the only way to spur on the negligent and it would bring about much good." - Letter Scalabrini to Simeoni, Piacenza, December 7, 1888, (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1888, No. 11, authenticated copy; Arch. S.C.P.F., Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, ff. 1544-1545). The Circular Letter invoked by Scalabrini was made public by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith on February 27, 1889.



*Your letter to all the bishops of America dealing with the salvation of Italian emigrants filled me with the most vivid joy! In it, in fact, admirably shine forth both the depth of your apostolic zeal and the munificent kindness of your spirit, that place you among the most glorious of your predecessors.*

*No doubt, all shall read in your letter a testimonial to your apostolic piety, and a most noble act of your pontificate! That from the Apostolic See, as from a beacon of light, should emanate the force of its truth and compassion on all people is a fact known to all for centuries past; but it would not turn to its glory if the same Apostolic See left deprived of its love and concern those souls in remote regions it had once raised and nourished when they were close to home!*

*The See of Peter is responsible for all, welcomes all to its fold, it exhorts all, it looks after the welfare and salvation of all: but there are some whom the Church has already considered an integral part of its household, the people of Italy, in whom it has placed its complacency.*

*In your timely action for the assistance of the great multitude of Italian emigrants, tried by great lack of spiritual help either on account of adverse conditions or of the neglect of authorities, your word, true to your office, deserve all support, especially on the part of Italians. Such welcome is highly deserving of you, Most Holy Father, as a sovereign of Italy, and exults in our time the majesty of the Apostolic See.*

*In fact, while not a few Italians, led astray by a hostile attitude forget what a great honor is the Apostolic See for Italy, or, even worse, ungratefully ignoring the innumerable benefits received from it, have no shame in plotting unwarranted intrigues against you and the Apostolic See, You, as a compassionate father, disregarding their malice, fill your sons with still more abundant favors. This way you prove yourself a true witness not only to the power, but also to the compassion of Christ who walked on earth doing good.*

*I rejoice at this new light by which through your merits the Apostolic See shines. At long last, made aware by evidence of truth and sad experience, may all my Italian fellow citizens realize that down their new chosen path they have reaped but sorrow and ruin. More readily will they learn to place their hope not in people falsely promising human happiness, but only in you, Most Holy Father, and in the Apostolic See, where lies all hope of life and strength. This is the tree of life planted in the midst of nations, under whose branches all peoples find salvation.*

*Such the reasons for my unbounded joy! Unceasingly I give thanks to God, author of all good, for inspiring and strengthening in my heart the will to help my brother emigrants, and making it yours by the sanction of your authority. Now, in fact, I stand confident that, in the munificent charity of your heart, you will bring to completion this undertaking.*

*I thank you, Most Holy Father, for being pleased to add to the innumerable favors already granted me this last one that makes my dreams come true and charges me with the main responsibility to carry out this saving work!*

*On my part, to the best of my ability and for the little I may be worth, I will tirelessly devote myself to this endeavor, and to the service of the Holy See, as well. I shall dedicate to it all my strength, my very life. If on other occasions in the past I confirmed my loyal service to you, in a wholly special way I do so this time.*

**History of the SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATION – VOLUME 1  
CHAPTER 8**

*On this day of the Lord's Epiphany when the Divine Missionary brought light to all nations for the first time, I implore from the Savior of men in His Christmas the abundance of His heavenly graces upon Your Holiness and upon your work undertaken for the Church and the whole human family.*

*Prostrate at your feet, I ask for the Apostolic Benediction upon me, the members of this Institute, and the diocese of Piacenza."*<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Pope Leo XIII, Piacenza, January 6, 1889. (Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1888, No. 171, copy. Translation from Latin).

**Appendix I**

**ITALIAN EMIGRANTS IN AMERICA**

*A series of articles written by Father Francis Zaboglio, upon invitation of Bishop Scalabrini, and published in "L'Amico del Popolo" of Piacenza in September 1886<sup>1</sup>.*

Some years ago, I was kneeling in a quiet corner of a beautiful church of a small town in the Alps, when I noticed a lady enter holding two girls by the hand. She fell on her knees together with the two girls at her side, in the middle of the church. After a short while in silent prayer, they kissed the floor and left in tears! Poor lady! She felt this to be probably the last time she prayed in her parish church! She would never again, perhaps, set foot on that ground! She was to depart for America! I was deeply moved and tears were streaming down from my eyes, also!

Likewise, at dusk in another town in the Alps, a man, in his forties, came to take leave of me, his pastor. When he left, from the window I followed him down the sidewalk to the church! Finding the door locked, he knelt at the low wall in front of an open window by the side of the main altar. He remained there for a long time in prayer was almost unwilling to leave that little church where as a youth he had come so often to draw strength and courage, of which now especially he was so much in need. At last, he stood up and crying sadly walked home.

He was to leave for distant America to earn the daily bread for his family! Why should his wife and children die of starvation?! But how sad it turned out! Only a year after departure news came of his passing away! What a trying misfortune for the young orphans and their mother! How will the unfortunate family be able to compensate the storeman, who, trusting the farmers' honesty, had sold him rice and cornflower on credit, and reimburse the compassionate friend, that, moved rather by sentiments of charity than by desire of gain, had loaned him the money for the trip? Most of all, how are they going to secure the means for their livelihood?

Still on another occasion, I happened to be travelling along with a young lady, who, forced by the difficult conditions of her family, was also leaving her homeland. She had been educated in a boarding school and was singing a farewell song she had learned there. But how much gloom and sadness in that singing!! How pitiful the lot of the migrants!

At the end of this April I was in Genoa. The "*Perseo*", a ship of the "Società Generale di Navigazione Italiana" was ready to sail for Argentina, and I decided to go to the pier.

The ship had about a thousand passengers on board, if not many more! How many young and adult men, how many women and girls, were leaving in tears

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. above Ch. 2, p. 12.

their homeland! Poor people! It was a ship of sadness and sorrow! And, sad to say, there are so many of them!!

## II

Are there really many Italians who migrate, especially to America? Every year, mostly from the ports of Naples, Genoa, and Le Havre, they sail by the thousands! Anyone who reads the newspapers and statistics knows it! One has only to inquire about it among the Lombards, the Venetians, the Piedmontese, the Ligurians, and the Neapolitans, and he will find enough information to make him shudder in horror!

Three years ago, at about night time, I happened to be in Colico, a little village on the north side of Lake Como and a port of call for steamers serving the lake. There was still more than an hour left before sailing, yet all hotels were closed. Noticing people going in and out an open store, I entered. By the dim light of a flickering oil lamp one could see in one corner a young man, a girl, and a middle-aged woman sitting half asleep with their elbows on a table; in the middle of the room a heap of bags and worn-out travel bags! Whom did those bags belong to? Who were these people?

The bags belonged to a large group of poor farmers from the Valtellina on their way to America in search of better living. Placing themselves into the hands of God, they were prepared for good and bad luck, if only they could be spared dying of starvation! Those three drowsy persons were standing guard on the miserable belongings the group was carrying along! Poor woman and young man! Yet, how much more sad for the girl!

I know of a small town in the Alps from where out of four hundred people at least forty left for America, not counting those who went to France and to Switzerland. From another village of about the same size, sixty five migrated. Fifty five have gone from a town of four hundred and fifty persons. A community with sixteen hundred inhabitants had many leaving their homes for the new world years ago; yet, in the period of three months forty more people went to America from there, and the flow continues on.

I cited these communities and statistics, and I could report many more, which are well known to me; but the story is the same, sometimes in larger proportions, in many towns and provinces of Italy. When as a boy in my home town I attended the sacred services on Sundays it was a source of joy for me to see the church full of people and hear the walls resound with their joyous singing, all taking active part in the common prayer, the Mass, and the Vespers. What desolation, now!! When going to church today, even for the solemn Mass, one sees very few people there, and few are the voices joining the priest in the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries.

And all this not because piety and fervor are decreasing, but for the reason, rather, that the "city once full with people" has been left alone in desolation and few go for the feast day! A great number of those that should sing here in

their own church the praises of God, live now in faraway places; many, perhaps, forgetful of Him or offending Him!

### III

And why do so many people leave their homeland and go to places so far away? It is hunger, dreaded hunger, that urges them into this sorrowful decision!

It is not my intention to inquire into the causes of this poverty; be it sufficient to establish the fact. No one is in a better position than the pastor to know the miserable conditions of poor people! His sacred ministry brings him to all homes, and to the inner recesses of their hovels! A piece of polenta<sup>2</sup>, seldom stale, as none of it is ever left over in the trencher, and hardly always a piece of low, very low grade cheese, are the staple of life for many a poor family of our workers and farmers, and fortunate are those who can have even this much!

Oftentimes, the mother, aware the food may not be enough, distributes it to her hungry children in proportion to their age; then, no other choice remains for her but to let them cry around the empty table, or wander through the streets begging for their neighbor's charity!

No wonder, if a poor pastor after giving all he has to charity, and unable any longer to bear the sight of so much misery, should step aside in sorrow into seclusion.

As I was saying, those workers and farmers are considered lucky who can satisfy their hunger on a piece of bread or polenta. Actually, not a few families lack even that much!

This way, the unfortunate parents have to helplessly witness their children grow weak and die imploring like Count Ugolino's offspring: "O my Father, why don't you help me!" In some mountain villages families like these are many!

Upon reading these lines someone may be tempted to doubt whether there may be some exaggeration! Would that there be! Anyone, however, who should suspect so, would certainly soon change his mind if he only took pains to take a tour together with the writer through some towns, enter certain shanties, even certain more pretentious homes, and see with their own eyes the squalor and misery existing there, of which even their very neighbors are unaware!

Feeding his family is not the only worry of a poor father. There is also the storeman who claims what is his own! He may have sold him one or two hundred liras worth of food on credit, and is now clamoring for what is his due! No wonder, then, if in such condition the unhappy father, or one or more of his grown children, should decide to leave for faraway lands hoping to make enough money to pay his debts while using the rest to support his family! We sometimes happen to hear or read of accusations hurled at people who migrate! May the Good Lord forgive them! Who could provide support for so many poor families!

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<sup>2</sup> Italian for cornmeal

Until some other way to solve the problem is found, emigration must be accepted as a necessary evil.

"Either steal or migrate" - this is the terrible dilemma I heard repeated time and again by our poor farmers! But, by the Grace of God, they do not want to steal! Then, they have no other choice!

Two years ago I had been offered by a pious person the task of distributing a certain amount of grain to the poor of my parish. I had just finished doing so, when a little boy, eight or nine years old, of a family I thought to be well off, came up to me on behalf of his mother to plead with suppliant entreaties for a portion of grain. I sought out some information about that boy from the pastor, and I discovered that his impoverished father had to migrate to America to support his wife and nine children, the oldest only 12 years old! And just think, only a few years back that family was apparently in good financial condition!

God forbid, should the father, so weak and in poor health, find his end in those inhospitable regions, struck down by toil and inclement climate, leaving behind the widow and nine children! They would be forced to go begging for a living! Many families, nowadays, become impoverished that were once well off!

Allow me to express my humble opinion! It is about time we stop wasting words on the problem of emigration; let us rather do something about it and start thinking about going to the assistance of Italian emigrants in their temporal, moral and religious needs!

#### **IV**

Do hopes and reality always respond to expectations? Alas, the contrary is true!!! If up to now I had to sound off the alarm in strong, sorrowful words, no less sad expressions will I have to utter still. How many parents, forced by hunger, have sent or let children leave for America with hope in their help and have been miserably deluded! These young men leave their parents, grandparents, brothers, and sisters, in tears and promising the world! Upon arrival in the new country they write an account of their voyage confirming their promises! Some months later, they send a few hundred liras to pay back the loan for the trip! In another little while they send a few dollars more; then some occasional letter filled with excuses and new promises. In a year or two, it is much if the suffering parents will still hear now and then from their children. Before long these sons of theirs will abandon them and hardly remember, perhaps that they have parents and brothers struggling in poverty! This is the truth, the story of everyday!

I am not saying that all migrating young men act like this, but certainly many do. Some years ago, in a small village I know very well, dire poverty gripped all, harvests had been scarce year after year, families were deep in debt! America became the land of their dreams; so much so that even fourteen year old boys were packing and leaving. But, in the span of a few years their parents stopped hearing from them altogether. Only indirectly could they come to know with great sorrow that their children quitting the practice of the faith received on

their mother's knees, were given to the vices and pleasures of life. They have become lost children! Just a few days ago, on call to an old sick man, with tears in his eyes he showed me a letter from a dissolute son of his in Brazil. In it I could read: "I know you are praying for me; do not waste your time; in any case your religion was the cause of all my troubles. Now, that I do not believe any more in those fables, I am well and my business is thriving!" What blindness! What disillusion and sorrow for the heart of a poor old father!

It is much less likely that adult emigrants may go astray altogether, and cut all ties with their families; they send remittances, keep providing for old parents, wives, and children; should they return, they do so with a fairly good financial security. One could spot them in any crowd, thin and emaciated by the increasing toil they were subjected to, the harsh climate, and their prudence, even with food, to save money.

Yet, in all the time spent away across the Atlantic, they either never, or once, twice a year, on the principal solemnities, at the most, attended Mass, listened to any sermon, entered a church! They themselves confess to all this! As to the sacraments, no mention! What will be the fate of these souls for so many years away from Mass, any religious instruction, the sacraments, living in a corrupt and irreligious environment, who do not hear of God except on the lips of those that blaspheme Him, anyone speaking about religion except those that attack it with insult, irony, and abuse? It is already so hard to be a good Christian when one can regularly assist at Mass, hear the homily, and attend religious instruction! It is so difficult to be a good Christian, especially for a young man, even when, besides all these spiritual helps, he has also good parents to watch over, guide, correct, and reprimand him! It is hard indeed! Though the greater part of the adults, as pointed out before, do not become utterly corrupt and alienated from their family, still all the conditions listed above in which circumstances place their souls, cause many of them to defect from the Church and tread upon their most sacred duties.

How many have left a wife they adored, children they deeply loved! Then, their love grew progressively cold, until it died out! Finally they engaged in adulterous unions!

Yet, no one is there to raise his voice, to search for a cure, or to render less harmful, at least, this ominous and revolting sore brought about by emigration, cause of these exceeding religious, moral, and social evils. Was there any time in Italy's history so barbarous as this, when so many thousands of Italians are left to themselves, almost completely bereaved of all assistance, especially religious?! Irreligion into which our poor countrymen are ensnared and lack of religious assistance are the causes of these evils! It is a well-known fact that man without spiritual guidance becomes irreligious; thus, ready to neglect his most sacred duties, he breaks loose of all hallowed bonds, rejects divine and human law, and ceases all restraint over his passions! What a pity! Many of these unfortunate brethren were good Christians, replenished with love for God and their families! Many of these young men were beyond reproach! How many pure girls arrived there to become...! There is no need to say what! Cast a man

overboard in the middle of the ocean who never knew how to swim and leave him there to himself! He will certainly be a prey to the waves!

I haven't mentioned yet the Italian slaves that live in America, whom Americans themselves had to protect from their fellow Italians! Should there be anyone in the dark about it, let him read and be horrified:

**"Slavery of Italians Ended.** A truly strong and harsh bill was introduced into the House of Representatives in Washington by Mr. Lovering, intended to abolish importation of Italian serf workers destined to the United States, its territories, and District of Columbia, by unscrupulous Italian recruiters, their no less cruel accomplices, and henchmen! Mr. Celso Cesare Moreno, on whose recommendation the bill was presented, is deeply convinced that the provisions contained in it are adequately effective in stopping this shameful trade of human flesh, sweat, and blood, and in stamping out of this country the criminal activities of recruiters. From the enacting of this bill by the Congress one can expect a better concerted action towards the moral and social protection of these swindled and hapless Italians. This way, at last, a miserably long history of shame, cruelty, and deceit at the expense of unfortunate men, will definitely come to an end."<sup>3</sup>

For a more detailed information on this slavery, read here a condensation of the bill as reported in the "National Republican". The scope of the bill is stated in these words:

"Abolition to import Italian, other serf and bonded workers, to be forcibly kept engaged in the United States of America."

Articles 1 and 2 deal with persons that recruit or urge recruiting young men for bonded work in any firm, with penalties up to five years in prison, and up to five thousand dollar fines. Article 3 is expressed this way:

"Any Italian employer or landlord or any of his henchmen, any other person or persons who for their own gain have brought into the United States, its territories, or District of Columbia, a man or a woman, a boy or a girl from Italy or elsewhere to be employed as street organ players and singers, dancers, acrobats at street or church corners, beggars, collectors of rags, waste paper, spoiled foods, or in any other vile and base odd jobs; Any person who shall engage them either individually or in groups to work for cheap wages in railroads, canals, water reservoirs, or shall forcibly compel them to pay their bosses or accomplices, or other person or persons, two-thirds or any other part of their wages, shall be tried for felony, and, if found guilty, he will be condemned to prison for a time no longer than five years and to pay a fine no higher than five thousand dollars."

Article 5 sanctions the penalties to inflict on employers and accomplices that recruit workers to be forcibly employed in any kind of job. Article 6 is formulated as follows:

"Any person indicted for these crimes may be tried either in the district court of the place where they have been committed, or where the person so cheated, abducted, or employed, is being held under these bonds and kept in servile

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted from the "National Republican of Washington", on July 13, 1886, as also reported in several Italian newspapers.)



and abject serfdom."

Do you think, perhaps, these Italian slaves, these unhappy outcasts, to be few? Captain Moreno, at whose urging representative Lovering introduced the bill to the House, in a letter to architect Joseph Ceri of Bologna estimates that the unhappy ones in serfdom may approach ninety thousand men, women, boys and girls. Anyone can see for himself how miserable the social conditions of these poor people are!

To a Christian, especially if he be a priest, who looks beyond the temporal into the spiritual values, and treasures the Lord's precept to love one's neighbor not only in caring for his material but more so for his moral welfare, spontaneous will come the question: Are they given any religious assistance?

These ninety thousand poor serfs "allured and abducted", condemned to perform "as street organ players and dancers, acrobats, fake blind and sick, beggars, collectors of rags, and waste paper, gatherers of spoiled foods, forced to surrender "two thirds or other part of their earnings" to a cruel boss, or bonded to work on railroads, canals, water reservoirs, for starvation wages", do they have any time to themselves for reflection on the immortality and salvation of their soul, on the existence of God that created them?

Will that infamous "gang of bosses", as Mr. Moreno calls them, these people with no heart or faith, who prey on the flesh and blood of their fellow countrymen as on instruments of their nefarious trade, will they allow emigrants a chance to keep holy the Lord's day, attend Mass, receive religious instruction and the Sacraments? What will those boys and girls grow up to be under such tyranny?

But what do these renegades care about the souls of ninety thousand Italians? To them, they are not created to serve God or for heaven; no, they exist only to fill their billfolds and make them rich! "Their god is their belly," their way of life is no other than the basest epicurean philosophy: "Let's eat and drink and be merry today as there is no tomorrow!" Unfortunate souls! Wretched slaves!

**APPENDIX II**

**LETTER OF BISHOP SCALABRINI TO,  
AND RESPONSE FROM, ARCHBISHOP CORRIGAN  
ON “CAHENSLYSM”<sup>1</sup>**

**I**

**Bishop Scalabrini  
to Archbishop Michael Agustin Corrigan  
(10.8.1891)<sup>2</sup>**

"... The good marquis Volpelandi gave me to read a copy of the letter written by your Excellency to the Hon. Cahensly.

In truth, these two gentlemen felt very mortified in seeing attributed to them ideas which they never held, and are pleading with me to respond on their behalf, sure that my words may be more effective with your Excellency.

Dear Archbishop, allow me to tell you that in this matter a storm broke out in a spoon of water. Apart from the fact that it was never, nor could it ever be, the intention of these good gentlemen to undermine in the least the American episcopate, and I can reassure you they have never even dreamed of petitioning the Holy See for a double jurisdiction. Their idea was very simple: to see that the various European nationalities could have in the American episcopate a representative, and this not in a foreigner but in a citizen of America.

Isn't this what has already been suggested by the same American episcopate, inspired by that lofty wisdom and that practical knowledge of things which is its distinguishing mark? Isn't this actually the method which is already being followed? Aren't there German bishops in the United States? Wasn't there as Bishop also Msgr. Persico, who was actually born in Italy? And apart from him, is in their now of Bishop who is somehow Italian? If we look at the matter in these terms, as it truly was, your Excellency can see that no negative effect could have ensued. I actually believe that this would've helped in good measure the Episcopal Body. In fact, since the bishops must provide indistinctly for all Catholics subject to their jurisdiction, they would've had from the above-mentioned representatives exact and sure information about the customs, the aspirations, the needs of the respective nationalities, which would've made it easier to provide for them and the multitudes would've been much more satisfied and religion would've drawn from it more advantages.

There would be other considerations, but, since the Pope thought it better to intervene with the letter of Card. Rampolla to the eminent Archbishop of Baltimore, there is no need for more.

This is what I had wanted to communicate to you not only in response to the wishes of the above-mentioned gentlemen, but also so that your Excellency in your high influential role will settle things, if you see fit, especially with your venerable colleagues in the American episcopate."

**II**

**Archbishop Michael Agustin Corrigan  
To Bishop Scalabrini  
(31.8.1891)<sup>3</sup>**

"... I am surprised to learn that the two gentlemen Mr. Cahensly and Mr. Volpelandi were very mortified by my letter; I believe, however, that more than they, the American Bishops should be mortified by their behavior. Forgive me, Bishop: but one doesn't improvise so lightly and send to the Holy Father a memorandum, where even if a single person is not being offended, the entire American episcopate at least is morally offended: and, what is worse, this

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. above, Ch. 2, p. 14-15

<sup>2</sup> Arch. G.S.,D, I, 1 handwritten copy by Msgr. Mangot

<sup>3</sup> Arch. G.S.,D, I, 1

memorandum was sent to the Pontiff by people who never saw America and have learned of the misfortunes and the oppression of emigrants from some novelist' account, or from some newspaper correspondent who doesn't have at heart the truth but only intends to impress his readership.

Before attempting to teach the American episcopate how to care for the spiritual interests of the emigrants, one should know America, and then, *in camera charitatis* suggest confidentially one's own opinion to the Bishop in whose favor stands the presumption of having the responsibility for the salvation of souls more than the laity. I believe, Bishop, that you would not see it well if a lay committee should suggest to the Pope a method of governing the diocese of Piacenza different from the one you have followed now. It was, therefore, quite reasonable that I should express my idea and in a way my resentment in this regard.

Your Excellency states in your letter that those gentlemen did not intend to create a double jurisdiction but only that *the various European nationalities should have a representative in the American episcopate and this be not a foreigner but an American*. Then your Excellency adds: *is this not the method now in use?* Allow me, Bishop: if this method already exists in the United States, why did Mr. Cahensly send a petition to the Holy See? It seems a mental shortcoming to ask what has already been granted, and in fact implemented. Since I know for certain that Mr. Cahensly is well aware and knows what he's doing, I must conclude that his intention was quite different. This is confirmed by Cardinal Simeoni's reply when he frankly said that Mr. Cahensly's project was impossible to implement. Therefore, the issue was very different.

What is of greater significance is that the remarks of Mr. Cahensle (*who was in America for a month, more or less*) are not all gold: he received information from suspected sources and did not have sufficient time to accurately evaluate the American Episcopate's work with immigrants. The St. Raphael Society's committee for German immigrants, made up of distinguished persons of German origin headed by Bishop Wigger of Newark, himself of German extraction, has solemnly protested against this project and Mr. Cahensly's memorandum. Certainly they would not have reacted publicly against a fellow countryman if everything were in line with the real situation.

Dearest Bishop, the question of immigration to America cannot find a solution without taking into account American culture and life. One must live at least a few years in America in order to understand what eludes a traveler's superficial judgment. A people cannot be studied in a month. The American people, educated to freedom and national independence, progress in Catholicism as it advances in freedom. But when it enters the Church, it does not leave outside the door the idea of national independence. The American Episcopate has to do its best that this independence does not invade the area of religion: it would bring about most serious damages. A people brought up with such an education would not resign itself to be subjected to a foreign Bishop. If Mr. Cahensly's idea were implemented, no doubt an element of division and fragmentation would be introduced among American Catholics, and then of competition, dissensions, discords to the detriment of Catholicism and to the advantage of Protestantism. Moreover, Cahensly's idea seems unacceptable to me because it requires the appointment of bishops chosen because they are foreigners and as representatives of the foreign nationalities. On the contrary, the American Episcopate wants capable bishops, be they American or foreign. Besides it wants the Bishop to represent the people entrusted to him and not a foreign nation. This is certainly the true concept of Bishop: his right is over the whole flock and must care for all without distinction. Even if by an absurd hypothesis we were to admit the existence of such bishops, no good would result or at least good results would not compensate for the harm that could come. In such an hypothesis clashes would be inevitable between one Bishop and another and between Bishop and people.

Believe me, Bishop, I speak because of no other sentiment than that which my conscience demands. My view is the evaluation of a long and mature

experience. If I used the great liberty in expressing my ideas to your Excellency, attribute it to my sincerity. I cannot hide my convictions on this matter to none and much less to a friend such as your Excellency. If I have been the only one to send the word of disapproval to the Hon. Cahensly, this should not surprise your Excellency since no other Bishop feels the burden of immigration more than I, since all immigrants come to New York."

**Appendix III**

**LETTERS OF THE SACRED CONGREGATION  
FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH  
TO THE Nuncios, Internuncios, and Papal Delegates in America,  
and to Archbishop Ireland of St. Paul, Minn.**

**I**

"Sacred Congregation of Propaganda.<sup>1</sup>

November 1887

Most Illustrious and Reverend Bishop,

In the audience of November 14, acting upon the report of this Sacred Congregation's Secretary, His Holiness was pleased to approve and take some provisions that will somehow obviate the deplorable evils of Italian emigration, especially in America. He expressed the desire that this Sacred Congregation direct You to carry them out as effectively as your pastoral office will demand.

Acknowledging as urgent the need to send to America priests fit for assisting Italian emigrants, the Holy Father was pleased to approve the founding in Piacenza of an Institute to which those priests from the various regions of Italy may be admitted, who intend to prepare themselves for the missions among emigrants to the end of assisting them at least for five years under the jurisdiction of the local Ordinaries who will grant them the necessary faculties.

With this scope in mind, he ordered a letter to be sent to the bishops of America to let them know his desires and exhort them to take advantage of the new help Divine Providence has placed at their disposal by requesting these priests for assisting Italians in their dioceses from this Sacred Congregation that would provide to send them from this Institute. The bishops shall welcome them kindly, grant them the needed faculties, and accord them all support in their important ministry.

Copy of this letter is herein enclosed that you may be better informed on how in your prudence you may implement the efforts of bishops and missionaries in the territory under your jurisdiction. It shall be the duty of Your Excellency to inform the government to which you are accredited about the reasons that moved the Holy See to enact these special provisions for the spiritual needs of Italian emigrants, preparing it to support, as far as in its power, their enforcement.

Finally, it is the will of His Holiness that you report to the Holy See all important information on the approximate numbers, conditions, and needs of emigrants, especially those that pertain to the salvation of their souls, so that you may contribute mature advice on any further provisions which might be considered opportune in the future.

While I am honored to convey to you these official instructions, I am pleased to take this opportunity to express to you my sentiments of deep esteem and respect, professing myself your most devoted servant,

Cardinal Simeoni."

**II**

"Most Reverend Ireland D.D.  
Bishop of St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.<sup>2</sup>

From S.C. de Propaganda Fide  
November 25, 1887

Most Reverend Bishop,

You well know how many Italians are forced by necessity to emigrate from their fatherland, and how many evils and difficulties they encounter in the regions

<sup>1</sup> Arch. S.C.P.F. Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, f. 1390

<sup>2</sup> Arch. S.C.P.F. Collegi d'Italia, Piacenza, f. 1387

where they had hoped for a better existence.

Our Holy Father, in his paternal concern for the faithful's welfare anywhere, and for their soul's salvation especially, cannot help worrying and feeling concern for so many of his children, particularly Italian, who, poor and abandoned, struggle in this miserable condition!

Reflecting on ways which may somehow be helpful and opportune to the scope, he finds none more effective for the time being than to recommend them with all his heart to the care of the American bishops under whose jurisdiction most often they live, frequently in danger of losing their faith for lack of priests.

Since many of them do not know any language other than their own, and are therefore in great need of Italian priests, His Holiness has approved a while ago the founding in Piacenza of an Institute where pious and zealous priests from various regions of Italy are to be trained so that they may go to America and provide assiduous spiritual assistance for Italian emigrants either by preaching missions or by other activities of the sacred ministry.

Since Your Excellency is now granted by Divine Providence a new help in your pastoral office that you may more effectively provide for the spiritual assistance of the souls entrusted to your care, by order of the Holy Father it shall be your duty in this great need to take advantage of it in such a way as to draw sure and abundant fruits.

All things considered, therefore, it is the desire of the Holy Father that these missionaries be requested from this Sacred Congregation and sent by the above-mentioned Institute, and that you grant them directly all the faculties needed to exercise their ministry free and independent of all jurisdiction of pastors and vicars, directly responsible only to you, for a greater effectiveness of the mission to which they devote themselves. Even more, be it known to you that by the Apostolic See you are given power, when the case may be, to separate from the circumscription of local parishes the territories where emigrants live, and form them into new parishes to be entrusted to the direction of their missionaries.

This Sacred Congregation trusts above all in your zeal and solicitude for the carrying out of the last provision, as it seems very useful in those regions as a means for eliminating the difficulties which have till now prevented the effectiveness of the priestly ministry among Italians.

It shall be your duty, therefore, to devote all your energy in providing that a house for missionaries be soon established in a suitable location which will serve as a center of salvation for the Italians scattered in that immense country.

You are also directed to report to this Sacred Congregation whatever concerns this apostolate for which you will never lack the help of God and the cooperation of the bishops of the States in the Union.

While in virtue of my office I convey to you these instructions, it gives me pleasure to express to you sentiments of deep esteem, and I confirm myself

Your devoted servant  
Card. Simeoni, Prefect."

**Appendix IV**

**THE APOSTOLIC LETTER "QUAM AERUMNOSA"  
IN LATIN COMPARED WITH THE OUTLINE  
PREPARED BY BISHOP SCALABRINI<sup>1</sup>**

**APOSTOLIC LETTER<sup>2</sup>**

**Epistola  
Venerabilibus Fratribus  
Archiepiscopis et Episcopis  
Americae  
Leo PP. XIII**

Vererabiles Fratres

Salutem et Apostolicam benedictionem.

Quam aerumnosa et calamitosa sit eorum conditio, qui ex Italia quotannis in Americae regiones ad vitae subsidia quaerenda turmatim commigrant, tam compertum vobis est, ut nihil attineant id fuisse per Nos explicari. In vero mala, quibus illi premuntur, vos quidem ex propinquo intuemini, eaque, datis non semel ad Nos litteris, commemorata dolenter sunt a plerisque vestrum.

Deflendum sane, quod tot miseri Italiae cives, solum mutare inopia coacti, in mala plerumque graviora incurrant, quam quae effugere voluerunt. Ac persaepe ad labores varii generis, quibus vita corporis absumitur, lunge miserior adiungitur animorum perniciis. Prima ipsa demigrantium transvectio periculis plena ac detrimentis est: incidunt enim plerique in cupidos homines, quorum quasi mancipia fiunt, et gregatim in naves coniecti, atque inhumane habiti, ad depravationem naturae sensim impelluntur. Ubi vero ad destinatas oras appulerunt, linguae et locorum ignari quotidianis operis addicti, improborum insidiis, et potentiorum, quibus sese manciparint, patent insidiis.

Qui autem Industriae sua satis sibi parare potuerunt unde vitam tueantur, versantes tamen assiduo inter esos, qui omnia ad quaestum et utilitatem suam referent, nobiles humanae naturae sensus paulatim exuentes, eorum vitam vivere discunt qui omnes spes et cogitationes suas in terra defixerunt. Huc accedunt obvia passim irritamenta cupiditatum, fraudesque sectarum, quae istic late grassantur religioni infensae, at plerosque in viam trahunt quae ducit ad interitum.

**OUTLINE OF BISHOP SCALABRINI<sup>3</sup>**

**Venerabilibus Fratribus  
Archiepiscopis et Episcopis  
Americae  
Leo PP. XIII**

Venerabiles Fratres

Salutem et Apostolicam benedictionem.

Vos non latent, Venerabiles Fratres, gravissima, quibus objiciuntur, pericula, multa filiorum Italiae centena millia, qui succrescente in dies patriae linquendae necessitate ad vestras praecipue regiones commigrant. Ipsi vero, pastoralis vestrae sollicitudinis sollertia excitati, discrimina huiusmodi in nostram deduxistis notitiam.

Miserrima certe est hisce filiis Nostris, et in primis lugenda conditio, qui patriae solum vestrae compulsi, ea quae necessariae sunt ad victum parandi causa, vel rem domesticam meliorem faciendi, longis itineribus atque infestis se committunt. In ipso enim tineris principio vel infidorum hominum praeda fiunt, qui ex fratrum suorum miseris illiberales atque sordidos quaestus faciunt, vel praeter modum in unum locum constipati flagitiosae vitae ineunt consuetudinem.

Quis vero referat deplorandam, quae illos manet, sortem cum eo quo tendunt pervenerint? Statim ac in terram alienam evadunt, linguae quae ibi obtinet usu carentes, locorumque consuetudinis ignari, adversae fortunae casibus dire jactantur. Multi ac insalubres, ut fertur, sterilesque terras immani pro ditione exportati, maximis afficiuntur calamitatibus, omnique dolorum genera oppressam vitam degunt, atque saepe saepius pestiferis terrae exhalationibus, vita maturius quam par est, decedunt. Alii, falsis pollicitationibus illecti, necessitate improba urgente, contractibus saepe numero sese ligant captivitate ipsa deterioribus; pueri victum ostiatim quaesitare compulsi a teneris annis criminosam agunt vitam, puellae vero in ignominiae baratrum praecipites quandoque ruunt; qui denique vitam honestiori quo possunt modo tueri satagunt, tristissimis vexantur curis moeroreque tabescunt.

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. above, Ch. 8, pp. 96-98

<sup>2</sup> Leonis XIII Pontificis Maximi Acta (Romae, 1889), Vol. III, pp. 380-384

<sup>3</sup> Arch. G.S., B, IV, 1888, n. 170, copy.

## History of the SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATION – VOLUME 1

### APPENDIX IV

In his autem malis illud longe luctuosius est, quod in tanta multitudine hominum, amplitudine religionum, difficultate locorum, haud facile praesto iis potest ea quae par asset, salutaris cura ministrorum Dei, qui italicae compotes linguae, ipsis verbum vitae tradant, sacramenta administrent, et opportuna subsidia impertiant, quibus eorum erigatur animus in spem bonorum caelestium, et vita spiritus sustentetur ac vigeat. Hinc multis locis rari admodum sunt ii, quibus sacerdos adsit morituris, non rari quibus nascentibus minister deest ad regenerationis lavacrum: plurimi sunt quibus nuptiae, nulls habita Ecclesiae legum ratione ineuntur, unde similis patribus propagatur proles, atque ita passim apud hoc genus hominum oblivione delentur christiani mores, pessimi quique inolescunt.

Haec omnia Nos reputantes animo, ac miseram tot hominum vicem dolentes, quod quasi oves pastore destitutas cognoscimus per avia abrupta et infests locorum, simulque cogitantes Pastoris aeterni caritatem et monita, Nostrum muneris esse duximus, omnem quam possumus eis opem afferre, salubria Pascua parare, ac omni quo datur ratione, eorum bono et saluti consulere. Quod eo libentius aggressi sumus, quod caritas hominum, quos eadem ac Nostra regio tulit, ad id proniores faciat, ac certa spes teneat, numquam defore Nobis studies vestra operamque adiutricem.

Quapropter curavimus ut in Sacri Consilio christiano nomini propagando hac super re consultatio haberetur, eique mandavimus, ut quaesitis et diligenter expensis remediis, quibus tot mala et incommoda possint depelli, sin minus, allevari, quod maxime e re foret proponeret Nobis, utrumque spectans, ut animarum saluti prodesset, atque migrantium molestias, quatenus fieri posset, leniret.

Cum vero causa potissima invalescentium malorum in eo sit, quod infelicibus illis desit sacerdotale ministerium per quod caelestis gratia impertitur et augetur, plures ex Italia presbyteros istuc mittere decrevimus, qui conterraneos suos noto solentur alloquio; doctrinam fidei ac vitae christianae praecepta doceant ignorata au neglecta, sacramentorum apud eos salutari ministerio fungantur, succrescentem sobolem ad religionem et humanitatem informent, omnes demum ex quovis ordine, consilio ac ope iuvent, cunctisque foveant curae sacerdotalis officii. Quo id commodius ac plenius effici posset, per litteras Nostras XVII Kalendas Decembris anno superiore datas sub annulo Piscatoris, Apostolicum sacerdotum Collegium Placentiae episcopali in sede, curante Ven. Fratre Iohanne Baptista Placentinorum Episcopo constituimus, quo ecclesiastici viri, quos Christi caritas urget, ex Italia convenient, ut iis excolantur studiis, iis exercentur muneribus eaque disciplina, per quam strenue et feliciter penes dissitos Italiae dives legatione pro Christo fungantur, et idonei fiant dispensatores mysteriorum Dei.

Ex his rationibus pronum est colligere quot gravissima pericula illorum salus patiatur. Eo magis periculum in immensum crescit, quod illis praesto non sit Dei minister, qui caelestis vitae misteria pueros edoceat, bonisque instruat moribus, adultis vane praestet opportunitatem religiosi officii satis faciendi, esosque sacris societ connubiis. Ipsi enim probe nostis, Venerabiles Fratres, tenuem nimis esse sacerdatum numerum pro istarum regionum interminata magnitudine, neque etiam satis ubique obtinere itinerum commodes. Quo fit ut in America degentes facilitate commeandi destituti vitam defiant quam ipsi gentiles deteriores, sine templo, sine sacrificio, absque publicis precibus, nunquam verbum vitae audientes, ita ut nullam colere religionem facile videantur. Quod si inter haereticorum insidias vel hominum sectis addictorum technas, qui istis in regionibus maxima dominatum exercent, fidei, quod est supremum animae bonum, iacturam non faciunt, id ingens sane miraculum est putandum.

Hinc acutissimus et continuus ipsorum commigrantium clamor ut sibi in auxilium optimi mittantur sacerdotes. Nullus profecto clamor huius Apostolicae Sedis voluntati ac votis conformior edi poterat, quam tot patrum familiarum expositio, pro se, pro natis spiritualia efflagitantium subsidia. Si enim summa conscientiae sollicitudine angi opus est quotquot salutis fratrum procuracionem susceperunt, id certe praecipuo quodam jure Apostolica Sedes sibi vindicat quae semper miseros quosque in suam recepit tutelam ac indigentibus opem salutemque tulit.

Quapropter aeterni Pastoris Christi Jesu caritatem ineffabilem intuentes, qui super ingenti turbarum multitudine misertus est, quia erant vexati et jacentes sicut oves non habentes pastorem. Ipsi Nos, qui divino impercepto consilio, ad beatissimi Apostolorum Principis Cathedram assumpti Illius in terris vices gerimus, super filiorum Nostrorum contritione movemur ex animo. Etsi enim Romanus Pontifex omnibus debitor sit, ac singulos filios suos Apostolicae dilectionis officio amplectatur, singulari tamen necessitudine vinculo Italiae filios, ubicumque fuerint gentium, ab Ipsa adjuvari condecet. Conspectis igitur tot commigrantium italorum malis, in ferendo hisce remedium aliquod, aminum posuimus, ut scilicet illis Christianorum sacra ne desint, ac praesentis etiam vitae calamitates leviores fiant.

Iam pridem per Nostram Congregationem, cui titulus a nomine Christiano propagando, sollicitudinem ac studium Episcoporum incitavimus, quorum potissimum ac super re exposcenda erat cura. Eademque Congregatio plura ad nutum Nostrum pro innata sibi maturitate consilia expendit atque discussit. Quia vero providendi meliorem firmioremque modum necessitas urget in dies, divino aspirante Numine, ea omnia adhibere decrevimus pro Italis in Americam confluentibus, quae in Nostra essent potestate.

Nunc vero complura iam esse disposita probataque annunciamus vobis, Venerabiles Fratres. Inter haec porro commemorare placet Missionariorum Apostolicum Institutum pro italicis coloniis in dissitis Americae plagis constitutis, quodve, hoc ipso anno, sub regula per Nos probata atque sancita, Venerabilis Frater Noster Iohannes Baptista Placentiae Ecclesiae Episcopus in sui sacri ministerii Sede excitavit. Ipsum autem Apostolicum Collegium iam Nostris litteris in forma Brevis 17 Kalendas Decembris alto commendatum, a Christoforo Columbo, qui primus Christi nomen in istis regionibus invexit, Placentinae genii devinciunt, nome accipiet.



## History of the SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATION – VOLUME 1 APPENDIX IV

Inter alumnos autem huius Collegii, quod quasi Seminarium haberi volumus ministrorum Dei ad salutem Italicarum Americam incoleant, iuvenes etiam a vestris regionibus, italis parentibus natos, recipi et institui volumus, modo in sortem Domini vocati sacris cupiant initiari, ut deinde sacerdotio aucti et istuc remeantes, sub vestra pastoralis potestate, omnes quarum usus fuerit, Apostolici ministerii partes expleant.

Neque vero ambigimus, quin et reduces isti paterna cum caritate excipiantur a vobis, itemque facultates impetrent opportunas sacri ministerii causas in dives suos, monito parochi, exercendas: quippe ad vos, venturi sunt quasi auxiliares copiae, ut sub auctoritate cuiusque vestrum, cuius in dioecesi versantur, sacrae militiae operam navent. Profecto in primo operis exordio tanta haec auxilia haudquaquam erunt, quanta res ac tempus flagitant, neque eorum qui mittendi sunt opera par esse ita poterit numero et necessitatibus fidelium, ut singulis et remotioribus in locis sacerdotes constitui possint, qui curam animarum gerant. Quamobrem optimum factu censemus, si in dioecesibus, quae advenis ex Italia magis abundant, communia habeantur domicilia sacerdotum, qui exinde digressi circumiacentem regionem peragrent, et sacris expeditionibus excolant. Qua ratione autem, quibusve loci opportunius ea possint constitui, id erit prudentiae vestrae decernere.

Haec omnia quae Apostolicae Nostrae providentiae esse duximus, vobis hisce litteris significanda curavimus. Si quis autem ex vobis compererit sive sensu et iudicio suo, sive collatis cum Fratribus consiliis, aliquid praeterea praestari a Nobis posse ad eorum utilitatem et solatium, quorum causa haec scribimus, sciat se Nobis gratum facturum, si de hoc ad sacrum Consilium fidei propagandae praepositum studiose retulerit.

Ex hoc autem opere, quod ad curam et praesidium plurimarum animarum, omni catholicae religionis solatio carentium suscepimus, fructus Nobis pollicemur uberes, maxime, si accesserint, uti confidimus, ad illud sustentandum tuendumque fidelium, quorum pietati pares suppetant opes, studia et subsidia.

Caeterum adprecati Deum benignissimum, qui omnes homines vult salvos fieri et ad agnitionem veritatis venire, ut hisce coeptis propitius adspiret, ac prospera det incrementa, Apostolicam benedictionem intimae dilectionis testem vobis, Venerabiles Fratres, et universo Clero ac fidelibus, quibus praecestis, peramanter in Domino impertimus.  
Datum Romae apud S. Petrum die X Decembris  
MDCCCLXXXVIII, Pontificatus Nostris anno undecimo.

LEO PP. XIII

In eo autem una cum sacerdotibus missionariis optamus ut etiam italicarum familiarum in America degentium qui se in spem Ecclesiae succrescere demonstrent, quique sacrae militiae nomen dare percipiant, ad Sacerdotium preparentur, quo facilius et firmiter demigrantium spirituale bonum, temporis processu, quasi per Clerum indigenum custodiatur, curetur atque in aevum perseveret.

Minime dubitamus, Venerabiles Fratres, quin tam pium caritatis Institutum plurimum solatii atque auxilii sollicitudini vestrae pastoralis sit allaturum, propterea quod Sacerdotes, qui se suaque omnia pro fratrum salutem devovent, rite dispositi, atque, quantum liceat, plurimi, maiore in numero ad vestras dioeceses missi, Vobis a laudata superius Congregatione petentibus, arbitratui vestro directionique subijcientur. Certa igitur spe nitimur vel propter nimiam caritatem vestram eos benigne exceptum iri, congruisque facultatibus donatos, praesidio vestro perpetuo usuros.

Vehementer etiam cupiemus ut hisce sacerdotibus domus aliqua in unaquaque Dioecesi constituatur, ex qua digredientes quaquaversus, prosint quoque in magis dissitas plebes excurrere, allaturi et istis sanctioris vitae munimenta.

Gratissimum quoque Nobis futurum declaramus, si notitiis observationibus que, prout colligere potest sedulitas vestra, ad levanda, quae supra lamentavimus, mala, sollicitudinem Nostram instruere satageritis. Insuper delectum virum ad vos mittere, opportuno tempore, cogitamus, qui vobiscum collatis consiliis, omnibus perspectis necessitatibus ac rerum adjunctis, omnia Nobis, quae operi nostro secundum paterunt praestare exitum, fideliter referat. Id certo prosequi atque optatum finem perducere poterimus, si, ut firma Nobis est insita animo spes, tandem aliquando Apostolicae Sedi liberior meliove subrideat aetas.

Dum vero Italiae Episcopi presbyteris suis ad vos transmeandis dant veniam, unitatis spiritui servientes, qui omnes in unum corpus colligit Ecclesias per dictam conjunctionem cum hac suprema veritatis Cathedra (quae unitatis spiritus principium exstat et perfectio), vos, Ve. Fra., eidem spiritui parentes antedictos sacerdotes omnibus benevolentiae officiis cumulate, ut praeclaram ad Dei gloriam susceptum ab se opus rite consummare valeant.

Interim omnibus filiis Nostris sacerdotibus, qui studio salutis fratrum ardentis, alacri promptoque animo, ad vos venient, in primis autem et potissimum vobis universis, Ven. Fr., et populis vestrae fidei commendatis, omnia multiformis gratiae Dei munera adprecamur, et horum pignus Apostolicam benedictionem propensae voluntatis Nostrae in vos testem peramanter in Domino impertimus.

Datum Romae...

**BISHOP SCALABRINI'S OUTLINE  
FOR THE APOSTOLIC LETTER  
"QUAM AERUMNOSA"**

**To the Venerable Brothers, Archbishops and Bishops of America  
Pope Leo XIII.**

Venerable Brothers, Salutations and Apostolic Benediction.

Well known are to you, Venerable Brothers, the serious dangers in which the many hundreds of thousands sons of Italy live, who, on account of the increasing need to leave their country, emigrated especially to your regions.

Moved by the zeal for your pastoral responsibility, you have brought to our attention such pitiful conditions. Truly most miserable and above all deplorable is the condition of these sons of ours who, compelled to leave the homeland in order to seek for their livelihood or improve their financial stricture, undertake long and difficult journeys. At the very beginning of their journey, either they become prey of unscrupulous men who seek sordid and rich gain on the misery of their brothers, or start down the road to vice on the ship itself into which they are indiscriminately overcrowded.

Who can tell the sorrowful fate awaiting them on arrival to their destination! As soon as they set foot on the new land, unfamiliar with the language and ignoring the customs of the place, they are liable to be shattered by unfortunate events.

Many, we are told, deported through gross deceit to unhealthy and unproductive land, are afflicted by unbearable trials, and live in all kinds of sorrow! More than often, overcome by the unsanitary conditions of the fields, they die much earlier than their age would claim. Others, allured by false promises and urged by dire need enter upon contracts very often worse than slavery itself. Children, forced to beg from door to door for food, lead criminal lives from their early years, while girls fall sometimes into the abyss of ignominy. Finally, even those who try their best to lead honest lives, are vexed by sorrowful preoccupations and anxieties.

From all this, one can very well see how greatly endangered is their eternal salvation. The danger increases immensely when there is no priest to teach children the mysteries of eternal life, to train them in good moral behavior, to give adults the opportunity to fulfill their duties, and to bless their marriages.

You are aware, Venerable Brothers, of the small number of priests in your vast regions, and of the often insufficient means of transportation. Consequently, it so happens that those living in America, unable to move around, may lead worse lives than the pagans, without a church, worship, Mass, or ever hearing the Word of life. They do not seem to practice any religion. It is to be considered a great miracle already if they do not lose their faith in the middle of the snares of heretics and so many protestant sects prevailing in those regions. No wonder, then, if emigrants persistently implore that good priests be sent to them. However, there could not be a cry better responding to the desires and intentions of the Holy See than the imploration of so many heads of families asking spiritual assistance for their children and themselves.

If it is a duty that all those be in conscience concerned about it who devote themselves to the salvation of their brothers, still it is above all the right of the Holy See always to provide care for the needy, and help and salvation for the poor.

Therefore, mindful of the ineffable love of our Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who took pity on the crowds troubled and scattered around like sheep without a shepherd we, ourselves, by the inscrutable design of God taking His place on earth in the Apostolic See, are deeply moved by the pitiful conditions of our sons.

Though the Roman Pontiff owes his service to all, and embraces in his Apostolic charity every single son of his, still in virtue of its special title of relationship to Italy, the Holy See shall

properly take care of them anywhere they may be in the world.

Concerned then over the evils besetting so many Italian emigrants, we have decided to come to their help so that they may not be deprived of religious assistance, and their temporal hardships be alleviated. Already some time ago, through our Congregation, named after its scope of spreading the Christian faith in the world, we have urged the zeal and solicitude of the bishops, on whom especially rests the responsibility to take care of the problem. By our desire, the same Congregation studied and discussed a number of plans with mature consideration. However, since the need to provide a better and more effective means is urging us more every day, we have decreed to provide Italian emigrants in America with all help at our disposal.

And now, Venerable Brothers, we tell you about the many initiatives we have so far prepared and approved. Among them we are especially pleased to announce to you the Apostolic Institute for Italian Emigrants in America. It has been founded this very year under a rule we approved and ratified, by our Venerable Brother John Baptist, Bishop of Piacenza, in the city of his pastoral ministry. This Apostolic Institute, already by us praised with a Brief on November 15, 1887, shall be known as "Istituto Cristoforo Colombo", after the first man to introduce the name of Christ into America, with whom the people of Piacenza enjoy bonds of a special relationship.

It is our wish that, together with the Missionaries, also those children of Italian families in America be trained there for the priesthood, who, giving sure signs of a vocation, wish to become priests. This way, with the passing of time, the spiritual welfare of emigrants will be more easily and effectively assured, taken care of, and continued in the future by a kind of native clergy.

We have no doubt, Venerable Brothers, that this pious Institute of apostolic missionaries will bring great joy and help to you and your pastoral work! In fact, these priests, many if possible, who renounce themselves and all for the salvation of souls, will be sent, upon your request, in greater numbers by this Sacred Congregation to exercise their ministry under your jurisdiction and authority. We entertain firm hope, therefore, that in your eminent charity you will kindly welcome them, grant them the necessary faculties, and accord them your continual protection.

It is our most earnest desire that in every diocese a central house be established for these priests from where they may reach out in every direction to the most remote communities bringing to them also the spiritual means for a holier life.

We shall appreciate it very much if you will strive to advise us on those observations and news which, in your zeal, you will find to be helpful in alleviating the above lamented evils.

Furthermore, it is our intention to send a visitor of our choice, who, upon consultation with you and research on needs and circumstances, shall report everything to us that may help us to better carry out our plans.

Certainly we shall accomplish all this and bring it to fruitful results, if, as we firmly hope, at last a more free and peaceful age will dawn on this Holy See.

As in a service to the Spirit of unity which joins together all churches in one body through union with the Chair of Truth, beginning and end of the Spirit of Unity, the bishops of Italy grant permission to their priests to go across the seas to you, so also on your part, Venerable Brothers, obedient to the same Spirit, grant them all signs of your benevolence that they may effectively carry out the mission they accept for the glory of God.

On all our sons, the priests, who, deeply concerned for the salvation of their brethren, will be coming to you, and before and above all on you, Venerable Brothers, and on the souls entrusted to your care, we invoke all the gifts of Divine Grace, and lovingly in the Lord we impart the Apostolic Benediction as a token of our benevolence.

Given at Rome, etc....

**Appendix V**

**LETTER OF ARCHBISHOP IRELAND  
AND REPLY OF BISHOP SCALABRINI  
ON THE RELIGIOUS PROBLEMS OF ITALIAN EMIGRATION.**

**I**

"St. Paul, Minnesota

December 21, 1888 <sup>1</sup>

Dear Bishop:

Allow me to thank you for sending me your pamphlet "*Disegno di Legge sulla Emigrazione Italiana*". (Proposed legislation on Italian Emigration). I read it with attention, profit and pleasure.

This problem of emigration, in one or other form, has kept me worrying for so many years, now. I had to pay attention especially to the Irish immigration, and, though in a smaller measure, to the German also. But occasions were never lacking during all this time when I had to devote myself also to Italian immigration to America, and to ascertain the deplorable state of neglect to which thousands of your poor countrymen are condemned.

In one of my visits to Rome, in the winter 1886-1887, I spoke a number of times to Archbishop Jacobini, to Card. Simeoni, and to the Pope himself on the urgency of organizing some activity on behalf of Italian emigrants. On that occasion for the first time I was informed of your generous plans, and I have followed with interest the progress of your Institute ever since.

In my opinion, your Institute is the most beautiful and useful form of Apostolate the Church could undertake in our day, and it will be for me a source of great disappointment if Italy did not give it all the support you desire!

May also the Italian government, if not for reasons of faith at least for the sake of patriotism, come to your help and accord the members of your Institute the modest favors you ask for, and more.

Five months ago, I paid a visit to the fine priests Your Excellency has sent to New York, and I was able to see for myself the great work they are doing already in that city. I hope you may soon be in a position to send your priests to many other cities of our republic.

Bishop Elder of Cincinnati told me he desires very much to have two of your priests, and I am sure that the more your Institute will be known the more other bishops will ask you to send them some missionaries.

There is still a long way to go for the Italian missions in America before all communities of Italian emigrants scattered throughout these United States may be taken care of! It will be impossible for small communities to support two or often even one priest! They will be, therefore, in danger of losing their

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<sup>1</sup> Arch. G.S.D.I, 1 (Original in French)

faith if neglected. I do not intend to discuss here the means to come to the help of emigrants in conditions such as these.

There should be here in the United States a zealous and intelligent priest to represent you with the high mission of taking an inventory of all the Italian communities, and to make in place an in-depth study of the most effective ways to come to the help of each region, keeping you constantly informed on needs and conditions of Italians in the various states of the Country. The very honor of the Church is at stake here in the serious urgency of the problem of caring for Italian emigrants! This is what I pointed out to the Holy Father when I was given the privilege of an audience with him. In the mind of Americans, Catholic and Protestant alike, Italian emigrants represent a people on whom the Church has lavished her action for many centuries, and certainly, bishops, priests, and religious were not lacking in Italy! Any judgement passed on Italian emigrants is also an evaluation on the Church as a moral power for civilization. I had often occasion to respond to objections provoked by the miserable conditions of Italian emigrants, and not always was I able to suppress all thoughts of resentment and scorn against the two hundred and fifty bishops of Italy who were forgetful of their flock across the seas, no matter what diligent care they might have had for them at home.

For these reasons I feel I owe you, as an American bishop, a debt of gratitude for what Your Excellency is doing, and I pray the Lord with all my heart to bless your work.

Your most devoted confrere  
+ John Ireland Archbishop of St. Paul."

## II

"Piacenza, March 12, 1889<sup>2</sup>

Dear Archbishop:

You will forgive me for being so late in answering your kind and beautiful letter of December 21<sup>st</sup>, but the cause of this delay is not due to any negligence of mine. Before writing to you I had wanted to forward your letter to the Congregation of Propaganda, and I had to wait for a response. Now I can tell you that the Roman Congregation has read with deep satisfaction these pages in which you show so eloquently the importance of the Institute I founded, and so justly point out how on its success depends not only the spiritual future of many Italian Catholics cast across the seas by emigration, but the success of the great work of Evangelization entrusted into the hands of the American Episcopate, as well. Men, in fact, are much too used to draw logical and stringent conclusions from the facts taking place around them! Nowadays, more than ever the experimental system tends to prevail! No wonder, then, if

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<sup>2</sup> Arch. G.S.D.I, 1 (Original in French)

your protestant countrymen, seeing the religious ignorance and indifference of a great number, though not of the majority, of Italians, may conclude that Christian life must be very weak in our country when so many of its citizens so easily lose their faith, and abandon the practice of their most elementary religious duties! Now, since Italy is not only a totally Catholic country, but the center of our holy religion, also, and host to the Holy See, it follows, as so well Your Excellency points out, that protestants might be inclined to believe Catholicism to be in a state of decline, and the cause of it to be found undoubtedly in the lack of faith and virtue attributable to the guilty inactivity and negligence of their priests.

Certainly we have to react against these misconceptions, but we must above all do away with the main causes that engender them. On the success and progress of the work I undertook will depend the curing of the evils we deplore. It will equally be a hindrance in the propagation of the faith in America if the Christian traditions and principles of Catholicism were not preserved in the millions of Italians living in the American Continents.

For these reasons, the Congregation of Propaganda has welcomed my Institute with the greatest benevolence, and sees with satisfaction how well appreciated it is by the American Episcopate, particularly by you, one of the most famous and learned bishops in the New World.

Propaganda was not alone in praising your attitude in regard to my Institute. The Holy Father Pope Leo XIII, whom I invited to read your letter, was visibly pleased, and spoke of you with heartfelt benevolence. His Holiness cherishes a most graceful remembrance of Your Excellency, and appreciates as you deserve your eminent zeal and talents.

Now I have to thank you for your expressions in my regard. Allow me to credit them to your benevolence towards my humble person and the Institute I direct. It is for me a great consolation and precious encouragement to have my ideas and projects approved by a prelate that so highly honors the American Episcopate with his virtue, learning, and apostolic activities.

The Institute I have founded is progressing and succeeding well! Petitions from priests who desire to join the Congregation of the Missionaries of Piacenza are pouring in, and I am grateful to the Good Lord! Financial difficulties, above all others, hinder the growth of this holy undertaking! Unfortunately, nothing can be expected from the government, at this time more than ever engaged in its struggle with the Vatican! In time the situation will change for the better, I hope. In the meanwhile my Congregation will have to bear the consequences of this contest! Catholic Italy is poor of means! On my part I do all I possibly can to support my Institute, but the resources at my disposal are very limited. The revenues of the bishop, as of all bishops in Italy, are now reduced to less than modest proportions, the commercial and agricultural depression has in great part deprived owners, merchants, and manufacturers of their profits, so that with all their noble generosity Catholics cannot help in totally defraying the expenses necessary to support the novitiate!

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For a strong and rapid growth of my Congregation the generous cooperation of America would be needed also in the financial burden of running the novitiate! Our expenses are relatively high: purchase of building and church for the Mother House, furnishings, maintenance, support of candidates, clothing, and trips of the missionaries, etc. Oh, would a generous heart from among those who are in possession of great riches in America only come to the help of this Institute destined to glorify God and save souls! It would be possible, then, to admit and prepare a larger number of priests for the evangelization of Italian emigrants! I convey this idea to you! Make it a subject for serious and mature reflection. If you find it worthwhile, let it be known to your confreres in the Episcopate, and find practical means to have it accepted by your Catholic countrymen. With the contributions of generous Americans I would be in a position to widen the field for the Institute of Piacenza, and send across the Atlantic numerous bands of zealous missionaries to bring our lost Italians back to the saving paths of Christian practice.

In spite of the worries this Institute to which I committed myself, and the pressing financial strictures cause me, my trust in God is deep and unshakable. The Lord will help us, and this portion of his flock that crossed the seas to America shall not elude the shepherds of His Church! Far from swelling the ranks of those who despise the Catholic Faith, it will form the future strength and honor of the young Church of America destined to become the crown and pride of St. Peter and of our holy religion.

Be pleased to accept, Archbishop, the expression of my high esteem and profound devotion.

In Christ,  
+ John Baptist Scalabrini,  
Bishop of Piacenza."

**Appendix VI**

**BISHOP SCALABRINI AND A BELGIAN PROJECT  
OF ASSISTANCE TO EUROPEAN EMIGRANTS**

The news that Bishop Scalabrini had founded a Congregation of Missionaries for Emigrants aroused a special interest in Belgium, a country then trying to find an outlet for its increasing population, and its agricultural and industrial crisis. Some priests had begun to be concerned about the spiritual care of their emigrants! In 1887 Mons. Charles Cartuyvels, the famous Vice President of Louvain University, had given start to a series of conferences to call the public attention to the problem of emigration, when he heard about the initiative of Bishop Scalabrini and the favorable support it had been accorded by the Holy See! He turned, therefore, to the Bishop of Piacenza:

*"In our country, crowded with people and manufactured goods, where inhabitants are counted at 201 per square kilometers, the phenomenon of emigration is beginning to be a reality. I deem it wiser to direct it towards Latin America, entirely Catholic, rather than to the Protestant North! But the idea of emigration is so new to us that it is strongly discouraged by the clergy under the pretext that it would be the equivalent to eternal perdition, as though damnation were less of a threat in the great industrial cities where an only pastor assisted by a vicar may have charge of twenty or thirty thousand souls at the mercy of bosses who have no qualms of conscience for disregarding any christian principle.*

*In my humble opinion, what should be done now is to follow in your footsteps. As need compels the crowds of the poor towards the New World, we ought to follow them in order to keep them a Catholic people. Emigration contains unique positive elements of future promise. In fact, it is recruited from among Latin or other nations that have remained faithful to Catholicism: Italians, Basques, Spanish, and this last year, also Belgians. Anglosaxons and Germans have no part in it! There must be a special plan of God here! Within a century or so, the New World will dominate!*

*Thoroughly convinced of these ideas, I began to spread them all over Belgium through lectures. With pleasure I hear that the Holy See supports you in this crusade on behalf of emigrants; a seminary has been opened in Piacenza to provide them with priests; the Italian Episcopate has committed itself to endorse your project. Please, Bishop, kindly send me some documentation on this work, most of all a copy of your first publication which so greatly aroused the attention of the Italian nation. I witness its results, but I do not know its content. All this would be very helpful to me in the work I am undertaking for the Belgian emigration in the New World, especially in Argentina. I would also ask you to inform me on the nature of the Institution founded in Patagonia by Don Bosco: missions or agricultural stations? Or both at the same time? Are they European communities, or native people only?"<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Letter Cartuyvels to Scalabrini. Louvain, December 7, 1887. (Arch. G.S.B., IV, 1888, No. 109).



Later on, Bishop Scalabrini was asked to take charge of an Institute which Mons. Cartuyvels together with other priests, among whom Prof. Hengesch, had in mind to found in Belgium, precisely in Clairefontaine, on the border with Luxembourg, under the patronage of St. Peter Claver. This project was prompted by a French seminarian, Henri Degrenne, who had been admitted to the Institute of Piacenza by Bishop Scalabrini on December 7, 1887. In March 1888 Degrenne had obtained permission from Bishop Scalabrini to go to Belgium to collect funds for emigration. The Bishop of Piacenza had decided he should be accompanied by Father Joseph Molinari. They were directed to Mons. Cartuyvels by Archbishop Dominic Ferrata, the Apostolic Nuncio in Belgium. Things took a more rapid course than anticipated. A committee composed of the bishops of Namur and Luxembourg was soon formed, that decided to buy the medieval abbey of Clairefontaine as the seat of an Institute for emigration. On April 10, 1888, Degrenne reported to Father Rolleri:

*"My Professor at the Major Seminary wishes to donate to the Bishop of Piacenza a contribution of ten thousand francs and a large building with a beautiful piece of land around it to open there a Minor Seminary. Here vocations and funds are found in abundance. I made known this proposal to Bishop Scalabrini; he will do what he thinks best."<sup>2</sup>*

On May 6<sup>th</sup>, Father Rolleri wrote to Father Molinari:

*"I have written twice already to both of you, on April 22 and 28, ordering you on behalf of our Bishop Scalabrini to be back in Piacenza on the tenth of this month at the latest. I addressed both letters to the American College of Louvain, the first to you, the second, with enclosed another one for you, to Henri Degrenne. The reason for this order is that there was no intention of granting you permission to stay away more than a month as you are soon to leave for America and Henri acted contrary to instructions in regard to the project of Clairefontaine.*

*He should have proceeded to fill in legal papers with the persons responsible for transferring the ownership title of that property to the Congregation, entirely free of any burden to support and direct that daughter institution! With this document the Bishop would have travelled to Rome for the needed approval and have our Congregation declared international. In all this time Henri did not do anything else than send us a barrage of words contained in letters that brought nothing but displeasure to all, especially to our Bishop, who keeps saying he was forced to give his consent to a trip he was all along opposed to.*

*I substantially refer to you these things so that he may report them, if necessary, to the people in Clairefontaine. Our Bishop intends to conduct the dealings on the matter directly from here when you shall return. You are directed to carry out these instructions."<sup>3</sup>*

We know the content of the first letter of Father Rolleri to Degrenne by a duplicate sent to Bishop Scalabrini:

*"Last night at 9 o'clock I had an audience with Bishop Scalabrini. I found him much disturbed and disgusted at your inconsiderate behavior in dealing with*

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<sup>2</sup> Letter Degrenne to Rolleri, Luxembourg, April 4, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B., IV, 1888, No. 110).

<sup>3</sup> Rough copy of letter by Rolleri to Molinari, Piacenza, May 6, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B., IV, 1888, No. 113).

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*the project of Clairefontaine contrary to what had been previously decided here! This much appears Wednesday and today in your letters to the Bishop who passed them on to me with instructions to answer them advising you in his name to suspend all proceedings on this matter."*<sup>4</sup>

Some light on the intentions of Bishop Scalabrini is shed by a letter sent by Prof. Hengesch to him on May 5, 1888.

*"Luxembourg, May 5, 1888.*

*Most Illustrious Bishop,*

*Since receiving your most welcome letter on April 16, I did not cease devoting myself wholeheartedly to the Institute you consider founding here in Clairefontaine. Mr. Degrenne and his Reverend Companion will have reported to you already all that has been done so far. The exclusive ownership title you requested in your letter can be obtained at a relatively moderate cost because the religious women that own it are willing to make a great sacrifice on their part for such a sublime scope.*

*The project for a committee is succeeding also, and we hope to find sufficient funds for the work of Mons. Cartuyvels, especially.*

*It would seem wise that in the staff be included also some other priest either from Luxembourg or Germany to help in various ways the priests that would come up from Piacenza to take over the direction of the seminary. To Degrenne I have suggested one who seems to me right for the job, and could be considered for it, should the case arise and Your Excellency be pleased to do so. On my part, I promise to do all I can to cooperate in the growth of the foundation of Clairefontaine.*

*I present to you my sincere respects and profess myself*

*your devoted servant,*

*D. Hengesch, Prof.*

*at the Major Seminary of Luxembourg."*

The succeeding letter on May 13 begins by saying:

*"In the hope Your Excellency will be contented with my humble way to let you know or understand my ideas, I dare carry on my correspondence in Italian in order to reach an all direct exchange of views.*

*I find it necessary because Mr. Degrenne, as you clearly point out, considers as done what is being planned, and he reports as already concluded, perhaps, what others desire or propose to do. On the other hand, I would not quench his enthusiasm as undertakings like this stand in need of fervor and of a certain degree of audacity."*<sup>5</sup>

In fact, Degrenne persisted in his utopic and naive enthusiasm not in the least lessened by the sedate letters of Father Rolleri.

*"Abbaye de Clairefontaine,*

*May 11, 1888*

*Dear Bishop:*

*At the urging of Prof. Hengesch I have the honor to let you know at what point*

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<sup>4</sup> Letter by Degrenne to Scalabrini Louvain, May 5, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B., IV, 1888, No. 111).

<sup>5</sup> Letters Hengesch to Scalabrini. Luxembourg, May 5, 1888, and May 13, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B., IV, 1888, No. 115-116).

*the proceedings of Clairefontaine now stand. First of all, Mons. Cartuyvels himself, whose enthusiasm has cooled off quite a bit on account of that famous letter, said all is proceeding well and fast! All Belgian newspapers will carry an article by him about Clairefontaine, and beginning today, a summary of it in the form of a letter will start to circulate around the country!*

*Prof. Hengesch sent for a Capuchin priest to take charge of the provisional direction of three students and for lay brothers to be admitted soon. At this moment there are three of us here at Clairefontaine, the old chaplain, the Capuchin priest, and I. As you see, Bishop, the Institute is taking shape; no matter what may happen, it will succeed. All bishops of Belgium support it, and their contributions shall never fail!*

*Allow me to express my opinion to you, Bishop. I would advise you to accept without any reservation the advantageous proposals presented for your consideration. The house of Piacenza would have nothing to lose and all to gain. As to the question of its superiors, I am directed to inform you that the Committee would be very happy to accept the appointment of Mons. Mascaretti. The choice of someone else could give rise perhaps to difficulties. I think that Mons. Mascaretti would succeed very well as superior of this foundation. He is extremely congenial and kind; he knows men and how to direct them. A rough and harsh character would never succeed here! As for myself, I ask to remain here, nothing else. In fact, they need me here for the "Review on Emigration". Its first issue will appear on next July 1st."<sup>6</sup>*

On May 17<sup>th</sup>, the same Degrenne sent to Bishop Scalabrini the proposals the Patronage Committee of the "Institute of Clairefontaine" had decided to submit for his approval:

1. That Clairefontaine be at least spiritually united with Piacenza, and considered a filial house.
2. That a petition be presented to Your Excellency to appoint the Superior and a lay brother from Piacenza.
3. That Mons. Mascaretti take charge of the direction of the Institute."<sup>7</sup>

Bishop Scalabrini had in the meantime expressed his view to Prof. D. Hengesch:

*"Dear Professor:*

*I have received your kind letter and I thank you wholeheartedly.*

*The more I reflect on this project the more I become convinced it to be the Will of God that I give it up. I do not feel at all inclined to take the responsibility for that Institute if I am not in a position to attend to it but imperfectly, especially since I would have to direct it only from a distance. Besides, how is it possible for a foreign bishop to decide on this delicate and important matter without consulting first the Holy See?*

*Now Mr. Degrenne informs me that the house of Clairefontaine has been opened already, and other plans are underway. But, by what permission? Everything was done unknowingly to me, and to the Holy See itself, I suppose. None of the*

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<sup>6</sup>Letter Degrenne to Scalabrini. Clairefontaine, May 11, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B., IV, 1888, No. 117, translation from the French). Francis Mascaretti, a Carmelite, had resigned as Bishop of Susa and retired to the Carmelite Monastery of Piacenza as Titular Archbishop of Zama. He died there in 1894.

<sup>7</sup>Letter Degrenne to Scalabrini. Clairefontaine, May 17, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B., IV, 1888, No. 118).

*bishops involved, for whom I have the greatest respect, contacted me! No matter how things may stand now, in order to avoid misunderstandings, I hasten to declare to you, Professor, and through you to your worthy Bishop, that I had nothing to do with this project, and intend to remain totally alien to it.*

*It is my conviction that the Institute of Clairefontaine will prosper just the same, if not better, under the wise direction of yourself and of the able Mons. Cartuyvels, and much more so if endorsed by some Belgian bishop. On my part, I would be glad to recommend it to the Holy See. I could not do more than this! Obviously, since they have a common scope, the two Institutes - Belgian and Italian – would be united in bonds of close Christian charity, though completely independent of each other.*

*As to Degrenne, who, in need of everything had been admitted here by an act of charity, to tell the truth, I have only praise for him, but since against my intentions he has decided to remain there, it will be wise for him to stay with you. Lack of submission in a community member is a fault too serious for a Superior to readmit to it one who has freely chosen to leave, especially when his action is known to the other members, as in this case. Degrenne does not belong to my diocese as I intended a further period of preparation before granting him incardination; neither is he bound by any vow to my new Institute. He is free to go wherever he pleases. I have nothing to do with him any longer, neither has he with me, because he does not belong to this diocese. This very day I will have all his documents sent over to you.*

*Be pleased, kind professor, to accept the assurance of my esteem, while I implore God to grant you His Graces.*

*Devotedly Yours,*

*+ John Baptist, Bishop.*<sup>8</sup>

The Nuncio to Belgium had in the meanwhile recommended the new foundation to Propaganda Fide presenting also an outline for a Constitution.

*"Most Reverend Eminence,*

*A few months ago the Bishop of Piacenza sent two priests to Belgium to study the possibility of founding an Institute that together with the one he established in his diocese should provide a sufficient number of missionaries destined to defend and promote the religious interests of Europeans leaving for the various nations of America.*

*Upon my advice, they turned to Mons. Cartuyvels, Vice-president of Louvain's University, and other people, actively engaged in the moral and religious welfare of emigrants. In a short while a committee was formed, with the bishops of Namur and Luxembourg, and Mons. Cartuyvels, as members. Together with the two delegates from the Bishop of Piacenza, they went to work in earnest, and succeeded in finding a beautiful building in the diocese of Namur to the extreme south of Belgium by the boundaries with the Duchy of Luxembourg, and obtained as well the funds needed to provide for the immediate support of the Institute. Since you have been informed about this project, I shall not enter into any further details. The building where the young candidates will be trained is the ancient abbey of Clairefontaine. You will find a description of it in the enclosed note.*

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<sup>8</sup> Rough copy of letter Scalabrini to Hengesch, Piacenza, May 15, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B., IV, 1888, No. 116).

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*In order to clearly state the scope of the Institute and the nature of its relationship with the Congregation founded by Bishop Scalabrini, the three mentioned prelates have drawn up an outline for a constitution which I submit to you upon their request. They hope the Holy Father and Your Eminence may be pleased to approve and encourage their undertaking.*

*From the initial signs it appears as though the Lord is abundantly blessing the work of these zealous prelates. They have accomplished in a very short time what others would in many years. From the human point of view, such success finds its explanation in the great growth of emigration taking place in Europe, in Belgium especially, from where people are shortly expected to emigrate in large numbers due to the high increase of population in such a small territory, and to the industrial and agricultural crisis.*

*Bruxelles, June 15, 1888*

*+ Dominic*

*Archbishop of Tessalonica*

Document enclosed with letter to Card. Simeoni by Archbishop Dominic Ferrata, Apostolic Nuncio to Belgium on June 15, 1888.

**"Institute of the Missionaries of St. Peter Claver.  
Abbey of Clairefontaine, Belgium.**

1. Concerned over the unexpected proportions emigration is taking in the countries of Northern Europe, the undersigned, associated to safeguard the religious interests of their fellow countrymen, upon serious reflection before God and consultation with persons well known for their virtue no less than for their authority, have decided to found a Society of Missionaries whose scope will be to provide for the spiritual needs of Emigrants.
2. The Abbey of Clairefontaine shall be the Mother House.
3. This Institute, which we devoutly place under the patronage of St. Peter Claver, will carry the name of this untiring Apostle of America. It shall be committed to:
  - a) Train young men for the priesthood.
  - b) Give seminarians a solid preparation in Theology.
  - c) Form priests to the missionary life.
  - d) Admit lay brothers whose duties shall be to teach catechism and cooperate with the missionaries.
4. The rule of this Institute shall be conformed to the Constitution Bishop Scalabrini has written for his Congregation of Piacenza, in everything identical to ours.
5. Upon consent of Bishop Scalabrini, the Institute of Clairefontaine shall be spiritually united with Piacenza but without involvement in each other's direction of counting on each other's resources.
6. The administration and high direction of the Institute pertain to a Patronage Committee composed of the bishops of Namur and Luxembourg, and Mons. Cartuyvels, Vice-President of Louvain University.
7. Firmly convinced that all apostolic work must above all find support and place its strength and success in the approval and blessing of the Vicar of Christ, the undersigned must humbly implore the high and paternal favor on our undertaking of our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII, the great Pontiff who never failed to be the protector and promoter of all apostolates, Christian education, and civilization.<sup>9</sup>

Card. Simeoni welcomed the initiative and asked Bishop Scalabrini for more

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<sup>9</sup> Copies in Arch. G.S.B., IV, 1888, No. 116.

detailed information. The Bishop gave this answer.

*"Most Reverend Eminence,*

*The news that the Holy Father was pleased to allocate a grant of twenty thousand liras for the Congregation of the missionaries for Emigrants could not be more timely nor welcome!*

*I would like to directly thank the Holy Father, but I do not find words fit to express my feelings! Be pleased to act as my interpreter with him, Your Eminence. The consoling fruits I expect of the new Institute will serve, I hope, as the most welcome recompense to his noble heart. I wish the check be sent through the "Banca Nazionale" as this appears to be the safest and speediest way.*

*As to the project in Belgium, it is necessary I clarify somehow the information sent to Your Eminence.*

*This is how it all happened. In November, last year, a young French man, a certain Henri Degrenne, was recommended to me. I admitted him to my new Institute on trial appointing him at the same time to teach French to the Missionaries. Last March, he pleaded with me for permission to visit Belgium, invited by some friends to collect funds on behalf of Belgian and Dutch emigrants living among Italians in America. Upon much hesitation, I accorded him my consent, but not without assigning a companion, Father Joseph Molinari, a very pious priest of our new Institute, to go along with him. When they arrived in Luxembourg, many got the idea of founding there also a house of Missionaries for their emigrants to be associated with the Institute of Piacenza. My answer was that the idea deserved high praise, but nothing should be done without first informing Propaganda Fide and securing the blessing of the Holy Father on the project. I do not know what happened; the fact is that soon afterwards I was informed that without fail a house would be opened in June. It was then that I recalled Father Molinari and immediately dismissed Mr. Degrenne. You may verify all this in the letter I wrote to Prof. Hengesch, of which I enclose a copy. As a whole, I had the impression that the matter was dealt with too lightly, and that behind it all was this young Degrenne, talented for sure, but lacking in maturity, and more so in humility!*

*My opinion is that the Belgian Institute should not be approved at all unless a Bishop take full responsibility over it, and it be limited to the care of emigrants from Belgium and Holland! In fact, to seek providing for Italy, France, or any other nation, where the problem has been already or is about to be taken care of, seems to me an unconvincing presumption and an unwarranted pretension. Identity in name, means, and scope would give way to jealousies, disagreements and dissensions, neither few nor insignificant. I did not even so much as mention this matter to Your Eminence when I was in Rome the last time, so lacking in validity it seemed to me!*

*On the other hand, I had agreed with one of the promoters of the Institute that I would take it upon myself to report any proceedings about it to Your Eminence in case they should come up to me with positive plans. It had not been done."<sup>10</sup>*

As we can gather from another letter of seminarian Degrenne to Bishop Scalabrini, Mons. Cartuyvels postponed to an indefinite date the opening of the

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<sup>10</sup> Letter Scalabrini to Card. Simeoni, Piacenza, July 10, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B., IV, 1888, No. 120).

Institute at Clairefontaine and sent the young man to New York, in the meanwhile, "to prepare himself in meditation for the dispositions of the Good Lord."<sup>11</sup> In 1889, Degrenne was ordained a priest in New York. Afterwards, having failed in his attempt to become a cloistered monk, he was made pastor in Tecozautla (Hidalgo), Mexico. Finally, he returned to Europe in 1899 "dreaming to go to Jerusalem." After this we lose track of him.

As to the Institute of Clairefontaine, we know that following a first attempt to have the Divine Word Missionaries direct it, the Priests of the Sacred Heart took charge of it in 1889, as we read in the life of their Founder, Father Leo John Dehon.

"In the summer 1889 the Apostolic School of Clairefontaine was opened in Belgium on the border with Luxembourg. At first devoted to the training of missionaries for Ecuador, it has now been opened for the religious assistance of emigrants from these nations and Scandinavia!"<sup>12</sup> (12)

In October of the following year, the same Father Dehon got in touch with Bishop Scalabrini expressing his intention to have his congregation take charge of the Institute of Clairefontaine, with the scope, among others, to attend to the religious assistance of Belgian emigrants.

*"Dear Bishop,*

*Our humble Congregation of the Oblate Fathers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is attempting to carry out in Northern Europe the wonderful work you have undertaken for emigrants in Italy. We have apostolic schools and novitiates at Clairefontaine (Belgium) and at Sittard (Holland). We run missions in Ecuador, South America, already, and intend to establish centers for emigrants in Antwerp, Buenos Aires, and Montreal.*

*Any information you may kindly send about your Institute would be a source of help and encouragement for us! Would you not do so? Did you receive any Brief of approval from the Holy See and indulgences? Did you organize an association of benefactors? I would be grateful if through your secretary you would send me these documents and information.*

*Within a month I will have to go to Rome. I have been advised to see your houses at Piacenza and Genoa. I will have, thus, the honor of a visit with you.*

*I ask your blessing, and your pardon for taking the liberty to write to you.*

*Be pleased, Your Excellency, to accept my devoted respects.*

*Leo J. Dehon,*

*Superior General.*"<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Letter Degrenne to Scalabrini, August 9, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B., IV, 1888).

<sup>12</sup> Giuseppe Frediani, *Un apostolo dei tempi nuovi: Father Leo John Dehon, Founder of the "Priests of the Sacred Heart"* (Rome, 1960), p. 93

<sup>13</sup> Letter Dehon to Scalabrini. St. Quentin, Aisne, October 10, 1890. (Arch. G.S., Scalabrini, Special Correspondence. Translated from the French.

**Appendix VII**

**FIRST STEPS OF BISHOP SCALABRINI TOWARDS  
THE SPIRITUAL ASSISTANCE OF EMIGRANTS ON SHIPBOARD**

On April 15, 1888, in a letter addressed to Card. Simeoni, Bishop Scalabrini reports his first attempt to carry out this apostolate already codified in the "Regolamento" of 1888 with these words: *"To assist the emigrants during their voyage across the sea by exercising the sacred ministry on their behalf and by attending to them especially in time of sickness."*<sup>1</sup>

*"Before all else I have to inform Your Eminence that I have been in Genoa these past few days to expedite the last formalities with the Shipping Company "LA VELOCE" for providing spiritual assistance to our emigrants on shipboard.*

*It is a well-known fact that most of the time there are on board protestant agents and free masons who seek to pervert our unfortunate countrymen. Besides, hardly any crossing is completed without anyone or more dying. I know of one case, recently, when about ten people died.*

*From all this you can see how urgent it is to provide a solution for the problem. I have found the man qualified for this type of work, a priest very well known to me, who grew up under my very eyes at the seminary of Como."*<sup>2</sup>

On April 11, 1888, the deputy administrator of "S.A. La Veloce" Shipping Company, wrote to Bishop Scalabrini:

*"As to the conversation I was honored to have with Your Excellency recently, I am privileged to inform you that the administration is willing to accord on a trip by trip basis a free ticket to a priest appointed by you.*

*The personnel on board shall provide all the facilities necessary to exercise during the crossing his religious ministry on behalf of those persons among the passengers and crew who should request it."*<sup>3</sup>

Father Zaboglio was charged with personally carrying the response of Bishop Scalabrini to Genoa and with working out the details thus expressed by the deputy administrator.

*"The priests assigned by Your Excellency shall be taken on board free of charge, lodged in a private first class cabin, treated as such both ways, with freedom to disembark either in America or at intermediate ports, and embark again on successive trips. They shall be exempted from fees for transportation of luggage containing religious articles and furnishings, sacred vestments, destined for use in the missions in America even above the weight consented to other passengers.*

*You will freely indicate aboard what ship you desire the priests to be embarked. Father Zaboglio suggested a definite line by indicated. This administration has no difficulty of sort in this regard, and we leave it up to the wise directives of Your Excellency.*

*The ship commanders shall receive precise instructions to make it easy for the*

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<sup>1</sup>Regolamento 1888, Chapter I, No. 3, #6.

<sup>2</sup>Rough copy of letter Scalabrini to Card. Simeoni, April 15, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B., IV, 1888, No. 3). The priest whom Bishop Scalabrini is referring to was Father Francis Zaboglio

<sup>3</sup>Letter Adorno Durazza to Scalabrini, Genoa, April 11, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B., IV, 1888, No. 123).



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*chaplain on board to exercise his ministry during the trip provided it does not interfere with the demands of their service to the passengers. Agreement on details will be worked out by priest and personnel, together."*<sup>4</sup>

The first to enlist in the corps of the "external missionaries", who, though not members of the Congregation with vows, yet were volunteering their service to assist emigrants if only for one trip, was probably Mons. Alberto Allegro, a canon from the diocese of Ventimiglia. We know it from a letter of his to Bishop Scalabrini.

*"Most Reverend Bishop,*

*On my visit to Genoa today I called on the administration office of "La Veloce" for some information. The ship "Napoli" is very small. It will sail on January 3. The "Nord-America" is the largest ship of this company; it will leave port on February 3<sup>rd</sup>. I think that my ministry will be of greater service aboard this one. In any case, I am willing to leave also on January 14<sup>th</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup> if Your Excellency so commands.*

*With special permission, this morning I visited the ship "Vittoria", that is to sail on the 24<sup>th</sup> of this month. It has about twelve hundred emigrants on board! Poor people! They kissed my hands, convinced I would go along with them! To have to witness the sight of all these wretched human beings, some sickly, women, old men, children, is a horrifying experience!*

*In the presence of such miseries, one cannot help but admire and welcome the sublime apostolate of the Institute conceived and carried out by the faith, compassion. and charity of Your Excellency. The sailors themselves were saying today: 'If we only had a priest on every trip how willingly we would sail!'"<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> Letter Adorno Durazza to Scalabrini, Genoa, April 28, 1888. (Arch. G.S.B., IV, 1888, No. 125)

<sup>5</sup> Letter Allegro to Scalabrini, Genoa, December 29, 1888. Arch. G.S.B., IV, 1888, No. 127).