



**The Pastoral Action of Bishop
John Baptist Scalabrini
and his Missionaries among
Immigrants in the Americas
(1887 - 1987)**

Silvano M. Tomasi, c.s.



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CMS
Occasional Papers:
Pastoral Series

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BISHOP JOHN BAPTIST SCALABRINI
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AMONG IMMIGRANTS IN THE AMERICAS, 1887-1987***

By

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New York

January 1984

* This paper is a preliminary reflection on methods of pastoral service to migrants in the Scalabrinian tradition. Comments and suggestions are welcome.

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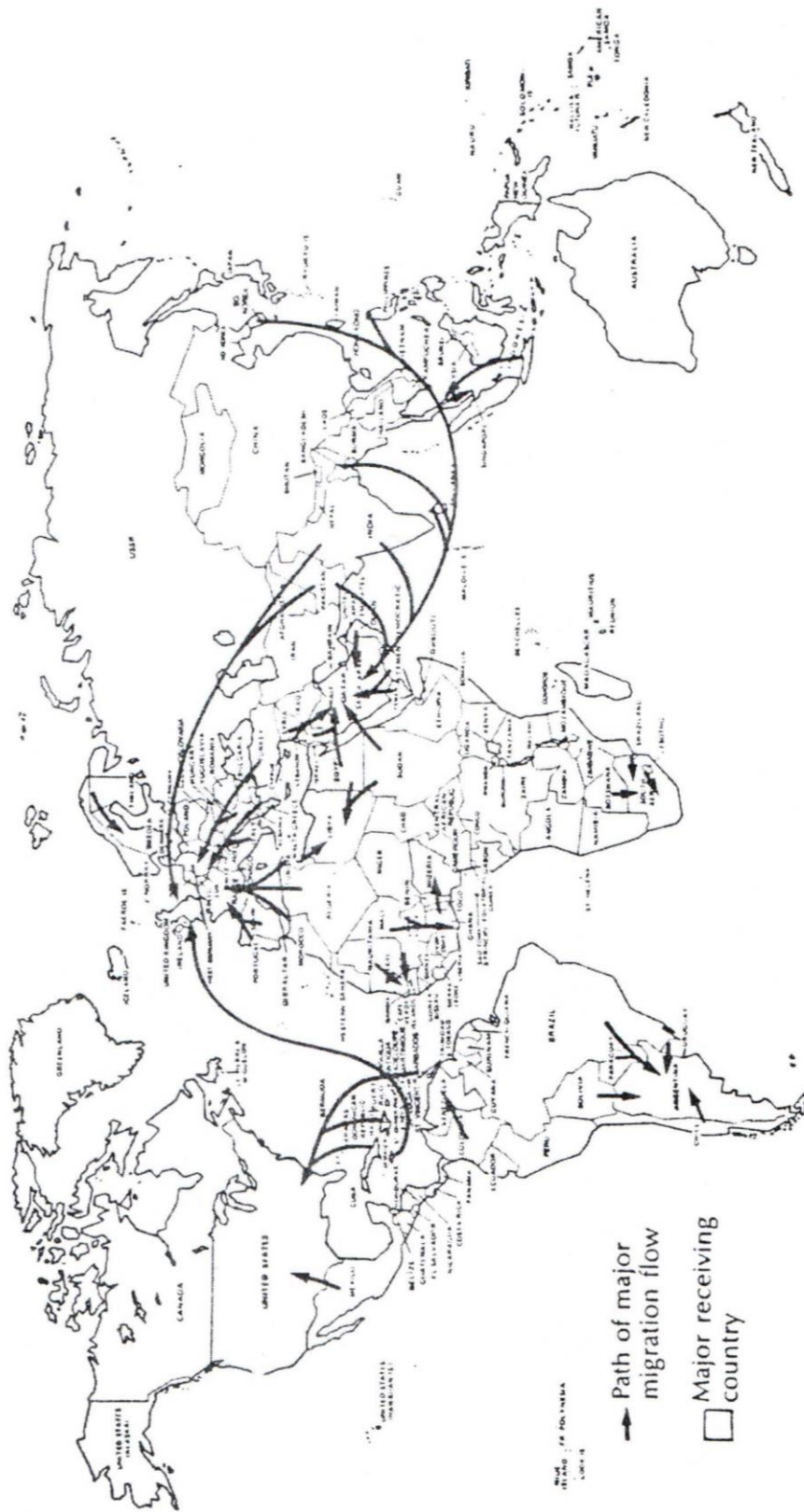
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**THE PASTORAL ACTION OF BISHOP JOHN BAPTIST SCALABRINI
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A century of experience in the pastoral care of migrants offers a unique opportunity. It becomes possible to analyze the motives, the methods and the models adopted in this type of Church action, service to migrants, on such an extended length of time that its impact on local churches, on the immigrants, and on the awareness of the universal Church, are allowed to emerge with evidence. From the founding of the Scalabrinian Congregation in 1887, when the center of concern were the masses of Italian peasants directed to the Americas, to the stirrings of renewal and internationalization rediscovered and implemented after the Second Vatican Council, diverse forms of action for the evangelization of migrants have followed in succession or have co-existed in the Scalabrinian apostolate.

A critical review of these pastoral forms or strategies can throw light and prompt creative insights as we face the increasing and always tragic contemporary phenomenon of migrants and refugees on every continent.¹

I. ANSWER TO MASS MIGRATION AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATION

I. The Founder: Bishop Scalabrini as Point of Departure and Point of Reference

The historical roots from which any discussion must start are the example and the person of the Founder: his "memorial", like the "memorial" of the Eucharistic celebration gives efficacy to the disciples' action.

The conciliar document *Perfectae Caritatis* interprets the renewal requested by Vatican II in an historical perspective. It asks of religious families: a return to the sources; adaptation to the changed conditions of our time; in order to better correspond to the requirements of the future.² In this way, the charism of foundation must be lived in a history that keeps evolving. At the same time, however, it is threatened by history: it can be diluted and misinterpreted or even betrayed and abandoned in the course of time

Members of every religious institute are therefore confronted with the issue of reincarnating their charism again and again along the path of history. In this process, therefore, it is necessary to avoid the twofold temptation of copying the Founder, who has lived in a very different historical context, and of using the Founder to advance personal ideas under his legitimizing authority. The

¹ For information and a summary description of today's migrants and refugees, cf. *Migration, Population Growth and Development. Population Reports*, Series M, n.7 (September-October 1983). Baltimore: The John Hopkins University, Population Information Program. The periodical publications of the Scalabrinian Centers for Migration Studies offer continuous up-dating on migration flows, cf., for example, *Dossier Europa Emigrazione*, VII, 9 (September 1982), 10 (October 1982).

² "Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life" (*Perfectae Caritatis*), n.2, p. 468, in W.M. Abbott, ed. *The Documents of Vatican 4*. New York: Corpus Books, 1966.

distinction becomes also necessary between the spirituality of the Founder, his personal charism, and his charism as Founder.

- a) **The spirituality of a founder** or of a group of persons is the characteristic outlook and the totality of ways through which one receives and answers the Word of God. It is the unifying form of faith and of the expressions that manifest it and implement it in the exercise of piety and of life practically lived. God directs himself to man in many ways: in revelation, in creation, in the signs of the times. This complex "word" gives life to a variety of answers like St. Bruno's flight from the world and St. Francis' Canticle to Brother Sun, the social apostolic commitment for the poor of St. Vincent de Paul and that for the youth of St. John Bosco. A founder is conditioned by the environment and its spiritual trends by his inclinations and by his temperament. The homilies of Bishop Scalabrini, for example, and his understanding of faith and fatherland reflect the Italian mentality and that of the Lombard clergy at the end of the XIX century.
- b) It is not possible to reproduce the religious sensibility of the past nor **the personal charism of a Founder**, his strictly personal devotional and penitential expressions in the context of his historical environment. The Lord marks every person with a name of his own, inimitable. Besides, *Perfectae Caritatis* invites to open up to the spiritual trends of today: biblical spirituality, liturgy, missionary spirit as inculturation of the Gospel message of evangelization transcending Western civilization. In our case, the work of discernment and of historical research must end up in the identification of Scalabrini's charism as founder. Many people and organizations were concerned with migrants in 1886--1887. What is it typical of Bishop Scalabrini? What is the platform that supports his various types of pastoral action?
- c) Part of Scalabrini's personal charism, his **charism as founder**, has been communicated under the impulse of the Spirit to his missionaries in the founding of the Congregation. We find this charism in the written documentation regarding the beginnings of the Scalabrinian groups:
 - * letters, pamphlets, interviews and memoranda in which the project and the developments of the Congregation are discussed and made known. There we can grasp the motives that justify the choice and the type of missionary group wanted;
 - * the rules, that gather the essential of the founder's intuition, and that in their evolution reveal the progressive maturing of the founding project;
 - * the documents of ecclesiastical approval of the Scalabrinian institute. They authenticate the ecclesial nature of the founder's charism.

In a parallel with Jesus' experience, who "began to do and to teach" (*coepit facere et docere*), the founder makes known his charism in the action undertaken, in the method he used, and in the initiatives brought to completion. This is an alternative, experimental way, to understand the charism as founder of Bishop Scalabrini.

Reference to the existential situation, however, demands a further distinction. The Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles is rooted in the charism of its founding (a Congregation of Missionaries for Migrants) and not in a generic way in the charism of Bishop Scalabrini founder of other institutes like the Sisters for the Deaf and Dumb, and of other Catholic movements like the St. Raphael Society for the work for the rice-pickers, even though this apostolic wealth,

together with his extraordinary spiritual dimension, constitute the indispensable context within which the specific charism of foundation is understandable.

To approach Scalabrini's action on behalf of migrants implies a unique form of participation for his followers. In *Hasidic Stories*, Martin Buber writes about his grandfather, who lived poor and paralyzed in a small Russian village. Once he was requested to narrate a story in front of his master. Grandfather told how his teacher, the saintly Baals hem, had the habit of dancing when praying. "My grandfather was narrating totally taken up by his story", Buber continues. "He could not refrain from showing -- by jumping and dancing himself --how his teacher was doing." In that very moment, he was healed.

To tell a story -- by showing through imitation -- is the healing also of religious institutes today.

The history, however, of Scalabrini's pastoral interventions, through which we can understand his spirit, must be placed in the framework of the concrete and original method through which he was acting.

2. Action at the Service of Migrants

a) **The pastoral method of Bishop Scalabrini.** The equilibrium of inaction and lack of commitment to either liberals or conservatives, transigents or intransigents, was not Scalabrini's choice. Instead, he took a stand in favor of reconciliation between the Pope and the Italian Government, of the clergy involvement even outside the sacristy, of progress in laws and social and educational programs. By fully accepting his responsibilities as Bishop, he was proceeding without parochialisms "pushed by an audacious spirit of initiative toward the realization of extra-diocesan work of national and international impact". At the sign of concreteness, "with the characteristic style of a Lombard captain of industry",³ he combined knowledge and action in a method of pastoral intervention that was effective and well-articulated.

(1) **Experience** dictates the criteria of intervention. Two essential components of the experience from which Scalabrini starts are his person, that looks at reality with a vision of faith, and his neighbors who require help because of the marginality they suffer and the spiritual and material needs they feel. The interest for the emigrants is born of the experience of their dramatic conditions that he had already sensed in the parish of St. Abbondio in Como (1870-76) and in the first pastoral visitation to the diocese of Piacenza (1876), when he discovered that 28,000 faithful were abroad. The encounter with emigrants shakes and moves:

In Milan a few years ago, I witnessed a scene that left me with a sense of profound sadness. As I walked through the station, I saw the vast waiting room, the porticoes at the side, and the adjacent piazza filled with three or four hundred individuals, poorly dressed and separated into various groups. Their faces, bronzed by the sun and marked with the premature wrinkles drawn by privation, reflected the emotional turmoil agitating their hearts at that moment. There were old men, bent with age and labor, young men in the flower of manhood, women leading or carrying their little ones, boys and girls, all united in a single thought, all heading to a common goal.

They were emigrants. They belonged to the various provinces of northern Italy, and they were waiting with trepidation for the train that would take them to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea

³ Franco Molinari, "Il movimento cattolico a Piacenza sotto il Vescovo Scalabrini (1876-1905)", *Bollettino Storico Piacentino*, (settembre-dicembre, 1967), 4-27 - for an analysis of Scalabrini's method, cf., J. Holland and P. Henriot, S.J., *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*. Washington, D.C.: Center of Concern, 1980

from where they would embark for the far-off Americas where they hoped to find less hostile fortune, a land less unresponsive to their labors... I left there deeply moved, a host of melancholy thoughts pressed on my heart. Who knows what accumulation of misfortunes and privations seem sweet to them, I thought.... how many disappointments, how many new sufferings is an uncertain future preparing for them? How many will emerge victorious in the struggle for existence? How many will die amid the turmoil in the cities or the silence of some uninhabited plain? How many, though they find bread for their bodies, will have no bread for their souls....

Ever since that day, my thoughts have often turned to those unfortunate people, and that scene always reminds me of another, no less desperate, which I have not seen but which it is possible to glimpse in the letters from friends, in the reports of travelers...

The impact brought about by experience leads to the question: "Faced with this lamentable situation", Scalabrini continues, "I have often asked myself: how can it be remedied? ..."⁴

It was not a question of literary tricks for consumption by mass media. Reporting in 1891, the excellent Milanese newspaper, *Lega Lombarda*, writes:

It is a strange and often repeated coincidence that every time we have occasion of dealing with the work of Bishop Scalabrini for the migrants, an emigration scene always happens to be at hand. It is well known that the same day on which the Bishop of Piacenza came to Milan to give a conference, he met with a large mass of emigrants. Today when we are reporting about the departure in a few days of missionaries of the Institute Christopher Columbus, the reporter describes for us a moving little scene of emigration at our central railroad station.

In fact, yesterday morning with the first train from Vaprio have arrived in our city many peasants from Villa Fornaci and nearby villages accompanied by their families and directed to Genoa where they will embark for South America. During the trip those unfortunate were once in a while singing a song for the occasion. One could sense, however, that it was a song they were chanting with a lump in their throat.

The passengers in the other wagons of the train could not refrain from expressing their deeply felt compassion at the sight of those poor peasants forced by their hard economic condition to expatriate to far-off regions where, perhaps, for many of them life will not be less hard or less miserable than that led up to now in their village. Let's hope they will find at least those comforts that Christian charity is planning to provide them.⁵

In the "Project for an Association to Provide for the Spiritual Needs of Italian Immigrants in the Americas"⁶ (1887), we find again the testimony of the impact of experience:

When I became a bishop, I came to know even more the most serious evil of emigration during the pastoral visitations. In the diocesan synod that I held in 1879, I issued an explicit decree whose observance, as I noticed during the second visitation, is producing not few spiritual fruits.⁷

After all, Father Zaboglio himself had prompted Scalabrini to action under the stimulus of his own experience with migrants when he visited his family in Wisconsin. He wrote in 1886:

⁴ Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, *L'emigrazione italiana in America*. Piacenza, 1887. Pp. 3-5.

⁵ "Partenza di missionari per l'America", *L'Amico del Popolo* (Piacenza), Wednesday, September 2, 1891.

⁶ Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, 1887. As cited in M. Francesconi. *Inizi della Congregazione Scalabriniana (1886-1888)*. Rome: Centro Studi Emigrazione, 1969.

⁷ Ibid. P. 30.

Your Excellency will forgive me if with the true filial confidence, I have expressed in writing, as I did by voice, the sentiments that for a long time have been in the depth of my heart and that have always filled me with deep sadness since the time when I had the occasion of seeing and touching with my own hands so many miseries.

Fr. Zaboglio added that he would not be at peace until "a vast system of assistance" was established. In the meantime, he placed his own life and energy at the service of the migrants in the hope that Bishop Scalabrini would take the leadership in organizing some help for them.⁸

The increase in emigration is another sign that leads Bishop Scalabrini to act and he proposed a fusion of his initial project of assistance to migrants with that started at the end of 1886 in Florence by the National Association for Assistance to Italian Missionaries. He wrote in February 1887 to Professor Ernesto Schiaparelli:

As you know, emigration is unfortunately increasing in Italy every day. To speak only of the emigrants to America, while in 1881, they reached the number, that at the time seemed huge, of 28,117, in 1885 the number mounted to 83, 786 with 15, 642 children. In view of such a deplorable state of affairs, last year I addressed myself to His Eminence Cardinal Simeoni, Prefect of Propaganda, begging him to provide in some way to the religious future of so many hundreds of thousands of our compatriots.

Only yesterday I received from him a reply. The reply has been, as I should have expected, worthy of an apostolic heart, all zeal for the souls of his own brothers. In the name of the Holy Father, however, he gives me the task of drafting a project in this regard. I would like, therefore, to talk with you to see if it were possible to combine together the two projects so that one could serve as support and help of the other.⁹

The pastoral visitations made to the migrants in the United States and in Brazil in 1901 and in 1904 witnessed the same preoccupation of starting from reality. The *Progresso Italo-Americano* reported at the conclusion of Scalabrini's visit to the United States:

He came to America to see with his own eyes and to touch with his own hands. He leaves today for Italy, after three months of meticulous, investigative study...satisfied that he can, with very great trust, hope in the fortunate future of all of us.¹⁰

Had the migrants been seen as too disturbing, too demanding, unprepared or ignorant, irresponsible or rebellious, the Scalabrinian Congregation would not have been born. On the other hand, direct contact with the migrants, uprooted and exploited, opened the heart to a Christian response.

(2) **The analysis** of the causes and of the social and religious consequences of emigration led Scalabrini to face the experience that moved him. He avoided superficial rhetoric and adventurous initiatives and proceeded in the humble search of the truth of the situation. He built up sure knowledge of the migration fact to be credible in legislative debates and in his proposals for assistance. In 1901, *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* wrote:

⁸ Ibid. Pp. 13-14

⁹ Archives of the Associazione Nazionale per Soccorrere Missionari Italiani e Scalabriniani.

¹⁰ *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* (New York), 12 Novembre 1901, p. 1.

Bishop Scalabrini, who is a person of intelligence and shrewdness, who studies with an open mind every new and beautiful modern idea, did not stop at his own personal impressions ...he undertook a survey on his only area of concern, Italian emigration. He has carried out interviews from President Roosevelt down to bishops, authorities, foreign citizens, and compatriots.¹¹

Already in 1886 Scalabrini was collecting the information he needed from personal conversations with Father Zaboglio, from letters of migrants, from newspaper clippings on emigration,, and was carefully evaluating it. He wanted a diversification of sources. In 1887, he wrote to Cardinal Simeoni:

I am thinking of publishing a pamphlet...if you could have sent to me the reports of the American Bishops on the conditions of the Italian immigrants...¹²

In 1888 in his open letter to Senator Paolo Carcano on an immigration law project, Scalabrini observed:

From the day when I published my work on *Italian Immigration in America*, I have been able to collect data and make some observations that can turn out to be of some use to many of our unfortunate compatriots, ... and if I have made a mistake in evaluating them and if I have done a useless work, for you and for all people of good will, "the long study and the great love be my excuse".¹³

To the *New York Daily Tribune* (August 4, 1901), he restated his position:

It is my purpose to learn as much as I can on the conditions of the Italians in this country so that I may more intelligently direct the affairs of the missions from Italy.

In addition to his personal research, Bishop Scalabrini encouraged the systematic study of immigration and involved in it the famous sociologist Giuseppe Toniolo who, in his own writings, would have dealt many times with this issue. From the correspondence between Bishop Scalabrini, Toniolo, Volpe-Landi, and Cesare Sardi emerges a successful process of sensibilization. Without knowing him personally yet, Toniolo wrote to Scalabrini on February 5, 1889:

Since the beginning of this most opportune activity in favor of the migrants, I have been a natural admirer, favored in this feeling by my studies in my capacity as professor of social economics in this university. Thus, I find myself to experience every day the importance, even the urgency, of a doctrinal and practical movement of good and learned Catholics in the field of social life.¹⁴

Scalabrini answered:

...even without knowing each other personally, our souls already understand and love each other ... your idea of promoting an association of social studies among lay people under the direction and the approval of the episcopate could not be holier nor healthier nor more opportune. I wish that it may soon be implemented and find strong support on the part of all persons who truly love our country. As you might have known from the Honorable Marquis Volpe-Landi, the Society of

¹¹ Ibid, P. 1.

¹² Scalabrini to Cardinal Simeoni, Piacenza, February 16, 1887, in Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, *Scritti*, P. 5.

¹³ G.B. Scalabrini *Il disegno di legge sulla emigrazione italiana: Osservazioni Proposte*. Piacenza, 1888, Pp. 6-7, cf. *Scritti*, I, Pp. 141-42.

¹⁴ Giuseppe Toniolo. *Opera Omnia*, Serie VI, Epistolario, vol. I, (1871-1895). Città del Vaticano: 1952, P. 124.

Assistance to Migrants is already established. Now the laity will have to understand all its importance and support it and to this effect, it will be very useful, I hope, the association you have projected.¹⁵

The association mentioned was to the Committee for Studies and Social Works of Lucca, established with the intention of promoting and helping all the institutions based on a Christian economy and sociology and seen as the source of religious and civic renewal in those days. In these terms Sardi was writing to Volpe-Landi. He added also that Toniolo was the soul of this Committee that later on became the Catholic Union for Social Studies in Italy:

I wrote Toniolo about the letter you sent me and I encouraged him to come to Lucca, take into account this topic of immigration, and study the way of linking it and grafting it in the work of the Committee we have constituted with the general purpose of directing toward the concept of social welfare the moral and economic activity of Catholics.¹⁶

In fact, the by-laws of the Association for Assistance to Migrants written by Scalabrini were modified and edited by Toniolo who shaped them up with a clear religious priority.

Then the analysis of the social context of emigration led to some new insights. Volpe-Landi, faithful interpreter of Scalabrini's thought, wrote to Toniolo:

I share everything that you so nobly wrote me regarding the opportunity for Italian Catholics, with their bishops at the head, to take the direction of studies and action in the social field by placing themselves at a head of a movement that, at present, is acquiring a very great importance. The necessity of this movement is deeply felt by everyone, even as a practical and effective means to prepare the removal of the fatal conflict (the Roman question) also in political relations. And it is rightly under this particular point of view principally that Bishop Scalabrini has undertaken the solution of the most serious problem of emigration. Will we succeed? Let's hope so. With the help of God and the concurrence of studious, intelligent, and strong-willed Catholics.¹⁷

Through a keen analysis of the social and historical situation within which he lived, Scalabrini implemented in an original way, and as an important protagonist, the goals of the Catholic movement to incarnate religious values in Italian public life through commitment to social action.

(3) **The theological reflection** that followed Bishop Scalabrini's experience and analysis of reality was the indispensable illumination of faith coming from the Word of God, tradition, and the social teaching of the Church that right then was given a new impulse with the publication of *Rerum Novarum*, of Leo XIII, the Pope who approved Scalabrini's foundation.

The light of faith determines the direction of action, particularly in the priorities chosen and incorporated by Scalabrini in his initiative as Founder, the specific focus that concerns us for the historical continuity of the charism of the Scalabrinian Congregation.

The person as subject of rights finds a prominent place. In the first pamphlet, *Italian Emigration to America* (1887), Bishop Scalabrini justifies his intervention by the fact that the

¹⁵ G.B. Scalabrini. *Scritti*, I, P. 237.

¹⁶ Cesare Sardi to G.B. Volpe-Landi, Lucca, March 4, 1889.

¹⁷ G.B. Volpe-Landi to G. Toniolo, Rimini, March 20, 1889.

migrants are victims of abuses of power, are exploited, live like animals, are considered and treated like slaves by merchants of human flesh, are lynched because of prejudice, lack religious assistance. Since fundamental rights are denied to the migrants, Scalabrini asks on their behalf for "the attention of the Italian clergy, the Catholic laity, and of all the persons of good will. Charity, true truce of God, does not know partisan sides."¹⁸

On the other hand, addressing Propaganda Fide, Scalabrini shifts the emphasis and underlines more the state of religious abandonment of the immigrants, as he indicates in the "Plan for an Association to Provide for the Spiritual Needs of Italians Emigrated to the Americas" (1887). Evangelization is a parallel and inseparable argument for the pastoral care of migrants. On June 13, 1887, Scalabrini wrote to Leo XIII that he had prepared his pamphlet on migration "also to better dispose the minds in favor of the evangelization plan" submitted to Propaganda Fide.¹⁹ The evangelization of migrants had the twofold purpose of preserving the faith and of building a new, more brotherly society. The scope of the Congregation, state the 1895 Rules, "is keeping alive the Catholic faith in the hearts of our emigrated compatriots, and procuring, as far as possible, their moral, civil and economic welfare". (1,2). The theme of the preservation of the faith appears in all the writings of Scalabrini that touch on the emigration question.

Then, from the optimism of his vision of faith, Scalabrini was looking at the future of transatlantic permanent migrations with the conviction that they could bring about and anticipate the ideal Christian society where, in the pluralism of nationalities and tongues, religious and political unity would eliminate every barrier and conflict. Two well-known speeches to the Catholic Club of New York (1901) and to various authorities and people in Brazil (1904) document the enthusiasm of Scalabrini who believed in the mysterious work of Providence in history.²⁰

Human rights and evangelization were not separate and much less antagonistic fields in the theology of Bishop Scalabrini. He considered the human person in its historical condition and without artificial dualisms. In a letter to Sen. Alessandro Rossi of Schio, G.B. Volpe-Landi wrote:

Bishop Scalabrini and our Committee count a lot on you... For us in Italy, the emigration problem truly calls attention from a religious, political, social and economic point of view. The project undertaken is great and such to perhaps dishearten also the most courageous; but without doubt the goal is noble and generous. For this we ask support, acceptance and cooperation from all those who, to the love for religion and country, join the love for the working classes ...²¹

It was a process of liberation of the whole man for which all modern means were useful. By highlighting the necessity to make the public aware of "the great spiritual need in which the Italian immigrants in America found themselves and of the urgency to provide", Scalabrini saw the crucial role of the press as a tool for implementing emancipation:

¹⁸ G.B. Scalabrini, *L'emigrazione italiana in America*. Piacenza, 1877, P. 6.

¹⁹ M. Francesconi, *Inizi della Congregazione Scalabriniana*, op.cit., P. 34.

²⁰ G.B. Scalabrini. *Scritti*, II, 232-36; 323; 337-38.

²¹ G.B. Volpe-Landi to Alessandro Rossi, Piacenza, May 3, 1889.

If others think to facilitate, - and will no doubt facilitate, the achievement of their goal, i.e., the liberation of a people (Ireland) from political domination by means of the press, why will the press not serve to facilitate the liberation of our compatriots from an immensely more dangerous slavery?²²

Scalabrini's social theology was substantially directed toward the building of a society where "eliminated every distinction of class or party", might shine "beautiful of Christian splendor the sentence: *home homini frater*".²³ It was not by chance that, as key for the interpretation of his first writing on emigration, on the title page he quoted the verses of Manzoni: "All made in the semblance of only One.:. All children of the same ransom...In whatever time, in whatever land...We spend our life...We are brothers..." Political, social and religious action was channeled toward this ultimate end so that the problems of assistance to the deaf and dumb, the rice-pickers, the migrants, and the poor had to be faced and resolved as a logical consequence of theological convictions. It is not surprising, therefore, that Scalabrini wrote in a minute of a letter where he was offering his support and concrete cooperation for the cause of the blind: "All that concerns even the material welfare only of individuals and families is not foreign to the sacred ministry of the Catholic priest."²⁴

(4) Experience analyzed and enlightened by faith provokes and requires an adequate answer. **Pastoral planning** was the next step adopted by Scalabrini to clarify in a progressive way the type of intervention demanded by historical circumstances for an effective pastoral praxis. At first, the plan of action was tentative: a Pious Association of priests with a temporary oath to give spiritual assistance to migrants; some Committees of lay persons for assistance at the ports; the request for financial support from the National Association to Assist Italian Missionaries; the foundation of an Italian seminary in America; circular letters to the Bishops of Italy and of the Americas. Then, the outline of the main structures for the care of migrants came to light: the men and women missionaries of St. Charles, as religious personnel; the Society of St. Raphael, with lay personnel; a Commission or Congregation of the Holy See "Pro Emigratis Catholicis", as a universal structure. In programming his action, Bishop Scalabrini became the catalyst of all Catholic forces interested in the emigration phenomenon through a creative convergence of personalities and movements.

There is a crisscrossing of correspondence and meetings between 1886 and 1905 that shows a style open to sharing and joint work. Even though not always successful, Scalabrini's pastoral planning was developed on the basic principle that the people to be served take precedence over the instruments used to do it.

On the roads of the migrants walk together Scalabrini and Bonomelli, Cabrini with her Sisters of the Sacred Heart, Cahensly with his Saint Raphael Society, Toniolo with his Catholic Union for Social Studies, Schiaparelli with his National Association to Assist Italian Missionaries.

²² M. Francesconi, *Inizi della Congregazione Scalabriniana*, op.cit., P. 31.

²³ G.B. Scalabrini, *L'emigrazione italiana in America*, op.cit., 69-70.

²⁴ Archivio Generale Congregazione Scalabriniana, Pos. 3625, 6 (1891?).

If on the one hand we have to admit some fragmentation in the Italian Catholic Movement's action on behalf of migrants, on the other, emerge Scalabrini's wide horizons. In writing to Count Sardi of Lucca, G.B. Volpe-Landi noted:

Our Central Committee has been constituted with some wide views (*larghezza di vedute*) as far as it concerns the members that make it up. This is in accord with the advice of Bishop Scalabrini, to obtain a wider and more effective support from everywhere to the work of assistance...It seems to me opportune to follow the same system in asking for and obtaining membership.²⁵

This "larghezza di vedute" or ample vision toward political and ideological currents favored a wider consensus and therefore a greater pastoral service in planning an answer to the problems of migrants.

As ideal stages along the same road, experience, analysis, theological reflection, and pastoral planning, end up in the pastoral action that implements brotherhood. Bishop Scalabrini was moving along the main road of the Church succinctly summed up in *Octogesima Adveniens* (n.4):

It is the duty of Christian Communities to analyze with objectivity the situation that is specific of their country, enlighten it with the immutable words of the Gospel and derive principles of reflection, norms of judgment, and directives for action from the social teaching of the Church.

b) Interventions Carried Out by Bishop Scalabrini in the Field of Emigration. In his style opened to cooperation with all who could help the cause of migrants, Bishop Scalabrini was active in history to influence its course, not to succumb to it. From his faith convictions he took initiatives directed to the growth of the entire person. For **human development** and the defense of the rights of the migrants, he founded the social assistance Association of St. Raphael by involving in it the laity first of all. The history of the mission at the port of Genova, of the New York St. Raphael's Society, of the Committees organized in the various Italian cities, has not yet been fully written up. The good carried out is, however, documented. The most original aspect remains probably the attempt at participating and actively sustaining the first international social assistance voluntary agency for migrants, the St. Raphael's Society for European Emigrants, started by Peter Paul Cahensly in Germany and developed afterward in Italy, Belgium, Austria, and other countries like the U.S.

Notwithstanding the difficulties existing in Italy because of the conflict with the Holy See after the fall of Rome in 1869, Bishop Scalabrini followed emigration legislation with proposals, writings, public talks, and personal contacts. The clearest example remains his involvement for the enactment of the 1901 law. Already in September 1898, he had participated as a leader in a series of conferences and discussions held in Turin on the occasion of the Italian General Exposition. Present were various senators, missionaries, Schiaparelli, and others, like Luigi Einaudi (future President of Italy), who served as secretary of the group. They all supported the law proposed by the Minister Visconti-Venosta against emigration agents and for the protection of the emigrants.²⁶

²⁵ G.B. Volpe-Landi to Cesare Sardi, Piacenza, June 18, 1889.

²⁶ Esposizione Generale Italiana. Esposizione delle Missioni. *Gli Italiani all Estero: Emigrazione, Commerci, Missioni*. Torino: Tipografie Roux, Fossati & Co., 1899.

Formation of public opinion was a constant concern of Bishop Scalabrini's action: he valued it and considered it necessary for the defense of the immigrants in contemporary society. The means utilized were public conferences in various cities, monographs, direct political contacts, interviews to the press. Volpe-Landi wrote in an 1890 letter:

Our project advances. Bishop Scalabrini has held public conferences on January 29, in Genoa, on February 8, in Rome, to make known the needs of Italian emigrants and the nature, character, purpose of his Congregation of Missionaries and of our Association of Assistance. Such conferences, in which participated journalists, deputies, government functionaries, etc., had great success. Other conferences will be held shortly in Florence and Turin. As a follow-up were established in Rome and will be constituted in these last two cities working Committees. If in this way we could obtain also enough financial contributions, that have been missing so far, we will no doubt be able to support even those who, like yourself, carry out such a worthy service of religious and civil assistance for our emigrants.²⁷

In Bishop Scalabrini's biography is evident his political cleverness. The network of political connections extended from his friend Senator Paolo Carcano to the Minister Visconti-Venosta, from the Emigration Commissioner Bodio to the director of the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. He did not refuse to write to the King in 1893 to present him with his emigration publications and to ask support for the institutions he had established "with an eminently patriotic purpose and without doubt of national interest".²⁸

At the White House he spoke with President Theodore Roosevelt in defense of Italian immigrants. In his international trips and in Italy, he did not miss any occasion to use the press, as the volume *Trent'anni di Apostolato* amply documents. Because of this sensibility that was channeled to concrete works and interventions, the former Italian Prime Minister Francesco S. Nitti wrote to Bishop Scalabrini, asking the Bishop's advice, "corrections, additions, modifications to his volume on *Catholic Socialism*. "You, among Italian Bishops", added Nitti, "have studied longer than anyone else the most important social questions. It is because of this that I turn directly to you..."

In 1894, as soon as Nitti became director of the new journal, *La Riforma Sociale* (Social Reform), he wrote again to Bishop Scalabrini"

...I would be very grateful if you could prepare, for the first issue of my review, an article on *Italian Catholics and the Social Question*. Italian Catholics are sluggish and indolent. You with your word can do much good and determine a whole new movement.²⁹

For **evangelization**, the founding of the Missionary priests and sisters of St. Charles represents the most original and lasting ecclesial contribution of Bishop Scalabrini. The history of the beginnings and development of these two religious congregations witnesses his pastoral

²⁷ G.B. Volpe-Landi to Canon Peracchia, Piacenza, February 23, 1890.

²⁸ G.B. Scalabrini to the King of Italy, Piacenza, November 14, 1893. AGCS, 3025/2. It should be kept in mind that a bitter and formal break existed there between Italy and the Vatican.

²⁹ Saverio Francesco Nitti to G.B. Scalabrini, Correspondence, AGCS, 3025/ 22. *Le Riforme Sociali* was the continuation of the journal *Rassegne di scienze sociali e politiche* of the Marquis Ridolfi.

solicitude and missionary spirituality.³⁰ Wrote Bishop Scalabrini to Cincinnati Archbishop William H. Elder in 1883:

Nothing is closer to my heart than the spiritual welfare of the Italians who emigrate abroad. To this end are directed all my efforts in founding the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles to help the Bishops in whose dioceses our Italians reside...³¹

Some years later in the conference he gave at the Catholic Congress of Ferrara in 1899, he said on the topic, *The Emigration of Italian Workers*:

The Church of Jesus Christ, that has launched evangelical workers among the most barbarian nations...has not forgotten and will never forget the mission entrusted to her by God to evangelize the children of poverty and labor. She will always look with an anxious heart to so many poor souls that, in forced isolation, are losing the faith of their forefathers...

The newness of the charism Scalabrini impressed on his missionaries is the religious priority of their ministry through a community apostolate. Toward the end of 1897, he wrote to Father Giacomo Gambera, "The Missionaries...by observing the Rules, love each other and form a real religious body." Collective witness would give continuity and guarantee personal selflessness.

Bishop Scalabrini, however, engaged also other priests called adjunct missionaries (*missionari esterni*). The Piacenza newspaper *L'Amico del Popolo* of April 3, 1889, under the title, "Departure of a Missionary", reported:

Last Monday left our city the Rev. Amelio Stocchi of Bergamo, who today will sail from Genoa in the ship Duchessa di Galliera to accompany the 800 emigrants who embarked on that same steamer directed to Brazil and Argentina. On the 14th, another priest will sail for the same purpose on a ship that will take to America 1,200 voluntary exiles from Italy. These remarkable ecclesiastics belong to the association of the Missionaries of the Christopher Columbus Institute and are called *adjunct missionaries* because, without being bound by any special ties, volunteer to accompany the emigrants during the crossing. They offer them with intelligent love their assistance and the services of their sacred ministry according to the faculties granted them by Bishop Scalabrini in his capacity as special Apostolic Delegate of the Holy See.

The intensity of Scalabrini's preaching and administration of sacraments in the pastoral visitations to the immigrants in the United States (1901) and Brazil (1904) show once again the dominant role of evangelization, always in a context of defense of the human rights, the culture, and the work of the migrants. In Scalabrini's action there is continuity between human development and evangelization, both linked together by the same impulse: the building up of the Kingdom. In the Middle Ages, the continuity between philosophy and theology was represented by the ray of light that is not broken in its path. Today, the method of Bishop Scalabrini shows us a new continuity of the faith commitment with the implementation of justice.

³⁰ The history, reasons for the founding and the goal of "sanctifying action" of these two Scalabrinian Congregations, is widely documented: M. Francesconi *Storia della Congregazione Scalabriniana*, I-VI; F. Gregori, *La vita e l'opera di un grande Vescovo*. Torino, 1934; M. Caliaro-M. Francesconi. *John Baptist Scalabrini, Apostle to the Immigrants*. New York; Center for Migration Studies, 1977.

³¹ G.B. Scalabrini to William H. Elder, Piacenza, June 21, 1893.

c) **Proposed Interventions Left Incomplete** on an emigration bill introduced in the Italian Parliament, Bishop Scalabrini observed:

Those proposals were applauded at the time, but not enacted. We know it: the progress of ideas is exasperatingly slow, especially when they clash with interests and passions, but it is constant when the ideas proposed are just and really useful.³²

In the clash with few financial resources, limited and unprepared personnel, the lack of sufficient political consensus in Church as society, Scalabrini's creativity met with difficult obstacles that blocked or delayed for many years some of his pastoral interventions he saw urgently needed for the migrants.

Flying missions and financial stability for the projects undertaken were aspirations often expressed by Scalabrini, but they had no follow-up. He wrote to the Apostolic Delegate in the U.S. in 1893:

Father Vicentini wrote me that it would be a desire of Your Excellency that a House of itinerant (*ambulanti*) missionaries be founded, who would have no other commitment but to run wherever there are settlements of Italians. This is an ancient desire of mine, a desire expressed to me also by the Holy Father, and I would have gladly implemented it if I had the means. If Your Excellency, with the large influence deservedly acquired, could come to my help, the establishment of such a house in a central place could be a true blessing. To obtain this most noble objective, it would suffice that the Holy Father grant what was already asked of Him. About fifty between archbishops and bishops and six Cardinals with diocese, while in Rome on the occasion of the Jubilee of the Holy Father, sent Him through Cardinal Bausa a letter in which they begged Him to impose an annual collection in all the Italian Churches to give a new impulse to the work of Italian missions abroad. All down there seemed favorable to the project, but so far, no positive sign. A word of Your Excellency to the Holy Father, now that you have met these poor priests and have direct experience of how much remains to be done, could help me very much. It is always, distinguished Monsignor, the issue of means that paralyzes everything.³³

Regarding the collection for the migrants, Scalabrini wrote to Cardinal Ledóchowski: "An annual collection has been decided for the liberation of black slaves; may God want that soon the same be done for the salvation of white slaves."³⁴

In Naples, Bishop Scalabrini would have wanted a mission for migrants as it was done at the port of Genoa. He wrote to Cardinal Jacobini who had recommended him a priest:

I had an idea. If instead of sending this priest to America, we could employ him for port missions here in Italy, for example, in Naples? There is no mission in that port. Something could be attempted with that most worthy Archbishop whom I know and whom I found very well-disposed lately for this project. From Naples also emigrants leave continuously *en masse* and a missionary who could be their counsellor, guide, teacher, could do much good.³⁵

³² G.B. Scalabrini. Report to Propaganda Fide, August 10, 1900.

³³ G.B. Scalabrini to Francesco Satolli, Piacenza, September 14, 1893. In G.B. Scalabrini, *Scritti*, II, P. 19.

³⁴ G.B. Scalabrini to Card. M. Ledóchowski, December 3, 1897. *Ibid.*, P. III.

³⁵ G.B. Scalabrini to Card. D. Jacobini, Piacenza, August 22, 1897. *Ibid.* P. 105.

In several letters to Father Zaboglio, the founding of a seminary on Staten Island, New York, is insisted upon. Scalabrini wrote:

You asked if Father Felice has done well to acquire the property on (Staten) Island. My immediate answer is that he has done very well and here is the reason. At the beginning of this month, I was thinking a lot on how to implement the idea cherished by the Holy Father of founding there an Italian-American College for the children of the immigrants that show a vocation to the ecclesiastical status. It would be for us a true providence. In such a college the clerics would take Latin and philosophy classes, and theology here in the motherhouse. It seems to me that the Lord really wants this project...³⁶

If the Scalabrinian Congregation had started a seminary in North America in 1891, its development would have probably been quite different. If, besides, the internationalization of the Congregation toward geographical areas and migrant groups of different cultures had come about during the lifetime of the Founder, the path of its history would have led to surprising turns. In April 1888, Bishop Scalabrini wrote to the Bishops of Belgium about the work entrusted to him by the Holy Father. The concern for the evangelization of all migrants is already obvious:

This project is called the Work for the Evangelization of Emigrants and it has the purpose of providing with priests (who speak their language), the numerous Europeans that go to colonize America, Africa, and Australia. Established last November by a special Brief of His Holiness, already more than sixty requests of admission have reached me from Italy and from abroad and I have not been able to respond for lack of means.³⁷

In a 1904 letter to St. Pius X from Brazil, Bishop Scalabrini presented a more articulated international vision grown out of his experience with immigrants in the Americas:

Now I take the liberty, Holy Father, to express an idea of mine. Your Holiness has put forward the sublime and fruitful program: *Instaurare omnia in Christo*. The Church then, that through the admirable institution of Propaganda Fide spends so much money and uses so many priests for the spreading of the faith among infidels, will not do something similar for the preservation of the faith among migrants? I speak of the migrants of all countries and of all Catholic regions: Italians, Germans, Spanish, Portuguese, Canadians, etc., etc. A special Congregation dedicated to this problem, the greatest of our century, would honor the Holy Apostolic See, would bring peoples closer to her, as to a loving mother, and would accomplish an immense good. Up there in the United States of the North, losses to Catholicism are in the millions, surely more numerous than the conversion of infidels made by our missions in three centuries, and appearances notwithstanding, they continue still. Protestantism works up there and works even here to pervert souls. A Congregation therefore that would establish relations with Bishops, from whom leave and to whom arrive Catholic migrants, and if it were not enough, with the respective government; that would study in all its facets the difficult and complex problem of emigration, taking advantage for this of old and modern studies; and that in the name of the Holy Father would impose opportune remedies, would be a blessing for the world and would suffice to make your Pontificate glorious.³⁸

³⁶ G.B. Scalabrini to Francesco Zaboglio, Piacenza, January 20, 1981. *Ibid.* I, P. 287.

³⁷ G.B. Scalabrini to a Bishop, Piacenza, April 1, 1888. AGCS, 2, 3 - This minute in French is the text of a circular letter directed to the Belgian bishops.

³⁸ G.B. Scalabrini to Pope Pius X, Sao Paulo (Brazil), July 22, 1904. *Scritti*, op.cit., II, 324-25.

The international office *Pro Emigratis Catholicis*, seminaries in immigration countries, the geographic and ethnic enlargement of the Congregation, the national collection for emigration works in some countries, all proposals advocated or foreseen by Bishop Scalabrini, were implemented many years after his death. The involvement of the laity in creating awareness and providing financial support for the cause of migrants through local committees on the model of those of the St. Raphael Society; missions like those intended for ports of departure and arrivals, remained insights only. Intermittently, ship chaplains for migrants, itinerant missions from centralized houses, conferences for the formation of public opinion, have been types of intervention used with profit for the migrants.

The variety and richness of the practical and pastorally effective interventions proposed and implemented by Bishop Scalabrini are a unique experience in the history of the Church. They confirm without exaggeration the evaluation of the great sociologist and Servant of God Giuseppe Toniolo:

I personally knew H. E. Bishop Scalabrini since the first steps of his initiative on behalf of our migrants. I consider this fortunate...that man had the insight of future events, proper of superior minds and great hearts, or rather of those, whom the Lord calls to become special and opportune instruments of His profound and merciful providential plans in the world."³⁹

II. THE FIRST MISSIONARIES OF BISHOP SCALABRINI: THE COMMUNAL ASPECT OF HIS CHARISM

A founder without followers and companions can do nothing. His founding charism has to mature and be accepted. The process entails understanding of the founder's changes, doubts and dreams about the institute envisioned and understanding as well of the followers' more earthy and more realistic implementation of the charism in daily life. Thus, by becoming communal, the founding charism is curtailed but also enriched by the personal charism of those who accept to give group witness with the founder. It would be enlightening to analyze the motives and the lives of Fr. Mantese and Fr. Molinari, the first two professed missionaries of St. Charles, and of Fr. Zaboglio, who prompted Bishop Scalabrini to organize a group of priests for the care of Italian migrants, and who most probably can be considered a cofounder of the Congregation. The first Scalabrinian missionaries are privileged witnesses, even though they left us few reflections on their vocation. Their letters echo internal disagreements, personal diatribes, selfish concern together with a strong attachment to the Founder and the cause of the migrants. The basic values and loyalties that prompted the first missionaries to give their lives at the service of poor immigrants can probably be best derived from their pastoral action. New initiatives emerged in response to the environment, the experience acquired in the daily contact with the needs of the migrants. In *Mutuae Relationes (11)* we read that the Founders' charism is an experience of the spirit, "transmitted to their own disciples to be lived by them, protected, deepened and constantly developed in unison with the Body of Christ in perennial growth... Therefore, in this work of cultural evolution and ecclesial renewal, it is necessary that the identity of every institute be preserved with such assurance as to avoid the danger of a situation not clearly defined, so that religious without due consideration to the particular style of action proper to their identity, be inserted in the life of the Church in a vague and ambiguous way." It is obvious that there is an

³⁹ Giuseppe Toniolo to Massimo Rinaldi, Pisa, November 1, 1911. AGCS, 3035/29.

identity that persists over time and over changed cultural conditions, and a continued evolution, like that of the child becoming a man, who is different, yet the same person.

In the Americas, the first missionaries of Bishop Scalabrini modified the pastoral programs of the Founder on the impact with the masses of immigrants. Community life never worked as prescribed in the original Rules. Pastoral action was very diversified at first. Between 1889 and 1900 in the United States and Brazil the history of the Congregation records the presence of Fr. Astorri among the stone cutters of Vermont, of Fr. Morelli and Fr. Parolin among the railroad workers in New York and New Jersey, of Fr. Consonni among the workers in the fazendas of the state of São Paulo, all of them following a similar model of "flying missions". Lack of resources notwithstanding, a Catholic newspaper for the immigrants was started by Fr. Morelli in New York in 1899, *L'Armonia*. Social assistance was a major component of the activity of the few early Scalabrinians. At the ports of Genova and New York, Frs. Maldotti, Bandini and Gambera worked out effective immigrant protection against exploitation and frauds through the port mission and the Labor Bureau Office and the St. Raphael Society. The Columbus Hospital started by Fr. Morelli was later on taken over by St. Frances Cabrini, a better administrator. Orphanages were opened in São Paulo and Newark. A handful of men and women, against great odds and with no assured financing, tried to meet the needs facing them. Parish churches and chapels were also built with a great desire for independence and the comfort of being in one's own community of language and culture. Schools were seen as less of a priority, but an attempt was made to provide them and have sisters to run them. The fervor of initiatives was accompanied by openness toward other ethnic groups. Bishop Scalabrini ordained a Polish priest for his Congregation during his visit to New York in 1901 and, perhaps responding to criticism from the Italian members of his institute, he publicly approved and encouraged the ministry of another zealous Polish missionary, Fr. Chmielinski, who built the parish of Our Lady of Czestochowa in South Boston, to serve Polish immigrants in the 1890's.

On October 12, 1889, *L'Amico del Popolo*, the Catholic newspaper of the diocese of Piacenza, published a letter from New York addressed to Fr. Roller. This letter sums up the elan and achievements of the first missionaries:

Very Reverend Father Superior, following the example of all well-organized missions, I send you a retrospective summary in the form of a synoptic table of all the little good done so far with the Lord's help.

We left Piacenza on July 13, 1888; landed on these shores on the 22; held the first service on August 5 in a store or warehouse that did not hold more than 500 persons. On September 10 we held a meeting to form a parish committee and at the same time to explore the ground.

The enthusiasm and the generosity were beyond belief, at the same time that we were fighting in New York to face an uncommon storm and Fr. Zaboglio was sustaining other fights of no less importance in Boston.

The novena of the Addolorata, that of the Rosary, that of the Saints, attracted so many people to *our church* that not even the one fifth could enter so that we had to provide another church twice as big. On December 21 we rented a second church paying Lire 1000 per month. On Christmas night it was blessed and the first service was held there. Useless to say that we had the consolation of seeing the church overflowing and half the people could not enter. Attendance kept always increasing and in all feast days we celebrated five masses in a church always full.

On January 1 six religious societies, established the previous December, were formally accepted. On February 2 *new missionaries* arrived who were of great comfort. Thus, during Holy Week all services could be held with dignity and extraordinary participation. On April 24 the rented church became our property through an appropriate deed at the cost of \$82,500 equivalent to Lire 412,200, and a third is paid. We hope to pay the rest in less than five years. On May 1 we started the flying missions (*missioni ambulanti*) in the countryside with great attendance everywhere. On May 26 the new church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was started. This church is now run by Fr. Annovazzi who makes it progress very well. In June Fr. Zaboglio left for New Orleans and prepared the ground for the founding of the new church, that now functions fairly well under the direction of Fr. Paroli, transferred from Boston. At the end of that month another meeting was held in New York and even there were established the foundations of a new church that comes along very well under the direction of Fr. Astorri. Now we feel the need to open a third (church) in New York, where there are 136 thousand Italians, and this also, *Deo adjuvante*, will soon be a fait accompli. Here is the result of our labor:

In about 15 months we have opened 8 churches with the respective houses; we took the direction of the Italian hospital in New York; we inaugurated the orphanage for Italian orphan children, and opened various schools attended by numerous pupils. Praised be the Lord. Everything proceeds well. We only lament the scarcity of personnel and our inability to meet all the needs. My missionaries are all inspired to do good. I assure you, Father Superior, had we other missionaries moved by the same spirit our mission would in a short time extend to all the United States and the Italians would very soon be freed of the inconvenience of mixed churches and would be provided with the moral and material assistance they totally lack...

This early phase of exuberance, not without conflicts and defections, was followed, however, by a second period of acquiescence and stabilization when the dominant pastoral strategy became, in the U.S., the national parish and, in Brazil, the "*capellania curada*" or a sort of personal parish with the same transitional purpose of service until the new language was learned.⁴⁰ The type of immigration to North and South America was more permanent and as such it influenced the pastoral choices of the Congregation and eased the transition from creativity to adaptation, as required by the second generation. The vision of the Congregation was no longer dominated by the original impulse of the Founder who had seen a great need and was led by the Spirit to answer in the light of the Gospel. The group of missionaries became more concerned with their welfare and status in society. I would hypothesize that the desire for social acceptance was correlated to the adoption of a life-style and pastoral action in line with that of the diocesan clergy. For all their shortcomings, however, the first missionaries of Bishop Scalabrini remained substantially faithful to his intuition: 1) of service to the immigrants as people in special need; 2) a service carried out by a corporate ministry.

⁴⁰ Cf. G. Rosoli, "Chiesa ed emigrati italiani in Brasile, 1880-1940", *Studi Emigrazione*, XIX (June, 1982), 225-251. An interesting document is the Decree of August 25, 1896, of D. Jose de Camargo Barros, bishop of Curitiba, stressing the temporary role of the "*capellania curada*". Both in Brazil and in the United States, the Holy See encouraged the use of language parishes for the pastoral care of immigrants. The transient and temporary character of this pastoral institution was also clear from the start, as Card. Ledóchowski had informed the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, "...an exceptional arrangement, which should cease, when the causes which provoked their erection ceased". (April 26, 1897).

III THE WAY TO THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

If a religious group perverts or forgets its charism, it loses its reason of being in the ecclesial community. Immediately after World War I, the Congregation risked disintegration and death because of lack of planning, internal strife and excessive individualism, a leadership without roots in theology and in the history of the community and concerned with only holding on in pastoral and personal positions 'conquered'. Since a critical history of the congregation is lacking, only tentative interpretations of its pastoral experience can be attempted.⁴¹ In the United States and Canada, the development of the Congregation after the first two moments of initial exuberance and of stabilization went through: first, a deep crisis in the early 1920s; then, a slow recovery since the reintroduction of the religious vows in 1934; finally, a reawakening to its charism in the post-Vatican II period that led to the rediscovery of the need of the migrants in the context of the Church concern for the poor and for social justice as an integral component of Christian faith. As an added consequence, the beginning of the internationalization of the Congregation took place since the needs of immigrants, not ethnicity, return to be the determining motive of pastoral choices.

The extent of the crisis can be summed up from archival notes of 1922 and 1923. In 1922, Fr. Vicentini confided to the Cardinal Prefect of the S. Consistorial Congregation: "I am counsellor (of the Superior General); but of what? We are called, rather, I am told, something when everything is done, and when it is necessary to remedy what has been badly done... It seems that more than a Congregation we are an agency to recruit (*assoldare*) priests and send them to America to make money and have more freedom. Evil is in the root..., i.e., the lack of religious vows."

The following year, the then Superior General Fr. Chenuil, of whom Fr. Vicentini was talking, went to the Prelate for Italian Emigration ready to sell the Congregation. He proposed: "Why couldn't the institute of Bishop Scalabrini become like the Opera Bonomelli? They (Scalabrinians) would keep the administration, we (Prelate) would form the priests that then the institute would send to America, where they would be at the absolute dependence of the Ordinaries."⁴² The corporate ministry had been completely discarded.

During the Fascist period, the Congregation in North America discovered ethnicity as nationalism and embarked in strengthening parochial structures. It could be useful to study the consequences of these choices for seminary formation and the understanding of the charism of the Congregation. The values that were recognized as important and socially acceptable within the Scalabrinian group were apparently connected with administration and ethnic identity rather than religious commitment and fidelity to the charism of service to the migrants.

Finally, in recent years, confronted with massive new immigration, the Congregation in North America returned to diversification of its ministries and to the Founder's original intuition that special need more than nationality should prompt an evangelical answer of service.

Pluralism of interventions in the field of migrations and internationalization are pastoral challenges still confronting the Congregation in North America. The question now is of where

⁴¹ The excellent *Storia della Congregazione Scalabriniana* by Fr. M. Francesconi provides the necessary documentation for a critical evaluation of the ups and downs and pastoral and internal choices of the Congregation.

⁴² Centro Studi Emigrazione, Roma. Archivio del Prelato per l'Emigrazione Italiana, Pos. 1255.

the community will go, on the road of renewal or on the road of death. Joan Chittister, O.S.B., observed: "More than 66 percent of the religious orders founded before the year 1800 have died. Either they could not see through the filter of the Gospel the new needs of the world around them or they could not bear the effort it would take to stoop down to deal with them or they did not, in the face of old responsibilities, old debts and old ideas, any more have the resources even to begin the shift."⁴³

At present, then, the pastoral action of the Congregation is at a turning point, because its life is at a turning point: *agere sequitur esse*. To be effective, it must find roots in the corporate religious life of the community and it must find vision in the pastoral method and missionary inspiration of its Founder. But in the dialectic concern between apostolic outreach (poorest immigrants, internationalization, new ministries) and group identity (stability, continuity with the past, needs of present members), the lesson of the Bible and Jesus is clear: the scale must tilt in favor of outreach. After all, memories are useless, unless they are reborn in a continued vision of service.⁴⁴

⁴³ Joan Chittister, O.S.B., "Religious orders must offer future vision, not memories". *The National Catholic Reporter*, November 25, 1983.

⁴⁴ D. Denior C. Stuhlmüller. *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983. Pp. 340-41.