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among Polish Immigrants
in Boston (1893 - 1909)**

Silvano M. Tomasi, c.s.



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**A SCALABRINIAN MISSION AMONG POLISH IMMIGRANTS
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by

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1. Scalabrini's Visit to Polish Immigrants

In New England, the first days of September 1901 were still so warm to make uncomfortable the constant travelling of a distinguished Italian prelate who had come to visit the growing Italian immigrant communities and the priests and catechists he had sent to assist them. John Baptist Scalabrini, bishop of Piacenza and founder of the Missionaries of St. Charles, had arrived in Boston on September 6 welcomed by a royal parade. The 40,000 Italian immigrants of the city went wild with celebrations. The visit of Scalabrini became the occasion for the Italians to affirm publicly their presence. "It is impossible to describe the enthusiasm of our colony" Scalabrini reported to his secretary and friends back in Piacenza, "parade, bands, luminaries, applauses to no end."¹ The Boston Herald was even more detailed in its reporting: "A festive, cordial reception was given yesterday evening by the Italians of Boston to Bishop Scalabrini...Hundreds and hundreds of people escorted him to the North End...The entire Italian quarter was adorned with drapes and festoons, the flags of the United States and Italy were waving from every window. Hundreds and hundreds of fluorescent lights...fireworks—many small family altars were exhibited...Men, women and children were everywhere, at the windows, on the telegraph poles, on the balconies."²

The week Scalabrini spent in the Boston area absorbed all his energy. His activities ranged from meetings with the Irish Catholic Women taking care of the Italian girls to conversations with Archbishop Williams, from homilies and administration of confirmation to visits with immigrant Italians in surrounding communities, like Winthrop.

A day, however, was set aside for the Polish community of South Boston and the extraordinary priest Scalabrini had allowed to serve them, Father John Chmielinski. "Today I am staying with Fr. John Chmielinski, of your acquaintance," wrote Scalabrini to his secretary Mr. Camillo Mangot on September 10, 1901, from the Church of Our Lady of Czestochowa. "With my permission, he has devoted himself for years to his Polish countrymen, as you know, and has succeeded in building a beautiful church with a good house. He is very attached to me and to the Congregation. Like the other missionaries he has renewed his vows according to the form suggested by Propaganda and I look ahead with hope (*ne spero bene*). He is a serious young man and applies himself with eagerness in the fulfillment of his duties."³ In the parish of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa, Bishop Scalabrini was attending to a double concern: a practical and legal arrangement for his Polish-born missionary within the life of his Congregation; a pastoral outreach to the Polish immigrants.

a. Scalabrini's acceptance of Polish Apostolate

In his diary entry for October 2, 1893, Archbishop John Williams of Boston noted that a priest had been provided for the Poles. "Rev. Chmielinski one of the Italian fathers of North Square

¹ Scalabrini to Mangot, Letter of September 7, 1901-AG5.

² Cf. Angelo Scalabrini, *Trent'anni di Apostolato: Memorie e Documenti*. Roma: Cooperativa Tipografica Manuzio, 1909, pp.460-61.

³ AGS (3022/22) Bishop John 13. Scalabrini to C. Mangot, Boston Sept. 7, 1901.

Boston has permission of his superiors to attend to the Polish Catholics and the Archbishop has appointed him to do so."⁴

Father Chmielinski had arrived in the United States in August 1893, was assigned to Sacred Heart parish in Boston and somehow, he had immediately permission to work with his countrymen who were without spiritual assistance. The assumption, based on Archbishop Williams' statement - later on in 1901 confirmed by Bishop Scalabrini, (with my permission, he has devoted himself for years to his Polish countrymen...) - is that some explicit decision for Polish involvement must have been made very early in the presence of the Missionaries of St. Charles in Boston.

In a letter of 1894 to Father Astorri, one of his missionaries in Boston, Bishop Scalabrini wrote: "I bless...you and all those in the community, dear Father John (Chmielinski) and your brother that lives with him."⁵ In reports sent to Propaganda Fide, the exceptional work for Polish immigrants is explicitly mentioned. In March 1900, Scalabrini writes to Cardinal Ledóchowski: "Boston, Boston St.- Church of Our Lady of Czestochowa. In reality this church is for the Poles, since I have among my missionaries in Boston a young Pole named John Chmielinski, who studied here and was ordained here with regular letters of his bishop of origin. I thought well to allow him to dedicate himself to the care of his own countrymen and succeeded in founding this church that he cares for with praiseworthy commitment." Again, in August of the same year, in a more detailed report on the missionary activity of the Congregation, Scalabrini writes to Cardinal Ledóchowski: "Boston, Polish Church. Fr. John Chmielinski. N.B. This young Polish priest who studied here in the motherhouse (with regular papers from his bishop) asked me with insistence to dedicate himself to his countrymen. I, after consulting on this matter that worthy archbishop, granted this (permission) to him. He, however, always depends on the Superiors of the Congregation of St. Charles."⁶ The permission of superiors for Father Chmielinski's Polish apostolate is repeated in another entry in Archbishop Williams diary for November 18, 1894. The Archbishop writes: "Dedication of Polish Church of "Our Lady," So. Boston. At 10 1/4 blessed this new church on Boston St.... Rev. Fr. Chmielinski came to Boston from Piacenza Fathers to attend the Italians at North Square. He, with the consent of his superiors, took charge of the Poles last November 1893, and said mass for them every Sunday in the Church of the Holy Trinity and commenced the Church dedicated today. He attends Poles in the vicinity, especially in Salem."⁷ Although an explicit, public permission of Scalabrini existed for Father Chmielinski's pastoral action on behalf of the Polish immigrants, the first formula of vows did not reflect it. On April 24, 1892, Father Chmielinski had made a perpetual commitment.

He vowed poverty and obedience according to tie constitutions of the Congregation of St. Charles "*pro missionibus ad Italos emigratos habendis in dissitis praesertim Americae plagis*" (for missionary work among Italian migrants especially in the faraway places of America).⁸

⁴ Archbishop J. Williams, *Episcopal Register*, Oct. 2, 1893. Archives Archdiocese of Boston-Photocopy of the pertinent pages was provided by Fr. Andrew Brizzolara, C.S.

⁵ missing from document.

⁶ missing from document.

⁷ Archbishop J. Williams, *Episcopal Register*, op. cit., Nov. 18, 1894.

⁸ AGS, 1779, Fr. Chmielinski's handwritten formula of vows.

Was Scalabrini satisfied that there was a basic commitment to the missions and that the service to a specific language group had secondary importance? When in South Boston on September 10, 1901, Scalabrini received Father Chmielinski's renewal of vows. The formula is now very clear. It states: "...I promise to belong to the Congregation of St. Charles, as when I entered with temporary vows and to dedicate myself, according to the permission received, to the care of my countrymen from Poland, under the obedience of the Superior General. So help me God and these holy gospels."⁹ The young congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles had a variety of forms through which its members belonged to it and therefore, of formulas for the vows or oath of membership: perpetual commitment through the vows, temporary commitment for five years, even temporary commitment for a year.¹⁰ Together with the type of membership, Scalabrini was groping with a more definitive vision for his congregation and in 1900 he was still searching. He wrote on August 12, 1900, to the Secretary of Propaganda Fide: "It is useless that I repeat that you will do me the greatest favor if you will solicit the approval of the Rules. I like (this approval) only for ten years since experience has shown me that there is always something to learn and to modify."¹¹

In this context, then, the 1901 determination of Scalabrini to accept Father Chmielinski's explicit engagement with Polish immigrants becomes an important insight into the Founder's vision which is consistent with his pastoral outreach.

In fact, a few months earlier, Scalabrini had accepted another Polish seminarian in Italy. Father Pietro Maldotti, the fiery and heroic immigrants' chaplain at the Port of Genoa, had asked Scalabrini to take into his new Institute Stefano Duda. Writes Maldotti: " I have known this unfortunate young man from an excellent Polish family for five years. He helped me as interpreter at the port. With difficulty I obtained him from the Salesians, who for reasons I do not know very well, did not want to ordain him a priest, insisting that he remain a layman, not however for lack of qualifications, since the documents speak, but for reasons of opportunity...".

Fr. Maldotti wanted Duda to work with immigrants at the port of New York since he knew many languages. On Maldotti's word, who had directed to Scalabrini's new institute Fr. Marchetti, Fr. Chenuil, Fr. Bernardo and Fr. Teofilo, the Bishop accepted Duda in December 1900.¹² After his visit to Our Lady of Czestochowa in Boston, Scalabrini requested that Duda be sent to New York and ordained him there on November 3, 1901, and assigned him to Sacred Heart in Boston. On January 2, 1902, Father Duda writes to Scalabrini: "...because of my weak health I am not in the position to make myself as useful to the immigrants as I would like. I thought therefore I could

⁹ AGS, 1779, Fr. Chmielinski's handwritten formula of vows. The original text says: "10 7mbre 1901. So sottoscritto Giovanni Chmielinski innanzi a Dio faccio promessa di appartenere alla Congregazione di San Carlo, come quando sono entrato coi voti temporanei e di dedicarmi, secondo il permesso avuto, alla cura dei miei connazionali di Polonia, sotto l'ubbidienza del Superiore Generale. Così Dio mi aiuti e questi Santi Evangelii. Giovanni Chmielinski."

¹⁰ Mario Francesconi, *Storia della Congregazione Scalabrianiana*, Roma: Centro Studi Emigrazione, 1974, Vol. IV, pp.2-5.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 4.

¹² AGS, 1843, Letter of P. Maldotti to Padre, Genova, Dec. 26, 1900, and letter of P. Maldotti to Fr. Rolleri, Genova, Dec. 18, 1900. Writing to P. Rollexi, Fr. Maldotti adds: "Duda ...will be a precious element in the Port of New York, much more so because he learned the trade under me here in the Port of Genoa. I do not add a word, because the Bishop (Scalabrini) will have already spoken to you on this question."

adapt better (*d'addattarmi meglio*) among my compatriots. If then Your Excellency believes it opportune to hasten my transfer among the Poles, I would be extremely grateful to you."¹³ It would seem, then, that Scalabrini had already in mind of sending Fr. Duda among Polish immigrants. In April 1903, Fr. Duda was working together with Fr. Chmielinski and had put aside his idea of being released from his vows in the Congregation of St. Charles. It is not known if his change of mind was a result of Bishop Scalabrini's persuasion.¹⁴

b. Scalabrini's outreach to Polish Immigrants

"I arrived here (South Boston) at 7 1/2 met by the good Poles, by a group of young girls dressed as angels and scattering flowers. I said Holy Mass and I had Father John say what I could not say to them. They (Poles) understand only their language. I was very much moved by this ceremony for me mute."¹⁵ Thus Scalabrini described his first encounter with the Polish immigrant community. A bond was established and promises made. On September 25, 1901, while Scalabrini was in the Midwest visiting Detroit and Saint Paul, Father Chmielinski wrote him to remind him he was due back to Our Lady of Czestochowa.

Excellency: According to what your Excellency promised me before leaving for Utica, I have announced in church that on October 27, you will administer the sacrament of Confirmation. All the Poles have expressed to me their desire and their yearning to see Your Excellency in our midst. Father Gambera, however, has told me that your Excellency wants to be in Piacenza by All Saints and therefore you may not come to Boston. This would be a very great disappointment for me and we could say a ruin for the Polish colony. All would say that it was not true what I announce from the altar that your Excellency would come for sure on October 27. *I know it for certain that nationality does not make any difference for your Poles who right from the heart we are sons of your Excellency and love you as our father.* Therefore, we dare to ask of your Excellency that privilege that others have received. I hope to receive an affirmative answer that will make me very happy."¹⁶ Scalabrini kept his word and on October 27 he was in South Boston. Writing to his secretary in Italy, he said: "From Providence I passed again to Boston for the general Communion and for Confirmation in the church of the capable Father John. I was most edified."¹⁷ On his part, Father Chmielinski remained deeply loyal to Scalabrini to whom he wrote in 1903: "...I cannot do without showing you somehow my true gratitude and continued

¹³ AGS, 1843, Letter of Stefano Duda to Scalabrini, Boston, January 7, 1902.

¹⁴ AGS, 1843, Letter of Stefano Duda to Scalabrini, Boston, August 14, 1902. In this letter Fr. Duda was asking to be released from his vows to be free to work among Polish immigrants. The letter was written from the Italian church of Sacred Heart, but Fr. Duda remained of the same opinion even when he moved to Our Lady of Czestochowa. Fr. Chmielinski observes in a letter to Scalabrini: "He (Duda) is a good young man, but still a boy and as I see, we must not take seriously all that he says, especially when he is a little excited. A letter of your Excellency directed to him would do much good. Fr. Duda, from his savings sends you 100 dollars." AGS, 573/5, Chmielinski to Scalabrini, South Boston, May 1, 1903. In December 1908 Fr. Duda was at St. Stanislaus parish in Newark, N.J. from where he asked again to be released from his vows.

¹⁵ Letter of Scalabrini to Mangot, South Boston, Sept. 10, 1901, in Francesconi, op. cit., p.382.

¹⁶ AGS, 573/5, John Chmielinski to Scalabrini, South Boston, September 25, 1901.

¹⁷ Letter of Scalabrini to Mangot, New York, October 31, 1901, in Francesconi, op. cit., p.393.

remembrance of your Excellency by adding to the wishes for the coming Easter feast a small gift that might demonstrate to you that I have always been and always will be your son."¹⁸

The pastoral visit of Bishop Scalabrini to the United States put him in touch with a complex society where a variety of immigrant groups were slowly finding their home.¹⁹ Within the limits of the personnel available to the missions, Scalabrini took an active role by visiting and ministering to Polish immigrants, changing the vow formula to include their care, by ordaining a second priest from Poland to be assigned to their assistance.

The success of Scalabrini's pastoral outreach to Polish immigrants, however, rested with his exemplary missionary John Chmielinski.

The Black Madonna of Czestochowa in Boston

In the 1880's immigration from Russian and Austrian Poland swelled like a torrent. Estimates of Polish immigration to the United States show the inflow of this new group. From 1880 to 1890, 342,106 Poles entered the country; from 1891 to 1900, 270,902; from 1901 to 1910, 873,600. By 1905 there were said to be 10,000 Poles in Boston, 2,000 in Lowell, 1,800 in Haverhill, 1,000 in Salem.²⁰ From the Russian controlled city of Plotz, toward the end of 1889, the seminarian John Chmielinski joined the mass of migrants, left the seminary of Plotz where he had entered in September 1887 and studied with distinction and diligence,²¹ and arrived at the *Convitto Ecclesiastico* of Saints Peter and Paul in Genova. He was born November 13, 1868, in Masiak, province of Przasnycz, Russian Poland. His early education was received in the gymnasium of the City of Flock.²² After five months in Italy, the 22-year-old Chmielinski heard of Scalabrini's project of an association of priests to assist Italian immigrants in the Americas. The Bishop of Ventimiglia, who probably had welcomed in his diocese the young Polish seminarian, wrote to Scalabrini: "It is not I who send him there; it is he himself who asked me as a favor to come, telling me he feels strongly inclined to the missions. He has good testimonials for his behavior and studies"²³ In April 1892, Bishop Scalabrini receives Chmielinski's vows according to the Constitutions of the Congregation of St. Charles and ordains him a priest. In asking the Secretary of the Propaganda the certificate of apostolic missionary for Fr. Chmielinski, Scalabrini describes him as an excellent young man.²⁴ On May 28, 1893, John Chmielinski arrives in Boston at Sacred Heart parish in the North End.

¹⁸ AGS, 573/5, John Chmielinski to Scalabrini, South Boston, April 6, 1903.

¹⁹ Cf. Scalabrini's speech at the New York Catholic Club in 1901.

²⁰ Robert H. Lord, John E. Sexton, Edward T. Harrington. *History of the Archdiocese of Boston. In the Various Stages of its Development, 1604 to 1943*. Vol. ELI, pp. 230-31.

²¹ AGS, 1779.

²² James S. Sullivan. *The Catholic Church of New England. Boston and Portland: Illustrated Publishing Co., 1895* Pp. 192-193.

²³ AGS, 1779, Bishop of Ventimiglia to Scalabrini, August 28, 1890.

²⁴ AGS, 1779, Scalabrini to Card. Ledóchowski, May 11, 1893.

He began to function as a missionary at large for his countrymen in the various cities around Boston and extended his services even to Providence, building an impressive network of Polish congregations, as the history of the archdiocese of Boston records.

"As soon as his fellow countrymen here learned of his presence, they were inspired with the idea of forming a Polish parish, with him as their rector. A meeting of Polish residents, held in a hall on Hanover Street, enthusiastically accepted the project, pledged adequate financial support, and voted to send a delegation to lay their petition before the Archbishop. Father Chmielinski himself and the Superior of the Missionaries of North Square having given their consent, on October 2, 1893, Archbishop Williams appointed the young priest "to attend the Polish Catholics."

As most of his people lived near the border-line between South Boston and Dorchester, the new pastor directed his attention towards that section. By November 29, 1893, he had bought a tract of land extending from Dorchester Avenue to Boston Street, with the three thousand dollars quickly raised by his small but eager flock. While mass was said for them at the German church and then at St. Margaret's, Dorchester, an adequate frame church on their own land was speedily erected and dedicated November 18, 1894, under the patronage of Our Lady of Czestochowa. Thanks, largely, to Father Chmielinski's talents for leadership and organization, this parish advanced from small beginnings to real strength and prosperity amid a peace and harmony rare in the history of first parishes of any race in Boston. Moreover, this pioneer of our Polish clergy for years displayed remarkable activity in going about the Diocese, ministering to his scattered compatriots wherever they could be found, organizing congregations where it is possible, paving the way for many a future parish. The harvest was slow to ripen, but in the years 1903-1906 five new Polish churches were dedicated.

At Salem, which had from the first been the most important of Father Chmielinski's missions outside Boston, he long said Mass for the Poles almost weekly in the basement of St. Mary's Church.

Eventually he built the Church of St. John the Baptist on Herbert Street, which was dedicated July 5, 1903, and over which his former assistant, Rev. Joseph Czubek, was, on October 22nd, appointed resident pastor.

Holy Trinity Church, Lowell, was begun by Father Chmielinski in the summer of that same year, and completed by Rev. Stephen Duda, P.S.S.C., the first resident pastor, who was appointed October 22, 1903. It was dedicated September 18, 1904.

At Lawrence the same tireless missionary from South Boston built another Church of the Holy Trinity, which was blessed February 5, 1905. Its first pastor was Rev. Francis Wojtanowski, sent here on April 29th of that year.

Down to 1903 the Poles of Chelsea, though frequently visited by Father Chmielinski, were accustomed to attend Mass in South Boston. As the distance was great and their numbers were increasing, they petitioned the Archbishop for a separate parish and for a priest of their own choice. Their nominee was Father George Jaskolski of Chicopee, a member of the Order of the Conventual or "Black" Franciscans (O.M.C.), which had but recently come into the Diocese of Springfield. After some delays and after obtaining the necessary permission from Rome, on June 27, 1905, Archbishop Williams signed the papers which erected the new parish and gave it to the Conventual Franciscans, who were thus for the first time brought into this Diocese. Soon after,

the former First Congregational Church was purchased, and, after being refitted, was dedicated January 7, 1906, as the Church of St. Stanislaus.

Sometime in 1905 Father Stephen Duda, who had retired from Lowell the previous year, became pastor of the Poles in Lynn, and set about procuring for them a church, which was blessed as "St. Michael's" on April 22, 1906.

Father Chmielinski died in 1937. He had certainly been faithful to the cause of the immigrants. As the history of the Boston archdiocese notes: "Nearly all the newer Polish parishes - those founded under Cardinal O'Connell - owe their inception in some degree, as, indeed, most of the older ones do, to the missionary labors of the pioneer Polish priest of the Diocese, Father John Chmielinski. Almost everywhere one discovers that he had been first on the scene, gathering and organizing the Polish people, arousing in them the desire to have a church and a resident pastor, laying the first foundations on which later pastors have built."²⁵

The pastoral activity of Father Chmielinski had started with an intense love for the missions, and this inner commitment, that his three years in Piacenza, Close to Bishop Scalabrini, had nurtured, was the source of his success. The pastoral understanding of immigrant's integration in the local church, that Chmielinski had, also reflects the views of Scalabrini. A few notes are left of Fr. Chmielinski's reaction to the schism that occurred among Polish immigrants and they offer his insights on the priority of religious concern. "1) Do not push the Americanization of Poles in the United States," Chmielinski writes. "In time this nationality group will become American. With the development, however, especially in the last years, of national sentiment among Poles, the effort with which some bishops want to impose on them Americanization (*l'americanismo*) could cause immense injury to religion. 2) Poles make up the fifth part of the Catholics. Even though in many dioceses they are a third or a fourth of the faithful, they have among their priests no bishop, no auxiliary or vicar general. Both clergy and people complain about this fact. The liberal press takes advantage of this accusing Rome of neglect and in this way, it works in favor of the schism. 3) Polish auxiliary bishops could do much good for their countrymen: take care of their spiritual need that in many cases escape the attention of Irish and German bishops, who do not know our language and our character; counteract to the influence of independent bishops. The Polish people have great esteem and veneration for the bishops and if they had some Polish bishops by whom they could feel understood and receive empathy, such a provision without doubt would help much in the destruction of the schism and the preservation of loyalty to the legitimate shepherds."²⁶

The concern for bishops of the same ethnic group of the immigrants was subscribed by Scalabrini in his correspondence with Archbishop Michael A. Corrigan of New York and by the memorandum submitted to Leo XIII by the Luzern Conference of 1891 through Peter Paul Cahensly and Marquis G. Volpe Landi. The strong polemic that ensued on this question at the time shows how difficult and slow the process of recognition of the special pastoral care needed by immigrants has been. In 1983, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in a pastoral letter on Hispanic Ministry would note: "The appointment of Hispanic bishops and archbishops since 1970 has greatly enhanced this apostolate. We rejoice with all the Hispanic Catholics who

²⁵ Robert H. Lord et al., op.cit., pp. 231-33; 741.

²⁶ AGS, 1779, handwritten note without date.

see in these new bishops a visible and clear sign that the Holy See is recognizing their presence and the contribution they are capable of making to the life of the Church in the United States."²⁷

Through his actions and his ideas Father Chmielinski was a true follower of Bishop Scalabrini. The sensibility of his fellow missionaries from Piacenza, however, was less universal.

III Father Chmielinski's Companions React

In 1893 the pastor of Sacred Heart's in Boston, where Father Chmielinski was assigned, was Father Giuseppe Martini. It was Father Martini who raised questions on the behavior of his Polish confrere. "I am duty bound," wrote Father Martini to Father Provincial Vicentini, "to inform you that the Polish Father right because Polish loves more the Poles than the Italians. He has gone to the Archbishop and has obtained the permission to assist the same (Poles). He is always with them and I am almost certain that he would do by himself what should not be permitted to him by the Superiors of the Congregation, namely, to open some Polish church."

In October 1893, Father Martini writes again that Chmielinski works independently: "By now we can count very little on him: of the Italians, his confreres included, he does not want to care."²⁸

At the end of the same month, the Provincial brings the case to the attention of the Superior General Bishop Scalabrini: "Father Martini complains much about the Polish Father who works with the Poles of his own whim, comes and goes as he likes, spends much and does not offer him the help he should and could. The day after tomorrow I have to go to Boston to preach and in this way I will see better how things stand. Father Carlo Bertorelli also doesn't seem to give much satisfaction to Father Martini. It seems impossible, these young missionaries, when they are here, it seems they feel very little the brake of the vows."²⁹ Scalabrini's answer is unknown. Father Martini was overwhelmed with work and discouraged about his companions' behavior to the point he was considering leaving the Congregation at the expiration of his vows. The recurring complaint about Fr. Chmielinski, however, was only that he was more for the Poles than the Italians and perhaps too aggressive. In September 1893, Fr. Martini had written directly to Scalabrini: "He (Chmielinski), still young and inexperienced, has already in his head to build and direct a Polish church."³⁰ In the correspondence of Father Martini and Father Vicentini there is no hint or expression that they realized that Polish immigrants were facing the same social and pastoral difficulties than the Italians. The approach toward the Polish confrere was indirect and negative. On October 24, 1893, Fr. Martini wrote to the Provincial: "This morning Father Chmielinski came to ask me some things on a collection for his church and without making him suspicious of anything I could know part of his intentions. It is by now certain that he is about to buy a house that also serve as chapel, outside the city. He would go there permanently, but without the intention of leaving the Congregation for the five years. All considered, my opinion is to let him go... If dispensing him from the vows could free the Congregation from a certain

²⁷ National Conference of Catholic Bishops. *The Hispanic Presence: Challenge and Commitment. A Pastoral Letter on Hispanic Ministry*. Washington, D.C., 1983-

²⁸ AGS, 573/2, Martini to Vicentini, Boston, October 24, 1893.

²⁹ AGS, 573/2, Vicentini to Scalabrini, New York, Oct. 27, 1893.

³⁰ AGS, 573/2, Martini to Scalabrini, Boston, September 26, 1893.

responsibility, it could also leave him a wider field to make mistakes. In the end I believe he would be a good priest; hut he needs experience that at his own expense (*a danno suo*) will make him understand that to command well it is necessary to know how to obey."³¹

In a letter to Scalabrini the following day, Fr. Martini offers more details: "Fr. Chmielinski does not want to stay with us any longer. He does not say he leaves the Congregation, but in fact he leaves it. He wants to have only the care of Poles with his church and house. He could gather the Poles in a hall attached to our church and remain in the house, but he wants to be independent. This idea he has always had. Father Provincial is accommodating the situation by letting him go; there is no other way of accommodation... To his Excellency the Archbishop we had to say that the Congregation is not assuming the responsibility for what he will do with the Poles, once he is independent. His Excellency has answered that he must depend on his superiors."³² During October and November 1893, Fr. Chmielinski is busy collecting money from the Poles for their church. The Archbishop is ready to loan him money to buy a Protestant Church. Fr. Provincial sends him a letter, that we don't have, and Fr. Martini tells him clearly, he cannot tolerate his conduct and invites him to leave. By the end of November 1893, Father Vincenzo Astorri writes to Fr. Zaboglio: In a few days will leave from our house Father John, who has taken the care of the Poles and has obtained ad tempus the basement of the German church."³³ A few days earlier, Fr. Martini had also written to Fr. Zaboglio: "The Polish Father is about to leave our house. Father Provincial told his Excellency the Archbishop that the Congregation will not take any responsibility for what he would do if he will go by himself, but the Archbishop seems not to give weight to the words of the Provincial."³⁴

By January 1894, Fr. Chmielinski is by himself in South Boston.³⁵ In May, internal disagreements at Sacred Heart's seem to continue. Fr. Martini writes to Scalabrini: "The brother of Father (Astorri) left the house on May 11 and is gone to Fr. Chmielinski's house as a servant. This Father is about to build a church fox his Poles, of who he alone has care. He, however, keeps himself always as a member of the Congregation and for the good of the same will do what will be possible to him: thus, he says. Meantime he has given me \$100 for the Institute..."³⁶ Alone, Father Chmielinski carries on an intense assistance to the Polish immigrants without losing contact with the Congregation.

In 1895, Father Vicentini writes to Fr. Rolleri in Piacenza: "With this letter I am sending another check of \$200...\$50. were given me by Fr. John Chmielinski. He regrets he cannot give more, because this year he had to help the construction of the new church. In any case, if he will listen to my recommendations, as he promised, he will be able to send more in time. The Poles are generous with their priests."³⁷ After Scalabrini's visit to the United States and his ordination of Father Duda, Fr. Chmielinski receives some help from this second Polish Scalabrinian. In a letter

³¹ AGS, 573/2, Martini to Vicentini, Boston, October 24, 1893.

³² AGS, 573/2, Martini to Scalabrini, Boston, October 25, 1893.

³³ AGS, 573/2, Astorri to Zaboglio, Boston, November 27, 1893.

³⁴ AGS, 573/2, Martini to Zaboglio, Boston, November 15, 1893.

³⁵ AGS, 573/2, Martini to Zaboglio, Boston, January 29, 1894.

³⁶ AGS, 573/2, Martini to Scalabrini, Boston, May 17, 1894.

³⁷ AGS, 573/2, Vicentini to Rolleri, Boston, January 7, 1895.

to Scalabrini in 1901, Fr. Roberto Biasotti, pastor of Sacred Heart's in the North End of Boston, writes: "Father Stefano (Duda) is inclined toward the Poles and if he can he goes to Father John where he even stayed a Sunday without informing me. He declared to Fr. Paolo and various times to me that he doesn't understand Italian dialects and therefore believes useless his work in this church. Up to now he never wanted to preach; but he hears confessions and assists the sick and is really a good priest"³⁸

Scalabrini's presence at Our Lady of Czestochowa and his acceptance of Fr. Chmielinski's vows to work for the Poles renewed the bond between the founder and his missionary. Writing to Scalabrini in May 1903, Fr. Chmielinski says "You will forgive if for so long I did not send you news of myself. This was not due to forgetfulness, but to the many preoccupations that prevented me from sending you a sign of my gratitude...by adding to my Easter wishes a small gift that may show you that I have always been and always will be your son...I hope that in the future I will have a chance to keep the promise I made to you here in Boston and make up for the past... My parish activities proceed well. The population has almost doubled. I am building a church in Salem, that will be completed next June. Fr. Stefano Duda, who lives with me, has told me that on the 22 of this month will leave for Italy to be released from the vows. I do not know what to do. I have three missions outside Boston and each has more than 800 souls. I will have to leave two, because I will be without a priest.

The Archbishop of Boston has told me that if Fr. Duda will be outside the Congregation, he will not accept him in his diocese."³⁹ Scalabrini acknowledged this letter, that we don't have, and it must have been very encouraging, as Fr. Chmielinski's next letter to him indicates: "...receiving a letter from your Excellency I feel the happiest man in the world. Not a day goes by that I don't remember your benevolence and fatherly heart you have shown and still shows toward me... Thanks be to God, my activities proceed well. The new church in Salem will be blessed July 5. The young priest you have seen in my house will be made pastor. This week I have also bought the land in Lawrence where according to the permission received from the Archbishop shortly, I will build a church for the Poles. I hope that Fr. Duda, who has forgotten his departure for Piacenza, will be made pastor."⁴⁰

In 1905 Bishop Scalabrini dies and his Congregation already shaken by internal dissensions, individualism and lack of leadership enters a period of decadence where the Founder's vision becomes blurred. Fr. Chmielinski keeps in touch with some confreres and Msgr. Mangot, Scalabrini's secretary, with whom he spends some pleasant days in Rome in 1909, as he comments in a letter to Mangot. In the same letter he adds a postscript: "Forgive my Italian. This is the reason that I don't write more often. The Archbishop of Boston shortly goes to Rome. Fr. Vicentini should try to have the church that the Archbishop wants to give to the Congregation at the best possible conditions."⁴¹ Was this the Polish Church? To Msgr. Mangot Fr. Chmielinski writes again two months later: "In answer to your most welcome letter I send you a check of \$100. as an offering for the expenses of transporting the body of the unforgettable Bishop

³⁸ AGS, 573/26, Biasotti to Scalabrini, Boston, December 27, 1901.

³⁹ AGS, 573/2, Chmielinski to Scalabrini, South Boston April 6, 1903.

⁴⁰ AGS, 573/5 Chmielinski to Scalabrini, South Boston, May 1, 1903.

⁴¹ AGS, 573/5 Chmielinski to Mangot, South Boston, February 19, 1909.

Scalabrini. I hope that the manifestation of the people of Piacenza will succeed to be as solemn as the great deceased deserves it."⁴²

The temporary vows Fr. Chmielinski had made in the hands of Scalabrini in 1901 must have been renewed in 1906 since in 1909 he is still a member of the Congregation. The time, however, was not ripe for the incorporation in the mentality of the disparate surviving group of priests Scalabrini had gathered of his insights for the pastoral care of all migrants.

After direct experience in the United States and Brazil with a variety of cultural groups of immigrants, Scalabrini submitted to the Holy See a plan for the pastoral care of immigrants of all nationalities.⁴³ He had also made his the work of Chmielinski with the Poles to the point of modifying the formula of the vows. Obviously Scalabrini was growing in his understanding of his role as founder of a religious missionary community and his death prevented the maturing, especially the organizational arrangement, of his insights. Polish language ministry did not remain an active component of the activities of the Congregation of St. Charles. The Superior General, Fr. Vicentini, who had shared Fr. Martini's complaints with Scalabrini about the "Polish Father", met with Father Chmielinski during the latter's visit to Italy in 1909, as the following letter recalls: "You will forgive me," Fr. Chmielinski writes to Fr. Vicentini, "if I have not answered right away your dearest letter of two months ago. The reason is due in part to the many occupations and in part to my indolence that I have to fight when I am obliged to write in the Italian language. I have heard with great consolation of the triumphal celebrations in Piacenza for the transfer of the body of the never enough lamented our father. You ask me information on Father Duda and I frankly state that between me and him every correspondence has ceased from the day he left my house. At present he is in Newark, New Jersey, in a Polish parish, whose pastor was killed a few weeks ago. According to what was agreed between us, when I was in Piacenza, I am always waiting for the papers of release from the Congregation to be able to be incorporated into this diocese of Boston. You know well, that in my heart I am always attached to the Congregation and I will always try to help it as far as my means allow it. In the meantime, I am enclosing a check of 200 dollars, 100 as an offering to the house and 100 for the celebration of 100 masses according to my intention. When I was in Rome last year, I found out that some negotiations were going on between you and Msgr. Bianchi for the acquisition of a Church in Rome in the name of the Congregation. However, the Church found, you refused to accept it because about 20 thousand lire were required for the work of restoration. Your Paternity will have done well not to accept.

Since, however, I am convinced that for the good of the Congregation, especially before the American Bishops, it would be not only a good thing, but a true necessity to have a church in Rome, I am making you the proposal to find for you twenty thousand lire as soon as the Church will be given to the Congregation. If this is not done (*in caso contrario*) these bishops will never keep in due consideration the work of Bishop Scalabrini and in some dioceses will even try to expel the Fathers of the Congregation to place there other priests, as it happened in Cleveland, Ohio. While I state my willingness to pay the money, I place as a condition that Father Paolo be sent to Rome, because outside Your Paternity nobody better than him could represent the Congregation in Rome, even because Father Paolo knows these Bishops of America and the

⁴² AGS, 573/5 Chmielinski to Mangot, South Boston, March 28, 1909.

⁴³ Cf. *Bishop Scalabrini's Plan for the Pastoral Care of Migrants of All Nationalities*. New York: Center for Migration Studies (no date), pp. 38.

conditions of these dioceses. Moreover, he speaks English and therefore he could keep in contact with the Bishops, who always arrive in Rome. It is not necessary that I tell you that this proposal of mine has not been suggested by any other sentiment than the good of the Congregation."⁴⁴

An entry in Father Vicentini's Diary for July 12, 1909, reports the formal decision that separates Fr. Chmielinski from the Congregation, even though his last letter was an expression of concern for it. Writes Fr. Vicentini: "I send to Ft. Chmielinski the document to allow his incardination in the Archdiocese of Boston etc. I write also that I hope he will continue in his affection and help to the house."⁴⁵ The story, however, does not conclude at this junction. Perhaps the juridical confusion in the Congregation from the death of Scalabrini to the reorganization brought about by Cardinal Rossi, perhaps the self-understanding of the members of the Congregation who stressed their personal attachment to Scalabrini and his sense of mission, kept Fr. Chmielinski in a Scalabrinian context. In 1916 Fr. Chmielinski was celebrating his 25th anniversary of ordination. An Italian language newspaper reported the event under the headline: Priestly Jubilee of a Deserving Scalabrinian Missionary.

It describes the celebration for the occasion at Our Lady of Czestochowa, the fact that Fr. Chmielinski founded eleven Polish parishes, schools, and contributed to the education of seminarians, three already deacons.

It adds: "The entire day of Tuesday, June 20, Fr. Chmielinski spent it among his confreres of the S. Heart Mission. Present at the banquet prepared there in his honor were Fr. Oreste Alussi of New Haven, Conn.; Fr. Ludovico Toma of Orient Heights, Fr. Nazareno Properzi of Somerville, Mass., Ft. Pietro Maschi of Framingham, Mass... Letters and telegrams of cordial participation were sent by the two Provincials A. Demo of New York and Fr. Chenuil of Chicago, ILL, Fr. Parolin of Syracuse, N.Y., Fathers Giacomo Gambera and Riccardo Lorenzoni of Chicago, Fathers Domenico Be Mott and L. Quaglia of Providence, R.I., Fr. Marenchino of New Haven, Conn. etc. Fr. Vittorio Gregori, in the name of his confreres as well, presented the honoree with a magnificent stole..."⁴⁶ Father Alussi commented in a letter on the observance of Ft. Chmielinski fruitful twenty-five years of ministry: "...from heaven must have smiled on this beautiful feast the holy bishop John B. Scalabrini."

IV Conclusion: Nationality in Religious Congregations

The historical experience and decisions of Bishop Scalabrini in dealing with Polish immigrants: equal treatment of them during his American visit, adaptation of the vows formula to include this ministry, permission, and therefore mandate, to Fr. Chmielinski to work in this field, the ordination of a second Polish priest in New York, speak of his basic concern for a missionary service to a segment of special people in need of pastoral care because of emigration. The evolution of Scalabrini's understanding of his Congregation and the peculiar style of group belonging and identity of the first missionaries seem to explain the events and the development of the Polish Scalabrinian mission in Boston.

⁴⁴ AGS, 573/5, Chmielinski to Vicentini, South Boston, May 19, 1909.

⁴⁵ AGS, P.D. Vicentini, Diazio, Vol. V. p. 185.

⁴⁶ AGS, 1779 a clipping from an unknown Italian language newspaper.

Appendix

This page of Scalabrinian history seems also to confirm Fr. John Lozano's comments on the issue of nationality in religious families. Writes Lozano:

The question of the relationship between community charism and the nationality of the first members of an Institute has taken several forms. In theory there is nothing against a religious institution being limited to certain geographical zones. East and West have had distinctive forms of monasticism, following diverse traditions. But in the West, since the thirteenth century, religious Institutes have generally taken the form of centrally organized institutions: In these national frontiers have no value. Members of many different nationalities live together in the same family and share the same vocation and spirit. Some orders, such as the Dominicans and Jesuits, were international groups from the outset. Others, such as the Franciscans, spread rapidly through different countries. However, most Institutes developed slowly and only later came to cross the borders of their country or origin.

In this latter case the institution may have set its roots so deeply in the society of the mother country that the universality of its message suffers. As new generations from other countries enter, they may undergo a certain culture shock at what they consider to be a foreign mentality. This is followed by a reaction against the French, Spanish, or Italian elements in the Institute or, in the case of America, against the European. This has been the main reason why a number of Congregations, especially those of women, have decided to separate and form a new group. This can definitely be a form of enrichment for the Church, although the original group may lose vitality. Other groups maintain their unity but undergo a series of crises until a fuller formulation of their aims and spirit can be developed. Clearly, the "national" as such does not pertain to the charism, although the founder may only have been able to actualize it within the context of his or her own national heritage".⁴⁷

All national heritages are enriching, but the charism of service to migrants transcends them and allows for unity in diversity.

⁴⁷ John M. Lozano, C.M.F. *Foundresses, Founders, and Their Religious Families*. Chicago: Claret Center for Resources in Spirituality, 1983, pp. 80-81.

THE POLES IN BOSTON.

A Church and Colony to Be Established
—Father Chmielinski.

Boston — *April 1894*

The San Carlo society, one of the strongest Roman Catholic missionary societies of Italy, will shortly erect a church for the sole use of the Catholic Polish residents of Boston.

The land for the structure was purchased about three months ago and it is intended to build on it the coming summer. The site secured is located on Dorchester avenue, nearly opposite Hyde street, and runs through to Boston street. The edifice will be a temporary structure, built to last five years, when a more handsome stone structure will replace it.

Archbishop Williams is now considering the plans for the building, and it will be built to contain a seating capacity for 600 people. There will be two masses on Sundays and one daily.

In Boston at the present time there are some 2000 Catholic Poles, among whom are several hundred Lithuanians. Centuries ago they were entirely distinct from the inhabitants of Poland, but be-



THE REV. JOHN M. CHMIELINSKI.

came united in the fifteenth century; they still retain their own language and customs, together with that of their adopted country, and, like the majority of the Polish inhabitants, are devout adherents to the Roman Catholic church. They will also worship there.

Catholic churches for Poles have been established in many of the large cities of

the United States, Chicago alone having a dozen churches. In this State, Chicopee and Webster have their own houses of worship, all in charge of secular priests, while the church to be located in this city will be the only Polish Catholic church presided over by a priest from the San Carlo Missionary Society.

The Rev. John M. Chmielinski of this society, whose picture adorns this column, is the priest selected by the archbishop to attend to the spiritual wants of his countrymen. He was born in the town of Piorcki in Russian Poland, twenty-five years ago. He comes of a wealthy and highly educated family. He was ordained at the Christopher Columbo College in Piacenza, Italy, about two years ago, and joined the San Carlo society immediately on his ordination. He spent a year in missionary work throughout Italy and came to this country last August, since which time he has acted as assistant priest to the Rev. Father Joseph Martine of the San Carlo society, pastor at the Church of the Sacred Heart, which is located in North square at the North End.

He is a young man of fine appearance, and, for the short time he has been in this country, speaks English very fluently. His present congregation worship him, and he wields a powerful influence over his countrymen. In joining the San Carlo society, he took the vows of allegiance for five years.

A COLONY OF POLES.

A Polish colony will be established in the neighborhood of the church. Eight lots have been purchased by Father Chmielinski for the church at 25 cents a foot, and several adjoining lots have been taken by the Boston Polish Society and other of their countrymen. At the present time all sections of the city contain many of these people. They attend the Catholic churches in their vicinity and have the reputation of being very devoted to their faith. They are mostly employed at tailoring and in sugar refineries, and are very saving in their habits.

A Polish Lithuanian ball, the proceeds of which will go toward the erection of their church, will be held in Caledonia Hall on the celebration of the 103d anniversary of the Polish constitution, on Thursday evening, May 3.

Father Chmielinski has taken up his residence at No. 14 Washburn street.