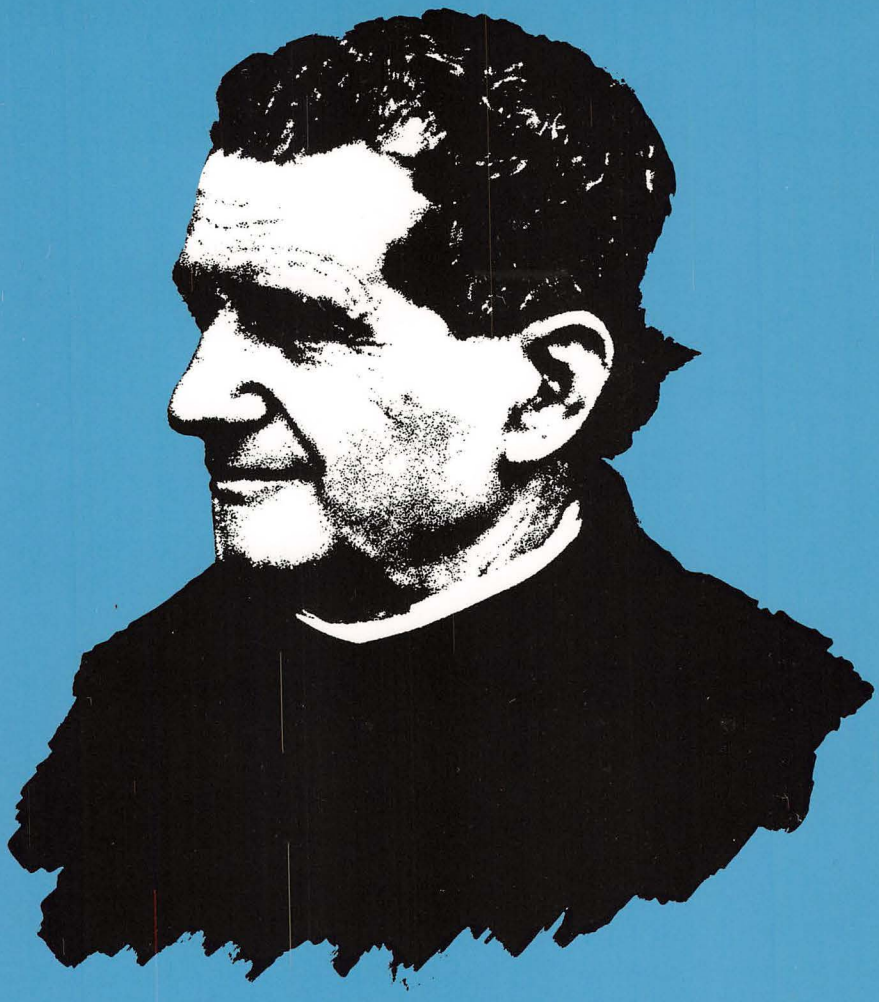


VOLUME XVIII - 1886-1888

THE BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS

of Saint John Bosco



FATHER EUGENIO CERIA

FATHER EUGENIO CERIA (1870-1957) already enjoyed the reputation of a distinguished scholar, author, and editor when in 1929 Father Philip Rinaldi, Superior General, asked him to continue the publication of the **Biographical Memoirs,** the monumental work begun by Father John Baptist Lemoyne. Father Ceria's qualifications had been enhanced by his personal contact with Don Bosco during his formative years as a novice and a student of Philosophy at San Benigno Canavese and Valsalice. **Don Bosco con Dio,** published in 1930 and now considered his masterpiece, is a penetrating and inspiring study of his spiritual father.

By systematic and persevering effort Father Ceria brought the **Biographical Memoirs** to completion in 1939, his contribution being Volumes XI-XIX. Other works followed. While compiling the **Annali della Società Salesiana** in four large volumes (1941-51), he published biographies of St. Mary Mazzarello, the Venerable Father Michael Rua, the Servants of God Father Andrew Beltrami and Father Philip Rinaldi, and many other outstanding Salesians. Though advanced in age, he undertook the collection and editing of the **Epistolario di S. Giovanni Bosco,** in four volumes, two of which were published before his death, which occurred on January 21, 1957 at the age of 86.

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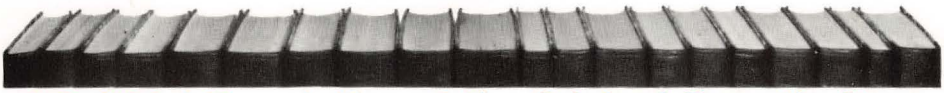
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THE

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS

OF

SAINT JOHN BOSCO

The
Biographical Memoirs
of
Saint John Bosco

by

Rev. Eugenio Ceria, S.D.B.

AN AMERICAN EDITION
TRANSLATED
FROM THE ORIGINAL ITALIAN

Volume XVIII

1886–1888

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Dedicated

WITH PROFOUND GRATITUDE

TO

THE LATE, LAMENTED, AND HIGHLY ESTEEMED

VERY REVEREND FELIX J. PENNA, S.D.B.

(1904–1962)

TO WHOSE

WISDOM, FORESIGHT, AND NOBLE SALESIAN HEART

THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

OF

THE BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS

OF

SAINT JOHN BOSCO

IS

A LASTING MONUMENT

This Volume Is Dedicated

to the memory of

Father Lawrence Chiabotto

(my first director, 1939;

and master of novices, 1942–1943)

Father Angelo Franco

and

Father Aeneas Tozzi

(my director in Newton, NJ;

1942–1952)

and

Father Ted Ciampi

With whom I lived some of the best

years of my life.

These men have touched the lives of
many Salesians. They have certainly touched
my life and helped me know Don Bosco,
love Don Bosco, and follow
Don Bosco.

With deep gratitude,

Fr. Vincent V. A. Zuliani, S.D.B.

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Introduction

Fr. Juan Vecchi, of happy memory, in his last publication (*Foundational Themes of Salesian Spirituality,* p. 32) states: "It is hard to understand Salesian spirituality and grow in it if we do not constantly get closer to its spring, its origin—namely, Don Bosco."

"We should pass from an attitude of simply telling a story about Don Bosco and lavishing praises on Don Bosco, to a deeper knowledge of Don Bosco."

"We need to place the deeds and sayings of Don Bosco in their proper context; we need to reflect once again on the meaning of the deeds and sayings of Don Bosco within our historical situation and culture."

The present volume of the *Biographical Memoirs* will certainly help all readers come to know more about the sayings and deeds of Don Bosco and, hopefully, be able to locate them in "today's historical situation and culture."

The readers will also come to know what Don Bosco meant by *Da mini animas, coetera tolle,"* since he wore himself out, even physically, up to his death, for the salvation of souls.

This volume is the end result of several people's work.

The commercial translation of many years ago was the groundwork for the revision made by two Salesian Sisters: Sr. Josephine Carini and Sr. Mary Ann Zito. They also put the entire revised version on the computer.

Fr. Michael Mendel, S.D.B., checked the Sisters' revised version.

I have checked and revised the previous revised versions against the Italian text to make sure that nothing was omitted or in anyway misinterpreted. The Appendix is entirely mine.

A debt of sincere gratitude goes to all of the above-mentioned people for their work; to Mrs. Jo Ann Donahue for her final computer work; and to Fr. Francisco Javier Aracil, S.D.B., the main editor.

Fr. Vincent Vincio Aldo Zuliani, S.D.B.
The final translator

Preface

(1886–1888)

With this eighteenth volume, *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco* come to an end. As we read his life story, three distinctly different periods are immediately evident to us. The years of his life prior to 1841 were devoted to his vocation and his preparation for the priesthood. Then came the stormy beginnings of his mission on behalf of youth, in which we find interwoven the slow development of the first seeds which were to constitute the Salesian Society, as well as its progressive affirmation and final establishment by papal approval of its Rules in 1874. The last fifteen years were dedicated to the consolidation and expansion of the work as a whole. Upon his death, Don Bosco was able to leave the work to his successor. It lacked nothing essential to its exuberant vitality or its perpetual fecundity.

Two more volumes will complete the number of books: One will trace the entire history of his glorification from the beginning of his cause for beatification and canonization (which one might say started immediately after his death) to the worldwide growth of the universality of his cult; and the other will be an analytical index to render research as easy as possible.

We have an immense store of information on Don Bosco and his work that, perhaps, has no parallel in hagiographic literature. It is disseminated through a number of lengthy volumes, eighteen to be exact. Such a vast amount of detailed information may seem superfluous from a literary standpoint, but it will nevertheless offer a precious and most beneficial source of abundant information to the Salesian Family, which is eager to know even the smallest details concerning the life and deeds of their Father. To Don Bosco's sons and daughters, his *Biographical Memoirs* will, in all ages, constitute a family treasure of inestimable value.

Outsiders may wonder and even feel skeptical in the presence of this enormous quantity of biographical data. However, this accumulation of data came about in the most natural way. Don Bosco did not live an isolated life within his spiritual family. His activities were not carried out behind closed doors. He lived habitually side-by-side with both the boys and the Salesians, going about his business in full view of everyone, reporting to them on his undertakings, granting interviews to all with the utmost frequency and easy

familiarity.[1] He had countless and the best of relationships with outsiders far and near, with people of all kinds of social status. He granted them audiences, he called on them personally, doing good to their body and mind as well; he shared with them his own plans, told them about his undertakings and asked for their help. It was therefore only logical that a large number of people were informed of his sayings and deeds, and were in possession of things he had written, so that it was no great effort to gather much detailed information. The work of the historian was facilitated further by the aura of veneration that surrounded this man of God from the very beginning. This is the reason why there were some in his houses who took note of all he said and did, while others outside his houses treasured his letters, retaining indelible memories of their contacts with him.

Furthermore, he himself bequeathed some important pages dealing with important moments of his life to his sons on an order received from above. When Father John Bonetti undertook to publish the history of the first twenty-five years of the Oratory in the *Bulletin*, Don Bosco checked every installment, or had Father Rua do it if he happened to be absent.[2] Finally, the informative process for the cause of his beatification and canonization brought a host of eminently reliable first-hand witnesses before the ecclesiastical tribunal of Turin. Their recorded testimony filled many reams of paper. Rarely has a biographer had the good fortune to depend on such an abundant and clear source of information on so recent and so thoroughly reliable data.

[1] Who knows in the course of time how many people will find it hard to believe that a man like Don Bosco maintained friendly relations with the boys and even confided incidents of his personal life to them. No one will ever be able to understand Don Bosco unless they are able to picture him as a father among his children. One elderly Salesian recalls hearing a story from Don Bosco's own lips, while he and several of his companions were gathered around their father as he strolled in the Oratory playground. He no longer recalls what gave rise to this incident, but the story he heard is vividly impressed on his mind. Shortly before midday one morning in France, Don Bosco was on his way to dinner with a family who had invited him. On the way there he recalled that he had also promised to dine with some other people at two o'clock. Quite unperturbed, the one who accompanied him reminded him about a promise made to dine with the other people. Don Bosco replied, "Never mind, we shall satisfy them both." At this point of his narrative, one boy wanted to know whether he really had gone to lunch twice.

"We most certainly did, and we cut a good figure," Don Bosco answered.

Then he explained pleasantly how immediately after the first meal, they were ready to eat another, praising the warm charity of both his hosts towards his undertakings. This is just an example of the natural way in which Don Bosco himself supplied information for his biography.

Fr. Andrea Scotton, pastor of Breganze, wrote of him to Fr. Rua in a letter dated February 26, 1891: "That which was displeasing to other people was a source of inspiration to him. He often talked of himself and his undertakings, so simply and candidly that a listener merely wondered."

Fr. Lemoyne (*Biographical Memoirs*, Vol. II, pp. 23–24) writes: "Don Bosco was delighted in recounting these events and in recalling every least circumstance. This he did with such sincerity and keen enjoyment. He would reminisce, smile and savor the recollection of days gone by..."

[2] This work of revision was so accurate that while Don Bosco and Fr. Michael Rua were on their way to Spain, Fr. J. Bonetti sent them the proofs of the installment that was to appear in the next issue of the *Bulletin*. Fr. M. Rua returned it to him, with Don Bosco's observations.

Our mention of Father Michael Rua invites us to stop for a while and consider the wide range and value of his testimony. He lived for forty years at the side of Don Bosco. "Lived with" means that he not merely resided under the same roof, but shared his whole life. Naturally, this close relationship developed slowly and naturally, according to Father Michael Rua's age and the responsibilities given him. Nevertheless, Father Rua became fully aware of the role that Don Bosco had assigned to him initially, only when he was already mature in years. However, Don Bosco kept no secrets from Father Michael Rua, so that when Don Bosco died, Father Rua could be described as a living archive of information concerning Don Bosco.

Father Rua's sharp intellect had enabled him to take stock of Don Bosco's thoughts and his actions objectively. His very powerful memory responded promptly and faithfully whenever it was needed. Father Rua, a saintly man, would not dare to allow his reports to be mystified or to depart in any way from the truth, as a not-too-enlightened kind of piety would have done only for the sake of promoting edification. One example could stand for a thousand possible examples. D'Espiney's book *Don Bosco* had already flooded France and was being read in almost every civilized country when, in 1890, an Italian version of the eleventh French edition was planned. Father Michael Rua took it upon himself to edit the text, eliminating anything that did not seem absolutely certain in the light of his own knowledge of the facts. In doing this, he followed only verifiable evidence. He did not hesitate to eliminate the story relating the final appearance of the gray dog, *Grigio*, which had taken place in 1883 on the road between Ventimiglia and Vallecrosia, although he had heard talk of it. The author protested, since he himself had heard the story from Don Bosco at Nice Maritime only a few days after it had occurred. When Father Michael Rua heard this, he too was upset and simply based his apology on his own limited information of the incident. One may well imagine what valid assistance he gave the historian who was coordinating Don Bosco's biographical data by supplying information and by acting as a source of verification.

We must say that Fr. John Baptist Lemoyne was an extremely fortunate historian. However, this good fortune was only one among many others he had, especially the one of easily verifying his accounts by relying on the tradition still alive around him, and by consulting Don Bosco himself personally; besides the fact that he could rightly apply to himself the words *nos qui manducavimus et bibimus cum illo* (we who ate and drank with him), since he among others, was one of those who lived with him for almost twenty-three years.

Here we would like to describe the wonderful accomplishments of Fr. John Baptist Lemoyne, a glorious son of Don Bosco.

Before he began his detailed narrative of the life of the saint, Fr. Lemoyne collected an enormous amount of material that was to constitute the principal source of information in the course of his writing. Once it was chronologically coordinated and already printed on galley sheets, this miscellaneous data was compiled in three separate parts. One is documentary in nature, consisting of the reproduction of all official documents then existing in the archives of the Congregation. The second part, interwoven with the former, consists of correspondence and comprises hundreds of letters written to Don Bosco and/or to superiors of the Oratory from Salesians, either missionaries, men and women cooperators, and others, although only in very rare instances are the originals available for a necessary verification. The third section, which might be described as narrative, consists in the breakdown of unpublished or partially unpublished manuscripts. Some of these passages are distributed in suitable places of the account. In view of the nature of this data, and the use to which it was destined, Father John Lemoyne did not feel the obligation to quote its source. Among the sources we investigated, we succeeded in identifying the following: (1) a confidential memorandum printed and sent to cardinals by Don Bosco, concerning his conflict with the archbishop of Turin; (2) a substantial diary of Father John Barberis; (3) a number of notebooks in which Father Joachim Berto jotted down impressions during his journeys with Don Bosco to Rome, singling out incidents which deserve remembrance, even though they are not connected with Don Bosco's travels; (4) a long diary of Father [Charles] Viglietti, with a brief appendix compiled by Father John Bonetti; and (5) other manuscripts of minor importance. Naturally, whenever possible, our account of the events is quoted directly from the source, which is duly mentioned. Information of uncertain origin, doubtlessly culled from oral or written reports, but lacking supporting corroboration or documentation, also belongs to this third category.

At times, Father Lemoyne speaks for himself, or allows to be recognized by his own style. When he did so, we have never failed to quote him relying for the rest on his authority. We are indebted, for a number of details, to sources of information either unknown to him or tapped after his time. Once he began the work, he moved on and with his ninth volume, he covered Don Bosco's biography up to 1870; the volume is dated 1917. However, he was already tired and had little energy to complete the biography the preceding year.[3]

It is our conviction that, as time goes by, public and private files will reveal

[3] Fr. John Lemoyne began working on the history of those early years while Don Bosco was still alive. In reference to his work, he wrote Bishop John Cagliero on March 24th, 1886: "This biography is developing so smoothly, magnificently, and wonderfully in its varied pattern that it would be hard to find a more enchanting book."

new documents previously unexplored or inaccessible regarding the manifold activities of Don Bosco.[4] But no matter what may come to light, and even shed new splendor on the Servant of God, his personality will always remain focused in its present incomparable image. There is one aspect of his life that may well be further illumined by future revelations. Nothing, however, could change the opinion already held by those historians who, to this present time, explored his life story. We mean to refer to the stand he took on the issue known in Italian history as *Il Risorgimento Nazionale* (the National Renaissance). The superficial observer might be led to form a judgment not entirely true to facts because of the wide access even to government departments enjoyed by the saint. It is therefore advisable that we sharply clarify the ideas on this issue.

In regard to the *Risorgimento*, one has to distinguish three things: the issue in itself, the men responsible for it, and the institutional effects that followed.

The issue in itself comes as the result of two convergent movements: a political and a social one. Don Bosco did nothing, said nothing, and wrote nothing for or against the political movement that culminated into the independence and the unity of Italy. His intentionally neutral attitude in this matter was inspired by a theoretic, practical principle implicit in the reply he gave to the direct question of Pius IX. When the Pope asked him what his political views were, he declared that his politics were the politics of the Our Father—the politics that stand for the coming of a kingdom, but only the kingdom of God. His guiding principle in this attitude was that if a priest is to make his ministry effective, he must soar way above all divisions caused by political parties.

He explained himself when talking one day with Bishop Jeremiah Bonomelli, the great bishop of Cremona, who recalled the following words verbatim: "In 1848, I realized that if I wanted to do a bit of good, I had to put all politics aside," Don Bosco told him. "I have always steered clear of politics, and was therefore able to accomplish something, and I did not find obstacles, but instead assistance, even where I least expected to find it."[5]

The social movement, aimed at raising the intellectual, civil, and economic level of the people, was something else. Don Bosco not only perceived how this democratic trend would prove irresistible, but also foresaw all the good and evil that it would bring in its wake, according to whether or not the evolution desired took place under, without, or against the influence of the Gospel. He therefore committed himself entirely to giving a Christian

[4] Several times Don Bosco was heard to say, "A fifth of my life can never be told, either because I destroyed all documents pertaining to it, or because these were lost."

[5] Geremia Bonomelli, *Questioni religiose-morali-sociali del giorno* [Religious-moral-social problems of the day] (Milan: Cogliati), Vol. I, p. 310.

education to the children of the people, endeavoring in this way to educate youth to become morally sound and spiritually articulate citizens for Italy, who would exercise a beneficial influence in shaping the years ahead.[6]

As for the men who shaped the *Risorgimento*, Don Bosco sought never to lose contact with them right from the beginning. He was inspired to do so by three ideals: to find a way to do them some good; to persuade them to assist or, at least, be friendly to his own work; and to prevent them from harming the Church too much. His *Biographical Memoirs* supply many examples that prove how well justified his outlook was in reference to these three ideals. *La Civiltà Cattolica* expressed itself very aptly when, in announcing Don Bosco's death, wrote, "In the mid 19th century, at the center of violent changes among the people and political upheaval, Don Bosco was able to conjure up a wondrous stream of charity, by the authority of his words and example, captivating even the most rebellious spirits and drawing them to the serene gentleness of Christian faith."[7]

As to the institutional effects we mentioned, namely the new national regime and the whole new structure of public life, Don Bosco, instead of having discussions on them, sought to take advantage whenever he could, legitimately procuring the best and greatest benefits from them. He therefore never opposed constituted authority; he respected it, and insisted that other people respect it likewise. It became a habit, especially after the collapse of the Pope's temporal power, that certain persons and newspapers denigrated the House of Savoy, which had reunited under the scepter the whole peninsula. Both in Turin and on his travels, Don Bosco always deplored such behavior because in the kingdom of Savoy he perceived—and history fully justified his opinion—the sole, true support of public order in Italy. Lastly, he constantly hoped for a reconciliation, feared by some and deprecated by others, which would one day heal that disastrous conflict which popped up in Italy after 1870 between the ecclesiastical and civil power. He hoped for a reconciliation in the form praised by Pius XI in an historic speech, and which ultimately became a reality with the Lateran Pact under the same Pope.

We will conclude by quoting the wise judgment expressed at the death of the saint by a staunch Catholic journal, which magnified his hard work and humility: "In those stormy years of political change, social problems and

[6] In a posthumous publication, containing intimate scenes from his life, *Etapes de ma vie* (Paris, Calmann-Levy, 1936), Rene Bazin wrote in October 1913 that "he felt that it was a wonderful mission to 'hasten to the defense of religion, to rebuild religious souls strengthening the influence of Doctrine around us; training apostle-workers and apostle peasants by action, and if the mission is well carried out, without resort to politics, then it will exercise political influence'".

[7] Vol. 1 (1888), p. 498.

religious strife, Don Bosco always remained perfectly steadfast in his duty as a Catholic priest, always totally devoted to ecclesiastical authority, and especially to the Pope. He always labored wholeheartedly for the Church and with the Church, always wholeheartedly fighting against evil. At the same time, in word and deed, he abstained from all harshness, friction, conflict, and contrast. He preferred action to words, and endeavored to maintain harmony among all, turning them and guiding them towards good works, for the glory and advancement of religion and for the benefit of society."[8]

This brings us a thousand leagues away from the attitude of those who, caught between two conflicting forces, "straddled the fence," as the saying goes. Such people meet with the fate usually reserved for those who would serve two masters. In the final analysis, they ended up hating each other. Precisely the opposite happened to Don Bosco. It is enough to scan the newspapers at the time of his death. We witnessed this edifying phenomenon: The distinction seemed to have disappeared between good and bad newspapers, which unanimously joined in celebrating his name. Only one decisively sectarian journal, since it could not then speak well of him or speak badly of him, abstained totally from mentioning his name and from informing its readers of his death.

The secret of such worldwide acclaim lay in his charity exercised in harmony with the principles of the Gospel. This was the all-powerful magnet he held in his hand and that attracted all hearts to him. A liberal parliamentary deputy, a man of great learning who later became minister of state several times, revealed the truth of this as viewed from the opposite camp, in a letter of condolence written at the saint's death:

Too many factors keep men apart in their historic and political outlook, in times of civil and social reconstruction. Yet, although one may be on the opposite side, one can nevertheless delight and find edification at the sight of a flame of charity soaring to Heaven after having given such generous comfort to an immense human misery. One may have a different outlook on civilization; yet there are points in which harmony is perfect among all those who believe in the infinite goodness of charity. For these people to relieve human suffering in God's name, to uplift the spirit among those who suffer, to regenerate through labor those oppressed by poverty and misfortune, to reveal to sharp minds new experimental areas and to the virtue of sacrifice the new regions of pious victories.... appear

[8] *L'Eco di Bergamo*, February 2, 1888.

to be a holy, wholesome, and fruitful undertaking, rich in moral, economic, and civil advantages.[9]

When Don Bosco's illness grew worse, it dispelled the last lingering illusions of the many people who loved him, who could not believe that the day would dawn when they could no longer see him, listen to him, or communicate with him. But after he died and the grief had subsided, they saw that he was beginning to be more vitally present than ever before. Both young and old took singular pleasure in reading about him and hearing people talk of him. The examples and teachings he had left behind supplied themes for sermons, subject matter for articles, material for study. His picture decorated the walls of homes like a guarantee of a blessing from God, and people carried his picture on them as a token of assistance from Heaven. Innumerable graces of all kinds, attributed to his intercession, were reported to us from widely scattered countries. The popularity of his name, already great during his lifetime, gained constantly in intensity and extension. And it so happened that, shortly after his death, when it was announced that the cause for his beatification was about to begin, it seemed to be the most natural thing in the world that the traditional laws of the times should be disregarded in his case. Once the cause had begun, constant, worldwide interest mounted, following the various phases of Roman procedure until his apotheosis on Easter Sunday, April l, 1934. The recollection of that event still moves those who were fortunate enough to witness it, and it will always awaken an undying echo in the history of the Church. The worldwide popularity of his cult requested by the Catholic episcopate and decreed by the Holy See set the final seal of official recognition on the glory, which the saint already enjoyed in individual instances, in nearly every diocese of the world. One may with far greater justification apply to this immense veneration, the words which one great poet uttered in reference to the fame of another major poet: *Just as his fame is presently alive in this world so will it be as long as the world lasts.*

Turin, August 22, 1936

[9] Letter from Paul Boselli to Fr. John Baptist Francesia, Rome, February 3, 1888.

Chapter 1

DON BOSCO AT THE ORATORY WINTER 1886

For two and a half months at the beginning of 1886, our saint did not leave the Oratory. Whenever the boys at recreation saw him pacing up and down on the balcony on the second floor outside his room or walking toward it, they would immediately stop their games and run to stand beneath it, clapping their hands loudly with joy. He would stand still a moment before going inside, hold onto the railing and say a few kind words to them. They listened in reverent attention, and then acclaimed him with thunderous applause.

One evening in giving the "good night," Father John Baptist Francesia[1] said that it was unnecessary that they clap their hands so loudly whenever they saw Don Bosco. Their superiors knew already how fond they were of him. The warning proved to be of no avail, because the boys continued to manifest their delight uproariously every time they were lucky enough to see him.

As for his health, Father Joseph Lazzero wrote to Bishop John Cagliero on January 10th: "Don Bosco complains that he can no longer get his head to do anything. When he only tries, he instantly gets a violent headache. It does not matter if he does not work. Provided he is alive, it does not matter if he stands up or sits down. For us it is enough that he exists because he is everything to us."[2]

In one of the usual monthly circulars Father Michael Rua sent out the following piece of news on January 27th: "Thanks be to God, our dear Father's health has grown no worse, but unfortunately, there is no visible improvement either. His legs are reluctant to carry him. His eyes are always weak. His stomach is still unsettled. Yet he hears confessions and grants audiences whenever he can, and is unable to relax." [3]

[1] See Appendix 1.
[2] For both priests, see Appendix 1.
[3] See Appendix 1.

He heard the confessions of the Salesians who went to see him in his room. Also in his room, he heard the confessions of the students of the fourth and fifth high school grades. He assembled them from time to time to have a friendly talk with them, especially on the subject of vocation. Some of these gatherings have endured in the recollections of the survivors who wrote or spoke of their memories to us.

One such meeting took place on January 3rd. On December 13, 1885, after he had finished talking with them, he had given the boys some nuts. Now, as he desired to distribute the remaining nuts to all the boys, he performed a miracle not dissimilar to others narrated elsewhere in the pages of these *Memoirs*. He had someone hand him the little sack of nuts, and distributed them with a generous hand. The cleric Angelo Festa,[4] seeing that there were far fewer nuts than there had been on the previous occasion, cautioned him, "Don't give out too many, because there will not be enough for all of them."

"Leave it to me," Don Bosco answered.

The boy who was holding the sack also told him that if he went on giving them out at this rate, there would not be enough for everyone.

"You be quiet," he said. "Are you afraid you'll be left without?"

The boy was one we have already mentioned before, Joseph Grossani,[5] who spent a few hours of the day in Don Bosco's antechamber to usher in visitors. He recalled that Mrs. Nicolini had brought the nuts, and also told us about several other incidents.

There were sixty-four people present. First giving a handful of nuts to each one, then using both hands, the saint would not have had enough nuts to hand out. Just then the attention of the pupils was drawn to something very singular. They had seen how many nuts had been taken from the sack and how many still remained in it, and were astonished to see that the level of the nuts inside had not gone any lower. No matter how many were taken out of it, the quantity inside remained the same. It looked as though a mysterious hand was putting back as many nuts as he took out.

Their wonder reached its climax when, at the end of his distribution, they found that the little sack weighed neither more nor less than it had weighed before. At that the boys could not conceal their amazement from Don Bosco and asked him how come he had done that.

"Oh! I don't know," he answered, smiling in all simplicity. "But

[4] He died as a priest at Ljubljana, Slovenia, on July 4, 1905, at the age of 39.

[5] See Vol. XVII.

because you are my friends, I can confide something to you. I will tell you something that happened at the Oratory many years ago."

He then told them about the wondrous multiplication of chestnuts and the consecrated hosts.

At the end of the story Father Francesia showed up. He had heard an unusually loud noise and had come out saying, "Oh! Oh! What is all this?"

To which the boys replied in chorus, "Don Bosco gave us some nuts."

"Give me a few, then!" Father Francesia said to Don Bosco.

"But you cannot eat them because you don't have teeth," Don Bosco replied.

Just then a loud noise and chatter was audible in the courtyard below. The choir had just returned from Valsalice, where it had given a performance. Father Francesia told Don Bosco that they were some of the older boys, and they should not be deprived of nuts.

"Have them come upstairs," Don Bosco answered, as he was dismissing the others. Then he ordered Joseph Grossani to look in the drawer to see whether there were any nuts left over. Grossani had left the drawer empty the last time he had looked into it, and was now amazed to find a substantial quantity of nuts in it. He picked them up, put them in a little sack and brought them to Don Bosco, who handed them out with a liberal hand to some forty boys, even handing a fistful to the sack bearer.

Father Lawrence Saluzzo was one of the teachers in the upper high school grades. The saint always wanted him to be present during his talks with his pupils, but on that day he happened to be absent. A little later, chancing to meet him in the library, Don Bosco said, "Too bad you missed the talk this evening."

"Why, Don Bosco?"

"Get Festa to tell you what happened."

"No, you tell me, please. Do me this favor."

Meanwhile, drawn by curiosity, Father Finco, Father Luchelli, and others came over, and Don Bosco told the story with the simplicity of one who had been nothing more than a spectator.

Once word of the occurrence got around the house, people began searching for the miraculous nuts everywhere. "I questioned the boys," Father John Baptist Lemoyne wrote, "and all of them confirmed the fact that they had seen it with their own eyes. All of them were steadfastly convinced that a miracle had been wrought."[6]

[6] See Appendix 1.

Don Bosco again summoned the same pupils eleven days later. The recollection of certain things he had said in giving the Oratory his New Year's strenna for 1886 lingered in their minds, and in filial trust they informed him that they would have liked him to explain some of the predictions he had made a little more clearly. So when they were in his room on January 14th, he talked with them as follows, and as he was talking, the cleric Festa wrote down what Don Bosco said:

We are gathered here once again to exchange a few words. You will wonder, why does Don Bosco send only for us, without summoning also the priests, clerics, artisans, or all the students, at least? Naturally, this does cause a little envy among your companions and others who notice this preferential treatment. You have to know that once upon a time, Don Bosco was always among the boys, and the boys always sought him out. He went to hold missions at Chieri, Castelnuovo, Ivrea, and Biella and boys, who were not boarders here in the Oratory, but boys of the city of Turin, would get together in as many as ten, twenty or thirty at a time. On one occasion even as many as one hundred and thirty met and they would walk to wherever Don Bosco happened to be, so that they could go to confession to him. And Don Bosco always loved to be among the boys.

Now I am no longer able to move around. I no longer have the strength to address the whole community. Yet, I do want to guide at least a few, if not all the students, and not all the Oratory members, at least the pupils of the fourth and fifth high school grades. Now you have asked me something specific. You ask that I explain my New Year's strenna to you. You asked me to tell you something about those six companions of yours. Now then, it is not good that I tell you that there are some among you who are to die. However, I must tell you that of those six boys, almost all of them are already well prepared, and should they now appear before the judgment seat of God, we may hope that they would be at peace and do things right. The others, who are not yet ready, will be ready by and by. For you should know that unknown to them, there is someone behind them, who takes it to heart to see that they are properly prepared, so when their turn comes, we may well hope that it will go well with them. You too may rest assured, but nevertheless be prepared, and don't rely on the fact that you are in good health, even if you were among the strongest boys of the Oratory.

One day, some years ago, Don Bosco had warned that within a certain time a boy of the Oratory was to die. Without telling him in so many words, Don Bosco kept close to him, and helped him to make a general confession to put things right with his soul. He also urged one of the supe-

riors to keep watch over him. I can tell you that this was a good boy, well prepared, so that things went well with him.

However, if there was a strong boy at the Oratory, it was Milane. He came to the last day of the allotted time. And his companions were already saying, "You watch! This time he's going to get out of it...." On that last day, at nine o'clock in the morning, he was slightly indisposed, and was sitting up in bed, a piece of bread in his hand and his friends all around him. They were all chatting cheerfully. All of a sudden, Milane turned on his side to rest against the pillow. His friends called to him, but he did not answer. They shook him, but he seemed not to notice anything. He was already dead.

I have only mentioned the name of Milane, but I could give you the names of several others, no less strong and healthy, who also met with a like fate. Therefore, be prepared, don't rely on the fact that you are in good health. Be greatly devoted to the holy Virgin Mary, pray and be cheerful, very cheerful.

You asked me to explain what I said about the general disasters that are to afflict our country during this current year. I will do this gladly. I was almost close to saying it in public from the pulpit. Our Lord will send disasters upon us, namely pestilence, drought, and damaging floods. You will ask, "Why does the Lord send us such punishment?"

There must be a reason for it, beyond all doubt. It is the vice of dishonesty that calls down such disasters on mankind, as the punishment of God. This is a delicate subject, you understand, and that is why I did not feel that I could very well say it out in public. The pure of heart shall see the glory of God. By "the pure of heart," I mean those who never had the misfortune of falling into that shameful sin, or who if they did, immediately got back to their feet again.

You will hear it said that cholera rages here, that elsewhere there are floods, etc. You will say that all these punishments are punishments sent by God to punish people for their sins. But don't be afraid; be cheerful, very cheerful. For as long as you wear the medal of Mary Help of Christians around your necks, and are deeply devoted to her, I am inclined to hope that, as I did on other occasions when cholera had invaded the city of Turin, exactly here in the vicinity of the Oratory, you too will be safe, as our boys were safe then.

I am saying these things to you in particular, but keep it for yourselves only. Don't even write home to your parents or to other people about it, telling them that Don Bosco told us that this and that will happen. No,

keep this knowledge for yourselves. Draw as much benefit as you can from what I have said, but don't talk about it with others.

There is something else I want to tell you. I noticed that a great many of you came here to go to confession this morning; you went to communion, and you made the exercise of a happy death. I am very glad, but naturally, this makes the others a bit envious. The younger boys may well say, "We do have sins to confess to Don Bosco, haven't we?" Of course, but as I already said, Don Bosco cannot look after everybody. That is why he limits himself to looking after the pupils of the fourth and fifth high school grades, because it is their last year in school and they have to decide on their vocation, for almost always the eternal salvation of a youth hinges on this. Don Bosco is the regular confessor of the boys in the fourth and fifth high school grades, but this does not mean that they would be wrong if they made their confession to other priests, so long as the boys go often with the proper disposition of mind to confession and communion! I repeat, I only want to know how you feel about your vocation, be it for the priesthood or not for the priesthood, because I want you to enjoy both temporal and eternal happiness. I am glad as far as those who come here to receive communion at Don Bosco's Mass. But I want you to feel free in this. Anyone who wishes to go to communion in church will do well, and he who prefers to do so during Don Bosco's Mass also does well; but let no one do so because he feels he is ordered to do it. No!

We shall see each other again on other occasions, when you and Don Bosco have nothing else to do, and I will always say whatever seems to me best for your greater welfare.

The carefully kept ledgers of the Oratory list the dates of the six deaths that occurred between March and September in 1886. They were the deaths of two students and four artisans.[7]

The boys met again for a third time on the evening of January 31st. "Tell us a dream which might only concern ourselves," they said to Don Bosco.

He replied, "All right, I will. Some years ago I dreamed that I was strolling among my boys after community Mass. They were all standing around me and looking at me as they listened to my words. But there was

[7] They are as follows: Charles Brunet of Bardonecchia, first high school grade, March 9; Charles Ranzani of Borgo Castano Primo, second high school grade, April 13; Anthony Enria of Turin, copperplate engraver, May 4; Anthony Trogu of Carloforte, bookbinder, May 28; John Ferrari of Vigevano, bookbinder, July 5; James Alladio of Busca, blacksmith, September 21. In January Charles Gonino of Druent, a tailor, also died, but at home. He had left the Oratory on December 27 because he was sick; so he had not been present at the time of Don Bosco's strenna.

one boy in front of me who turned his back on me. (Whenever Don Bosco walked with the boys in the playground, the ones in front of him always walked backward, facing him, and never turned their backs to him.) This boy had in his hand a lovely bouquet of flowers of varied colors: white, red, yellow, and purple. I told him to turn around and look at me. He did so for a moment, and then went on walking as before. I reprimanded him for that, and he replied, *Dux aliorum hic similis campanae, quae vocat alios ad templum Domini, ipsa autem non intrat in ecclesiam Dei* [He who acts as a guide to others is like a bell which summons others to the house of the Lord but does not go into church]. At the sound of these words, the whole thing disappeared, and I too soon forgot about the dream. But a few days ago, I saw among you a boy who was precisely the one I had seen in my dream. He has grown bigger now, but it was he."

Immediately, the boys asked: "Is he here with us? Who is he?"

"Yes, he is here among you," Don Bosco said. "But it is not right that I tell you who he is, since I myself don't know what interpretation I should give to the dream."

So saying, he had the nuts leftover from last time brought to him. Their quantity had somewhat decreased because, in the meantime, more than one piously furtive hand must have dipped into the little sack. As was only natural, the boys kept their eyes riveted on the sack during the distribution of the nuts to see what might happen. But when the sack was emptied, it was empty. Nevertheless, there were enough to go around for everybody, save for one of the two boys who were holding the sack, one holding it from underneath on the palm of his hand, the other keeping the mouth of the sack open.[8] But after rummaging inside it, Don Bosco exclaimed, "Ah! There's still one more!" Then, continuing to rummage, with a big smile he brought up a whole handful, and he gave them to that lad, saying, "Hold onto them. They are precious."

Then he called the catechist, Father Stephen Trione,[9] who was standing behind the boys, and gave some to him too. He sent for Father Celestine Durando,[10] the prefect general, whose office was nearby, and found more nuts for him as well. "I also want to give a few to Mazzola and

[8]These were Titus Tomasetti, who died a Salesian priest on August 17, 1897, at the age of 28, and John Franchini, who is still alive [in 1937], also a Salesian priest. Fr. Charles Viglietti's diary mentions Garassino; he, however, had stayed in the study hall. But the diarist was not present at the occurrence. Fr. Franchini died on April 23, 1940, at age 72.

[9] See Appendix 1.

[10] See Appendix 1.

Brother Paul Bassignana," he said. They both received a handful. The boys were more than astonished. They stared dumbly, as if seized by holy fear.

At last, again putting his hand inside the sack, he drew out five more nuts, and holding them out, said how sorry he was because a few boys were not present. In fact, there were just five missing: three who had gone to Valsalice and two who had remained in the study hall. Certainly, in the room's semi-darkness and with his poor eyesight, Don Bosco could not have observed their absence by himself.

On his way out, the pupil Barassi went up to Don Bosco and asked, "The boy with the bouquet of flowers will cause divisions, will he not?"

"Certainly, and he will be a cause of anxiety," Don Bosco replied. But we do not know anything further.

Before entering his room from the antechamber, Don Bosco stopped and took Calzinari by the hand - a devout youth, who, however, never allowed himself to be seen by Don Bosco - and whispered something into his ear. The boy went pale and answered, "Very well."

When he was alone again with his secretaries, the saint said, "I have already invited here that boy with the bunch of flowers and sent for him. He promised to come, but has not come yet and yet I have to speak with him."

How much good did all those boys who approached Don Bosco with confidence receive especially in the confessional!

After the death of the saint in 1888, Father Michael Rua received a letter written with intimate details, though its author authorized him to make whatever use he wished of it. For that reason, it was kept, and we quote here the passage that refers to Don Bosco as confessor. The poor boy that wrote it had all too soon grown wise in the ways of vice and had acquired very bad habits that were leading him towards perdition. Divine Mercy so ordained that he was admitted to the Oratory as a student, where he abandoned himself entirely into the arms of Don Bosco, sincerely disclosing his miseries to him every week. Constancy in making a weekly confession proves a powerful tool, to rise up and regain the freedom of the children of God! In the instance to which we refer, perhaps a weekly confession would not have been swift enough and effective enough without the sweet, patient, and benevolent charity of Don Bosco.

Let us listen to what the penitent himself said: "Only the serene and tranquil calmness of Don Bosco and, I should say, the kind indifference shown to whatever I told him; only the way he spoke - just a few words but seasoned with the delicacy of a holy affection and deeply felt compassion and soothing like balm; and finally only his way of listening,

without being disconcerted by hearing the same sins again and again: these were the healing tools, the loving bonds with which the man of God soon succeeded in instilling in my soul not only horror of sin, but courage too, and a most vivid confidence that I would one day break the stout chains of my slavery ... Oh! How many times, as I recall Don Bosco's charity, as I recall the immense amount of good he did to me, do I not race in my thought to the pitiful situation in which many souls exist, souls which even though corrupted by vice, might still be healed and restored to grace, if they could but find the same loving kindness, that cheerful and comforting welcome in their confessor as I found to be so characteristic of our beloved Father!"

Something in the way of an innovation had been introduced into Don Bosco's chambers two days prior to the gathering just described. Until then, whenever he was unable to go downstairs to the church, he celebrated Mass in the antechamber, at a small altar concealed in a chest that looked like a closet. With some difficulty, the cleric Viglietti[11] had succeeded in having the room adjoining the antechamber transformed into a chapel, with its own fine altar.

On the eve of the Feast of Saint Francis de Sales, when Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda had come to speak with the servant of God, the secretary told His Eminence how delighted the entire household would be, if he would deign to bless both the altar and the chapel. The cardinal graciously consented. Joined by the bishop of Ivrea, a few canons, and several distinguished gentlemen, they all attended the function with Don Bosco. After putting on his stole, His Eminence recited the liturgical prayers with the ritual book in his hand, and blessed the altar and the room, which were festively illuminated. The people present then intoned the *Miserere* and other psalms. It was a moving little ceremony, the timeliness of which is fully evident today.

Now that Don Bosco's chambers had become a genuine little shrine, the little chapel where he said his last Masses stands, so to speak, as the *sancta sanctorum*.

We have referred to the solemn Feast of Saint Francis de Sales and must state a few details concerning it. It was preceded by a meeting of Cooperators who "for their greater convenience," as it said in the letter inviting them to attend, gathered in the church of Saint John the Evangelist where Don Bosco presided. The congregation expected to hear

[11] See Appendix 1.

him address it, and he too wished to speak, but the doctors were against it. He therefore delegated Father John Bonetti,[12] giving him the themes he should discuss. There were three subjects: (1) some comforting achievements by the Salesian Congregation, thanks to the charity of the Cooperators; (2) the necessity that these beneficial results be pursued and increased by looking after other important undertakings; and (3) by what means such a goal could be attained.[13]

Bishop John Baptist Bertagna was to have given the blessing; but since he was prevented from doing it by another ceremony, Don Bosco gave it himself. In reference to his blessing, Father Joseph Lazzero wrote to Bishop Cagliero on February 3rd: "Certainly, on the one hand it gladdened us all to see Don Bosco at the altar; while on the other, it moved us all to compassion when we saw how he could go up and come down the altar steps only with difficulty. Yet, he was glad to do it."

Don Bosco was delighted that very evening by the safe and sound arrival of Father Louis Calcagno and Father Peter Rota from Uruguay, and of Father Michael Borghino from Brazil. They had landed at Bordeaux, where the bishop had given them a warmly cordial welcome, just because he had heard they were sons of Don Bosco.

Never before had the Feast of Saint Francis been celebrated with so much solemnity. Bishop Valfré, who had recently been appointed bishop of Cuneo, said the "Community" Mass; the cardinal assisted at the Pontifical High Mass; the eloquent orator, Bishop Riccardi of Ivrea, delivered the panegyric of the saint in the afternoon, linking the life of Saint Francis de Sales to the program of "loving God" and "having God loved." Salesian maestro Brother Joseph Dogliani[14] had his choir perform Haydn's Imperial Mass, the cardinal imparted the benediction, and Dr. Joseph Fissore officiated as chairman of the festivities. Forty guests honored Don Bosco's table at dinner, among them His Eminence, four bishops, and the Parisian Counts, the de Franquevilles. In the evening, the boys enacted a new play by Father Lemoyne entitled *Vibio Sereno*, dealing with the Romans and the Christians of the first century. His Eminence decided to attend the performance as well. "This was a delightful day for Don Bosco, who took part in everything," Father Joseph Lazzero said in his letter of February 3rd.

[12] See Appendix 1.

[13] The whole speech was published in the *Bollettino salesiano* in two installments, March and April.

[14] See Appendix 1.

Don Bosco had slept badly the night before, awaking Brother Viglietti with his shouts, and in the morning the cleric questioned him. "I saw a stout youth with a broad skull that grew narrow at the level of the forehead," he answered. "He was small and thick-set, and he was walking around my bed. I tried in every way I knew to have him go away; but when I drove him away from one side, he fled to the other and continued his tiresome pacing. I scolded him, I wanted to beat him up, but I could not make him stop annoying me. At last I said, 'Look, if you don't go away, you will force me to say something to you I have never uttered before.' Since the boy continued his pacing, I said out loud, 'You carrion!' Then I woke up."

He blushed as he finished his story, adding, "I never used that word in my life; and now I say it in a dream?" And he smiled.

Two dreams, which because of their nature could be joined with the preceding one, were narrated to his secretaries on February 25th. In the first, he was about to enter the cathedral of Saint John the Baptist in Turin when he saw two priests, one of whom was leaning against the holy water font, the other against a pillar. Both of them with an indifferent air were keeping their hats on. He wanted to reprimand them but hesitated somewhat, noticing a look of cynical disdain on their faces. Nevertheless, he took hold of himself and addressed the first of the two.

"Excuse me. What town are you from?"

"What's that to you?" the other answered brusquely.

"It's only because I wanted to tell you something that I have to tell."

"But I have nothing to do with you."

"Now listen. I don't want to rebuke you, but even though you have no respect for a sacred place and don't trouble yourself about people who are scandalized and may laugh at you, please have some respect for yourself at least. Take off that hat!"

"You are right. That's true," the priest said, and he removed his hat.

Then Don Bosco went to the other one and repeated his advice to him. He, too, took off his hat. Whereupon, laughing heartily, Don Bosco woke up.

In the second dream, he met someone who urged him insistently to appear in public, to preach about the Way of the Cross.

"Preach about the Way of the Cross?" he answered. "You mean the passion of our Lord."

"No, no," the man insisted, "I mean the Way of the Cross."

So saying, he led him down a long road that opened at the far end into an enormous square and bade him climb onto a platform. The place

was deserted, so Don Bosco asked, "To whom am I to preach, since there's no one here?"

Then all of a sudden, the square began to fill with people. So he spoke to them of the Way of the Cross, explaining the meaning of the term, listing the advantages to be obtained from this pious devotion. When he had finished speaking, everyone begged him to continue by explaining each individual station. Don Bosco asked to be excused, declaring he did not know what more he could say, but the people insisted, so he resumed his sermon. Talking uninterruptedly, he said that the Way of the Cross was the way to Calvary, the road of suffering that Jesus was the first to walk on, and proposed that we follow him along it when he said, "*Si quis vult post me venire, abneget semetipsum, et tollat crucem suam quotidie, et sequatur me*" [If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me].

He had already narrated another dream about the Way of the Cross on November 16th of the previous year. He thought he was surrounded by a multitude of people who were saying to him, "Do the Way of the Cross with some examples! Please, please do!"

"But what examples do you want me to give you?" he answered. "In itself, the Way of the Cross is a continuous example of the sufferings of our Lord."

"No, no, we want a new presentation."

Don Bosco suddenly found himself with the book already written. In fact, he had the galley proofs already in his hand and was looking hurriedly for either Father Bonetti and Father Lemoyne or Father Francesia, so that they might correct them for him, since he was very tired. During this anxious search, he woke up.

The saint truly was to show himself as an example of the passion of Jesus Christ, enduring in union with him the painful infirmities that were now to be his until his death, thereby giving his sons an example of patience.

We will pass along yet another dream that seems to hold some prophetic element. He related it to Father Lemoyne and the cleric Festa on March 1, 1886. He dreamed he was at Becchi, and his mother was next to a spring of water: she was removing the dirty water and putting it into the pail that she was holding. That same spring was always the source of the purest water, so he was astonished, unable to find an explanation for all this.

"*Aquam nostram pretio bibimus* [We drink our own water for a price]."

Mama Margaret said then, "You and your Latin!"

Don Bosco replied, "That was not from the Scriptures."

"That does not matter. Say something else, if you want to. Everything

is understandable in what I said. You only need to study them well. *Iniquitates eorum porta....* [Their iniquities...] Now you can add whatever you wish."

"*Portavimus? Portamus?* [We have carried? We carry?]"

"Whatever you prefer: *portavimus, portamus, portabimus* [We have carried, we carry, we shall carry...]"

"Think well about these words, study them and have all your priests study them, and in them you will find all that is about to happen."

Then she led him behind the spring to high level ground where he could recognize Capriglio and its surroundings, and the villages of Buttigliera and Buttigliera itself, as well as other hamlets scattered here and there. Pointing to them she said, "What difference is there between these places and Patagonia?"

"If I could, I would do good here and there, too," he answered.

"If that is so, then it's all right," Mama Margaret answered.

Then it looked as though his mother was going away, and since his imagination was quite tired he woke up. After telling them the dream, he remarked, "The place my mother showed me would be ideally suited for an institute because it is centrally located among a number of inhabited areas that have no church at all."

In the circular letter mentioned previously, Father Michael Rua also mentioned audiences, besides meetings. The strain of receiving visitors always occupied several hours of his day, but only the recollection of two visits that differed widely one from the other was handed down to us.

On January 3rd, a French lawyer went to see him. He said he had been sent by the Bourbons. He explained at great length to Don Bosco that it was essential to restore the former Bourbon kings to all Europe, starting from Spain, and that the princes of this royal house were seeking his counsel and his blessing. Don Bosco let him talk as long as he wanted. Finally, hoping to force an answer from him, the stranger asked, "What would be the opinion of Don Bosco on this matter?"

"I am not competent to pass a judgment on such questions," Don Bosco replied. "I barely know the names of the pretenders, and even then I don't know all of them. I also am deeply obligated to France. I have opened several houses there, which are maintained by the charity of the people of France. Consequently, I can in no way abuse the hospitality extended to me. So I would not know what advice to give you. I will only say that it would hardly be wise to enter into such an endeavor, unless there were a fairly substantial means to surely guarantee its success."

"Oh, if all the Bourbons get together, the means will be available," the lawyer answered.

"You must remember that unless there is probability, indeed certainty of success, this would cause immense damage to France."

"What do you think about the successful outcome of the undertaking?"

"That God's Holy Will be done in all things."

"Would you extend your blessing to the Bourbon princes?"

"Why not? But only in the sense that God's Holy Will be done in all things, and nothing more."

"Do you authorize me to refer what you have said?"

"I have no objection."

After this interview, the lawyer went directly to Venice to receive instructions from Don Carlos. Some people suspected that he was a secret investigator for the French police who had been sent to sound out Don Bosco's political opinions. At any rate, the replies given by the saint could neither arouse suspicion nor offer any pretext for accusation. It had always been his principle never to dabble with politics.

The other visit we mentioned was connected with the desire to obtain a healing for someone. A gentleman who had been knighted through the mediation of Don Bosco had promised him a sum of money to help his houses, but although he was in a position to do so, he had never kept his word. It now happened that his son, who was the successful manager in family affairs, became seriously sick. In view of the critical situation, his father hastened to see Don Bosco on January 19th, imploring him with clasped hands to pray and have prayers said for his son's recovery.

"I willingly promised I would pray," Don Bosco said later to someone who was with him, "but his son has been summoned by God. It would be necessary for his father to say to Don Bosco, 'Stop, Don Bosco! I have ten thousand lire here that I want to give you, and you must obtain this grace from Mary Help of Christians for me.' Then, certainly...but now all I can do is pray that the Lord may receive his son into heaven soon, as he dies." It was the belief of the saint that those who are not generous with God have little hope of obtaining exceptional graces from Him.

A distinguished benefactress of Don Bosco, Countess Wanda Grocholska, née Princess Radziwill, had precisely the opposite experience. In March 1886, the day before Don Bosco set out for Spain, she fell sick at Cracow with pleuropneumonia, complicated by other factors, and very soon she was in danger of death. Her sister telegraphed the saint, imploring him to pray for the sick lady. A doctor summoned from Paris

did all he could to save her life, but very shortly after, she entered her death agony. Suddenly, while the doctor was checking her pulse, he shouted, "She is safe!"

A few weeks elapsed, and Father Rua wrote to a friend of the countess to ask for news of her. But she did not answer, so it was believed that the countess was dead. Don Bosco was already in Barcelona when Father Rua, who had gone with him, remarked to him one day, "Countess Grocholska has certainly died."

"Not at all," Don Bosco answered, smiling. "She has recovered and right this minute she is having breakfast."

"Who sent you that news?"

"I had a telegram from Heaven."

The situation was exactly as he had described.

To this same period also belongs another incident concerning Don Bosco's knowledge of future matters. The superior of a convent had written to him from Monaco to recommend to him a young lady, a convert from Protestantism, who was an epileptic.

He replied, "Let her be faithful to her promises. For as long as she is faithful, she will enjoy the protection of the Most Holy Virgin."

The young lady enjoyed excellent health for as long as she remained faithful, but her disease again assailed her when her fervor waned. Having given that answer, Don Bosco went on, "Would you not have someone named so-and-so in your house? Tell that prodigal daughter to go back home and take care of her blind mother and children." Astounded, the superior wondered how Don Bosco had come to know something that no one had told him, all the more so, since she herself was already somewhat suspicious. A wretched woman had pretended that she was a mulatto and a pagan, truly eager to learn about the religion of Jesus Christ and embrace it. A Jesuit priest who had been told of it by a confidante of the woman mentioned it to the bishop, and then asked the Mother Superior if she could take the woman into her convent, and prepare her for baptism. The unfortunate woman expressed her impatience to be baptized, but almost immediately the whole business was discovered to be a farce. Don Bosco had given a timely warning about her because the sacred ceremony was only two days away.[15]

Don Bosco also received a delightful honor from France. Our readers will recall the lecture he gave in 1883 to the Geographic Society of Lille

[15] See Appendix, doc. 2.

about Patagonia. Later still, he sent the association a memorandum on the same subject, which was considered a work of great merit. The board of directors of the Society was certainly in no hurry to deliberate since it was not until January, 1886, that he was informed that a silver medal for his merits in the area of geography "as interpreted at the present day," namely as a "contribution to the knowledge and progress of mankind and conditions in foreign countries" had been awarded him. The medal was to be awarded during the course of a solemn assembly meeting, which could not be held until a much later date. On one side of the medal were to be the words: *Don Bosco - Salesian Priest - Civilization of Patagonia*, and he was asked to name the date to be inscribed. He replied that the date should be May 24, 1879, on which day the Salesians had first entered Patagonia, and that the words *founder of the Salesians* should follow Don Bosco's name.[16]

The medal could not be awarded him other than during the solemn general assembly meeting to be held somewhere around the end of the year. By December, the president advised him that on Sunday, the 19th, "It would be an honor and a great pleasure to us if you were able to attend. The people of Lyons, too, would be happy to see you and acclaim you." But Father Julius Barberis and Father Paul Albera[17] represented Don Bosco instead.

After being introduced by President Desgrands in the hall of the university where the association usually held its meetings, they were asked to take their seats in an eminent position, beside the president's chair. After the reading of the minutes concerning the progress and activities of the association, the president spoke. In words of highest praise, he recalled Don Bosco's speech about the farthest border of South America. He said that the speaker had supplied very precise and highly interesting information about those inhospitable regions, drawing his material both from reliable authors and reports from his missionaries whose difficulties he followed in his thoughts and in his heart. He concluded by saying that Don Bosco had thus so well deserved the recognition of the Geographic Society that the board had awarded him a silver medal. Father Paul Albera then stood up to receive the medal, amid fervent applause from the large assembly.

Two foreign newspapers, too, had words of high praise for Don Bosco. In Portugal, *La Palavra*, in two of its articles written on January 15th and 16th, published a long enthusiastic article, naming Don Bosco as the most meritorious benefactor of mankind in recent years. Another newspaper

[16] Appendix 3.

[17] For both priests, see Appendix 1.

extolled his praises from the banks of the Thames. This was *Merry England*, which wrote a magnificent biographical profile and voiced its opinion of Don Bosco's priests as follows: "The Salesian priests are truly men of great learning, but what is far more important, they are endowed with apostolic zeal and genuine piety. In short, they are good, fervent shepherds who would willingly lay down their lives to save their flocks."

The new, very popular newspaper *Eco d'Italia*, the mouthpiece of the Genoese Catholics, quoted this article on January 25th, expressing on its own behalf the utmost esteem and veneration for the Salesian Society and its founder, and ended with the following fervent appeal: "Ah yes, let us assist, let us promote and sponsor as best we can, the holy institute of the new Apostle of Abandoned Youth. If we do, we shall render one of the greatest and noblest of services to the holy cause of God and his Church."

A discordant note was struck at Faenza. The radical newspaper *Il Lamone* resumed its outcry against the sons of Don Bosco, and its issue of January 17th denounced "Salesian education" to the authorities, claiming that as enemies of the nation, the Salesians instilled their own sentiments in the minds of their young charges. It was at this same time that the new prefect of studies general, Father Francis Cerruti,[18] inaugurated his responsibility by publishing a pamphlet at the beginning of the year entitled "Don Bosco's Views on Education, Instruction, and the Contemporary Mission of the School."

"The same ideas which inspired Salesian education," Father Cerutti wrote, "were shared by the most illustrious modern pedagogues and educators, who were horrified by the picture presented by impiety and immorality which threatened to engulf entire nations and peoples."[19]

Anyone who saw Don Bosco so drained of his former strength would never have imagined what he was mulling over in his mind during February and March; he was planning a journey to Spain. He felt that he had to act quickly; otherwise he would no longer have been able to realize his wish. He was thinking about how he could overcome the opposition of his loving sons, who were so sorely afraid for his precious life. He had been to Spain already, to tell the truth, but only as saints travel, and in no ordinary manner. We here relate this story, of which we have several reports. Many times did we hear the authentic tale from the lips of the very person who received this totally unexpected visit. It may seem odd

[18] See Appendix 1.

[19] See the above pamphlet, pp. 10–11.

that this confrere, speaking about the matter later, did not well recall on what night the first appearance occurred, whether it was the night before or the night after the feast day of Saint Francis de Sales [January 24]. This slip of memory does not weaken the credibility of the episode, about which he testified during the apostolic process for Don Bosco's beatification and canonization:

Father John Baptist Branda,[20] the director of the Salesian house of Sarriá, was sleeping peacefully in his bed when he heard someone call him. Awake, he clearly heard Don Bosco's voice saying, "Father Branda, get up and come with me."

Father Branda thought to himself, "Oh! I must be dreaming! I need to sleep!" To rid himself of what he felt was an illusion, he turned over to the other side. He soon fell into a deep sleep and slept until he heard the bell for rising. During the morning, he recalled the voice he had heard during the night, but gave no thought to it and did not worry about it until the octave of the Feast of Saint Francis de Sales.

Then, during the night of February 6th, while he was sleeping, he heard another summons: "Father Branda! Father Branda!" Again, it was Don Bosco's voice.

He shook himself, opened his eyes, and to his astonishment saw that the room was as brightly lit as if it were midday. Besides, since his bed was in a cell, he saw the silhouette of a priest projected on the curtains, exactly like Don Bosco.

The voice again called, "Don't sleep now! Get up!"

"I'm coming immediately," he answered. He rose, got dressed, pulled the curtains, and saw Don Bosco waiting for him in the middle of the room.

Don Bosco wore an expression of paternal, trusting affection. Father Branda went up to him and took his hand to kiss it, just as Don Bosco said, "Come with me. Take me for a visit through the house. I'll show you things you don't have the slightest suspicion of. Yet they are frightening things."

Father Branda took the keys of the dormitories and went upstairs into the dormitories with Don Bosco. All the boys were asleep in their beds. Don Bosco pointed out to him three who were easily recognizable although their faces were hideously disfigured. "Do you see those three wretches? You would never believe who has corrupted them unless I had come to tell you. And I came because it was necessary for me to disclose this iniquitous mystery to you. You trusted him. You thought he was good,

[20] See Appendix 1.

and so he seems on the outside. It is the coadjutor (and he uttered his name). He is the one who has assassinated the souls of these boys. Look at their present miserable condition."

When Father Branda heard the name, he stood dumbfounded. He would never have suspected such wickedness. The coadjutor was really believed to be a good man; his exterior behavior was beyond reproach.

Don Bosco went on, "Send him away from the house immediately. Don't let him remain among the boys. He's capable of ruining others, too."

Meanwhile, they were moving along, passing from one dormitory to another, observing all the sleeping boys one by one. Don Bosco pointed out to Father Branda several with distorted, deformed faces. After they left the dormitories, they toured the whole house. The stairs, rooms, and playgrounds were all lit up as though it were daytime. Don Bosco walked swiftly, as if he were hardly forty years old. They returned to Father Branda's room, where in a corner beside a bookcase appeared the three poor boys. They tried to hide as they saw Don Bosco. Their faces were still repulsive. Near them, motionless, stood the coadjutor with hanging head, trembling all over and contorted, like a condemned man approaching the scaffold. Don Bosco's features became terribly severe as he pointed to him while telling Father Branda, "It is he who ruins the boys!" He then turned on the culprit and cried out in a thundering voice, "Wretch, is it you who steal souls away from our Lord? Is it you who thus betray your superiors? You are unworthy of the name you bear!" So he continued in a menacing tone, accusing him and laying out to him the enormity of his sin, which had been going on for months and months without his saying a word in confession.

A cleric also appeared beside the others. He stood as if humbled, but not contorted like the coadjutor. Don Bosco looked at him, too, but not as severely as at the coadjutor, and said to Father Branda, "Send him away from the house, too, for if he remains here, he will do great damage."

"But I don't know how I can carry out your orders," Father Branda remarked. "I don't know what reasons I should give for such actions. I have no proof. It's a delicate matter. Couldn't you get someone else to carry out your orders?"

As he was talking, it seemed to him that he glimpsed Father Rua right beside Don Bosco, putting his finger to his lips and motioning him to be quiet. Father Branda fell silent and Don Bosco moved on to leave the room. Just then all the light disappeared. Now completely in the dark, Father Branda groped to find the lamp on his desk, lit it, and found he was

alone. It was still two hours before the time to get up. So he took his breviary and began to recite the Divine Office. When the bell rang, he went downstairs to say Mass in a state of great agitation.

He was very upset at the prospect of having to expel the two confreres. How could he summon them? How could he begin a conversation with them? What points could he bring up to induce them to confess their fault? He observed them closely but did not detect anything calling for reproach. But he heard an inner voice that kept repeating, "Act! Act!"

He summoned the prefect, Father Anthony Aime, and the assistants and urged them to keep their eyes wide open to find out who the least good boys might be. He hoped thereby to discover some hint of the hidden evil. He resolved not to speak and felt that his conscience was clear because he was taking such precautions. He felt that thereby he had silenced those inner voices that did in fact leave him in peace for a few days. But every time he was about to celebrate Mass, he felt himself seized by a certain horror that made him tremble.

While he was in this state of mind, he received a letter from Father Michael Rua in Turin. He long treasured it and showed it to many people.[21] The letter said: "I was walking with Don Bosco this evening, and he told me he had paid you a visit. But perhaps you were asleep at the time."

Four or five days after the dream-vision, Father Branda went to celebrate Mass in the home of Dorothy de Chopitea Villota. This mother of the Salesians in Spain told him, "Do you know that I dreamed about Don Bosco? I dreamed of him last night."

"Forgive me," Father Branda interrupted her, "I'd like to say Mass immediately this morning."

The saintly woman's words had thrown his heart into turmoil, and he did not want to hear any more. He went straight to the chapel, vested, and began Mass. But after he had said the prayers at the foot of the altar and mounted the steps, as he was bending to kiss the altar he was seized by fear and trembling; within him a voice resounded, "Do at once what Don

[21] He showed it to Fr. Aime, the prefect; he read it in a conference to the clerics, as Fr. Pirola recalled; he had it read to missionaries who passed through Sarriá shortly before Don Bosco arrived there. Then eventually he mislaid it. During the canonization process Fr. Rua testified: "I was in Turin in those days, and the day after that apparition, Don Bosco in a conversation with me told me that during the night he had paid a visit to Fr. Branda. I believe that he ordered me to write and ask him whether he had carried out his orders. At the time I did not make a big deal about what he said, and once I had obeyed his directive, I gave it no further thought. When I accompanied Don Bosco to Spain a few months later, Fr. Branda came to meet us at the border and told me exactly what had happened; so then I understood what kind of a visit Don Bosco had paid him."

Bosco told you. Otherwise, this is the last Mass you'll celebrate."

Father Branda went back home, determined to take action. He would have preferred to seek advice, but he did not know whom to ask. He had not mentioned the matter to his confessor, being afraid he might consider the whole thing nonsense. Nevertheless, he put an end to his delay. He sent for the prefect, Father Aime, and bound him to strictest secrecy regarding what he was about to tell him. Then he related only part of what he had seen that night of the octave of Saint Francis, revealing the names of the three boys and giving him appropriate instructions. He was to send for them separately so that the others would not know, and he was to make them understand that he knew everything and instruct them to tell him who the scandal-giver was. If they denied everything or refused to speak, he should raise his hands. After questioning the first one, he was to shut him in a certain room and no one was to speak to him. Then he was to call the second and do the same as with the first, then lead him to a certain classroom, shutting him in as well. When he had questioned the third, he was to keep him in his office and report the outcome of his inquiry to Father Branda. "On this sheet of paper," Father Branda concluded, "I am writing the name of the one I saw as the instigator of this scandal, and when you come back from your inquiry, we will compare this name with the name the boys reveal." So saying, he took his pen, wrote on the paper, and folded it.

The prefect did exactly as he was told. The first boy, stunned, although he had begun by denying it, confessed when he realized that the superior was determined and certain of his facts. The second and third boys, when they likewise found themselves with their backs against the wall, gave the same answer.

Father Aime went back to the director to inform him of the results of his inquiries. Then Father Branda unfolded the paper and showed it to him. It was the name of the coadjutor whom the boys had accused. Prudence no longer cautioned the superior against acting, so he sent for the culprit immediately.

The coadjutor had been in a state of fearful mental agitation for some days. Once he had come before him, Father Branda asked him point blank, "Are you the one who has been ruining the boys?"

"I? How?" stammered the man in dismay.

"Yes, you, by doing this and this."

The wretch fell to his knees, imploring mercy, and he exclaimed, "Did Don Bosco write to you about it?"

"Don Bosco came here in person to tell me."

When he heard that he was to leave the house at once, the man wept and begged, saying that he should be removed from those duties that were a danger to him. They could even put him to sweep, but they ought to give him at least two months to make arrangements for his future. His request was granted.

So when Don Bosco arrived at the Spanish border, Father Branda, who had gone to meet him, drew him aside in a room and told him, "At Sarriá you may not find everything as you wish."

"What have you been doing?"

"The three boys were sent home, allowing a few days' interval between their departures, but the coadjutor is still in the house. I gave into his tears and supplications and granted him a postponement of a few months."

"Very well. I will come and see what we should do."

A few weeks later the coadjutor, too, was dismissed from the house for good.

Chapter 2

TO SPAIN THROUGH LIGURIA AND FRANCE

Although there weren't many Salesian Cooperators in Spain yet, they were quite influential. Eminent members of the clergy and society were proud to be members. The name of Don Bosco echoed from one end of the country to the other because newspapers and magazines were calling attention both to him and to his houses at Utrera and Sarriá. His more distinguished benefactors, foremost among them Mrs. Chopitea, would have been delighted to see him, so according to the occasion they begged him to come and visit also their country. Don Bosco had wanted to go to Spain for a long time. Towards the end of February, he made up his mind and preparations soon began.

When word spread inside and outside the Oratory that he was undertaking such a long journey, the Salesians and his friends were dismayed, for they were seriously afraid he might die on the way. He appeased them by reminding them all of his past travelling experiences which, far from deteriorating his health, had only improved it. He said, however, that he would first put his powers of resistance to the test by cautiously traveling down the Ligurian coast and then along the coast of France. If all fared well, he would continue on his way. If not, he would turn back.

The news that Don Bosco was about to visit Spain soon traveled fast and aroused great expectations. But no one was more anxious to meet Don Bosco, to hear him speak or delight in his presence than Mrs. Chopitea. Not many had as great an affinity with Don Bosco's spirit as she had. Therefore, no one was better capable of comprehending the full significance of his mission.

He departed from the Valdocco Oratory at two-thirty p.m. on Friday, March 12th, accompanied on the first part of his journey not only by the cleric Viglietti, his secretary, but also by Father Francis Cerruti and Father Anthony Sala. He looked well enough, but walked with difficulty and needed support. A reporter from a Tuscan newspaper[1] greeted him at the

[1] *L'Amico del popolo* (Prato, March 20, 1886).

station of Porta Nuova and showed concern at the idea of him traveling so far. Don Bosco replied that he was driven by the need for providing food for his boys.

"Appeal to Depretis!" the journalist said hurriedly.

"Ah! Yes, to him! If only he knew what I pay in taxes alone on all the houses I have in Italy!"

He arrived at Sampierdarena without any trouble, spending the time in rather pleasant conversation. At Sampierdarena, he found two good workers waiting for him. They had come from Arenzano and wanted to give him donations in thanksgiving for graces obtained through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians. They told him that where they came from, the people had fervent confidence in Mary Help of Christians.

Don Bosco had a bad night, and next morning he was obliged to say Mass in his room. The boys of the fourth and fifth high school grades attended it. As soon as he had said his thanksgiving prayers and had breakfast, he began interviews uninterruptedly until midday. As he himself said, nearly everyone had come to thank Mary Help of Christians for graces after having received her blessing from Don Bosco the previous year.

The Cooperators from Genoa had arranged to meet in the church of Saint Siro in that town for a talk. Don Bosco set out for it at about two o'clock in the afternoon. Archbishop Salvatore Magnasco also wished to be present. Father Francis Cerruti addressed the congregation for half an hour and held the attention of the large crowd that had come to see Don Bosco. As he entered the church, the people clustered around him to kiss his hand. Now and then, people were even afraid he might be crushed. In the sacristy, before and after the talk, he listened to people who wished to speak with him. To everyone who approached the archbishop to kiss his ring, the prelate would say, "Go to see Don Bosco." The coadjutor Enria heard many people say that they considered themselves lucky to have been blessed by a saint.

On March 28th, Father Joseph Lazzero wrote to Bishop John Cagliero: "Our beloved Father, Don Bosco, becomes more and more precious as he grows older. In Genoa, where he went for the meeting of the Cooperators, there was an enthusiasm that had never been seen before. The very generous collection is one sign of this."

A Cooperator from Voltri[2] wrote to Father Michael Rua on the same subject: "I spent nearly an hour in Paradise! It looked as if the

[2] Signor Primo Arona, Vegima per Voltri (March 21, 1886).

Cooperators, both women and men, wanted - forgive the expression - to gobble up our beloved Don Bosco! They all wanted to look at him, speak to him, kiss his hand. Don Bosco, all smiles, listened to everyone and had a kind word for everyone, a word which exercised a mysterious influence over their souls."

Toward nightfall, he was accompanied to the palace of Mrs. Ghiglini, where he dined. It was very late and he was very tired when he got back to Sampierdarena. One gentleman heard him say, "As for myself, I could live with a handful of corn, but I have to satisfy the hunger of so many children. Since the charity of good people knows no limits, I am in need of everybody."[3] At the end of the day, Charles Viglietti wrote in his diary: "Today Don Bosco was in good humor. He was witty and his mind was extraordinarily alert."

Father Dominic Belmonte, the director of the Sampierdarena hospice, declared that something in the nature of a miracle took place at Saint Siro. Don Bosco was handing out medals of Mary Help of Christians in the sacristy. Finding that he had none left, he turned to Father Belmonte to ask if he had brought some with him. The director handed him about forty medals, and perhaps even less, whereupon the saint resumed handing them out. The sacristy was crowded with people and he gave a medal to everyone holding out a hand. Father Belmonte and Mr. Dufour, who were standing beside him, could not believe their eyes. He must have given out several hundred medals, perhaps more than a thousand. This would not have been possible had their number not been multiplied in his hand.

The following day, interviews were given uninterruptedly for long hours. At midday, a young woman was brought to him by her father and mother. She would have no part of religion and seemed completely insane. However, in the presence of Don Bosco, she knelt down to receive his blessing and then said weeping, "I really do acknowledge my sin. Until now the devil had tricked me. I will go to confession tomorrow and then to communion."

Her parents were so touched that they neither wanted to rise nor take their leave. The scene lasted for a while. Fondly, they gave Don Bosco a donation and eventually took their leave.

That evening, the bells for the new belfry at Saint Cajetan were solemnly blessed. They were inaugurated by the coadjutor Brother Quirino, who had come especially from the Oratory to play them with an expertise unmatched. He was well known to the people of Turin.

[3] *L'Eco d'Italia* (March 15, 1886).

Don Bosco resumed his interviews after the ceremony, continuing until eight o'clock at night. "He is tired," the diary read, "but he looks very well. He is calm and cheerful."

Despite his preoccupations, which never allowed him any rest, he did not forget the Oratory. As a matter of fact, at the end of the day, he told his secretary to write to Father Michael Rua, and prompted what he should write. This is what Viglietti wrote:

> Don Bosco tells me to ask you to give his regards to the boys, to let them know that he is here at Sampierdarena and that he has found boys of good will also here; that like those boys at the Oratory, the pupils of the fourth and fifth high school grades attended Mass in Don Bosco's room and all received Communion from him with great devotion. He also tells me to give his regards to Father John Baptist Lemoyne, Father Angel Lago, Jerome Suttil, Angelo Festa, and Bishop Gastaldi.

Then he added on his own account: "Dear Father Michael Rua, for the love of charity, recommend Don Bosco to everyone's prayers, because his health leaves much to be desired."

A sculptor came to the hospice. He had never seen Don Bosco, but had sketched his portrait (head and chest) from photographs, always hoping to see him some day so he could put the finishing touches to his work. He, therefore, kept close to Don Bosco and pestered him so much that Don Bosco finally resigned himself to pose for him. As he climbed the model's platform the artist had readied for him, he laughed, saying, "Behold, I go to my execution." Then, as he saw the artist begin to pour a pasty substance of clay over the bust to correct his first molding, Don Bosco whispered to his secretary, "Do you see how he is plastering me, Viglietti?" After a quarter of an hour, he became drowsy and dozed off. When he awoke, he saw that an hour had gone by. He got off the model's platform immediately, since many people were waiting to speak with him.

That happened the morning of the fifteenth of March. After lunch, the interviews tired him considerably, yet at supper he told some delightful anecdotes. When the conversation became emotional, he said that he was no longer able to pray for his missionaries during Mass because of the intense emotion he experienced, which threatened to choke him. "Then I have to think of Gianduia [a popular mask of the Piedmontese theater] to distract my thoughts at all costs," he said.

The morning of the sixteenth of March, on the day he was to leave, he saw a crowd of visitors. At the last moment, Marquis Spinola showed up with his camera equipment to take Don Bosco's picture. The saint graciously consented, but since this took quite some time, they had to hurry to reach the Varazze Station and catch the train. But the stationmaster was kind enough to hold the train for him, since he had been told about the delay.

Instead of lasting only a few minutes, the stop at the station of Arenzano lasted hours to satisfy the multitude of people who had reached the station and who wanted to see Don Bosco. The crowd rushed into the interior of the station. Some were leading sick people; others were transporting them by some means. People had surrounded the train, and were hanging from it and climbing over the compartments. The train was already late, and the stationmaster repeatedly gave the departure signal, but the conductor did not dare set the vehicle in motion for fear of accidents. A woman who was ill had been carried to Don Bosco's compartment. When she received his blessing, she was healed immediately and returned home walking at a brisk pace without assistance.

What can be said about Varazze? The train employee could not even collect the tickets of the travellers because people getting off the train were caught up in the crush of the huge crowd who had gone to the platform, all the way to the tracks. The pastor of the mother church, who was a very good friend of the Salesians, had announced Don Bosco's arrival from the pulpit and had sent a bulletin to the city and the surrounding area informing all about a meeting of Cooperators. The result was that people came flocking from Savona, Sestri, Voltri, and Arenzano. Older people swore they had never seen such a crowd of visitors in Varazze, nor such enthusiasm and manifestation of faith.

The climbing to the school usually takes a few minutes, but Don Bosco needed three quarters of an hour because of the size of the crowd that surrounded him in order to kiss his hand. The boys that were waiting for him on either side of the path broke ranks and were overwhelmed by the rushing crowd.

After lunch, a crowd milled around the places near the school. Attempts were made to keep it at bay, but to no avail. No one knew what happened, but the front door burst open and the crowd filled the corridors and invaded stairways and classrooms. Who could stop such frenzy? Don Bosco's very life might have been endangered if he had emerged. Standing firmly outside his door, Charles Viglietti argued to deaf ears. Some people knelt before him, shouting that, for the sake of charity, he

allow them to see Don Bosco. The Cooperators meeting was scheduled for four o'clock in the afternoon. However, it was already five when Don Bosco was still confined to his room seated on his chair and hemmed in on all sides.

Somehow, he had to be liberated. Extreme situations called for extreme measures. They had to rely on a few muscular fishermen, who took Don Bosco and his secretary and escorted them to the parish rectory. To shorten the journey, they had him go through a door at the side of the building that was hardly ever opened. Then, they accompanied him along a private path that opened out into the square. It was difficult to force a path through the crowd milling in front of the church. Don Bosco was no longer able to walk, but was pushed forward, driven by the swaying of the crowd. So as not to be separated from him, Charles Viglietti held tightly onto his cassock. Groups of curious people thronged windows, doors, and roofs. At six o'clock they were able to cross the threshold of the church. Always backed up by the stalwart escorts, Don Bosco and his secretary reached the sanctuary, where he was at last able to sit down.

After the school choir had sung *Quasi arcus*, Father Francis Cerruti preached on charity of prayer and the charity of good works. Then the pastor addressed the people with such emotion and enthusiasm that he brought them to tears. Naturally, in the crush, several people fainted and had to be taken outside. The church remained crowded after the benediction. The square outside was positively paved with heads. Just as people were trying to solve the problem of getting out of the church, a peasant, with an arm in a sling came up to Don Bosco and said, "Pray for me. I have hurt myself. I cannot work and my family is in need."

"Which is the damaged arm?" asked Don Bosco.

"Well...Oh! I would not know...I am cured!"

Don Bosco begged him to hide his sling and keep quiet, but too many people had witnessed the event. Word got out and enthusiasm reached fever pitch. Near the altar rail, a man forcing a path for himself with his elbows approached Don Bosco. He looked as if he had some great secret he wanted to confide. He talked in a dialect that Don Bosco did not understand, so he bent his head closer to listen. This confused the man who did not understand what the movement meant, so he kissed Don Bosco on the cheek and disappeared.

Don Bosco slowly made his way to the exit at a snail's pace. Every now and then someone cried out, fearing they would be trampled. Always calm and composed, Don Bosco smiled, said a word or greeted everyone,

especially the children. At last, with all the pushing and shoving, he was able to reach the entrance to the rectory. A few steps led up to the porch of the house. After mounting a few steps, the saint turned around to face the crowd. That was enough to bring a solemn silence in an instant. Deeply moved, he told them that he wished to thank them all for their demonstration of affection. He thanked the pastor for his benevolence and then raised his hand to give a blessing. What a wondrous sight!

It was growing dark. Don Bosco stood up there, utterly composed and raised his right hand to form the sign of the cross over the bowed or kneeling crowd. At the word "*Amen*," an immense shout arose of "*Long live Don Bosco!*"

The cry echoed far and wide, again and again, while the bells rang festively. The nearby sea seemed to quiver under the radiance of the stars. Older people have never forgotten the impression that that startling moment of time made on them. Don Bosco had visitors in the rectory up to 9 p.m.

"These people have no idea what they want from me," Don Bosco later said to his secretary. "Some people come to say, 'My wife is sick, my brother is sick, my husband is sick...I want you to cure them.' Then they say, 'Tell me how much it is.' 'Graces are not for sale,' I tell them. 'Say three *Hail Marys* for three days to Mary Help of Christians.' 'What do you mean?' someone will then ask. 'Something more is needed than *Hail Marys* for this! Please tell me outright, how much is it?'"

Whereupon Don Bosco had to explain that faith in God was needed as well as prayer and alms to obtain graces.

There was much faith indeed. Not only unsolicited donations of money were given him, but earrings, rings, and other items of jewelry as well.

Among the many people who called on Don Bosco, there was a mother who sorrowfully brought her little girl, who was extremely weak in her legs. The girl could barely walk and was in danger of becoming crippled since she was increasingly becoming deformed.

Don Bosco blessed the child and told the mother, "Go, good lady. Do not grieve. Your daughter will improve."

The child did indeed improve and grew up strong and is still alive today. Her name is Carmela Gracchi.

We have a detailed report of a spiritual grace granted. Mrs. Mary Bruzzone, born in Rossiglione but then living in Varazze, had a son named Joseph who, from the obedient, affectionate boy that he had been, had grown fond of dances and frequented company of a suspicious character. His poor mother could find no peace of mind. When she admon-

ished the boy, he kept silent, smiled, and continued to do whatever he wished. Then he began associating with a group of pleasure-seekers, who whiled away their evenings in various dancehalls. The mother wept and prayed in anguish. The coming of Don Bosco lifted her spirits. She went to the school to pour out her heart to him, but how could she get to him among that milling sea of humanity? She decided to wait for him at the station when it was time for him to leave, but here too, the square, the entrance hall of the station and the waiting room were swarming with people. Abandoning all hope, she sat in a corner, immersed in her sorrow.

As she sat there heartbroken, one of the priests who had accompanied Don Bosco to the station went up to her and said, "Please, come with me." Mrs. Bruzzone followed him mechanically, and found herself in the presence of the saint, who had sent someone to fetch her. Astounded and confused by this mysterious summons, she fell to her knees before him and burst into tears. After a moment Don Bosco said, "Now what is the matter, poor lady?"

"Oh, Father! I have so much to tell you! But I am so bewildered that I do not find words. I have a big family, but one son in particular..."

"Poor mother!" Don Bosco interrupted, resting a hand on her head. "Take heart. There is nothing new in what you are thinking. I will pray for you during my Holy Mass and soon everything will be all right. Be at peace."

He blessed her and departed. The woman was going through a real martyrdom, thinking that her son was involved in immoral relationships, yet Don Bosco reassured her about this. And the situation was exactly as he had said. Then the improvement Don Bosco had foretold became evident. On the last Sunday before Mardi Gras, a period when his mother had even more reason than usual to be afraid, the boy told her towards evening, "Let us go to bed, Mama."

"You are trying to trick me so that you can be more free!" she replied. "Do as you wish, but I will go or not go to bed, just as I please."

"No, Mama, I am not trying to deceive you. I am going to bed."

He did. What had taken place within him no one knew, because he was a young man of few words. But it is a fact that from that time on, he no longer frequented either the places or the people he had seen before even though he had already paid his membership dues. He became a family man, attended to his business. He even worked in America for a few years, then returned to his family and never again indulged in anything nonsensical.

Don Bosco reached Alassio at eleven p.m. on March 17th. On the way,

he had talked with Father Francis Cerruti for over half an hour about the missionaries and the missions, specifically mentioning places of South America, Africa, and Asia where in time his sons would go and establish themselves.

"You may tell me that there are already other Congregations there," he said. "That is indeed true, but we go to assist them, not to take their place. Remember that! As a rule, they dedicate themselves mainly to adults. We have to dedicate ourselves to youth in particular, especially poor and abandoned youth."

We have no details of his stay at Alassio. From a letter written to Father Michael Rua by Charles Viglietti the evening of the eighteenth of March, we see that nothing distracted Don Bosco's thoughts from the Oratory. As a matter of fact, he told his secretary, "He asks me to give you and the Council his regards, and also asks me to have you share news about him with the boys, with many special regards to the pupils of the fourth and fifth high school grades. He asks me to tell them that Don Bosco thinks of them all the time, and after his communion every morning, he always feels that he is giving to them also the bread of angels."

He was in Nice, France, on the twentieth of March, expecting to remain there until the end of the month. The procession of visitors soon began. The best of local society attended the meeting held on the 24th. A number of aristocratic gentlemen who were vacationing in Cannes also attended it. The preacher, a priest from Nice named Bonetti, delivered a brilliant homily:

"Once upon a time, there was an angel in Paradise who was delighted to see God and all things pertaining to Him. One day this angel, looking at so much misery there was on earth, seeing how society was decaying and children abandoned, was profoundly moved and went to see God.

He spoke to Him as follows: 'Here I enjoy all your bounty, yet on earth I see your creatures groaning and asking for your help. God, I would willingly sacrifice everything, all the joys of Heaven, gladly, to hasten to their assistance.'"

"'So be it!" the Lord answered. Then that angel of Paradise spread his golden wings. He landed in Italy, flew to France, to Spain, and scattered his generous bounty all over Europe. He even flew to the extreme borders of the Americas and lavished upon them his blessings, never wearying of doing good. Although this angel of peace was already burdened by years of labor, he flew everywhere, giving his blessing and comforting all. You know this angel, my friends. He is among us. He is Don Bosco."

Then Don Bosco got up to speak and with deep emotion attributed to

the Cooperators all the merit for whatever good the Salesians were trying to do. The diarist notes: "His mind was most lucid."

A large group of friends sat around him at dinner, among them Vincent Levrot, Charles D'Espiney and Ernest Michel, all friends of his. Don Bosco had waited for this happy occasion to give special honor to Dr. D'Espiney. Thanks to Don Bosco, the Pope had created him Knight of the Order of Saint Gregory the Great. Now, he entrusted to the engineer Levrot, who had already received the identical decoration, the task of making a suitable public announcement.

At the end of the meal, the engineer gave a speech in which the nobility of the words used vied with the exquisite form employed to deliver them. We will only single out one of his remarks here because it is more than a single courtesy, especially at the banquet. Levrot had known Don Bosco a long time and better than anyone else. He was therefore in a position to weigh what he was about to say: "Whatever Don Bosco does, he does it well, and in the end he is always right." It was indeed so.

On quite a number of occasions, Don Bosco at first had been regarded unfavorably or with suspicion, but in the end, when the chips were down, he always emerged victorious; he met with approval and praise. Only in one incident, which really was a sum total of incidents, did a misunderstanding of his actions occur that lasted even after his death. Yet, at the predetermined moment, God's Providence justified Don Bosco before the entire church with midday sunshine.

To the applause of the other guests, Don Bosco pinned the Knight's Cross on the newly knighted gentleman. Then Father John Bonetti spoke, followed by Don Bosco, and then by the attorney Michel. "It was a delightful family occasion," the cleric Charles Viglietti commented.

Later on, Don Bosco went with the director, Father Joseph Ronchail, and Charles Viglietti to call on Countess Braniska, where he also met the duke of Rivoli and other noblemen. From there he went to visit Madame de Montorme. When he returned home, his coat was in rags because many devout people had snipped pieces from it with their scissors.

His visitors increased in number the following morning, so he did not have time to take his breath. But with the increased visitors, also the charitable alms increased. In the evening, an English countess went to see him and said she was willing to donate an immense estate she owned in England for the building of a Salesian house. She was urged to such generosity by a debt of gratitude. Only a few days prior, she was so sick that she had been unable to leave her bed. She had

written Don Bosco to implore his blessing. As soon as she received his answer, she felt better, and she went to call on him without the slightest inconvenience.

The case of Madame Mercier, a resident of France though English by birth, was also extraordinary. Although she was a Protestant, she had written Don Bosco from Nice on December 7, 1885. She had been sick for ten years and asked his prayers both for her physical and spiritual well being. Don Bosco had Father Joseph Ronchail answer that he would be in Nice on February 20th and she could appeal to him personally.

The saint now called at her palace with Father Paul Albera and his secretary on the evening of the twenty-sixth of March, and spoke to her of religion. She, too, talked in such a way that one would have imagined that she was already a Catholic. She asked Don Bosco to bless her, and was delighted with his gift of *Il Cattolico Nel Secolo [The Catholic Living in the World]*, and said she hoped to become a Catholic.

Don Bosco encouraged her by saying, "We are growing old, madam. What shall we say to God? Do not delay it!" However, she was not converted.

Then he called on two ladies who were ill. On his way home, he had a double and most welcome surprise from the boys who handed him a spiritual bouquet of communions they intended to offer up for him, and a list of two hundred names representing students who had spontaneously resolved to behave for love of him and who had all received the best mark for their good conduct that term.

The queen of Wurtemberg, wife of King Charles I and sister to Czar Alexander II (who had died a victim of the Nihilists in 1881) was then residing in Nice. Her name was Olga Nicolaiewna, and although a member of the schismatic Orthodox Russian Church, she nevertheless was eager to see Don Bosco because she had heard people say he was a saint. She sent a messenger to ask him to call on her, saying she could receive him only between three and four the afternoon of the twenty-seventh.

Don Bosco sent word that he would go. When he appeared at the threshold of the room where he was granting audiences, he saw a number of people still waiting to speak with him, among them Countess Michel and Baron Héraud. He calmly went back to his room again, although it was already three-thirty p.m. Father Joseph Ronchail and Charles Viglietti, who had gone upstairs to call him, paced up and down in the waiting room, impatient at the delay. When they saw him emerge at last, they begged him to hurry.

Then Don Bosco noticed Father Francis Cerruti standing there and, guessing what he wanted, he called him inside, saying, "Oh! The queen of Wurtemberg can wait a little longer. In the meantime, we can wind up our own business."

After hearing Father Francis Cerruti's confession, he said, "Now be good enough to hear my confession."

Outside, the two escorts were on pins and needles. As soon as he joined them, they complained that an hour had already elapsed, repeating, "Hurry up, or we will no longer be on time. Even now, it may already be too late."

"*E ciau! Turnuma a ca* [So be it. Let's go back home]," he replied in the Piedmontese dialect.

As he walked, he greeted and bestowed a caress on the boys he met from the school, stopping to give a souvenir to a few of them. In the street, he climbed into the coach that the Marchioness de Constantin had put at his disposal. The celebrated wit, Baron Héraud, took it into his head that he wanted to act as the footman, so he jumped into the driver's seat. There was to be a gala reception at the palace at four o'clock. Ladies and gentlemen were already filling the halls, eager to look at Don Bosco, at whom they gazed in veneration.

When they reached the waiting room, a pageboy went to announce Don Bosco's arrival to the queen. He was ushered in immediately, and the queen came toward him with a great show of courtesy and utmost cordiality. After he was seated, she asked him about his houses, his boys, his educational system, and how he paid all his expenses. She also begged him to turn his attention to Wurtemberg. While she was questioning him and listening to his answers, she gazed at him in reverence and at last asked him if he were in need of financial assistance at the moment. Don Bosco replied that since this was the first time he had the honor of meeting Her Majesty, he did not want to bore her with the subject. The queen insisted and seemed anxious to do something for him, so he explained to her what the Cooperators were.

"That is what I wanted from you!" the queen exclaimed. "Please, enroll me as a Salesian Cooperator."

They talked for three quarters of an hour. Only when Don Bosco said that he was soon to depart for Spain did the queen say that she did not want to detain him any longer, but begged him to return to Nice.

Just as she was taking leave of him, she said with deep feeling, "Thank

you for the blessing you have bestowed on my family. As soon as possible I will inform my relatives of it and let them know what you have told me. I will immediately make a note of the day and hour of such a precious visit."

A person has to wait for a sovereign to give a dismissal, but the queen seemed hesitant about taking her leave of Don Bosco. Without sending for a servant, as etiquette would have demanded, she herself accompanied him to the doorway. When she saw Fathers Joseph Ronchail and Charles Viglietti, she asked who they were and what they were doing, and spoke to them graciously. She recommended that the secretary take great care of Don Bosco and after greeting them, she withdrew. As he walked through the rooms, Don Bosco moved a number of ladies to compassion when they saw how painfully he walked and how visibly he suffered.

He had to leave for Cannes. Since he had time, he made a call at the convent of the Sisters of Saint Augustine, a rest home for wealthy women. He gave a private audience to a number of them. Then, he went straight to the station, where a number of ladies and gentlemen were waiting to wish him a pleasant journey.

He boarded the train with Charles Viglietti. When he arrived, Marquis Gaudemaris put his coach at his disposal and drove him to his villa for dinner. After taking his leave from that pious family, the saint went to bed at the Monplasir, a private boarding facility operated by nuns, the Auxiliary Dames, in a luxurious villa near the station. The nuns themselves, however, lived in an adjacent house.

He said Mass in their chapel the next day. Then the visitors began to arrive, and he gave audiences until midday. He dined with Countess de Villeroi at her villa, which was known as the Great Pine Tree, and granted some interviews also there. Then he returned to the Auxiliary Dames residence and found their courtyard full of people who all knelt on the gravel for his blessing as he passed by. He handed out medals, and then granted interviews until it was dark.

The next morning, Charles Viglietti wrote to Father Michael Rua: "I am eager to send you news about Don Bosco, who is sleeping in the room next to mine, in the big villa where the Auxiliary Dames have a boarding facility. Don Bosco is tired, but thanks be to God and to the prayers of the boys of the Oratory, he is fairly well in health. He says you should come to Marseilles on April first or second because he is eager to get to Barcelona."

A number of people gathered in the hospital chapel to attend his

Mass on the twenty-ninth, after which he retired at the home of its chaplain, Monsignor Marius Guigou. That zealous Cooperator soon found himself in a very difficult predicament. The rushing of the many people who followed the saint wherever he went disturbed his pleasure of having Don Bosco as his guest. They crowded his home without a second thought. The princess of Caserta, sister of Francis V, the last king of Naples, also called on him. A girl was brought to him bound on a stretcher because she was subject to convulsions. Her sad parents begged him to bless her. He did as they asked, then said, "How long has this girl been confined to bed?"

"Five years," her father answered.

"Do you have faith in Mary Help of Christians?"

"Yes, Father," the man answered.

"If you have faith, release the girl, let her dress in the adjoining room and you will see her walk without any need of assistance."

"Oh, that is out of the question!" the mother said abruptly. "The physicians say she must not be touched. It is impossible. She is absolutely incapable of moving."

"Do as I tell you!" Don Bosco said.

Then the sick girl herself spoke, "Have faith, Papa. Believe in Don Bosco. Try to obey him. Untie me and I will recover."

After a little hesitation, the father untied her. She took the clothes from the bed, dressed herself, rose to her feet and began to walk, saying, "Look, Papa! Look, Mama! How well I can walk! I have recovered!"

Her mother almost swooned from the emotion and excessive joy she experienced while her father was struck speechless. The girl asked them to help her carry her stretcher back home because she wanted to go back on foot. Her father did not agree and demanded that she lie down again so that they could carry her.

"Don Bosco, what are we to do?" the girl asked.

"Go home with your father and mother," the saint said, "and thank Mary Help of Christians."

It is easy to imagine what happened outside when people saw the empty stretcher carried out of the room while the girl walked behind it with a firm step. Other sick people were brought before him immediately. But Don Bosco said, "Now it is time to stop!" So he began to order certain prayers to be said for a certain length of time, in order to obtain graces.

One lady who witnessed this scene sent for her son to be brought

there, bed and all, and had him set right before Don Bosco. He blessed the boy in haste, told him to observe a few pious devotions for a given number of days, assured them that he would recover, and departed.

He had accepted an invitation to lunch in the lovely villa of Mr. Potron at noon, and then he returned to the residence of Monsignor Guigou, where he had to satisfy the expectations of an infinite number of people. They went into his room in clusters, were given his blessing and a medal, and then they were asked to leave.

He finally called on Her Royal Highness Princess Antonia of Braganza of the house of Hohenzollern, wife of Prince Leopold and a fervent Catholic, who was delighted to be enrolled as a Salesian Cooperator. From her residence he went on to the station, where a number of gentlemen awaited him to pay their respects. Among them were the prince and princess of Caserta, who kissed his hand reverently. Cannes was ever more generous in its charity than Nice.

He wrote to Count and Countess Colle from Nice on Friday the twenty-sixth: "Monday evening, God willing, I will be with you, and we can discuss our affairs with ease. If you can get an altar ready for me, I will be glad to say Holy Mass at home, otherwise I am at your service."

He arrived in Toulon the evening of the appointed day. He dined with his good friends who, as usual, enchanted by his delightful conversation, would not let him go until midnight.

In the letter already quoted he had also written, "On Tuesday, Count du Boys and his daughter will be arriving in Toulon from Hyáres to pay us a visit. They are charitable and excellent Catholics, and will make you feel at ease." They actually arrived and the count invited them, as well as the pastor of Saint Aloysius and a few friends, to dinner.

Count Du Boys asked Don Bosco to give him several medals of Mary Help of Christians. Upon receiving them, he explained how he owed his life to a medal of Mary Help of Christians. Three years before, he had fallen several meters and should have crushed his skull as he fell, if you consider that he was already seventy-nine years old. When he reached the ground, all he felt was a little dazed caused by the fall. He attributed this miracle to the fact that he had been wearing a medal of Mary Help of Christians.

In his talks with the Colles, Don Bosco discussed the biography of Mama Margaret that Father John Baptist Lemoyne was writing. The count was so anxious to read it that he wished to see it published soon at all costs. He said he himself would undertake the expense, but that it should

be published right away. Therefore, Charles Viglietti wrote to its author: "Don Bosco instructs me to write to you, by special delivery, what follows and I obey." After informing him of the wish of the count, he went on: "Don Bosco says that no matter how it is, corrected or not corrected, and if it says much or little of him that does not matter either, for he wishes that it be published as soon as possible. If an order is not enough, he says, he will beseech you as a favor: put aside every other occupation, but do as your Father who loves you as his dearest of all Salesians is asking you. This is what Don Bosco wanted me to tell you."

Any wish of Don Bosco's was equivalent to more than ten orders. So, in a letter dated April 23rd, Father John Baptist Lemoyne wrote to Bishop John Cagliero: "I am now about to finish in a hurry the biography of Mama Margaret, hoping to offer it to Don Bosco for the Feast of Saint John." This was indeed the day when Father John Baptist Lemoyne presented the biography to him.[4]

This is how the author introduces Don Bosco's mother to the reader: "She was not rich, but possessed the heart of a queen. She was not educated in book learning, but in the holy fear of God. She was prematurely stripped of him who should have been her mainstay, yet relying on her strength of will and her trust in the help of Heaven, she was able to successfully fulfill the mission entrusted to her by God." The book was very well received, for it gratified the legitimate curiosity of all those who were anxious to know who had trained Don Bosco when he was a child and how it had been done.

Don Bosco was delighted with the biography and often wept as he read a few of its pages, as he himself told its author one day. When Father Lemoyne told him how precious such tears of joy and such affectionate memories were to Don Bosco, the loving Father pressed his hands and only said, "Thank you!"

Don Bosco left Toulon that same evening for Marseilles. A sick person was sitting in his own train compartment and moaned in a pitiful way. When he heard who Don Bosco was, he threw himself at his feet, imploring his blessing. It was given to him. He felt better, gave Don Bosco one hundred francs, and then recited the whole Rosary, something that he apparently had not done for a very long time. The saint assured him that he would continue to improve in his health.

[4] *Scene Morali Di Famiglia Nella Vita Di Margherita Bosco* [Moral Family Scenes in the Life of Margherita Bosco,] (Turin, 1886). Salesian Tip. On April 19th, Viglietti wrote Fr. J. Lemoyne from Sarriá: "Don Bosco says that you would do well to ask Fr. John Francis Giacomelli to get details of Mamma Margaret's death."

At the station in Marseilles, the Olive family and the pastor, Father Guiol, were waiting to welcome him. The reception given him at Saint Leo's Oratory was one of indescribable enthusiasm. Toward evening, all the members of the house gathered around him to honor his arrival with a festive celebration. One memorable incident was the presentation of one thousand francs, the end result of small savings made by the boys of Marseilles, Paris, Lille, and La Navarre, to help him build the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome. The pupils at Saint Leo's had conceived the idea for such a collection.

The Marseilles newspapers had announced Don Bosco's arrival in town, so at certain hours, both in the morning and afternoon, the house seemed to be besieged. Tired as he was, the saint did not want to disappoint anybody. Indeed, so as to be sure not to upset anyone, he concealed his weariness from the confreres by telling them amusing tales of his past life.[5]

He waited for Father Michael Rua in order to resume his journey. Father Rua arrived late in the evening of April 2nd. Together they agreed to leave for Barcelona on the seventh on a sleeper train. In the meantime, Father Michael Rua studied Spanish by reading the pamphlet of the bishop of Milo, to which we have referred in the preface of the preceding volume.[6]

Let us say something about this pamphlet. Who is Don Bosco? On what was his reputation for being an exceptional man based? What ought one think of the Salesian Congregation and its founder? These were the questions raised by Spaniards ever since two houses of Don Bosco had caused people to talk about him in their country.

The author of the pamphlet decided to answer these questions in three long chapters, which were planned and written like three regular lectures. The booklet ended with a reprint of three articles published by the bishop in the *Revista popular* of Barcelona,[7] entitled "Don Bosco y Los Talleres Salesians [Don Bosco and the Salesian Workshops]."

The author said that he had made a careful study of the Salesian

[5]It was at this time that he told the story of the table silverware in the house of Baron Martini at Aix, as Fr. Charles Viglietti says in his diary (see Vol. XIV, pp. 16–17).

[6] Bishop Spinola, formerly titular bishop of Milo and ordinary of Coria, later bishop of Malaga, archbishop of Seville and then cardinal, was so holy a prelate that the cause for his beatification and canonization is now in progress. With the intuition proper of saints he fully understood Don Bosco's holiness and the grandeur of his mission, as can be seen from his book *Don Bosco y su Obra* [Don Bosco and his Work].

[7]Nos. 708, 709, 710.

Institute and was convinced that his effort would represent an outstanding service to the Church "to which the glory of this illustrious priest belonged," and a no lesser service to society "which benefits by everything that helps to expand and assist the holy undertakings of so distinguished a man, an authentic symbol of Christian charity."[8] The dynamic and facile style of the prelate's writing is such that one gladly reads its pages even today.

Don Bosco did not pretend to be unaware either of this or other similar publications, but he looked at them from a distance. When Father Evasio Rabagliati returned from America, he told the saint that he had read that particular book, and that he had liked it very much.

"Well then, translate it," Don Bosco said. "At this time only you and Father Louis Lasagna, of all the missionaries in America, are still capable of writing fluent Italian. Then we shall be able to print it."

"But how, Don Bosco?" Father Evasio Rabagliati asked confidentially. "Should we praise ourselves? Do you not think this would be unbecoming?"

"Well, no! Look. If we do not print it ourselves, others will, so the result will be the same. It is now no longer a question of glorifying the work of human beings, but only of glorifying the work of God because everything that has been done already and that is now being done is His work."

A lady, one Eloise Blanch who was mentally incompetent, instantly recovered her sanity when led into the presence of Don Bosco to receive his blessing on April 3rd.

There was no lack of healing cases in Marseilles also on this occasion. One day, a good lady who had suffered from violent headaches for a number of years went to see Don Bosco, imploring him to bless her and cause her pains to cease. Before blessing her, he told her to say three *Hail Marys* for a certain period of time. In an instant, the pain disappeared. Happy and contented, she promised that before nightfall she would bring him an offering of one hundred francs as a token of her gratitude. Upon returning home to her family, she forgot all about the prayer and her promise, so great was her joy. However, she was soon obliged to remember it, for her pain returned and she realized that she had not kept her word. So a few days later she again called on Don Bosco to keep her promise and came away cured.

Mademoiselle de Gabriac was seriously ill with consumption.

[8] Introduction, p. 10.

When she heard that Don Bosco was in Marseilles, she sent word to him that she would be very happy to meet him, since she had heard of the many cures obtained by him. She lived on Rue Saint Philomene, now known as Rue Dr. Escat, in the villa where the Blanchard clinic is now located. The saint wished to gratify her request and called on her. She immediately begged him to cure her. "I am not a healer," he replied, but then added, "We will now pray to Mary Help of Christians and in Her name, I will give you a blessing." He bade her say three *Hail Marys* and, after blessing her, he went away. Four days later, as he was saying Mass for her, as he had promised he would, her sickness suddenly disappeared and she recovered so completely that she later married and gave birth to two healthy children.

Saints possess the wonderful secret gift of restoring peace to hearts in conflict. A devoted Cooperator, Madame Broquier, had a daughter who had become hostile toward herself and her father, on account of her own husband. There had not been cordial relations between the two families for a long time. When Don Bosco saw how the young woman's parents were suffering because of this discord, he offered himself to act as peacemaker. The Broquier couple was delighted and gave a dinner in his honor, but only invited their daughter and son-in-law at his suggestion. Tempted by the prospect of meeting Don Bosco at table, they both readily accepted the invitation. This already represented a very important step.

During the meal, Don Bosco did not say anything that had any bearing on their family problem, but kept everyone happy with his jovial conversation. But when the dessert was served, he raised his glass and made a toast to peace, harmony, and family affection, in so persuasive and gentle a way that they were all touched and quite enchanted. At the end they all embraced and peace was restored.

On Monday, April 5th, the bishop confirmed some thirty boys in the Oratory chapel, and remained talking with Don Bosco for some time after the ceremony. The feast day of Saint Joseph was being celebrated in the house that same day; this proved to be a propitious occasion to invite the main benefactors of the house to Don Bosco's table, and to hold a meeting of the Cooperators. A distinguished audience of both ladies and gentlemen listened to the lecturer and was deeply moved by the words the saint addressed to them at the end. In recalling the charity of the people of Marseilles, Don Bosco became so deeply moved that his sobs interrupted him several times.

He devoted April 6th to the ladies of the committee. After saying Mass for them, he addressed them in the parlor of the Oratory for the first time, no longer assembling them in the rectory of the pastor of Saint Joseph's. As the minutes say, "This was more easily accessible to the weary legs of our holy founder than the rectory would have been."

First of all, he talked about the purchase of a nearby land site, since it was urgent that the building be enlarged, so as not to reject a number of applicants.

"This is not possible at the moment," Don Bosco said. "First of all, we have to think about paying our debts. I, too, am aware of how difficult things are at the present time. Many people who wish to perform acts of charity are unable to do so. We must thank Divine Providence for the assistance given us so far. I talked with Father Paul Albera and saw that we still have an old outstanding debt of seventy thousand francs from the previous construction of the house. When this is paid, we shall be able to meet our usual expenses with the assistance of charitable donations. I am going to Barcelona and hope to raise money there." Then Father Guiol interrupted him and recalled that Don Bosco had said during his speech that he wished he could extend not two, but even three hands, in order to beg for alms. He asked him whether of those three hands, one were reserved for Saint Leo's Oratory. "All three of them are," Don Bosco replied readily, thus expressing his full confidence that his journey would be successful. Indeed, he sent as much as ten thousand francs in one single mailing to Father Paul Albera from Barcelona.

He then told of an act of God as a justification for his confidence. "This winter, Father Paul Albera urged me to send him money," he said. "When I put together all I could find, I found that I barely had one thousand five hundred francs, only half of the three thousand needed. Letters arrived from Russia, Austria, and even Central Africa when the mail was delivered. I opened them, and inside I found strangely scribbled symbols that looked as if they were diabolical missives. None of us were able to decipher them. Luckily, we found an interpreter. A pagan woman had written, saying that she had been told of a lady who was in the habit of granting exceptional graces, and whose name was 'Holy Virgin.' She had heard also that there was need of money and that Don Bosco could not go to where she lived, so he should send other people to baptize her and other people as well. She would pay for their journey. Meanwhile, she was sending him a donation. It was difficult to change the money because no one knew what it was worth, but when the various amounts received from different places were added up, we saw that we had accumulated the one

thousand five hundred francs that were still needed. The most consoling thing about it all was that everyone had sent the money in thanksgiving for graces received through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians. It is She who protects our institute." So saying, he then told them about the progress made in Patagonia by the Salesian missionaries and about the progress of Saint Leo's Oratory, concluding with his habitual wit, "I invite you all to come to Turin for my Golden Jubilee Mass in 1891. We expect things out of this world on that occasion. We will have two thousand singers in the choir, and Bishop John Cagliero, the first Salesian bishop, will be there, heading a Patagonian choir."

In the minutes, however, it is stated that Don Bosco hinted at his own doubts that he would be able to attend the celebration. Before the meeting came to an end, the pastor, Father Guiol, handed him a donation of one thousand francs.

That same day, Don Bosco dined with Mr. Olive. When the door of the dining room was opened, everyone in the company of the saint uttered an astonished "Oh!" - for waiting for him, silently, yet rejoicing, were the novices of Providence House. Mr. Olive, the gentleman who had provided half a chicken for each boy at Valdocco, had arranged this delightful surprise for Don Bosco.[9] The children of the master of the house waited on the guests.

As soon as it was known in town that Don Bosco would be departing on April 7th, people went to the oratory in even greater numbers than before. A thick crowd gathered in the courtyard when it was time for him to leave the institute. The boarders were visibly sad as they lined up on either side of his path. Their sadness was enhanced by Don Bosco's farewell words: "We will see each other again in Paradise."

Father Charles Viglietti wrote that when Don Bosco said that, all the boys began to weep. They truly had every reason to do so, for never again were they to see their beloved Father on earth. He had bequeathed an unforgettable souvenir, which was to be his last, to all

[9]Fr. Guiol had spent the Feast of St. Francis de Sales with the novices of the Providence House and later told the ladies of the committee at their meeting on Feb. 5th about his impressions. What he told them was very interesting. "Those boys were really admirable, permeated with Don Bosco's spirit which is something quite special. Don Bosco wants youth to serve youth, or else he wishes it to be served by priests who have been reared in his own spirit and trained by him. The children who are reared in such an environment and are permeated by such ideas are wonderfully prepared for his apostolate. They are trained to do penance, to prayer, to self-sacrifice, all virtues that are ideal requisites for the making of a good priest, and later for training youth to live a Christian life. This is the institute which the committee has the mission and the joy to support and to be dedicated to."

the confreres of that house. He said it in Italian as he was leaving the house: "*Rammentatevi che siete fratelli* [Remember that you are all brothers]."

His most intimate friends and their families had gathered at the station. The stationmaster, who had reserved an excellent compartment for Don Bosco and his companions, went to greet him with the principal railway employees and paid his respects and extended his good wishes. His wife offered Don Bosco a lovely bouquet of flowers. When the train whistle blew, everyone started clapping and shouting good wishes to Don Bosco. Father Paul Albera felt his heart swell, while big tears ran down his cheeks, as he remained behind with the memory of an exhausted Don Bosco and in his heart, an intense fear that the journey might prove harmful to him.

Chapter 3

DIARY OF DON BOSCO'S VISIT TO BARCELONA

There was still a strong doubt at the Oratory that Don Bosco's health would permit him to journey beyond the Pyrenees. "If he does, then it can in all truth be called a miracle," Father Joseph Lazzero wrote to Bishop John Cagliero on March 28th, "because considering Don Bosco's present state of health, such a thing would be impossible to dream of, humanly speaking." Nevertheless, he voiced the commonly prevailing thought when he added: "He is a man of Divine Providence, and that is enough." Yet despite everyone's fears, he did not stop halfway.

Port-Bou is the first Spanish station at which the traveler arrives after crossing the French border from the side facing the Lion's Gulf. Don Bosco traveled for eleven hours from Marseilles, since he set out at five o'clock in the afternoon on April 7th and arrived at Port-Bou at four o'clock in the morning of the following day. Father John Baptist Branda and a gentleman from Barcelona named Suñer were eagerly waiting to welcome him. This same gentleman was the administrator for a very wealthy family of Barcelona, who hoped to obtain an outstanding grace from the saint, as we shall mention at the proper time.

He had reserved an entire compartment for himself, into which he now ushered Don Bosco and his two traveling companions. There they found every conceivable comfort, both in the way of refreshments and rest accommodations. In his extreme state of weakness, Don Bosco could not do otherwise than break his fast. However, Father Michael Rua, who hoped to celebrate Mass at a late hour, neither ate nor drank.

After coasting for a while along the shores of the Mediterranean, the railway track goes inland and later comes into sight of the coast again. Here at a secondary station, Narciso Pascual, the son-in-law of Mrs. Chopitea boarded the train with one of his children. Both father and son were already acquainted with Don Bosco, having been in Turin in 1884.

As they changed trains, another traveler, who had also boarded the train at Marseilles, had joined Don Bosco's company. Shortly before the train left that city and when this gentleman had already been seated in his place, he had heard a great noise, and looking out of the window, had discovered that Don Bosco, too, was about to depart. He had already heard many things about him, so he was most eager to meet him. At Port-Bou his wish was gratified, for Mr. Suñer knew him personally, and offered to introduce him. He did so in French, but the stranger completed the presentation by speaking Italian. Whereupon Don Bosco said, "Do not leave me. We will keep each other company the rest of the journey."

Utterly delighted, the gentleman never left his side. After conversing pleasantly for quite some time, Don Bosco dozed off until dawn. Noticing that one of Don Bosco's shoes had become unlaced, the courteous traveler knelt down, despite the objections of the saint, to retie the laces with great pleasure. Don Bosco got off the train at Barcelona, leaning on his arm and when he took leave of him, he said, "I will wait for you at Sarriá tomorrow. I want you to receive Communion from my hand."

"There is no need for me to say that I was at the Salesian house in Sarriá well before the appointed hour," the gentleman wrote.[1]

With the small general staff described above, Don Bosco made his entrance into the capital of Catalonia. The newspapers had already announced his coming some weeks in advance, with news about his personality and his undertakings. When the date of his arrival was made known, nobles and outstanding representatives of both clergy and lay people came from Madrid, Seville, and other large towns to welcome him upon his arrival. The people of Barcelona were proud of the honor of having him in their town, and staged a public demonstration such as would normally have been given to welcome a reigning monarch. Thousands of people moved toward the railway station, nobles and common folk mingling together. In a reserved area, the leaders of Catholic associations and representatives from the worlds of science, politics, city government, and the Church gathered in an orderly fashion. The governor was there to represent Queen Marie Christine, who was regent for King Alfonso XIII, then still unborn. The bishop was away from his See, but had instructed his vicar general to represent him, so he too was there, heading an imposing group of priests.

[1] Report by John Baptist Montobbio Villavecchia to the provincial, Fr. Joseph Calasanz (Barcelona, June 6, 1934.) Mr. Montobbio, a gentleman of Genoese origin, who is still alive, was the traveler mentioned above.

Don Bosco approached and saw right in front a spectacle extraordinarily great. This great spectacle assumed a character absolutely new because of the unique contrast between the solemnity of the reception given him and his own humility. His manner was utterly modest, his appearance fragile, and he looked almost lost facing such a crowd, though he met it with a serene countenance. His flashing eyes alone revealed what a great soul was concealed within that feeble body.

Unmindful of his weariness, he listened calmly and courteously to all the people who tried to get near him to pay their respects or ask him for a favor. According to the circumstances, and the people he met, he would answer either by bowing his head, or with an affectionate look or with a gracious word, while a charming smile hovered on his lips. But at the pace he was moving, he would never have reached one of the fifty and more coaches that were disputing the privilege of escorting him to the city through that vast crowd. With the assistance of volunteer escorts, Don Bosco finally reached one after approximately an hour. In the rivalry that ensued in choosing a coach, his choice fell on the carriage of the mother of the Salesians, who was delighted enough already by the words Don Bosco uttered as soon as he met her. He said, "Oh! Mrs. Chopitea! I prayed to God every day that he might grant me the grace of meeting you in person before I die."

As soon as he was escorted to the palace of this noblewoman, he retired to his room, since he felt an extreme need of rest. Meanwhile, Father Michael Rua celebrated Mass in the house chapel, where everyone attended who had been in the escort of honor accompanying Don Bosco. Later on, the servant of God made his appearance in the drawing room, where the representatives of several noble families were waiting to pay their respects. He dined with the patriarchal family. Then after receiving a few visitors, he was driven by coach to the school of Sarriá.

In Sarriá, his name was just as blessed as that of Mary Help of Christians because of one incident that the common folks held to be miraculous. The previous year, Barcelona had been hard hit by cholera, but Sarriá, which was only a few kilometers away and whereto thousands of people everyday would go from the infected towns, had remained immune. Mrs. Jesusa de Serra had collected a great many medals of Mary Help of Christians, which Don Bosco maintained were an antidote against the plague, and had sent her two sons Joseph and Sebastian to bury them all along the road linking Sarriá to Barcelona. Not a single victim was to be reported in Sarriá.

Don Bosco arrived at the school, as the expected Messiah. For the Feast of Saint John the previous year, the boys had sent him a drawing they had made, depicting a train in motion with the words "From Turin to Barcelona." At last, their dream had come true. How many novenas had they made, how many mortifications had they practiced to obtain the grace that Don Bosco reach them safe and sound! Therefore, as soon as they knew that this grace was about to be granted them, they started organizing a worthy reception for him.

The courtyard was magnificently decorated, but far more than on the flowers and festoons, Don Bosco's attention was riveted on the serene wide-open faces of the boys who gazed at him, never satisfied enough to look at him. "The Father, the Saint is here!" they were thinking. "This is the miracle worker about whom we have read and heard so many things!" The band accompanied a lovely song that uplifted the hearts of those who listened, all of them vibrant with joy and gratitude. An immense crowd swayed and pushed both within and outside the house. His first move was in the direction of the chapel to thank God for his safe journey, which had been prayed for by so many. A motet, which had been composed especially for the occasion, was sung to the words of *Ego sum pastor bonus [I am the good Shepherd]*. Then Don Bosco gave the blessing of Mary Help of Christians to the boys and all present. Father Michael Rua gave the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, assisted by the diocesan vicar general and a professor from the theological seminary. The emotions felt joined to the hard strains of that night and of that day would have overwhelmed him if the ever-solicitous and attentive Charles Viglietti finally had not taken him away and brought him to his room, after permitting him only a few brief interviews. The rooms he and his two companions were to occupy had been swept, fitted, furnished, and kept clean by Mrs. Chopitea and her daughters.

The evening paper, *El Correo Catalan*, first described his arrival and then continued: "The whole of Barcelona, represented by all its social classes, has joyously welcomed this most virtuous priest, to whom we extend our cordial welcome, and hope that if possible, his stay among us be extended."

The people of Barcelona were upset by the bad weather of the following morning, but it favored Don Bosco because there were few visitors and he was able to rest. This was not so in the afternoon. His waiting room was soon filled with ladies and gentlemen of the aristocracy. He was in no way bothered by the language difference, for Charles Viglietti wrote in his

diary: "Don Bosco talks in Italian and it is truly wonderful how everyone understands him. He also understands Spanish very well indeed."

Ever since Father Michael Rua had set foot on Spanish soil, he had not spoken anything but Spanish and seemed so at ease in his use of that language that whenever people discovered he had learned it in only a few days, thanks to one of those pocket grammar books edited by Sonzogno in Milan for only 15 cents a copy, they were completely dumbfounded.[2]

Neither distance nor chain of events could ever completely distract Don Bosco's thoughts from the Oratory. This is what Charles Viglietti wrote on his behalf in the evening to Father John Baptist Lemoyne: " Thank God, Don Bosco is well, and he instructs me to tell you that although he is in another country, among other people, his heart and his mind are always homebound towards his beloved nest at the Oratory."

We will continue our narrative by relating the subsequent events as they unfolded from day to day. It will be, so to speak, the Barcelonian diary of Don Bosco's visit to Spain. True enough, he stayed at Sarriá, but even though that population was not then entirely absorbed by that city as it is today (since it formed a separate community), it was nevertheless considered a genuine suburb of Barcelona.

SATURDAY, APRIL 10th

During the night of April 9th, Don Bosco had a new missionary dream, which he related to Father Rua, Father Branda, and Brother Viglietti, in a voice at times choked by sobs. Viglietti wrote it down immediately afterwards and, at Don Bosco's direction, sent a copy to Father Lemoyne so that he could read it to all the superiors of the Oratory for their general encouragement. "But," the secretary warned, "this is nothing more than a sketch of a very long, magnificent vision." The text that we are publishing is that of Viglietti, slightly touched up stylistically by Father Lemoyne to put it into more correct Italian:

[2] That day, April 9, Fr. Rua wrote a letter to Fr. John Bonetti and it began as follows: "Dear Fr. Bonetti, On the journey I had an opportunity to read the history of the Oratory of our beloved Father. He was very strict in editing and suggested a number of emendations that you will find in the galley proofs. Among others, eliminate the name and even the initial of the professor who came to visit us and the account of the deaths of Farini and Cavour." These were the galley proofs of the *Storia dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales* [St. John Bosco's Early Apostolate], part II, ch. 16, which then appeared in the August issue of the *Bollettino Salesiano*. As we see, Fr. Bonetti's work was supervised by Don Bosco and Fr. Rua. The professor's name may be found in *The Biographical Memoirs*, Vol. VII, p. 262. The deaths of the two statesmen are recounted in the *Memorie Biografiche*, Vol. VI, pp. 688, 962–963 (omitted in the English edition).

Don Bosco found himself in the neighborhood of Castelnuovo standing on the hillock known as Bricco Del Pino[3] near the Sbarnau valley. He turned his gaze everywhere, but could see nothing more than thick scrubs that sprawled everywhere and which were covered by an infinite number of small mushrooms.

"Now," Don Bosco said to himself, "this is also the country estate of Joseph Rossi.[4] He ought to be here!"

Shortly after that, in fact, he saw Rossi on a distant hilltop, gazing most seriously over the valleys spread out beneath him. Don Bosco hailed him, but he answered only with a distracted glance, as if his thoughts were elsewhere.

Turning in another direction, Don Bosco also saw Father Rua at a distance, who just as Rossi, was most seriously, but peacefully, seated as if resting.

Don Bosco called to both of them, but they remained silent, not replying by so much as a gesture.

So he descended from the hillock and walked over to another one, from the summit of which he saw a forest, but it was cultivated, and roads and paths ran through it. He gazed around in another direction, looking toward limits of the horizon, and even before his eye perceived them, his ear was struck by the uproar created by an immense crowd of children.

No matter how much he tried to discover from where the noise came, he saw nothing. Then a shout followed the uproar, as though in the wake of some catastrophe. At length he saw a vast crowd of boys who ran toward him, crying, "We've been waiting for you. We've been waiting for you so long. Now at last you're here. You're among us and you won't get away from us!"

Don Bosco did not understand at all and wondered what these boys wanted from him. But while he was standing there, dazed in their midst, gazing at them, he saw an immense flock of lambs led by a shepherdess. After she had separated the boys from the sheep, she set one group to one side and the other to the opposite

[3] *Bricco del Pino*: a hillock near Joseph Bosco's home at Becchi, on which he owned a vineyard. *Pino*, according to Natale Cerrato (*Il Linguaggio della prima storia salesiana* [Rome: LAS, 1991], p. 293), refers to Joseph (Giuseppe or, diminutively, Giuseppino).

[4] As a joke, Don Bosco had named Coadjutor Brother Joseph Rossi "count" of that piece of land. On Rossi, see Appendix 1.

side. She stopped in front of Don Bosco, to whom she said, "Do you see what's before you?"

"Yes, I do," Don Bosco answered.

"Good. Do you recall the dream you had when you were ten years old?"

"Oh! It's quite hard for me to remember it! My mind's tired and, at present, I don't remember it clearly."

"Good, good! Think hard and you'll recall it."

Then she summoned the boys to Don Bosco's side, telling him, "Now look in this direction. Look further on - all of you, look further and read what is written over there. So what do you see?"

"I see mountains, then the sea, then hills, and again mountains and seas."

"I read *Valparaiso*," one boy said.

Another boy said, "I read *Santiago*."

"I read both those names," added a third.

"Well," continued the shepherdess, "set out from there and you will form an idea of how much the Salesians have to do in the future. Now look in that direction. Draw a visual line and look."

"I see mountains, hills, and seas!"

The boys, too, focused their eyes and exclaimed in chorus, "We read *Peking*!"

Then Don Bosco saw a great city. Through it ran a wide river, over which some big bridges had been built.

"Good," said the maiden, who seemed to be the boys' teacher. "Now draw a single line from one end to the other, from Peking to Santiago. Establish your center in the middle of Africa, and you will get an exact idea of how much the Salesians have to do."

"But how can all this be accomplished?" Don Bosco exclaimed. "The distances are enormous, the places difficult, and the Salesians few."

"Don't worry. Your sons, the sons of your sons, and their sons again will do this. Just let them steadfastly observe the Rules and keep the spirit of the Pious Society."

"But where are we to find so many people?"

"Come here and look. Do you see fifty missionaries standing ready there? Farther on, do you see others, and still others? Draw a line from Santiago to the center of Africa. What do you see?"

"I can see ten central [mission] stations."

"Well, these central stations that you see will make up houses of studies and novitiates and will send forth a multitude of missionaries to staff these lands. Now look to this other side. Here you see ten more centers reaching from Africa to Peking. These, too, will provide missionaries for all of these other lands. There's Hong Kong; there, Calcutta; farther on, Madagascar. Here and also elsewhere there will be more houses, houses for studies and novitiates."

Don Bosco listened as he looked and examined, then he said: "And where can so many people be found, and how can missionaries be sent to all those places? There you have savages that feed on human flesh. In this place you have heretics and in that one persecutors. So how shall we manage?"

"Look," the shepherdess answered. "Be of good will. There is only one thing to do: recommend that *my sons constantly cultivate the virtue of Mary*."

"Okay, good. I believe I understand. I will preach your words to all of them."

"And beware of the error now prevailing, which is to mix those who are studying the human arts with others studying the divine arts, for the science of Heaven is not to be mixed with earthly matters."

Don Bosco wanted to say more, but the vision disappeared. His dream was over.

As Don Bosco was relating his dream, his three listeners kept exclaiming, "O Mary, Mary!" When the saint had finished, he said, "How much Mary loves us!" Then, when he was discussing this dream in Turin with Father Lemoyne, he said calmly, yet with a highly significant tone, "When the Salesians will be in China and find themselves on both banks of the river that passes through the Peking region... some will settle to the left bank from the direction of the mighty Empire and others to the right bank from the direction of the Tartarian region. Oh! When the one group will be able to meet the other to shake each other's hands! What glory for our Congregation! Yet the time is in God's hands!"

In sending a copy of this story of the dream to Bishop John Cagliero, this is what Father Lemoyne wrote on April 23rd in reference to the role played in it by Father Rua, Don Bosco's vicar, and by Joseph Rossi, the provisioner general: "As interpreter I would note that Father Michael Rua

stands for the spiritual part and is over worried; Joseph Rossi stands for the material part and is all messed up. Both of them will find consolation in the future." And that's what happened.

An apt commentary on the part of the dream referring to Chile is evidenced by an item published in the Salesian *Bulletin* of September 1887. Describing a journey that Bishop Cagliero completed with Bishop Joseph Fagnano[5] into that transandean republic, the article related that Santiago Senator Valledor had begged the Salesians to take over management of the state orphanage and to act as fathers to a great many children ranging from seven to ten years of age; and that, when they went to visit the orphanage, they heard one of the little orphans read these words during a small welcome reception: "We have been weeping and praying for two years now that Don Bosco might give us a father."

Nor was this all. Talking with the boys, Bishop Joseph Fagnano came across some very simple-hearted ones who confided to him, "The girls have their mothers (they meant the nuns), but we cannot have a father. Our father is Don Bosco, but so far he has not come here." The day the two Salesians arrived in Valparaiso, over two hundred little boys ran after them, shouting, "Our fathers have come at last! Tomorrow we'll be able to go to school! Oh, how happy we are!" When they saw and heard these things, they remembered what they had read in the dream, for what was happening was fulfilling the prediction.[6]

During the first few days of his stay, the pupils at Sarriá enjoyed festive hours. The first time that the band played some tunes after supper, Don Bosco put a pastry into the hands of each player himself. "These boys were beside themselves for joy because Don Bosco was with them," Charles Viglietti wrote. "As for him, he is very well and very cheerful."[7]

Since a constant stream of visitors came and went daily, we will not repeat the same things over and over again. Now and then, visitors seemed to come in a constant flow with no interruption, but more often they came in such waves that they were more in the nature of a flood. Being well rooted in their religiousness, the Spanish people were exultant to be close to a priest who had such a reputation for holiness.

Just as they did in Marseilles, the Salesian Cooperators of Barcelona had formed a committee of about thirty ladies, all of them equal in char-

[5] See Appendix 1.

[6] Letter from Fr. Evasio Rabagliati to Don Bosco (Concepción, Chile, May 14, 1887).

[7] Letter to Fr. Lemoyne (Barcelona, April 10, 1886).

ity and nobility, who zealously helped the house of Sarriá. Mrs. Chopitea was the president. They met regularly every two weeks to see what was needed and discussed how the needs could be met. They even worked with their own hands to keep the linen in order. Don Bosco addressed their assembly in Italian, thanked them for the charity they lavished on his house and predicted that soon the house of Sarriá would be enlarged to meet its requirements, and it would house as many as five hundred boys, to whom they would have extended their benevolent and welcome protection. Like a genuine mother, Mrs. Chopitea thought of everything that Don Bosco might need and looked after Father Michael Rua and the secretary Charles Viglietti. She therefore provided personal linen to wear and inspected their rooms to make sure everything was kept clean and tidy, even though a maid was responsible for this. She also sent one of her cooks to prepare their food and cooked some meals herself.

Marquis Brusi, the editor of *El Diario de Barcelona*, a widely circulated newspaper, called on Don Bosco and emerged from his room deeply touched. In that day's issue, he published an article containing a precise and detailed description of Don Bosco's arrival in Sarriá.

SUNDAY, APRIL 11th

At that time, as we've already said, Sarriá was an independent community with a transient population that in certain seasons of the year might have jumped to twenty-five thousand. The mayor, the board of aldermen and other leading authorities officially called on Don Bosco to pay their respects. All manifested the greatest veneration for him. The mayor, in particular, said that he thanked Heaven for having given a Salesian house to Sarriá, and promised that the municipal authorities would have always protected it to the best of their abilities. These gentlemen were delighted with the medal of Mary Help of Christians and with the blessing that Don Bosco gave to each of them.

Later, it was interesting to note what attention the editor of the *El Correo Catalán* paid to what Don Bosco said, as did a number of university students and representatives of Barcelona's evening schools. When they had all gone, the provincial of the Jesuits and some Jesuit fathers called on him.

Towards evening, the band gave a concert in the courtyard, which was all lit up for the occasion, and the day ended with fireworks. Since the gates had been left open, so as not to displease the neighbors, a stream of people entered the courtyard of the school. Don Bosco, too, wanted to enjoy the spectacle, but he was careful about his eyesight, only opening

his eyes to admire a wonderful balloon on which his name was written in large letters. It was allowed to soar upward into the air, majestically floating over the city of Barcelona.

MONDAY, APRIL 12th

The above-mentioned *Diario* sang Don Bosco's praises, as well as the praises of his worldwide activity and the workshops at Sarriá in a second article. On his visit the previous day, the editor of the journal had admired Don Bosco's superior intelligence and indomitable will-power, evidenced by his features, as well as his holiness.

How delighted Don Bosco was at all times to meet the past pupils of the Oratory! One such man named James Gherna was then residing in Barcelona. He hastened to see Don Bosco again and once more kiss his hand. He had been having trouble with his legs for years, suffering so intensely at times that the journey to Sarriá meant a great hardship to him. As soon as he saw his benefactor, he told him of his sufferings.

"Do not worry about it," Don Bosco said. "Relax!"

As Don Bosco was speaking, he touched Gherna's knees. Then he started recalling the early days of the Oratory, reminiscing about episodes and people. Gherna recalled very well how, in taking leave of Don Bosco in 1860, he had said, "Come to Barcelona some time!"

To which Don Bosco had answered, "Who knows?" He had said it in a tone that Gherna always remembered as a confirmation of something of which he was certain. "Now you see that that 'who knows' has come true," he said.

From one topic to another, the mind of that old pupil kept on crowding up with so many precious memories. He went back to Barcelona without realizing that he had been cured, so much was he taken up by the tender recollections of the years he had spent under Don Bosco's paternal guidance. He only realized that his pains no longer troubled him when he was in the city. Then he recalled that he had not felt any more pain from the moment the saint had put a hand on his knees. He was never again troubled by any such pains. He did have other ailments during the course of his life, but he remained immune from all further trouble with his knees. This was confirmed by the testimony of Father Philip Rinaldi.[8]

[8] See Appendix 1.

TUESDAY, APRIL 13th

A circular letter compiled by Father John Baptist Lemoyne and signed by the prefect general, Father Celestine Durando, passed on more outstanding details of Don Bosco's journey, up to the moment he arrived at the school of Sarriá, to all the houses of the Congregation. A second letter of the same nature would be sent out on May 5th.

Another journalist, the editor of *La Revista popular*, Dr. Sarda y Salvayan, called on Don Bosco and remained for dinner. Between three and six o'clock in the afternoon, according to estimates made, some two thousand people must have approached him. A fifteen-year-old girl, whose right hand and leg were withered, came with her mother to ask for Don Bosco's blessing. He blessed her and then asked, "Where do you feel pain?"

"Here in my hand. I can't move it."

As she spoke, she was quite unaware that she had lifted her hand, holding it palm outward before some thirty spectators. Don Bosco smiled, while the girl, embarrassed, felt that her hand was not yet flexible. But the saint told her to clasp her hands and to repeat with him, "Oh! Mary, cure me!"

Then he told her to say three *Our Fathers*, *Hail Marys* and *Glory Bes* until the Feast of Corpus Christi, not in order to be cured, but in thanksgiving for the cure already granted. Her leg was also healed, since the girl was able to go away without limping.

The administrator who had accompanied Father John Baptist Branda to meet Don Bosco at the border gave him a letter from Marquis Jovert of Gelida, his master, who humbly begged Don Bosco to pray for him. The saint replied in his own handwriting, assuring him of his prayers and asking him to choose a day and let him know when he wished to receive communion, for on the same morning, he would then celebrate Mass for his intentions.

When his family heard about the letter of the marquis, they were all astonished by its religious sentiments, for he had not gone to confession for a very long time. But there was more. Wholeheartedly absorbed in maritime trade, this gentleman was very wealthy, but he was tormented by a mania that made him very unhappy. It might be referred to as coprophobia, because he was always imagining that everything was filthy with dung. He would not eat with his family. When he was told once that his wife's mother had gone to Sarriá, a locality that according to him was utterly filthy, he no longer wished to see her, and woe to her if she dared to try to touch her daughter! Now and then, he became fully aware of his

condition and had even vowed he would donate a large sum of money if he were granted the grace of being cured of this morbid obsession.

The condition seemed to be caused by a fall. Years before, when he was on his way to Lourdes with his wife, his horse pranced, then broke into a wild gallop and, at last, plunged with its rider into a deep ravine. The horse cracked its skull open, although the marquis had only some slight bruises on his side. Since the ravine into which he had been thrown was no less than two hundred and fifty meters deep, superstitious people thought that he must have been possessed by a devil. His relatives had pinned all their hopes on Don Bosco, but the marquis steadfastly refused to meet him, since he had read in the papers that the saint would have to come to him from the abominable city of Sarriá. His wife, however, had called on Don Bosco in secret in the company of her administrator and had come away deeply comforted by a long conversation with him. She felt that it was already half a grace granted that her husband had written so devoutly and spontaneously to the servant of God.

In the fervor of his faith, an old colonel wished at all costs to kiss the feet of Don Bosco. After him there came a family consisting of twenty-two people. When they all knelt down for his blessing, Don Bosco turned to a lady who was present among others and said to her, "You are not to kneel down." She suffered from a knee ailment that would have only permitted her to kneel with great discomfort. But who had told him about it? The incident did not fail to arouse astonishment and deep emotion.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14th

Many people attended Don Bosco's Mass. He administered Communion to about two hundred persons. At midday, Mrs. Chopitea arranged a restful diversion for him at her villa, located in the middle of an immense park with a garden, which was delightful with its great variety of rare animals. As one went up the staircase leading to the living quarters, one had to pass in front of a large mirror on the first landing. Don Bosco turned to the people who had come to meet him.

"You must remember to invite these other gentlemen to supper," he said, and pointed to their reflections in the mirror.

Everyone laughed at the jest, which offered him an opportunity of telling a pleasant anecdote about something that had happened in a clothes store some years before in Marseilles. Father Martin, the pastor of the parish on whose jurisdiction the house of La Navarre depended, had tagged along with Don Bosco. This priest was very simple and sincere, and finding him-

self face to face with a big mirror, he removed his hat, in a moment of confused distraction, out of respect for the priest he believed he saw in front of him, which instead was his own reflection. At the same time, the imaginary stranger had, naturally enough, done the same thing. On his way to the door of the store, the priest said with courtesy, "You first," and made a gesture. But the other priest repeated the same gesture, though he did not speak. "No, no," the curate repeated, "You first."

This went on for some minutes, while Don Bosco, who studiously kept away from the reflecting mirror, had a good laugh. The gentlemen listening to him now likewise laughed, as they heard this delightful anecdote.

Not very far away from the villa was an aristocratic school for girls, directed by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart. He was asked to go and visit it, and he did so. The entire community went to welcome him at the entrance hall, while the boarders awaited him on the terrace outside the big study hall. There was a fair sized gathering of priests and people who wished to see him and receive his blessing. He advanced slowly, supported by Father Michael Rua and Charles Viglietti, talking affably with the mother superior, Mother de Bofarull. The large group of boarders improvised a pleasant surprise for him in the garden by intoning a charming hymn to Our Lady of Consolation set to a well-known, popular melody of Turin. As soon as he reached the building, he sat down to rest a while.

Among those present there was the mother of a pupil. Within two short weeks, she had lost two children. Taking advantage of the opportunity, this mother knelt at the feet of the saint, told him about her misfortunes, and implored him to cure her elder daughter, who was so retarded that, although she was fourteen, she was not allowed to make her first Communion. Touched by the poor woman's grief, Don Bosco sent for the girl, gave her a medal, and then rested his right hand on her head. He pronounced the formula of the blessing aloud and promised to pray for the grace the lady desired, should it be to the greater glory of God. He then addressed the weeping mother, "Have faith. Your daughter will receive Communion." He said nothing more. The prediction came true, for the child was at last able to approach the sacred table, and a few months later, God called her to himself.

Amid general excitement, Don Bosco started moving again in the direction of the terrace. Just as he was about to cross the threshold, the sound of the Salesian band in the garden cheered everyone up. When the playing ceased, two pupils advanced and one of them, on behalf of their companions,

presented Don Bosco with an elegant pocketbook containing a donation, while the other read a speech to him.[9] Then Don Bosco spoke, urging them all to receive the sacraments often. After that, they filed past him, one by one, to receive a medal of Mary Help of Christians from his hand.

Among the boarders there was Mercedes S., eight years old, a beautiful child who, however, had been a cripple from birth. Her father, who had but this one daughter, would have given anything to rid her of her physical handicap. He hoped for a miracle, and the little girl had prepared for one with a novena of prayers. When she was brought before the saint for his blessing and was told about her, he replied, "No, it would not be for her own good."[10]

The sisters awaited him in the study, some eighty of them all together, and they presented him with a very artistic monstrance. They, too, were given a medal and his blessing. One of the sisters there had been ill for a long time, without hope for recovery. She had made a tremendous effort to leave the infirmary and dragged herself to receive Don Bosco's blessing, thinking, "Who knows? At times, the most desperate hour is God's own hour."

As though the saint had read her thoughts, he said, "My daughter, we must love our cross, for it is Jesus Who burdens our shoulders with it." The nun understood, took heart, and abandoned herself completely to God's Will.

The mother superior could not stop thanking Don Bosco for his precious visit. She had written to Turin four times the previous year, to ask for special graces from Mary Help of Christians, and her prayers had always been answered. As he walked through the garden on his way out, the boarders were allowed to leave the study hall and line up on either side of his path, and when he had gone, they crowded onto the terrace and the upper balconies, shouting "long live Don Bosco" and waving their handkerchiefs or scarves.

A third article appeared in *El Diario de Barcelona*, in praise of Don Bosco and his institute, stressing Spain's appreciation for his schools for arts and crafts. "There is an aura of holiness discernible in his appearance, which is an echo of his Christian virtues and pure faith," it read, "and it is thanks to these that he has been successful in his work and is

[9] Viglietti obtained a copy and brought it back to Turin, but all we found of it was the Italian translation. See Appendix, doc. 10.

[10] See Vol. XVI, p.158 for a similar case.

able to continue guiding his mission of faith and civilization with such rousing success."[11]

THURSDAY, APRIL 15th

Besides the committee of aristocratic ladies already mentioned, there was another committee of Cooperators whose task it was to raise funds for the Salesian school in Sarriá. The saint held a meeting for them, too, during the course of which he explained what was meant by cooperating with Don Bosco.

During the afternoon, there was a meeting of another kind held in his presence. There was a flourishing Catholic association in Barcelona whose members were drawn from the most eminent ranks of the local citizens. Its president had been at the railroad station when Don Bosco arrived and called on him in the afternoon of the 10th of April with a group of prominent members with whom the Saint held a long and cordial conversation. Finally, these members decided to organize a solemn assembly meeting in his honor. A personal invitation was sent out to call all members to the meeting on the 15th of April[12]. On the morning of the 14th, the membership attended Don Bosco's Mass, while the president and the secretary served his Mass. In the evening, they came back again to the school's theater for a private meeting, or religious assembly, at which Don Bosco was present.

The general assembly on the 15th was quite another matter. Together with the board of directors, the president went to Sarriá to pick up Don Bosco and accompany him to their social headquarters. They all wore ceremonial dress, with the badge of the society on their chests. Three coaches waited outside the door. Don Bosco was the first to get in one of them, together with Father Michael Rua, the vicar of the diocese, and the provicar. The president and Charles Viglietti, the cleric, followed in the second, with the other people in the third. Until that time, the association had held its meetings in an old house that, in view of the increasing membership, had now become too small; so a new building had been procured. It was to be inaugurated on the day of Don Bosco's visit. Three big rooms were barely sufficient to accommodate all those who attended the meeting, since a number of the members had come with their wives.

Everyone rose as Don Bosco made his entrance, while an orchestra struck up a triumphant march. Once at his seat on a high dais, Don Bosco

[11] See Appendix, doc. 11.
[12] See Appendix, doc. 12.

listened to a beautiful vocal rendition of *Salve Regina*, performed by about twenty young voices under the baton of its composer, Maestro Frigola, who by then had already begun to make a name for himself also outside of Spain. The president, a university professor, then delivered a noble and outstanding welcome speech. After a short interval, a sonata was played and the secretary announced that during a council meeting, the association had voted to decorate Don Bosco with its social insignia of the association order. At this, two gentlemen stepped forward and hung a gold medal embossed with the emblems of Saints George and Joseph around his neck. Once this decoration was bestowed, new member Don Bosco was met with an enthusiastic ovation. Once again, and more markedly than ever, did the contrast between the pageantry around him and Don Bosco's own humble manner stand out.

Don Bosco now felt obliged to say a few words. His voice rang out strongly and his words were vibrant. Although he spoke in Italian, he was easily understood. This was his speech:

> Gentlemen:
>
> I wish I knew your beautiful native tongue, so that I could express my thoughts with it. I am unable to tell you what I feel in my heart just now, but I am deeply moved at the thought of all that this meeting means, and especially at the decoration you have conferred upon me.
>
> I promise you that I will treasure this medal as a glorious badge that honors me. Whenever I look at it, I will remember the Catholic Association and the Catholics of Barcelona. When I return to Turin, I will proudly show it to my beloved sons, urging them to emulate the virtues of the Barcelona Catholics, and when I go to Rome and see the Holy Father, I will tell him that the Catholic Association of Barcelona loves him and about all that it is doing for the benefit of a sound doctrine.
>
> May I express my most fervent thanks to the president for the undeserved praise he gave me in his speech, the main theme being the great advantages accruing to our modern society from the institution of the Salesian *talleres* [technical schools].
>
> I am very much impressed by the Catholic enthusiasm that prevails here, and I congratulate the city of Barcelona, which has been eminently devout throughout the ages. I am delighted to know that it will continue this in the future, thereby meriting future glory days.

> As an industrial population, it is more personally concerned than any other in sponsoring the Salesian *talleres* [technical schools]. Every year, fifty thousand youths who can be useful to society emerge from these schools to join the work force. They go to factories and labs, and here they carry their sound values. This keeps them out of gallows and out of prisons and they turn into living examples of wholesome principles.
>
> The boy who grows in your streets will first beg you for alms, and then he will demand it, and lastly, will force you to give it at gunpoint.
>
> As a civilizing effect of these schools, I can point to the results obtained by the Salesian missions in Patagonia, where the religion of Jesus Christ is already known and observed by over fourteen thousand natives.
>
> I will now close, begging this honorable assembly to assist the schools in the neighboring area of Sarriá with its prayers, so that God may bless them, for without any doubt, they are destined to improve the lot of poor and abandoned orphans.

He was interrupted by applause three times, and the audience was overwrought with deep emotion. After a collection had been taken up on behalf of the Salesian Institute, Don Bosco blessed the assembly and the meeting came to an end. At this time began what was for him the most wearying part of the proceedings, for the entire assembly flocked around him, and took him by storm. This was not just any crowd, but a choice crowd of aristocrats, who knew how to respect etiquette. Nevertheless, because there were so many of them, they wore him out, since he sought to please them all, holding out his hand to be kissed, saying comforting words, and every now and again, bestowing a special blessing.

The same people as his escort accompanied him back to Sarriá. He could not take it anymore, yet his good humor was unfaltering. He remarked to the cleric Viglietti that while they were bestowing all those honors on him, he kept going over in his mind the famous motto "*Quam parva sapientia regitur mundus* [What a small amount of wisdom does the world need to be governed]!"[13]

[13] The Swedish chancellor Ozenstiern is supposed to have said to his son who, in his timidity, had declined the office of first plenipotentiary envoy of Sweden to the Munster Congress in 1648, "*Videbis, fili mi, quam parva sapientia regitur mundus.*"

The meaning of the event is sacredly kept in an eloquent booklet that besides the account of the exceptional assembly meeting, also gives the president's speech and Don Bosco's own brief address translated into Spanish.[14] The newspapers dedicated considerable space to the event.

FRIDAY, APRIL 16th

A small boy, whose arm was so twisted that he could neither lift nor move it, was brought to see Don Bosco. He had been maimed like this since his infancy. His parents begged Don Bosco to bless the child, which he did. He then ordered him to stretch out his arm, clap his hands and clasp them, saying, "Mary, help me!" The child obeyed. This was the beginning of his total recovery.

The chaplain of the Sisters of Loretto now called on Don Bosco and begged him for the third time to gratify the request of the mother superior of that convent. She was dying of cancer and had asked for nothing more than to see him before she died. He had immediately sent word that as soon as he could, he would go to visit her and in the meantime, he was sending her a medal of Mary Help of Christians.

A poor boy of Barcelona named Medina had gangrene in one of his fingers and the surgeons were about to amputate it. After he had called on Don Bosco and received his blessing, he did not experience anything at all at first, but during the night, his finger was completely healed. A little later, Father John Branda enrolled him in the school, but he only stayed a few months, for he entered the Congregation of the Marist Fathers and when the director told the story to Father Lemoyne in 1890, he was studying theology.

SATURDAY, APRIL 17th

There was a great banquet given by Mr. Narciso in Don Bosco's honor. Only relatives of the master of the house were invited. The host's uncle had written a sonnet, which he read to him. When he returned home, a number of people were awaiting him.

SUNDAY, APRIL 18th

Thousands of people thronged the street, the courtyard, the waiting room, and the adjoining chambers. It became necessary to put up a notice

[14] "*Acta De La Sesion Solemne* [Minutes of the Solemn Session] held April 15, 1886 by the Catholic Association of Barcelona, to confer the decoration of the association on the illustrious and venerable priest Fr. John Bosco, Founder of the Salesian Technical Schools." (Barcelona: Catholic Publishers, 1886).

on the outer door of the church, stating the hours during which Don Bosco would bestow his blessing. "Don Bosco is tired and his health is none too good," Viglietti remarked in his diary.

MONDAY, APRIL 19th

Don Bosco was thinking of the house of San Benigno, the vocations hot house of the Congregation, and he had someone write to say that he was praying for the clerics there and hoped to see them again soon. He granted audiences from morning until night. He telegraphed Br. Rossi that he was to send a great number of medals immediately.

TUESDAY, APRIL 20th

"Don Bosco can barely breathe and his strength is drained out," the diary reads, "and only by imparting his blessing and saying, '*Dios os beniga* [God bless you]."'

By now he was obliged to give only general blessings. After he celebrated Mass every morning, he blessed the congregation in the church. Once they had left the church, another congregation entered to fill it, only to be blessed as the others had been. Then, as soon as he made it to his room and with difficulty, he immediately began to give audiences. The railway administration was obliged to increase the number of round trip trains between Barcelona and Sarriá.

The bishop of Vich, Bishop Morgadez y Gili, had arrived expressly to see Don Bosco. Greeted by the strains of the royal Spanish March, the bishop remained for dinner with two canons, who had accompanied him. He was followed by several outstanding families from Barcelona, among them that of the governor. The bishop of the diocese, Bishop Catalá y Albosa also arrived. In view of the prevailing views of those years, it was considered an act of extreme graciousness that the bishop should first call on Don Bosco without Don Bosco having to do so first, since he knew that he was away from his residence. The bishop treated him with genuine affection and spoke with him for more than an hour. The letter brought in person by the secretary of the minister of state, Silvela, of which we spoke in the previous volume, was read out in his presence. It dealt with the school of Madrid. The courtesy extended to Don Bosco by all these eminent people enhanced the feeling of veneration existing among the common people.

When we described the events of his journey to Paris, we had occasion to mention Madame de Cessac, a fervent admirer and generous bene-

factress of Don Bosco. On the 20th, he received a telegram from Paris that read: "Viscountess de Cessac very sick. (signed) Viscount de Cessac." Saddened by this piece of news, Don Bosco had Father Michael Rua reply to the telegram, promising he would pray. But before the letter was mailed, a second telegram arrived announcing: "I recovered quite suddenly yesterday evening and am eating and drinking. Thank you for your prayers. (signed) Viscountess de Cessac."

In a confidential letter dated April 30th, her husband wrote to Father Michael Rua, describing the sickness of his wife and the manner in which she had recovered. Her recovery had apparently taken place while Don Bosco was praying for her. However, the recovery was not lasting. The little notebook in which Don Bosco drafted letters (which were then to be copied and mailed to his principal benefactors after his death in 1884) also contains one for Madame de Cessac, but the saint himself added this line, prefaced by a cross, two years later: *Requiescat in pace* - 1886. This good lady died in the fall of that year.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21st

Don Bosco was on his way to say Mass at the home of Marchioness de Comillas when his way down the stairs was suddenly barred. A possessed woman, as soon as she saw him, flung herself to the ground, and apparently, passed out, foaming at the mouth, writhing like a snake. He told her to invoke Mary, but she shrieked, "No, no!"

Then the evil spirit spoke through her lips. "No, I do not want to get out of here! I do not intend to go!"

Since the wretched woman's name was Mary, Don Bosco called to her, "Mary, take hold of this medal!" But she gave no sign that she had heard.

At last, Don Bosco blessed her. At that, the young woman rose to her feet, took the medal that Don Bosco held out to her, kissed it, entered the church and attended Mass. She appeared to be cured. She ate breakfast quietly and did all this in the presence of many other people. The people who accompanied her said that they had not seen her behave so calmly for a long, long time, and they were astonished. She went back home, greatly comforted.

Outside, two very handsome carriages were waiting to escort the saint to the marchioness, who treated him with the same honors she would have given to a cardinal. Here we quote Charles Viglietti, who wrote:

> We arrived at the palace of the marchioness. One might well describe it as a royal residence. There are a lot of riches, especial-

> ly artistic masterpieces and its huge halls. Whenever some prince or king visits Barcelona, they always stay at the marchioness' palace. Everything connected with her private altar is most magnificent. The missal is covered with chiseled gold and silver, encrusted with precious stones. Both the chalice and the pyx are of solid gold, adorned with diamonds, emeralds, and topaz.

During the Divine Sacrifice of the Mass, there was singing to the accompaniment of the organ and the piano, but it was all Italian music. Some two hundred persons, relatives and friends of the marchioness, were in attendance. Afterward, Don Bosco had to meet every single one of them, interviewing them individually or in small groups until eleven o'clock. From there, he made a return visit to the bishop, who gave him a most cordial welcome. Don Bosco was entertaining the idea of establishing a novitiate in Barcelona, just as he had done at Marseilles, or even a national missionary seminary, and he mentioned it to the bishop, who promised his patronage and assistance. The bishop agreed with Don Bosco on the plan to begin by opening an elementary school at Sarriá that would help to foster vocations to the priesthood. It looked as if the bishop could not bear to let him go, and he even accompanied him to the head of the stairwell, which was something quite unheard of. Don Bosco then lunched with Marchioness de Moragas, the mother-in-law of Mr. Jobert.

When he left her house, he called at the convent of the Sisters of Loretto to comfort their superior as he had promised, for by now she was almost at death's door with a malignant tumor. He spoke words of comfort to her and blessed her. Then both the entire community and its chaplain introduced him to a nun who for a long time had been forced to sit with crossed legs, without ever taking one single step or moving. Informed the day before that Don Bosco was to pass by her convent, which overlooked the road leading from Barcelona to Sarriá, she had someone carry her on a stretcher outside the house to receive his blessing. At this blessing, which had been bestowed on her as he went by, she felt herself cured, and rising to her feet, she began to walk all by herself to the great astonishment of all. Now again, in the presence of Don Bosco, she started to run and skip, to the continuing amazement of everybody who had seen her immobile for so long a time. The nun, whose name was Sister Candida, was still alive in 1935 and lived in a small village at San Sebastian.

Upon his return to the school, Don Bosco found the street and courtyard jammed with people and coaches. Inside, some two hundred and

fifty members from the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul awaited him. Don Bosco joined them immediately, with an affectionate greeting, congratulating them on their piety and faith. He spoke to them about the Salesian Congregation and their own organization, explaining how both these institutions were in harmony. Instantly, a collection was taken up, as is the custom at every session of the members of the various chapters. Finally, Don Bosco blessed them and after giving a medal of Mary Help of Christians to each of them, he retired to his room to grant audiences to the many people impatiently waiting to speak with him.

"Many and many are the graces obtained every day through the blessing of Mary Help of Christians imparted by Don Bosco," Viglietti writes, "and every day we receive reports of the wondrous effects it produces. But by now it is quite impossible to keep notes on all of them."

HOLY THURSDAY, APRIL 22nd

In Spain, the last three days of Holy Week are dedicated entirely to liturgical celebrations, mainly to the commemoration of the mysteries of the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. All other occupations are set aside: no calls are made, unless absolutely necessary; railway services and trolley car services are reduced to a minimum; the factories and stores are closed; and the churches are crowded. These three days brought immense relief to weary Don Bosco, who was thus able to enjoy a little peace and spend some time with his sons at Sarriá.

Yet, there is an exception to every rule, for despite the prevailing cessation of visits, he did receive a visit from Mr. Mas and his wife and son. This gentleman was the owner of a famous cotton mill, the most important in Barcelona, which was located where the industrial university has its headquarters today. He was a much respected and zealous Catholic, and was seeking a special blessing for himself and his family from Don Bosco. He was admitted after some difficulty and remained with his family for more than an hour with Don Bosco in his room. As they were taking their leave, the saint embraced Mr. Mas closely for a few seconds, whispering certain words into his ear that have never been fully revealed to anyone else. Only two years later when Mr. Mas was about to die, he told his wife that she too should prepare for death, because Don Bosco had told him that very soon both of them would meet in eternity. His wife did, in fact, die a month later.

The deceased left to his son, Joseph, a large crucifix that Don Bosco had given him. This same son had been stricken by a severe pneumonia in 1934 at the age of 72, and the physicians had no hope of saving his life.

He hung the crucifix around his neck and, to the astonishment of his doctors, he recovered completely a few days later.

In the afternoon of Holy Thursday, Father Michael Rua and Charles Viglietti, the cleric, were escorted by Father Narciso to visit seven churches in the city. We will quote a page of a letter from Charles Viglietti to Father Lemoyne that records traditional Spanish piety: "We had a host of things to tell Don Bosco when we got back to Sarriá," he said, "because truly we had not believed that such piety existed in Spain. We saw soldiers in gala uniforms march in orderly fashion to visit the sepulchers, led by their officers. All the buildings in the city and government offices were displaying flags festooned with black borders in sign of mourning. There was not a carriage to be seen in the streets, nor did one hear the sound of any voices or musical instruments. Everywhere the streets were jammed with people on their way to church, holding their rosaries and prayer books in their hands. During these three days there are no coaches in Barcelona, and trains are standing still in the railway stations. There is no postal service either, and all stores and factories are closed. This religious, silent spell is broken only at midday on Holy Saturday. Spanish soldiers are under obligation to attend Holy Mass every Sunday."

The woman possessed by a devil made her second appearance on the 21st. She raved like a maniac, but again, no sooner had she received Don Bosco's blessing than she regained control of herself, kissed the picture of our Lady, and pressed it to her breast again and again while thanking Don Bosco.

GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 23rd

Don Bosco spent the day in intimate contact with his sons. The boys went home during the morning, but in the afternoon, they kept Don Bosco company for a long time, and he joked and strolled with them in the playground. Then he went into the two adjacent gardens, strolling through them far and wide. He then visited the entire facility, always accompanied by pupils. He was informed of everything going on, and made some plans for expansion, suggesting that more land be bought next to the present school.

HOLY SATURDAY, APRIL 24th

Don Bosco said Mass in Father Narciso's private chapel. In that house, one could hear the roar of the cannon announcing the moment of the Easter *Alleluia*! This was almost like the signal for the crowd to see him once again.

As a matter of fact, when Don Bosco returned home, several hundred people were already waiting for him, and he held audiences up to 1:30 p.m.

Later, a committee of men preparing for a Salesian meeting called on him. He talked with them at length of his undertakings and how best they could be supported. The ladies of the women's committee also wanted to see him once again. They were gathered in a separate room and the saint joined them, encouraging them to persevere in their charitable activity. In the meantime, several thousand people had invaded the school grounds and the immediate vicinity of the house. Thanks to the rest he had enjoyed during the previous days, he was able to prolong his interviews until late in the evening.

EASTER, APRIL 25th

A very charming little celebration enhanced the joy of Don Bosco's Easter Mass. A little niece of Father Narciso, the daughter of Emmanuel Pascual, was going to receive her First Communion. This wealthy and zealous Christian was deeply attached to the Salesians and took delight in helping them with his vast influence and lavishing his charity on them. In his happiness that it was Don Bosco who would administer First Communion to his child, he wanted to make the boys of the house happy by giving them some sweets. Among the guests there was that same Mr. Montobbio who had made the journey together with Don Bosco. He, too, enjoyed the refreshments after Mass. Don Bosco took the seat of honor. At a certain moment, he got his handkerchief out of his pocket. Taking advantage of the cordiality the saint displayed toward him, Mr. Montobbio asked Don Bosco to make him a present of it. Don Bosco replied, "Yes, on the condition that you give me a piece of paper."

Mr. Montobbio understood to what kind of paper he was alluding, but since he did not have the sum he meant to give him on his person, he promised to return some other day with the paper, asking for the handkerchief. The saint consented, and the handkerchief is religiously treasured as a relic to the present day.

Don Bosco saw the Oratory even in a dream. During the night of the 25th, he thought he was present at a talk that Father John Baptist Lemoyne was giving the senior students, and he noticed how many of them were absent. He then went down to the church of Mary Help of Christians during the community Mass and noticed that the number of communicants had fallen off. Later, when the above-mentioned pupils had made their manifestation, he had to deplore the absence of not a few. In the morning,

he had someone write a letter about these matters and sent it to Turin, letting it be known that when he got home he would reveal to each boy the role he had played in the dream.

MONDAY, APRIL 26th

Don Bosco gave communion to many people at Mass until he could no longer endure the hardship. He handed the pyx to another priest who was obliged to come out from behind the altar rail and walk among the crowd in the church, since the crush was so great that it was impossible for the faithful to approach the altar. In the brief span of an hour, Don Bosco emptied seven big boxes of medals, giving only one single medal to each individual.

What a critical moment it was when he tried to go upstairs to his room - a human wall was barring his way! The boarders of the house exchanged hopeless glances, not knowing what they could do to help him. But Don Bosco seemed to be utterly serene. The only remedy was to bolt and bar the front door, so that at least no one else could gain access. Then several people pushed and struggled to make a path for him. This maneuver continued from ten until eleven o'clock.

When he finally was safely escorted to his room, forty or fifty people at a time were allowed to enter the room, and he imparted to them a general blessing, gave everyone a medal, and then dismissed them to make room for another group. This was repeated twelve times until the people crowded in the interior of the school could be admitted, but outside there was an ever greater crowd. Access was granted in groups until nightfall. In the chapel, Father Michael Rua preached his first sermon in Spanish to the boys.

TUESDAY, APRIL 27th

Don Bosco's relatively good health was brought to an end by a bad cold, but this did not prevent him from granting an audience to the Barcelona seminarians. Nothing more of note to report for this day is on record, save his signature to a circular letter inviting Cooperators and friends to the parish church of Belén for a meeting on the 30th.[15]

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28th

No matter where he went, Don Bosco never lost an opportunity to comfort the afflicted. A venerable old man, Raymond de Ponsich, who

[15] See Appendix, doc. 14.

was rich and childless, had lost his wife at the beginning of the month. He did nothing but weep. He would neither eat nor rest, and people were afraid he would die of his grief. Both he and his relatives hoped that a visit from Don Bosco would restore his peace of mind.

Don Bosco called at his magnificent palace, which was not far from the school of Sarriá, at seven-thirty in the morning. Once there, he heard the confession of the pious old man, said Mass for him, and administered Holy Communion to him. Later, he remained talking with him for nearly three hours and dined with his relatives. Throughout that day, the old man did not weep and, later on, he seemed calm and resigned to his grief. Don Bosco wrote to him on August 31st from San Benigno, sending his good wishes for his name day and reminding him about his resolution to help the missionaries in Patagonia. Today, the original is well worn out and barely legible, since many sick people have used it as a relic.

We should also relate the story of a *sui generis* encounter. A priest had called on Don Bosco a few days before to inform him in strict confidence that the following night, the pastor of Saint Mary of the Pine would die. He said he had already received Holy Viaticum and was in *extremis*. He said that his parish was richer than all the others and it was the best parish from every point of view. He, therefore, asked for a special blessing so that he might be successful in taking it over from other competitors.

Don Bosco answered, "Yet, this pastor sent people to me who told me that he would recover, were I but to visit him. I am told he is an excellent priest, of the kind of which the Church is in great need at the present time. I will pray for him, and only a few minutes ago I sent him a medal of Mary Help of Christians. So let us do this. Join me in my prayers, so that God may do with you and the pastor whatever is best for His greater glory."

Many priests and pastors had registered their applications for that parish. All of them were disappointed because on April 28 it was known that as soon as the medal of Mary Help of Christians had been put on the sick man's ulcer he, who had been given up by the doctors, and whose last minutes appeared to be numbered, had suddenly begun to improve noticeably.

From investigations made in the parish files at the church of Saint Mary of the Pine, it appears that the name of this priest was Francis de Paola Esteve Nadal. The newspapers of April 1886 say that the pastor of this church, Father Francis Esteve, had received Holy Viaticum and in the death records at the selfsame parish, his name is listed under April 11, 1889. This means that he lived for another three years after his miraculous recovery.

That same evening, something unexpected occurred. While some forty people who had received a general blessing from Don Bosco were filing past him in his room to receive a medal, there was a sudden general outcry. A woman got into the room laughing in such a way as to appear insane and said, "Let these people here tell you about me. I am so excited that I am unable to speak."

She pointed to two women who had accompanied her from Barcelona to Sarriá to receive the usual blessing of Don Bosco. She had fallen down the staircase in her own home, and had broken her foot. The doctors had said there was no hope of any recovery. But after she had been blessed by Don Bosco as he was going upstairs to his room, she had been able to stand up a few minutes later, without need of assistance from anybody. Once she recovered from her first astonishment, she seemed quite out of herself with joy, which is why she had come into the room gesticulating and shouting, to the accompaniment of *ohs* and *ahs* from those who only a few minutes earlier had pitied her.

Charles Viglietti ran to call Father Michael Rua and others so that they might witness the scene. Her name was Rose Tarragona y Doret, and she was the daughter of Joseph and Seraphina de Pons de Orboyd, from Urge. She went home on foot, but came back the next morning to attend Don Bosco's Mass, feeling perfectly well, just as though she had never suffered any inconvenience.

THURSDAY, APRIL 29th

Together with Father Michael Rua and Charles Viglietti, Don Bosco called on the president of the Barcelona Bank, Oscar Pascual. While he was at this house, a lady to be baptized was introduced to him. For a long time, her legs had been so stiff that the poor woman had been unable to walk a step. Don Bosco told her to say a certain prayer until January. She obeyed and she began the New Year by going out and walking. Consuelo Pascual de Martí wrote this to Father Charles Viglietti on January 1, 1887.[16]

On his way home again, he remarked, "If I wished to open not only the hearts but also the purses and have all the money I want, I would only have to utter these true words: if you want to obtain graces from the most holy Virgin, Mary Help of Christians, give and you will be certain to receive; he who gives more will receive the more. But I do not say this

[16] The letter read, "Please tell Don Bosco at once that it has been many years that this woman could not walk a step, and now she already goes out of the house."

openly, so as not to frighten and turn against me both the authorities of the government and of the Church."

The immediate vicinity of the school had the appearance of a gigantic fairground. "They come to Sarriá and walk straight to the school," Charles Viglietti wrote Father John Baptist Lemoyne, "and not finding room inside the house, they sit down along the streets and eat their breakfast, their dinner on the sidewalk, waiting entire days to see Don Bosco. I say 'to see' only, because they are shepherded inside his room fifty and sixty at a time to receive his blessing and medal from his hand, but then they do not want to go away. I do all I can. I become hoarse, trying to get them to move so as to make place for others. 'What are you doing here?' I ask them. 'Oh! We want to look at him,' they answer. 'He is a saint! A saint!' They gaze at him, weep and obtain great graces of recovery by merely kissing his robe or receiving his blessing. By now, I am unable to keep records of it all."

On the 28th, a woman said she was suffering from cancer. The doctors were advising her to undergo an operation. She received Don Bosco's blessing and the next day she went to the doctor for a new check-up. She was found to be no longer in danger since the ulcer was healing. Such news as this spread far and wide in the twinkling of an eye. "The newspapers dedicate columns to it," Charles Viglietti commented. "The bishop talks about it to those calling on him, the clergy discuss it with the faithful, and the families with their relatives. Employees, soldiers and working men all talk about it. No matter what is being discussed, people always end up talking about him."

Many people took photos of him as he sat in his room or walked downstairs, while supported by someone else or as he stood before the altar administering Communion. No wonder the bishop, who was not at all inclined to be easily excited about anything, displayed an astonishing partiality for Don Bosco's work. During a talk to the clergy, he said he was entirely in favor of Don Bosco.

This disposition of the hearts was the best preparation one would expect to have and desired to have for the meeting organized by the gentlemen of the committee. Divided into various subcommittees, they called on individual families, collected money, enrolled new Cooperators, and invited everyone to attend the meeting. Father Manuel Pascal had given them a password, with which they greeted one another whenever they met in the streets. One said, "*A solis ortu usque ad occasum* [From sunrise to sunset]," to which the other replied, "*Salesiani sumus* [We are Salesians]."

FRIDAY, APRIL 30th

Two weeks of such preparations had their effect. The meeting was also a magnificent display of faith with which to begin the month of Mary.

Although the meeting was scheduled to begin at four o'clock in the afternoon, the pastor of the church of Belen was obliged to open the doors at one o'clock to prevent the crowd outside from breaking them, and at two-thirty he had to close them again, to prevent any accident. Thousands of people were shouting in vain outside in the square and adjoining streets. Inside the church, which was very large and equipped with thirty spacious stands or platforms, the people stood shoulder to shoulder, jammed indescribably together.

Don Bosco had had dinner with Mrs. Chopitea and arrived at the church in her carriage. Since it was quite out of the question that he could enter the nave of the church, a side door by the sacristy was opened for him. He then took his seat on the Gospel side of the altar, to the right of the bishop, who had Father Candido (the abbot of the French Trappist monastery of Saint Mary in The Desert of Toulouse[17]) to his left hand, while the dignitaries of the diocesan clergy sat all around. The civil and military authorities, with the directors of business societies and newspapers, were seated at the Epistle-side of the altar. The members of the ladies' and gentlemen's committees occupied eminent seats in the body of the church. The gentlemen wore their decorations on their chests. The city's mounted police was unable to hold back the crush outside, for a sea of people broke through a gate; but beyond the gate, the outer bronze doors held back their onslaught.

The ceremony went on as was the custom, which included the preliminary reading aloud of a chapter from the life of Saint Francis de Sales. The lecturer, Dr. Joseph Juliá, asked the bishop, as he received his blessing, "On what theme am I to lay particular stress?"

"Speak of the great work wrought by this man of God and make them understand his mission thoroughly," the bishop replied.

"What do you think, Don Bosco?" he asked then of the saint.

"I have nothing else to say but *Deo gratias*!" he answered.

The orator spoke of Don Bosco as the one sent by Divine Providence to the Church to help her face the exceptional needs of the times, and he praised the institution of the *Talleres Salesianos* [Salesian technical

[17] He was then in Spain for his canonical visit to the Trappist monastery there. Fr. Andrew Malet, then a newly ordained priest, who today is abbot of St. Mary in the Desert, accompanied him as his secretary.

schools], illustrating the good that had been accomplished by the *talleres* of Sarriá. Then Rossini's *Charity* was sung, after which Don Bosco himself wished to speak. He came forward to the altar rails and said he wished he had a voice like a bugle, such as one reads of in the Holy Scriptures, so that he could thank the people of Barcelona for their manifestations of faith, piety, charity, and warm welcome. He said that the following morning he would celebrate Mass in that same church for all those who were present. He said that during the day he had received by telegram a special blessing from the Holy Father for every benefactor of his Institute and for everyone attending the meeting.

Lastly, the bishop descended from his chair and stood beside Don Bosco, translating with a powerful voice in Spanish what the saint had said in his own language. The president of the ladies' committee, Mrs. Chopitea, and Antonita de Oscar Pascal, the treasurer, were seated by a table to gather all the alms that the young members of the Catholic Association and the Cooperators had collected with admirable order, from the various sections of the church assigned to them.

When it was all over, the doors were reopened, and Charles Viglietti writes:

> Instead of going out, the crowd turned eagerly on Don Bosco. Everyone wanted to see him, touch him, to be seen or hear him a word from him. There was even some who, in order to touch him, would fling themselves down on the ground, stretching out their arm, risking being trampled. Thanks to the help of muscular arms, it was possible to sweep Don Bosco away from the almost indiscreet piety of the crowd. Otherwise, who knows what they would have done to him. When he was in the coach with his company, he rode past the church to satisfy the curiosity of the crowd, and an immense multitude stood, bareheaded, awaiting his passing by. And to just think that it was raining so hard![18]

SATURDAY, MAY 1st

The attendance at Don Bosco's Mass in the church of Belen was no less spectacular than at the meeting. In the vestibule, Mrs. Chopitea and other ladies were selling books and religious articles and collecting donations on

[18] *El Diario de Barcelona* of May 1st wrote about the excellent influence of Don Bosco's presence in Sarriá (Appendix, doc. 15), after its report of the ceremony.

behalf of Don Bosco. After the Mass, there was another collection. Then, Don Bosco blessed the congregation, thanked the people of Barcelona with deeply moving expressions for all they had done for him, and praised their edifying piety. The pastor tried to say something, too, but after his opening words, he was overcome with emotion. Making a great effort, he said, "We have a saint here in our midst. A man sent from Heaven!"

The crowd was delirious to the point that it pressed too heavily against the gate of the altar railing, which gave way, then the crowd overflowed inside the sanctuary, sighing and groaning like the roaring of the waves of a stormy sea. Don Bosco was hurried into safety only with great difficulty and was taken into the sacristy.

He accepted an invitation from Manuel Pascual for the midday meal. During the sumptuous banquet, he suggested that he dedicate one of the bells of the Sacred Heart Church in Rome to commemorate the First Communion of his little daughter on Easter Sunday. He already had the inscription for the bell written out himself, and he read it.[19] Here, as in other patrician households, everything that Don Bosco used or touched was regarded as a precious relic. Glasses, cutlery, napkins, and other objects were religiously set aside and treasured.

SUNDAY, MAY 2nd

Countless was the crowd that jammed the Salesian *talleres*. People began arriving there at three in the morning, continuing until eight o'clock at night, and many of them had fasted the whole day. The courtyards and the streets beyond were jammed. It was impossible to give any private interviews early in the day; so Don Bosco went out on a balcony of a room adjoining his and imparted his blessing to thousands and thousands of the faithful. Such scenes cannot possibly be described; one had to see them. One could only weep in the presence of such faith, such charity, such religion! Wherever Don Bosco went, there was already a stone or a bronze tablet ready on which the date of his visit was to be inscribed as a remembrance.

It took him a good half hour to cover the short distance from his room to the church when he went to say Mass. When he left the altar, he could not even take off his chasuble since the crowd gathered in the sanctuary

[19] *Hac die magna Paschatis nobilis puella Maria de la Soledad Pascual y de Slanza scientia et virtute precoci, aetatis annorum novem, prima vice ad coenam Angelorum in ecclesia asceterii Salesiani Barcinonensis Accessit. Parentes Don Manuel M. Pascual de Boffarul y Maria de la Soledad de Slanza de Pascual gaudentes et benedicentes Dominum ad perennem rei memoriam gratulanti animo posuerunt 1886.*

blocked his way, pulling him in every direction to kiss his hand and his sacred vestments. "The worst of it is that in such a confusion and enthusiasm, Don Bosco at times is battered pretty badly," Charles Viglietti wrote. "They pull him, they scratch him and they carry him off bodily, yet he always retains his calm, he even laughs at such enthusiastic expressions, and at times he says, 'They do hurt me, but it does not matter. The biggest piece of all stays where it belongs.'"

He did not put an end to his interviews until one o'clock p.m., when the bishop and some forty eminent guests were expecting him for a friendly dinner. The tables had been set up in their hall. During the evening, he made frequent appearances on the balcony to bless the huge crowd standing around. At night, he watched the fireworks. Among other genial surprises, a lit-up portrait of Don Bosco dressed in Spanish costume made a sudden appearance.

MONDAY, MAY 3rd

In his unfailing goodness of heart that always guided him to do things to please others, Don Bosco accepted an invitation that caused him some inconvenience the morning of May 3rd. Mr. Suñer, the administrator of Marchioness Moragas, was a former chamber musician at the court of Napoleon III, and had composed various pieces of sacred and profane music that he had a *schola cantorum* perform, a school he himself had founded and now directed. He was anxious that Don Bosco should honor the school with his presence at the rehearsal of one of his Masses. The saint could not find it in his heart to say no, so he went down to the chapel and sat there throughout the entire rehearsal. In his diary, Father Charles Viglietti writes that the performance was excellent, but one may readily believe that Don Bosco's thoughts were concentrated elsewhere and not on the melodious singing.

That same day, Louis Martí-Codolar gave a banquet in honor of Don Bosco at his villa. He personally went to get him at eleven o'clock with a coach drawn by six magnificent horses, with coachmen in livery. People acclaimed him all along the route of the ride.

That villa was magnificent. Tourists visited it to admire its beauty. There were several inscriptions to remind people about the visits of princes and kings. The boys from the school had also been invited. From the towers, which gave the building the aspect of a castle, the flags with the coat of arms of the noble family were waving.

The whole large family, including the relatives, went to meet Don

Bosco as he arrived, while the pupils of the school stood together around the school band which played the royal Italian march. Over the entrance was a floral inscription reading "Long live Don Bosco." But the saint kept his head down and did not notice the display. "Look, look, Don Bosco! See what they did for you," they told him. So he looked up, he smiled and then again he recollected himself.

The daughters of Mr. Martí-Codolar and their cousin greeted his entrance into the concert hall with a festive sonata played by violin, violoncello, and piano. The boys were seated at a long table in the garden with the sons of Mr. Martí-Codolar and their cousins. The others sat down at table in the dining room, where places were set for fifty persons. The atmosphere was so cordial that Don Bosco and his companions felt as if they were at home.

One of the guests remarked to him, "Oh! Don Bosco, you must pray that all of us who are here now can meet again like this in Heaven."

The saint grew very serious and, amidst a sudden, general hush, uttered, "I would like to, but this will not come to pass."

These words caused a visible discomfort but Don Bosco, to cheer everyone up, put on his habitual smile and said, "After all, we will pray to our Lady, for she is so good, she will fix up everything."[20]

Don Bosco retired to rest after dinner in a room apart. Later, relatives of Mr. Martí-Codolar sought an audience with him. Mr. Louis himself and his wife were the last to enter the audience chamber, and no one knows what transpired there, but when the husband and wife emerged, they looked as if they could not believe what had happened to them, and their eyes were wet with tears. Charles Viglietti heard them say, "He is a saint! A saint!"

At four o'clock p.m., Don Bosco went to the garden with the others, and Joachim Pascual, the nephew of Mr. Martí-Codolar, grouped them all together to take a photograph as a souvenir of that happy occasion. He took ten different shots in only a few minutes.

At the present time, there is a large and varied collection of pictures of Don Bosco, featuring him through the different phases of his priesthood and in widely different poses. It has been rightly observed that in none of them is there any hint either of pride, self-satisfaction or even simple vanity.[21] His "square life, energetic, rugged, open, and profound" countenance appears

[20] Letter from Robert Vidal, monk of the Abbey of the Desert, to the editor of the *Bulletin salésien*, (Bellegrade, Haute-Garonne, November 20, 1936).

[21] Henri Ghéon, *St. John Bosco*, Les grande Coeurs series (Paris: Flammarion), p. 186.

"refined by suffering" during the latter years of his life, but even in his prime it expressed "simple, tenderhearted kindliness." And then too, "What an authority! What an intelligence! What a powerful, secret fascination!"

After the photographs had been taken, something very interesting occurred. The mitered abbot of the Trappists we already mentioned in connection with the meeting in the church of Belen was at the time a guest at the home of Narciso Pascual, and he mingled with the other guests. In the group photograph, he is seen sitting on Don Bosco's right. He now got up and spoke so enthusiastically of Don Bosco and his mission that everyone who heard him was moved. He then took off his ring from his finger and the abbot's cross from around his neck, and exclaimed, "No authority is good enough in the presence of this man of God!" Kneeling before him, he then implored Don Bosco's blessing both for himself and everyone else present. Everyone else then knelt down and he blessed them all.

After this, the abbot insisted so earnestly that he wanted the skullcap the servant of God was wearing that he overcame his reluctance and succeeded in obtaining it from him, so Father Michael Rua testified during the course of the apostolic process. He had remained in Barcelona for three days, solely in order to enjoy Don Bosco's presence there. His former secretary,[22] who was also a guest of the same noble family, wrote Canon Clement Tournier of Toulouse during the year of Don Bosco's beatification: "Happy were the days when I had an opportunity to see the saint and talk with him, eating at his own table. Once, as we strolled on the grounds, I had the good fortune of offering him the support of my arm, and this procured great blessings for me, without adding the blessing given to me by Don Bosco as I knelt at his feet." [23]

Don Bosco, too, was eager to inspect the villa of which he had heard so much. So in the company of many gentlemen, followed by the boys from the Sarriá house and leaning on the arm of Mr. Martí-Codolar, he walked through a good part of the grounds, halting to gaze at the magnificent collection of aquatic and ordinary birds, and again at the camels, bears, elephants, crocodiles, and other exotic animals.

He took his leave toward sunset. "It may sound strange," Charles Viglietti wrote in his diary, "yet, I do not think it would be an exaggeration if I were to say that nowhere else did we encounter such love and veneration for Don Bosco as we did in that household. Don Bosco himself

22 See note 16 p. 35.

23 Clément Tournier, *Le bienheureux Don Bosco á Toulouse* (Toulouse: Berthoumieu, 1929), p. 87.

said that to me today." Before leaving, he was asked to attend the unveiling of a stone tablet commemorating his visit.

It was only logical to think that many people would have looked for Don Bosco at the school during the course of the day. And so it was already decided that morning that all those who came were to be given a piece of paper on which to write their signatures and be told that upon his return, Don Bosco would bless the signatures, intending while doing so, to bless the people who had written their names, their relatives, and their special intentions. As he arrived home, he was handed an enormous folder, containing no less than seven thousand signatures.[24] Yet, this did not exempt him from the necessity of stepping out on the balcony to bless the vast crowd standing waiting outside.

The ordinary train service proved inadequate for all the people who wanted to get to Sarriá from Barcelona. During the last few days of his stay, the number of trains running was tripled, and at times, two engines became necessary because they were overcrowded.

DATES UNKNOWN

A few extraordinary episodes came to our attention through reports received much later, but since we do not know on which date they occurred, we will present them here below one after another.

First of all, there are three healings. An unfortunate mother led her daughter who suffered from chorea (commonly known as Saint Vitus's Dance) to see Don Bosco, and asked him to please heal her. "It is not I who will heal her!" the saint replied. Then he looked intently at the girl and said, "Be devoted to the Most Holy Virgin, say a *Hail Mary* every day, and you will no longer suffer from this disease."

A woman who happened to be present at the time asked the mother to inform her, should the girl truly recover. A little later, the overjoyed mother called on her personally to tell her that ever since Don Bosco's blessing, her daughter had been really well.

Returning home that very day, that same lady called on the Figueras family, since she knew that they had a daughter confined to her bed. She was very weak due to frequent hemorrhages. She told them what she had seen and heard about Don Bosco and gave the sick girl's mother a medal that the servant of God had given her, begging her to have faith and put it

[24] Viglietti wrote that he took the folder back to Turin with him, but we do not know what became of it.

around the patient's neck. At the same instant, her hemorrhages ceased completely and forever.

A lady cousin of this same woman had also been suffering from hemorrhages for a number of years. When she heard of the miracles performed by Don Bosco, she remarked trustingly to the person who was telling her about them, "I do not need to go and see him. It will be enough that I attend his Mass." Indeed, as soon as she had attended it, she recovered completely.[25]

Father Philip Rinaldi told Father Lemoyne of two other instances which he himself had heard from trustworthy people while he was provincial in Spain. One lady, most discouraged because of a series of miscarriages, poured out her grief to Don Bosco. The saint comforted her and said, "Be at peace. From now on, it will not be like that." Just as he had said, she later gave birth to seven healthy children.

A certain Professor Dalman went to see Don Bosco, accompanied by his wife and children. The lady carried a one- or two-year-old child in her arms. Both the father and mother asked his blessing and his prayers so that their children might grow up as good Christians. Don Bosco raised his eyes to Heaven and remained a moment recollected. He then pointed to the older children, saying with a smile, "We'll have them all become religious." Turning to the baby, he added, "And this one is for Don Bosco!" The parents never said a word of this to anybody, but awaited the course of events. One after the other, the older children became religious in different congregations. Among others, one entered the Society of Jesus; and the youngest became a Salesian.

Another of Don Bosco's predictions came true to the letter. At Sarriá, the need for the presence of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians was felt. Don Bosco, too, realized while he was on the spot how convenient their presence would have been. One day, he saw a villa, which was a short distance from the Salesian house and securely fenced all around, and he remarked to Father John Branda, "That place will do for our sisters." Yet everything seemed to conspire against it. The price demanded for the villa was so exorbitant that after vain attempts to persuade the owners to reduce it, the whole idea was relinquished and attention was turned elsewhere.

Don Bosco kept insisting with the director that the sisters should soon be able to get to Sarriá. All hopes seemed to have faded when the owner

[25] Report of the witness, Josephine Ferrea, widow of a man named Pons (Barcelona, July 18, 1909).

suddenly died. His son, the sole heir who was determined to abandon a place that constantly reminded him of his bitter grief, offered the house of his own accord for sale at a very modest price. Furthermore, someone was found immediately who undertook the payment for it, so that it was not long before the sisters took possession of it.

One day, Don Bosco received a group of gentlemen he did not know. He distributed a medal to each at the end of the audience. He had taken a handful of them at random, and the last man did not receive a medal. This gentleman begged him not to deprive him of the gift, but Don Bosco said to him, "You have abandoned your religious life." In fact, he had left the Society of Jesus.

TUESDAY, MAY 4th

The date of his departure was fast approaching and Don Bosco's friends already experienced sadness at the thought of not seeing him any more. Those who witnessed it were deeply touched by the following tender demonstration of affection. Some forty children, counting the grandchildren of Mrs. Chopitea and the children of Louis Martí-Codolar, sacrificed their small savings and personally handed the money to Don Bosco. One child gave him one hundred lire, another two hundred, some even more. He took the savings with a smile and said a few words to each of them. Then he invoked the Lord's blessing on them all.

He said Mass in the house of the Pons family, where he also had a noon dinner. Then he visited the sisters' "auxiliary" and the Jesuit school, where he spoke with the priests for more than half an hour, "*edificando a todos con su santa conversacion, su dulzura y su humildad* [edifying them all with his holy conversation, his sweetness and humility]," so Father Anthony Viladevall wrote to us from San Miguel in Argentina on June 25, 1933. All of them kissed his hand when it was time for him to leave.

The Reverend Father Anthony Viladevall had a personal reason for never having forgotten that visit. He was teaching mathematics in the Jesuit school, but had for some months been practically speechless with an obstinate attack of laryngitis, so that instead of teaching in class, he had been forced to go over things he had already taught to his pupils or avail himself of the assistance of an intelligent student who stood beside his desk to repeat aloud to the class what he, the professor, whispered into his ear. No treatment had had the slightest effect, but the above-mentioned pupil had been a tool of Divine Providence. His name was Joseph de Salas, and he was from a noble family. He told his mother

about his professor's plight, and his mother let Don Bosco know the case and asked for his help. Don Bosco handed her a medal of Mary Help of Christians to give to him, saying he was to put it into a bit of water and drink the water, praying to our Lady to heal him. "I hope it will heal him," he said.

The Jesuit followed his instructions, *sin gran fe* [though without great faith], as he himself admits today. Yet, his voice came back immediately, and never again did he suffer from any recurrent attack or residual disturbance. He still keeps the medal *como oro en pano* [like a precious thing].

After his visit to the Jesuits, Don Bosco called on a countess, who was ill, to comfort her. Then he went to see the hospital that had been founded by Mrs. Chopitea. A vast crowd of people had been awaiting him in Sarriá since early morning. As he went by in his coach, he saw a number of people up on the roofs, or astride walls, or sitting on trees. As he usually did, he stepped out on the balcony and said a few words to the crowd who applauded, shouted, "Long live Don Bosco," and knelt down to receive his blessing. The main entrance door was kept firmly closed because it would not have been possible to control the incoming crowd and who knows how many acts of pious vandalism one would have had to watch as a helpless witness! It was not possible to prevent some small thefts committed by a few privileged visitors who were granted interviews with Don Bosco out of due respect for their rank. How often had his secretary been obliged to replace the pen by his ink well during those last few days and to put fresh linen on his bed!

WEDNESDAY, MAY 5th

Don Bosco said Mass in the home of Mrs. Chopitea, lingering with her family until after midday. He then called on Marchioness de Comillas, where Louis Martí came to pick him up and take him to the church of Our Lady of Mercy. This is a famous sanctuary of Our Lady, much beloved by the people of Barcelona and frequented by many pilgrimages. No visitor to Barcelona who is a Catholic ever leaves without paying his respects to Our Lady of Mercy. And so on the eve of his departure Don Bosco, as well, had arranged to go there to pray and thank the Blessed Virgin.

As soon as his intention was known, many people lined the streets, waiting for him to pass by, or appeared on their balconies, or waited inside the church. A large group of the nobility welcomed him at the entrance to the church, escorted him to the sanctuary, and invited him to sit in a special seat. In front of him a boys' choir sang a *Salve Regina* to

an orchestral accompaniment. Then something took place that we might well call historic. But first we must explain what led up to it.

Amid the lovely, fertile hills that form a splendid crown around the Catalán capital, is one that soars higher than all the others, dominating not only the surrounding valleys and plains, but also the neighboring towns. It would be hard to imagine a more enchanting panorama than the one enjoyed from that hill. Hence, it has always been a favorite spot where the residents of the town and visitors gather. The hill bears a very unusual name - Mount Tibidabo. Its height and the extraordinary loveliness of the site have inspired the popular local legend that Jesus underwent his third temptation. The devil, it is said, brought the Savior there to show Him all the kingdoms of the earth and said on that very hilltop: "*Haec omnia tibi dabo, si cadens adoraveris me* [All these things I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me." (Matt. 4:9)].

A few years previously, the top of Tibidabo had come into the possession of some unscrupulous men who were planning to build a luxury hotel on it, to attract a cosmopolitan set of pleasure-seekers and playboys, or else to sponsor the construction of a Protestant church. In the face of such a danger, seven good men had made an agreement in 1885 to buy the hilltop themselves to prevent that beautiful spot from falling - to speak the truth - into the devil's hand.

After buying it, they were still considering what might be the best use for it. In the meantime, they had built a temporary chapel there dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Enter Don Bosco! His presence in Barcelona had given birth to the idea of donating the hilltop to him, so that he might reply to all persons of evil intent with the words of our Lord, "*Vade retro satana* [Get behind Me, Satan]!" (Mark 8:33).

One of the owners had raised objections, saying he did not even know who this Don Bosco was. But Manuel Pascual spoke of him with such eloquence and detail that the man was overcome by a mysterious awe and was left not only speechless, but also virtually breathless.

So while Don Bosco was in the church praying, these gentlemen came over to him and read out a declaration by which they ceded their mountain property to him, after which they handed over the deeds. The document of conveyance had been written and embellished by a fine calligrapher,[26] and it was handed over to him on behalf of the committee by the president of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society with these words: "To perpetuate the

[26] The Spanish text is given in the Italian edition, doc. 17.

memory of your visit to this city, the gentlemen gathered here met in consultation and unanimously decided to cede to you their property on Mount Tibidabo, so that its summit, which was in danger of being converted into a spawning ground of godlessness, may be consecrated with a shrine to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, for the steadfast, undaunted support of the faith which you have preached to us with such zeal and shining example, and which is our noble heritage bequeathed us by our ancestors."

Deeply touched, Don Bosco replied, "I am overwhelmed by this fresh, unexpected proof you give me of your piety and faith. Thank you, but you must realize that in this, you are the tools of Divine Providence. As I was leaving Turin to come to Spain, I was thinking to myself, now that the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome is almost completed, I must look for some other way to honor the Sacred Heart and promote devotion to it. An interior voice bade me to be calm, assuring me that here I would be able to gratify this vow. That voice kept repeating to me, "*Tibi dabo, tibi dabo!*" Yes, gentlemen, you are the tools of Divine Providence. With your help, a shrine dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus will soon rise upon that mount. Everyone will find there an opportunity to receive the holy sacraments, and your charity and faith - of which you have given me so many beautiful proofs - will be remembered forever."

His words were moving, and those who were listening to them were deeply touched. After blessing the crowd, he was accompanied to the sacristy, where he signed the register where the names of the shrine's most eminent visitors were recorded.[27]

As he left that sacred place, he was fully aware that he had undertaken a project of which there was no chance that he would see even the beginning, much less its completion. Yet, he revealed immediately how dear the project was to him in the first chapter meeting that he held after his return to Turin on the morning of May 26th. After listing the various commitments he had contracted in Spain, he went on: "On Mount Tibidabo, we could locate the novitiate for the young Spaniards who will be going to the missions. The bishops approve; they are even enthusiastic about the project. Meanwhile, things are progressing. The mount has been donated to us." Don Bosco's successors religiously received his vow as a heritage.[28] In the meantime, before the end of May, at the summit of Tibidabo, under the direction of the Salesians and thanks to the contributions of devout people,

[27] In the church of Our Lady of Mercy, on the left side of the altar dedicated to St. Mary of Cervellón, which stands in the right transept, a Latin inscription on a marble tablet commemorates the donation that took place there.

[28] The basilica atop the mount is the base of a Salesian-run parish and retreat house.

a little Gothic chapel was sprouting from the soil, through which the Sacred Heart had already begun to take possession of the spot.[29]

Mr. Martí-Codolar again accompanied Don Bosco to Sarriá from Barcelona in his coach. People gathered around him as he left and people lined up all along his route, as well as people awaited him upon his arrival. There were moving scenes everywhere, shouts and applause on all sides. The frenzy of the crowd was encouraged by the unperturbed calm of the servant of God, whose companions found their will and energy put to severe tests.

All members of the Pascual families came to the school after supper. There were four different family groups, all of them rivaling with one another to show their love for Don Bosco. The prospect of his imminent departure had brought them there. "All of them were crying," Viglietti wrote in his diary.

THURSDAY, MAY 6th

It was the last day. Don Bosco said Mass at the newly built altar in the school chapel, and then returned to his room after Mass to bless the crowd, which shouted until he came out on the balcony. He made a gesture to signify he wished to speak. This caused a general commotion, a pushing and shoving and pressing together, so that people could catch the words he was about to say: "I hope to see you all in Paradise. Up there, no more interviews with a poor priest, but with Mary Most Holy herself, with her divine Son, and it will not be just for a few moments either, but for all eternity."

The Pascuals were granted the final interviews, for despite their leave-taking the night before, they could not forego the pleasure of his delightful conversation on just one more occasion. "It was touching to see those poor ladies and gentlemen wander through the rooms, greeting us with sobs, unable to tear themselves away," the diary reads. "They would walk as far as the door, then come back again, re-entering the room, kissing all the things that Don Bosco had used. Then they would say goodbye to us once again, unable to explain what was happening to them."

Don Bosco had never had an opportunity to talk to all the boys assembled together; so at the very last minute, after dinner, he entered the church where they were all waiting to receive a final souvenir from him, and addressed a few brief words to them, blessed them and said goodbye. The boys were all weeping.

The railway employees on the Sarriá line also wanted to have the

[29] *El Diario de Barcelona* (May 30, 1886). See Appendix, doc. 18.

honor of his company on their train, since he had always traveled by coach during his stay; so they had a special compartment ready for him and together with their wives, treated him with every courtesy when he arrived. The principal local authorities, as well as several Cooperators and friends, got on the train with him, though neither Mr. Martí-Codolar nor Oscar Pascual were present. Since they had known what a crowd there would be at Barcelona, they drove in their coaches to the next to the last stop, where they met Don Bosco and his companions and escorted him by a secret path to the train bound for France, thus sparing him exertion and emotion.

Mrs. Chopitea and a large group of ladies and gentlemen were waiting for Don Bosco alongside the train for France. They had all come to say their final farewell. Many of them got into the compartment with him, getting off the train again at a station some two hours away from their place of residence.

Returning to Barcelona, Mrs. Chopitea kept thinking over the holy words she had heard and the holy things she had seen during the past few weeks, during which she had truly acted as both Martha and Mary. Whenever she had an opportunity, she attended the Mass celebrated by the servant of God with seraphic devotion, and had performed tasks for his comfort with her own hands. She had even called in artists to decorate the walls of her palace in the room where she was wont to receive her eminent guest. When he was gone, she looked on the room as a relic, converting it into a chapel. She locked away in big closets all the furniture and things Don Bosco had used. It was deeply edifying to see how this woman, who was admired and venerated by the whole city of Barcelona for her charity, had acted as humbly as a child, incapable of talking in the presence of Don Bosco.

Twice, in April and in May, did Father Celestine Durando, in his duty as prefect general, send brief reports on Don Bosco's travels in Spain to all the Salesian houses. In reference to the first of them, Bishop John Cagliero wrote: "Father Durando's letter was avidly read by all. Despite the fact that an icy wind was blowing, it warmed us all with holy enthusiasm, and *noble pride*, because we are the sons of such a father."[30]

Who could say what were Don Bosco's thoughts during his time alone as he recalled those twenty-nine days, with all their great field days and triumphs? We can surmise some of his thinking from a few words

[30] Letter to Fr. Lazzero (Patagónes, May 26, 1886).

that escaped him.[31] One day at table, a guest made a remark in his presence about the daily gathering of crowds, and in all calm and simplicity, he whispered in reply, "I really do not know why so many crowds come to see me!" Then, as the conversation went on, and the Salesian house at Sarriá was mentioned, he remarked with the air of someone saying something quite ordinary: "*The Talleres Salesianos* [The Salesian technical school] will train and educate five hundred boys." Self-forgetfulness and focus with steadfast faith on fulfilling the tasks wanted by God. These were the habitual thoughts of the saints.

[31] *El Diario de Barcelona* (May 1, 1886).

Chapter 4

DEPARTURE FROM SPAIN AND RETURN TO TURIN

Once reached the end of the previous Chapter, more than one Salesian must have asked himself how come in the report on all the days that Don Bosco spent in Spain and in France there was hardly a mention made of Fr. Michael Rua? Most assuredly Father Rua did not stand idly at the side of the Servant of God. The reason for this omission lies mainly in our sources of information, which are practically non-existent as far as Father Rua is concerned. We should, however, add that it was habitual for him to hide behind his shadow and so to speak disappear when he was with Don Bosco, so that he might not draw the slightest attention of anyone away from the person of the holy founder. We can therefore quite justifiably believe that he busied himself with the enormous amount of correspondence and represented Don Bosco in acts of courtesy and even of importance, though always in the guise of a most humble secretary. As vicar concerned with the government of the Pious Society, he must also have maintained daily contact with the members of the Superior Council whose activity was naturally conducted mainly in secret, without even those nearest to them being aware of it all. He must have exercised his sacred ministry on behalf of the Salesians and the boys at Sarria', especially in the confessional; but the truth remains that we do not have any positive evidence. Nor do we know anything about the return journey.

Yet, during the last few days at Sarria' something occurred which helped to win the veneration of Spanish Cooperators for Father Rua. The incident was recalled at the time he became the successor of Don Bosco. Physicians had despaired of the life of a child, and it was only a matter of time until the child breathed his last. In an impulse of love and faith, its parents brought the child to Don Bosco. The Saint who was exhausted beyond all measure had sent word to them that they should go to Father Rua. He blessed the child and the dying child recovered instantly. At the

time, it was thought that because Father Rua had given this blessing in Don Bosco's name, the influence of his intercession had caused the miracle. Later, when word got out and people reflected, they also acknowledged Father Rua's share of merit.

The travelers did not go beyond Gerona the night of May 6, for Don Bosco was in urgent need of rest and peace before undertaking further discomfort. A haven of peace was found for him in the home of the generous Joachim de Carles who was awaiting him at the station with his sons. A huge crowd surrounded the railroad station, but after greeting the religious and civil authorities who were introduced to him as soon as he got off the train, the Saint was quickly taken into a coach and rescued from the surge of the crowd. Fourteen reigning monarchs had already been welcomed into the palace in which he was now a guest. Among them Amadeus of Savoy during his brief reign in Spain. The family greatly admired Don Bosco and considered it an immense gift from Heaven that they were allowed to have him among them, even for so short a time. To the present day, the room where he slept is still kept in veneration, even though the palace has new owners. When it was donated to the bishop of Gerona, it became the magnificent headquarters of the Catholic Action Association.

How was it that Don Bosco was able to enjoy such aristocratic hospitality so far away from Barcelona? A living witness (1936), the old pastor at Lloret de Mar, the Rev. John Ferrés y Puntones, who was then employed with the noble family[1] can answer this question for us. Joachim, the first son of Joachim de Carles, heard that a religious who was regarded as a saint had arrived in Barcelona and planned to go to see him. On April 24, he set out with young Ferrés and called at the Salesian house in Sarria' where he was soon granted an interview with Don Bosco. Their conversation was a long one, and nothing is known of what was said, though Mr. Carles looked very happy when he got out. He attended Don Bosco's Mass the following day in the school chapel and received communion from his hand. After a second interview, he came out looking radiant with delight, for Don Bosco had given him hope that on his way home he might stay at his house. This hope was fulfilled. When the Carles family was advised that the Saint would be

[1] Report by Rev. Eugene Magni, director of the Salesian house at Gerona (May 5, 1936). See also *Mensajerito de Maria Auxiliadora*, Gerona, May 1, 1936. Dates here and elsewhere indicate that certain details were added when the volume was already in the process of being printed.

coming to Gerona the evening of May 6, the household could not have been more overjoyed than if the royal family of Spain had been coming to stay with them. The entire palace was decorated in gala fashion, a sumptuous banquet had been prepared in the finest hall and one of the best bedrooms had been prepared for the guest. The pastor thus describes the impression Don Bosco made on him at the time, "Don Bosco was of medium stature, with keen eyes, a penetrating look, a smile on his face, and he possessed an extraordinary charm and *poseia el don de gentes* [he had a personal magnetism]. One had only to look at him to realize he was a saint. The effect I felt in his presence was that I found myself obliged to ponder and examine my conscience, to find out how things stood with me spiritually." When he departed, Joachim de Carles, his son, and the two younger boys, Emilio and Eduardo, all chose to accompany him as far as Cervere. His visit was a short one, but they corresponded long after that.

He could not make many visits or receive many people because of the brevity of his stay. Among the people he did see was the bishop, Thomas Sivilla who came to see him early on the morning after his arrival, so eager was he to talk with him. When he saw the magnificent chamber assigned to him, he exclaimed to Mr. Carles who was accompanying him, "What? These chambers for Don Bosco?" To which the host replied, "Excellency, if I had anything better, I would have given it to him." Don Bosco left at eight-thirty in the morning. The entire household wanted to accompany him as far as Port-Bou, and took leave of him with the tenderest expressions of reverence and affection. When he was at last alone with Father Michael Rua, Brother Charles Viglietti, (Father John Baptist Branda who had traveled with him thus far had to return), he gratefully accepted the dinner which a kind lady had prepared for him. In the afternoon, he boarded the train for Montpellier, by which route he intended to take the shortest way back to Italy. He was eager to get to Turin, because it was nearly time for the novena of Mary Help of Christians. How soon he would do so was relative, since it had been agreed that he was to travel only in stages as required by his health conditions.

After a one-hour halt at Cette, where he took advantage of the interval to pay his respects to a wealthy family, he completed his itinerary for the day at six-thirty p.m. when he reached Montpellier. Here the rector of the seminary and other superiors awaited him with open arms. They had planned to have him have supper with the seminarians.

The next morning, May 8, he celebrated the community Mass, then granted an audience to many people who had been waiting in front of the seminary doors since early morning.

At about eleven o'clock, he visited the nuns of the Sacred Heart at the request of their Mother Superior. There was great expectancy. "Everything was jubilant that day. We were going to see a Saint." One of the nuns who is still alive today wrote to us on February 25, 1934, "We had prayed hard, asking that he might visit us, for we looked upon it as an immense grace. And great it was indeed when we saw and heard this venerable old man, whose features and tone revealed a soul intimately united with God." He stayed there a quarter of an hour, sitting in a big armchair while the community gathered around him, as well as the residents of the school and a number of women. He talked to them all a few minutes, and then various people began approaching him, one by one confiding their sorrows to him or asking him to pray for them. He listened kindly to them all. One little girl came up to him with her small hands clasped, her eyes full of tears, to implore him:

"Father, send my mama back to me!"

"Where is she?" the Saint asked.

"She is dead," the little one answered.

"Let her stay with our Lord," Don Bosco told her, "she is very happy there."

Since it was getting late, he spoke to them in a loud voice so that everyone could hear him, "I cannot listen to all of you. So I will give you my blessing and will pray that you may be granted the graces you are seeking."

The Sister who supplied us with this information was not yet a Religious. She was aware of certain signs of a vocation in her, but mostly vaguely, and out of her faith not by any inclination. She happened to be staying a few days in the convent and in no way was she thinking of remaining there. The Superior instead would have liked to have her go to the Novitiate that same evening, to place her in a safe environment. She felt overwhelmed at the idea of separating herself so abruptly from her family, without informing her parents or even saying good-bye to them, without enjoying even one more day of her life as a single girl in the world which she liked so much. It was in this state of mind that she saw Don Bosco pass close to her and look at her. But she remained quite aloof. The Superior made a gesture that she was to follow her. She did so, walking slowly down the stairs behind the Saint. When they reached the garden, the Mother Superior pulled

her in front of Don Bosco, bidding her kneel down for a blessing, which she had neither asked for nor desired. Nevertheless, she obeyed once again. In a fatherly way, Don Bosco put his hand firmly on her head, which was throbbing, and with a firm pressure of his palm on it, said, "Poor child, have faith. You have a big struggle ahead of you, yes indeed, but..." She was so shaken up at that time that she did not hear the words, which followed that "but." Yet everything came true to the letter: struggles, conflict, personal problems, and problems not directly concerned with her, all conspired to destroy her vocation. Forty-seven years after that meeting, she considers herself happy in her life as a religious and attributes her happiness to the influence of that blessing and to Don Bosco's prayers.

In its issue of Saturday, the 8th of May, the local Catholic newspaper, *L'Eclair* reported on all that had happened in Paris during Don Bosco's visit there in 1883. The article informed its readers that the famous Italian priest was now in their town of Montpellier and would celebrate Mass at eight o'clock in the cathedral the following day. This announcement caused a great stir in the population, and an unprecedented crowd filled the immense church in the early hours. When he arrived there, the whole cathedral chapter and clergy went to greet him. At the Gospel, the Vicar General spoke from the pulpit, recommending that a collection be taken up on behalf of the Salesian undertakings. Father Michael Rua and Charles Viglietti went around the church with the basket, thanking those who gave alms with Don Bosco's own ritual words: "May God reward you." When Mass was over, the Servant of God addressed a few words to the crowd, "His voice was weak and slow and could not reach out to the whole congregation," the article stated on the 10th, "his foreign accent embarrasses him and he seems to hesitate when he speaks," but "it is enough to look at him to sense that something supernatural which radiates from his entire person."

After a little refreshment in the rectory, he called at the Visitation convent and talked at length with the sisters in the hall. One nun who was much beloved by the entire community for her wonderful virtues was seriously ill. The nuns had begged him to visit her hoping for a miracle, and the Saint complied. After a moment of recollection, as if he were consulting the will of God, he lifted his finger, pointing heavenward for the nun, "To heaven, to heaven!" he exclaimed. As a matter of fact a little later, she gave her soul back to God.

Before his departure, the Saint granted many audiences also there and was back at the seminary by twelve o'clock. The seminary was run by the sons of Saint Vincent de Paul who had chosen to celebrate their holy patron feast that same day, feeling that the presence of Don Bosco would be the finest item in their scheduled festivities.

The stream of callers started moving on that afternoon, and there were so many of them that it was impossible to satisfy them all, because the timetable of the community could not be disrupted.

Many people witnessed a miracle. A sick woman who was carried almost bodily into Don Bosco's presence, recovered immediately as he blessed her and walked home by herself. As he went to his room from the audience chamber, he immediately unloaded the burden of gold and silver coins, which weighed heavy in his pockets. Then he said jokingly, "If we had not accepted money at Montpellier, they would have flung it to us, feeling that we were doing them a favor by accepting it."

At Montpellier, he met again a friend, Dr. Combal, who lived there.[2] As soon as he knew Don Bosco had arrived, he hastened to call on him that first evening and repeated his visit the two following evenings as well. The last time, he brought his family along, and would not go away until he had given Don Bosco a careful check-up. Upon leaving the room, he met Father Michael Rua and Charles Viglietti, and confirmed his diagnosis of two years before. "Don Bosco suffers from no other sickness than dire exhaustion," he said. "Even if he had never performed any other miracle, I would consider the fact that he is alive to be the greatest of all miracles. His organism is totally destroyed. He is a man dead from fatigue, yet he keeps on working every day, he eats very little, and he is still alive. This, to me, is the greatest of all miracles."

The clerics displayed an affectionate admiration for Don Bosco. If one had listened to them, they would have abandoned the seminary to follow him wherever he went. After supper he met the seminarians in a hall. He could hardly stand upright. He would have desired to speak, but his fatigue was such that he had to give up the attempt and content himself with imparting a general blessing to them. Yet despite that, the mere sight of him was more effective than any speech.

Perhaps Don Bosco was unaware or might have forgotten that he had a relative living at Montpellier: Francis Bosco, son of John, the Saint's uncle on his father's side, had left his native country, we do not know

[2] See Vol. XVII, pp. 37–39.

why, together with his wife, née Zagna, and had died at an early age in Marseilles in 1870, leaving two small daughters. The girls had been raised in the orphanage of the Sisters of Nazareth at Montpellier and were still there when their great cousin came to town. The elder of the two, born in 1867, was at an age where she had to come to some decision regarding her future. She called on Don Bosco at the seminary. It was not the first time that she had seen him, for when she was eight years old, her mother on her way to Castelnuovo had stopped to see him in Turin.[3] He now welcomed her with touching warmth and asked her what she meant to do with her life, to which she replied she wished to become a religious. "Good," he answered, looking at her with those penetrating eyes of his. "I will see what I can do for you." Then he added to the nun who had accompanied her, "I assisted her grandfather, my own father's brother, during his last moments. If everyone lived as he lived, death would always be as beautiful as his." The girl entered the Benedictine convent at Sembel by Miols, in the department of Heraut, and made her profession in 1893 changing her own name from Paula to Marie Eleanor.[4] She later became superior, and as we write, is in the Pradines abbey, department of the Loire.[5]

The stream of visitors grew more and more, seriously disturbing the peace of the pious place and so the Saint decided not to prolong his stay. On the morning of the 10th of May, after breakfast with the Sisters of Charity who had obtained the favor of such a visit through their fellow religious, the Lazarists, he left for Valence.

The cordial hospitality offered him at the Montpellier seminary had an effect, which we cannot ignore. Don Bosco had sent a note of thanks as well as several of his own publications, among others the *Life of Saint Vincent de Paul* to Fr. Dupuy, the seminary director, when he got back to Turin. The director wrote his reply on July 2: "The Montpellier seminary still cherishes the recollection of your visit. The good people of the town who gave you such a fine welcome

3 In a letter to her relative, Mother Eulalia Bosco of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians wrote in reference to this visit and in reference to her own father on November 21, 1929, from Pradines: "He must have been highly respected, for I noticed that when older people who had known him at Castelnuovo were told, 'Look, this is the daughter of Francis Bosco,' they all clasped their hands and said, 'Oh! Oh!' and looked at me with tender respect."

4 For her acceptance into the convent she was helped by Fr. Gervais, the vicar general of Montpellier, who helped her because of his warm affection for Don Bosco.

5 We are partly indebted for this information to Sr. Marie-Joseph of the Trappist convent at Espira de Agly in the eastern Pyrenees, who sent it to Fr. Lemoyne April 5, 1899, and partly to the above-mentioned Mother Marie Eleanor, thanks to a report sent to Mother Eulalia with the above quoted letter.

would be prepared to repeat it, and I again would be ready to offer my services in holding you and defending you against the onslaught of the crowds. I really did have a hard time trying to restrain their fervor when they tried to kiss the hand of a priest who is poor amid the poorest and full of ailments." Yet he noted that he did harbor one deep regret. Having left Don Bosco entirely to others, he had never enjoyed the chance of talking to him one on one. He had a great desire to question him about the system he used to lead souls to God. He had asked Don Bosco how he managed to control so many boys with so few assistants, and Don Bosco had told him that the entire secret lay in instilling the holy fear of God into them. This answer, however, had not satisfied the director. "The fear of God is but the beginning of wisdom," he had written in the above mentioned letter, "what I want to know is what your method is for leading souls to attain the apex of all wisdom, which is the love of God."

When the letter was read out to him, Don Bosco exclaimed, "They want me to state what my method is! Really...I would not know what it is myself. I have always gone along as our Lord inspired me and as the circumstances demanded."[6] We do not know what he wrote or told others to write as an answer, but certainly these simple words say a lot! They do not mean, as Father Bartholmew Fascie points out,[7] that Don Bosco was in the habit of drifting along without any directive, but that he was not rigidly bound to any stereotyped pattern, which might "restrict his freedom of action in the face of new initiatives or new demands." His eminently practical spirit could not stand abstractions. Don Bosco truly did elaborate a system all his own, the so-called preventive system, but he drew its foundations from "human and Christian tradition" and from his study of the mind of young people, and therefore not from theoretical pedagogy.

Along the route, which links Montpellier to Valence, there is Tarascon where Don Bosco had to change trains. During the half-hour halt, when word got around that the priest dressed a la Italian was Don Bosco, the waiting room soon was filled up with people Some were drawn by mere curiosity, others by their desire to be blessed by him.

They arrived at Valence about four o'clock in the afternoon. The pastor of the cathedral, who loved Don Bosco and the Salesians, was

[6] Lemoyne, *Vita del Venerabile Don Bosco*, 2:311.

[7] Bartolomeo Fascie, *Il metodo educativo di Don Bosco* (Turin: S.E.I.), pp. 20–22.

waiting to meet him at the station and escorted him back to his own home. At supper, the administrator of the great Carthusian Institute of Grenoble talked at great length with the Servant of God. This good monk knew very little about Don Bosco, and even less about his work, but in a short while, Charles Viglietti was able to "catechize" him so thoroughly that when he left, he promised to remember it and embraced them all with the utmost warmth. By saying, "he would remember it" he meant that among the substantial charitable donations made every year by his wealthy monastery, there would be something for Don Bosco too. Nor were these words thrown to the wind, for on May 31, a monk of that same Carthusian monastery called on the Oratory in the name of the Prior and gave Don Bosco fifty thousand francs, with a letter full of very benevolent terms, in which the superior stated he was ready to render him every service and give him any assistance.

A dinner was given in his honor the following day by the pastor who invited many gentlemen of the city, among them that same Albert Du Boys already encountered by Don Bosco in Toulon and mentioned as Don Bosco's biographer.[8] Later, Don Bosco called on the Sisters of the Visitation, those of the Holy Trinity, and the ladies working for missionaries, giving his advice, comfort, and blessings everywhere he went. At eight o'clock p.m. there was a meeting at the large cathedral, which was crowded to capacity, but Don Bosco yielded the floor to Father Michael Rua who told them about the history of the Oratory, and then he went around the church with Charles Viglietti to pick up a collection.

On the 12th, just as he had done the day before, he said Mass in the cathedral. He sat down after the Gospel, and he addressed a huge audience, speaking with particular stress of the Sacred Heart Church in Rome. There was then another collection taken up, while at the altar rail, Father Rua was distributing a great quantity of medals of Mary Help of Christians. After granting as many interviews as he could, Don Bosco retired because it was almost time for him to leave. It was noon when he left Valence for Grenoble, the last stage of his journey on French ground. We say 'the last stage,' not only because of the long journey we have just described, but also because it was the last of his life.

His fame had preceded him to Grenoble, so he was met by priests and

[8] See above. 00, and Vol. XVII, 200.

noble gentlemen who, in view of the expectation of the population, had arranged to escort him straight from the station to the church of Saint Louis. The streets and squares were jammed with people, and the church inside was packed from corner to corner. Wearing a surplice, the pastor came to greet him at the door with the clergy, and asked him in a loud voice to bless his parishioners and say a prayer for them. Don Bosco consented. Whereupon all barriers of restraint broke down. Swept by some sort of frenzy, the crowd pressed in on him. It was necessary to form a cordon around him to prevent him from being crushed and to enable him to approach the altar. Not being able to touch his hand or his garment any longer, the people held out their rosaries from afar, tapping him repeatedly on the shoulder, the neck, the head and the arms. Both when entering and leaving the church, he was subjected to a "pious scourging" as Father Rua who was then beside him testified during the processes.[9] As a matter of fact that evening his hands were stained with blood, his face ached, and he complained of pains in his right arm.

When by dint of time and patience, it was at last possible to get him safely inside the carriage, he was driven to the major seminary with an escort of priests and laymen. The coaches entered through the carriage gates, and the seminarians all leaned out of the windows, eager to catch a glimpse of the Saint. Surrounded by his staff, the superior met him at the foot of the staircase. Seeing him so exhausted and panting, he said, "Reverend Father, it looks like you are in pain...Yet, no one better than you knows how much suffering sanctifies us."

"No, no, Father Rector," Don Bosco replied promptly, "it is not suffering which sanctifies us, but patience."

The bell rang for supper shortly afterward, and when he entered the dining room of the clerics with all the superiors, they rose to their feet and applauded heartily. As he reached his own seat, he addressed them in Italian with the words: "Good appetite!" That's exactly what he did also on all similar occasions.

Four clerics in turn waited at table. The four who were on duty that evening plotted together to hide the plates and cutlery used by Don Bosco and to divide them among themselves. To make their little theft honest, they also decided to contribute so much per person to purchase a new set of dishes and cutlery to replace what they were taking. And so at a propitious moment, they seized their booty and divided the spoils.

[9] *Summarium* of the diocesan processes, no. XVIII, 185.

His first day at Grenoble, May 13, was a very hard one. During the Mass which he celebrated at the cathedral attended by the chapter which had met him with the solemnity of the episcopal ritual, Don Bosco addressed the crowded church at some length, explaining how his work responded to the needs of the times. Then the usual collection followed.

As he was walking through the square, after Mass, on his way to the rectory, an old white-haired man forced his way through the crowd, reached Don Bosco and flung himself on his knees, imploring his blessing and begging him to pray for himself and his wife. He was known throughout the city and was highly revered. His name was Paul Lamache, one of the seven men who with Blessed Frederick Ozanam had founded the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Paris in 1833, also known as Conferences. He had taken up his residence in Grenoble when he already was advanced in years, and for a number of years his wife had been seriously ill. At this time, the poor woman was unable to swallow food of any kind, and the physicians despaired of her. Her husband who was a man of great faith, having heard that Don Bosco was in town was coming to play his last card. After listening to his anguished plea, Don Bosco reflected a few minutes as if consulting God and then said, "Do something for the poor which will mean a sacrifice to you. Do your daughters own any jewels of which they are fond?"

"Yes, they do," the old man, said.

"Then let them offer them to Mary Help of Christians for the Salesian undertakings," Don Bosco told him. This meant a very great sacrifice, but a few days later, these little family treasures were on their way to Turin. After he received them, Don Bosco telegraphed, "Recovery will be obtained, if beneficial to eternal salvation." The outcome was that Mrs. Paul Lamache recovered and lived for another twenty years.

The members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul met in the rectory to pay their respects to Don Bosco and receive his blessing. After calling on a benefactress, he remained there to grant a number of interviews. For dinner he went out of town, to the seminary villa, together with all the clerics. On the way back, he stopped to see the Sisters of the Sacred Heart; then, returning home, he resumed his audiences with anyone who wished to speak with him. The hour immediately before supper was always given to spiritual reading, and no strangers to the Institute were admitted during such a period, so he joined the seminarians for this act of devotion. On this occasion, however, spiritual reading was replaced by an exhortation by Father Rua who chose as his theme God's love for us.

Someone who was present wrote, "His fervent words revealed his fiery soul. It was contemplation rather than meditation, but it became ecstasy for Don Bosco. Big tears ran down his cheeks and as the superior noticed this, he remarked out loud with his warm loving voice, 'Don Bosco is weeping.' It would be impossible to describe the effect those simple words had on us. The Saint's tears were even more influential than Father Rua's fiery words. We all felt deeply moved and recognized Don Bosco's holiness in his love, and we no longer needed any miracles to lead us to display our veneration for the Saint as we moved toward the dining room."

This is what they did. There were one hundred and twenty seminarians, and all of them wanted to kiss Don Bosco's hand. In an instant they had come to an agreement among themselves. Two of them took up their stand on either side of him, holding his arms to support him. All along the porch on their way to the dining room, they passed two by two to kiss his hands. It must be remembered that in France, it is not a custom to kiss the hand of a priest, as it is in Italy. To do so in that country was a gesture of great personal veneration.

Then there ensued a sort of competition to be able to speak with him privately. This is an example. Early next morning, a cleric named Edward Jourdan escaped, we know not how, from the ranks of the other seminarians and ran to Don Bosco's room and knocked on his door. No one answered, but Charles Viglietti appeared and said that Don Bosco was in the reading room. Without a word, the cleric raced to the reading room, while another seminarian, who had also appeared from nowhere, followed hard on his heels. Just as they got to the reading room, the door opened and Don Bosco came out. Both of them jumped forward and fell on their knees. Jourdan was the first to speak.

"Father. I am undecided about my vocation. Please tell me what to do."

"You must come with me, my dear friend," Don Bosco answered, "you will become a Salesian."

The other asked which path he should choose, but for sole reply, Don Bosco made a negative movement with his right hand as if to say, "Not you, I do not want you." Both in his 'Yes' to the former and his 'No' to the latter, Don Bosco's manner were equally categorical.

The worthy seminarians were seized by yet another craze: the urge to snip off pieces of Don Bosco's cassock or curls from his head. They tried this while their superior was introducing the occupants of the particular dormitories to Don Bosco. A number of them were armed with scissors, but when their chance came, they did not have the courage to go through

with their intentions. A few did, but were intimidated by a flashing glance from their superior. One who was luckier than the others succeeded, but Don Bosco noticed him and remarked with a smile to the superior, "Father Rector, you have some thieves here." The Rector opened his eyes wide, but his alarm lasted only an instant. The seminarian whose remark about Don Bosco's tears we just quoted, made a lovely observation: Don Bosco knew how to blend most remarkably two widely differing things: the severity of his glance and the loving quality of his smile. "The severe glance *ante factum [before the action]*," he wrote, "and the smile *post factum [after]*. Justice and mercy exchange an ineffable kiss in the Saints, as they do in God."

The author of this comment was the cleric to whom Don Bosco had said 'No' after saying 'Yes' to his companion. With the latter, the Saint repeated his invitation in the audience granted to the members of his dormitory, nor did his words fall on deaf ears. He went to the novitiate in Marseilles, became a priest and lived the life of an excellent Salesian until 1923. The other, who for many years was active in his diocesan pastoral ministry, at last entered the great Carthusian monastery at Grenoble, remaining there until the monks were expelled from France. His name was Father Peter Muton, and today he is the Carthusian vicar at Motta Grossa in the area of Pinerolo. His account of Don Bosco's visit to the Grenoble seminary contains many other little episodes, which can be read at the end of this volume.[10] But he is silent on one detail, which he nevertheless related at our novitiate at Monte Oliveto.[11] While he was in the seminary, he was in danger of losing his eyesight, or at least of it being so impaired that he would have been unable to continue his studies. Now, the first time he was able to get hold of the hand of the Saint, he pressed it, full of trust, against his eyelids, and unexpectedly, he found his eyesight got stronger, and all his fears were forever banished.

Don Bosco's third day at Grenoble was more or less the same as the first had been, with the only difference that it rained heavily. However, this did not prevent a stream of people from invading the church of Saint Louis where he went to say Mass, nor from crowding the adjacent streets and square. He was met as usual at the doors by the pastor and the clergy. After the Gospel Don Bosco described somehow the history of the

[10] Appendix, doc. 21. When the spoils were divided after Don Bosco had eaten, the glass the Saint had used fell to his share, and when he became a monk, he gave it to his family, who treasured it religiously. It was brought to table on the feasts of his beatification and canonization, and everyone present drank a sip of wine from it.

[11] *La voce di Monte Oliveto*, March–April 1932.

church of the Sacred Heart in Rome. After Mass, interviews in the rectory, interviews in the church of Saint Lawrence which he visited, and again interviews at the seminary. At eight o'clock in the evening, they all went to Saint Andrew's for the Month of Mary devotions. It was already getting dark, and a sea of humanity filled the square, since there was not enough room for everybody inside the church. Fearing that some mishap might occur in such a hustle and bustle, Don Bosco got out of the coach and was surrounded by several gentlemen, headed by the Herculean coadjutor Brother Benvenuto Graziano, who had come from Italy to meet him. They forced a path for him through the crowd. The Servant of God was so tired, that he could not take it any more; and yet he did say something to the people from the altar rails and gave them his blessing.

If entering the church was full of apprehension, the getting out of it again became a dangerous enterprise. With such a vast and restless crowd, a lot of trouble might ensue. "Neither Don Bosco nor we who were with him," Charles Viglietti writes, "will ever forget that evening. My feet were so trampled on that day that they were bleeding. I had to clutch on to his cassock so as not to be separated from him. Besides being worn out and bruised and battered, thanks to the indiscreet devotion of the faithful, our poor father had his hands all bruised, too. They had bitten him and rubbed rosaries, crucifixes, and medals against his face and hands." Nevertheless, for anyone who *au dessus de la melee [stood apart from the scrimmage]*, it must have been a deeply moving manifestation of faith.

On the last day, May 15, he did not leave the seminary until it was time for his departure. He said the community Mass and said good-bye to the clerics. He did not meet the bishop of the diocese, Bishop Fava, because he was absent from the town; but when he arrived at Grenoble, Don Bosco made it his duty to call at the episcopal palace as a sign of due homage. At last, about nine o'clock, he said his final farewell to France, where he had experienced French benevolence and generosity in so many different ways. He left on the express train for Italy from Grenoble.

Father John Baptist Lemoyne received word about a miraculous deed that occurred at Grenoble even before Don Bosco arrival. A certain Mr. Darberio had a son suffering from an incurable disease, but did not want to receive the sacraments. This afflicted the Christian family even more. The boy's father had written to the Saint, imploring him to pray to God that he might touch the unhappy boy's heart. Don Bosco sent word in answer that his son would not have only recovered, but that he would serve his Mass when he passed through Grenoble. That's what happened.

Two letters written to Don Bosco in January 1888 by someone who apparently was unaware of the health, in which the Servant of God then found himself, refer to Don Bosco's passing through Grenoble. In the first, dated January 16th, Suzanne de la Brosse asks for a spiritual favor. But to introduce her request, she reminds him of a temporal favor she had already obtained, thanks to him. "When you were in Grenoble two years ago," she wrote, "my father had terrible trouble with his eyes. You were so gracious to pray for him to Mary Help of Christians, and that same day his eyes were healed."

The second letter, dated January 25th, came from a poor youth named Mario Faure who enclosed an offering of one franc, 25 cents, saying that he had been cured of a sickness and now asked Don Bosco to pray for him, so that he might find work. To remind him of who he was, he recalled several things in reference to an interview granted him at Grenoble, saying that he was that poor youth who had been a hunchback. He had seen Don Bosco in his room at the seminary before he celebrated Mass in the church of Saint Louis, and the Saint had given him a medal for his mother who was sick, urging him to repeat this prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus until the end of the year: "Glory be to the Sacred heart of Jesus, now and forever and ever. So be it." This ejaculatory prayer was very easy to remember, and perhaps Don Bosco had advised it in consideration of the education of the young man. He wrote in his letter that he had always continued to say that prayer, though he did not add anything further about his mother's health. We would underscore the singular graciousness with which Don Bosco granted an audience to this poor boy, listening to what he had to say and comforting him, despite the heavy schedule he had at the time, as though he were an important person.

We come now to the epilogue. On May 11, Charles Viglietti wrote to Father Lemoyne from Valence: "Don Bosco, at whose side I am right now, asked me to give you his warm regards and to greet all the superiors at the Oratory, as well as the boys, and to tell them that he hopes to see them all again in good health Saturday evening." After so long an absence and the general anxiety for his health on such a strenuous journey, this piece of news brought great joy to the Oratory. He arrived a little before seven o'clock. Who could describe the enthusiasm when they saw him in the doorway? Their first wave of joy was quickly transformed into profound tenderness as they saw that he looked far more bent than before.[12] As he walked slowly through the courtyard between two compact rows of boys who grabbed his

[12] Letter from Fr. Lazzero to Bp. Cagliero, Turin, May 17, 1886.

hands to kiss them, one of the secretaries, noticing how exhausted he looked, wanted to put an end to all the commotion and pushed the boys back. Don Bosco noticed the immediate sadness on the faces of those nearest to him, so he gave the secretary a small slap across the cheek saying, "Why won't you let them kiss my hand? Let them do it." Thus they all had this satisfaction, following him with shouts of joy and applause as he walked along the corridor to his room. After supper, a display of fireworks and placards with all kinds of writings on them expressed the general rejoicing.

The Feast of the patronage of Saint Joseph, which the artisans at the Oratory celebrated with particular fervor, fell on May 16. In thanksgiving to Our Lady for the graces received during his journey, Don Bosco chose to celebrate Mass not without great inconvenience at his usual altar of Saint Peter's, during community Mass, in the church of Mary Help of Christians. This gave everyone the joy of being able to see him to their heart's content. At midday, he came downstairs to the confreres dining room for dinner where both the boys and the superiors read him complimentary essays in prose and in verse. Since Don Bosco spoke and loved the Piedmontese dialect, the director of the student body, Father John B. Francesia, paid him tribute in that dialect. At the end, Father Joseph Lazzero, the director of the artisans, announced that after the evening prayer service, his boys were staging an entertainment which could be entitled, *Saint Joseph and Don Bosco*, and invited all present to honor it with their presence. He added that he did not dare to invite Don Bosco because it would be staged in the open air in the courtyard; though it would, of course, be a precious boon to the artisans if they could just see him in their midst for a few moments. Don Bosco replied, "If the weather is good and the air is not too cold, I will be there."

Don Bosco was there! First Charles Viglietti got the idea to hang around Don Bosco's neck the medal that the Catholic Association had given him at Barcelona. Everyone hailed this novelty with great approval. The praises in honor of Saint Joseph were interwoven with references to the travels of Don Bosco, to the good he accomplished, to the recognition received in Barcelona, and to many other things, which moved him to tears. The Catholic Workers of Borgo Dora, of whom Don Bosco was honorary president, had sent a delegation to represent them with an affectionate speech to be read in public.[13] The Saint was so happy that he gave instructions that all that had been read out to him was to be copied nice-

[13]See Appendix, doc. 23.

ly, to be collected into a booklet which would be sent to the noble Marti-Codolar family in Spain. "Thus ended the lovely day of yesterday," Father John Baptist Lemoyne wrote the following day, in a letter already quoted, "a beautiful day for Don Bosco's arrival among us, beautiful because it was the feast of the patronage of Saint Joseph, and beautiful too, because it occurred during the novena for the feast of Mary Help of Christians, beautiful too, because we saw a clear, serene sky which we did not have for quite some time."

Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda rejoiced at Don Bosco's safe return more than anyone else in Turin. After allowing a few days to elapse, on the morning of May 18, he suddenly called at the Oratory to see him, judging that Don Bosco would by that time have recovered from the fatigue of a journey, which some people considered a "pious and astonishing act of temerity."[14] His visit was not a mere formality, but was motivated by cordial friendship. The Cardinal remained with Don Bosco for more than an hour. He found the Servant of God in a condition which, unfortunately, was the same as that described on May 20 by Father Joseph Lazzero to the Vicar Apostolic of Patagonia: "You will wonder how Don Bosco is? He is not sick, but he is failing more and more every day. His legs continually grow weaker and are unable to carry the weight of his body, which seems to be three times its normal weight. He walks slowly, like a snail, and only with great difficulty. His mind is still good, his stomach average, but his desire to talk gets less and less evident day after day. He enjoys hearing other people talk, especially when they tell him about the missions. Then he is all attention, and generally joins in the conversation himself. We hope that he can continue like this *ad multos anos [for many more years]*."

Although it seemed as if Don Bosco was in such a state that he would never attain his goal, he obeyed his own persistent urge, without considering his strength or taking even the most elementary human precautions. He pushed far ahead and, as always, Divine Providence assisted him most manifestly, helping him to overcome spiritual obstacles, which any mortal man would have deemed insurmountable. How much good did he accomplish for the souls with the effectiveness of his word! Apart from this, and apart from the material support of which he had such great need, and the magnificent donation of the *Tibidabo hill* which was destined to be the "national vow" of Spain to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, his visit to that nation had the same effect as it had in France. It made his works uni-

[14] Minutes of the Ladies' Committee meeting in Marseilles, May 13, 1886.

versally known, acclaimed, and sought after; it allowed them to be developed on a solid basis and far extended them within only a few years to the point that they emerged unscathed from the frenzy of the Communist revolution in 1934, which brought turmoil and bloodshed to the entire nation.[15]

[15] As we now correct our galley proofs (December 4, 1936), Satan personified by Russian Bolshevism has destroyed hundreds of churches and massacred 14,000 priests, and is threatening to concentrate the powers of hell in Spain for the purpose of destroying civilization and Christian Europe—unless the Archangel St. Michael does not first force the devil back into the abyss from which he has emerged.

Chapter 5

FROM THE FEAST OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS TO THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION / DON BOSCO'S SUMMER AT THE ORATORY AND AT PINEROLO

Every year the popularity of the feast of Mary Help of Christians became greater and wider. In 1886, the novena was attended by a great number of faithful; a greater crowd came on the eve of the feast and an extraordinary crowd came on the day of the solemn celebration itself. This vast attendance went hand-in-hand with a genuine devotion. The preacher during the month of Mary and the novena, Father D'Antuono from Salerno, said he had preached in much bigger churches to larger crowds, but he had never before encountered such recollection and piety.

The splendor of the sacred services was enhanced by the presence of several recently consecrated bishops in Turin. These services were held just as solemnly for the entire day of the 23rd as if it were already the feast itself. The pontifical services both morning and evening helped create this illusion, also because it happened to be a Sunday. Don Bosco celebrated Mass at the altar of Saint Peter, with a mighty crowd of faithful in attendance, while the general president of the Catholic Workers' Association of Turin and the president of the Saint Joachim chapter served his Mass. The members of the latter chapter had all turned out as a body to thank Mary Help of Christians for the safe journey of their honorary president. In the afternoon two hours before Vespers, the Salesian meeting was held. Don Bosco had held out the hope of addressing the meeting himself, but at the last minute, his strength failed him and he asked Father John Bonetti to do it for him. He sat down, listening from the sanctuary while the congregation kept on looking at him in a composed and bent down attitude. Something truly odd occurred during the collection. A working man who had forced his way to his side by dint of elbow work, placed ten silver lire in his hand saying, "I have been saving this for about six months. Take it for your poor boys."

When the Servant of God appeared in the Oratory courtyard, the Cooperators gathered around him in great number and with an indescribable

affection. "No one could have any idea of what enthusiasm really is, unless he had seen Don Bosco in the midst of his own," someone wrote at that time.[1] Yet how grieved they were to see how slowly he moved, and how bent he was! "How old he has become!" people said. In his diary, Charles Viglietti wrote, "It took Don Bosco three quarters of an hour to get up to his room. What a crowd! The majority were out of towners who had come to give thanks to Mary Help of Christians for graces they had received. Don Bosco twice did come out to bless them, with tears in his eyes at the sight of that crowd. He is exhausted, breathless, so worn out that he is about to fall. Yet, he wants to make everybody happy, talk with all of them, ask everyone for news. He is a martyr."

Although it was a weekday, the crowd was such as had never before been seen for the feast at the Oratory. Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda presided pontifically at the Mass sung by a bishop and returned again in the evening for Benediction. In successive waves, hundreds of priests and laymen, all friends of Don Bosco, came to congratulate him at the Oratory and keep him cheerful company. Several bishops sat grouped around the archbishop at table, while Don Bosco was surrounded by several Italian Cooperators and Count and Countess Colle. All the novices from San Benigno, who had come to visit Don Bosco on this festive occasion, had been wandering around the Oratory and attended the services since early morning. He wished to see them all together and as he took his leave of them he said, " You are already many, but the novitiate will be even bigger. I am giving you two medals, one for yourselves and the other for whomsoever you wish. I am giving you a small medal so that if you wish to send it by mail, it will not be over weight. I also give you my blessing, so that as clerics and priests you may do well, and I also bless your families. I will always remember you."

Later that evening, the Saint was deeply touched when the dome of the church was lit up, and he heard from his rooms a great outcry of *Hurrah for Mary Help of Christians* reiterated several times in the square outside the church. The outcry had come from thousands of people.

Two days after the feast of Mary Help of Christians, the Saint presided at an important chapter meeting in which the procurator general, Father Francis Dalmazzo, also took part. On behalf of the foreign minister, Count de Robilant, who had negotiated with him confidentially through the offices of Commendatore Malvano, Father Francis Dalmazzo proposed to Don Bosco the foundation of a Salesian house in Cairo. The vicar apostolic, Bishop

[1] *Bollettino salesiano*, July 1886.

Sogaro, and the apostolic delegate, Bishop Chicaro, had written to the Minister asking for some Salesians. The Italian government had already thought of Don Bosco for this project, being well aware of what he was doing, and that, whenever he undertook anything, he always saw it through to its conclusion. The government would assign him a large sum *brevi manu*, maintaining the most rigorous silence about everything, giving the Salesians fullest freedom of action, without having to depend on anyone. The Secretary asked that a school be opened as soon as possible, namely, at the commencement of the forthcoming school year, or by February 1887 at the latest.

But after pointing out that the government had failed to keep its promises at the time he had negotiated about Patagonia, Don Bosco said, "Now it is said that this is a certainty. But is there any danger that De Robilant be dropped from the Cabinet? If this were so, everything would go up in smoke."

Father Dalmazzo replied that there was no likelihood of any alteration in the plan. Commendatore Malvano had given him that assurance, since he would always remain director general for foreign affairs, even though the cabinet minister himself might change. Then too, this was a matter approved by the whole government, not by one single cabinet minister.

Don Bosco said, "I am tempted to agree and send a few Salesians to Cairo as soon as I can. Meanwhile, we have to find some schemer[2] who would go to Cairo, see how things are and negotiate. He should let them know that we will try to speed our departure as best we can; but that we would not do anything against the Propagation of the Faith to which we must remain loyal. However, he will not mention any subsidy we might receive from the government. Meanwhile, I can tell you quite frankly that this mission forms part of my plans and is in one of my dreams. If I were young, I would take along with me Father Michael Rua and say, "Come, let us go to the Cape of Good Hope, to Nigritia (Sudan), Khartoum, the Congo; or rather, to Suakin, as Bishop Sogaro suggests, because the climate is good there." We could establish a novitiate there by the Red Sea. But the Propagation of the Faith should not hold anything against the Salesians. Father Francis Dalmazzo should explain to Commendatore Malvano, in an academic way, that there is an immense number of Italians who live immorally in South America, Patagonia, the Pampas, Argentina, Chile, and the Ancud Islands,[3] to make him understand what we are doing and why we are in need of a subsidy."

Not without some decision, the council approved De Robilant's pro-

[2] He alluded jocularly to someone capable of negotiating with prudence.

[3] He meant the archipelago of Chiloe, of which Ancud is the most active harbor, in southern Chile.

posal, but on condition that things proceed slowly, little by little, as soon as it might be possible.

Cardinal John Simeoni, the new prefect of the Propagation of the Faith, had apparently inherited a certain mistrust toward the Salesians' missionary ability from Cardinal Alexander Franchi, his predecessor. He even kissed Don Bosco's hand and addressed him familiarly as "you", but since he opposed Bishop Sogaro's wish to become a Salesian, Don Bosco saw in it an indication of that mistrust. Nevertheless, as Don Bosco said at the time, Archbishop Dominic Jacobini, secretary to the above mentioned Congregation, "is a true friend of ours, entirely on our side and it was thanks to him that the Cardinal Prefect wrote on February 26, 1887 to Don Bosco, "I was very glad to hear that you are willing to send priests of your Congregation to Egypt to open a school to provide a Catholic education for the children of the Italian settlement. Anxious that this project be carried out as soon as possible, I would like your Reverence to directly contact the Vicar Apostolic, Bishop Anacletus Chicaro, since he has always been most committed to have such a school in order to save Italian children from the dangers of idleness and corruption, which are found there almost everywhere."

In this way both civil and ecclesiastic authorities, the former in its ambition to extend Italian influence abroad, the latter to extend the kingdom of God, came together in this wholesome endeavor. But in view of the friction which kept them apart, everything had been done without any mutual agreement, and from the Italian side without the initiative of the government hostile to the Church, but only thanks to the enlightened good will of the cabinet minister, who was a Piedmontese. He had assigned a million lire to subsidize the mission out of his secret resources. However, as it was discovered later through a really dependable source of the Robilant family Crispi, had disposed of that sum, once the minister was disposed of. Father Michael Rua sent the Salesians to Egypt ten years later, when the house at Alexandria was founded. Cairo had to wait until 1925.

Another situation toward the end of May called us back to Rome. During Don Bosco's absence from Turin, the Salesians had been gladdened by some joyous news. The Congregation had been left without a cardinal protector since July 25, 1885, when Cardinal Lawrence Nina had died. Don Bosco had asked the Holy Father graciously to entrust this office to Cardinal Laurenzi, who was informed of his wish and his application. But the cardinal told the Pope that he had decided not to accept it, and wrote as much to the Saint in a very humble letter, expressing esteem for both him

and his Congregation. At last after eight months, with a note from the Secretary of State dated April 17, the Holy Father appointed his vicar in Rome, Cardinal Lucido Maria Parocchi, as protector of the Salesians. The prefect general, Father Celestine Durando, sent a telegram to His Eminence in Don Bosco's name upon receipt of the auspicious news, conveying to him thanks and promises. The Cardinal replied likewise, in a telegram that "to the most noble sentiments expressed to him," he would have responded "with a solicitude worthy of Don Bosco." In his turn, as soon as he was informed about it, the Saint wrote to his Eminence from Barcelona, expressing his gratitude and great joy. He received the following reply:

Rome, April 29, 1886

To the Most Reverend Superior General:

I attribute to the charity of your Reverence and of your beloved sons the joy felt over my appointment as Protector of the Salesian Congregation, and am grateful for it.

Truly, when one is already burdened by so many other duties, it is no easy task to take the place of the late, lamented Cardinal Nina, a cardinal of so great and so many good qualities. This certainly would have discouraged many others besides me.

But the prayers of the revered Don Bosco, and of the exemplary priests gathered around him under the banner of Saint Francis de Sales give me confidence that the cause will not be damaged, nor the welfare of the Salesians impaired, by the weakness of the appointed protector.

With this confidence, I again happily shoulder this burden, as I appeal to the prayers of both the superior and his subordinates.

Most humbly at your service,
L.M. Parocchi
Cardinal Protector[4]

[4] Lucido Maria Parocchi, born at Mantua, August 13, 1833, attended elementary and secondary school in his home town seminary. He was sent to Rome to study theology at the Gregorian University, then returned to Mantua to teach moral theology, canon law, and history to the seminarians. He became pastor of the church of Sts. Gervase and Protase. In 1871 Pius IX appointed him bishop of Pavia, and 1877 archbishop of Bologna; but in both sees the Italian government denied him the *exequatur*, and so he was forced to live in the seminary on a subsidy from the Pope instead of what that State ought to have provided. In the consistory of July 22, 1872, Pius IX made him a cardinal, and in 1882 Leo XIII summoned him to Rome, choosing him as his vicar general for the Holy City in 1884. In 1889 he was promoted from cardinal-priest to cardinal-bishop, presiding over the see of Albano. When sickness obliged him to relinquish the vicariate in 1896, he assumed the more peaceful office of vice-chancellor of the Holy Roman Church. He died in December 1902.

This letter was addressed:
To the Reverend Superior General of the Salesians, John Bosco (Spain), Barcelona, Sarria'.

After Don Bosco's return, Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda had occasion to mention this matter in his correspondence with Cardinal Lucido M. Parocchi who wrote to him most cordially on May 29: "I am all the happier about this appointment as protector, since in a certain sense, it enables me to share in the efforts of this truly apostolic man, this miracle of charity, the superior of the Salesians, Don Bosco." That same month, the new protector publicly expressed what he felt about Don Bosco and the Salesians at the meeting held for the Roman Cooperators on the feast of Mary Help of Christians in the convent of the Lady Oblates at Tor de' Specchi. He first regretted that the meeting was not graced by the presence of "the most resplendent jewel: who on other similar occasions had brought luster to the meetings of the Salesian Cooperators, that "that venerable apostle of modern charity, the exemplary and indefatigable Don Bosco" was not there, and who would have answered so many questions "with that lovable smile which is that of a brother and an apostle, and with the tones of one who is both friend and father, benevolent to all." Then he analyzed the work which the Salesians had done, explaining how its very birth and development was all to be attributed to the faith and charity of the man of God. After illustrating these two things, he appealed to mothers of families that their faith-inspired charity might lead them to cooperate in so important an undertaking. He asked for contributions to the construction of the Sacred Heart hospice of Rome, and to the support of boys who would grow up to stand as the hope for both religion and for heaven.[5]

Don Bosco's frail health did not keep him from pursuing one of his most cherished objectives: the development of the Salesian Cooperators. During the last ten years of his life, one of his concerns was to increase the number of his Cooperators, consolidating the Pious Union by drawing into it outstanding people. In May, he sent the diploma of Cooperator, together with a collection of the *Salesian Bulletin*, to every bishop in Italy to whom it had not been sent already. It was almost as if this were his farewell gesture toward the Italian Episcopate, on whose behalf he had labored in critical times and with whom he wanted his Congregation to be indissolubly linked. He received fifty replies between May 14 and July 19, among them, three from Cardinals

[5]See Appendix, doc. 25.

Melchers, Louis Jacobini and Capecelatro. The pious bishop of Capua, who was also the learned librarian of the Roman Church, considered it "not only an honor but a genuine spiritual privilege" to be enrolled as a Salesian Cooperator. The saintly bishops thanked Don Bosco and asked him to pray for them, often expressing their hopes that his sons would get to work in their dioceses, which by their description, were in a sad religious condition. [6]

On July 2, the Superior Council first discussed the most convenient system of mailing the *Salesian Bulletin* and the best probable way to organize the Cooperators. Don Bosco spoke as follows: "The *Bulletin* in not merely our principal tool but is the tool essential for the Congregation. Our Cooperators represent an unsinkable support system. So we have to think how best they should be organized. Do not be hasty, but act with patience in such matters. There is a big difference between appointing leaders and finalizing the whole procedure of the organization. We should proceed slowly. If we can promote the *Bulletin* and the Association of Cooperators with thoroughness and regularity, our Congregation will never want for material assistance." At the time the *Bulletin* had a circulation of forty thousand copies. The annual costs for printing and mailing, without considering the costs of the personal upkeep, amounted to twenty-five thousand lire. During those ten years, the *Bulletin* had an income of nine hundred thousand lire. The first step taken in organizing the Cooperators was to establish Chapters in every parish. The pastor would be asked to suggest someone suitable for the office of leader. A director was also to be appointed, generally a canon delegated by the bishop, in bigger cities where there were several Chapters. In doing all this, it was necessary to avoid two difficulties: one of being too aggressive, and the other of undermining the local charitable contributions. This was the reason why Don Bosco recommended to proceed with calmness and prudence.

The prelates already mentioned belonged to dioceses quite distant from Turin. They had written to Don Bosco with the firm belief that he was still in excellent health and could continue his personal activities with efficiency. However, we knew that Don Bosco's strength was deteriorating. At certain times, he was so overwhelmed that he was unable to speak. His presence of mind, however, never left him. Once when he was having difficulty breathing, he said with a laugh, "Who knows where to find in Turin a good manufacturer of bellows? I could use them for breathing." On the feast of Mary Help of Christians, when he was practically breath-

[6]The replies are published in the Appendix, doc. 26 (A, B, C, D).

less, barely able to stand on his feet, and as the crowd pressed around him, he turned to his secretary with an air of mystery and whispered into his ear, "Would it be all right to give them a couple of punches, out of devotion?" One evening, when Charles Viglietti was accompanying him to his room, he expressed the fear that he might have taken off too many blankets and wondered whether Don Bosco would feel cold during the night. "Oh! If I do, you can put my shoes on to keep my feet warm," he said. These are small things, if you think of it, but they reveal his habitual inner serenity, which never left him despite both physical ailments from within and pressures from without.

In the afternoon of June 7, he told Charles Viglietti to have the coach ready, because he wished to resume the daily outings prescribed by the doctor. That same evening, they rode along via Rivoli. When they had passed the customs office, he got off the coach to walk a little. He talked about various matters, among them about those who hold the office of treasurer in religious congregations, that is, about those who, as he expressed it, play the role of Judas in the school, remarking that very often such people came to a bad end by betraying their trust. Exactly during those days the sad example given by the financial administrator of the Brothers of the Christian Schools was bandied around. "That was why, from the beginning of my career, I vowed I would never hold any money in my pockets," he said. "I know how to use it as soon as it comes into my possession. I am always full of debts, but we nevertheless manage to keep on going."

On another occasion, when speaking again of financial administration, he made this observation: "Never assign to the office of administrator of our finances anyone boarding in our house who was formerly wealthy, or came from a noble family, or anyone who once held some high office or position in society, but later lost everything. Use them instead only as helpers or as secretaries."

There are some incidents in the life of Don Bosco in which irrational creatures managed to deal familiarly with the Saint. On one of his daily walks in the company of Father John Baptist Lemoyne, a sparrow flew in front of him and began hopping along on the ground. Then it spread its wings in flight and perched on his right shoulder. It flew off again, circling in the air, and then perched this time on his left shoulder. Finally it soared high in flight and disappeared.

As we read in the life of other Saints, he too looked upon animals, the creatures of God, with a kindly eye. One day in November 1887, the buzz

of a fly was clearly heard during dinner. Don Bosco asked what the noise was. Someone went to the window and told him that a spider had seized a fly and was trapping it into its web.

"Set it free, set it free, poor little thing!" Don Bosco exclaimed anxiously.

"Oh! Let it be and let us wait and see what happens," someone answered.

"No, no! I do not want that...If you do not set it free, I will. It upsets me too much."

Although he was exhausted and in need of someone's support, he acted as though he wanted to get up and do it. But the fly was liberated immediately to make him happy.

He had trouble even during sleep. On certain nights he dreamt about monsters attacking him, and he saw cats that turned into lions and snakes that turned into demons. One night he shouted at length, calling on Charles Viglietti now and then. Viglietti, who was asleep in the adjoining room, was hesitant at first about waking him; but then, being afraid that the shouts and excitement might harm him, entered his room and woke him up. "Thank you, dear Viglietti," Don Bosco said, "you rendered me an excellent service. I have terrifying dreams which wear me out!"

A welcome visit was paid him on June 21 by the Salesians and the two hundred and thirty boys from Borgo San Martino School on a trip as a reward from their superiors for their commendable conduct throughout the school year. They walked through the streets of the town lined up by fours and people admired their discipline and behavior. At the Oratory their docility and behavior were singled out. Don Bosco saw them all together in the study hall, where he listened to some of their speeches. He answered their affectionate greetings with great tenderness, telling them that he had great affection for their school, which had been his second foundation. Referring to that outing, Father Joseph Lazzero wrote:[7] "The Borgo San Martino school is ever flourishing".

If the following Thursday had not been the feast of Corpus Christi, they would have chosen that day for their outing. However, that occasion did not prevent the oratory from celebrating Don Bosco's name day. The superiors felt that Don Bosco wanted the feast of Saint John to be celebrated with greater solemnity than usual that year. They understood one of his reasons for wanting this, but they discovered the other reason only later on. Since the new system of having two directors had been established at the Oratory, things were not progressing as it had been expected, especial-

[7] Letter to Bp. Cagliero, Turin (July 5?) 1886.

ly among the students. A pleasant family feast which would bring the boys closer to both Don Bosco and their superiors was just what was needed to restore the former family spirit. His other reason was that there were foreign personalities in the house who had already promised Don Bosco that they would be present. He was anxious to arrange for a celebration as solemn as possible to please his guests and give them joy, besides acquainting them about one of the characteristic aspects of his work: the happy family life of the Salesian houses. When this intention of the Saint became known, nothing was spared to respond to it all the way and, according to witnesses, everything was wonderfully successful and satisfactory.

At two o'clock on the eve of the feast day, when the house was already festively decorated, someone who had not been expected at all suddenly appeared at the Oratory. This was the president of the Peruvian Republic and his son. Since he was on his way to Paris he wished to employ the brief stopover in Turin by calling on Don Bosco and visiting the Oratory. The cleric Viglietti, who spoke Spanish fluently, acted as guide. Father and son were very enthusiastic and said they were anxious to come again and see everything at greater leisure. Meanwhile, they asked Don Bosco with affectionate insistence to think of founding a house in their own country. The Saint was already known in Peru because of D'Espiney's biography, which had been translated by Father Louis Torra in 1884. The general interest in Peru, as in other South American republics, was directed towards the vocational technical schools established for the sons of the working class. The Salesians arrived in Lima three years after the death of the Saint.

When the Peruvians left, two more guests who were eagerly expected arrived: Mr. Joachim de Font, the secretary of the Catholic Association of Barcelona and Count de Villeneuve Flayosc, president of the agricultural associations of southern France. These two gentlemen sat on either side of Don Bosco during the customary academic entertainment on the eve of his name day, since they were representing their countries. The most important feature of the program was the presentation by Father John Lemoyne of Mama Margaret's life, written by him.. The author accompanied the presentation with a sonnet he had written in which he described the book as the fairest blossom in a bouquet of flowers he was offering to Don Bosco for his name day, a bouquet consisting of the ever fragrant virtues of his holy mother.[8]

[8] Appendix, doc. 27.

On the 24th, Don Bosco said Mass at the Altar of Saint Peter. During the morning hours he received a delegation of past pupils who presented him with a red and silver brocade vestment. The mathematician, James Belmonte, was spokesman for the group. In his speech which was later printed,[9] he recalled memories from bygone days: "Every past pupil cherishes the beloved memories of the days lived under the paternal guidance of our dearly beloved Don Bosco. Now that they are grown men, his blessed memory comes to them to assist them when, at times, they are overwhelmed by difficulties when they have to face conflicting circumstances. For it was Don Bosco who in their younger years, taught them by word and example how to be steadfast in their work, their resolutions and their Christian generosity. How many of them, not to say all of them, consider the time spent in this atmosphere of peace and piety, of study and work, as the very best in their lives! The memory of their youth is perennially linked with the image of their affectionate superior who left so indelible a mark on their entire existence. The numbers of those who, now grown to manhood, are nostalgic about those happy days spent under the guidance of this incomparable Father, are increasing. The numbers of pupils who every year scatter all over the world once their studies have been completed, or once they have learned their trade, have assured us that there is by now no country where one does not hear people talk of Don Bosco." Don Bosco replied with warm affection and with tears of fatherly gratitude.

He then went downstairs to the common dining room, followed by his guests and the members of the council. The final academic entertainment, the second one which took place before a large audience, was filled with song, music, and declamations and was extremely entertaining. The Catholic Workers Association of Turin enrolled both Villeneuve and de Font as honorary members.[10] An impressive laurel wreath, wonderfully illuminated, which carried the names of all the houses founded by Don Bosco on its branches, was presented. At the end of the celebration, the Saint had to content himself with merely thanking everybody and greeting them all with an all-embracing gesture of his arms and a smile of ineffable tenderness.

On this occasion the cardinal was unable to attend because he was busy with the celebration of Corpus Christi. However, toward five o'clock, he did call on Don Bosco and stayed with him for two hours.

[9] *Nel di onomastico del Reverendissimo D. Giovanni Bosco gli antichi allievi dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales* (Turin: Salesiana), pp. 6–7.

[10] The Board of the Barcelona Association addressed a grateful and affectionate letter to Don Bosco, thanking him for the welcome extended to its secretary. (See Appendix, doc. 28.)

Figuring out the time required for mail delivery, the Salesians of South America had mailed their letters ahead of time and they arrived at the right time. It is moving to read those truly filial lines, but we would have to repeat things already said elsewhere if we were to give a sample of them. One can see how the memory of Don Bosco was kept alive in their hearts, and it was good enough to hold them all united, to encourage them in the face of hardship, and to spur them on to a holy rivalry in their apostolate! God creates some chosen persons to be influential not only in word and deed, but he also endows them with personal charm to win over the affection of their subordinates and collaborators.

It seemed that even Mary Help of Christians in heaven was pleased to enhance the joy of that day. Father Faustino Confortóla, the former director of the house of Florence and at that time transferred to Rome, was about to die because of a "verticolitis" intestinal obstruction. On the 23rd, a telegram arrived imploring a blessing and prayers for him. Don Bosco sent a telegram telling him that he was praying and ordering prayers for him. On the morning of the 24th, another telegram came from Father Dalmazzo worded as follows: "Praised be Saint John. After your blessing, Father Confortóla seems to have come back to life. Happy name day!" The doctor who had already given him up for dead saw him standing by his bed. The doctor exclaimed, "This is something that science cannot explain!" At that moment, Don Bosco received word of another incident in which the hand of Mary Help of Christians seemed discernible. A fearful eruption of Mount Etna had brought terror to the large population living peacefully on the slopes of the famous volcano. The locality most directly threatened was Nicolosi, a community of about four thousand people. It was estimated that the burning lava was streaming down the slope at the rate of fifty to seventy meters an hour. Pinewoods, chestnut groves, and cultivated lots were all flooded, burnt, and destroyed. In the face of this terrible catastrophe, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians wrote Don Bosco from both Catania and Agira, begging him to suggest something that might avert the danger. Don Bosco sent word that they were to scatter medals of Mary Help of Christians immediately throughout the area and that, meanwhile, he was praying and sending his blessing. The Sisters brought the medals to the pastor; he scattered as many of them and as high as possible. A wonderful event! The medals set the furthermost boundary of the molten stream, which advanced no further. After a certain delay, the Sisters informed Don Bosco about it. The newspapers had already published a telegraphic announcement through the

Stefani News Agency: "The lava came within three hundred feet of the village, then stopped short on the slope near the town." It must be borne in mind that the molten torrent of lava "suspended on the slope" was still in what is known as liquid form and it was constantly fed by the continuing eruptions. Scientists declared that Nicolosi was irrevocably condemned to be destroyed. Even the violently anti-clerical *Gazzetta di Catania* carried a dispatch which specified the area in which the flow of lava had stopped, and described the phenomenon by its proper name, wording it as follows: "Lava branched off at Altarelli, sparing them unscathed. Miracle." Today this petrified mass of heaped lava still stands as an everlasting memory of that miracle.[11]

The friends from Barcelona did not forget Don Bosco. Fresh evidence of this was seen after his name day. The Pascual brothers were among his fondest friends. Now Polycarp, the youngest brother, had married after the Saint's departure and set out on his honeymoon. On his way home he passed through Turin and on June 26 paid a pleasant surprise visit to Don Bosco accompanied by his bride. Since the feast of Saint Aloysius was being celebrated at the Oratory the following day, he attended the dinner party together with several other gentlemen. He heard some of the Oratory music and the repetition of the hymn composed for the occasion of the name day by Father John Baptist Lemoyne which had been set to music by maestro Brother Joseph Dogliani. He left Turin on the 29th. Charles Viglietti went to the railway station to see him off in the name of Don Bosco and Father Michael Rua. Some eight to fifteen letters arrived for Don Bosco every day from Spain.

Not wanting to disappoint one hundred and fifty honest working men, Don Bosco underwent a considerable inconvenience on the 29th, considering his physical ailments. The chapter of the Catholic Workers' Association of Turin was celebrating its tenth anniversary of existence and got permission to hold its fraternal banquet at the Oratory. Naturally, Don Bosco was invited to preside at it. Although the hot weather increased his discomfort, he could not find it in his heart to say no. Disguising his ailments, he gave everyone present the impression that he was quite well. At the end of the meal, toasts were raised, to which Don Bosco listened calmly, though he did not have enough strength to reply to them. However, when the banquet was over, the members of the association went to him individually and heard a few kind words from his lips.

[11] The two telegrams were also published on June 18 by *L'Unità cattolica.*

During the year of his canonization, there was much talk here and there about whether or not Don Bosco had been a Franciscan Tertiary. His name does appear in an old record-book but his name does not feature in the official records, possibly because it was inadvertently omitted. In 1886, the Franciscans of Saint Anthony felt that they ought to amend the situation and sent him a diploma of enrollment dated July 1, qualifying him as the Patriarch of the Salesians. The document was accompanied by a letter dated June 28, in which Father Candido, director of the Sacred Third Order wrote: "Here is the document which formally declares you a Franciscan Tertiary Brother of the Congregation of Saint Thomas. I imagine that you recall having received the habit and made your regular profession, even though you may not recall the exact time. In the event that you are uncertain, it would be as well that you do so now, since taking the habit and profession are indispensable to enjoy all its spiritual benefits. In this case, I would be pleased at your request to come to your room to see that this is done." This Father must have already spoken with Don Bosco on the subject prior to this, for he added: "Meanwhile, thank you from the bottom of my heart for the paternal welcome extended to me, and for joining our seraphic sodality." It is evident that Don Bosco had confirmed his enrollment in the Order *ab immemorabili*.[12]

He received a very important visitor the evening of July 5. Prince Czartoryski and his son called at the Oratory the day they arrived in Turin and were invited to dinner at noon on the following day. To honor his guests, Don Bosco called upon several members of the Turin aristocracy, among them Prince Prospero Balbo. Prince Balbo demurred, offering as a reason for declining the invitation his own hardness of hearing which prevented him from taking part in any conversation. "But I need you," Don Bosco insisted, "I want you to entertain the Czartoryski princes."

That name reminded the old count about his former comrade-at-arms. During the siege of Peschiera in 1848, a legion of Polish volunteers, under the command of Prince Ladislaus Czartoryski, father of August, had fought side by side with the Piedmontese. It was there that the two had met, both lieutenants in the artillery at that time. The desire to see his old comrade once again made the count forget his deafness. Their meeting could not have been more cordial or friendly. Their exchange of recollections of glorious bygone days at table filled a good share of the gen-

[12] It is also known that Pius X became a Franciscan Tertiary when he was pastor of Salzano, but nothing more, since there are no documents available. See V. Facchinetti, *L'anima di Pio decimo* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1935), p. 371.

eral conversation. Don Bosco sat listening until, seizing an opportunity, he too began talking of his battles, this time battles sustained against the enemies of his undertakings, against the enemy of souls, and against his creditors. August, who listened with interest, asked him whether he was thinking of sending Salesians to Poland, as well.

"Something ought to be done," Prince Ladislaus said, "to prevent the corruption of youth. When morality disappears, so does patriotism."

"Certainly, Don Bosco would be happy to be in Poland, for he would find many vocations there," his son said.

"We will come, we will come to your country too," Don Bosco said firmly, after hesitating for a moment's reflection.

"But when?" came the question.

"As soon as we have suitable personnel," he replied. "The language difficulties will not be so easy to overcome, but we will arrange for that too."

After a moment of silence, Father John Baptist Francesia turned to Prince August in his simple, teasing manner. "Look, Your Highness, why don't you become a Salesian, so that Don Bosco may open a house in Poland immediately."

There were smiles, an exchange of a few words on the subject, and then the talk turned to other things. But three people at the table continued to think about the suggestion: Don Bosco, Prince Ladislaus, and his son. The father had known Don Bosco in Paris at the Lambert palace, as we have already reported, but he had never visited any Salesian house. He had thought that the Salesian congregation was an excessively humble institution. Inflexible in his determination to deny his son permission to become a Salesian, he had agreed to go with him to Turin to speak with Don Bosco and inspect his house at close range, but certainly not with any idea of talking about a vocation.

After dinner, the three of them retired for a confidential talk. The father explained the family projects for the future of his son August, and asked the Saint for his enlightened opinion. Though Don Bosco had no doubts whatsoever about the young man's vocation, he only repeated what he had already written to him several times: namely, that he should prepare himself for his future life, so that he might live up to the legitimate expectations of his family and of his native country, Poland. But he did add:

"Yet, I believe that if it is obvious that the will of God conflicts with the wishes of Your Excellency, you should not offer any opposition."

"There is no doubt as to that," the father answered. "In fact, I would be delighted if I had another son who would become a priest."

"It would be a very good thing," Don Bosco said. "Anyone belonging to so influential a family could do much for the Church and for his country. Anyway, may the holy will of God be done in all things."

Both father and son were pleased with Don Bosco when they left him. The former had formed an excellent opinion of Don Bosco, but felt sure that in the end, his son August would bow to his paternal will. The latter was delighted that his father had revised his opinion of Don Bosco, and came away from the interview determined to follow the advice of the Saint. And so back home at Sieniawa he applied himself industriously to his business, transacting important financial matters on behalf of his father, holding high the traditions of his family. Prince Ladislaus was overjoyed. But how many times in this world do fathers propose and God disposes regarding the destiny of their children!

The heat of summer was draining Don Bosco's strength continuously. He was also troubled by symptoms of dysentery, so he agreed to the proposal that he move to Valsalice where the temperature remains cool even in the heart of summer, save for the noonday period. He went there the evening of July 7, with Viglietti. It had been hoped that he would return to Pinerolo, as he had done two years previously. The Bishop said he would have been delighted to have him at the villa. Don Bosco hesitated considerably at first. Then when he finally decided, he arranged to stay at Valsalice until the 15th, because he did not want to be absent from the two annual meetings of past pupils.

While at Valsalice he received two gracious letters from French prelates. That year, the Salesian printing shop of Nice had put out a French translation of his book *The Catholic in the World.*[13] Bishop Dabert, bishop of Perigueux and Sarlat, had received a complimentary copy and wrote to say he had found the book excellent from every point of view, both for its sound exposition and historic reliability, as well as for its simplicity and, at times, even for its familiar style which enhanced the effectiveness of the proofs and the exactness of its doctrine. The other letter came from Rennes, where the archbishop was that same Bishop Place who had been the bishop of Marseilles when the Salesians had first gone to that town, and who had then been made cardinal by Leo XIII at the Consistory of June 7. Don Bosco had written him a letter of congratulations, to which His Eminence replied, addressing the Saint as his friend

13 *Le catholique dans le monde* (Nice: Patronage St.-Pierre, 1886). This is the translation of *Il cattolico nel secolo*, which Don Bosco published as the first three numbers of the *Catholic Readings* in 1883.

and apologizing for the delay in answering him, saying, "You know well enough my former sentiments which remain the same regarding yourself and the Salesian family, so you may well imagine how welcome your congratulations were among all the testimonials and wishes I have been fortunate enough to receive." In closing he requested very deferentially to be remembered in Don Bosco's prayers.[14]

His brief vacation at Valsalice is linked to the memory of an incident which leans towards the miraculous. An authentic account of the incident is found in our archives. A wealthy farmer from Rosignano Monferrato, George Caprioglio, had a daughter who for some months had been in the insane asylum of Alessandria. He called on Don Bosco at Valsalice on July 10, to put the case before him and implore his help. Don Bosco ordered him to recite certain prayers with his family every day until the feast of All Saints. Mr. Caprioglio did as he was told and informed everyone: "Don Bosco has promised that the grace will be forthcoming." Despite his confidence, he became impatient to know the outcome of such a long period of prayer and went to Alessandria on October 22 to have definite news about his daughter. But he returned home upset because he had not been able to obtain from the doctor a reassuring word. However, convinced that Don Bosco was speaking the truth, he kept on praying as he had done before. And lo and behold! On October 29 he received a letter informing him that his daughter was completely restored to sanity and asking him to get at once to Alessandria to take her home. Her father hurriedly went to Alessandria and found her perfectly normal so much so that on the eve of All Saints' Day she wanted to receive the sacraments at Alessandria to thank God for her recovery.

Soon the change of climate showed its beneficial effects, for when Don Bosco went back to the Oratory on July 11 and 15 to be with the past pupils, he was able to speak to them at the end of the dinners on both occasions. Fortunately, his brief addresses were transcribed and represent the only record we have of this twofold festivity. A few Frenchmen were present at the dinner of the past pupils. This is what Don Bosco said:

"I would like to convey to you a few words also because I am not sure that I shall be with you next year. I would be very happy, indeed, to celebrate this happy day in your company again and again, but the troubles of my old age warn me that I must not be over confident. I thank you for hav-

[14] Appendix, doc. 29.

ing come to dine with me, as I also thank these gentlemen whose friendship brought them here to us from France. Not all of my good friends could come here today, my dear children, because of distance and because of their many commitments. But when you see them, please tell them that in you who were here, I could see them and that in thanking you, I thanked them for the affection that they continue to feel for me. Tell them that Don Bosco is still willing to share his bread with them, because it does not belong to Don Bosco, but to Divine Providence. Don Bosco loves you all in Jesus Christ because you love Him, and I hope that Our Lord will grant us the grace of living to see better days. Don Bosco will always pray for you; and please help me with your prayers, so that we can set our hand to new undertakings, and continue those we have begun. See how good Divine Providence has been to us! Today there are thousands and thousands of young people living in our houses; and they are certainly not fed only crickets and flowers. And yet from the early days of our Oratory, we never wanted for bread. Rather, our resources have grown hand-in-hand with our needs. I assure you that our undertakings will continue to prosper under the wings of a divine and adorable Providence. You and your children and your children's children will witness and delight in our fate and fortune and will share in them. Let us be faithful to our holy religion, for then everyone will be obliged to respect and love us. No one will have cause to dislike us, for charity is a bond which unites all hearts. I promise you that I will go on loving you as a brother and father, until our love will one day be rewarded when we hear those sweet words, 'Enter into the joy of your Lord, for you have obeyed my Holy Law'."

Some twenty laymen joined the priests-past pupils, for they had been unable to attend their own meeting the previous Sunday. From what Don Bosco said, it is easy to understand the themes which had been broached in the toasts previously given. Here he expresses some highly noteworthy ideas:

"I am delighted at what has been said. I have heard and enjoyed your words and your statements. The Reverend Pastor of the church of the Great Mother of God said that no one can surpass the love the past pupils of the Oratory feel for me! The engineer, Mr. Buffa assures me that our Cooperator friends are second to none in their love for me, and that this love felt by thousands and thousands of people knows no limits. Now it is my turn to say who it is I love the most. Tell me. This is my hand; which of my five fingers do I love the most? Which of these could I do without? Certainly, I would not do without any of them because all five of them are equally dear and necessary to me. Therefore, I can only say that I love you

all, all of you without any difference in degree or measure. There are many things I would like to say now about my sons and the Salesian Cooperators.

"The proposal made by the reverend pastor of the church of the Great Mother of God as an invitation to you to work for further growth of the Union of Salesian Cooperators is a very fine idea, because the Cooperators are the mainstay of the works of God, channelled through the Salesians....The Supreme Pontiff Leo XIII is not only our first Cooperator, but our first active collaborator. It is enough that you look at the facade of the Church of the Sacred Heart! It will tell you that the work of the Cooperators and of the Pope has combined to shake so many Christians out of the listlessness into which they had fallen, and spread out the vigor of charity. Such an act today is of an exceptional timeliness as the Pope himself has said. Could any one man alone have accomplished what we have accomplished? No. There is no one who could have done it. It was not Don Bosco. It was the hand of God who availed itself of the Cooperators! Listen! You have just said that the Association of Salesian Cooperators is beloved of many people, and I can add that it will spread in every country, wherever Christianity has penetrated. A time will come when the name of Cooperator will be synonymous with that of a true Christian. The hand of God upholds it! The Cooperators will be those summoned to promote the spirit of Catholicism. This may be a Utopian ideal on my part, yet I cling to it. The fiercer the attack on the Holy See, the higher the Cooperators will exalt it. The more unbelief shall increase everywhere, the more the Cooperators will uphold on high the torch of their effective faith."

Taking leave of these dear friends of his, Don Bosco left that evening with Father John Baptist Lemoyne and Charles Viglietti for Pinerolo. The rector of that seminary had come to pick up Don Bosco and escort him there. The bishop was waiting for him when he arrived with a princely carriage lent him by a gentleman of the town. Delighted to have the Servant of God with him once again, the bishop had had rooms prepared for Don Bosco and his two secretaries at his villa in Saint Maurice. The sudden change to that high altitude caused Don Bosco a somewhat agitated night. He had a long dream, of which he remembered nothing the following day, except that he had been summoned in great haste to the railway station barely in time to catch the train, and that he had then arrived somewhere where a big battle was taking place, and had suddenly found himself in the midst of the fray.

The pastor informed Don Bosco that another sort of dream which

he did not dream personally, but in which he played a part, had a very beneficial effect on a worthy person a few days later. A former benefactress, Mrs. Jerome Verdona of Gavi, who had for many years given lodging and hospitality both to the Salesians and to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, asked Don Bosco to send her a Salesian. She wished to let him know of her last will and testament, since she felt her end was near at hand. Father Francis Cerruti was sent to her. Some time later, she became unstable in mind, as well as infirm in body. The doctors pronounced her insane. She would not even wish to receive communion any longer. She grew sulky, expressing grief and dejection whenever she was able to say a few words. She could not stay still for five minutes, nor would she remain seated in any one place. She had been in this sorry condition for about two months when some friends of hers recommended her plight to Don Bosco. The evening of July 19, after going to bed, she fell into a peaceful slumber which she had not done for a long time She dreamt that she saw both Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco beside her comforting her. When she awakened she summoned her maid to call for a priest, because she wished to receive communion. She improved physically and mentally for a few more years, devoutly performing her religious devotions until she died a serene death and went to receive the reward of her charitable deeds.

The long letters he wrote from the bishop's villa clearly demonstrate how the air at Pinerolo was beneficial to his health. One was addressed to his benefactors at San Nicolas de los Arroyos and its original is religiously treasured there in the home of the worthy Montaldo family.

Turin, July 25, 1886

"To my well-deserving and charitable Cooperators, to all their relatives and friends residing in the town of San Nicolas de los Arroyos in America, and its environs.

Your religion and your charity, kind friends, both ladies and gentlemen, is well known in America and especially in Europe, because of the continued patronage you give our beloved children who live among you all. They very willingly left our country to get to you and carry out their sacred ministry for the glory of God and the spiritual benefit of your souls, and particularly for the benefit of youth. This was recommended to them particularly before they departed by one who loved them dearly in our Lord Jesus Christ.

I know that you are helping them, and what little they have already accomplished is due entirely to your charity. Continue your charitable work and I will go on praying for you so that our Lord may multiply his graces for all your undertakings and your families. Your good deeds were reported to our Holy Father Leo XIII who was delighted by what he heard.

'Give them the assurance of my particular benevolence,' he told me. 'Tell them that I bless them all from the bottom of my heart and that I grant them a special indulgence to be shared by all the Cooperators, their families, and any deceased relatives who might need prayers for their sufferings in Purgatory.'

You are aware that my Salesians do not own any temporal fortunes, their wealth is your piety and your charity. Your most venerated Archbishop Frederick Aneyros, Monsignor Peter Ceccarelli, the curate and vicar at San Nicolas, are the ones who encouraged us to reach you; and we place all our confidence in them and in you.

If God grants me to live long enough, I hope to write to you again, but this is uncertain because I have grown very old and am barely able to write and it is still more unlikely that my writing be understood. But I hopefully rely on your prayers and on the good news I hope to receive from you whom I love in Jesus Christ, and for whom every day, I have a special memento at the altar of God. God bless us, and may the Holy Virgin the Help of Christians guide us all safely along the path to Heaven.

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

He remembered Vincent Levrot, the architect and generous benefactor of Nice, on the feast day of Saint Vincent, and sent him good wishes for his name day:

Turin, Pinerolo, July 19, 1886

Dearest Mr. Vincent Levrot,

May the Holy Virgin the Help of Christians grant a special blessing on your name day to you, your family and all your business enterprises. May she generously repay you for your past and present charity to the Salesians.

May Mary guide us all safely to heaven.
Pray for this poor mortal who remains always,

Most affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

Levrot replied saying that he had received one thousand francs from a widow named Montbrun[15] which he was holding for Don Bosco's missions. Writing in French this time, Don Bosco asked him to thank the lady, and authorized him to hand the money over to Father Nicholas Cibrario, since the house at Vallecrosia, though small, was in need of everything. Also the other Salesian houses were, as he put it 'rich in debts...and creditors." Then, in giving news of himself, he added, "Thank God, my health is somewhat improved, though affected by a thousand troubles."

Don Bosco had written to Cardinal Parocchi from Pinerolo, informing him about his health and asking him to obtain a special blessing from the Holy Father for him. At the same time, out of respect for his Most Eminent Protector, he asked whether in future letters, he should continue to write in his own cramped handwriting, or whether he should rely on the hand of a secretary. He received the following reply which undoubtedly gave him great comfort:

Rome, July 27, 1886

Most Reverend Don Bosco:

I gave the Holy Father your good news and His Holiness was very pleased and ordered me to send you his very special blessing. In carrying out his apostolic orders, I am glad to add the assurance of my feelings which are so well known to you that it is like carrying coals to Newcastle to voice them again.

If it is not too great a disturbance, I would like you to continue writing yourself, because I can understand your writing perfectly, just as you are able to read the heart of him who remains with reverent affection, imploring the grace of a memento,

Most devotedly and affectionately in Jesus Christ,
L.M., Cardinal Vicar

He received an even more affectionate letter from the cardinal, his

[15] See Vol. XVII, p. 684.

own archbishop. Don Bosco had instructed Father John Baptist Lemoyne to write a nice letter to His Eminence for his name day, and received this exuberant reply:

Turin, August 7, 1886

Dear and Most Reverend Father John,

How pleasant were the good wishes, dear Father John that you sent me for my name day! Our good and reverend Father Lemoyne, who is so gifted in giving expression to all the love which the Salesians feel for this poor mortal, added something which gave me great joy. He says that prayers are said often for an old archbishop of Turin in all the Salesian houses. This is consoling and a guarantee of a happy future.

Since good Christians are supporting me with their prayers, I am confident even in my weakness and venture to hope that my work will not be entirely in vain.

I, too, pray for you every day, venerated Don Bosco. May your precious days be many here on earth. May the Salesian Congregation continue for a long time to come, to benefit from the influence of that charity, industriousness and sacrifice which so warms the heart of him who is its well-deserving and God-sent founder.

I hope you will reap great benefits from the fragrant Alpine air of Saint Maurice and gladly extend my blessing to you and the priests who are with you, while I remain,

Most affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Cajetan, Cardinal Archbishop

A new cloud of sadness was gathering over Italy at the beginning of June, slowly spreading all over the peninsula. While the volcanic eruptions of Etna kept the province of Catania in anguish, cholera reaped victims in Piedmont, the Venetian provinces, Apulia, Emilia, and Tuscany. Its intensity was lesser than it had been during the previous epidemics, but this time it lasted longer. Two years previously, Don Bosco had recommended wearing a medal of Mary Help of Christians around the neck and certain devotions as an antidote. Therefore, requests for medals poured in at the Oratory, and innumerable reports of graces obtained were recorded. The following letter, written from Pinerolo to Mr. Maggi Fannio of Santa Maria Iconia in the area of

Padua, documents the advice Don Bosco kept reiterating for his Cooperators while the danger lasted.

Pinerolo, July 27, 1886

Dear Friend,

I received your kind letter of the 25th with an enclosed offering for which I am most grateful. I now hasten to assure you that I and my boys are praying fervently for you, those dear to you and the whole of this good city. Yes, may Mary Help of Christians spread her mantle over you all, blessing and protecting you from all harm now and in eternity.

I gave instructions that the medals be sent immediately. If you do not receive them in a few days, please let me know.

Please accept my respect, while I bless you and everyone in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. In order to be protected against cholera, it is necessary to:
1) Wear the medal around one's neck, or on one's person.
2) Invoke Mary Help of Christians often (Mary Help of Christians, pray for us).
3) Receive very frequently the holy Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist.

As it had on other occasions, the medal of Mary Help of Christians worked miracles. In September, the son of a pious Cooperator from Rimini went home stricken by the dreadful plague. His mother instantly thought of Mary Help of Christians and without saying a word, put a medal blessed by Don Bosco beneath his pillow before putting him to bed. Hardly had the poor youth put his head on the pillow than he exclaimed with great happiness, "Oh! How good I feel! There is nothing wrong with me. I feel as if I had been restored from death back to life." Whereupon, he jumped up from bed and, although he had been unable to stand on his feet beforehand, he began to move around the room quite easily. No further symptoms of the plague were evidenced in him.[16]

In August 1886, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians were to

[16] *Bollettino salesiano*, February 1887.

hold their general chapter to elect their superior. Unable to preside at the chapter, Don Bosco delegated Father Michael Rua who had again taken over the general supervision of the Sisters, now that Father John Bonetti had been elected catechist general of the Congregation, to take his place. He sent him all the required faculties with this affectionate letter.

Pinerolo, Bishop's Villa
August 8, 1886

Dearest Father Rua,

I am unable to go to Nizza Monferrato for the election of the mother general and other superiors solely on account of my poor health, so I am giving you all the necessary faculties regarding this and other deliberations which are to be taken for the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. I have prayed already, and shall continue to pray so that everything may work out for the greater glory of God.

Courage: God is with us. I'll be waiting for all of you in Paradise, thanks to the help of God and his infinite mercy.

Courage, I repeat; the Lord has many things all ready for us. Let us strive to carry them through.

I am half blind and feeble in health. Pray for me too, who will always be in Jesus Christ for you and everyone else,

Your most affectionate friend and father,
Rev. John Bosco

Father John Bonetti wrote on the 26th of that month to Bishop John Cagliero about the Sisters, "Don Bosco is anxious that they spread out all over, because he was instructed about it from on high *ex alto*." Their general chapter re-elected all the superiors whose terms of office had ended.[17]

On August 8, the Catholic Workers' Association of Bergamo celebrated its tenth anniversary of existence. In giving advance notice thereof to Don Bosco, its president had requested a special blessing. Don Bosco addressed this fine letter to him which was printed together with other letters of distinguished men in a special edition entitled CHARITY.

[17] There are references to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in a letter written by Fr. John Bonetti to Bp. John Cagliero, which we are including in the Appendix (doc. 33).

Turin (Pinerolo) July 22, 1886

I thank and bless with all my heart the goodness of the Lord who in these troubled times has permitted the Catholic Workers' Association to be born and grow. The encouraging results in the town of Bergamo offer us a luminous example which encourages us to champion it further.

I will pray fervently to the Lord God to bless and protect everyone who promotes this Association in any way.

On this propitious occasion, I wish to appeal to you yourself and all the members of the association, in your great charity kindly pray for me and my orphans who now number over two hundred and ten thousand.

May Mary protect us all and be our guide in every peril along the road to Heaven. So be it.

Rev. John Bosco

P.S. I am old, half blind, so please bear with me while you read this humble letter.

We have already mentioned in this and other volumes on several occasions that the Catholic Workers' Associations looked to Don Bosco as an outstanding forerunner of action taken on behalf of the working classes. This prevailing opinion made such associations look upon Salesian houses, wherever they might have been, as natural meeting grounds for their sessions. Thus, on June 3, the Catholic Workers' Association of La Spezia went to the Institute of Saint Paul for the celebrations related to the blessing of its standard. The well-known Genoese Cooperator Maurice Dufour was present. During the banquet which was held in the courtyard, there were shouts of *Long live Don Bosco*! followed by similar shouts in reference to the Pope, the King, the Queen, and the Bishop. This name seemed to galvanize the guests who repeated it frenziedly several times and at the sound, the boys who were assembled in the study hall, all got up and went out running while they too were shouting and acclaiming in every key: LONG LIVE DON BOSCO![18]

The following month, it was not the population of La Spezia, but the King of Italy himself who rendered homage to Don Bosco. When King Humbert went to Genoa on July 17 to attend the inauguration of the monument to Victor Emanuel II, his august father, he stopped in this maritime city

[18] *L'Eco d'Italia*, June 6, 1886.

for a couple of hours. The municipal authorities had invited the school to attend the royal reception, and the king was pleased when a delegation from that institute was presented to him to pay him homage. Already at his arrival he had observed the group of boys lined up in two rows outside the hotel and had asked who they might be. The prefect of studies, Father Angelo Caimo, was to have read a speech to him, but there was not enough time. His Majesty asked him several informative questions, then turned to the provincial prefect and other officials who were standing near him, and said, "It is truly amazing. This Don Bosco has an extraordinarily fertile activity. By now he has houses scattered in many parts of the world. And how much good does he do! He has created a model institute in Turin which can stand any comparison with the best." Then he expressed the wish to see all the boys again when he left. His first aide-de-camp, General Pasi, gave orders that they were to line up again outside the entrance together with the troops, and that their band alone was to play as the King came out. The King walked past their ranks, looking at them affectionately, and greeting their superiors, bowing his head. The next day the mayor gave the director the charitable donation of four hundred lire assigned to the institute by the King.

From now on we will have no more important dreams to relate. The dream he had in Barcelona was the last of Don Bosco's great dreams. He recounted others later on, but they were purely natural in character, and he told them for entertainment. He narrated one on August 9. He had seen many peasants climbing into a hayloft, looking here and there and searching for hay, but they could not find any. When they had climbed down into the stable, they searched the mangers and found a few wisps.

"Now what shall we do?" They asked one another. "Spring is over, and here we are without any hay."

"There is nothing else to do," one of them grumbled, "than kill off the cows and eat the meat."

"What then?" asked another? "We'll end up like Pharaoh's cows that ate each other."

Nearby he saw some handsome suitcases, closed, which no one was trying to open. He went over, opened them, and found them full of big copper coins.

"What does this mean?" Don Bosco asked his guide.

"The rich," he was told, "will receive this money, while diamonds, gold, silver, and precious jewels will pass into the hands of the poor. The rich will be dispossessed and despoiled."

From time to time, Don Bosco left the bishop's villa to visit the neighboring shrine of Saint Maurice, together with the bishop's secretary. One

morning, on the top of the hill named after the martyr of the Theban legion, he stood still to admire the magnificent view. He looked toward a solitary hilltop where a handsome house was built opposite to where he stood, and said, "How lovely, how enchanting that little hill is with that magnificent house! How ideal it would be for a Salesian school!" This was Mount Oliveto, and the house had once belonged to the Jesuits and later to the Carthusians, though it was now the property of the state. In 1915, Father Paul Albera inaugurated a home for orphans of World War I and his successor installed a Salesian novitiate there,[19] when the need for its original purposes no longer existed.

Now that Don Bosco was feeling fairly strong again, he decided to return to Valdocco to be present at the final award ceremony for the boys. So he departed the morning of August 13. He wanted to give some gratuities to the domestic staff who had looked after him so carefully. Not only did they refuse to accept it, but they also even begged him to accept from them a small sum they had put together for his poor boys. Moved to tenderness, he assured them that he would always remember them in his prayers. "You could not do any better than that for us," they told him. "It was a joy for us to be able to wait on you. If only we could give you a little good health!"

The Bishop accompanied him to the railroad station. Who would have thought that they were never to meet again in this world? The Holy See had transferred Bishop Chiesa to Casale where Bishop Ferré had died. One friend of Don Bosco was succeeded by another friend. But God called him unto himself quite suddenly on November 4.

Although he had not been away very long and had not gone very far either, Don Bosco's sons, both big and small, all hailed his return joyously. It was dinner time, and knowing how much he welcomed news of his missions, several letters from Bishop John Cagliero were read out to him at table. The vicar apostolic wrote that he would shortly push forward to the heart of Patagonia, where he knew that a considerable number of native Indians were located. Don Bosco wept as he listened. Some people had laughed years before when he had suggested the establishment of missions in Patagonia, for the population census for that locality had indicated that the whole wasteland was uninhabited. "Don Bosco wants to go and preach the Gospel to the grass!" some people then said. Now Cagliero was confirming what Don Bosco had seen in a dream. That was why he was moved to tears.

Divine Providence, too, seemed to want to give him a welcome. The next

[19] Msgr. Cesano, who was the Bishop's secretary, recalls Don Bosco's pious wish in a special edition published when electricity and water were brought to Mount Oliveto (Turin: SEI, 1923), p. 6.

morning, the prefect general, Father Celestine Durando, had been obliged to take from him all the money he had received recently to meet urgent needs. No sooner had Father Durando left him than a gentleman entered his room. He had been waiting for some time in the waiting room. Almost as if he were testing his charity, Don Bosco said, "Forgive me if I kept you waiting. The prefect of the Congregation was here and took away all the money I had, and Lo' and behold! Don Bosco is poor, really penniless."

"But what would you do, Don Bosco, if you were in urgent need of a given sum of money right now?" the man asked.

"Oh! Divine Providence!..... Divine Providence!" exclaimed Don Bosco.

"Yes, Divine Providence... Divine Providence...that is all very well. But now you are without money and would not know what to do if you had immediate need of some."

"In such a case I would tell you, kind sir, to go into the waiting room because you would find someone there who has brought a donation for Don Bosco."

"What..? Do you really mean it?.... There is nobody outside, or at least there was no one when I came in. Who told you that?"

"No one told me. I know it, and so does Mary Help of Christians. Go, go, and look."

The gentleman went out into the waiting room and did see another man there.

He asked, "Are you here to see Don Bosco, sir?"

"Yes, I am. I have brought him a donation."

He was asked to come in and gave three hundred lire to the Servant of God.

On the feast of Our Lady's Assumption, Don Bosco presided at the solemn award ceremony for the artisans and students who were leaving for their vacation on the next day. At the height of the festivities, everyone was amazed by an unexpected occurrence:

Father Louis Lasagna suddenly walked in. He had just arrived from Uruguay. He walked up to his beloved Father and embraced him with filial affection amid general emotion. He then sat down beside him. When the ceremony was over, he began to speak. Despite the impatience which generally overcomes young people in such moments, his fiery words caught their attention. One thing in particular delighted Don Bosco. One day during the month of May, Father Lasagna had received a telephone call from Montevideo. The father superior of the Jesuits had informed him that a great lady from Santiago, Chile, wanted the Salesians to get to her native town. She said she was prepared to pay their fares from Europe

and provide all they needed. Then and there Father Lasagna had not paid any great attention to what was said because such offers were made all too frequently; but five minutes later he received a copy of the Barcelona dream sent from Turin. In it he read about a house at Santiago, Chile.

Don Bosco's birthday was traditionally celebrated as usual on August 15. On this occasion Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda wished to personally convey to him his good wishes, and again remained talking with him for a couple of hours.

Countess Balbo, who had sent him her good wishes by letter, must have been happy to receive the following reply from him:

Turin, August 18, 1886

Dear Countess,

I have received your most gracious letter of the 14th and am happy to answer it.

Thank you for your good wishes for my birthday. I return them a hundred fold, "times". I said Holy Mass at the altar of Saint Peter on this occasion. I leave it to you to imagine with what a great effort and fatigue I did so - and I prayed; I prayed most fervently for everyone who has either given or now extends a hand to me to help complete the mission which heaven in its mercy entrusted to me. In my prayers, I remembered you and all your dear ones very particularly, wishing them all abundant graces of all kinds and both spiritual and temporal favors.

Dear Countess, please accept my sincere regards and believe me to be in Our Lord Jesus Christ,

Your most devoted and grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Everyone knows today that Don Bosco was born on August 16, and not on the 15th; but at that time he himself did not know this. A very recent biographer of the Saint makes a delightful comment in this regard.[20] After imagining that Mama Margaret had spent the feast day of the Assumption in playful union with the Mother of God, to whom she offered the infant about to be born, the author adds, "Don Bosco had good reason to write, 'I was born on August, 15.' Yes, spiritually. Because he had two mothers, one in heaven and one on earth, and he honored both of them."

[20] Henri Ghéon, *Saint Jean Bosco* (Paris: Flammarion), p. 22.

Chapter 6

THE FOURTH GENERAL CHAPTER

Obliged by his age and his infirmities to spend his days sitting in his little room, with an evening outing in a carriage for his sole recreation, Don Bosco's life must have been monotonous for a man accustomed as he was to ceaseless activity. Four events happened during the last months of 1886 which, despite the unavoidable discomfort they caused him, nevertheless broke the tedious monotony and gave Don Bosco genuine comfort. These were the Fourth General Chapter, a trip to Milan, a missionary expedition, and the inauguration of the new novitiate house at Foglizzo.

The Fourth General Chapter was the last ever to take place under the guidance of the holy Founder. The convocation letter was dated May 31, and it also stated that since it would soon be six years since the Superior Council had last been elected, new elections were to be held on this occasion. The Chapter was to meet at Valsalice, commencing September 1. According to the Constitutions,[1] besides the members of the Superior Council, the following had a right to participate at the Chapter: the Provincials, the Procurator General and all of the Directors of the houses. The Constitutions[2] also specified that in view of the elections every director was to be accompanied by a Salesian who had made his perpetual profession, and who had been elected by the confreres of his own house for this purpose.

Each director received at the same time the agenda of the items to be discussed, so that they might acquaint their community members, inviting them to give serious thought to the matters in question and to make in writing any proposals or suggestions they thought suitable, sending them on time to the prefect of studies general, Father Francis Cerruti, who had

[1] Chapter VI, note to art. 3.
[2] Chapter IX, art. 10.

been chosen as Moderator of the General Chapter. The agenda was formulated briefly as seen below:

AGENDA OF TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED AT THE FOURTH GENERAL CHAPTER IN SEPTEMBER 1886

The topics discussed at the last General Chapter will be briefly reviewed, with special stress on:

I. Number 3 of the plan proposed at that time, namely, Regulations for parishes already under the direction of or to be directed by the Salesians.

II. Number 5: directives for the technological section of Salesian houses, and ways by which vocations may be developed among young artisans.

The following new topics are submitted to the Confreres for examination:

III. How to implement the decree *Regulari disciplinae* of his Holiness Pius IX of happy memory.

IV. Procedural system to be followed in admitting candidates to Sacred Orders.

V. Manner and means for creating houses of formation for clerics in the different provinces.

VI. Ways to obtain an exemption from obligatory military service.

VII. Modifications in the directory of our Society. Proposals made by the Confreres.

Lastly, both the directors and the Salesians who were chosen to participate in the Chapter were instructed to meet on August 25 at San Benigno Canavese for a preliminary retreat. Don Bosco also was present at that retreat, having been there already since the 21st during the retreat of the aspirants.[3] Never had there been such an impressive assembly of Salesians. Don Bosco was surrounded by the Superior Council, by three Provincials, twenty-nine directors,[4] by the 29 Salesians elected by their proper houses besides a good

[3] Before he left Turin, Don Bosco had written to Pope Leo XIII humbly conveying to him his best wishes for his name-day, St. Joachin. On the 24th he received from Rome the following telegram: Father Bosco. S. Benigno. Thanks for wishes. Imploring the fullness of Divine gifts on the orphans guided by the well-deserving Salesians. The Holy Father imparts his Apostolic Blessing to all. L. Cardinal Jacobini.

[4] See Appendix, doc. 34. Of the other two provincials, the one from Liguria, Fr. Francis Cerruti, had been councilor to the superior council since 1885; the other, Fr. James Costamagna, provincial of Argentina, was absent.

many other priests not members of the General Chapter. The preachers of the retreat were Father Joseph Bertello, "who preaches to us truly classical meditations," as Father Joseph Lazzero wrote, and Father Louis Lasagna "who gives his instructions with a genuine missionary zeal and Salesian spirit" (again the words of Father Joseph Lazzero).[5]

Because of financial difficulties, only Father Louis Lasagna from South America was able to participate. People were upset because, despite everything, everyone would have wished to see those distant territories more fully represented.[6] Bishop John Cagliero wished to be present in spirit by submitting some proposals, to be developed upon in a special talk to the directors. He sent them also on behalf of the Salesians in South America.[7]

During the retreat, Don Bosco felt every day more and more exhausted, because of the heat. Therefore, he refrained from doing more than granting a few interviews to some directors, being absolutely unable to do anything. But as a general principle he said, "If you wish

[5] Letter to Bishop John Cagliero, San Benigno, August 28, 1886.

[6] L.C., "On behalf of Fr. Michael Rua, I would like to say that it is regretted that only Fr. Louis Lasagna could come over from America. We had looked forward to seeing Fr. James Costamagna, Fr. Joseph Fagnano and a few others as well." Fr. Michael Rua himself wrote to Fr. Anthony Riccardi, Bishop Cagliero's secretary, on August 11: "We are all sorry that only Fr. Lasagna could attend the general chapter, out of all the superiors in America. We had hoped to see at least two of them. Well, patience!" On August 26, Fr. Lasagna wrote Bp. John Cagliero from San Benigno: "Don Bosco was very unhappy that neither Fr. Fagnano nor Fr. Costamagna could come."

[7] Proposals for a talk to Directors:

1. Insist on observance of the vow of poverty, especially as far as traveling, clothing, material repairs, and constructions.
2. Urge exemplary conduct in community life, especially as far as food, drink, etc.
3. Urge a prompt reply to the circular letters from the Provincials.
4. Urge observance of the practice of the exercise for a *Happy Death* regularly and thoroughly, not only for the boys, but also for the Salesian Confreres.
5. This also applies to the monthly manifestations.
6. Remind them all that above all else, they are to assist, love, and help their confreres and then the boys.
7. This applies especially in cases of young clerics coming from San Benigno who need continual paternal guidance and great charity such as it prevails there, in practices of piety and of the Congregation. Teach them to become good teachers and assistants through the preventive system of education, by reading it to them and explaining it. Help them in difficulties they encounter in their work, which at times are the main cause of their defection.
8. All Chapter deliberations are to be read at the beginning of the year, and then in short installments a few of them every day. A chapter of the rules is to be read once a month during the exercise for a *Happy Death*.

Fr. Francis Cerruti (Turin, October 12, 1886) wrote him: "Your proposals reached here two days after the end of the General Chapter, that is to say the evening of September 9. But on reading them, I note that two-thirds of them are the same as those advanced by the majority of the confreres, and have already been adopted by the General Chapter. I will gladly take the remaining third into consideration when revising and printing our deliberations, because of their intrinsic value and also because they were sent by our missionaries who, as such, represent the glory and chief mainstay of the Congregation."

to speak with me about matters concerning the soul, come to me, and you will always find Don Bosco ready to help you. I have a little breath left, but I will spend it gladly for the welfare of my sons." When he saw all the Salesians who were making the retreat gather around him to listen to what he was saying during some of their recreations, superiors and subjects all mingled together, he would remark contentedly, "In this I recognize all of you as my sons. Always be like this, without striving for preference. I see here the directors, the preachers of the retreat, the members of the Superior Chapter, all united as one single family. I would like to say so many things, but my lungs refuse to blow. I will tell them all to Father Michael Rua, and he will repeat them to you. Meanwhile, pray for Don Bosco." So saying, he walked away while they hastened to kiss his hand, deeply moved.[8] Then, at length, excessively weak and in great pain, he left the house the morning of the 31st. He stayed the rest of the day at the Oratory, leaving for Valsalice at ten o'clock on September 1. He decided to stop when he passed by the convent of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians where a number of Sisters were assembled for their retreat. He entered the Chapel, gave all the sisters some souvenirs, blessed them, got into his carriage again and continued his journey.

All members of the General Chapter awaited him at Valsalice. They met in the church toward evening. Don Bosco sat in the sanctuary among the outgoing members of the Superior Council. After the singing of the *Veni Creator*, Father Michael Rua declared the General Chapter open in his name and read out the articles of the Regulations regarding the chapter. Then, after having invoked the protection of the Virgin Mary by singing *Ave Maris Stella*, having received the benediction with the Blessed Sacrament, they all entered the meeting room for their preliminary session.

Here, after a concise report on the various offices to be entrusted to the members that were to be elected, it was agreed that the ballot would be held the following morning, and that the first session would take place in the afternoon to discuss the fifth and seventh topics on the agenda which concerned formation houses for clerics in the various provinces and compilation of the catalog directory of our Society. These two subjects were of secondary importance, yet in the opinion of the Moderator,

[8] Giovanni Battista Francesia, *Vita popolare del beato Don Giovanni Bosco* [Popular Life Story of Blessed John Bosco] (Turin: SEI), p. 216.

they were to help the members of the Chapter come to a better mutual understanding and get the debates under way.

It was the first time that the Superior Council had appeared at a General Chapter with its own secretary who was Father John Baptist Lemoyne. The secretary is not actually one of the members of the Superior Council. He was merely an officer, so at that time he could not participate in the election either by virtue of the rule which gave voting rights to the Superior Council, or by virtue of common law. However, availing itself of its right before the preliminary session came to an end, the assembly agreed unanimously that the secretary general of the Superior Council could vote.

The last thing done was to hand out a list of Salesians eligible for office from which the outgoing officers were not excluded. There were seventy-one all told, without counting the Rector Major, who was elected for life, his vicar who served ad nutum rectoris, the two bishops, and John Cagliero and Joseph Fagnano who had been given special appointments by the Holy See. At that time also the Novice Master was to be elected, since the Rule specifically prescribed: *Novitiorum Magister eligatur in Capitulo Generali* [The novice master is to be elected at the General Chapter].[9]

The election, which took place without any problem[10] on the morning of the 2nd, gave the following results:

Prefect:	Father Dominic Belmonte
Spiritual Director:	Father John Bonetti
Administrator:	Father Anthony Sala
Councilor For the Schools:	Father Francis Cerruti
Councilor For Technical Schools:	Fr. Joseph Lazzero
Councilor:	Father Celestine Durando
Novice Master:	Father Julius Barberis

[9] Chapter X, art. 9. In the tenth General Chapter of 1904, it was decided that "the Novice Masters to be elected by the Rector Major, in agreement with his Council, after consultation with the Provincial Council." See Deliberations of the IV General Chapter, San Benign Canavese, 1905.

[10] Fr. Joseph Lazzero wrote Bp. Joseph Cagliero (September 3, 1886): "Before every vote, the office to be filled by whosoever would be elected was announced out loud. When it came to the councilors, one was qualified as councillor for schools, another for arts and trades, the third for correspondence concerning the missions." Likewise Fr. Francis Cerruti wrote him (October 12, 1886), "It was comforting to see the orderly fashion in which the members of the Superior Council were elected and how the General chapter was conducted."

Bishop Cagliero was proclaimed honorary catechist general. When the election was over, a resolution was read out to Don Bosco, informing him that everyone present had unanimously agreed that insofar as the election was concerned, he should do whatever he saw best in our Lord, and either confirm what was done or alter it. Don Bosco thanked the assembly for this vote of confidence, he said he was gratified, and asked them all to give thanks to God. Then, by way of conclusion, in words full of fervent charity and sadness, he informed them that that very same morning, the Congregation had lost its beloved confrere, Father John Nespoli, and expressed his hope that the Congregation might have many such excellent Salesians like the one just deceased.

Father Nespoli did indeed deserve such a beautiful commemoration. The fact of his premature death enhanced the sadness over the loss of this brilliant and virtuous man. He had attained his status by dint of heroic sacrifice, as he was naturally an irritable and a stand-offish person. He had lost his father at the age of nine, and had lived for another two years with his relatives. Then a pious lady to whose charity his father had recommended the unfortunate family as he was dying, took steps to have him enrolled at the Oratory. Here he completed the full five years of high school. When he was in his last high school grades, immersed as he was in the study of the classics, he failed to find people who understood his spiritual needs and could enlighten him adequately on matters pertaining to faith, and so his piety cooled off. Luckily, he clearly perceived the sanctity of both Don Bosco and Father Michael Rua, who acted as a double-headed magnet to keep him at the Oratory. In 1876, he entered the novitiate which was then a separate section of the Oratory. He began to work on his own spiritual formation that year under the guidance of Father Julius Barberis, though during the three years following his temporary religious profession he once again slowed down. Finally, he was sent to Alassio and found in the director Father Francis Cerruti the perfect guide just suited to him. His process of spiritual growth did not suffer any further setback. His daily life consisted of study, piety, teaching, and assistance. While teaching on the college level, he asked to teach the weekly religious class, for which he prepared himself with the utmost seriousness and from which he also obtained excellent results. While at Alassio, he enrolled at the University of Genoa, but became fatally sick shortly after being awarded his doctorate in literature. He was barely twenty-six years of age.

His name is linked to a posthumous publication on the Doctors of the Church, a work which is a symbol of the deep love with which he had dedicated himself to the Fathers of the Church.[11] His friend and fellow teacher, Father Bartholomew Fascie, who was at that time still a lay person, but who today is the prefect of studies general, wrote an interesting preface on the life of the translator. In speaking of his character, he says, "There was a definite note of stability in him, a stand so forcefully constant that I could always picture him no matter the situation, whether I saw him before me, or whether he saw me, and say to myself: ...That's Him! There was one setting in which this intimately personal characteristic of his stood out most sharply and uniquely, and that was the classroom. There Father Nespoli was utterly himself, with his wholly genuine personality." In referring to his intellectual activity, he observed, "To him knowledge was but a means, the end being not that of being learned, but of being human and good, and being able to help others to be good." Father John Nespoli provided such a help by being a good teacher. In praising him his colleague says that he was a teacher when he was saying Mass, in reading his breviary, during recreation, while taking his boys out for a walk, and naturally when he was giving lessons. "His haughty soul became gentle when he was with his boys, and he was everything to them, capable of understanding them, accepting all their problems and objections seriously, solving them, bending his character a little to meet their own characters. Yet, he was always serious. There was one category of people towards whom he was inexorable and he never let up. His dynamic will could never adapt itself to empathize or even better still to tolerate lazy fellows in his class." His strong will power never failed him, but upheld him throughout his life. "He was so decisive in everything he did," Father Bartholomew Fascie says, "that he was thoroughly astonished when his director asked him whether he ever had any doubts about his vocation. He could not understand. It simply would not enter his head that there were some people who, after taking so momentous a decision, could still have doubts about it. It took quite a lot out of me to convince him of it." He loved his family, his friends, his pupils; but, says Father Bartholomew Fascie, "he loved Don Bosco first and foremost, for he had taken the place of his

[11] S. Aurelio Agostino, Letters XXXIII. Translation and comments by the Rev. John Nespoli, Turin, Salesian printing works, 1887.

own father in his heart, and in requiting his love, Don Bosco let him realize how dear he was to his heart."[12]

Now let us return to the subject of the General Chapter. The afternoon session of September 2 in which the topics of the directory lists and of the formation houses for clerics were discussed does not offer any remarkable features, save a few remarks made by Don Bosco. He approved the proposal of sending some of the most brilliant clerics to complete their studies at pontifical universities in Rome. He only pointed out that he felt this would be too premature at that time, in view of the dire need the Salesians had of personnel for the houses they had opened. The first two Salesian clerics sent to the Gregorian University to study theology in the fall of 1888 were Angelo Festa and James Giuganino. The Saint further recommended that the present terminology used, such as *Ascritti* [enrolled] and *Anno di Prova* [year of trial] be maintained instead of novice and novitiate. "The latter terms are neither necessary nor convenient," he said. We will speak later of a third feature when we speak of Foglizzo. The meeting did not make any formal deliberation.

The first thing discussed the morning of the 3rd was how clerics might be exempt from military service. In those years, there were still several ways out, though in the following years they were all closed.

"In all these matters, it is extremely important to have a good friend willing to help us," Don Bosco said, " one who is well acquainted with people and with the laws. If there is no such person, we will have to appeal trustingly to someone suitable who will take the matter under advisement. We must beg him to help us make sure that any rights that the draftee may have are respected either when he is drafted or during the medical visit. People generally consent to do so, and commit themselves to help our cause on behalf of others."

Quite remarkable is what he predicted, after referring to military service regulations in France and in Spain. "As to Italy, I have been told that it is now under examination how youths who want to devote themselves to foreign missions may be exempt. This will greatly facilitate the exemption of our own boys. The day is not far off when, with but some restrictions, all the clergy in Italy will be exempt. But until

[12] Op. cit. pp. 6, 14, 20, 30, 26. Among Fr. John Nespoli's papers, a notebook of autobiographical recollections was found which had been interrupted by death. This is now in the possession of Fr. Bartholomew Fascie. One section in particular is instructive in so many ways that we are reproducing it in the Appendix, also because fragments relating to our own history can be found in it (doc. 35).

this comes about, we must try to obtain exemption by every honest, legal channel."[13] There was nothing at that time which could hold out any hope that the clergy would be generally exempt, for the spirit prevailing in the government circles at that time was definitely slanted in the opposite direction. Yet, today, this is an accomplished fact after the Lateran Pact. The one restriction is in the event of general mobilization, though even then anyone *in sacris* would be assigned to ecclesiastical or medical services.

Having exhausted this subject matter, the Chapter passed on to examine what procedure ought to be followed in admitting clerics to Sacred Orders. The minutes say nothing about the debate which continued in the afternoon, but the study must have been thorough, judging from the fifteen articles which were deliberated upon.[14]

During the afternoon session, regulations for parishes were elaborated upon. The speaker, Father Louis Lasagna, availed himself of the work already done at the Third General Chapter. He prefaced it all with a few considerations which tended to advise to proceed with caution in accepting parochial duties all too readily. There were a lot of problems involved in reconciling the sources of authority where a Parish was joined to a hospice. After a lively debate, the matter was shelved. It was left to the Rector Major to determine in each individual case whether the director of the hospice was to be the superior of the entire house, or whether the pastor was to assume full direction of everything. It was however deliberated that the two administrations should be kept separate from one another. It was still too short a time that the Salesians had been active in the administration of parishes to have any store of past experience to which they might refer in deciding such issues. Nevertheless, this second venture was an improvement over the first. A number of rules were worked out worthy of some consideration inasmuch as, if nothing else, they constituted the basis on which the final deliberations were taken at a later date, and also because they were debated during the time when Don Bosco was still alive.[15]

Don Bosco came into the conference room and acted as chairman of the proceedings, something which had been done until then by Father Michael Rua, just when the Chapter was discussing how the pastor

[13] Deliberations in Appendix, doc. 36.
[14] Appendix, doc. 37.
[15] Appendix, doc. 38.

might be removed from office *ad nutum superioris*. After he was briefed on what had already been said, he began, "It is my opinion that in view of the troubled times in which we live because of the separation of powers between the secular and ecclesiastic authorities, it is best if we proceed the way we can, adapting ourselves to circumstances in the parishes we already staff. For any future parishes we may be called upon to direct, the Superior Council shall study how the stability of the pastor can be assured."

Another interesting attempt concerned how to better discipline in our professional technical schools. Paragraph two of the agenda sent to the Salesian Confreres had contained a double query, namely, what direction ought to be given to the artisans and in what ways could religious vocations be fostered among them.

The coadjutor Joseph Rossi also participated in this debate. The deliberations taken are such that they deserve not be buried in the archives. First of all, because they reflect Don Bosco's thought, since he had certainly made them his own, and secondly, because they also represent the initial phase of the transition from a period based entirely on tradition to another period where written rules regarding the intellectual, technical and religious directives prevailing in our professional technical schools had become the norm, after thirty years of experience.[16]

On Sunday, September 5, only one meeting was held in the evening at which the Chapter determined the manner of observing the decrees for the acceptance of novices, and what procedures should be followed in admitting new members to profess their vows. "With those decrees", Don Bosco said, "Pius IX desired more than anything else to put a weapon into the hands of religious orders so that they might use it to reject applicants not suitable for religious life." "That was the reason why this disposition was to be restricted to Italy alone. Such is the spirit of the decrees."

We will now say a word about the origin and nature of these decrees. A year after his ascent to the throne of Peter, specifically on June 17, 1847, Pius IX addressed his encyclical *Ubi primum arcano* to superiors general, abbots, provincials, and other religious superiors. In this encyclical he stated that, as soon as he was elected Pope, he had in mind a plan to protect, strengthen and improve religious orders. He

[16] Appendix, doc. 39.

then promised them that he would dedicate himself very particularly to assure that the "sanctity of norms, the teaching on spiritual life, religious discipline, and regular discipline in keeping with their individual statutes, might be restored and flourish always and better." He then informed them that with a view to promoting and assuring such a reform, he had constituted the Congregation *de statu regularium* and urged religious superiors to keep careful watch over their subjects, maintaining genuine harmony among themselves, as well as with the bishops and the diocesan clergy, so that everyone might contribute *viribus unitis* to the edification of the Body of Christ, namely, the Holy Church. On January 25, 1848, through the Congregation for Religious, he promulgated the decree *Regulari disciplinae instaurandae* in order to carry out this program of reform. The decree contained sound regulations regarding the admission of novices the taking of the habit, and religious profession.

In keeping with the pontifical disposition, a general committee board and seven provincial examiners had to be elected. Proceeding with their election, the members and the secretary of the superior council were elected for the executive committee, and Father John Baptist Francesia, Father John Marenco, Father Eugene Bianchi, Father Philip Rinaldi,[17] Father John Baptist Tamietti, and Father Peter Guidazio[18] were elected as provincial examiners.

The various proposals submitted by the Salesian confreres were put before the assembly on the 6th, during the two meetings held that day. In our opinion, the most important debate centered on the *Salesian Bulletin*. The general concept was stated as follows: "The purpose of the *Salesian Bulletin* is to foster the spirit of charity among our Cooperators, inform them on what has been and is being accomplished by our Pious Society, and to animate them to give us the help we need. It is consequently to be considered as the organ of the Society."[19]

In order that the periodical might faithfully accomplish the purpose for which Don Bosco had first undertaken its publication, the general chapter deliberated as follows:

1. The *Bulletin* was to be edited and printed under the direct supervi-

[17] Fr. Philip Rinaldi took part only in the session of the elections, since he accompanied the director of the house of St. John Evangelist, Fr. Marenco. Fr. Philip Rinaldi was the director's vicar.

[18] The names are listed according to the number of votes obtained.

[19] See Deliberations, Chapter V.

sion of the Superior Council, which would provide for its translation into various other languages. An appointed editor-in-chief would edit and coordinate articles and information sent in from different areas and assure prompt publication and mailing.

2. In order that the *Bulletin* might satisfy regional requirements without having to modify the individual translation of the text, the last pages of each issue should be kept available for special features of interest concerning houses located in the specific country.

If any article needed to be urgently published in America, the provincials there would print extraordinary supplements, a summary of the contents being duly provided in the successive issue.

3. Each provincial should instruct someone in his province who is qualified and has time to gather monthly resumés of most important Provincial news and forward the same to the editor of the *Bulletin* before the 15th of each month, so that it might appear in the next issue.
4. Special account should be kept of donations for Salesian houses given by Cooperators in response to the *Bulletin*, and the donations should be forwarded to the Rector Major by each receiving house.

Hospices could keep donations contributed expressly for that individual house, but the Rector Major has to be informed. In each instance the intentions stipulated by the person donating the money should be carried out.

Don Bosco took the floor several times during the two sessions. Once he urged everyone present to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the Organization of the Sons of Mary Help of Christians, and to cultivate adult vocations. Then he went on, "When Cardinal Joseph Berardi informed the Holy Father Pius IX about the Organization, the Pope said, 'If Friars want to have more friars, they will have to follow this course; so will the bishops, if they want priests. The reason for this is that sometimes a boy can go astray while an adolescent, but will return to his senses at the age of sixteen, eighteen, or even twenty.'

In speaking of the recommendations made by Leo XIII, urging that youth be rescued from the influence of the Freemasons, Don Bosco remarked, "It will be enough to appeal to older young men not to join any kind of association without the consent of their parents and of their pastor. But they should not discuss the matter specifically either in the house

or in the press. This would only reawaken the wrath of the enemy without any advantage."

In regard to visits to the houses by provincials and major superiors, Don Bosco urged that one should always make such visits in the name of the Rector Major, and urge the confreres to observe their rules, not by simply saying "I want," but by pointing out that this is what the rules impose. "That 'I want' ruins everything," he concluded.

In support of what Don Bosco had just said, we might quote some other remark of his made apropos to this point on February 14, 1887, at the Superior Council meeting. Since there was a discussion about furthering the development of certain articles in the Rules, he said, "Do not try to render our Rules either too verbose or too specific when they appear to be a bit concise. Wherever there is no need of Rules, one should proceed with paternal kindness, and let the subjects help their superior to ensure the smooth running of the house."

Here we have a fine example of that same kindness of which he was a living example. An unexpected order from Father Francis Cerruti had Father Herminio Borio transferred from Lanzo to Randazzo. The idea of going to Sicily was equivalent, in the eyes of the good Piedmontese priest, to going to the ends of the earth. He felt he was discriminated against and poured out his heart to Don Bosco in a letter, for which he received the following fatherly reply:

Turin, February 6, 1886

Dear Father Borio,

You can leave quite peacefully. My benevolence and my blessing will accompany you wherever you go. Take patience and prudence along with you. Be a light to your companions. God will so dispose that we will see each other in the not too distant future.

May Mary guide us through dangers, and act as a sure guide to heaven for all the Salesians.

Keep on praying for this friend of yours who will always remain in Jesus Christ,

Most affectionately,
Rev. John Bosco

While speaking of the preventive system, Don Bosco said that he had begun writing a pamphlet on the subject and hoped to finish it himself or have

someone finish it for him., But unfortunately, the pamphlet was never completed, and no trace was found even of its beginning among the Saint's papers.[20]

The Council met for the last time on the morning of the 7th. Father John Bonetti read out a report on five items concerning our dealings with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, namely:

1. The physician visiting the sick nuns was not to be accompanied by Salesians.
2. The Salesians should be satisfied with their services in the kitchen and dining room.
3. No opposition was to be made by the Salesians in the transfer of any Sister.
4. They were never to be addressed with the familiar term of 'you,'(thou) and any familiarity was to be avoided.
5. To the question as to whether the Sisters, besides writing to the Holy Father, the Rector Major and Mother General, might be allowed to write freely to the local director, or to their former directors and confessor, the speaker expressed a negative opinion. Only Sisters residing in America would be allowed to write to the provincial because of the great distance.

At last Father Michael Rua spoke of several sections in the Rules, the observance of which needed to be urgently encouraged:

1. Prompt, solicitous reply to the monthly letters from provincials; the provincials, likewise, were to be prompt in replying to questions sent them by the Superior Council.
2. Provincials and directors should all agree as far as the observance of poverty.
3. Directors were not to keep drinks or liqueurs in their rooms either for themselves or others.
4. The directors were to follow the Rules as far as both quality and quantity of food.
5. Clothing was to be kept clean. There ought to be no anxiety to change it beyond what was specified by the Rules; the same applied to footwear.

[20] In the sixteenth volume (pp. 368–376) we published a genuine little treatise on punishments. Fr. Michael Rua had obviously written the manuscript, and the style was also his; but it is Don Bosco who speaks through him. We believe that Fr. Rua elaborated a draft of Don Bosco's on the subject into a circular form, the draft being destined as a preparation for the pamphlet already announced. The circular which was never printed was found by us quite accidentally in 1904. Undoubtedly, Fr. Rua would never have ventured to put such words into Don Bosco's mouth, if he had not truly uttered them.

6. No pleasure trips were to be undertaken; and when traveling, unless necessity demanded, no one was to travel second class.
7. To make the Exercise for a *Happy Death* according to the deliberations, and separately from the boys.
8. The Manifestations should be made regularly. This ensured the smooth running of the house.
9. The director was to give first his attention to the confreres, before he gave it to the boys. Classes in theology and liturgy were to be given. This helps the keeping of the religious spirit.
10. Assistance was to be given to young clerics just out of the novitiate. Their spirit of piety was to be fostered and they should be trained to work. They were to be warned especially not to exhaust themselves by talking too loud when they began teaching. The director was to keep informed about their behavior in the classroom and correct them charitably and sincerely.
11. The Preventive System should be read and explained at the beginning of the year, as it had been already established.
12. An alert eye was to be kept on beginners. Adequate assistance was to be given to anyone encountering difficulties.

The moderator read out the closing statement of the General Chapter which was then signed by all. This is how the document ended:

"Just as our Rules grant the most extensive faculty to the Rector Major in all that concerns the well-being and prosperity of the Pious Salesian Society, so also the members of the General Chapter before leaving extend their cordial thanks to their dearly beloved Don Bosco for the paternal kindness extended to them in assisting them. They voice fond hopes that his precious life be kept, and unanimously declared that they yield to him all powers to further develop whatever may not have been adequately discussed, and to add or amend anything which may need to be added or amended for the well being and the progress of the Pious Salesian Society and in keeping with our Constitutions."

Here and there we have referred to observations made by Don Bosco during the Chapter sessions, but judging from what Father Paul Albera wrote, not all that he said was recorded by the two chapter secretaries, Fathers John Baptist Lemoyne and John Marenco. For

this reason the Saint's second successor[21] states, "Everyone stated his own opinion quietly and tactfully and at the end of the debate, waited for Don Bosco to decide the issue, and solve the difficulties, and then point specifically and assuredly to the course of action that should be followed. These meetings were like so many school lectures in which the Reverend Teacher seemed to try to concentrate in only a few words all his teachings and all his long experience since he felt that the day in which he was going to leave his beloved disciples was getting nearer."

When at the beginning of the new school year the personnel of each house was all settled down and the normal running of things was going on smoothly, Don Bosco sent to all the confreres an official communication, informing them of the outcome of the elections adding the following recommendations with a circular letter compiled by Father John Lemoyne, dated November 21:

"What needs to be done now is for you to give your fullest obedience to the new council...since it came from the Lord through you. May such obedience be prompt, humble, and cheerful, as prescribed in our Rules. Let us look to our superiors as brothers, rather as loving fathers who seek nothing else than the glory of God, the salvation of souls, our own well being, and the smooth running of our Society. Let us see in them the representatives of God himself, and let us get used to look upon whatever they may order us to do as an expression of His divine will. If, at times, it might happen that they give orders which are not in harmony with our desires, let us not refuse to obey. Let us consider instead how painful it is for our superiors when they are obliged to tell people to do something which is difficult or distasteful. Let us remember that they do it only because they realize that such orders are requested by the smooth running of things, by the glory of God and the well-being of our neighbors. Let us sacrifice our own preferences and comforts gladly for so noble an end, and remember that the greater the sacrifice we make in obeying, the more meritorious our obedience will be in the eyes of God.

Also, dear sons, let us be very careful not to fall into the great defect of griping, for this is not in accordance with charity, it is hateful in the eyes of God and harmful to the community. Let us avoid

[21] Rev. Paul Albera, Bp. Louis Lasagna, *Biographical Memoirs* (San Benigno Canavese: Salesiana, 1900), p. 214.

griping about anybody, particularly about our confreres, especially when they are our superiors. The Holy Spirit says that he who gripes sows the seeds of discord, creates ill-feelings and discontent, where instead there should be peace of mind and cheerfulness together with charity. Let us endeavor, with our obedience, respect, and love, to attain what Saint Paul says,[22] namely, that our superiors *cum gaudio hoc faciant et non gementes*, i.e. let our superiors carry out their task with joy, and not with sighs.

But I do not want to recommend to you on this occasion only obedience and charity. I am very anxious about yet a third thing which is that we persevere in keeping our vow of poverty. Let us remember, my beloved sons, that to the greatest extent, the well being of our Pious Society and the profit for our own souls depend on such an observance. True enough, Divine Providence has aided us so far and we might also say, in a most extraordinary measure, in all of our needs. We are confident that such help will continue also in the future, thanks to the intercession of Mary Help of Christians who has always acted as a mother to us. Yet this does not mean that we ourselves should neglect to use the greatest possible care in curtailing our expenses wherever possible, in economizing our supplies, in traveling, in building, and in general in all things not absolutely essential. I rather believe that in this we are bound by a special duty both towards Divine Providence and towards our benefactors. Therefore, beloved sons, I earnestly recommend that you carry out that which has been established in our deliberations (Title V), in regard to economy, especially in that which pertains to building and repairs, our supplies, and travels.

You may rest assured that our Lord will not fail to bless abundantly our fidelity and exactness in observing these three cardinal points most generously, these three points being obedience, charity, and poverty."

The Deliberations appeared in print in 1887. Nothing had been published after the Third General Chapter, so what had been deliberated at that time was edited and published together with the recent deliberations.[23] The fourth Chapter, dealing with the Festive Oratories, is com-

22 Hebrews 17:18.

23 *Deliberazoni del terzo e quarto Capitolo Generale della Pia Società Salesiana tenuto in Valsalice nel settembre 1883–1886* [Deliberations of the Third and Fourth General Chapters of the Pious Salesian Society held at Valsalice in September 1883–1886] (San Benigno Canavese: Salesiana, 1887).

pletely new, that is, it was not dealt with in the Chapter of 1886. Don Bosco would have liked to have collected in one single volume all the deliberations of the four General Chapters, but since a certain amount of time would have been required to do such a thing, he preferred to publish the deliberations of the last two chapters without delay. The publication which he had desired appeared in 1902 in the form of a small volume in which the deliberations of the first six general chapters are listed after the Rules.

Chapter 7

ST. JOHN BOSCO IN MILAN / DON BOSCO'S LAST INVESTITURE OF NOVICES AT SAN BENIGNO

The Oratory choir left for Brescia under the leadership of Maestro Brother Joseph Dogliani while the General Chapter Meetings were in progress at Valsalice. It was the vigil of the solemn festivities to be held at Brescia for the coronation of Our Lady, venerated in the shrine of Our Lady of Grace, and the choir was to play an outstanding role in the magnificent musical program. Don Bosco had willingly consented to "lend" his boys to those fervent Catholics there, thanks to the request of Father Elena, an eminent preacher from Brescia and a zealous Cooperator. Besides the local population, thousands of devout faithful had gone there from every diocese of Lombardy for the occasion. There were also several prelates, among them, Bishop Joseph Sarto, then bishop of Mantua, and Cardinal Canossa, the bishop of Verona. The eminent Maestro Raimondi passed this judgment on the general rehearsal,[1] " A special praise should go to the children's choir of the Salesian Institute of Don Bosco and to their excellent director, Maestro Dogliani, who with an equal share of patience and understanding succeeded in training this choir of youthful voices to a degree of remarkable harmony." The praise for their "admirable precision" in the final performance, gave grounds for another person to magnify the method and effects of the education imparted in Don Bosco's institutes. "One of the merits," he wrote,[2] "and, I might also say, one of the secrets of this remarkable and God-sent man's educational institutes is the way by which young people are taught to be virtuous without any imposition, by guiding them to love what is good, to seek it and practice it spontaneously. The outcome of this extremely delicate procedure could be seen yesterday morning when all the young choir singers spontaneously received the Sacraments without any pressure from anyone. Oh! Don Bosco is certainly capable of providing

[1] *Il Cittadino di Brescia*. September 7–8, 1886
[2] Loc. cit., September, pp. 9–10

good Christians for the Church, as well as good citizens and excellent craftsmen in the arts and sciences for the nation."

The presence of the boys in Brescia brought such a fervent and general feeling of contentment to the population that the committee in charge of the festivities wrote Don Bosco, "Not only did we admire the masterful singing talent of your beloved pupils, but we also wondered beyond all description at their excellent, edifying behavior. Deeply grateful for your generous gift to our town and to Our Lady for sending them to us, we can only express our sincerest thanks to you, also on behalf of our most venerated Bishop.[3] Don Bosco is truly a blessing to all and to everything."[4] Since it was believed that Don Bosco was already in Milan, the letter continued: "On this occasion, however, Don Bosco would be an even greater blessing if, since he is in Milan as we are told, he would honor Our Lady of Grace with a short visit, thus acting like a crown on our festivities. Please, give us this joyous surprise, Reverend Don Bosco, and you will see around you people full of faith and devotion that will give great joy to your deeply religious heart."

Don Bosco was to arrive in Milan shortly. There were a great many eminent and active Cooperators in the Lombard capital, and the life and soul of the Association was Father Pascal Morganti, a former pupil of the Oratory who later became the archbishop of Ravenna. These good friends of the Salesians had reiterated their requests for a public assembly in the town, both orally and in writing, for they believed that this would have helped spread more the information on what the Salesians were doing. However, the presence of Don Bosco was necessary. Father Angelo Rigoli, also a past pupil, and one of the very early boys of the Oratory, strongly backed up the proposal, since he hoped that after the meeting, Don Bosco would call on him in his parish of Casale Litta. Don Bosco decided to comply with the invitation, instructing Father Louis Lasagna to arrange the meeting.

There had been uncertainty for some time as to the possibility and advisability of such a journey, for Father Michael Rua and other superiors were fearful of the effect it might have on Don Bosco. Could he endure the fatigue of the journey? Would not the foreseeable discomforts prove to be the last straw in the condition of his failing health? What if, considering his state of extreme weakness, he were to be taken suddenly sick far away from the Oratory? At last, after great hesitation, Don Bosco

[3] This was Bp. James Corna Pellegrini.

[4] Fr. Joseph Lazzero, who had accompanied them confirmed these impressions. He wrote Bishop John Cagliero on September 16, 1886 from Casale Litta: "Our boys attracted the affection of the organizers, as well as of the whole population; in a word, of all Brescia. They were really the jewel of those magnificent celebrations."

himself informed the Lombard Cooperators and he announced in a supplement to the September *[Salesian] Bulletin*, that the Milanese meeting would be held on Sunday the 12th of that month,[5] "Despite the infirmities to which I am subject, I am most confident that I shall nevertheless be able to attend the meeting, for I am eager to become acquainted with and renew the old friendships of a good many members of the clergy and the population of Lombardy. These people on several occasions have given me evidence of their generous charity on behalf of the undertakings which have been placed into my poor hands by Divine Providence."[6]

He was greatly influenced in this decision by a personal motive. He was aware of all the obligations he had toward Archbishop Calabiana because of the assistance he had received from him while he was bishop of Casale and was now glad to publicly express his own gratitude before departing from this earth.

He set out for Milan the morning of September 11 together with Father Louis Rocca, a Milanese who was director of the Alassio school, and with Father Charles Viglietti. A gentleman from Barcelona, Leander Suñer, the administrator of the estate of Marquis Jovert[7] had gone to meet him at the Oratory and driven him to the station in a magnificent carriage. Leander Suñer had just arrived from Germany the day before, accompanying the Marchioness Jovert and her lady companion, and all three of them called on Don Bosco at the Valsalice school, attended his Mass and then graciously accepted his invitation to have coffee with him. As she took leave of him, the Marchioness gave him an offering of one thousand lire.

He arrived in Milan at one o'clock in the afternoon, after a pleasant journey. The archbishop's carriage was waiting to drive him to the palace where he was to be the guest of His Excellency. A number of ladies and gentlemen and many priests were awaiting him at the station, to extend their Ambrosian cordial welcome to him. Father Louis Lasagna who had arrived the day before, was also there with Father Moses Veronesi, director of the school of Mogliano Veneto. There was also a crowd in the square outside the railroad station, and when Don Bosco appeared, shoulders bent and moving with difficulty but smiling, people were moved, and you could hear people say: "Look, there is a saint!....A great saint!...The Saint of Turin!" As he passed by, many people knelt to receive his blessing.

[5] Fr. John Bonetti compiled the letter on behalf of Don Bosco.

[6] Fr. Louis Lasagna had written Bishop John Cagliero (San Benigno, August 26): "Don Bosco is always weak, unsteady, practically exhausted. Nevertheless, he is going to Milan."

[7] See this volume, ch. 3, p. 1.

The priests of the archdiocese met him at the entrance hall of the bishop's residence and formed an escort of honor all the way to the archbishop's chambers. He climbed the great staircase very slowly, leaning on stout arms, and almost being carried by them, but people noticed and commented on his vivacious eyes and his alert spirit. The almost eighty-year-old venerable bishop went to meet him, embraced him tenderly, and showed him the utmost esteem and cordial friendship.

"Excellency," Don Bosco hastened to say, "I wanted to see you again and receive your blessing once more before I die."

The bishop was most affable also with the Salesians accompanying Don Bosco, and immediately began to talk in dialect, recalling his native Piedmont and his contacts with Don Bosco and his sons. The Servant of God looked tired, so after a light repast, he was led to the room made ready for him to rest. He had recovered his strength somewhat at five-thirty p.m., dinner time, and was having a lively conversation with the invited guests. After the meal, he received some visitors. He retired at around ten o'clock p.m. and the archbishop, wishing to receive Don Bosco's blessing and anticipating his reluctance, suddenly knelt in a most devout manner in front of him, then he embraced him affectionately once again, and accompanied him to his room.

The Saint turned his thoughts to the retreat then being held at Valsalice and at his instructions, Father Charles Viglietti wrote to Father Michael Rua that very evening, "Don Bosco orders me to ask you to tell everyone who is making the retreat that he is very sorry for being so far away from them. He says that this constitutes his major discomfort, though he thinks of them all in his prayers. He sends his regards and abundant blessings to everybody."

The Salesian meeting had been very well organized and took place the morning of September 12th at Our Lady of Grace Church. The Archbishop was sorry that it took place in what was not the very best season of the year, since the entire aristocracy of Milan was missing and usually returned sometime around All Saints' Day. Nevertheless, that was quite an impressive assembly. The boys of the Oratory who had gotten there from Brescia sang some parts of the High Mass marvelously; and even the secular journalists in attendance were enchanted by Bishop John Cagliero's *Sancta Maria succurre miseris* as anyone could tell by the articles they wrote. At the end of the Mass, the archbishop made his appearance, a few minutes ahead of Don Bosco, who arrived with Fathers Louis Lasagna and Charles Viglietti. People had hailed him with the utmost reverence all

along his way there. No sooner did he appear at the main entrance of the church than those nearest to him crowded around him, and it took some time and effort to drag him (this is the most appropriate word), to the side of the bishop in the sanctuary. The crowd filling the immense church gazed on him in silent devotion. Even the historian, Cesare Cantu,' had pressed through the throng to reach him, and followed him a short while.[8]

After the boys had sung a motet, Father Louis Lasagna received the blessing from the archbishop and went on to the pulpit. When they first saw him, there was general disappointment, for everyone expected that Don Bosco would speak. But from his opening words, the orator caught the attention and the gracious acceptance of the public, almost eight thousand people in number, who hung onto his words for more than an hour. Anyone who had heard him preach before would not have found exaggerated the opinion expressed by his biographer about his eloquence, "He possessed a subtle gift which enabled him to get into the hearts of his listeners," Father Paul Albera wrote,[9] "and he had such a store of examples and anecdotes at his command, such a persuasive manner of speaking, that he could share with everybody not only his ideas but also his enthusiasm."

He began by voicing his gratitude to the archbishop who, twenty years before on that very day, had admitted him to don his clerical cassock. He then described the whole of Don Bosco's undertakings in the Old and New World, depicting picturesquely the life of the Salesian missionaries, especially their activity on behalf of Italian immigrants. The reporter of a Turin newspaper[10] wrote that had the meeting been held in some private place instead of inside a church, the speaker would have been interrupted by applause again and again, especially when he demonstrated how the missions were not merely a religious undertaking, but also a patriotic one, and that the government should really exempt from military service all clerics destined to join the missions. He really shook his listeners when, with all his eloquence, he presented the Papacy to them as the most magnificent and purest glory of all Italy. Such a digression, probably intended for some good purpose, proved most timely for a number of reasons.[11]

When it was all over, Don Bosco yielded to the wishes expressed by

8. See Vol. XIII, p. 476.

9 Loc. cit., p. 126.

10. *Il Corriere di Torino*, September 13, 1886.

11 Albera, loc. cit., p. 217 (Appendix, doc. 41). He then held a second meeting at St. Mark's. In November, Fr. Pascal Morganti wrote to Fr. Michael Rua (November 16, 1895), "Bp. Louis Lasagna is, one may say, the first person who touched off the flame of Salesian enthusiasm here in this city with his two talks at Our Lady of Grace Church and at St. Mark's" (loc. cit., p. 219).

some eminent people and walked through the main aisle. Just as the people had done in Paris and Barcelona, the Milanese thrust themselves forward as he passed, some kissing his hand, some devoutly touching his garments, some making the sign of the cross, or asking him for his blessing. Those who were unable to get near him gazed at him from afar, touched to see him so ailing and yet smiling, and their tenderness was enhanced as they saw how the venerable old archbishop was supporting him. The crowd filling the square outside the church and the adjacent streets broke out into a mighty roar, *Long live Don Bosco! Long live the Archbishop!*

As the carriage in which the two of them were seated passed by, the shouts acclaiming them were repeated with all the fervor of popular enthusiasm.

Don Bosco got off at Saint Charles seminary where the Oratory choir was lodged, and many people were waiting there to see and speak with him. The boys gave him a jubilant reception as the Saint smilingly walked past them, with kind words and jokes. The people who witnessed the scene admired the exchange of affection between father and sons.

After greeting the boys, Don Bosco withdrew to a hall to grant audiences. But how could he interview that many callers one by one? Besides, in the twinkling of an eye, the hall had become so full of people that there was definitely not enough freedom to confer with individuals. A God-ordained incident attracted the attention of everybody and offered a way out of that predicament. In the midst of all the confusion a lady was leading her deaf daughter by the hand. As soon as she reached the Saint with great difficulty, he blessed the child and told her to say a certain prayer. Just as if she had heard and understood, the girl retired to a corner, prayed as she had been told, and came back to his side, saying, "You see, Don Bosco, I am quite cured. Now I can hear everything." The amazement of the other people present reached its climax and in the twinkling of an eye, news of this cure spread all over the town.[12] During the ensuing confusion Don Bosco was spirited away from the room, but on his way from the seminary to the archbishop's palace, the passers-by recognized him and halted, greeted him and at times joined forces to applaud.

The generosity of the Milanese did not falter either at the meeting or afterward. The city pastors opened a subscription on behalf of the missionaries, so that anyone who had been unable to attend the meeting at the church

[12] In an article published on the 22nd under the title "Miraculous Cure," *La Palabra* of Lisbon reported this incident. "We learned of this in a letter from Reverend Joao Marques who has been resident in Italy now for a year."

of Our Lady of Grace or had been prevented from contributing their alms there, on account of the crush, might be able to make his charitable donation.

The archbishop had invited several pastors and noblemen to dinner that evening to honor Don Bosco. After the repast, the Saint began to grant interviews, and went on until nightfall. Then, the bishop tried to provide a little rest and amusement for him in the form of pleasant conversation before the evening meal. When it was time to go to bed, the Servant of God told Father Charles Viglietti to arrange everything so that they would be able to leave the following afternoon at the latest.

During the last two years of his life, poor Don Bosco's former infirmities were complicated by new physical disfunctions which made traveling uncomfortable, and any extended length of time away from home most uncomfortable.

He said Mass in the bishop's chapel the morning of the 13th. The chapel was crowded with people attending the Mass. The president of the Club of Saint Ambrose and Saint Charles, and a member of the Board of the Catholic Youth Association, served at the altar. The boys of the Oratory and a number of people in the congregation received communion. The remainder of his time was spent in giving audiences. These resumed after lunch and continued until four o'clock p.m. Nearing the departure time, the bishop again knelt to receive his blessing and when he took leave of him, he embraced him weeping, tenderly kissing his hands and thanking him cordially for such an unforgettable and dear visit. Many gentlemen who had learned from the newspapers that Don Bosco was in Milan hastened back to the city from their country residences, but he had to leave and was unable to receive them. Likewise Duke Scotti, his good friend and benefactor, arrived too late to talk at length with him. He had to be satisfied by going to see him at the railroad station with a number of other ladies and gentlemen.[13]

He left Milan with only Father Charles Viglietti. He was absolutely exhausted. When he arrived in Turin, the jaded horse of the Oratory drove him in the humble little coach directly to Valsalice from Porta Susa station, and the Saint paid a delightful surprise visit to the persons making a retreat there. He entered the dining room quite unexpectedly as they were finishing supper. Little by little he regained some of his strength in the peaceful quiet of that house.

Father Louis Lasagna had not made the return trip with Don Bosco because he had to go to Busto Arsizio and Casale Litta to address the

[13] The poor young girls residing at the Home for the Blind had written him a touching letter, and begged him to come in person to bless them, or else send them his blessing (Appendix, doc. 42).

Cooperators of those two localities. The thirty choirboys of the Oratory went with him. The provost Father Tettamanti and the pastor Father Rigoli, two names so dear to the Salesians, could not have done more if they had to welcome Don Bosco himself.[14] The people of the two towns supported them wholeheartedly in this, as did the clergy and the faithful of the neighboring towns.

Newspapers of all kinds dedicated their attention to Don Bosco before his arrival, during his stay in Milan, and after his departure. The most outstanding newspaper of the Italian Liberal Party limited itself to announcing his arrival, which was already something quite considerable in those days. Later it carried a long article, containing in its own words "an impartial report of this local event," not without poking fun at the police headquarters for having taken too literally the rumors that an anti-clerical demonstration had been planned, and for taking excessive precautions, as a consequence. In reference to the music of the Oratory, it went on, "We do not think one could possibly expect greater intonation, better harmony, or more exquisite blending of voices from these boys than the way we heard them sing yesterday." It then spoke in detail of the meeting and the speaker, with a tinge of a disputable humor as requested by the spirit of the newspaper and of the times, anytime the liberals had to write about the Pope or the Church. After an accurate outline of only a few sentences concerning Don Bosco's personality and merits, it closed stating, "A friend of ours, Prof. Rayneri of Montevideo, Argentina, informed us one day that the best school for girls in that capital is the one founded there by Don Bosco. Even the daughters of the President of that republic are attending it for their education."[15]

The more moderate *Perseveranza* described the whole ceremony which had taken place on the 12th with warmth. The outright liberal newspaper *Il Caffè* announced Don Bosco's arrival in an early issue, referring to him as "one of the most cultured of the influential leaders of the clerical party," and in the following issue it described the meeting. The following is the impression made upon the author of the article by the visit of the Servant of God: "Don Bosco is a lovely old man, with strongly marked out features and always smiling. His appearance does not show his advanced age, which is however shown by his practically extinguished strength." This is the judgment that he passed on his life and undertakings; "The charitable undertakings of Don Bosco are growing bigger day after day, and although

[14] *Salesian Bulletin*, November 1886.

[15] *Il Corriere della sera*, September 12–14.

his appeals for help are always responded to everywhere, he lives a hard life himself. Despite his advanced years, he is concerned solely about one thought, "humanity and religion," and he is an arch enemy of the outspoken arrogance of angry ecclesiastics. He is a true minister of the church of Christ, unfortunately imitated by only a few!" The no less liberal *Italia* expressed its appreciation for the fact that Father Louis Lasagna had spoken so well "without insulting either persons or institutions as is usually the case," and gave a concise outline of his talk, mentioned the crowd attending it, and the other crowd which had besieged Don Bosco on his way out. *Il Pungolo*, also a forthright liberal paper, praised the music and gave an extensive report of the talk. The conciliatory Catholic newspaper *Lega Lombarda* illustrated the life and undertakings of the Saint in two articles.[16] *La Settimana religiosa* of Milan published an extensive, emphatic account of it on September 16. Likewise *L'Eco d'Italia in Genoa* and *Il Corriere di Torino* published letters from Milan about it on the same day.

There were three newspapers which chose not to deviate either partially or entirely from their adamant anti-clerical program. *Il Secolo* did announce the presence in Milan of "one of the influential leaders of the Italian clerical party, Don Bosco," adding, "He is one of the most militant agents of clerical doctrines and one of the most intelligent as well. He does not limit his action to mere preaching, but works unceasingly, founding institutes of all kinds, workshops, missions, homes for the poor, doing everything which the liberals should be doing. We look on him as a model for every party, for at the present time we do not need words but deeds, and Don Bosco gives us deeds." But on a second occasion when reporting the meeting, it remained formally within the limits of pure courtesy, expressing itself objectively about the speaker and praising the young choirboys. Under a belligerent heading, "Yesterday's Meeting of the Clerics," *La Lombardia* wrote on a restrained note until it exhorted the government to direct and protect Italian immigrants, then it displayed as though it were a scarecrow "the overpowering influence of Catholic missionaries whose action may be beneficial to civilization in its early phases, but then it grows hostile toward the liberal institutions of our mother country."

Further on, in referring to the burning issue of the relations then existing between Church and State, it wrote, "We must in all truth admit that the speaker was very moderate and cautious in his political allusions." *La Riforma*, Crispi's own newspaper in Rome, was not so moderate because

[16] Perservanza, p.13; *Caffè*, pp. 13–14; Italia; Pungolo, pp. 13–14; Lega Lombarda, pp.12–13.

it published a venomous correspondence from Milan against Don Bosco's "clerical charity," against "clerical schools," against the competition offered by his "clerical homes" to the working people "laboring in the thick of real life". Though it did render tribute to the eminent personal qualities of the man, it deplored the fact that "a civilized city should have described him as the angel of charity" as has been stated in the letter inviting people to attend the meeting.[17]

Naturally the proper note was struck in the columns of the militant *L'Osservatore cattolico* of Milan, which was then read all over the peninsula. In the second of two articles[18] it read, "Don Bosco's visit to Milan has assumed the proportions of a genuine event, thanks to the veneration felt for this apostle of charity, and also thanks in part to the lack of restraint on the part of some liberal newspapers that were already brainwashed with the old anti-Catholic hatreds and therefore endeavored to present the arrival of Don Bosco as a clerical provocation, and did their best to stir up some true disturbances. We have detected similar attempts in previous quotations taken piecemeal from journals more or less hostile to the Church. Fortunately, the people of Milan turned a deaf ear to such instigations and turned the attacks of politicians into a solemn defeat."

The author of the article was present when Don Bosco entered the episcopal residence. This is how he described his impression: "It was sad to see the venerated Don Bosco climb the great staircase in the residence, his legs so feeble that they could barely support his weight. Yet despite all this, his mind is still alert, his eye keen, his memory excellent." Then the author described Don Bosco's meeting with the archbishop: "When he came into the presence of the archbishop, it was the prelate who knelt at Don Bosco's feet, wishing to receive his blessing as an act of humility and as a sign of that exquisite deference which so distinguishes him, ably circumventing any objection with a cunning strategy."

He wrote about the meeting and this is the way he described Don Bosco's exit from the church: "It was a pitiful and deeply moving scene. Don Bosco was obliged to cross the main aisle of the crowded church. He was worried at the prospect of having to reach the door through that vast throng, which was anxious to get a look at him. It was then that the venerable archbishop took his arm, and assisted by other people as well, Don Bosco began the arduous march which I believe lasted about an hour and

[17] *Il Secolo*, pp.13–14; *Lombardia*, p.13; *La Riforma*, p.17.

[18] Issues of September 12th and 13th.

was filled by testimonials of devotion and veneration for the two old men, who were holding each other close in a fraternal embrace."

Among those who considered themselves fortunate to have helped the archbishop make a path for Don Bosco was the famous historian Caesar Cantu' who had been proud to have received his diploma as a Salesian Cooperator in 1878 from the Saint himself.[19]

Although the unfortunate climate of the times did not allow civil and political authorities to follow popular sentiment by participating in any way in such solemn manifestations, it was nevertheless common knowledge that they were gratified by the enthusiasm of the crowd, which was so seldom seen around the person of a priest. Don Bosco's habitual way of dealing with the government authority had always been fully appreciated in higher circles, and this sometimes gave rise to suspicion and malignant speculation in those who were not fully acquainted with his impeccable ecclesiastical ethics. We have already seen on so many occasions the characteristic features that similar relations always had and so it is not necessary for us to return to the subject; however, we will add one more instance. The pupils of the school run by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians were having their awards ceremony in September at Nichelino, near Turin. The foreign minister, Count de Robilant, also happened to be present. Father John Baptist Tamietti went up to greet him on behalf of Don Bosco. "Oh! Don Bosco!" the minister of state exclaimed with pleasure. "Please thank him gratefully for me and tell him that I would be happy if he were to avail himself of my services, because I am entirely at his disposal. Please tell him, please do tell him for certain."

At the end of the festivities he said once again, "Please remember, tell Don Bosco that I want to help him."

The Saint did not lose any time in thanking the Archbishop of Milan for the exceptional kindness with which he had been treated. The bishop replied on September 25th with a calling card on which he had written "Much fervent thanks to the venerated and beloved Don Bosco for his autographed letter and the book which followed it. Your visit to Milan is remembered by all with kind gratitude, especially by the undersigned who hopes to extend his hospitality to you again on other occasions. Pray, please pray for the archbishop of Milan."

Don Bosco was still at Valsalice when on September 21st, a telegram from the Parisian journal *La Croix* arrived at the Oratory addressed to the "Superior of the Salesian Congregation," in which the editor-in-chief wrote "Fervently

[19] See Vol. XIII, p. 476.

share grief over the tragedy. Please telegraph news about Don Bosco." This caused much astonishment but then it was quickly realized that in France someone had said Don Bosco had died. Don Bosco replied in person, "I am well. I cannot explain your anxiety. Nevertheless, I am grateful for your attention." He was in fact so well that immediately afterward he received the count and countess Donato and kept them talking at length, because they had come to say good bye before leaving for Constantinople where the count was to direct the embassy in the name of the King of Italy, before the Turkish sovereign.

Despite this, a few Italian newspapers as well published word of the Saint's serious illness. Alarmed by the news, Father James Margotti rushed to Valsalice to find out himself what was happening. He found him seated at his desk, looking well and with his customary good humor. When asked how his health was, he replied that, apart from his age and the trouble he was having with his legs, he had no other disturbance, for which he blessed Divine Providence. Then there was a long conversation about Patagonia. When Margotti asked him about the gold mines which had recently been discovered there, Don Bosco cut him short saying that by order of the Pope, he had sent the Salesians there to win souls for Jesus Christ and not to go hunting for gold or silver mines. In its issue of the 24th, *L'Unità cattolica* discredited all the false rumors about Don Bosco's health.

Don Bosco returned to the Oratory on the evening of the 27th; but he did not remain there long because on the 29th he went to San Benigno where the novices were on retreat in preparation for taking their vows. He said the community Mass on October 3rd, the feast of the Holy Rosary, but being exceedingly tired, he administered communion only to those serving Mass at the altar. Later on he received the profession of fifty-three novices, and at the end of the liturgy, he addressed them all. An armchair was placed in the middle of the chapel for him so that he should not overtire himself. The clerics gathered around him. The records of that house contain a faithful summary of his talk, which we ourselves heard. First of all, the Saint voiced the delight he felt at that moment, saying that he could not have experienced any greater delight on earth. Then he appealed to them to practice charity, charity toward their superiors, by obeying them always and in such a way as not to cause them to groan and sigh.

"It is a sacrilege," he exclaimed, "that anyone should take a vow of obedience and then behave as some do, by only obeying when it pleases them". He urged them to practice charity toward the members of the Society who should never criticize each other, not even in things which pertain to our publications. He voiced his own disapproval of such critics, stressing the

word with forceful indignation. He insisted on this very much, and repeated several times that one should either speak well of one's neighbor or else be silent. In this he showed an earnest desire to be heard and obeyed, and added to his words such an expression of grief that he began to weep. His trembling weak voice suddenly grew strong and stern, as if he were about to curse those hellish tongues which never blab except to criticize.

At a given moment he went on, "If Don Bosco has been unhappy... it was because of this lack of charity among the Salesians." A sudden wave of emotion came over him as he passed from his first to the second sentence, his eyes were filled with tears, and he resumed speaking with a repressed sob. Then he changed the subject, assuring them all for their comfort that the Salesian Society was in excellent shape financially and added that it would spread out most amazingly. The Salesians would want for nothing, provided they remained faithful to educating poor youth, since this was the mission entrusted to them by Our Lady. "If all of you were qualified to act as directors," he said, "I would already know where to send you, from the first to the last of you." Lastly, he appealed to our prayers for him, repeating several times that as long as there was breath of life in him, he would continue praying and sacrificing himself for his beloved sons.

While Don Bosco was thus receiving the vows of these new young hopefuls of his religious family and endeavored to forge the soul of an apostle in them, other apostles were meeting the same day in Turin to "combat and avert the perils latent in the vigorous resurrection of the intransigent clericalism and Jesuitical spirit, and now about to be brought forth to the detriment of the country." This was proclaimed by a Liberal parliamentary deputy.[20] To the person who informed him of this political rally, Don Bosco replied that that rally was an attempt by the Freemasons to publicly advertise the godless association and try to accustom the population to consider it as a meritorious and respectable association.

What upset the Free Masons most of all was the way in which private schools were then flourishing. In a pamphlet which was handed out to everyone who had attended the political rally, Turin was described as a town in which the newly constituted clerical movement was revealing extreme ability in its strategy, especially through instruction. Don Bosco was pointed out as the life and soul behind all this successful undertaking. "The life and soul of this vast conspiracy," it said,[21] "is the inspired

[20] *L'Unità Cattolica,* October 2, 1886.

[21] The pamphlet, which consisted of ten pages, did not indicate where it had been printed, but was entitled: *Quid agendum? (A warning by the Liberal Party).*

saint of Valdocco, Don Bosco, a singularly intelligent and daring man, a Jesuit like Ignatius of Loyola, a cunning diplomat, humble in his personal greatness, ready for anything, extraordinarily active, capable of everything: capable of setting up schools all over the world in the twinkling of an eye, of founding industrial plants, building churches, and writing sugar-sweet little books. Don Bosco is a force which is perhaps acting with the assistance of others, with the support of a society which has greater hopes centered on him than even on the Black Pope.[22] He is a monarch who reigns and rules without pomp or circumstance, under a cloak of sordid humility, and cunning compunction, though with a soul within which outbursts of hatred rule against everything which is light, truth, and progress. Don Bosco is the personification of this new Turin clericalism, just as he is its animating spirit, its strength, and its brain."

Lo and behold, a distorted caricature of Don Bosco as glimpsed through the anti-clerical lens of the day! Yet to us at the present time, this intentional distortion conceals an indirect testimony to the effective and God-sent influence of Don Bosco's defensive action in Italy. The enemies of the Church were aware of him and trembled but since he always acted well within the law, they could not do anything against him. Don Bosco's deference to national institutions was at times misunderstood by well-meaning men; but he knew to what extent his conscience permitted him to go as a Catholic, and he never strayed one inch from the path of righteousness.

Someone felt that he displayed too fervent an allegiance to the house of Savoy, as if he had forgotten the wrongs which the Savoy monarchs had perpetrated against the Church. There were quite a few who felt that way in Milan; but Don Bosco set his gaze higher and farther afield. On November 29, 1881, Bismarck had uttered the following words in the Reichstag: "What guarantee would you take on yourselves for the future of Italy, especially if God were not to preserve the present dynasty which now has but few scions?" Now when these words were read out to Don Bosco from the issue of October 12, 1886, in which *L'Unità cattolica* had quoted them, he said, "I have been repeating the same thing for years and years, whenever I talked about the Italian situation." Amid all the inter-party strife, Don Bosco looked to the historic monarchy as the focal point of law and order and the guarantee of a better future for Italy. History confirms the accuracy of his viewpoint.[23]

22 The liberals called the Jesuits' Father General the *Black Pope*.

23 In his diary of 1880, published in *La Nuova antologia* in 1936, Deputy Alexander Guiccioli made the following entry for August 22: "The dynasty of Savoy is the one good thing still left to us; and that is precisely what they (the rebels) are attacking" (June 16, 1936), p. 427.

Chapter 8

THE MISSIONARY EXPEDITION OF 1886 / A LOOK AT THE HOUSES AND MISSIONS OF SOUTH AFRICA

The Salesian houses and missions in South America faced serious financial problems and there was no solution to be found for them. For this reason Bishop John Cagliero made appeals to Turin insistently, listing his requirements and begging for assistance. In a council meeting held on September 18, 1885, Don Bosco had said, "I am thinking about a circular letter so as to help the missions, but it is not yet fully formulated in my mind. I still need to pray some more, then I will talk about it."

This circular letter, which was drafted following along the guidelines, set by the Saint and which he himself edited, was ready in October 1886. It presented a picture of the current state of the missions, the plans for the future and the urgent needs of the present. Then it announced an imminent missionary expedition. In conclusion, it implored the charitable assistance of all Cooperators so as to support the houses already founded, allow new ventures to be undertaken, as well as raise the substantial but indispensable money required to carry out the new project of an expedition of more evangelical laborers.

This appeal was not only addressed to the members of the Pious Union, but was translated into French, Spanish, and German and sent all over Europe to princes and ministers of state, as well as to editors of newspapers, no matter what their political affiliations might have been. A copy was even sent to the Emperor of China and the Shah of Persia. No less than one hundred thousand addresses had to be written, and many of the Oratory boys helped in this, as well as a number of clerics who had been sent from San Benigno and a dozen Sisters who had come from Nizza Monferrato. Don Bosco was not only trying to raise money, but also to make his undertakings known throughout the whole world. He said so himself, "I am not only looking for an immediate advantage, here and now but I'm looking for future advantages. Those who may not do anything for us here and now will recall our plea and later will do some-

thing about it. That means that even when years will have gone by, we shall still receive legacies, inheritances, and offerings because of these circulars letters."

The press provided great publicity for the circular letter by reproducing it in its entirety or printing a summary of it with comments. However, even in this instance, the attitude of some Italian liberals was revealed to be narrow-minded and as restricted as ever in their spiteful and cheap anti-clericalism. Those men were so steeped in hostility against anything remotely connected with Christianity that whenever they discussed it, they would lose their heads and their common sense. The hatred against the Church, which they were brooding in their hearts, did not permit them to appreciate even those solid advantages that these missionaries were gaining for their mother country, while they were unreservedly appreciated by lay governments. Yet, despite all this, one might well quote in reference to their publications what a Catholic newspaper of Genoa wrote in reference to a venomous long-winded attack published in Crispi's paper *La Riforma* in Rome; namely, that the knowledge of similar writings was "the best tool to spur on good people to give more and better assistance to the venerated founder of the Salesian Congregation."[1]

Donations flowed in generous proportion and number. Don Bosco himself gave us an eminent proof of it. In a council meeting taking place as early as November 2, during a discussion as to what would be the best way to send money to those American houses that were imploring aid, he said, "Now we have enormous amounts of money for our expenses. We have sent out this circular letter on behalf of the missions. Divine Providence does not fail us. So let us get a firm foothold. In order to settle the debts of our houses in America we should do this - Father Louis Lasagna should convey the order to establish American Council, made up of Directors and Provincials. This Council should study how to settle the past with its deficit; it should also draw some formal procedures, with which no Director would be allowed to arbitrarily contract any new debts. Father Lasagna should work out some economical plans before he leaves. At this time Divine Providence is providing both for us and for America. Father Joseph Fagnano should deal only with *in spiritualibus* [spiritual

[1] *L'Eco d'Italia*, October 31, 1886. As a document of Don Bosco's times, we thought best to resurrect this writing (see Appendix, doc. 45). It was also reproduced in *La Gazzetta di Catania,* which used it in its war against the Salesians. But in Sicily, *Le Letture Domenicali* of Palermo (November 28) not only published the "magnificent circular letter" but opened a subscription on behalf of the Salesian missions. An insolent news item entitled "The hunt for money" was also published in France by *La Semaine anticlericale* at Nevers (November. 11).

matters], while an Economer would administer the temporal affairs of the mission. They need not be afraid of debts in America. They should be shouldered by the superior council, but every effort should be made to put things right in order."

The "thank you" notes lithographed on an original written by Don Bosco himself were sent to ordinary donors; but in certain cases the Servant of God would write a "thank you" note himself, independently of whether the donation was modest or substantial, as it can be seen from two letters of which we have copies. The first of these letters is addressed to Canon Blaise Rumiano of Susa, a former fellow student of Don Bosco at the Convitto Ecclesiastico.

Turin, November 30, 1886

My Dear Canon:

I want to write to you myself to assure you that I was delighted both by your letter and by your donation. You may not have acquired merit for being a nuisance, but you certainly have the merit for being a donor, as you really are. Why do you not come and see this poor old friend of yours any more? Please give my thanks to our mutual friend, Canon Bermond. My regards *in Domino* [in the Lord] to your sister, if God has not yet summoned her already to the place Mary has held in reserve for her in paradise.

God bless us and please believe me always in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

One Cooperator who never turned a deaf ear to any appeal from Don Bosco was the very charitable Count Eugene de Maistre, who on this occasion put his hand generously into his pocket and received the following reply:

(undated)

My Dear Count Eugene de Maistre,

I did have a letter ready for you, assuring you that we would be saying special prayers for you and your whole family at the Oratory during this period. I was halfway done with it when Mr. Vergan came in to give me your generous offering of 2,000 francs.

Blessed be God forever, and my eternal thanks to you, dear Count Eugene. I am fully confident that Mary Help of Christians

will reward your charity generously. I pray to heaven that your country estate will yield abundant crops, and that your whole family may enjoy good health, and the consolation of seeing them progress from one virtue to another until you are able to see them all gather around you in heaven. We will show our gratitude to you the best way we can. Therefore, on the last three days of the year, our orphans will say prayers and offer up Communions for the following intentions: on December 29 for Papa Count de Maistre; on the 30th for the countess, your mother; on the 31st for the repose of the soul of the countess, your deceased wife.

Please give my respectful regards to your whole family and please be so gracious as to pray for me and mine (240,000 orphans) who all express sincerest gratitude to you while I, on behalf of all the Salesians, am deeply honored to remain as always,

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

A large and a small missionary expedition set out in 1886. In the previous volume we said that in 1885 Father Michael Borghino had reached Italy from Brazil, and Father Louis Calcagno and Father Peter Rota from Uruguay. Now, without waiting for a larger group to be formed, the three of them sailed for America in April, along with three clerics: Fia, Giudici, and Zanchetta, all names which were to become famous during the ensuing years. They were then only clerics, but they had reached both the vigor of their age and strength, since they were coming from the ranks of the Sons of Mary. They arrived at Barcelona where everything seemed to promise that they would once again see Don Bosco, but all they saw were the preparations the Confreres and the Cooperators were making to welcome him within the next two days.

Of the three priests whose memory is ever in benediction among us, Father Joseph Lazzero repeated a statement he had made at the time of their arrival in Italy, also at the time of their departure.[2] "Both Father Michael Borghino and the other two guests deserve a certificate of good conduct for the time they have spent here with us, and as I already said on another occasion, they really did reveal an excellent spirit and attachment to Don Bosco and our society. Let us hope that our Lord will always keep them so, and that being in the full flower of their life, they will have time to accomplish much good."

[2] Letter to Bishop Cagliero, March 28, 1886.

When the time drew near for the larger missionary expedition, Don Bosco published a circular letter and addressed it to the Turin Cooperators and those of the neighboring area as a supplement to the *[Salesian] Bulletin* of November. Four thousand copies were printed, to invite them all to attend the farewell ceremony. In a previous similar letter written in French, he had extended the same invitation, together with his October appeal, however this was sent only to people who were known friends of the Congregation.[3]

Twenty-six Salesians and six Daughters of Mary Help of Christians were to cross the Atlantic, escorted by Father Lasagna, who went to Rome in the early part of November and who had received a promise of protection and a subsidy of one thousand five hundred lire from the minister for Foreign Affairs, Count de Robilant. He had become such a friend with him that the Count himself assured him that he was not a Free Mason, as people were saying. Father Lasagna was received by the Holy Father in a private audience. The Pope immediately asked for news about Don Bosco's health, and asked a thousand different questions about the missions. When he was told about the needs of Brazil, and how Don Bosco had prepared an army of missionaries, inspired solely by the charity of Jesus Christ, the Pope exclaimed, "Let this be known to the honor of Turin and the glory of the Salesian Congregation. This has filled my heart with great joy and hope. I expect great things both for the Church and for Society from the Salesian Congregation."

Father Lasagna then went to Casale to greet his brother at the seminary, as well as other relatives and friends. He ran a very close risk of having to renounce his holy missionary activity forever, for a number of eminent priests and laymen full of admiration for his fine qualities had worked out a plan by which they would apply to the Holy See to have him as their bishop, since their own diocese was without a bishop due to the recent death of Bishop Ferré. From a mere plan they jumped into action. Two canons presented a petition to Don Bosco and begged him to pass it on to the Holy Father himself, with his word of recommendation. "This will add yet another well deserved claim to the many claims

[3] See Appendix, doc. 46, A–B. The October circular and the news about the missionary expedition suggested to certain swindlers the idea of playing a trick on the good faith of their neighbors. The tool they used was *La Staffetta*, a weekly news bulletin of Naples. *La Sicilia cattolica* of Palermo fell into the trap. Don Bosco and Fr. Michael Rua behaved with what might have seemed excessive prudence, if the conduct of saints had not been always guided by supernatural charity. Those who wish to learn more of this audacious scam may read the documents, which speak for themselves. See Appendix, doc. 47 (A, B, C, D, E, F).

which our beloved Don Bosco already has on the benevolence and gratitude of the diocese of Casale," one of the sponsors of the plan wrote to him.[4] Don Bosco handed the petition over to Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda and asked him to do whatever he thought was best in the Lord. The cardinal asked him how he felt about it. Don Bosco replied that he did not want to influence the issue in any way and was quite indifferent about it. The petition was forwarded to the Pope but it arrived too late, for Leo XIII had already assigned someone else to the See. Divine Providence had disposed that Father Louis Lasagna was to become bishop, but not cease his work as a missionary.

When this design of Divine Providence came true in 1893, another unspoken prediction made implicitly by Don Bosco to Father Louis Lasagna the day of his farewell had come true. It was the hour before the farewell ceremony on December 2 that Father Lasagna had his last conversation with the beloved Father and asked him for some medals that Don Bosco had blessed, so that he might give them as presents to the Salesians' friends. After they had been given to him, he took his leave. He had barely gone downstairs on his way to church to preach when the cleric Angelo Festa came running after, to hand him a small box. "Don Bosco sends you this box," he said. "He says that the rest are for the others, but this one is for you, and you alone."

From the sound, it looked as though the box contained medals. Father Lasagna put it into his pocket, ran to the church, and did not give it another thought. Well into the ocean voyage he remembered it, he opened it, and found inside a gold filigree chain lying on some cotton. He was surprised at the sight, and without understanding what he saw, he put the lid back on the little box and put it away. When he arrived at his destination, he put it away in his desk and did not take it out again until the day a telegram brought the sad news of Don Bosco's death. In the general grief, which pervaded the house, everyone began looking for things, which would remind them of their deceased Father: letters, medals, and similar souvenirs.

During this search Father Lasagna's secretary came across the little box. He took out the chain; he lifted the cotton as lo and behold, he found a little note in which a benefactor from Chiavari was asking that the chain be sent to Don Bosco for the second Salesian missionary bishop of South America.

"This means that I am to give it to the second Salesian bishop on

[4] Canon Romognoli and Fr. Louis Calcagno, Casale, November 26, 1886.

behalf of Don Bosco," Father Louis Lasagna thought. He did not imagine at that time that five years later he himself would be that bishop.[5]

On the morning of December 2nd, Don Bosco received the religious professions for the last time, in his private chapel. The professed were a group of young clerics who had been unable to make their vows with their companions at San Benigno in October, either because they had not reached the required age or had not then completed their one year of novitiate. The Saint's exhortation dealt with the theme of obedience.

During the evening farewell ceremony in the church of Mary Help of Christians, neither the inspiring talk by Father Lasagna, nor the haunting beauty of the sacred ceremony, or even the inspired words of Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda could draw the attention of the faithful off Don Bosco. The venerable old man sat humble and recollected between Bishop Emilian Manacorda, the bishop of Fossano and Bishop Leto, titular bishop of Samaria. Everyone felt instinctively that his holy life was heading towards its sunset. When he had embraced the last of the departing missionaries as they walked down the central nave toward the exit, he slowly dragged himself, supported by the two prelates, toward the sacristy where the cardinal had been so kind as to wait for him, and now went toward him with a great display of affectionate cordiality.

One of the advantages drawn from having these departures set up with so much solemnity was that the press used them to exalt, spread out, and advertise far and wide the missionary idea. Even in towns like Turin, which heard periodical appeals about the missions during the course of the year, the missionary ideal was then far from enjoying the fame and the welcoming acceptance which goes with it everywhere today. That was why the Catholic newspapers and periodicals gave detailed reports of what took place in Turin on that occasion in both large and small Italian towns. *L'Osservatore Cattolico* of Milan carried an announcement on the 2nd, which began as follows: "Today the Salesian Congregation has written the most beautiful page of its history." After which, the correspondent acknowledged that: "When I saw that venerable priest today, with his gentle, modest countenance, surrounded by filial veneration on the part of the most high-ranking ecclesiastical authorities, I felt my heart filled with tenderness, and my soul drawn to him."

In the *L'Unità cattolica* on December 4th, an anonymous author

[5] *L'Italia reale* of Turin on April 3, 1893, reported this anecdote in the words Bp. Lasagna used in a previous publication.

described by the newspaper as "a fine and religious soul" and by the *Bulletin* of January 1887 as "a very eminent personality," ended his extensive report by intoning an anthem of love and faith in honor of Don Bosco and his sons.

"Thank you, venerable Don Bosco, thank you," the article read, "for having invited me to such a tender and dear ceremony." "In the immense church of Valdocco, I beheld the full beauty of the Christian faith which unites us all as brothers. Your Oratory gave the picture of a *Propaganda Fide*. Never did your eight hundred boys ever seem so dear to me or so pious as they did on Thursday evening. I watched them kneeling in prayer for their missionary brothers perhaps never to be seen again. Never did your Sisters of Mary Help of Christians seem more venerable than Thursday evening when they prayed and assisted at the pious ceremony, from many platforms. Never, I might add, did more poetic or solemn notes so delight me as the melody of the vast choir of your singers! Oh! What an exquisitely musical soul Bishop John Cagliero has! May you uplift the minds and hearts of the savages of Patagonia with your religious harmonies to the light of the supernatural, as you do uplift the hearts and minds of your compatriots. May the pupils of your South American schools, baptized in the faith of Christ, multiply rapidly, and form an endless choir to praise and bless the Lord."

The travelers went to Marseilles because they were to board their ship at Marseilles. Father Joseph Lazzero and Father Guido Barberis accompanied them. From that port, one of the twenty-six Salesians, Father Gastaldi, sent Don Bosco a description of their journey, and voiced his own feelings and those of the others as follows:[6] "It is a great joy and a true comfort for me to be able to pen these lines to you, for in some measure they make up for the distance which already separates us from you, most beloved Father. You could never imagine how it cost us, how painful it was for us to say good-bye and leave you. Only the thought that you are praying for us constantly and that you are blessing us and the reason for which we are leaving you make less hard this saying good-bye to you. Beloved Father, we already felt that we loved you, but now we feel that we love you even more than ever, especially when I think back on those happy days when, thanks to your goodness, I was able to see you and listen to your paternal words. Oh! May our Lord once again allow us to enjoy such good fortune!"

[6] Marseilles, December 7, 1888.

They went on a pilgrimage to Notre Dame de la Garde, and after they said Mass and had their devotions, a pilgrim went up to them and asked whether they were by chance Don Bosco's missionaries. When they said that they were indeed, the unknown man gave one of their number a handsome donation. Then he handed the guardian of the sanctuary some money for the inconvenience caused. Later they discovered he was a member of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

They all celebrated the feast of the Immaculate Conception in the novitiate of Saint Marguerite, and Father Joseph Lazzero sent Don Bosco the following report which is well worth holding on to:[7] "It was a delightful family feast, a reunion, a blending or, if I express myself in a French fashion, a brotherly communion of French and Italian spirits, all seeking to express oneness of spirit, oneness of disposition, that of their common Father, Don Bosco. References dealing with the departure of missionaries were read out, the name of Don Bosco being inserted into them, so that others might come to know with what excellent principles the good new novices were trained."

Father Lasagna found time to call on Count and Countess Colle and wrote to his beloved Father on the 12th in the very room which his hosts always called "Don Bosco's room", "Oh! How happy these two creatures are that they know Don Bosco, and that they have his respect and his affection. How delighted they are to entrust their fortune to his hands, so that he may invest it for the greater glory of God and well being of souls. They admit that they are the blessed tools of Divine Providence in the hands of Don Bosco."

Further on he wrote, "Now what should I say to you on the eve of our departure, most venerated Father? Tomorrow night, or at the latest the day after tomorrow, Tuesday, we shall already be aboard the *Tibet*, which will take us far away from you. Oh! how aware our heart is of this, and how sad it makes us at times! But we are consoled by the thought that your blessing and prayers accompany us, and that everywhere your fatherly affection surrounds us. We have no other aspiration nor ambition other than to prove ourselves worthy sons of so good and holy a Father! Oh! If our Lord helps us to fulfill our intentions, you will see, most venerated Father, that we shall procure nothing but joy, great joy for you, no matter what effort and sacrifice it may entail!"

They set out to sea the evening of the 14th, and the voyage was

[7] Letter to Don Bosco, Marseilles, December 12, 1886.

dramatically stormy. "My poor companion missionaries!" Father Lasagna wrote in a letter to Don Bosco,[8] "They will never forget all that they went through those two fearful days of December 19th and 20th of this year."[9] In reference to the six Sisters, he stated, "Really, I would never have believed that I would find such assurance, such courage, in these young women, these poor Sisters. Praised be God and also thanks to you, dear Father, for having been able to instill so excellent a spirit in your children."

They arrived in the harbor of Montevideo safe and sound on January 6th, but their painful adventures were not yet over. There was cholera in the city, and cholera was causing a disaster in Buenos Aires.[10] Cholera had also visited Italy and this had caused problems and delayed their departure. It was worse still when they arrived. Although there had been no cases of cholera on board, there was no way of obtaining permission to land. They had to turn sail and continue the voyage to Flores Island and stay there in quarantine. Fortunately this quarantine lasted only five days, though it cost them a lot. Yet, on the 14th they were all at Villa Colón, where the confreres gave them a very warm welcome.

If it had been felt in Turin that the number of departing missionaries was an impressive one, they realized when they arrived that it signified very little in the face of the needs. At least double that number was required only to staff adequately the three houses in Uruguay at Villa Colón, Las Piedras, and Paysandu'. Yet some of the new arrivals had to be shared with the Argentinean provinces where work was increasing, rendering a more intensified activity necessary.

When he went back home to Italy, Father Lasagna had brought Don Bosco a letter from the bishop of Montevideo in which the bishop requested that a technical school be established at Las Piedras, while at the same time he recommended his sorely tried diocese to Don Bosco's prayers. Don Bosco told Father Lasagna to reply as follows:

1. He thanks him for his kindness to the Salesians and the Sisters in Uruguay;
2. He promises prayers for him in his tribulations and for all the troubles of his much persecuted diocese;

[8] Aboard the Tibet, December 23, 1886.

[9] The graphic description of the infernal storm may be read in the *Bollettino salesiano*, March 1887.

[10] Four Salesians, two from La Boca, Fr. Bourlot, the Director and pastor, and the coadjutor Fabrizi, and two from San Nicolas', Fr. Galbusera and Fr. O'Grady, were stricken by the plague, but Fr. James Costamagna wrote Don Bosco on November 24th, "They overcame the violence of the fever, thanks to Don Bosco's medal."

3. He says that a home for artisans at Las Piedras was impossible;
4. He promises one, instead, for Mondevideo, hoping that permission be obtained from him and Mr. Jackson, to whom he had already written;
5. Fr. Louis Lasagna would have returned with some good companions to carry out this project of Don Bosco which was also very dear to the hearts of Jesus and Mary;
6. He adds that he foresaw that this institute would do immense good for the souls and the religion throughout the Republic of Uruguay and perhaps even throughout all of South America, and that was why he was counting on the Bishop's zeal and on the zeal of the faithful.

Fr. Louis Lasagna relied on these notes, which in their original were even more laconic to draft a reply letter, of which we have a copy.[11]

Father Lasagna's province included also the two houses in Brazil where the future held great promise, even though the present was very hard. The house at Nicteroy was fighting against debts and Protestants. Yet its sphere of action was nevertheless growing. The house at São Paulo, which had only recently been opened, had too small a staff. On all sides, bishops were continuously calling on the Salesians to work in their dioceses.[12] Foreseeing how the Congregation would have made headway among the civilized peoples and the tribes of that immense state, Don Bosco had written to Father Michael Borghino and his three assistants, "I want you to be the light. When you go to Brazil and meet your confreres, tell them you have come to bring light, not because there is any darkness there, but inasmuch as you add light to light, so that its rays may shine forth among the natives and the little negroes." He also entrusted him with the delivery of a letter he had written to Princess Isabella d'Orleans-Braganza, daughter of the last Emperor, Peter II, and consort of Count d'Eu.[13]

Turin, March 1886

Your Imperial Highness,

Divine Providence has so disposed that two Salesian houses be founded in the Empire of Brazil, one at Nicteroy and the other in São Paulo, both of them destined to provide a home for the poorest and most abandoned orphans.

[11] See Appendix, doc. 48, A–B. The letter to Mr. Jackson, of which we have a copy, must also have been signed only by Don Bosco. (See Appendix, doc. 49.)

[12] Letter from Fr. Anthony Ricciardi to Don Bosco, Almagro (Buenos Aires), February 1888

[13] The original is in the parish, in the possession of Prince Peter d'Orleans-Braganza, son of the princess to whom the letter was written.

A few of my religious confreres, who have temporarily come back to Italy, have told me about the kindness and charity of Your Imperial Highness, and therefore I am recommending all of these Salesians to you and His Majesty the Emperor, for all that they desire is to win souls for heaven and decrease the number of juvenile delinquents. They pray fervently and tell their pupils to pray too, for the health and prosperity of your whole family and for your august father, His Imperial Majesty.

May Mary Most Holy protect this remarkable dynasty, for which our orphans (and there are now over two hundred thousand of them) offer up special prayers to God.

I consider it my bounded duty to invoke the blessings of heaven upon all your Brazilian subjects during my Holy Mass and am greatly honored to remain with profound gratitude and humility.

Your most obedient servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Don Bosco's recommendation did not remain a dead letter. On November 15th, the Emperor and Empress, together with the secretary of agriculture and some other people, went to inspect the house of São Paulo from top to bottom, asking the director many details about the boys and the method of education being used with them. The Emperor said he was very fond of the institute and that he knew both Don Bosco and his Congregation. One of the boys recited a very charming complimentary address and offered their Majesties a volume of meteorological data especially prepared by the Colón Observatory with a picture of the boys of that school. A hymn was then sung which, though simple, had a delightful effect. The director offered their Majesties diplomas as Salesian Cooperators, which they were pleased to accept. When they left the house, they gave him a substantial sum of money and left behind them an unmistakable conviction that they were very well disposed toward the institute.

In November of the following year, the Emperor happened to be passing by Cannes and so Father Louis Cartier, the director of the House of Nice, called on him to pay Don Bosco's respects. He was received with great affability. The Emperor shook his hand and immediately asked for news about Don Bosco, "How is Don Bosco? Is he here in Nice? He is a great man...a saint...I am very fond of him...He does so much good...I like his undertakings very much, especially the house at São Paulo where he is accomplishing so much good..." Father Louis Cartier told him that Don

Bosco was sorry that he could not be present to personally recommend his sons in Brazil and in Nice, and also voiced regret that the Emperor, since he was leaving Cannes so soon, could not visit the house in Nice. The Empress too, was very gracious, and spoke of her great veneration for Don Bosco and her admiration for his houses. She recommended in particular that he was to ask Don Bosco to pray for her and the Emperor. The following day, Father Cartier sent his prefect, Father Caesar Fasani, to Cannes with a note of thanks and some gifts for the Emperor. These consisted of two copies of D'Espiney's *Life of Don Bosco*, three big photographs of the Saint and a copy of Father Francis Cerruti's booklet, *Don Bosco's Views on Education*. The Emperor of Brazil gave a good deal of attention to Italian literature, and had a great preference for the writings of Manzoni, with whom he was well acquainted. He was delighted with the gifts and as he was gazing at Don Bosco's picture, he said, "I am not satisfied with seeing only his likeness; I want to see him in person... Yes, I will call on him." He said this on November 26th, but two months later Don Bosco was at the gates of eternity.

Father Louis Lasagna had written Father Michael Rua on January 8th about the inevitable expansion program, which, in spite of everything, was carried out in Brazil, Uruguay, and the Argentinean and Patagonian missions.

"What do you want?" he wrote, "We are led by the events, or I should say, by Divine Providence which beckons us, and we have to follow." It was this same Divine Providence that had allowed men such as Bishop Cagliero, Bishop Joseph Fagnano, Bishop Lasagna and many other alert minds, to become ready for great initiatives, and grow up by being around Don Bosco. They were the stuff of which pioneers are made, neither timid nor narrow-minded, but courageously enterprising and broad minded.

We have a letter of Bishop Cagliero, which is a treasure house of information on Argentina. It describes graphically the local situation during the summer months, i.e. from December to March. Bishop Cagliero left Patagonia on January 5th and remained absent from his place of residence until May 8th. On February 22nd he was in San Nicolas' and from there he wrote to Don Bosco:

> San Nicolas', February 22, 1886
>
> Most Reverend and loving Father in Jesus Christ,
>
> It is time that I should write to you myself to give you a detailed account of all that is happening in our houses where I have been staying to preach retreats.

The retreats were held in Patagones, Buenos Aires, Colón and San Nicolas'. In these three places the retreats for the Sisters took place at the same time as those of the Salesians, and I was helped by three companions. The sentries changed, but it was always the selfsame corporal to lead, guide, and control the patrol.

This was by no means an easy task for me, but when I thought about what Don Bosco had to endure in similar circumstances and about the need to keep updated on everything and everyone, then I considered my task, difficult as it was, not of a great importance and so I easily carried it out.

I found in all our houses a strong, determined, and irrevocable will to be good, holy Salesians. In all our houses the lax were encouraged, the all-too impulsive restrained, the sluggards were shaken up. All sermons were geared towards the themes of Don Bosco, the Oratory and its early days. I say quite frankly that those happy recollections did everyone good, both the preachers and those preached to, for they gave everyone a clear vision of and were a definite guide for the Salesian spirit.

In my special talks and manifestations, I had occasion to speak very beneficially about the spirit of poverty and also about economy, which is so necessary if we are to pay our debts, from which none of our houses are free. Just the same, the preventive system became the principal theme wherever necessary, as well as the great motivating power of loving kindness in the education of our pupils.

Trust, brotherly love, father-son relationships between the superiors and their subordinates stand out all down the line, so that I had to make practically no changes, if any at all, in personnel.

There has been work done and there will be more accomplished in the area of vocations, but these are few because the soil is sterile. We have given the cassock to seven cleric novices, among them Felix Caprioglio, who is an excellent and veteran Salesian. Ten made triennial vows or perpetual vows. Almost all of them were born in America.

There were also 10 clothings and as many professions among the Sisters, almost all of them Italian born or children of Italians; namely, from among the people with whom we have most contact.

But I look forward to a very encouraging future at San Nicolas'. The many Cooperators who live there are already talking of entrusting to us their very many boys and girls not only to

educate them, but also to consecrate them to our Lord, if this is their vocation. These families are inspired by a prevailing early Christian spirit, and are very fond indeed of the Salesians. I called on nearly all of them at their wealthy isolated farms (chacras) [ranches] and have invited the more important ones among them to a modest reception we gave yesterday for the feast of Saint Francis de Sales and the meeting of Cooperators. Among them was Bishop Ceccarelli, who is always fond of the Salesians and a good friend of ours.

Father Joseph Solar and Father Giovannini were ordained priests in Colón, while Rinaldi, Patrick O'Grady, and Guido Zaninetti were ordained at San Nicolas'. Three took minor orders. Many others are now getting ready with their studies and their virtues to receive the same grace in the near future.

This, most venerated Father, is the news or activities *ad intra*. And now I pass to give you news and activities *ad extra*. The sinister storm clouds that darkened our horizon in Patagonia have disappeared. The Governor, General Winter, invited four of our Salesian priests to a family reception when one of his little daughters was baptized. Among the priests there was Father Joseph Fagnano, against whom he preferably had his most bilious attacks. Now their reconciliation is an accomplished fact, thanks to the intercession and grace of Mary Help of Christians, to whom I recommended particularly Patagonia and all its concerns as soon as I went ashore on the Rio Negro.

The missions that were closed for a year have now resumed their activity and Father Dominic Milanesio, who had been arrested by the troops, is now guided and assisted by the troops on his excursions through the Andes whenever he is in need of their help. I hope too that the government will help us by paying the chaplains something, for there are quite a few of us. Father Angelo Savio earns 54 escudos a month at Santa Cruz as land-surveyor; Father Joseph Mary Beauvoir also receives 64 escudos a month as military chaplain. I need that similar resources be given to some of us in Patagonia where we have big debts for the two churches that we had to build.

I found an intermediary to get through to the President when in Buenos Aires, but I am afraid that the political situation will put him out of office in a few months. If we have a new, more competent

president, it will be all the better for us. So we have to await events.

In Montevideo, the storm burst out and it is terrible. May God protect us. The government and its president have made themselves universally hated. All honest citizens and the best of the generals and officers in the army are united to get rid of them by means of cannon fire. Our school at Paysandu' is exposed to the risk of becoming the general headquarters for government troops because of its location and solid construction. But let us hope for the best. They, hopefully, will be dissuaded from taking this step by the protest of the Italian minister and by the war ships, which are ready in Montevideo's territorial waters. Meanwhile, the boys will not return until it is all over.[14]

So please pray, beloved Don Bosco, for these unfortunate countries which are always upset by revolution and arms, citizens fighting against one another. We are comforted in the midst of this terrible situation by the fact that we are foreigners, and even more that we are alien to this land of tribulation and of thorns. We are trusting in your prayers and those of our dear confreres and our Cooperators.

Yes, please pray, for just now we are in need of prayers. Your sons send you their regards. From Brazil to Tierra del Fuego, we are praying for your precious health. We know that you have confreres who love you all the way from the Alps to Cape Lilibeo. But they are in no way superior to these others who love you here with all the intensity of the two biggest oceans, the Atlantic and the Pacific, which are hardly to be compared with the Mediterranean and the Adriatic.

Please accept our warmest regards from everybody and bless us all in our Lord.

Our humble submission and my pastoral blessing to the revered council and all its more venerable subjects. Amen.

Your most affectionate son in Jesus Christ,
John, bishop of Magida

P.S. I received faculty to authorize mixed marriages *cum cautelis* [with caution] from Rome, as well as a letter from Cardinal Simeoni in reply to my first report to the Propaganda. It is very complimentary.

[14] The revolution broke out on March 28th, lasted only a few days and was a blood bath.

I am now writing a second report, which I will send to Father [Francis] Dalmazzo, and a copy to Turin.

I am drawing up a similar report at the same time for the Propagation of the Faith and the Holy Childhood Association.[15]

Because of the debts, which represented such a heavy burden to the Argentine province, Bishop John Cagliero had decided not to open any more houses for at least a year, but the providential circumstances made him change his mind. In 1885, the government of La Plata promised a fine piece of land to the Salesians on condition that they build a school there or the contract, which had still to be drawn up, would be null and void. The Salesians were very eager to go to La Plata, also because the population there was more than half Italian. How could they venture to start building with all the debts they had? So the matter was allowed to drop. But the Protestants soon took over, for they had been on the alert and had succeeded in obtaining the same facilities from the government. However they were soon forced to abandon the place, and we know not why, after they had built a church and two houses there. It was then that the pastor of the town, Canon Carranza, bought both houses and land, calling on the Salesians and offering all to them with urgent recommendations from the archbishop and other people in authority to back up his offer. After what had happened it was felt that they could not refuse. So a new house was established, which soon began to flourish and it flourishes to the present day.[16]

Bishop Cagliero wrote another report full of such details. It's rather long but it just suits the time and place and here it is:

Buenos Aires, April 10, 1886

Beloved Don Bosco, dear Father,

I am about to leave to return to my beloved Patagonia. I have spent two months holding retreats in our various houses. I had a good time for a month here in Buenos Aires. I needed this period of rest to pay calls and receive them, to establish new relationships and to try to raise money.

Thanks to the head chaplain of the army, I established contact with the Minister of War who appeared to be very well dis-

[15] The news that his secretary, Fr. Riccardi, sent Don Bosco on March 12th (see Appendix, doc. 51) helps to complete this account.

[16] In July, Fr. James Costamagna sent Fr. Michael Rua an interesting report on this house. (Appendix, doc. 52.)

posed toward our missions, for whatever we do leads to the well being of the soldiers stationed along the banks of the Rio Negro. Thanks to him I obtained gratis eight free passes from Buenos Aires to Patagones. This saved me some 500 escudos, and as we always say, this is worth more than a punch in the nose.

In the meantime, the monthly sum of 300 escudos, which our missions were paid by the government for the past two years, has been suspended, and we are carrying on the best way we can. I was able to raise one thousand escudos from stipends for Masses and from donations. This is not much considering the small value that money has in these parts.

When I visited our houses, I paved the way for some sort of Junior Union of Salesian Cooperators (not to be confused with the Organization of the Holy Childhood), and I hope it will yield several thousand escudos a year, but all without any publicity about it.

I have sent a written report on our missions for the year 1885 to the archbishop, so that he may pass it on to the Government as has been done previously. The Governor may or may not give us some assistance.

I have also called for help from several charitable associations, and they promised they would give me something. People say that when a wolf is hungry, it comes out of its den. That is what I did. I was driven by the debts we have with the bank for building the two churches you know about.

Now let me give you some news about our credits with almighty God, if he will grant us a little of his goodness and some of His infinite mercy.

Father Angelo Savio and Father Joseph Mary Beauvoir and a coadjutor (Fossati) are now settled on the banks of Rio Santa Cruz. It takes five days by sea to reach us. They are on excellent terms with the Governor, with whom I spoke before he departed for that territory. It is not unlikely that they will push even further ahead, going to reside at Cabo de las Virgines [Cape of the Virgins], where, as you may have read in the newspapers, it is said that one small river conveys not sand but gold sand (!!!) to the sea. While we are joking about this newfound California, the British are working seriously, and as much as they can in search of this new god (gold) who is not our God.

Father Dominic Milanesio, Father Bartholomew Panaro and a

catechist, together with a horse attendant, have been out on the missions since December, and from a letter I received I notice that they will leave the snowcapped Cordilleras by the end of April to come here to Patagones, where a report will be made of their explorations. The good Salesians have covered a trifling distance of 300 leagues only on their going to the mission place, overcoming very great dangers thanks to Divine Providence. Poor Fr. Milanesio was hit with sunstroke and got sick right in the middle of the desert, with bloodstained diarrhea. They were more than forty leagues away from human habitation and without food, for their supplies had run out. The muleteer or arriero or horse attendant they had with them rode everywhere to try to find some game at least. He finally found a cow bagual [wild] that was lost in the desert. He chased the cow, and the cow gave them food for eight days, as many as were needed for poor Fr. Milanesio to be able to continue his journey on horseback.

On the slopes of the Cordilleras, a horse suddenly bucked, as horses often do, and shook off its load, breaking the sacred altar stone. Under the faculties granted by the Holy See, he could have said Mass with the broken altar stone or even without it, but he preferred to ride right through the mountain range and enter Chile alone. It took him two days through the winding gorge of the mountains before he came to the first village from which one can see the Pacific. It is called Los Angeles. Here he was warmly welcomed by the Franciscan Fathers who also gave him financial assistance. They know Don Bosco and the Salesians by reputation, and are very anxious to see us settle in that area. On a second trip, or rather a second horseback ride through the Andes, he reached Chillian and Concepcion on the seashore. Here he was welcomed with indescribable rejoicing by Father Domingo Cruz, the Capitular Vicar, and his secretary, who showed him the house that was being built for us. The Salesians would be sent out from there into the immense region inhabited by the Araucanians, who are still without any priests and in dire need of spiritual assistance.

Dear Don Bosco, all our houses are drained of personnel and if we are to establish ourselves in Chile, as you, dear Father, so desire, as I do as well as others do desire, then get ready an adequate caravan of missionaries, and send them all to me in Patagonia. Here we have found a route, which takes us for a ride

of 1500 kilometers to the Cordilleras, and another, of 200 kilometers, which leads us along a path used by chamois straight into Chilean territory.

The harvest reaped by our brave missionaries at this mission consisted of 100 communions, some twenty-five or thirty weddings and about 800 baptisms; six hundred of them are Indians. Health-wise they are all well, despite their discomforts, fatigue, and the rough life, which they are forced to lead in this infinite solitude, inhabited only by wild animals and the Araucanian Indians who have crossed into the Argentinean territory.

When I reach Patagones, I will find out whether they are going to continue on their return journey or whether they are planning to stop half-way, in agreement with the cachiques Namuncura' and Sayuheque, to give instruction to these two tribes about our holy religion and baptize some 2500 Indians. We shall see whether the missionaries are able to do it in time, because the Minister for War told me that he would like to bring the Indians to Buenos Aires. The reason for this is that since they have not yet been trained to do agricultural work, and since they prefer a life of idleness to one of work, he is afraid of a rebellion. So the missionaries will fare as Divine Providence disposes.

As they have already written you, there are nine new Salesian priests who were ordained *extra tempora* [out of season]. Just as if they were cherries or apples, the various houses shared them, but they are still complaining that there are too few. But it will not always be like this, because when there is a factory and a manufacturer in the house, they will turn them out more often.

But you, dear Don Bosco, must send me at least some good material from San Benigno and the material must be of good quality and fit for long wear. A few days in advance of his feast day, Saint Joseph made us a present of a new house in the modern, beautiful city of La Plata. We did not want it and really could not have accepted it, but it was nevertheless dropped into our laps, because that was what the archbishop, the vicar forane of that city and a large crowd of Italians who live there without any spiritual assistance or religious instruction, all wanted. The site, the wooden house and a very pretty little chapel built of soft marble, which entirely came from Switzerland and already made, are being donated to us by the provincial government. We, who had

made up our minds not to open any houses at all in Argentina because we were aiming resolutely at Chile, are still sitting here, victims of our own upbringing, which prevents us from saying no when other people want us to say yes. But if Father Celestine Durando stands firm, we really will not open any more houses in this area, no, no, truly not! If only it were true. This is what I hope and this is my wish.

Everyone is in good health everywhere and full of the best of wills to work and become saints.[17]

Help us, dearest Father, with your holy prayers, and please accept from your most loving son the best of good wishes for your happiness and my blessing,

John, bishop of Magida

Just as the above letter was on its way to be mailed, the bishop was informed by telephone that Roca, the President of the Republic with whom he had sought to have an audience, was willing to receive him. Without wasting any time, the Vicar Apostolic called on the General in his palace that same evening, together with Father James Costamagna. His main reason for this visit was to thank him for the letter of recommendation he had given him the previous year for the Governor of Rio Negro. After he had been thanked, Roca, *ex abrupto* (with abrupt military curtness) put on the carpet the question of jurisdiction. "You are a bishop and you are not Argentinean," he said. "You cannot wield authority in this Republic. The Pope has no right to arbitrate here without permission from the government."

The bishop deftly warded off the attack once again, saying that he did not have ordinary jurisdiction in the Republic, and was only a missionary bishop, with the task of visiting the Salesian houses particularly in Patagonia. In all matters or questions having to deal with government issues, he would always refer to the authority of the archbishop of Buenos Aires.

[17] The following statistics given by Fr. James Costamagna to Fr. Michael Rua (April 12) form a commentary on these words: "The convent of Mary Help of Christians has 60 resident boarders and 100 day students as compared with our own school. We have 335 boys at San Carlos, of whom 250 are residents, and the others are day students or merely coming to school. At La Boca, there are 250 girls, 100 at St. Isidore, 100 at Moron; 150 boys at La Boca; 100 at Santa Caterina. All of them attend school. Then there are the oratories.... Oh! What an abundance! While we are high and dry...and full of debts! We also have to think about the house at La Plata (St. Joseph made Bp. Cagliero accept it). But there just isn't the personnel. *Quare conturbas me?*[Why do you bother me?] Pray to the Lord that we may steer our course properly...either working for God alone, or else that we may all die this day together. Kiss our dear Papa's hand for me."

This evasive reply was a satisfactory enough explanation to gratify the President. Then they began to talk about the progress of the missions, the schools, the two churches that had been built, and the recent explorations made by the Salesian missionaries, the number of converts, the thousand and more baptisms which had been administered since his return among the Indians, both the adults and the children. Most of all, they discussed the debts that had been made in building the two churches, the houses, and the schools in Patagonia. After he had thanked the President for the eight hundred escudos that had been given him through the mediation of the archbishop, the bishop asked him not to forget the missions, but to always help the missionaries. The president promised that he would. Then he wanted to know more of the Salesian Congregation and how it was organized vis a vis the law, and praised Don Bosco's wisdom.

Bishop Cagliero managed to complain about the severance of diplomatic relations between the Republic and the Holy See.

"There is no such thing as a severance," the president retorted, "It is purely a personal matter with Bishop Matera. It is my intention that these relations be re-established very soon. In fact, you may use what I am telling you. You can take note of this and naturally, not in an official manner, inform the Pope and his Secretary of State about it."

Bishop Matera, archbishop of Irenopolis, apostolic Delegate and Envoy Extraordinary to Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay, who had met with Bishop Cagliero at Montevideo in 1885, no longer enjoyed the confidence of the Argentine government, and so he had been obliged to leave the Republic without even advising the Holy See in advance. Hence the rupture with Rome. Now the situation seemed to be much simpler as the president had described it, so it was not going to be difficult to find some solution. That interview was the starting point for the resumption of diplomatic relations, since the bishop reported this to the procurator general, Father [Francis] Dalmazzo, asking him to inform the secretary of state, Cardinal Louis Jacobini, about it.

Bishop Cagliero had by now been able to win over to his side the leading men in the government, which proved very useful to him to consolidate his own authority in his See of Patagones after his lengthy absence. The Salesians, the Sisters, and their pupils were not the only ones waiting to welcome him on both sides of the Rio Negro. A large heterogeneous crowd filled the banks of the river, ladies and gentlemen, soldiers and sailors, Indians and gauchos, all awaiting him with great enthusiasm. The

leading authorities went aboard to pay their respects. Although the governor, who had been indisposed for several days, was anti-clerical in sentiment and personally hostile, he could not refrain from sending a superior officer immediately to represent him and say how happy he was he had arrived. All this made the Vicar Apostolic very happy, for he was sure that such a change of heart in the heart of his Vicariate would have smoothed his path and facilitated an ever more effective exercise of his ministry. Certainly, his way of doing things did much toward winning such esteem and confidence. "His personality radiates warmth and happiness all around him," Father Angelo Piccone wrote,[18] "and in everything he does, he couples simplicity with prudence, and gentleness with the strength of a genuine elder son of Don Bosco." No sooner did he set foot on shore than he headed for the church and after a short prayer, he thanked everybody for their magnificent welcome. But such a general expression of gratitude was not enough. Courtesy demanded that he make a round of visits to all the more important people which gave him an opportunity of getting to know more clearly the leading families which were all in need of religious instruction.

Neither the distance nor the exhausting labor of the Salesians in those remote parts of the world could decrease the memory of Don Bosco in their hearts. They talked about him together; they spoke to the boys about him, and never left any of his anniversaries unobserved. On May 19th, all the boys of the Patagones School wrote a personal note to Don Bosco for his forthcoming name day. "The note written by Louis Villanueva, an Indian artisan who had been in school for two years, was utterly charming," Viglietti wrote in his diary. "Who was there who would have failed to realize how Don Bosco enjoyed the reading of those letters?"[19]

A good number of letters written by the Salesians for this same occasion have been kept. Our readers will understand if we seek in them traces of the feelings of these early Salesians for Don Bosco. We feel that it would be of considerable help to shed light on our Saint, by seeing the fervent affection he aroused in his sons, and how much comfort he was to them in their troubles, what a great incentive to do good was there for them with such dispositions of heart! Undoubtedly, Don Bosco possessed the secret gift of making himself loved, with that sincere, constant, positive and operative love, which is a filial love.

[18] Letter to Fr. Lemoyne, from Carmen de Patagones, May 14, 1886.

[19] We did not find the letter from the Indian boy, but only two others. (See Appendix, doc. 53, A–B.)

We will begin our survey of the letters with those, which come from Uruguay. From Paysandu the cleric Grando thus bared his heart to him: "I assure you, beloved Father of my soul, that the prayers inspired by my gratitude towards him who in giving me life, rescued me from the danger of losing it, will only be stilled by my death. I can also assure you that our holy rules and your own saintly counsels, which I hold written on a picture of Mary Help of Christians that you gave me with your signature, will be the norm of my conduct. I realize that it is only thanks to this that I have found peace of mind so far, for I have felt neither sadness nor melancholy or ill temper; except when I do not follow such a norm."

The cleric Soldando from the same school expresses his sentiments as follows: "This is yet another opportunity given me to express to you my gratitude, loyalty, and love. Our Lord offers us yet another chance to pay tribute to your merits, to your heroic virtues, insofar as this miserable world will allow us. This is yet another opportunity given us to honor him who is well deserving beyond all descriptions. ... Thank you, Oh! Infinite thanks to you, my God, for having given me such a Father. Yes, dear Don Bosco, you are my father for you gave me life, not physical life, but spiritual and moral life. You are my most distinguished benefactor here on earth ... you are my savior, after Jesus ... you are my Teacher who preaches to me by word and moves me by your example."

Humbly and sincerely did Father Peter Rota from the Pius School of Villa Colón write, "I am the last of your sons and I too now join in to add my own *Long live Don Bosco!* to the thousands and thousands of *Hurrahs* which will be heard within the Oratory walls during these days. Perhaps my shout will not echo that far, but your hyper-sensitive heart will hear it all the same, because it comes from a heart that loves you tenderly like a son."

From Colón Father Louis Calcagno, who felt that his life was fading away with his persistent poor health, was comforted by the prospect of a happier life lived forever by the side of Don Bosco. "I am afraid that this note will not reach you in time for your name day," he wrote, "but I will, nevertheless, strive to follow with all the love I have in my heart, the manifestations of love and reverence staged on that same day by my dear brothers at the Oratory .... Dear Father! Please remember this poor son of yours in America who will never see you again on this earth! Please pray often for me so that, after following the holy Salesian Rule with all my strength, I may be able to fall at your feet one day in paradise." From Colón also two *Hijos Americanos* [American sons], the clerics Echeverry

and Canessa, wrote in their own language, bewailing the fact that they had never seen him, but saying that they knew him nevertheless, through what their superiors had told them, asking him to pray for them.

From Buenos Aires, first of all, Father Durando, the director of the newly founded house of Santa Catarina, joined to his good wishes for his dear Father Don Bosco, a fine report on the situation at the new school.

Then, also Father James Costamagna wrote a letter signed by all the confreres, and emphatically expressing his wishes on behalf of all, "Oh! Don Bosco, our most dear Don Bosco! All the members of the houses of San Carlos, of Our Lady of Mercy, of La Boca, of Santa Caterina, and of La Plata jubilantly hail the name day of our Beloved Papa, being ever more aware of the immense grace conferred on us by the dear Lord in allowing us to be the sons of Don Bosco. We are happy, beyond all measure, to see that even this day has again splendidly dawned this year. We send you a unanimous *Long live Don Bosco!* across the ocean which is to resound in the playground of the blessed Oratory to gladden the happiest day of the Father of Youth of two continents and hope that our blessed and venerable father will realize, more fully every day, that all his sons of the Argentina Province love him dearly and that all of them mean to be worthy sons of so great a father, without any exception whatsoever."

Two loving sons from San Nicolas' expressed their love in long letters, telling Don Bosco with zest about the good deeds of love in which they had been involved.

Father Evasio Rabagliati, who was to be the first Salesian provincial of Colombia, wrote, "Whether obedience keeps me here or summons me elsewhere, I will always carry with me the picture of my dearly beloved father, Don Bosco, which will spur me on to work indefatigably in whatever area obedience may assign me, so that I may prove myself a worthy son of so great a father, and make sure I get a place near him in paradise. Oh! What a wonderful day that will be, most dear father!"

There were a number of Irish boys at the school of San Nicolas', all of them coming from a very large Irish settlement in the area. Father Evasio Rabagliati, who spoke some English, and especially Father O'Grady, who had come to the Oratory from Ireland, looked after them in and out of school. The latter wrote Don Bosco in French:

"Dearly beloved Father,

This welcome and lovely day of your feast made a lasting and most happy impression on me although I was only fortunate enough

> to be present at it once, and I still feel a thrill of joy just remembering it ... If you, most dear Father, are fond of these dear Irish men, they too are fond of you in return. Many of them are already acquainted with your love for souls and with your many good works. They admire and bless you and all of them who knew I was writing to you send good wishes for your name day. They wished to join me wholeheartedly by sending you their own wishes."

Now let us go back again to Patagonia, where we started out in our survey. The bishop's secretary, when he remembered the feast of Saint John, wanted to send Don Bosco a gift, hoping it would arrive at least for his birthday, if not already for his name day. He shared his plan with Father Joseph Lazzero. There was an Indian boy among the young artisans at Patagones who at fifteen years of age was already capable of working quite adequately on his own as a shoemaker. Father Anthony Riccardi therefore asked Father Joseph Lazzero to let him know the measurements of Don Bosco's foot, so that they could send him a pair of shoes. Such a gift, from the first Indian pupil enrolled in a Salesian school by his sons in Patagonia, would certainly have delighted him. But he also wrote at length directly to Don Bosco on June 5th in a most effusive way: "Please know that all of us love you intensely in our Lord. In everything we do, both sacred and profane, your most dear image, the image of our dearly beloved father, is always with us in our mind and heart. Oh! What a great feast we too will celebrate on the 24th! On that day we shall all be at the Oratory in spirit, strolling around your little room which houses our treasure, our own father. We will delight him. We will even be bolder that that! For we shall come up to you in spirit, most dear Father, to tell you, "Oh! Father. Oh! Don Bosco! How dearly your sons in Patagonia love you! Bless them." And you will bless us wholeheartedly and we will return to our work with new courage and ardor, on behalf of these dear boys who are also your own sons, beloved Don Bosco."

Lastly, Bishop Cagliero himself wrote how he felt, both to Fr. Joseph Lazzero and to Don Bosco. He wrote to the former on May 26th: "With this letter I'm sending a world of good wishes for our beloved Don Bosco whom we hail most affectionately, most cordially, and most unforgettably. *Dominus custodiat eum et vivificet eum et beatum faciat eum in terra.* Amen! Amen! Amen! ["The Lord protect him, give him life, and make him blessed upon the earth."]

Together with his good wishes, he sent Don Bosco a handsome gift,

namely, the report on all that his sons had accomplished in their evangelical labors in Patagonia during the past year: 1300 Indians and natives of the Rio Negro baptized, 1000 first communions, 3000 devout communions on the part of the faithful, 200 communions a month by the boys and girls attending the schools. "This is the harvest reaped since I arrived in this most sterile desert," he wrote. "We have woven it into a garland of most fair lilies, entwined with fragrant flowers and star-spangled with costly diamonds to crown your venerable head with it, and say, "The glory of children is their father. *Gloria filiorum pater eorum.*"[20]

We cannot ignore the echo, which came from Santa Cruz. Because of the great distance and the limited maritime communications with other parts of the South American continent, Father Joseph Mary Beauvoir had decided to write his letter on April 28th. We will quote a few sentences from this lengthy letter. "This last and useless, if not to say burdensome, of all your sons, does not forget! Oh! Never forgets his father, no matter how far away he may live out his life, nor how the remote country where he lives separates him from the object of his dear affection. The thought that Don Bosco remembers me is a sweet comfort, but it is not all. When I recall now and then the years of my youth, which I lived at his side, tears run down my cheeks. Why may I not see him once again, talk with him, kiss the hands which have blessed me so many times? If I could but enjoy his lovable presence but for one moment, see but once again his smiling face, and be encouraged by his expressive, cordial glance! Then I would die happy in my far away, voluntary desert exile. Yes, I hope our Lord will grant me this coveted good fortune."

Don Bosco replied on September 7th. Father Joseph Mary Beauvoir wrote Father Michael Rua, "I was ineffably happy to receive the loving letter from our venerable and beloved daddy, Don Bosco. As I read it, my mind went back to those happy places and times where I spent the beautiful days of my childhood and adolescence."

Who could fail to see the powerful lever of the profound and tender love the first Salesians felt for Don Bosco in the very expert hands of Don Bosco himself?

There is a rather troubled news item in Father Joseph Mary Beauvoir's letter. One poor coadjutor brother was giving signs of growing personal problems. Don Bosco gave orders that someone was to write immediately that the coadjutor should be sent back to Europe. It was

[20] Proverbs 19:6.

pointed out to him that the journey would entail enormous expense, and that there might be some hope of a reform. "That is unimportant," the Saint cried in anguish. "No matter the cost or cost what it may, he is to be sent back immediately. His is a soul that is about to be lost, and we have to save it."

Unfortunately, it was already too late. The wretched man died a very tragic death at Santa Cruz only a little while after this.

Bishop Cagliero had written a general report on the situation of the Patagonian mission, making three copies of it, one for the Holy Father, which was submitted to the Pope by the Cardinal Protector,[21] a second one for the Salesians, and the third one for the Propagation of the Faith.[22] His secretary then made a summary of it, which was sent to Don Bosco. If we are to give a complete picture of this initial period of Salesian missionary activity under enlightened guidance, we should quote yet another of his letters very newsy and full of vitality:

Patagones, July 28, 1886

Most Reverend and beloved Father:

I have delayed writing to you somewhat because I was expecting our missionaries back from their seven-month journey through the Andes.

They got back here safely, and the Lord has assisted them most wondrously and blessed their apostolic excursions.

Father Dominic Milanesio has been truly a Godsend to all the inhabitants of the Rio Negro area. In the company of our excellent Father Bartholomew Panaro and the coadjutor Catechist Forcina, with two men to look after the horses, they covered a distance of 555 leagues, or rather 2500 kilometers, on horseback.

[21] Card. Lucido Parocchi replied as follows:

Dear and most Reverend Bishop,

In compliance with your request, I solicitously did my grateful duty of reporting the excellent progress of the missions of our good Salesians to the Holy Father. The Supreme Pontiff was visibly moved and heartened, and he spoke in praise of Your Reverence and all the others who in true apostolic zeal are assisting you in expanding the kingdom of Jesus Christ. He also imparts to you his entire benediction as you requested. In informing you of his sovereign sentiments, I especially congratulate you personally on what has been accomplished and am ready to do all I can as your Protector, while I wish the missions ever greater development and reverently kiss your hand, Bishop, with profound and affectionate esteem.

Most devotedly in Jesus Christ,
L. M. Cardinal Vicar
Protector of the Salesians

[22] He filled out the form for the Propaganda (Appendix, doc. 54) for the first time.

They crossed the Andes, the Cordilleras that is, twice by mule, and reached the plains of Chile passing through Antuco, Angeles, Concepcion, and Chillan, where they collected alms and other help for the Malbarco mission which is on the eastern slopes of the mountains at the source of the Rio Neuquen which flows into the Rio Negro.

They preached missions in thirty different missionary stations or inhabited areas, all of them more or less with fair-sized populations. They baptized 1117 persons between natives and children of Christian families, celebrated 60 weddings, and instructed 1836 converts to receive First Communion.

This exploration has now covered the whole of the Rio Negro valley as far as the Limay and Neuquen rivers, the whole of the right bank and left bank valleys of the Neuquen, with its ten or twelve tributaries, pushing as far as the Chilean border and the province of Mendoza. We know by now the whole of the most important and more densely populated sector of northern Patagonia which has been initially catechized, save for four or five tribes whose cachiques have already declared that they are favorable to their conversion.[23]

We are working on an ethnographic map of the entire area lying between the Rio Negro and Rio Colorado, marking the missionary stations and inhabited areas, the settlements and tribes, and specifying the distance lying between one station and another, as well as the principal rivers and the fords where horses can ford them, making reference to the most important valleys and mountains.[24]

We shall send you a copy of this map making it as accurate as possible, and our Turin geographical experts can then trace the water courses of the rivers, the range of mountains, figure out the grass grown in prairies inhabited by horses and sheep, cows and quanacos, ostriches, and an infinite number of other carnivorous and herbivorous animals.

[23] This entire mission can be seen in the *Bollettino salesiano*, December 1886, in the description given by Fr. Dominic Milanesio. The favorable attitude of the cachiques is documented by the visit of Sayuhueque's son to the bishop, which was related by Fr. Angelo Piccono. See Appendix, doc. 56.

[24] Fr. Stefanelli in particular worked on it, assisted by Fr. Angelo Savio, under the direction of the bishop, and was sent to Don Bosco on August 20. There had been no intention of doing anything scientific, but only to map out something that would serve as a guide for the convenience of the missionaries as well as offer some idea to those who were living far away from the missions. We did not succeed in finding it.

I am enclosing for you a detailed prospective map of the localities through which our missionaries traveled, listing their names and detailed statistics of baptisms, communions, and weddings celebrated.

We continue to cultivate with the greatest care the tender little shoots we have here at Patagones and Viedma, and they are now growing tall and strong, and are laden with fruits and flowers.

We preached an extraordinary mission for the Holy Jubilee,[25] taking our inspiration from the novena of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the patroness of the Pueblo. We preached three times a day. Many ladies came to communion, and also all the boys and girls attending our schools. As far as men.... nothing!!!

I am counting a lot on the Association of the Apostolate of Prayer, which was successfully inaugurated and has fifteen zealous members. They are the most important women of the area who have done wonders to draw all mothers of families to attend, and they were successful.

And so, through the devotion, love, and support of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I succeeded in persuading a number of families to do their Easter duty and conform their lives to a Christian spirit. Naturally, this orientation towards piety and devotion has aroused great animosity among the evil-minded who are already twanging with their convulsion and satanic wrath. But we are silently, calmly, and prudently going our way until such time as some saint will help us save also the men, most of whom are swayed by human respect, others by self interests, and the rest by their passions.

Father Angelo Savio has been with us now for more than a month and has brought us some excellent news of his mission in central and southern Patagonia. He has gathered information from the Tehuelches Indians, that there are many *tolderias* [camps] scattered over the immense prairies of the central desert, and along the banks of the rivers. When the winter is over he is going back to Santa Cruz and will try to make an important exploratory journey in those areas. He will be accompanied by a few Tehuelches Indians who have already been instructed and baptized. The one you saw in the photo made here in Patagones, standing to the left of the bearded missionary, is one of them.

[25] Leo XIII had promulgated an extraordinary jubilee for the year 1886.

Meanwhile, Father Joseph Mary Beauvoir is looking after the mission with Fossati, until Father Savio gets back.

Father Joseph Fagnano has been in Buenos Aires for some time, and he is trying to obtain some funds from the government or from private persons. But he writes that he is not very lucky. This is a vital issue because he cannot go back to his prefecture until he has paid the bank loan obtained for building the church. The houses of San Carlos, Colón, and Paysandu' also are burdened heavily with debts for the building that has been constructed, and even if they wanted to, they would not be in a position to help us, we who are the poor dwellers of the desert. The thing, which upsets me most is that, all our labor produces barely enough to pay off the interest on our debts.

I am bombarded by letters from Chile-from Santiago, Valparaiso, Talca, and Concepcion-to which I reply with promises and requests to be patient. But with my staff, I am unable to take a single step elsewhere and only Father Evasio Rabagliati, who is requested by the school of San Nicolas', will be useful to me in starting something in Chile.

Soon, I will have to start thinking about setting up at least two new stations along the course of the Rio Negro. However, I am not going to plunge into any such undertaking with neither means nor personnel, but will await an opportunity. Meanwhile, I am compiling a lengthy report to be sent to the Propaganda, and also a letter for Lyons and Paris.

Oh! If only it would rain money!

We heard about your trip to Barcelona and that *Commota fuit tota civitas* [how the whole city was moved]. We heard also that they offered you *omnia regna mundi* [all the kingdoms of the earth] and that you have accepted it all together with the mountain, *Tibi Dabo*, in order to offer it back to its true Master, Our Lord.

This journey will have made the people of Catalonia happy, but not those of Andalusia who were disappointed, as were the South Americans who would like to build an aerial railway so that they might have the honor of your visit.

We are always on good terms with the civil and military authorities because I give them the white glove treatment. But I do not trust them, and I do not confide in them. Poor Father Dominic Milanesio had barely returned from a most exhaust-

ing mission when the governor confiscated all his horses on the pretext that they belonged to the government. He attempted to prove they were his, or belonged to the mission, with specific, written documents in hand, but it was to no avail. So I went down to see him and he immediately put the blame on the guards who acted too hastily. I pretended to believe him, although I also know that not a leaf stirs at Viedma unless he orders it. He also added that he had given orders that our horses were to be given back to us. Father Angelo Piccono was with me and as he was serving tea, I told him how Great Britain gives assistance to the missionaries and various other appropriate things, which he understood perfectly well. But they are military men, and that is enough. The Salesians have now been in Patagonia for six years, and they have been six years of battles of calumnies and victories, won only at the cost of sacrifices and troubles.

But if it were not like this ours would not be a missionary life. As for myself, I am living between fear and hope ever since I visited the President, but let Him who sent me here think on how to uphold me. The ascent to power of a new president in this unfortunate country will heap all manner of ills upon the Church.

But I do have President Roca's word. However, I am not expecting anything from it, since he lacks one more 'c' to be a *'rocca'* (rock). We will go forward, with God's protection. The miracle will continue if they do not bother me, so the good Argentineans say. But woe to me if I were to talk of either vicariate or vicar, for then I would be exiled immediately. So I remain a Salesian bishop and an apostolic missionary all the time, namely, a mystery that they do not understand and which is best if never explained to anybody. This is how we are going on, but meanwhile we are doing good a *las barbas de gualicho* [to the whiskers of the wading birds], as the Indians say.

So I need prayers, and since it was you Father, who got me into a dance, you must kindly teach me how to dance, since I only know how to play. Our fellow priests, the clerics and coadjutors, are fairly intent on observing our Holy Rule, on progressing in the virtues required of Salesians. Every Thursday our two houses meet for a conference, at which we

discuss either ethical or moral questions or some problem of ascetics, or else some disciplinary question to ensure the proper running of the mission.

The Festive oratories for boys and girls are very flourishing and very well attended for quite some time now. We are gathering up the stray ears of wheat, i.e. young and old Indian boys and girls, who are scattered here and there among Christian households. By dint of encouragement and urging, we do manage to persuade these people to send these young people to us to be instructed and baptized. Those already baptized are now being instructed for First Communion.

A good many of them who do not live with the Christians cannot be helped to do good. They are like ears of wheat that have been trampled by the hoofs of horses and mules *quibus non est intellectus* [who have no brains].

Our missionary for Central Patagonia, Father Joseph Mary Beauvoir, has pushed his explorations as far as Cape of the Virgins, where people are streaming from all parts, attracted by the glitter of gold.[26] The sands there are truly extremely valuable because of the gold they contain. Explorers say that in some places it is far richer and more plentiful than in California! Oh! If only it were true that we were still living in the Golden Age! Yet not even the hens will look at gold, since they much prefer an insect to the golden grains.

Please accept the regards, the love, and the very hearts of all your sons in Patagonia, most beloved Father. Pray for us and invoke the protection and blessing of Mary Help of Christians on our mission.

The Sisters, who are most zealous, are asking with me for your fatherly blessing.

Most affectionately in Jesus Christ, your son,
John, bishop

The reader should not overlook the care taken by the bishop in establishing the Association of the Apostolate of Prayer as soon as he arrived

[26] *Cabo de la Virgines* is at the mouth of the Strait of Magellan. Fr. Joseph Mary Bearvoir had set out from Santa Cruz for this excursion, having been there with Fr. Angelo Savio since the end of March. As we have already said, he had succeeded in going there as a land surveyor, whereas Fr. Joseph Mary Beauvoir was there as chaplain to the government.

back in Patagonia, and one should notice how much he relied on the efficacy of this institution, because of his fertile ardor and his indefatigable zeal. We do not imagine that he had succeeded in establishing it without difficulty, but the fact that he had attempted it was already in itself a sure indication that his zeal was of the right stuff. Don Bosco's disciples had not only learned how to work, but also how to pray, from their incomparable master.

The far away Father sent his beloved elder son a New Year's gift which he was to treasure very much. It was dear to him not only because of the generous financial assistance his father gave him, but also because of the love, which he could perceive in the letter in which he told him about it. Lastly, it was dear to him for the letter itself, which covered two fair-sized pages and betrayed at every line the effort made by the writer. But in *eo quod amatur, aut non laboratur aut et labor amatur*.[27] [When you love something either you don't find it hard to do or you do it even if it is hard].

Last Day of the Year, 1886

Dearest Bishop Cagliero,

Father Louis Lasagna is leaving and will give you our news. I received your I.O.U. and it will be paid to the amount of 15,000 francs on December 19th. Father Lasagna is not leaving us empty handed. The fares and all the debts contracted in the past, amounting to approximately 200,000 francs, have all been paid in full by Don Bosco. *Long live prosperity!* I trust that the new confreres are ably assisting you. See that detailed reports are sent to the Propaganda, to the council, the Propagation of the Faith, and the Holy Childhood on:

1. The development of our missions.
2. Our concession in Chile.
3. Whether the road between the Rio Negro and Ancud is already open.

Just now we have a marked increase in priests, postulants, clerics, and novices.

Do not spare any effort to spread Christianity in the western part of Patagonia, the region of Tierra del Fuego and at San Diego.

Humble regards to our beloved Archbishop Frederick

[27] St. Augustine, *De bono viduitatatis, 26.*

Aneyros and a million respects also. You should be already preparing a choir of Indians who would come and sing at the fiftieth anniversary of my first Mass!

Watch out, this evening I am delivering a short talk, God willing, to our Salesians from the place where the little hill once stood.

Do not forget Count Colle and his wife, the Countess Sofia.

My cordial blessing to all my sons. Urge them all to take great care of their health, to work, be temperate, and then everything will be all right. Amen.

May Mary guide us to Heaven.

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S.:

1. *Domine, retribue nobis bona facientibus in vitam aeternam.* [Lord, reward us, for the good we do, with eternal life].
2. If necessary appeal to the Good Shepherd at Valparaiso or of St. Santiago; he promised me he would give whatever money was needed.

The reference to I.O.U.s calls for an explanation. In letters from the missionaries, we see how, in critical moments, they obtained loans from banks in South America in the name of Don Bosco. The banks lent the money without ever asking for confirmation from Turin. In fact, such a promissory note which had expired and had not been protested through oversight were accepted by bankers to the amazement of the people holding them when they were told that such notes were worth their weight in gold. During the apostolic process, Fr. Anthony Sala said that this had been the custom all over Europe. He testified to this to show how much credit Don Bosco had generally enjoyed.

A circular of Don Bosco, dated December 31st, addressed to the directors in the American houses, contains a passage, which illustrates this paternal gesture of Don Bosco. Don Bosco's Vicar wrote: "By January 1st, i.e. tomorrow, here at the Oratory, new credit is opened for all our houses in South America. It is announced that all past bills have been paid in full. Although donations received after Don Bosco's circular of October have not totaled as much as your debts, Don Bosco nevertheless wishes to open a new account, and this will be done. May this help increase our gratitude toward our beloved

Father in each and every one of you, and spur you on to have an ever greater caution in financial matters, this being the fervent wish he has voiced many times."

From what we have described briefly here, our readers have certainly grown convinced that this Patagonian mission, which was the dearest aspiration of Don Bosco's apostolic heart, could by then be regarded as so well organized as to lead us to hold the highest hopes for the future.

Chapter 9

TRANSFER OF THE NOVITIATE TO FOGLIZZO

Not only did the growing number of clerics make it advisable that the novices be separated from the professed members of the Congregation, but the canonical prescriptions also advised this. During the general chapter meeting in the afternoon of September 2nd, Don Bosco recalled that when the approval of the Rules had been discussed between Pius IX and the Secretary for Bishops and Regulars, it had been noted that the novices ought to be kept apart from the students, and the students apart from the professed Salesians. Don Bosco had simply pointed out at that time that he was still in need of houses, personnel, novices, and indeed of everything, to which the Pope had replied, "Go on and do the best you can."

So the Saint continued, "Now we should make such divisions to the extent that we can, for they are stressed as beneficial and essential."

He might have said even more, namely, that in view of such separation, a special building was now being set up, as a matter of fact. Foglizzo was a large rural community some six kilometers from San Benigno. Don Bosco had bought property and a palace from the noble Count Ceresa de Bonvillaret. Without being overly comfortable, for it had quite a few substantial drawbacks, the palace could be adapted to accommodate about a hundred people. Just then he did not think it wise to talk about it, probably because he had not yet decided whether he meant to send the clerics already professed or the novices to the new residence. We concluded this from what he said in August to some who were anxious to know for whom the new house was destined, so that they might more easily arrange for an economical purchase of the materials necessary for the work of adaptation.

Don Bosco said, "Let us leave it as it is for the time being. Let us wait for the feast of the Presentation of Our Lady in the Temple. At that time

Our Lord and Our Lady will inspire us and let us know what we should do."

That feast fell on November 21st. Perhaps it was a habit with him to await special inspiration from Heaven on feasts dedicated to Our Lady. Yet he did not wait after all until that date to make up his mind, for Father Julius Barberis escorted the novices to their new quarters on October 14th. As we shall see later, Divine Providence was to assign the school of Valsalice to the students of philosophy.

When the novices took possession of it, the house had been given neither a name nor a patron saint. Only on October 20th did the superior council decide to dedicate it to Saint Michael the Archangel at the suggestion of Father Julius Barberis. The minutes do not say more, but that decision must have been motivated by the wish to honor Don Bosco's Vicar, by dedicating to his patron saint the first important house opened in Italy after his appointment to that office.

The ceremony of its solemn inauguration, scheduled for November 4th, was gladdened by Don Bosco's presence. He left the Oratory together with Father Michael Rua and Father Charles Viglietti, traveling by train as far as Montanaro. The station is about five kilometers from Foglizzo.

Here the entire population went in a body to meet him, led by the local clergy and the priests from the surrounding area. A swarm of boys gathered around him and he joked with them, and invited them all to the Oratory. Then he got into a coach and the horse set off at a trot, whereupon the boys, holding their wooden shoes in their hands or tucking them under their arms, began to run behind him for as long as their strength held out.

Half way there, the boys of Foglizzo who crowded on both sides of the road to await him, also began to follow the coach, running on their bare feet to the outskirts of the village, without heeding the rough gravel pebbles which hardened the soles of their feet. The inhabitants of the locality were all grouped together here and there, from the first houses to the parish church.

The coach came to a halt at the first houses, and the mayor, bareheaded, at the head of the municipal staff, stepped forward to read a speech in which he declared himself fortunate to have the opportunity to welcome so great a man to his so small a town.

When he had finished reading, Don Bosco asked him to sit by his side and the coach moved on again at a slow pace, following the band

along the main street to the applause of the population. The festive pealing of bells and the noisy explosion of firecrackers added that touch of something exceptional which always delights the native folks on great occasions. "It would be impossible to describe the enthusiastic joy that the sight of Don Bosco aroused in the eighty boys already living in that house, and in their well worthy superiors, *"l'Eporediese* wrote on the 10th. The author penning these lines saw with his own eyes eminent persons and older folks moved to the point of tears at the scene, and considered it an honor to hasten to kiss the hand of this man of God. "It was indeed moving to see Don Bosco supported almost bodily by his Salesians as he walked from his new house to the parish rectory, always giving an answer to anyone who chose to address him, whether it was a child or an adult, a poor or wealthy person, whether the answer was merely a glance or a smile. The worthy priest is no longer able to stand firmly on his two feet, so he naturally looks a little tired. But he remains permanently youthful. His smiling face, his serene brow, his keen, sparkling eyes, lucid mind, astonishing memory, and delightful conversation indicate that he is a most lovable man. His hair is only now beginning to turn a little gray."

Father Ottino, the pastor, invited him to dinner in the rectory together with the pastors of the area and the municipal authorities. Replying to the toasts of the other guests, Don Bosco said, among other things, that in coming to open a house at Foglizzo, he was motivated by the sincerest desire to do as much good as he was able to the boys of the locality.

He said this in special reference to a remark made by a priest who had recalled having seen him surrounded by a few dozen boys many years before, with only his mother to help him.

His mother was the cook, the maid, and the guardian, a real factotum of a woman. He also remarked that the boys now had grown to a legion, and that his collaborators had increased more and more every year both in the old and new continents.

In the afternoon, Don Bosco spent a couple of hours among the novices. First, he blessed the chapel, a very poor but beautiful chapel which had formerly been a garage. Then some hundred boys received their cassock. The Servant of God Andrew Beltrami was conspicuous among them for his habitual humble demeanor.

At the end of the clothing ceremony, a curious scene took place. All the new clerics marched through the playground as they left the chapel, each one carrying his own chair. This was a surprise even to Don Bosco

who asked Father Lawrence Bianchi for an explanation. Father Bianchi replied that there was only one chair per person in the whole house, so that the clerics had to carry them when they went to chapel, into the study hall, to the dining room or to their bedrooms. The Saint answered smiling, "Oh! I like that! This house is having a good start."

As we have already indicated, the Servant of God remarked one day, "Father Barberis has thoroughly understood Don Bosco." That was why he had appointed Father Barberis as novice master both at the Oratory and at San Benigno. And so he became the ideal master for the Salesian novices. Don Bosco wanted Father Barberis to be in charge of the novitiate so that the religious training might proceed properly in the new novitiate. The house was entrusted to Father Bianchi who for a number of years had been the novice master's faithful assistant at San Benigno, and enjoyed all his confidence. But, in order to preserve the integrity of the spirit wanted by the Founder, Father Barberis used to go there as often as possible, and never missed the monthly practice of the Exercise for a Happy Death.

The Saint set out on the way home again in the afternoon of the 5th, accompanied by the most cordial manifestations on the part of the people of Foglizzo and Montanaro, to whom he imparted his blessing as they gathered in the square.

Don Bosco gave an account of the clothing ceremony as soon as he got back to the Oratory, to Mrs. Theodolinda Pilati of Bologna, as he had promised her before setting out.[1]

(undated)

Dear Madam:

I just got back from the clothing ceremony at Foglizzo. I blessed the cassocks of one hundred and ten clerics who have now joined the swarm of 500 more youngsters who are being trained in order to go and work in the missions. I recommend them all to

[1] He had written her as follows:

Turin, November 4, 1886

Dear Madam:

I duly received your kind donation of 500 francs, which represented a valid contribution to the departure of our missionaries for Patagonia. At this time I have to leave for Foglizzo to clothe some hundred future missionaries as clerics.

I will be back here in two days and will then write you again.

God bless you, your sisters, your relatives, and friends. May Mary guide us all along the road to Heaven. Amen.

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

your charity and the charity of your sister, so that they may progress in learning and holiness, and thus be able to win over many souls for heaven.

Not only do I wholeheartedly carry on the novena which you so piously desire, but it is my steadfast intention to have a special memento for you every day during Holy Mass, as well as for all those things to which you dedicate your charity and which are directed to respond to the needs of the Holy Church.

God bless you, your relatives and friends.

Please be indulgent toward this poor, half-blinded old man who will always remain in Jesus and Mary,

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

It appeared that Heaven wanted to show that the house at Foglizzo was especially blessed by Divine Providence. On December 6 Don Bosco told a strange story of Divine goodness connected with that new novitiate during his usual afternoon walk with Frs. John Marenco and Charles Viglietti. The director absolutely needed a sum of money, and so he went knocking at Father Celestine Durando's door.

Here let us open a parenthesis:. Why did he go knocking at Father Durando's door and not at Father Dominic Belmonte's? Since the experiment of the two directors had failed, not so much because the system was wrong in itself, but because Father John Baptist Francesia had shown himself unsuitable to the task,[2] the direction of the Oratory had to be settled differently.[3] They went back to the one director system. Father Belmonte was assigned as director. But this entailed such a burden of responsibility that the new prefect general would have had to be able to be present in two places simultaneously in order to attend properly to both assignments. And so Don Bosco asked Father Durando to continue holding the office of prefect general. This allowed Father Belmonte to devote the greater part of his attention to the Oratory for two years.[4]

[2] This is confirmed in letters from Fr. Lazzero to Bp. Cagliero in 1885 and 1886.

[3] Fr. Francis Cerruti wrote Bp. Cagliero on October 12, 1886: "Certainly the way the Oratory is governed is of the greatest importance to the Congregation and as things stand now, they certainly cannot continue."

[4] In our directories for 1887 and 1888, beside the name of the prefect general, Fr. Dominic Belmonte, we read, "Director of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales." Beside that of the councillor general, Fr. Celestine Durando, "Serving as prefect."

So then, Father Bianchi called on Father Celestine Durando and told him that he still needed 1960 lire to meet a highly urgent commitment.

"I have just this minute left Don Bosco who gave me all the money there was in the house. There is nothing left."

Caught between the devil and the deep blue sea Father Bianchi hastened to Don Bosco's room. When the good Father heard what he wanted, he replied, "Really, I do not know what to do to help you. I gave everything I had to Father Durando just now. But I believe that something was delivered since he was in here. But all the same, I do not believe it will be enough."

He walked over to the desk, opened a drawer and took out some money. They counted it. It amounted to 1960 lire exactly!

Even more astonishing was a second incident of an entirely different kind, which occurred a month later. Among the novices clothed by Don Bosco on November 4th there was a young man from Marseilles, Louis Olive, whom we already know.[5] In December, he fell seriously ill with typhoid fever. Since his condition was very bad indeed, Father Paul Albera was informed; he came at once from Marseilles and had Louis moved to the Oratory so that he could be better cared for.[6]

On Christmas Eve, Don Bosco called at the infirmary to see the patient toward evening. He told him in the presence of the Salesian Father Roussin, "I assure you that Our Lady will cure you." Yet the doctors held very little hope of his survival.

The novice's father arrived on the 28th, and he edified everyone he met with his resignation to God's will and his utter trust in the Lord. He had recently had a proof of the Divine mercy in his family. One of his little daughters seemed about to die. Feeling her end near on December 9th, the little girl asked that a biretta of Don Bosco, which was kept in the house, be put on her head. The biretta was brought out, unfolded, and placed on her head. A few minutes later she told her mother that she felt better and that she could remove the biretta. Then she fell asleep and rested a few hours. She had not been able to sleep at all ever since she had become ill. On the 18th her father telegraphed Don Bosco to thank him for his prayers, adding, "Claire has been much better for some days. We ask for your prayers for her

[5] He could have made the novitiate in his own country but did not wish to do so. Since he knew everybody there, he would have been given special treatment, he said. He preferred to observe the common life in every way. See also Vol. XVI, p. 37.

[6] As provincial in France, Fr. Albera was the French novices' superior.

good convalescence." When he left for Turin, her convalescence was progressing normally. So one day at the end of dinner there with Don Bosco, he complimented him, to which the Saint replied, "We shall drink a toast in Marseilles when Louis will be fully recovered and seated at the head of the table."[7]

Words cannot describe how happy these words made the young man's father. Nevertheless the doctors, Vignolo, Gallenga, Fissore, and Albertotti, as well as another physician, all declared that his son would die. But what the physicians were not able to accomplish was actually accomplished by her who is the *salus animarum* [health of the sick]. During the night of January 3-4, Don Bosco had a dream, which he described as follows:

Turin, January 4, 1887

I do not know whether I was awake or asleep. I did not even notice the room or house I was in, when an extraordinary light began to lighten up the place.

After some kind of prolonged noise, I saw a person appear who was surrounded by many, many other people and moving toward me. The people and the ornaments they wore were so brilliant that any other light became like darkness, to the point that it was impossible to keep one's eyes upon any of those present.

Then the person who seemed to be the guide for the others advanced a little and began to speak as follows: *Ego sum humilis ancillia quam Dominus misit ad sanandum Ludovicum tuum infirmum. "Ad requiem ille iam erat vocatus; nunc vero ut gloria Dei manifestetur in eo, ipse animae suae et suorum curam adhuc habebit. Ego sum ancilla cui fecit magna qui potens est et sanctum nomen eius. Hoc diligenter perpende et quod futurum est intelliges. Amen."*[8]

At these words the dwelling returned to its former darkness, and all night long I hovered between waking and sleep-

[7] The episode resembles one involving the other Olive family, also French benefactors of Don Bosco's works. See Vol. XVI, p. 37; Vol. XVII, p. ?

[8] The short Latin quotation reads: " I am the lowly handmaid [cf. Luke 1:48] whom the Lord has sent to heal your ailing Louis. He had already been summoned to his rest, but now, so that glory of God may be manifest in him, he must give thought to his soul and the souls of his family. I am the handmaid for whom great things were done by Him who is mighty, and holy is His name [cf. Luke 1:49]. Reflect carefully on this, and you will understand what has to happen." Amen.

ing, but drained of strength and dazed. In the morning I hastened to get news of young Louis Olive, and I was assured that he had undergone a genuine turn for the better after a restful night. Amen.

The next night he saw the same apparition once again. Speaking in Latin, she gave him several admonitions for the benefit of the Congregation and the boys:[9]

January 5, 1887

The continuation of the words of her who called herself the Lord's handmaid:

"I dwell in highest heaven, that I might enrich those who love me and fill them with treasures. The treasures of adolescents are chaste words and actions. Therefore, you ministers of God, cry out, never cease crying out: 'Avoid ill-omened groups, specifically, dirty talk. Dirty talk corrupts good morals [cf. 1 Cor. 15:33]'. With the greatest difficulty are they corrected who indulge in idle and scurrilous words. If you wish to do something very pleasing to me, carry on good conversations among yourselves, and give one another the example of good deeds. Many of you promise flowers yet offer only thorns to me and my Son.

Why do you so often confess your sins, while your hearts are always far away from me? Speak and do what is right, not what is bad. I am a Mother and I love my children, and I abhor their sins. I will come to you again to lead some of you to true rest with me. I shall look after them even as a hen protects her chicks [cf. Matt. 23:37].

You artisans, manufacture good deeds, not wickedness. Dirty talk is a plague circulating among you. You who are called to administer the Lord's heritage, cry out, never grow tired of crying out, until he comes to summon you to render an account of your stewardship [cf. Luke 16:2]. It is my delight to be with the children of men [cf. Prov. 8:31]. But time is short; so have courage while you have time."

[9] The whole text is in Latin. Italian edition, p. 254.

On the morning of the 5th he sent for Father Lemoyne and told him everything. Father Lemoyne has left us a record of their dialogue. After telling him what he had seen and heard, Don Bosco went on: "And now I have sent for you that you may give me some advice. Should I let the Olive family know what I have dreamt?"

"You know that better than I do," Father Lemoyne answered, "Our Lady has always been so very good to you."

"Oh yes! That is true."

"And so many of these dreams of yours have all been fulfilled to the letter."

"That is true."

"So, if you will allow me, and do this I only to give glory to God, I will call them visions, for indeed they are."

"You are right."

"Now, we have every reason to believe that this dream, too, is a supernatural event which will come true, and that Olive, although the doctors have given up on him, will recover."

"What advice do you give, then?"

"To use a little human prudence, if you think it best, I would say that you could start circulating the rumor that Don Bosco has dreamt of Olive; that, in the dream, he felt that there was reason for high hopes."

"Well, we can do that."

"But, Don Bosco, please do me this favor: write this dream down. I know that you have difficulty writing, but it concerns Our Lady. If this comes true, there you have proof of Mary's maternal goodness."

"Well, I shall write it, then."

He then wrote what we have already reported above.

We feel that we should not remain silent about yet another incident. On one of those evenings, the cleric Olive who was seriously ill, had dreamt that Don Bosco had gone into his room to see him and had told him, "Be at ease. You will come and see me in my room within ten days."

The brightness of that dream left in that patient the conviction that Don Bosco had gone to him in person, and he refused to accept the opinion of those who denied it. He was already so much better by January 10th that his father left for France. Louis got out of bed on the 12th. On the 24th he made his appearance in the Superior Council's dining room during dinner, and the superiors welcomed him with great joy. When his health was completely regained, he did not go

back to Foglizzo, but at Don Bosco's wish returned to finish his novitiate in his own country.[10] His health continued so satisfactorily that in 1906 he was able to participate in the first expedition of Salesian missionaries to China, where he exercised a bountiful apostolate until his saintly death in 1921.[11]

[10] *La Semaine religieuse* of Nice published an article about the Salesian novitiate at Ste. Marguerite in Marseilles in its first issue of November; Mrs. Quisard brought it to the attention of Fr. Lemoyne, saying that Don Bosco himself had written it. (See Appendix, doc. 57).

[11] Fr. Olive died, in fact, September 17, 1919, at Canton at the age of 52. Fr. Ceria reports the year correctly in Vol. XVI, p. 37.

Chapter 10

LAST EVENTS OF 1886

In the late fall, when the harvest in the vineyards is over, it is pleasant to go hunting for some small bunches of grapes which have eluded the eye of the pickers. If one stumbles on any, there's particular delight in nibbling them. That's what we intend to do now, skimming through the last four months of 1886, gleaning some interesting doings and sayings of Don Bosco which could not have been inserted into the previous pages and yet they are somehow valuable.

In October Don Bosco resumed his afternoon outings by coach. When he reached the open countryside, he would get out and now leaning on Father Charles Viglietti's arm, now walking very slowly without any support at all, he would talk of many things. This was a genuine source of rest for him. One evening, on the way home they met the cardinal's own coach. When His Eminence recognized him, he jumped out, bade Don Bosco halt and went over to him, eagerly asking how he felt and greeting him very affectionately. When he was gone, Don Bosco, heading for home, emphasized the graciousness of the great prelate.

Another time on his way home he called on the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, for whom had provided his priestly ministry from the very first years of his stay in Turin. He was delighted to have a friendly hour-long talk with the Sisters, recalling bygone days and the difficulties surrounding the foundation of the Oratory. Before moving on, he blessed the Sisters and the women living in the house, leaving a precious and lasting memory of his visit.

He also resumed his weekly talks to the upper-class students, at times keeping them with him for a whole hour. He would first say a few kind words to them, and then hear the confession of anyone who wished to do so. At times he found it very hard to hear their confessions, due to his drained strength. One day Father Charles Viglietti asked him to forego the strain, on the advice of the physician.

"Oh! Of course, of course," Don Bosco replied, laughing, "you have done something very wrong, and now you do not want to make your confession, right?"

Then he took him by the hand: "Dear Viglietti, if I no longer hear the confession of the boys at least, what is there for me to do for them? I promised God that until my dying breath I would dedicate myself entirely to my poor boys."

By similar meetings with them he aimed above all at enlightening them on their choice of a way of life. He had a booklet entitled *Sentimenti di S. Tommaso d'Aquino e di S. Alfonso Maria Liguori intorno all Entrata in religione* [Thoughts of Saint Thomas Aquinas and of Saint Alphonsus Mary de'Liguori upon Entering Religion][1] translated from French and printed for young men who might have found themselves in similar situations. Thousands of copies had been sent to pastors in the dioceses of Piedmont and to Salesian Cooperators so that anyone who was ignorant of the importance of the religious life might be taught not to put any obstacles in the way of a vocation.[2]

A French young lady, who was later to become a pillar of the institute founded by Cardinal Lavigerie in Africa, went to Turin to consult Don Bosco on her vocation. She was in doubt whether she should become a nun in the cardinal's missions, enter the cloistered nuns of France, or become a *Daughter of Mary Help of Christians*. Knowing that she was very wealthy, the Saint was very cautious in the way he spoke. He had to avoid giving anyone any pretext to accuse him of attempting to get her dowry or any inheritance. But at any rate, two things are certain: if Don Bosco had so advised her, the young lady would have become a *Daughter of Mary Help of Christians*: secondly, Don Bosco would have advised her to do it, had he believed this to be the Will of God. So this is what he told her, "If you would like to continue somehow the lifestyle you have had so far with your parents, enter some French community, for there are many good ones in France. But if you seek only Jesus and his Cross, if you really want to suffer with Jesus, join the missions."

She perceived the divine summons in these last words. In his sermon at her clothing, the cardinal mentioned this event, and he recalled it again

[1] San Benigno Canavese, 1886. Count Prospero Balbo had done the translation.

[2] So that this circulation might produce better effects, a printed note was enclosed with it at Don Bosco's express wish. It said, "Thinking that the booklet would be useful, the translator took the liberty of sending out a copy of this booklet, asking those who receive it to say an *Ave Maria* for his intention."

in a sermon about the slave trade a year later in the Church of Saint Joseph in Marseilles. In this same sermon he spoke of how much nuns were needed and spoke of his own foundation. The first time he just made a general allusion to "a great man of God he had consulted in Turin,"[3] but the second time, as all our confreres heard, he pronounced the name of Don Bosco and gave further details.

The young lady first went to see the cardinal for advice. The cardinal had perceived the makings of a nun in her, just the kind that he was hoping to find to successfully conduct his new foundation in Africa. But her mother was steadfastly opposed to her daughter's vocation, basing her opposition on reasons that were not negligible. Not knowing what course to take, the cardinal decided not to trust his own judgment before uttering his final word, but resolved to hand the matter over to someone else who might judge her vocation. "I turned then to someone who was not French, but a foreigner," he said, "to a priest whose life is entirely dedicated to the welfare of souls, who burns with devotion for the most holy Virgin Mary, who manifestly protects him constantly. He is the founder of a religious congregation which is by now established all over the world, he is a learned and humble man whose long experience with the human mind permits one to have the fullest confidence in the honesty of his counsel, and whose miracles can no longer be numbered, since they are continuous." He therefore advised both the mother and daughter to go to see Don Bosco so that the young lady might decide. They obediently went to see Don Bosco who interviewed them separately and then told them:

"Could not this matter be settled by a deal?"

"What kind of deal?" they both asked.

"That the mother becomes a nun together with her daughter!"

To the mother this sounded like a voice from Heaven. When she went back to see the Cardinal, she offered her life to him, so that he might consecrate it to our Lord. At that time she was in Africa with her daughter.[4]

A pastor from Turin, Father Dominic Muriana, of the Church of Saint Teresa and former pupil of the Oratory, also went to seek advice from Don Bosco. He had found himself in great financial trouble because of the debts left him by his predecessor. He had gone to see the saint immediately upon being assigned to the parish, to ask him what he ought to

[3] Msgr. Baunard, *Cardinal Lavigerie*, 2: 398.

[4] Fr. Ronchail reported to Fr. Lemoyne on the sermon at Marseilles.

do in order to conduct his ministry properly. He had been given the threefold advice the Saint usually gave in similar instances: take care of the children, the sick, and the older people. At this time the saint asked him whether he had done as he had advised. Father Muriana said yes, and added that he was very pleased, for he saw how fond the population was of him.

"As to the debts, there is a very easy solution," Don Bosco said.

"And what can that be?"

"Play the lottery."

"But shall I win?"

"Most certainly you will win."

"If that is so, complete your advice and tell me what numbers to play."

"Look, I will give you three numbers, but listen to me and understand. Faith, Hope and Charity. But do not act the way someone does who, after getting these three words out of me, goes to a fortune teller to find out the relative numbers."

"Did the numbers come up?"

"Not even one! You play these three virtues properly and you will pay off all your debts."

The young parish priest repeated his conversation with Don Bosco at a lunch given at the Oratory on the feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1891, and said that in a comparatively short time, he had been able to pay all his debts. No one but Don Bosco would have given such advice with greater conviction, for this had been his long and fortunate experience throughout his whole lifetime.

Did not his faith indeed work miracles? We should add here two more graces to the other many extraordinary ones related so far, and both of them are attributed to his prayers. The Community of the Ursulines, who were running a school in Piacenza, had invoked the Saint's prayers and blessings, since they were facing great troubles. He wrote in answer, "Our Lord will grant you the grace, but in a way most beneficial to your souls." God did indeed answer their prayers beyond their expectations.[5]

The other grace was granted to a Frenchman, Jerome Suttil, who had lived at the Oratory, working in the bookshop for some years. He had been suffering so much and for many months on account of his leg that at

[5] See Appendix, doc. 58.

last he had to go to the hospital. An infection brought about by a wrong medicine seemed to make the amputation imperative. One morning, to his own surprise and that of his physicians, his leg healed. As the patient racked his brains to find out how this could have come about, the cleric Angelo Festa went to see him to inform him on behalf of Don Bosco that he had recovered. His improvement had come about between seven-thirty and eight o'clock, at which hour the Saint was celebrating Mass. He recovered completely.[6]

Talking about miracles, we should recall an incident that happened to Father Stephen Trione. The very zealous Salesian who was then the catechist of the Oratory students, upon returning from a short mission, reported to Don Bosco on the excellent results obtained by his sermon. The Saint said smiling, "I want to obtain for you from God the gift of performing miracles." In his simplicity, he replied, "Nothing could be better! This way I shall be able to convert sinners more easily!"

Then Don Bosco's face became very serious and he replied, "If you were to possess this gift, soon you would implore God, in tears, to take it away from you."

The Servant of God must have given thought just then to the tremendous responsibility that anyone given such an extraordinary gift bears before God.

Among Don Bosco's other miracles, we should also list the heroic fortitude with which he could withstand long and fiery opposition and the undaunted patience with which he endured long and painful infirmities.

What did he not endure in order to obtain certain privileges! When it was all done, he instructed Father Joachim Berto to assemble and coordinate all the privileges he had obtained, a long and arduous work now preserved in a voluminous sheaf of documents in our archives. He had almost completed the work and informed Don Bosco of it, saying that there was every reason to be happy that the privileges had now been granted, because it meant removing many obstacles from his path in the years to come. With deep feeling the Saint answered, "But in order to get this far, we have had to pass through the Red Sea."

During the Informative Process, Father Francis Cerruti testified to his state of health[7] during those last two years of his life. "When his headaches, his congested chest and semi-blinded eyes prohibited his tak-

[6] See Appendix, doc. 59.

[7] *Summarium*, no. X, #39.

ing part in any kind of work, it was both painful yet consoling to see him sit on his shabby sofa for long hours, at times in semi-darkness, because his eyes could not stand the light. Yet he was always calm and smiling, his rosary beads in his hand, his lips moving as he murmured ejaculatory prayers, lifting his hands now and then, revealing with silent words his submission and intimate union with the will of God, although his extreme exhaustion would no longer allow him to declare it in so many words. I, myself, am firmly convinced that the last few years of his life were practically one long and continuous prayer to God. Others, too, believe the same. It is indeed true that if we entered his room to see him and speak with him, we always found him in an attitude of profound meditation, although he gave no outward sign, for his face remained cheerful, calm, and serene, just as any words that passed his lips were words of peace, charity, and faith."

Father Cerruti tells us that one evening in the fall, Father Berto had gone to Don Bosco's room around five o'clock and found him walking up and down the corridor, barely able to drag himself along. When he saw him, the Saint said again and again, *Iam delibor, iam delibor.*[8] Then, looking him full in the face, he added sorrowfully with deep feeling, *Tempus resolutionis meae instat. Cursum consummavi.*[9] Whereupon the secretary retorted, "But Saint Paul also says, *Bonum certamen certavi, fidem servavi. In reliquo reposita est mihi corona iustitiae, quam reddet mihi Dominus in illa die iustus iudex.*"[10] The Servant of God changed the subject.

We have mentioned Father Francis Cerruti. Since he was prefect of studies for the Congregation, Don Bosco entrusted an urgent and important matter to him at a Superior Council meeting on November 19th, "Next year we will have to see what can be done in order to have accredited teachers, and enroll some ten of our clerics at some university or other. It is true that we have said we will only send priests to the universities because of the havoc wrought in inexperienced souls by such attendance and the defections that occur in our ranks. Should there be a reli-

8 "I am being poured out, I am being poured out," part of 2 Tim. 4:6: "For I am already being poured out like a libation...," i.e., St. Paul sensed that his end was near and that his blood would soon be poured out like wine offered before a sacrifice.

9 "The time of my departure is at hand. I have finished the race," parts of 2 Tim. 4:6–7. That is, "My career has been completed," followed by an image of a race in the stadium.

10 "I have fought the good fight to the end; I have kept the faith. All there is to come now is the crown of righteousness reserved for me, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, will give to me on that day."

able priest among these clerics, we would hope that he would serve as antidote and guardian. We will have to investigate this matter, because we need to be staffed with legally qualified teachers. At the present day, it is more essential that we combat the enemy with our shield rather than with weapons."

At this forceful encouragement from Don Bosco, Father Cerruti identified and motivated a number of Salesians to devote themselves to arduous study in order to obtain the indispensable degrees qualifying them to teach in private institutions, even though they were already past the age of most students.

A true and great praise is due him for he is the one who organized the studies and schools of our Society. This does not mean that until then nothing had been done in this respect. "Much, very much had been done," Father Al Luchelli wrote and he was a reliable witness to that early period.[11] The name of Father Celestine Durando will always remain written in the records of our Society in letters of gold. But that was still the so called heroic era in our history. Our Pious Society had then been in existence for only a few years. Immense, uncharted was the area open to our action; narrow, sorely limited, quite inadequate to our needs was the number of workers. The time we had was barely sufficient for us to do the day's work, and each one was forced to multiply his efforts, and shoulder alone the responsibilities of many others. But meanwhile, God smiled down on us, blessing the intrepid ones who were full of good will, fired as they were by the zeal which brushed off on them in their contacts with Don Bosco, so that they faced the strains of their apostolate just as David, the little shepherd, also armed only with a sling, faced the giant Goliath. Never, perhaps, was our work so abundantly rewarded with good results." But we could not always keep up at that pace, so everybody hoped that a regular formation be provided for Salesians to become teachers and educators. Father Francis Cerruti devoted all his energy to this noble undertaking.[12]

Father Cerruti was one of those God-sent men whom Don Bosco had raised ever since they were children and now found at his side at an hour

[11] A. Luchelli, *D. Francesco Cerruti,* funeral eulogy (Turin: SAID, "The Good Press," 1917).

[12] The extent and depth of his dedication was evident even before he was unanimously confirmed in the office, which Don Bosco had entrusted to him a few months previously. In 1886, the 15th centennial of St. Augustine's conversion was celebrated. It was Fr. Cerruti who planned to commemorate it with an academic program held at St. John the Evangelist on June 10th. The program of the day reveals the man's mind. The letter of invitation, signed by Don Bosco, must have been written by him (Appendix, doc. 60).

when he most needed them. Don Bosco was waning then and he needed men like Father Cerruti ready to help him, to provide him with a powerful hand to carry on, organize and give stability and expression to the undertakings he had just started. Endowed with an organizational mind, a strong will and great practical sense, Father Cerruti displayed wisdom, calm, and steadfastness throughout his thirty years in that responsibility. His authority covered the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians as well, and the direction of the Salesian press. In every one of these areas, he was a source of energy to others, for he was greatly endowed with the gift of motivating others to action. In all he did, nothing was so dear to his heart as to keep vibrant the spirit of the Founder in all the Salesian confreres. In addressing his public thanks to the Salesians on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his election as prefect of studies general, he wrote, "Each day that goes by convinces me more and more of the bounded necessity of adhering as closely as we can to what Don Bosco taught us, also in regard to instruction and education, never straying from Don Bosco's teaching even in the smallest detail. Far from us all innovators!"

A pleasant day was spent around Don Bosco on November 30th in the Valsalice School. It was the feast of the award ceremony for the noble boarders of that school. Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda and the Rev. James Margotti spent several hours in the morning and evening with the Saint. During the ceremony His Eminence introduced one of his delightful improvisations on the value and effectiveness of discipline. Don Bosco returned home to the Oratory around six o'clock p.m.[13] That same evening the Cardinal wrote to Bishop John Cagliero, "I spent nearly the whole day today at the school of Valsalice. There was the award ceremony, which was truly delightful, interesting like all feasts are at the Salesian houses. Nothing was quite so interesting as our beloved Don Bosco who was there with us, always jovial, serene and happy. He was no worse in health, although always subject to his habitual infirmities. Our Lord must surely want to use him for many great things to come. Among these, we should not overlook a handsome group of missionaries who should set out the day after tomorrow. I do not want to forego the pleasure of attending the ceremony, nor of calling down all the blessings of heaven upon this chosen group." Rightly had Father Francis Cerruti written to the bishop,[14]

13 See *Unità cattolica,* December 2, 1886.
14 Turin, October 12, 1886.

"Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda continues always to be a most affectionate protector to us, and he is certainly one of the greatest comforts and supports that our beloved Don Bosco has."

At the beginning of 1871, Don Bosco had some confidential souvenirs he had written, lithographed, and mailed to the directors of his houses. He had signed them all with the following date, "Turin, 1886 Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy. 45th anniversary of the foundation of the Oratory." He sent a copy to every director, heading it with a "Christmas Strenna."[15]

Two Salesians had been sent by Don Bosco to preach a mission in the parish church of Saint Anthony at Bra, where a past pupil of the Oratory, Father Louis Pautasso was vicar. When they came back, they told wonders of that excellent Christian congregation. When the Saint heard this, he wrote this short letter to the vicar:

Turin, December 19, 1886

Dearest Father,

To my most great joy, I received word of the success of the retreat preached by our priests in your parish. Blessed be God forever in all things, and may Mary Help of Christians aid and protect us always, so that we may keep the fruits. I bless you and all your parishioners with a full heart, and may the Divine Mercy assist us always to live and die in his holy grace.

Pray for me who will always be in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

In Turin on December 20th, the revered Baron Manuel died at a very advanced age. He was a very charitable gentleman and in his old age had wanted to retire from active participation in the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and other pious organizations. Before taking this step, he wanted to seek the advice of Don Bosco:

[15] These are the souvenirs that we read in Lemoyne's *The Biographical Memoirs,* Vol. VII, 316–319. In a letter to Bp. Cagliero dated November 29, Fr. Rua wrote: "Fr. Lasagna will be bringing a strenna for the directors, consisting of a collection of confidential souvenirs that Don Bosco has gathered for you all from his long experience. I hope they will know how to draw the greatest possible benefit from them."

"Go on as you are now," the Saint had told him, "Let us work until the very end of our days, and do all the good possible."

"That's what I decided to do," he wrote in his memoirs.

There was a Superior Council meeting that day and Don Bosco took the floor several times, saying interesting and beneficial things which we can glean from the minutes of the meeting. Father Paul Albera too, happened to be present, because several changes in the staff in the French houses were under discussion. Among others, Father Louis Cartier, the director at Saint Marguerite, was to be transferred to Nice as vice director, to take Father Joseph Ronchail's place the following year when Father Ronchail was to be transferred to Paris. But here an obstacle arose.

"Nice Maritime is a locality where we have a concentration of Cooperators, not only from France, but from the whole of Europe and America," someone pointed out, "since foreigners from all parts of the world convene there and enroll in the Pious Union. They therefore strike-up relationships with us and do their utmost to persuade other people in their respective countries to enroll too. I do not think that Father Cartier's natural disposition and poor ability to beg for alms could bring much of a benefit to our Pious Society."

Don Bosco replied, "Father Ronchail should accompany and introduce Father Cartier to the homes of our benefactors so that his limited natural disposition may not prove obstructive in his dealings with the Cooperators. True enough, not all of us have the gift of knowing how to solicit alms. For this, one should have frankness, humility, readiness to shoulder sacrifices, a way of talking which may win over people's hearts, and caution in the use of words so as not to offend anybody's sensitiveness. The *Salesian Bulletin's* help must be enlisted to announce the appointment of a new director, to introduce him to our Cooperators.[16] Let a circular letter be published, in these terms: "Circumstances have called Father Ronchail to the house in Paris as director. The superiors have decided that I, Father Cartier, should take his place. While I am honored to announce my appointment, I appeal to your charity and your good advice, etc., etc." When Ronchail arrived in Paris, he addressed a very similar circular letter to the Cooperators in the metropolis, "Today, those

16 The *Bulletin Salésien* of June 1887 used the occasion of announcing the death of Mrs. Levret to mention Fr. Cartier as director of the house in Nice; in its next issue it published an obituary notice which he had written on this pious Cooperator.

who know Father Cartier will have heard that he has become an incomparable collector of alms in Nice. During the past years of economic crisis everywhere, he succeeded in raising a church to Mary Help of Christians on which he spent several millions."

In speaking of Paris, Father Michael Rua remarked that after roaming the city for an entire day, Father Charles Bellamy had collected only seven francs. Don Bosco replied, "In these circumstances, let the director have one hundred letters lithographed, to read as follows: 'our house at Menilmontant is in serious financial need. We need this and that. I will call on you on such and such a day to collect your charitable donation.' This will enable us to collect something; otherwise, nothing can be accomplished. If one calls unexpectedly on anybody, and he is unknown, and he is unable to prove his position or authorization, nothing will be accomplished. A calling card might also be printed, with the following words beneath the name of the caller: '*I appeal to Monsieur* (leave space for the name, to be filled in by pen) *on behalf of the poor boys living in the house where I am director and beg you to bear us in mind when you might consider making some charitable donations'*. These calling cards might be printed for all directors of those houses, which rely on charity. We might also add as a motto: *Those who give to the poor will be generously rewarded by the Lord."*

Father Paul Albera sought authorization to purchase a piece of land, which would complete the area of the playground of St. Leo's Oratory. Twenty thousand francs would have been needed to pay the deed. The Superior Council approved and Don Bosco said, "Here again we could write a circular letter, once we have entered an understanding with the proprietor of the land, wording it as follows: 'We have so many boys in our house, and it has become necessary for us to build further, so that we can take in many more boys than we have now (50, 80,100 boys, etc.). Such and such a sum would be required. You are invited to list here whatever sum of money you may see fit to give, so that we may have an idea of the amount of capital with which we can reckon'. Then we can call on this benefactor today, or on that other tomorrow with a ledger in which we can enter their signatures."

The Council members laughed at the ease with which Don Bosco could think up practical ways of raising money. He replied, "Once I could keep on working by going around in search of help, but now I content myself with letting my brain work all the time. Once I conceive a plan, I investigate the pros and cons, stipulate the details and forge ahead... Now

it is a matter of buying this land. Father Albera can send me the list of the leading citizens in the town of Marseilles. I will write to them. The grace of Mary Help of Christians will do the rest."

On another occasion, a transaction between the Salesians and a certain Mr. Mingardon of Marseilles had begun, regarding the purchase of a printing shop which Mingardon was willing to sell at a very convenient price. Nothing came of it. Father Albera now broached the subject again, to which Don Bosco replied, "We would need a board of directors if we were to draw any advantage from such a contract; but anything which was even only remotely tinged with commercialism was always fatal to religious orders."

At Christmastime the new dining room for the members of the Superior Council was inaugurated—it was located on the second floor, adjacent to the library and very near Don Bosco's rooms. This would have enabled him to get to it without any difficulty.[17] On that same occasion, a feast was held to honor Fr. Charles Viglietti's first Mass.

Something quite new was inaugurated after Christmas at the Oratory. For the first time, on Saint John the Evangelist day, all the artisans agreed that they would celebrate the real name day of Don Bosco. All the different shops sent him a letter, signed by each individual boy working in them, as well as by their respective headmasters and assistants. Everyone promised Communions, visits to the Blessed Sacrament and Mary Help of Christians and prayers.

Many Italian bishops too were praying for Don Bosco, as they eagerly assured him that they would respond to his appeal, launched in October. One bishop, Peter DeGaudenzi of Vigevano, who, ever since he had been a canon at Vercelli, had tenderly venerated and helped the Saint for a number of years, wrote to Father Michael Rua on January 4, 1887, "I here enclose a very modest offering for Don Bosco's Salesian missions.[18] How much I regret not being able to do more! I am making this small offering also because I hope our Lord will preserve a man of God like Don Bosco for us. Please, give him my very best and encourage him, saying that prayers are offered for his good health, here as well as in the seminary, and in religious institutes. During the triduum, held the last two days of the year and the first of the current year in all churches of the diocese in honor of the

[17] Not long after Don Bosco's death, his successor returned to the common dining room.

[18] He sent 40 lire. See Appendix, doc. 62 (A, B, C, D, E, F,).

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus for the Holy Father, I ordered that prayers be said for our dear, venerated Don Bosco when I was giving Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament in the cathedral. I bless this admirable man who spends his life doing good."

The above mention of the artisans leads us to recall an event of interest to us. In 1886, to meet a greater number of applications, Don Bosco had three big rooms built, approximately eighty-two feet in length and twenty-three in width, in the corner of the first playground, where the quarters of the superior council now stand. The new site was not completely dry when the Oratory superiors had located some fifty pupils into it. Father Anacletus Ghione, their catechist, who checked on them morning and evening when it was time for them to rise and go to bed, noticed that their beds were wet from the humidity dripping from the ceiling rafters. Afraid lest the boys might get sick, he laid the problem before Don Bosco. The good Father asked him whether the beds could possibly be moved elsewhere. Father Ghione replied that he had considered that possibility but could not find any place. Whereupon Don Bosco remained silent a moment and then said, "Well, leave them where they are."

"But they'll all be sick this winter," the catechist insisted, adding that their assistant had already been ill for three days.

"Relax," the Saint replied, "not a single boy will get sick."

Indeed, not one boy got sick all through that winter. The assistant too recovered in a short time.[19]

It was now the end of the year. No one ventured to hope that Don Bosco would come downstairs after evening prayers, to join them in the church of Mary Help of Christians. So what did they do? Shortly before sunset everybody in the house— artisans, students, and Salesians—gathered beneath his windows, and sang in chorus the well-known song with indescribable gusto,

Let us go, friends,
Don Bosco awaits us.
Perfect joy
Awakens in our hearts.

Don Bosco, leaning on two priests, appeared at the window, deeply

[19] Report by Fr. Ghione in the October 1925 *Bollettino salesiano* (49:258).

touched, and gripping the railing of the balcony. He leaned out as far as he could, thanking them all and wishing everybody a happy end of the old year and a joyous beginning of a new year, with the blessing of Our Lord and of Mary.

Chapter 11

A LIFE OF RETIREMENT

The Piedmontese winter, which was especially hard on all old men, piled discomfort upon discomfort on Don Bosco, compelling him to live completely walled up in his modest apartment. Save for the few lucky students of the fourth high school grade who were allowed to go and see him now and then, to call on him and make their confession to him, the boys did not see him at all. We should remember that the fifth high school grade had been phased out in 1886. On January 22nd, he heard the boys' confessions for over two hours. All of them went to confession save one, who failed to make his appearance. But his absence went unobserved, for it had already been some time now that a number of them had either chosen other confessors, or were prevented from going at that hour because they had to study, or for some other reason they were not going to make their confession to Don Bosco and if they did, they did it rarely.

But on this occasion the Saint noticed it. As a matter of fact he sent for the boy that same evening. He had him sit down beside him, he chatted for a while on different matters and then asked, "Why have you not gone to the Sacraments for some months?"

The boy hung his head, without answering. Don Bosco broke the silence to ask:

"Do you want me to tell you why?"

"Yes, please tell me," the boy answered.

"Look, for this and this other reason." So saying, in a fatherly way, he listed the sins, which the poor boy was ashamed to confess. Dumbfounded, the boy gaped at him, quite at a loss, then fell on his knees and made his confession. When he emerged from the room, he met Father Charles Viglietti and told him with the familiarity the boys were wont to use with him, "Don Bosco just said this and this to me, and guessed all of my sins."

On another occasion, while speaking about the graces bestowed by Our Lady on the Oratory, Don Bosco remarked to the same secretary, "Mary loves us too much. It is useless for our boys to try to hide anything they have in their hearts. I see it and bring it out into the open."

He continued to give audiences to outside visitors, but to a much lesser degree than previously, for his secretaries had received orders from his physicians and the superiors that the number of visitors and the duration of their interviews was to be curtailed. On January 2nd, Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda went to see him, and stayed with him for an hour. On the 5th Bishop Ordonez, the bishop of Quito, Ecuador, went to see him and asked for at least four Salesians in the name of the President of the Republic of Ecuador. He then went to Rome, but again called on him on his return and obtained a formal promise. Already on January 1st, Don Bosco had said something to Father Viglietti which the latter had entered into his diary. "It just got into my head the idea that I should set up as soon as possible a missionary expedition to Quito and the Republic of Ecuador. That is a mission station where vocations can be found."

Among other people also Father Louis Guanella went to see him. He had not called at the Oratory again since leaving it in 1878. It was not until Jan. 2, 1887 that he had the courage to visit Don Bosco. After the Saint's death, he described the impression Don Bosco had made on him, at that visit: "He seemed quite transformed to me. I thought I could detect a ray of divine grace on his transparent face. He blessed me warmly as I knelt at his feet, and he also blessed my humble endeavors."

The youthful priest, Father Raymond Jara, who later became bishop of Ancud in Chile, also went to see him from Nice, France. He was traveling through France trying to raise money to found a Catholic university at Santiago. He called on Don Bosco to have medals and some holy pictures blessed by him. The picture of Mama Margaret was among them. The Saint was shaken up as he caught sight of it; he gazed at it a few moments, and then said, " Love her!" As the young man walked with Don Bosco through the corridor where the offices were located, he remarked that it was very narrow, and ventured respectfully, "If I am not too bold, might I ask for an explanation?"

"Please speak up!"

"Should there be any stout priest in your congregation, how would he be able to walk down this corridor? Why did you build it so narrow?"

"Why... why...to fight against temptations."

Father Jara understood. When he returned to Chile, he built a big building, subdivided into many small apartments where one hundred eighty university students from the province could live. While it was under construction, he recalled Don Bosco's words and ordered that the corridors were to be very narrow, with the doors built very low. During a civil war provoked by President Balmaceda in 1891, the building was confiscated and put up for sale by auction. Located as it was in the heart of the city, many people were eager to buy it. All those who looked at those corridors and those doors were so disappointed that they lost all interest, so it was restored to its original use to the delight of the professors who had preceded it.

In the stillness of his little room, Don Bosco devoted a good deal of his time to his correspondence. An incredible number of letters were delivered daily to the Oratory, most of them to Don Bosco, and they dealt with business, graces received through Mary Help of Christians, with the *Catholic Readings*, the *[Salesian] Bulletin*, and with replies to circular letters. They were coming from Italy, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Poland, Russia, Asia Minor, India, and North and South America. Once they had been sorted, the Saint called on trusty people who read his letters to him personally, then, being unable to reply himself as a general rule, he instructed others to answer them for him. Let us look at some of this correspondence of which we still have copies.

Two letters *Sui Generis* [unique] which came from France add yet further proof to the many proofs of the extraordinary aura of holiness in which Don Bosco was universally held. Someone who had already on several other occasions, consulted him on spiritual problems, in particular on his marriage plans, now wrote to implore him on the eve of an official engagement whether, as a good Christian, he would do well to marry a certain young lady. The Saint replied, "You may marry this person with a serene conscience. She will contribute to your happiness if both of you will go frequently to Holy Communion. I recommend my young orphans to your charity. Pray for me, and may God bless you and the Blessed Virgin always be your guide." Another person had never met Don Bosco at all, but having heard that he was a man of great faith from one who had seen him in Paris, he confided his problems to him. For some years he had been thinking of marrying someone, but financial issues had led him to break off his relationship. Now he was anxious to re-establish it again. He asked that Don Bosco examine the matter conscientiously before God and then

let him know the outcome of his pious and charitable mediation. "Will I find elements for both worldly and eternal happiness in this marriage that I wish to contract?" the man had written. "Should my hopes fail, would that mean perhaps that our Lord is summoning me to another path in life?"

This is what Don Bosco replied, "Ask your spiritual director about what he thinks. If he says yes, then all you need to do is to make sure that the person of whom you write goes to Holy Communion. As to the rest, be at peace. I am praying for you and I recommend you to my little orphans. May God reward your charity generously." The gentleman had enclosed a charitable donation in his letter.

He must have written a good many notes or short letters in gratitude for donations he had received.

For New Year's Day, Prince August Czartoryski had sent him a donation, telling him at the same time how deeply fond the Polish Cooperators were of the Founder of the Salesian Congregation. In writing to thank him for his charity and kind words, he did not refer to the prince's vocation, certainly out of consideration for his father, but restricted himself to saying, "In all events, please believe that we do not cease praying to God for you and all that concerns you."[1]

Don Bosco wrote to Countess Alexandra di Camburzano:

Turin, January 9, 1887

Dear Countess,

I am very sorry that you are not well. I and others will pray for your good health. I understand perfectly that you have your crosses to bear. All of us have some, except for Don Bosco who has none at all.

It would seem as if the things of this world are approaching a crisis, but God is an infinitely loving Father, and infinitely powerful, so let us leave things to him.

Thank you for the strenna you sent for our little orphans. Tomorrow they will go to Holy Communion for you. I myself with the help of God will say Holy Mass. May Mary be our guide to heaven.

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. J. Bosco

[1] Appendix, doc. 64.

On the feast of Saint Francis de Sales he sent a holy picture with this inscription to Baroness Azeglia Ricci, née de Maistre whom he had known ever since she was a child:

"Dear Baroness Ricci,

May God bless you and generously reward your charity. Our priests, missionaries, and orphans join me in offering up prayers for you every day."[2]

Anniversaries, nominations, happy events involving people to whom he felt bound by ties of allegiance or gratitude, never went by unnoticed. In 1887, the Catholic world celebrated the jubilee of ordination to the priesthood of Leo XIII. At the beginning of the year at Bassano Vicentino a special edition entitled *Exultemus* was being printed. And those responsible for it were calling on the most eminent figures of the Catholic world to contribute some article befitting the occasion. They could not overlook Don Bosco. On January 18, saying it was quite impossible for him to write an article, he formulated the following declaration, "That which I can do however, is to state, and very clearly indeed, that I make my own the sentiments of faith, esteem, respect, veneration, and unfaltering love that Saint Francis de Sales had for the Supreme Pontiff. Jubilantly do I endorse all the glorious tributes inherited from the holy Doctors of the Church and the Councils, which when woven into a chaplet of precious gems, adorn the head of the Pope. Among them, I quote, Abel for the primacy, Abraham for the patriarchate, Melchisedek for the order, Aaron for the dignity, Moses for the authority, Samuel for justice, Peter for power, Christ for the anointing and Shepherd of all Shepherds, as well as over forty other no less splendid and appropriate tributes. It is my intention that the members of the humble Congregation of Saint Francis de Sales should never deviate from the sentiments of this great Saint and patron of ours in regard to the Apostolic See; that they readily and respectfully, in simplicity of mind and heart, accept not only the Pope's

[2] To this same lady on New Year's Day, the Saint had written on a visiting card, "The Rev. John Bosco begs you accept his humble respects. He and his orphans are praying for you and all your intentions, while he calls down upon you the best blessings of heaven. January 1, 1887."

decisions in matters of dogma and discipline, but also his opinions even in matters open to dispute; that they should follow him even as a private doctor rather than adhere to the opinion of any other theologian or scholar. I believe that not only the Salesians and their Cooperators should abide by this rule, but all the faithful in general, especially the clergy. Over and above the duty incumbent on children to respect their Father, over and above the duties incumbent on Christians to venerate the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the Pope deserves the greatest deference because he was chosen from among the most learned, the most prudent, the most virtuous, and is assisted very particularly in his rule of the Church by the Holy Spirit."

On December 26th, Cardinal di Canossa, the bishop of Verona, wrote to him to appeal on behalf of his own brother Octavius, "Bless him, myself, and all our family. Once again do I recommend my undertakings to your fervent prayers, especially one business matter for which I have been praying to God for some time. Ever at your service." In closing, he expressed his "infinite esteem and devotion."

Three weeks later Don Bosco sent him this reply,

Turin, January 14, 1887

Most Revered Eminence:

I was very happy to receive your greetings and blessings and was delighted to pay my respects to your brother, Count Canossa. At the present time, all our prayers are addressed to the Most Holy Virgin Help of Christians so that you may be preserved *ad multos annos iubilares dies* for the glory of the Church, the support of those in need, and especially for the benefit of the poor Salesians who humbly but fervently recommend themselves to the charitable prayers of Your Eminence.

Please bless us all, and kindly look on us as your humble, but most affectionate servants and sons.

In the name of all,
Rev. John Bosco

Please forgive this bad handwriting.

By return mail the cardinal wrote expressing his keen joy over his letter. This answer is a precious document, which reveals the high opinion this great man of the Church had of Don Bosco and his Congregation. Verona was then getting ready to celebrate the imminent silver jubilee of its bishop's episcopate. Leo XIII had anticipated the gesture of the diocese by writing a letter of congratulations to which reference is made herein.

January 15, 1887

Dear and most venerated Don Bosco:

No other letter among those I have received recently, after the magnificent letter of our Holy Father Leo XIII, brought me such joy and happiness as your own affectionate letter did this morning! A thousand times, thanks! For, among your many and holy occupations, you did not only remember my own humble person, but also you inconvenience yourself to write me with your own hand! I am grateful to you from the bottom of my heart, and since I cannot do more, I will pray to the Lord to bless you and your holy undertakings, with even more fervor than I usually do. I say, "even more" because I esteem and love them, yes indeed. I love your Salesians and although unworthily, I do have a special memento for the missions every morning during Holy Mass, especially for Africa, Patagonia, and China where the Sisters of Canossa are doing a great deal of good.

Poor Africa! Oh! Do me the charity of praying first for me (for great is my need, as I well know), and then for that unfortunate mission! You must know that one day I told the superiors of this little seminary for Central Africa, "If he accepts us we will all move on with arms and baggage under the rule of Don Bosco, all of us together, and go to South America which is quite another country."

But they felt that they ought to respect the memory and the efforts of our late lamented Bishop [Daniel] Comboni, and wait to see whether it so pleased our Lord to re-open the road for us to reach the blacks. So I did not try to insist.

Meanwhile, my cordial thanks to you for everything, and to your excellent Salesians with you. You promised me the greatest of all graces, namely, the support of their prayers. I beg you also, to bless me, and to believe me always with all my heart,

Your most devoted and affectionate,
L. Cardinal di Canossa, bishop

Deeply touched, the Servant of God acknowledged receipt of the letter with the cordial simplicity peculiar to Saints and sent him a holy picture of Mary Help of Christians, on which he had written the following tender invocation across its back: "Most Eminent Cardinal Canossa. Oh Mary, guide this beloved and zealous son of yours in all his undertakings, always along the path to heaven. January 23, 1887, Rev. John Bosco."

If Verona had as its bishop a cardinal, Don Bosco had to be thanked for it. When the pious and humble prelate had been transferred to Bologna by Leo XIII, he had gone to the Pontiff to implore him to allow him to remain in Verona. It so happened that he met with Don Bosco in Rome. He confided to him with tears in his eyes what was happening, imploring him to put in a word in his favor. During his audience with the Pope, the Saint steered the conversation around to this subject and when he realized that the Pope was not against gratifying the wish of the Bishop, he found a way to make a proposal. Since Bologna was a cardinal's See, might not it be possible to accept a renunciation to an archbishopric, while granting the rank of cardinal to the bishop making such a renunciation? The Holy Father liked the idea, whereupon when Don Bosco again met with the bishop, he said:

"Archbishop? No, but cardinal? Yes!"

Another eminent prelate addressed benevolent words to him. At the beginning of February, Bishop Camillo Siciliano di Rende, archbishop of Benevento and apostolic nuncio in Paris had been appointed to be named cardinal. Don Bosco had met him four years previously in the French capital, where both the prelate and his mother had shown him great reverence. He now felt it his duty to congratulate the prelate rightaway on this new dignity conferred on him, and recommended to him at the same time the recently established Salesian house at Menilmontant. The cardinal waited for the consistory, as is usually done, and then wrote him on March 24th from Paris: "I am most grate-

ful to you for the affectionate congratulations you were so kind as to address to me upon my elevation to the cardinalate. I thank you most cordially for this and hope that in your prayers you will obtain all the help I need from heaven to fulfill the duties, which this new dignity imposes on me. I do not know the Salesian house here as yet, but I assure you that I shall consider myself fortunate if I can render any services to your Congregation."

The apostolic nuncio in Madrid was yet another new cardinal who had been in correspondence with Don Bosco in reference to the foundation of Santa Rita School in Madrid.[3] Don Bosco sent him his congratulations too, to which Bishop Rampolla replied with warm thanks in the following manner,[4] "I am happy for this opportunity to affirm once again my special benevolence for the Salesian Congregation and to congratulate you on all the good your sons are doing in the Spanish diocese where they are located. Not long ago I heard warm praises of them from eminent prelates. May it please the Lord that they multiply in numbers also in this country which is in such great need today of protection against the deceits of the wicked."

The attorney Melchior Voli was elected mayor of Turin in March, and Don Bosco sent him a letter of congratulations. In thanking him warmly for it and asking him to accept his most reverent regards, the foremost magistrate of the city declared that he was happy to recall the days of his adolescence when he had the "good fortune of meeting the most reverend and meritorious Don Bosco in the home of Roasenda." Mr. Voli had assisted Don Bosco in copying his *History of Italy* in this household.

Don Bosco was not in a condition to hold any regular conversations, yet he was delighted to listen to others telling him about the missions and was overjoyed whenever letters from his missionaries were read aloud to him. His own conversation was restricted to brief words, at times truly witty. In looking at the effigy of Napoleon III on a coin, he exclaimed, *"Sic transit gloria mundi.*[5] No one ever talks about him any longer...unless they talk badly."

[3] See Vol. XVII, p. 600ff.

[4] Madrid, April 11, 1887.

[5] "Thus does the glory of the world pass away," words, accompanied by the burning of flax, once addressed to the Pope during his coronation rite. The phrase is adapted from The Imitation of Christ, "O quam cito transit gloria mundi," bk. I, ch. 3, 3. Don Bosco was very familiar not only with papal history but also with The Imitation, which powerfully influenced him in his seminary days (see Bosco, Memoirs of the Oratory, trans. Daniel Lyons [New Rochelle, 1989], p. 159).

When questioned by Mr. Olive whether he might say, in writing to his wife, that Don Bosco was well, Don Bosco replied, "Tell her that Don Bosco has been overcome by laziness." Mr. Olive laughed, protesting that quite the opposite was the truth, but Don Bosco insisted, "It is only the courtesy of Mr. Olive which questions the truth uttered by Don Bosco."

One day, Mrs. Quisard of Lyons sent him a holy picture on which the following words were written in French, "Be with God as a bird which feels the branch quiver and yet keeps on singing, aware of its wings." He read it carefully, then handed it to someone, saying they were to take it to Father Joachim Berto, adding, "Who knows what Father Berto will then think when he receives this!" Father Berto thought what Don Bosco had expected. He understood that it was a fatherly admonition that before long, his sole supporter in this world, Don Bosco, would no longer be there with him. Rarely did Don Bosco break up his silence at table, because he always seemed to be constantly meditating. One day, as he poured some water into his wine, he said, "Jesus on the Cross also wanted his Blood to be mixed with water."

To his great confidant Father John Lemoyne, who used to sit with him in the evenings to ease the unavoidable idleness of his solitude-artificial light hurt his eyes-he once made a prediction. Without anything having been said in reference to such a topic, he remarked out of the blue, "You'll live to a ripe old age." Another evening, as Father Lemoyne was silently trailing him upstairs, Don Bosco suddenly halted and, as if he were revealing a secret, whispered, "A very glorious future awaits you." Then after a brief pause, he continued: "What you have suffered is nothing in comparison to what you will have to suffer. But be brave, everything has an end in this world...and then...and then comes paradise."

Father Lemoyne lived to be seventy-seven. His memory endures and will endure in benediction in the Congregation, and his name echoes also outside the congregation on the lips of many people, especially for what he wrote about Don Bosco. But the last period of his life was really troubled by physical infirmities, and even more by spiritual anguish coming from various causes, for he was endowed with a lively imagination and a deeply sensitive heart. He was probably weighed down by some spiritual torment the time when he met a young Salesian priest and blurted out, "Once upon a time at the Oratory we ate polenta but we had Don Bosco!"

Now and then Don Bosco would relate the dreams he had had during the night to the younger secretaries who were usually around him. Apart from two of these dreams, one of which we have already related in connection with the cleric Olive, none of them contained anything extraordinary.

Yet, on the evening of February 13th this is what he told Father Viglietti, who recorded his words in his diary: "I want to write down many important things which were revealed to me in a dream at the beginning of the year. I always mean to do it, but then I forget. See that you remind me of it. I will turn them over to you, so that you can record them." But, perhaps in order to save him the painful effort of writing, Father Viglietti did not remind him.

Not infrequently, when dreaming, he would cry out loudly, and would wake up Father Viglietti and scare him and get him to run to him from the adjoining room. This occurred during the night of March 2-3. In the morning the secretary asked him what he had dreamt. He replied that it had been merely a muddle that he considered of no importance. He recalled only one part of it: He seemed to be wandering through some uncultivated land, and someone said to him, "You are worried about cultivating lands on the banks of the Rio Negro, while you have utterly uncultivated fields here."

"Oh!" Don Bosco answered, "I'll let grass grow in these fields and turn them into meadows, and they'll provide fodder for the cattle."

Then he saw a beautiful cherry tree laden with fruits and urged a farmer to pick them. The farmer obeyed, but as he began plucking them, the cherries looked withered and spoiled.

During another night, March 24th, he dreamt he was in the middle of a vineyard where the vintage was in progress. "How can this be?" Don Bosco wondered. "It's spring, so how can they already be harvesting the grapes? Yet what an abundance of grapes! How lovely these grapes are! Yes, the harvest will be wonderful this year."

"Yes, yes," answered his brother Joseph and Joseph Buzzetti, who were among the vinedressers. "We have to pick up a lot while it's here, because this year of abundance will be followed by years of famine."

"Why will we have a famine?" Don Bosco inquired.

"Because the Lord intends to punish men for their abuse of wine."

"Then we must get a lot of supplies for our boys," Don Bosco exclaimed.

As he was relating even this dream, he indicated that he attached no

importance to it. However he concluded with a smile, "It's a dream!"

On the morning of April 3rd, he told Father Viglietti that he had been unable to sleep the night before, because he had been thinking over a frightful dream, which he had had during the night of the 2nd. All of this had thoroughly exhausted him.

"If the boys were to hear the story of what I saw," he said, "they would either give themselves to a life of holiness, or they would run away in terror, so as not to hear how the dream ended. Besides, it is impossible for me to describe it all, just as it would be difficult to draw a genuine picture of the punishments in store for sinners in the hereafter."

He had seen the pains of hell. First he heard a terrible noise, like the noise of an earthquake. Then and there he did not give any great attention to it. But the noise gradually grew louder until he heard a long, drawn out, and terrifying rumble, mixed with screams of terror and agony, inarticulate human voices which mingled with the general din to produce a horrifying uproar. He looked around him apprehensively to try to find the cause of such a pandemonium, but he could not discover anything. The ever more deafening noise was getting closer, but it was no longer possible for either eyes or ears to discern what was happening.

Don Bosco went on with his description: "At first I saw something like a mass, a shapeless voluminous something which gradually shaped into a gigantic barrel of fabulous proportions: The painful cries were coming from it. Terrified, I asked what it might be, and what could be the meaning of what I was seeing. Then the screams, which until that moment had been inarticulate, grew louder and more distinct, so that I made out these words: *Multi gloriantur in terris et cremantur in igne* [Many will be glorified on earth and be burnt by fire]. Then I saw inside that kind of barrel some people with indescribable deformities: their eyes were coming out of their sockets; their ears, almost torn away from their heads, were hanging down; their arms and legs were dislocated in a ghastly manner. Intermingled with the human screams were the strident meowing of cats, the rabid barking of dogs, and the roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, and the snarls of tigers, bears, and other animals. I looked closer and among those unfortunate people I recognized some. Then even more frightened I asked again what such an unusual spectacle could mean. I was given this answer: *Gemitibus inenarrabilibus famem patientur ut canes"* [with inexpressible groanings they will be as hungry as dogs].

Meanwhile, as the racket increased, his perception of things also grew clearer and more vivid. He was better able to recognize those unhappy souls, he heard more clearly their cries, he felt more oppressively his own terror. He yelled out some questions: "Will there be any remedy for, or escape from such a disaster? Is such an array of horror, such a tremendous punishment, set for us? What must I do?"

"Yes," a voice answered him, "there is a remedy, but only one: to hasten to pay one's debts with gold and silver."

"But these are material things."

"No; *aurum et thus* [gold and incense]. Unceasing prayer and frequent communion will provide a remedy for such an evil."

During this dialogue, the more anguished were the shrieks heard, the more monstrous were the appearances of those who shrieked, so that, frightened to death Don Bosco woke up. It was three o'clock in the morning, but it was impossible for him to go back to sleep. As he told the story he was trembling all over his body; he was hardly breathing, and in tears.

Don Bosco never declined to preside at Superior Council meetings, which were usually held in his room. Only four were held during the period of which we are now speaking. We will glean through the minutes to draw whatever may refer to the Servant of God.

During the first meeting held on February 14th an important matter was discussed, namely what relations should exist between the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the Pious Salesian Society. This topic had already been examined in a previous meeting, but no conclusion had been reached because of the absence of some members of the council. It was now necessary that some conclusion be forthcoming, so that the Sisters might know to who they were to apply in various circumstances, without their Congregation or the regular observance of their rules being damaged in any way. Don Bosco had instructed Father Lemoyne to look into the matter thoroughly and then report to him. Father Lemoyne studied the matter, asked questions, and read his report on February 14th. In this report he set forth separately the various opinions expressed at different times by individual members of the Superior Council. For our story we only need to know three things: the basis of the whole issue, a radical judgment on how to solve it, and the deliberations made by Don Bosco with the consent of the council.

At that time, the superior of the Sisters' Congregation was the rector major, and consequently so was his vicar. The Rules, which had

been written by Don Bosco and printed, read as follows in Art. I, Heading II: "The Congregation is subject directly to the authority of the superior general of the Society of Saint Francis de Sales, whose title is rector major. In every house he may be represented by a priest to be called director of the Sisters. The director general will be a member of the superior council of the Salesian Congregation." It was therefore not a question here of an autonomous superiority of the Congregation, but of its general direction dependent on the rector major and his vicar. In the beginning, Father Dominic Pestarino had been their general director, then Father James Costamagna, who had been director at Mornese. As the congregation grew, it was decided that the particular direction of it should be left to the local director of the motherhouse, first at Mornese and then at Nizza Monferrato; yet at the same time, Father John Cagliero, the catechist general of the Salesians, had begun to take charge of its general control and supervision, under instructions from Don Bosco. He held that position until 1884 when he was sent to Patagonia as vicar apostolic. After his departure, the general direction of the Sisters had been transferred to Father John Bonetti, a councilor to the superior council. Since he had been elected catechist in the general chapter in 1886, the question came up as to who should have the general direction of the Sisters. That was why the council had already discussed this problem, as we have previously stated, at a meeting held in Valsalice, but no solution had been found. Now Don Bosco was anxious to find a solution.

Would it not be the best plan of all if the Sisters were to learn to get along by themselves, without obliging the Salesian superior to intervene in their ordinary deliberations in their direction and administration? This would without any doubt greatly facilitate and simplify the task of anyone assigned to their direction. This was the fifth opinion gleaned, set forth and analyzed by the one who had to report on the issue,[6] and he argued against it, just as he had done for the previous ones. Here we quote his reasoning behind it, "Women have a particular need of assistance, even in matters of apparently slight importance, and need to feel in practice the necessity of such a sup-

[6] The other four opinions were: (1) entrust direction of the Sisters to one of the three councillors of the Salesian superior council; (2) entrust it to the local director of the house of Nizza Monferrato; (3) always subordinate to the rector major and his vicar, the general direction of the Sisters should be exercised by the Salesian superior council, i.e., by each of its members regarding his area of responsibility among the Salesians; (4) the catechist general should retain the Sisters' direction.

port. If we leave them to their independence, they will only turn to outsiders for such a support, and their local confessor, who will be eager to comply with what, they confide to him, will mold them according to his spirit. Women in a Congregation have a tendency at times to free themselves from a submission imposed on them by the will of their superior, in instances where his will comes in conflict with the viewpoint of any influential mother superior. Ecclesiastical history gives us many such examples. Our Sisters are not without material resources, and it is only natural that they should prefer their own superiors to the Salesian superiors, hence there is a need to maintain contact with them by visiting them, having conferences for them, corresponding with them in regard to each single one of their houses. When a woman is neglected, or only feels she is being neglected, she will always find some way to avenge herself, or else will become fatally discouraged. One who was in contact with them for six years does know for a fact that it is not the Rule, but affection and trust, which keep our sisters, bound to our Congregation. The proverb, which says 'Only one rooster in the hen house', is not without meaning. Father Stephen Chicco before he left the post as director of Nizza, Father John Cagliero before he left for America, and Sister Mary Mazzarello before she died, all insisted on the necessity of tightening more and more both relationships and direction. It is enough to have mentioned even superficially this fifth opinion to realize how completely wrong it was."

When all five of the proposals had been discarded, the one called upon to report on the issue formulated his own point of view in the following terms: "Let the general direction of the Congregation of Sisters be entrusted to the vicar and the catechist so that the former may attend preferably to the material and financial problems, the second to the moral and spiritual ones." This viewpoint was based on the following reflections:

1. It would be far simpler to agree in order to keep unity of direction. 2. The possibility of helping each other in carrying on the direction, since they are only two, without failing to respond to their duties towards the Salesians. 3. The fact that both of them are superiors would lend greater weight to whatever they might order, conferring greater authority on both of them and ensuring greater esteem for them, while at the same time, in many instances both one and the other could call for necessary help either upon the members of the council, or on the

local director of Nizza Monferrato. 4. The Rule prescribing that decisions should rest with the vicar, this being the prerogative of the superior would also be kept. Consequently Father Michael Rua nominated Father John Bonetti, the catechist of the Salesian Congregation, as director general to work with him. This decision definitively was agreed upon.

For a whole month, namely until March 14th no further meetings were held. At that meeting it was discussed in particular what specific purpose the house of Valsalice should have, a subject, which was again taken up in the fourth meeting on April 19th. In the third meeting on March 28th, Don Bosco was present. He listened, he put in a word or two, but said nothing relevant, if we do not exclude his wish that soon circumstances would be favorable enough to permit the Salesians to open a house in the city of Cuneo.

Despite his infirmities, which made his outings a no-no, Don Bosco chose to go out several times in February. On the 3rd, he went to the church of Saint John the Evangelist, where the Cooperators meeting of Saint Francis was being held. A letter of a correspondent to a Venetian newspaper,[7] read: "It was hoped that the holy man would address the assembly as he used to do, but his age, the hardships he endured, the tough trials he experienced during his life have worn out his dauntless body. Today Don Bosco is unable to stand upright on his own two feet; his chest is congested and he is therefore unable to speak in public. He now feels the weight of a marvelously active life. Yet, his mind is as alert as it was when he was thirty, and his heart still knows the youthful enthusiasm for the works of God he always had. He has for the boys more than affection, a kind of worship because in them he perceives and seeks to find the religious hopes of the future." In his place the rector of the church, Father John Marenco, addressed the Cooperators. After the ceremony, the Cooperators gathered around Don Bosco, eager, as always, to see him at close range, to greet him and to hear a kind word from his lips.

A few days later, a Milanese weekly journal edited by Father Albertario[8] gave some space to Don Bosco. Beside a very good resemblance of him on the front page there was a long article full of admiration: "The name of Don Bosco is the summary of a genuine

[7] *La Difesa,* Monday–Tuesday, February 7–8, 1887.
[8] *Leonardo da Vinci,* February 13, 1887.

Christian epic," it read. "There is no one in Italy to whom his name is unknown; his name is repeated by millions with deep feeling, with veneration, with trust, and with gratitude." Then there followed a charming profile of this "miracle man," this "true hero of the priesthood," which ended thus: "He is truly powerful, albeit so very humble and so very affable. He is a giant of charity and zeal, and any praise is inferior to his merits."

A pious matron who deserved well of the Salesian Congregation, a certain Mary Pelissero, was seriously sick. Out of gratitude, Don Bosco decided to call on her. Father Charles Viglietti accompanied him to her house on February 12th. Her whole big family met him in tears and implored him to save the life of their beloved patient. The lady's niece who had introduced her relatives said to him: "Look at this girl!" "She was dead from her kidneys downward. You blessed her several years ago and now she is fully recovered. This other girl was totally blind and now she can see perfectly. Oh! Please heal our aunt also!"

Don Bosco lingered with them for a while, and talked of paradise, and of resignation to God's divine will. He blessed them all and handed to each a medal of Mary Help of Christians. Then he entered the sick woman's room. She must indeed have been a holy woman, for she spoke touchingly of paradise and Christian resignation. She received Don Bosco's blessing with rapture. And he told her that if she went to paradise, he would have some errands for the Holy Virgin, and that meanwhile he and his boys would pray to God that He do whatever was best for the welfare of her soul. It was not long after that the lady ended her long and virtuous life with a holy death.

One of Don Bosco's benefactresses who had deemed herself fortunate to be known as his mama and the mama of his boys, Countess Gabriella Corsi, died on April 8th. The Saint had visited her during the first few days of her sickness and had said, "Ah! Countess Corsi! You did not keep your word! You promised me that you would give two calves to the boys of the Oratory to keep them happy on the day of my priestly jubilee. You did not keep your word and I will not keep mine."

Then on the feast of Saint Gabriel, her name day, he sent her a holy picture with this invocation to Our Lady written with his own hand: "Countess Gabriella Corsi: Oh Mary, grant thy daughter a happy name day and protect her from all dangers. Guide her and all her family along the road to paradise, and allow them, after a holy life, to be all togeth-

er to keep one another company for all eternity in heaven. Amen."

Another of his mamas that he would dearly have liked to see again and bless, the noble lady, Ghiglini, whose name we have often mentioned, died in Genoa on February 13th. Her manifold charity had made her one of the most meritorious of Salesian benefactresses. She had given very special evidence of it to the Salesian house of Sampierdarena.

The departure from this earth of persons who had played such a big role in the undertakings of the Saint seemed to be the prelude to his own imminent death.

Chapter 12

DURING THE EARTHQUAKE OF FEBRUARY 1887

On the last day of the carnival, which fell on February 22nd, Don Bosco wanted to assist at the amusement usually enjoyed by all the boys on the playground. Before he retired to his room, he even tossed handfuls of hazelnuts to them, and letting go of their games, the boys eagerly rushed here and there to pick them up, for they were Don Bosco's nuts. Later, he sent for the pupils of the fourth high school grade and gave them each a medal. There was something mysterious in the way he urged them to treasure the medal, saying that it would protect them from any disaster. A disaster did indeed occur the very next morning, for a frightening earthquake, which had great repercussions in Piedmont as well, hard hit Liguria. Had Don Bosco spoken at random or had he had a foreboding? Father Charles Viglietti writes that on March 4th Don Bosco had told him he had given out the medals because of the terrible earthquake, well aware that it would take place on the following day. It was then believed that certain things he had said earlier on January 5th could have had a relationship with this event. When he was asked why, at the beginning of the new year he had been silent on the events which would occur in 1887, he replied, "It is better that I keep quiet, because otherwise I would frighten people too much. Everyone would become terrified and would only live restlessly."

In Turin, the earthquake shock was a violent one. The boys of the Oratory had gotten up only about a quarter of an hour before and they rushed headlong from their dormitories into the playground. Those who were already inside the church got out running. In the midst of their panic, they held out their arms to the statue of Mary Help of Christians standing on the dome of the church. It was at that moment that Father Charles Viglietti entered Don Bosco's room and found him laughing. He said, "This is an uncalled for dance. I was just about to get up, but while I waited for the quake to end, I felt cold around my shoulders and got back into bed."

There were some terrifying scenes in the schools located along the Riviera, where the quakes followed one another at more or less lengthy intervals. For several nights the boys camped out in the open. Some days later the director of the Varazze school asked Don Bosco what they ought to do, if they should return to sleep inside the house or not. The Saint sent word, "Go back indoors. The earthquake will not do you any damage." Nor did it.

The center of the earthquake's activity was the Gulf of Genoa, along the line, which stretches from Savona to Mentone. Here there were several thousands of victims. Everywhere houses were either destroyed or dangerously tottering. Some churches had been knocked down, and enormous damage had been caused throughout the entire area. Italy was deeply moved by such a misfortune. The newspapers opened subscriptions for the victims, thus revealing how the catastrophe was considered a national calamity. When informed of the extent of the damage, Don Bosco sent word to the directors of the Salesian houses in Liguria that they were to give all the possible assistance they could, material, personal, or moral. Then, at his order, Father Francis Cerruti wrote to the bishops of Savona, Albenga and Ventimiglia:[1]

"Don Bosco, my dearly beloved superior, deeply moved by the disaster which has caused such desolation in a great part of your diocese, would like to give whatever assistance he can to alleviate the terrible consequences of the earthquake. While recommending to our director in the Salesian house at Varazze that he assist the unfortunate victims in any way, Don Bosco instructs me to inform Your Excellency that he will gladly give shelter gratuitously here in Turin and, if necessary, at Sampierdarena, to four boys chosen from among the most miserable who have been abandoned as a consequence of the earthquake." This meant that Don Bosco was prepared to give free room, board, and education to twelve boys.

It appeared as a singular grace granted by Our Lady that all the Salesians and their pupils were not affected by personal tragedies — since they had no dead, no wounded, not even bruised people. But the material damages suffered were considerable. In Piedmont, the houses did have damages but they could easily be repaired. This was not so in Liguria, where several of our houses were badly hit. The one of Vallecrosia was more damaged than all the others. It had to be evacuated immediately. That day school was closed, and the boarding girls were sent home and if they were orphaned or without a home of their own they

[1] Turin, February 28, 1887.

were sent to Nizza Monferrato.

As soon as he had received reports from the individual directors, Don Bosco sent out two circular letters. In one he ordered the Salesians to set aside one day in every house in which prayers were to be offered up to God for the dead victims and for thanksgiving services for the manner in which all the residents of Salesian houses had come out of it unharmed. He also ordered that in order to be able to meet any unforeseen emergency, for a whole year no building or repairs were to be undertaken. No purchases were to be made unless absolutely essential. They were all to shoulder sacrifices and endure any privations imposed by the situation with a willing heart. In his other circular, he informed his Cooperators of the damages suffered and of the ensuing expenses, making a humble appeal to their charity.[2]

Of all the houses damaged, the one of Vallecrosia worried Don Bosco the most, not only because it had suffered more than all the rest, but also because the enforced halt in Salesian activity there only benefited the protestants. He immediately sent his building contractor Joshua Buzzetti to Vallecrosia to estimate the cost of the necessary repairs. After this accurate investigation he wrote that about six thousand lire would be necessary to ensure temporary safety for the occupation of the building. A good deal more than that would be required for other indispensable work. The letter was read to Don Bosco during lunch. "The Lord will see to it. Let us keep calm." He said, and taking the letter, he put it beside his plate. At the end of the meal, in walked Count Eugene de Maistre who after an exchange of greetings, asked Don Bosco, "Do you need money, dear Don Bosco?"

"Is that a question to put to Don Bosco?" was the reply. "Just think, I have to finish building the church of the Sacred Heart in Rome. I have all these boys to take care of and many other expenses to pay."

"Good," the Count said, "I want you to know that an old aunt of mine wanted to bequeath some money to you in her will. Then, reflecting that it is better to have a candle in front than two at our back, she told me to bring you this envelope without any delay."

So saying, he handed Don Bosco an envelope, asking him to verify its contents. Don Bosco handed it to Father Michael Rua, telling him to look inside. Father Rua did so and took out six one-thousand lire notes.

It was Father Michael Rua who mentioned this incident to Father

[2] Appendix, doc. 65 (A, B).

Lemoyne, who took notes of it and the notes are kept in our archives. These notes do not say whether Don Bosco told the Count for what purpose the money would be used. This is actually to be ruled out, as becomes evident in the following letter, which was to serve as a receipt for the donor.

Turin, March 6, 1887

Dearest Count Eugene:

On your way through Turin you were kind enough to call on us, paying us an eminently charitable visit.

We were faced with an outstanding debt of 6,000 francs which had been presented to us only a few minutes before, and due to be paid. It was precisely one of the debts made by our missionaries when they departed for Patagonia. At ten o'clock yesterday morning, this debt was paid to the amazement of the creditor and my own amazement, since I had not envisioned disposing of that debt so soon.

God bless you, dear Count Eugene. You have acted as a well deserving bearer and blessed be your charitable aunt who was the generous donor.

All our missionaries, all of our two hundred fifty thousand orphans will pray that God graciously reward you both here on earth and in eternity.

On this occasion I must fulfill a duty, and that is to thank you for what you have done for the entire Salesian Congregation and their pupils on several occasions. We appreciate the importance of your great help in view of our present difficulties and in view of the multitude of orphans who on all sides implore to be rescued.

God bless you, Count Eugene, and may the Holy Virgin protect your whole family together with you. May She guide all of you always along the path of virtue until you attain heaven, together with this undersigned poor fellow.

It is a long time since I have written any letters, so please overlook my bad handwriting and my somewhat disconnected thoughts. This has been a welcome recreation for me to write to someone I love dearly in our Lord, and for whom I offer up a special memento every day during Holy Mass.

Always glad whenever we have a chance to see you or to be of service to you in any way, I am happy to remain,

Your most humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

This offering proved doubly beneficial, inasmuch as it helped to pay off an urgent debt amounting to precisely six thousand lire. It also allowed the Salesians to dispose of an equal sum necessary for the initial work required at Vallecrosia.

In such an emergency Don Bosco could not refrain from calling on the charity of those more likely to understand and willing to help. Here in fact are three letters that he wrote at this same time to benefactors. He wrote to Marchioness Henrietta Nerli of Florence. She too was one of his "mammas."

Turin, March 3, 1887

Dear Marchioness, and most beloved as a mother:

I received in good condition the important and big case of bottles of very rare and choice wine. I am somewhat mortified because, as your loving son, which I wish to be, I should have been the one to offer something to so charitable a mother. Your gift was in excellent taste and of the finest quality. This precious wine, besides the other good benefits that it does provide for me, is prolonging my life. Blessed be God in all things, and blessed be your great charity, especially in such disastrous times as these, when I would certainly not have ventured to make any such purchase. I am confronted with difficulties which I have never faced before because of the damage to our houses in Liguria, and because some of our orphans together with our Sisters are scattered here and there. But God has always assisted us, and Mary has also protected us, and our confidence will never disappear. But please help us with your holy prayers. In all things we are sincerely grateful to you and hope to be able to pay our respects to you in person. I am happy to be as always,

Your most humble son,
Rev. John Bosco

In reply, the marchioness sent him five hundred lire. In acknowledging receipt of it, the Saint cautioned her to be quick and draw up her will.

He said she should not delay it a single day, because she would otherwise find herself in the same situation as Job, and would die forsaken by everybody with no choice as to what she wished to do with her wealth. The lady did not take his advice literally. When she fell sick toward the end of March, her servants and her physicians kept her isolated from everybody. Even the director of the house in Florence, who wanted to see her, was refused access. When she died, everyone abandoned her and Father Stephen Febbraro had to keep watch over her corpse. No valuable item was ever found. Her substantial fortune, which she had intended to use to help a number of charitable organizations, was inherited by distant relatives.

The Genoese gentleman Oneto Dufour had always been a generous and steadfast benefactor. So Don Bosco wrote to him as well with his habitual simplicity:

> Dear Mr. Oneto Dufour:
>
> Do not be surprised if this poor priest is calling once again on your charity, which is well known to me. I need you badly. Our houses in Liguria were all more or less damaged by the disastrous earthquake. The orphanage for girls, their school, the house and church at Vallecrosia by Ventimiglia were damaged and they are now calling on us for repairs and re-building as soon as possible. At the moment, I am without any financial support, so I am asking whether you can come to my assistance. I appeal to you for the love of God. I am sure that Mary will certainly reward you with the special graces that she will shed abundantly on all your children and the other members of your family.
>
> God bless you and keep you in good health, and in the meantime I am honored to be,
>
> Your most grateful servant,
> Rev. John Bosco
>
> P.S. I am old and half blind, so please bear with my bad handwriting.

In Genoa, there was also a certain Raphael Cataldi, a rich banker and charitable Christian. Since Liguria was the scene of the disaster, the Saint felt that this was the more reason for calling on his assistance.

To the Banker:

Dearest Mr. Raphael Cataldi:

It is now quite some time since I had the honor of paying my respects to you in person, but I have never forgotten to pray every day for you and your entire family. Now I have been led to remember you and your charity by something very serious. The recent catastrophe of the earthquake has damaged more or less all our houses in Liguria. Our hospice, church, and school at Vallecrosia by Ventimiglia were damaged. They are calling on us for immediate repairs and new constructions. I cannot provide for their needs in this truly tragic moment so full of misery. Could you come to my aid? I am appealing to you for the love of God who will certainly reward you generously.

I have grown old and almost blind, so please bear with this bad handwriting.

I remember your family and your saintly father. I shall gladly pray to the Holy Virgin that she protect you all and guide you all safely along the road to heaven. Amen.

With profound gratitude, I am always in Jesus Christ,

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Father Varettoni, the pastor of Rio San Martino in the district of Mirano, in the province of Venice, had sent Don Bosco a substantial offering quite spontaneously; so he wrote now to thank him:

[No date]

Dearest Father,

I cannot admire enough your charity and your utter detachment in exercising it.

With the serious and urgent needs I have at the moment, I trust that your offering will be very generously rewarded. Your name is already listed among the more outstanding benefactors of our orphans. Bless you and your charity. Allow me also to praise the great courage with which you go about doing good works. You do not wait for people to do them for you, as some do, who

mostly are disappointed; you do them yourself. We will be praying fervently for you and please love me in return in Jesus and Mary. Are we not going to have the pleasure of seeing you some time here with us?

May Mary guide us all to heaven.

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

He addressed a humble appeal for help of some sort to a certain Marchioness Talicarne, a Daughter of Charity at the Turin Hospital of Saint John. From the letter we realize that she was in a position to be generous in her charity and was also well disposed to be so.

Turin, March 30, 1887

(There is no form of address on the letter.)

Allow this poor priest too, Marchioness, to call on your charity on behalf of his little orphans. Our houses were all more or less damaged by the recent catastrophe of the earthquake, but the buildings at Vallecrosia by Ventimiglia were almost entirely damaged. The church and school have been closed. The orphans who are living in our home there and the Sisters have been scattered and sent to other localities. Presently quick repairs are needed or a new building. At the time, I am quite without money. Could you, in your great kindness, come to my assistance, for the love of God? I pray fervently for you and will also have these orphans of mine pray that your reward may be generous and that the holy virgin Mary guide you safely along the road to heaven.

With profound gratitude, I am honored to be,

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

The religious sent him an offering of one hundred lire a few days later, and Don Bosco sent her this letter of thanks in reply:

Turin, April 4, 1887

Dear Marchioness,

I have received with sincere gratitude the generous donation of 100 lire, which you, in your great charity, were so kind as to send to me for our little orphans.

I shall always be most cordially grateful to you and will always pray to our Lord for you, and all your intentions. Meanwhile, our little orphans helped by you in these critical moments have immediately begun to offer up special prayers and go fervently to Holy Communion at the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians, according to your intention. I am fully confident that our prayers will be answered. God bless you generously, well deserving Marchioness, for what you are doing for our little orphans.

Once again I appeal to your charitable prayers and remain most gratefully,

Your obedient servant,
Rev. John Bosco

After so great a catastrophe, the customary flow of donations naturally diminished considerably at the Oratory. Nothing more came from Liguria. Other parts of the peninsula yielded little. Public charity was diverted to alleviate the sufferings of those stricken by the earthquake. Wondering how he could find the money to provide for the upkeep of his houses, Don Bosco informed all the superiors of the house of his desire that everyone endeavor to try to obtain money from friends, benefactors, and acquaintances, by informing them of the desperate straits of Don Bosco. Yet, as we have said, this did not prevent him from opening his doors to take in a dozen poor abandoned boys. Here again, one had to wonder at the benevolence of Divine Providence. He said to Father Charles Viglietti on March 4th, "This morning we needed two thousand lire, and lo and behold, we received a money order for one thousand from some unknown source. The other will arrive before evening." It did.

That morning Father Martinengo of Savona, a Mission priest, went to see him to ask whether he could go to see his family without running any risk. Don Bosco told him that he could go with his heart at ease, provided he took with him medals of Mary Help of Christians to distribute among his relatives, and urging them to receive the Sacraments at the

same time. On this condition, he said, they would not be harmed in any way by the earthquake. He also recommended the same thing for his schools in Liguria.

It is not surprising that in the midst of so many preoccupations, the beginning of the milder weather seemed at first to increase Don Bosco's sufferings instead of relieving them. He was very sick the evening of April 5th. He was speechless, he was breathing with great difficulty, and he could hardly move his limbs. He was undressed immediately and helped to bed like a child. He was unable to say Mass the following day. He got up late and partook of a little nourishment, but did not succeed in holding it down. He regained some of his strength toward midday. He picked up courage and said that he was feeling better and went to the dining room with the others. But later he was obliged to go to bed very early. On the 7th, which was Holy Thursday, he said Mass in his private chapel where, after administering Communion to his secretaries, he preserved the Sacred Species, wishing to receive Holy Communion the next day.

Prince August Czartoryski went to Turin in mid-April. When he saw how Don Bosco's health was fading away more and more, he decided to make a spiritual retreat under his guidance, so that he could come to some definitive decision about his own future. In his numerous talks with the Saint, he intensified his pleas that he be permitted to enter the Salesian Congregation immediately. Praising his intention of leaving the world to embrace religious life, Don Bosco urged him to reflect whether it would not be better for him to enter the Society of Jesus or the Order of Mount Carmel, but the young nobleman who had seen many religious communities, replied that nowhere did he believe he could find the peace for which he had been craving so long other than in the Salesian Congregation. "The Salesian Congregation is not for you," the Saint kept telling him. This was the last test to which God subjected that chosen soul. Steadfast in grace and sustained by his unfaltering faith in the Divine assistance, he kept repeating what he had been saying in every interview. At last, after imploring Don Bosco's blessing, he left for Rome, a few days ahead of the Servant of God. Don Bosco soon joined him because he had made a definite decision to undertake this journey in order to be present at the consecration of the church of the Sacred Heart.

Chapter 13

DON BOSCO'S LAST JOURNEY TO ROME

It is not at all unlikely that in his poor state of health, Don Bosco would hope that he could rely confidently on special assistance from Divine Providence in risking the discomforts of such a long journey to Rome. This hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that he apparently did not plan to make the journey in the shortest time possible, but intended to make stops along the way. He intended to avail himself of these stops to do whatever his works needed. As a matter of fact, before leaving Turin he announced a meeting for Ligurian Cooperators at Sampierdarena, inviting them all by means of a circular letter mailed out from the Oratory on April 18th.[1]

He left for Rome on the morning of the 20th of April, 1887. "He left home for his journey but he was looking as if he would not be able to make it even as far as Moncalieri," Father Joseph Lazzero wrote.[2] Accompanied by Father Michael Rua and Father Charles Viglietti, Don Bosco took his seat in a first class coach. The railroad stationmaster of Turin went one better as he led him to a reserved compartment, instructing the staff traveling on the train to show him every possible attention. This great courtesy was due to Commendatore Stanzani, the general manager of the railways, who had warmly recommended him to the railroad stationmaster.

He arrived safely at Sampierdarena. The boys of that house, who had been waiting for him anxiously, hailed him with filial affection. Their good father not only did not appear to be tired after three and a half hours of travel, but even seemed invigorated by it, to the point that he walked past the pupils with a cheerful smiling face. In the dining room he ate with a good appetite and showed an excellent sense of humor. This was a

[1] Appendix, doc. 66.

[2] Letter to Fr. Riccardi, Turin, April 30, 1887.

sincere joy for everyone.

But things changed somewhat the next day as was evidenced by the fact that he said Mass with great difficulty. Nevertheless, he granted as many interviews as he could to people who crowded into the house. During the afternoon, a magnificent coach drawn by two horses was sent to him by Mr. De Amicis, a Salesian Cooperator, and drove him to Genoa. A great crowd of people were lined up along the route leading to the church of Saint Sirus, which had been chosen on this occasion for the meeting. The immense church proved too small to accommodate all those who sought to get a seat.

When the Servant of God appeared in the sanctuary amid a group of eminent people, a soft murmur became audible up and down the nave and all eyes were riveted on him, as he sat down, to listen to his talk. Some minutes elapsed and then the archbishop arrived with the principal members of the diocesan clergy. The meeting between these two venerable men caused a ripple of emotion to pass through the congregation.

The ceremony began immediately. A pupil of the Sampierdarena hospice read out some passages from the life of Saint Francis de Sales. After this, Monsignor Omodei Zorini, one of the most eloquent preachers of the day, ascended the pulpit. He loved Don Bosco tenderly, and used all his eloquence to describe and magnify his works. He could not ignore the recent catastrophe, which had fallen upon Liguria and damaged the Salesian houses along the Riviera. The collection picked up by the young Catholics of the Blessed Charles Spinola Association yielded one thousand three hundred lire, besides the sums collected at the door of the church prior to the meeting, or brought later to Don Bosco in person by donors. After the ceremony, it took Don Bosco nearly an hour to reach the sacristy, so great was the crowd of devout admirers around him. "That dear Don Bosco with that kindly face of his, that smile which is that of a saint! Who failed to go and see him yesterday?", *L'Eco d'Italia* asked of its readers on April 22nd. "He is old, suffering in body and now he cannot walk without support, but how youthful his mind is, always alert and concerned about thinking of so many things, and about soaring on high, so that his mental vision might extend as far as it possibly can! Everyone wished to hear one of his words. Everyone wanted to kiss his hand or at least his cassock. He endeavored to satisfy everyone, smiling slightly, and always serene. 'He is a saint,' everyone was saying."

He prolonged his stay at Sampierdarena for a day and a half longer, during which time he gave audiences for hours and hours uninterrupted-

ly. "Poor Don Bosco!" Father Viglietti wrote on the 22nd in his diary. "He is so tired! There are moments when he no longer can breathe." Twice did the impatient crowd break into the room as the door opened, all falling on their knees. The residents of the house were assailed here and there in classrooms or in the corridors by people eager to be allowed to go see Don Bosco.

This popular enthusiasm was enhanced by rumors reporting exceptional temporal and spiritual graces that had been obtained through him. One sick lady, who had received his blessing, recovered in an instant, saying she was cured. A certain Pittaluga, son of the late Joseph of Sampierdarena, had not received the Sacraments for over thirty years. Although he was about to die, he showed no signs of repentance. His relatives appealed to Don Bosco who promised to pray for their intention. The sick man abandoned his obstinate stand, went to Confession and Holy Communion. The previous year, Father Viglietti had seen a boy in poor health being brought to Don Bosco. He saw him at that time walk by himself, both healthy and strong, to thank Don Bosco. A lady led her son to him saying that he was a rascal of a young man and a cause of despair to the family. He would take no part in the sacraments or in religious devotions. Don Bosco blessed him. Oh! Miraculous result! The boy emerged from the room like a lamb and returned the next day with a serene countenance, very happy after having gone to Confession and Communion. His mother asked for another blessing for him so that he might be given the gift of perseverance.

We will relate here the story of a curious prophecy. We have not been able to fix its date, but it concerns Sampierdarena. During one of her meetings with Don Bosco, the sister-in-law of the Salesian Father Herman Borio, was told: "When you are old, you will come to live in our house at Sampierdarena, where a goat will be your companion. I don't mean at all a goat that chews grass, you understand, but a two-legged goat. It will keep you company even in death." When this lady, who had always been a benefactress of the Salesians, was left alone in her old age, she easily obtained permission to retire by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians at Sampierdarena. She lived with them for the last ten years of her life. A certain Sister Olympia was her favorite companion. Since she always called her Sister Olympia, she never felt any need to know her last name even up to the last days of her life. Now both this lady and the nun fell sick at the beginning of January, 1936; both got worse rapidly, and both died within four hours of each other on the feast of the Epiphany. Sister

Olympia's surname was Capra [goat].

On the afternoon of the 22nd, he got into a coach with Father Stephen Belmonte and Father Viglietti, and rode to Sestri Ponente to call on his benefactress, Louise Cataldi. As he was taking his leave of her, she asked, "Don Bosco, tell me what am I to do to make sure that I will be saved for all eternity?" Most likely she was expecting some spiritual advice on ascetic life, or perhaps a word of reassurance, but with a somewhat severe countenance, Don Bosco replied, "In order for you to be saved, you will have to become as poor as Job."

Don Bosco then was repeating here by means of an hyperbole one of his well known ideas that the rich should give if they do not want to fall short of the social mission entrusted to them by Divine Providence. At these words the good lady was greatly taken aback, and for a while she did not know what to say or do. Once they were outside the house, Father Stephen Belmonte, who had been in the antechamber and had just caught Don Bosco's last words as the door opened, asked him how he had ever found the courage to say such a thing to a person who had already given away so much in alms. "You see, there is no one who dares to tell rich people the truth," Don Bosco replied.

It would be appropriate here to comment on something Don Bosco had said which was recalled recently in Marseilles, in order to stress once again and clarify what Don Bosco thought about alms-giving. In a talk delivered at Marseilles on the occasion of the award ceremony for the pupils of St. Leo's Oratory, Mr. Abeille, the president of the Marseilles association for Trade protection, related an incident, which he had witnessed as a boy. On one occasion, when visiting the house of La Navarre, Don Bosco had also gone to the neighboring Hyeres where he was the guest of Mr. Abeille's father. At table that evening his father had expressed wonder at the miraculous haul of fish (meaning alms) that the Saint had made after a brief sermon to the faithful in the local parish church. As he had walked through the congregation with the plate in his hand, the gentlemen in the crowd had emptied their wallets into it, while many ladies, not having anything else to give, had dropped into the plate the precious jewels they wore. Instead of sharing in his wonder, Don Bosco did find it utterly natural since everything superfluous should be given away in charity. He even said, "Look, Mr. Abeille, once you have saved one hundred francs a month, and one hundred francs per month are a lot, all the rest should be given to God."

"Yet, with eight children to educate, one thousand two hundred francs

a year in savings is not enough," the elder Abeille had retorted.

"I have thousands of children to look after," Don Bosco said.

"Oh, in that sense, the Pope has many more than you have," Mr. Abeille replied. "He does not count them by the thousands, but by the millions."

"That is true," Don Bosco agreed, "but the Pope does not house and feed them."[3]

Some people may feel that the doctrine of the Saint in the area of wealth was unduly harsh,[4] but there is an evangelical doctrine in this matter, which does not lend itself to any facile interpretation. For our Lord says, *"Amen, I say to you, it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God"* (Matt. 19:23-24.). In his comments, which follow Saint John Chrysostom, Curci says, "Here Jesus wanted to reveal to his disciples the tremendous and insurmountable obstacle represented by wealth in the path of salvation, of its very essence and nature, without any specific reference to the inner disposition of those who possess it."

Don Bosco, who was in every way and above all concerned with the salvation of souls, repaid the benefits received in a holy manner, by helping his rich benefactors to overcome this obstacle.

Don Bosco left Sampierdarena at one o'clock p.m. on the 23rd, without being able to partake of any nourishment on account of his overwhelming fatigue. He walked through the playground, which was crowded with strangers who knelt down with the boys to receive his blessing. Many other people were waiting for him at the railroad station. Here again, thanks to the attentions of the railway employees, Don Bosco was able to enjoy the quiet of a reserved first class compartment together with his two companions.

He was now on his way to La Spezia. Although he was still fasting when he got there, he submitted with his unfaltering amiability to the courteous manifestations of the citizens who had come to see him, and then to the festive welcome given by the boys. That same evening he received a visit from the commanding officer of the maritime arsenal. The following day he called on the bishop of Sarzana, Bishop Rossi of the Dominicans. After that, priests and laymen came in endless procession to

[3] *Le petit Nouvelliste de l'Oratoire Saint-Léon* (a quarterly bulletin), November 1935.

[4] See Vol. XV, pp. 438–440.

pay their respects, among them several officers. The director gave a special dinner at which authorities of all kinds, ecclesiastic, civil, and military were present. "It really was a beautiful day," Father Viglietti wrote. "All the authorities of La Spezia came to pay their respects to Don Bosco and ate with him. They were all enthusiastic about him and spoke of him with veneration and affection... and left very unwillingly, declaring themselves his humble servants in everything in which they might be of use to him. The majority of them came back later to visit him." He had spoken magnificently at table, arousing the greatest admiration among all the guests who proclaimed him a truly great man.

The morning of the 25th was devoted to the Cooperators who were not the only ones who went to listen to Father Michael Rua speak, because many eminent gentlemen and graduate officers of the navy were also present. At the end of the talk, Don Bosco imparted the blessing of Mary Help of Christians. Then he sat there to satisfy the eager crowd that wanted to get near him, kiss his hand, and speak to him. Among others, he was approached by Commendatore Polino, the general commandant at the arsenal and the colonels Castellaro and Scapparo. This was something quite unheard of in those days in Italy, namely, that high ranking officers and the employees should thus publicly render tribute to a priest.

He set out for Pisa around four o'clock in the afternoon. Archbishop Capponi sent his secretary to the railroad station to take him immediately to the bishop's palace, for he wanted to have Don Bosco as his guest. But Don Bosco excused himself, saying that he was in a hurry to get to Florence that same day. The confreres from Lucca were also at the railroad station, though they barely had an opportunity to exchange a few words with him. On this train he met Bishop Joseph Giusti of Arezzo who traveled with him as far as Florence and, before he continued on his way, he got a promise from Don Bosco that when he continued his journey to Rome, he would stop in the bishop's town.

In Florence the Salesians thought that they could take him immediately to their own house, but they had to reckon with the Florentine mama, Countess Uguccioni who, unable to walk, had sent some of her relatives to the railroad station with the order to escort Don Bosco to her palace in Via degli Avelli. She was at that time paralyzed, unable to walk a step. Furthermore, she was troubled by spiritual anguish for which Don Bosco's letters always provided inner peace. That day, however, she looked for far more from his very lips.

During the three days he spent with her he celebrated Mass every

morning in her private chapel. Two boys from the Salesian school went to serve his Mass, escorted by Father John Filippa, who was therefore present when these two venerable people met and exchanged their good mornings on the threshold of the little house chapel, the one leaning on Father Viglietti's arm, the other pushed in her wheel chair. For the first time the countess had the appearance of a soul in pain. Melancholy was written all over her countenance.

"Good morning to you, countess," Don Bosco said joyfully. "Shall we dance?"

"Oh! Don Bosco!" she replied, "As you see! Woe is me!"

"Good, good," the Saint said, "do not worry, countess...We can do it later in heaven."

Fortunately his stay in Florence was not upset by any exceptional discomfort. He then was able to grant a good many interviews. The director had organized things excellently, sending out letters to the leading families in the city, announcing his coming, so there was a constant coming and going of carriages either before the hospitable residence of the countess or at the Salesian house in via Fra Angelico, and a constant flow of ladies and gentlemen of the aristocracy and eminent prelates. Archbishop Cecconi was gracious enough to call on him before Don Bosco could do the same at his palace, for he appeared almost immediately at the school. Bishop Velluti Zati, duke of San Clemente and titular bishop of Orope, put his own carriage at Don Bosco's disposal for as long as he would remain in Florence.

On the last day of his stay, April 28th, Don Bosco did not eat as usual in the house of the Immaculate Conception, but with the countess, to be closer to the station. At table she recalled in detail for those eating with them how Don Bosco had recalled her Godson back to life twenty years before. While she was talking, Don Bosco sat with head down, blushing and silent. Convinced that she would never see him again, the charitable noblewoman did everything she could to persuade him to stay longer in Florence, even promising to give him one thousand lire a day as long as he prolonged his visit.

"You know how poor I am," he said, "and all the many needs my boys have. Just now poor Don Bosco is unable to do what he would wish. I have a commitment that does not brook delay, namely, the consecration of our church in Rome, and I really must be in that city some days in advance."

Generous as always, the countess made a generous gesture of resignation, making it even more meritorious inasmuch as it was accompanied

by a substantial offering.[5]

The invitation extended to Don Bosco by the bishop of Arezzo was doubly advantageous. In the first place, it enabled him to forego completing the remainder of his journey in one single stage, which would have wearied him. Then, since he was hardly known in Arezzo, he hoped he would be able to rest a little before arriving in Rome, where he foresaw he would not have had a single day free for himself. So he was very grateful for this stop.

Don Bosco had a very touching encounter at the Arezzo railroad station. As soon as the stationmaster saw and recognized Don Bosco, he went running toward him; he embraced him, then, in tears, he told those standing near, "I was a bad boy in the streets of Turin, with neither father nor mother. This holy priest took me in, educated me, and gave me schooling so that I was able to attain the position I now fill. After God, I owe it to him alone if today I am earning an honest living." All who heard what he said were so touched that they all wanted to kiss the hand of the Saint.[6]

The bishop, who was entirely a man of God and who died poor, though he had a well supplied dinner table, showered tributes and attentions on Don Bosco. He sent a magnificent coach to meet him, lent by a noble family of the town. At the episcopal residence, he had assembled all the seminarians to welcome Don Bosco. He had supper with him and his companions, and escorted him in person, toward midnight, to the chamber usually called the Pius VII room, which was always kept closed since that great Pontiff had spent a night in it on his triumphant return journey to the Eternal City. A young priest, who was astonished at such privileged treatment, asked the Bishop, "Why all these honors? If he were a bishop or a cardinal, *transeat* [let it go], but a simple priest..."

"He is more than a bishop, more than a cardinal; he is a saint!" the bishop answered.

That priest, whose name was Angelo Zipoli, could not possibly foresee that fifteen years later, inspired by the recollection of the former guest of his bishop, the Saint, he would himself relinquish a very eminent position in order to join that Saint's religious family.

Don Bosco spent the whole of April 29th in perfect peace and quiet at Arezzo. He found immense relief in an outing, partly on foot and part-

[5] See Luigi Mori, *Don Bosco a Firenze* (Salesiana, 1930), pp. 138–140.

[6] *Rassegna Nazionale,* February 1, 1915, p. 366.

ly in the coach, through the delightful surrounding hills in the early evening hours in the company of the bishop. Upon his return home, his thoughts flew to the Oratory. Since the month of May was getting closer, Don Bosco wanted Father Viglietti to write to Father John Baptist Lemoyne to tell him he desired to have all the pupils of the fourth grade assemble for a talk and to tell them that Don Bosco was thinking about them, that he sent them his greetings, and exhorted them to behave well during the month of Mary, and to add whatever else this faithful interpreter of Don Bosco's thoughts might see fit.

Four representatives of the diocesan clergy went to pay him homage. Upon receiving their respects, Don Bosco invited them to enroll as Cooperators, of whose existence they did not even know. He explained what they were all about, then sent for Father Michael Rua and dictated their names.[7] One of them, picking up courage, asked him why, since he was apparently in such ill health, he had ventured to take so long a journey.

"What do you want?" he answered. "It is an order from the Pope and one cannot say 'no' to the Pope. In a few days the church of the Sacred Heart will be consecrated at Castro Pretorio. When the Pope came to know about it, he asked our superior in Rome, 'Is Don Bosco coming to Rome for the consecration?' When the superior answered that my health would never have allowed it, the Pope said, 'No, I want him to be here. Write and tell him that if he does not come, I will not sign his passport to Heaven.'

So you realize that it is also in my own interest that I go to retrieve such a precious document which I shall certainly be needing before long." The archpriest of Capannole who described this incident for us affirms that these were Don Bosco's exact words. So this is something that we would never have found out from any other source, namely, that the arduous journey undertaken by Don Bosco had been an act of obedience to the Pope.

He left for Rome on the morning of the 30th, and arrived at the Termini railroad station a little after three o'clock in the afternoon. As he was moving toward the exit, supported by others, but still finding it difficult, he shared gracious and at times amusing words with all the people

[7] They were: Fr. Angelo Zipoli, rector of the seminary, professor of science and later canon; Fr. Joseph Clacchi, rector at Bibbiena; Fr. Dominic Pallotti, professor in the seminary; Deacon Angelo Rossi, teacher at the Piano school. We owe to the last one, now archpriest at Capannole, much of this information.

who had gone to meet him. Two sisters already known to him showed up and said that if he would allow them, they would pay him a visit. Smiling, Don Bosco replied, "It costs somewhere between ten and twelve thousand lire to visit Don Bosco in Rome." But then he added, "Nevertheless, I will be pleased to grant you both an audience gratis."

He entered the Salesian house from via Magenta. The door was decorated with festoon, the pillars in the hall decorated with flowers, and there was a poster hanging on the outer wall of the apse: *Rome is overjoyed and exultant to welcome within its walls the new Philip, Don John Bosco.*

The boys and the superiors were waiting for him under the portico. He sat down on a plain stool and allowed them all to kiss his hand. Then he listened affectionately to their singing and declamations. At the end of the little entertainment, he wittily remarked to those who surrounded him as he was climbing the first steps leading up to the floor above, "You have read some compositions and talked about so many things but you did not say a word about dinner." Everyone burst out laughing and replied that dinner was ready for him. Several gentlemen, among who was the tall figure of Prince Augustus Czartoryski, sat down at table with him.

Father Francis Dalmazzo also introduced a former pupil of the Turin Festive Oratory named D'Archino, who later became a coadjutor and died at the age of ninety in the house of the Sacred Heart. D'Archino now said, "It has been eighteen years since I had the pleasure of seeing you. The last time was December 28, 1869, the feast of Saint John the Evangelist. I made my confession to you then in the church of Mary Help of Christians."

"And since then you did not go to Confession, right?" Don Bosco asked at once.

"I did, Father, and many times; but not to you because I was too far away."

Here, in reference to Confession, Don Bosco related something that we already know,[8] though some had doubts about it and others denied it as highly improbable. We think we should quote what he said as D'Archino repeated it to us and just as Father Lemoyne too heard it from him and wrote it down. This then is what Don Bosco said:

"You see, I put the same question once to His Excellency, the minis-

[8] See Vol. IV, pp. 289-290; and Vol. XIII, p. 375.

ter Francesco Crispi. One day when I had some business matter to discuss with him, I called on him. As soon as I reached the antechamber the ushers asked for my name and conveyed it to the minister. As soon as he heard it, the minister came to the door of his study, saying, 'Come in, dear Don Bosco, please come in. There is no waiting in antechambers for you.' As soon as I was in his study, he went on, 'Do you recall that when I was in Turin I came to see you and made my confession to you in that little cubbyhole? Oh! You never allowed me to wait in the antechamber.' 'Forgive me, your Excellency,' I answered, 'but have you ever gone to Confession since then?'"

Naturally, Don Bosco did not divulge then what the minister had answered. It seemed highly improbable that Crispi should have said "to make my confession to you," and that it was believed that instead he had said "to have confidence in you," since no one was willing to believe that this famous political exile had given any thought to confession at the time. The statement we have reported here cannot logically be invalidated.

Humanly speaking, there was reason to believe that this time Don Bosco would have remained within four walls in Rome, neither making nor receiving any calls, but encouraging his Salesians with only his mere presence, but Divine Providence disposed otherwise. It appeared that Don Bosco's infirmities had been transferred to Father Michael Rua whose condition became such as to cause some alarm since he was stricken by an acute attack of lumbago, as well as troubled by other ailments. "Don Bosco is better in health than all of us," Father Charles Viglietti wrote,[9] "...and he is hard at work on behalf of his sons. He is writing letters, giving interviews, and is full of life." We can allow for a margin of exaggeration in this optimistic report by the secretary, but it is indeed true that from the very first day, Don Bosco was able to receive in audience some illustrious visitors, such as his good friend Archbishop Kirby, Archbishop Dusmet of Catania, Marchioness Vitelleschi, Count Antonelli, the Pope's nephew Count Pecci, and the Cardinals: Ricci Parracciani, Mazzella, Aloisi-Masella, Rampolla, Bartolini, Laurenzi and Verga. The future cardinal, Bishop Cagiano de Azevedo, brought him three thousand lire for the altar of Mary Help of Christians, which was to be built in the Sacred Heart Church. All these people did not content themselves with merely paying social calls, but were received with warm cordiality and were

[9] Letter to Fr. Lemoyne, May 1, 1887.

happy to remain talking with him at times for more than an hour. Later, an entire group of seminarians and religious went to see him.

Prince Czartoryski, who hoped while in Rome to find some solution which would enable him to attain his ideal of entering religious life, was a frequent visitor. He had left Rome without getting any decisive word from Don Bosco, but was determined not to leave Italy before this matter had been settled, so he intended to put his fate into the hands of the Pope. With this thought in mind, he did not feel it would be too long if he were to wait a whole month for the honor of a timely audience with the Pontiff. He was now granted this audience only after the church had been consecrated and Don Bosco was already back at Valdocco. Leo XIII, too, bearing his eminent lineage in mind, suggested that he should enter the Society of Jesus instead, since this would be more suitable for him, but when he heard that nothing could so gratify his aspirations as the Salesian Society, he not only stopped from any insisting but he approved his plan. When he was told that Don Bosco was hesitant about admitting him, he reflected a moment, then said, "Go back to Turin and call on Don Bosco, bring him the Pope's benediction and tell him that it is the wish of the Pope that he enroll you among his Salesians. Persevere and pray."

Since the prince had also mentioned obstacles on the part of his family, the Pope cut his words short, saying, "The will of God before all else." Comforted by these words from the Vicar of Jesus Christ, he hastened to Turin where he again saw Don Bosco, who had intended to test his vocation more than anything else, then he departed in haste for Paris where a far more difficult interview awaited him with his father.

Before we end our description of Don Bosco's journey and arrival in Rome, we must return briefly to Turin to report a sudden tragic loss. Only a few days prior to Don Bosco's journey, the Rev. James Margotti had called on him to offer him his good wishes since he had a foreboding that Don Bosco's absence would not be a brief one. After a lengthy and friendly conversation, he gave him an offering for the church of the Sacred Heart. Who would ever have imagined that they were never to meet again here on earth? A swift illness carried Margotti to the tomb on May 6th, to the grief of his many friends, and the respectful sorrow of his many enemies. It is only right and proper that in these Memoirs we dedicate a passage to this sincere friend and constant benefactor of our Saint so that the Salesians of future ages may retain his memory. All the more is this fitting since general obliv-

ion seems to have veiled his memory to the point that today's young people have never heard of him or whatever they know of him is wrong.

Margotti was a Ligurian from San Remo. He was a born journalist and founded *L'Armonia* with other ecclesiastics and laymen in Turin in 1848. He then left that newspaper in 1863 to found *L'Unità cattolica,* which, under his direction, long held the line of defense for the Church and the Pope in the fight against various liberals, all of them more or less hostile to both the Church and the Pope. Thanks to a well stocked and coordinated library, with card indices, reference files, and note books, and a formidable memory which was worth more than anything else, thanks to an inexhaustible store of examples and arguments which were as sharp as arrow heads, his polemical writings were free of all hesitancy or half-truths, and struck relentless blows wherever any intrigue was being hatched or anyone attacked faith, Christian morals, or the Catholic hierarchy. One might well find things against which one could raise objections today against that impetuous style of writing, but if we are to judge it equitably, we would have to view it impartially in the light of the times in which he lived. In an historical period, in which generous aspirations were violently thwarted or distorted, when the anticlerical movement of the sectarians was considered the indispensable label of patriotism, the dispersion of Catholics would have been far greater had it not been for the forceful action of a daily newspaper without fear and without compromise to uphold the papal idea and summon around it a handful of brave men, prepared to undertake anything and everything to safeguard religious freedom. It is therefore only natural that he was dearly beloved by both Pius IX and Leo XIII and that the Italian episcopate looked to him as to its most staunch champion.

His enemies liked to depict him as an arch-enemy of the Italian Risorgimento, and their descendants and other people who are ill-informed, occasionally hurled some such damning accusation at him. We can see what his true sentiments were in three sentences of a letter he wrote to a banker friend on April 12, 1876, which is now in the keeping of Senator Alfredo Baccelli: "Seven centuries ago our fathers hoisted the Cross on the chariot, and they were great and victorious. Today, Jesus Christ himself and his Vicar are fought against in the name of Italy and of freedom. We true Italians rise up in defense of both Jesus and his Vicar, keeping up with our ancient

traditions."[10] Undoubtedly, had he lived until the year1929 and had he seen the papal sovereignty recognized officially by Italy in the form most becoming to our modern times, he would have blessed the struggles sustained in order to keep alive the concept of this sovereignty in the conscience of Catholics. In its rebirth he would have hailed the dawn of the true Italian Risorgimento. His last article, in fact, bore the title "The Conversion of Saint Augustine and the Conciliation."

This great athlete, when he felt his end approaching, offered his life to God with a faith and piety that touched all those who witnessed it and that serene simplicity with which he had consecrated his talents, his strength and his rest to God ever since the days of his youth. Father Celestine Durando telegraphed the tragic news to Don Bosco with the following words: "James Margotti died at four fifteen. I was there. What a holy death! What a loss!"

The loss was a very heavy blow to Don Bosco. He instantly ordered special prayers in both Rome and Turin. Then he expressed his grief in public on two occasions, as we shall see in the following chapter. On June 18th, he had a solemn requiem Mass for the repose of his soul celebrated in the church of Mary Help of Christians. Bishop Leto, the celebrant, was assisted by Bishop Manacorda, who delivered the funeral eulogy.[11] In his letter of invitation he said, " With the death of the Rev. J. Margotti, Catholic journalism has lost its most staunch champion, the clergy has lost an exemplary priest, and our Oratory has lost a counselor, a friend, and a benefactor as well."

During his forty years of journalism, Father Margotti had looked at Don Bosco with an ever-growing esteem and veneration; he helped him as much as he could with his newspaper and with his money. He remembered him in his will too, for he bequeathed to him a legacy of twelve thousand lire. This glorious journalist was always delighted to enjoy Don Bosco's pleasant company. He called on him whenever he felt this would be pleasing to Don Bosco. He was always delighted to be invited to eat at Don Bosco's table, and in turn he was happy whenever he could have the pleasure of Don Bosco's company at his own celebrations. In February 1886, at a family gathering in the house of his

[10] The Senator published an excerpt from it in *La Stampa della sera* (December 11, 1935) and informed us that it had been written to "Cavaliere Resapieri, banker and administrator, who was in contact with various people in the Vatican and other churchmen at that time."

[11] See *Bollettino salesiano,* July 1887.

friend, the Saint had occupied the place of honor among the other guests, and several times during the course of the banquet, had led the conversation to the subject of heaven. At one point he said, "Ah! Father, when we shall be there!" Another guest, Father Reffo, the future superior general of the Fathers of Saint Joseph, recalled this incident and was in the habit of saying that in the face of Don Bosco's great stress on the theme, he had thought to himself that the Saint foresaw that that would be the last time that such a family gathering would assemble. In fact, he remained with a vivid impression that Margotti's days must have been numbered."[12]

Don Bosco, too, felt in 1887 that his own days were numbered. He had arranged for the church to be consecrated in April, but there was still

[12] See *Unità cattolica,* February 1, 1888. When Fr. James Margotti's funeral ceremony took place in the church of St. Secundus in Turin, this striking inscription, spelled out by the celebrated man of letters, Fr. Maurus Ricci, was to be read above the main entrance:

TO JAMES MARGOTTI
WITH ELOQUENT WORDS AND SUPERIOR LEARNING
THE MAGNANIMOUS CHAMPION
OF THE CHURCH AND THE ROMAN PONTIFF
AGAINST THE SNARES OF DARKNESS AND OPEN BATTLES
TO THAT INCORRUPTIBLE PRIEST
WHO FOR FORTY YEARS
WITHSTOOD THE MOCKERY OF DISSENTERS
THE REPROACH OF THE FALSELY PRUDENT PEOPLE
BE WISHED THAT PERPETUAL PEACE IN HEAVEN
WHICH HE KNEW ONLY TOO BRIEFLY ON EARTH
FOR HIM WHO NEVER BENT DOWN
BEFORE THE TRIUMPH OF ANY FALSEHOOD

After 1870 his famous slogan "Neither elected nor electors" caused great controversy in Italy for many years. When he discussed it with the publisher of Il *Cittadino of Genoa (Il Cittadino,* May 10, 1887), he said: "I am a soldier of the Church, and I have never done anything on my own impulse. When someone who was above me in the hierarchy commanded me to talk like that, I did; when I was told to retract my words, I did; when I was ordered yet again that nothing new was to be introduced but the old program reinstated, I did so. What does it matter to me, a soldier, whether hatred or applause is aimed at me? I know that I am doing my duty before God, and that is enough for my conscience."

Among the autographed manuscripts of Don Bosco (no. 664) there is a draft of something which he wrote for a dedicatory album; it reads: "By the ties of friendship that for many, many years bound me to Fr. Margotti; in homage to the staunch Catholic principles that he has so fearlessly defended; in union with so many pious and learned people who acclaim him; as a token of humble but profound, undying gratitude for the benefits bestowed on me, on the houses entrusted to me by Divine Providence, and on the boys living in them-do I wish Dr. Margotti a long and happy life in this world, and the reward of the brave in the eternal bliss. *Amen."*

Among the letters which Don Bosco prepared, to be posted after his death, there was this one:

"Dearest Fr. Margotti, Thank you for the charity which you have shown to our orphans and for your support and protection of our works. May God reward you generously. I beg you to continue giving us your assistance after my death. O Mary, protect your servant and lead him to heaven.

Your most affectionate friend,
Fr. John Bosco

This letter was published in *L'Unità cattolica's* second edition of February 2, 1888.

so much to be done that not even six months would have sufficed to complete the work. So people tried to persuade him that it would be better if it were delayed until December, but he would not listen to any such reasoning. On no account, he said, was the consecration to be delayed beyond the middle of May.

"Go to Rome," he told the administrator Father Anthony Sala one day, "and see that by May 14th everything is in order. Pay the workers, pay off all those who are clamoring for money, even double their ordinary wages, provided that the church can be opened for services by that date."

"But where am I to find the money?" Father Sala asked.

"Do not worry about that. Spend whatever is necessary."

"What if the paintings are not finished?"

"No matter. They can remain as they are."

"What if the high altar is still incomplete?"

"We will put up a temporary wooden one."

Father Sala obeyed. In Rome everyone felt that the impossible was being demanded. Work went on even more feverishly when Don Bosco arrived. There was a coming and going of workers of all descriptions during the next twelve days. There were men dismantling the scaffolding and removing equipment, men finishing the marble pavement, decorating the altars, putting the last touches to the baseboards, decorating the sanctuary with tapestry. In the sanctuary there stood only the altar Mensa and some steps filled the space where the great high altar was to be. Since the daylight hours were not enough, the final preparations went on at night. Had people waited for December, Don Bosco certainly would not have been able to get to Rome, as he himself had said very explicitly.

Chapter 14

CONSECRATION OF THE CHURCH OF THE SACRED HEART

An article appeared in a Roman periodical announcing the forthcoming consecration of the Church of the Sacred Heart, ending with the following remark, "On that day, those priests will be well satisfied for having built such a monument; for that day will be more than just a religious event, it will be a genuine triumph of art."[1] This statement makes it fairly obvious that the paper in question was anything but Catholic in sentiment. We *post factum* can rightly correct it and say that May 14th that year was a triumph both of religion and of art.

Starting with the artistic aspect of that feast, we could see how the people responsible for the celebrations were anxious for music to be featured in the proceedings and be given an honorable emphasis. In Turin, it had been suggested that the *schola cantorum* [choir] of the Oratory be sent to Rome. Under the baton of maestro Brother Joseph Dogliani, this impressive group of singers performed the most intricate melodies impeccably, to the point it did not fear any comparison. It also appeared a most delightful idea that this church should be inaugurated with Don Bosco's choirboys so dear to him. These ideal reflections went hand-in-hand with the economic ones, because it would have entailed a heavy expense if any significant number of good Roman choir singers had been engaged for the five days during which the celebrations were to last. Yet, Don Bosco was hesitant when he thought about the expenses involved by having no less that eighty people travel to Rome and back. Again, Divine Providence helped him in an unexpected manner and in a measure more than sufficient.

Early in May, the people of Genoa were getting ready to celebrate the third centenary of the canonization of Saint Catherine Fieschi Adorno. The organizing committee in charge of these celebrations wished them to be as magnificent as possible. They wanted excellent music for the litur-

[1] *Il Cicerone,* May 8, 1887. It appeared at newsstands on Thursdays and Sundays.

gical services in the cathedral. The committee directed its attention to the young singers of Valdocco and appealed to Don Bosco, naturally offering to duly pay for their services. One could not have asked for anything better, and no obstacle arose to prevent the execution of this plan.

The complete large choir departed from Turin on May 5th, escorted by several superiors and headed by maestro Joseph Dogliani. It consisted of thirty soprano voices, twenty-two contraltos, nine tenors and seven basses. Three eminent musicians also traveled along: Petrali from Bergamo, Galli from Milan and Bersano from Turin. In Genoa the rehearsals aroused exciting expectations. On the 8th, *Il Cittadino* stated: "Everyone present at the rehearsals for the Mass that is to be sung today was utterly enchanted." The feasts lasted three days during which both the population and the visitors to the city admired the Oratory choir, not only because of its brilliant singing, but also because of the boys' impeccable behavior both in church and elsewhere.[2]

It would have been inconvenient for the choir to eat their lunch at Sampierdarena after Mass and then return to town for Vespers. So a rich piano maker, Mr. John Ferrari kept tables set in his garden for the entire group for three days, catering to them with considerable generosity. On the third day, his wife even handed Fr Lazzero an envelope, asking him to deliver it to Don Bosco.

[2] On the 9th, *Il Cittadino* wrote: "People were very astonished to hear such childish, harmonious, velvety, crystal-clear voices with such high notes as no one had expected to find in Genoa. Many people maintained that for this occasion, women had been allowed to sing in church, but the echoes filling the spacious domes of San Lorenzo came from the voices of the Salesian pupils. Likewise, maestro Dogliani, who conducted the choir that he himself has trained belongs to Don Bosco's school, so the greater portion of merit is due to him. Anyone who had the opportunity of attending the rehearsals at close range was amazed by the discipline, conduct, and concentration, which reigned among so large a group of singers. This also had a very positive influence on the musicians in the orchestra, so that everyone did his job conscientiously, without effort, grimaces or so-called theatrical emphasis which under other circumstances might have been regarded as an asset, but which would have been entirely out of place in a house of prayer. Those candid, fine, delicate voices which were never nasal or guttural as unfortunately one usually hears from young singers, were described by someone as without character, i.e. neither voices of women nor of boys. 'They were the voices of angels,' someone answered, while we who are less poetic declare: 'They are the voices of well educated boys, trained in sacred singing for the church as only the Salesian know how to train and educate them.' In its edition of the 11th: "We are happy that Genoa has at last had an opportunity to hear what is meant when it said, 'Let us teach boys to sing sacred music,' and we are delighted that an example was given to us by that model of all good graces sent by Divine Providence to cause the spirit of God's Church to flourish anew everywhere, the venerable Don Bosco." Again referring to the subject on the 23rd, this was how the singing of the Masses was described: "All three Masses met with universal approval. Perhaps the Mass by Haydn was the one, which delighted the congregation the most. The sopranos and contraltos were especially wonderful and astonishing in the voice range, intonation, sweetness, precision of cue, blending and balance of voices, in short, in their whole method of singing. At last we have heard an artistic performance in church, in which the musical pyramid was fully evident from the base to the top."

When it was opened, it was found to contain the money required for the round trip to Rome for the entire choir.

Their triumph in Genoa was the prelude to the Roman festivities. They set out for the Eternal City on the morning of the 11th.

For the time being we will leave them. And we will go back to find Don Bosco once again in the church of the Sacred Heart.

On Sunday, May 8th, there was a reception given in Don Bosco's honor, to which many Italian and foreign gentlemen and prelates had been invited. They joined Don Bosco at dinner and enjoyed a genuine family feast. Don Bosco was eager that the imminent celebrations should have an international flavor, both to make people understand that his Congregation was at the service of the entire world, and also because the entire world had contributed to the construction of the new church. Toward the end of the banquet, he addressed the gathering, practically only in order to commemorate Margotti. After he had spoken, several other people took turns to speak in Italian, Spanish, French, German, and English. Then someone wanted to know which language he liked the most. With a smile, he replied, "The language I like best is the one my mother taught me, because it did not require any great effort to learn it, and I find it easier to express my ideas with it. Then too, I do not forget it as easily as I do other languages." His reply was met with general laughter and applause.[3]

This is where we can admire Don Bosco's refined tact. May 8th was the feast of the Apparition of Saint Michael the Archangel, the name day of Father Michael Rua. The Saint wanted to take advantage of this opportunity to introduce his vicar to Roman society and Father Rua was consequently toasted several times with complimentary remarks and praise. Nor was this all. At a given moment, the doors of the dining hall were opened wide, and the youthful house choir entered, singing a special composition written just for the occasion in honor of Father Rua. Father Rua thanked them with affectionate, simple words that pleased everyone at the table and concluded asking permission to distribute some sweets to all of the singers.

The stream of visitors continued without interruption. On the morning of the 11th, Don Bosco granted audiences to the committee of Cooperators, represented by ladies with the best names in Roman aristocracy. They first attended his Mass, then went with him to the dining

[3] Here we ought to insert the incident narrated in Vol. XIV, p. 459, n. 2.

room where coffee was served. He blessed them after a brief talk and gave them some silver medals. After having mentioned this reception and having recorded the names of the ladies attending, Father Charles Viglietti adds in his diary, "Don Bosco is very tired, exhausted, and says he cannot but wait for the joyous moment when he can fly back to Turin to be with his boys. He hopes to do this on the 17th, making only one single stop at Pisa." But unfortunately, he still had a long and hard way to go.

The organ was tested before the consecration ritual. The organ of the Church of the Sacred Heart was the one hundred and twenty-second made by Bernasconi of Varese, whose reputation had already been established beyond the Italian borders and even beyond the confines of Europe. Petrali, former director of the musical conservatory at Pesaro, Renzi, and the leading organist at the Vatican Basilica and Bersano, Don Bosco's former pupil and now organist in the Turin Cathedral, all tested it. Capocci too, who was the organist in the basilica of Saint John Lateran, Moriconi, director of the orchestra in the basilica of Saint Mary Major and other famous organists, all accepted invitations to attend the organ testing. Experiments were repeated morning and evening on the 12th and 13th; the most widely varied and intricate symphonies were performed on the organ. The public was granted access by personal invitation, bearing the following footnote; "At the entrance may we ask you to make a donation to defray the cost of the organ." A great many people attended the tests from start to finish.

When it was over, the three examiners expressed their verdict in their report as follows: "It is an organ fully worthy of its eminent maker.... Its fullness is majestic. Its volume well gauged in proportion to the magnificent church. Manned by a battery of 27 chromatic pedals, it produces that mysterious and imposing effect which constitutes the true feature of this sovereign among all musical instruments. Excellent is the imitation of the concert stops, which cover the entire keyboard; perfectly reproducing the instruments they stand for. Its mechanism is simple, solid, and precise. Its harmony and blending of sound are perfect, its execution, immediate. The work has been accomplished successfully in each tiny, individual part, and it offers yet another proof of the progress made by the excellent manufacturer during the last few years. The manufacturer more than minding the profit, minded the outcome of his works, sparing neither effort nor sacrifice to direct his own steps toward achieving his set goal and take always new steps toward progress. With this drive he gives

evidence of his genuine, and properly understood patriotism, since he remained faithful to the Italian tradition and Italian school, while at the same time, willingly accepted useful modern innovations, no matter where they came from."

Don Bosco was present at the tests several times, in the company of Father Rua and a noble French lady, but they sat in a secluded place, that is, from the side of the fake orchestra, which stands opposite the true orchestra on the sides of the sanctuary. At the end, he complimented the organ manufacturer and invited him to attend his own golden jubilee Mass in 1891, adding, "Then when the feasts are over, we will meet again in 1892 in paradise."

Bernasconi returned to Varese, and told his employees about the praises deservedly due to them because of the organ they had built, but as he told them also of the double invitation extended to him, he showed that he did not like the second invitation, for he suspected that it was a specific indication of the year in which he would die. In fact, he did die in January 1892. It is not a fantastic hypothesis to suppose that the first invitation, which was purely imaginary, had been used by Don Bosco in order to pave the way for his prediction of that harsh reality which was a timely warning given to a Christian as a voice from heaven. The organ builder had been generous with Don Bosco as far as his bills, and Don Bosco rewarded him in his own way spiritually by doing good to his soul, keeping alive in his conscience the helpful echo of the *"Estote parat,* [be prepared]".

Two outstanding graces were attributed to Don Bosco's blessing. At three o'clock in the afternoon on the 12th, when the second organ test was in progress, two distinguished persons, husband and wife, appeared at his door. His secretary told them that he was resting. But with tears in their eyes, they appealed to him to please announce them, because they were coming from far away and needed to talk to him immediately. Father Charles Viglietti decided to deliver their message. The Servant of God obliged. As soon as they got in front of him they knelt down, while the lady begged him to heal an arm, which had long been paralyzed. Don Bosco told her in reply that she should take the matter up with the Sacred Heart by giving alms to his church. "How much money do we still have?" the wife asked of her husband.

"A five hundred lire note," he replied. "Will that suffice, Don Bosco?"

"I do not haggle about alms," the Saint answered, "all I say is that you should give in proportion to your wealth." The gentleman put a five hun-

dred lire note on the table. After a short prayer, Don Bosco blessed the lady who felt immediately healed. She began to move her arm in every direction, quite beside herself with joy.[4]

The couple had barely gone out when a group of seminarians arrived from the Pius Seminary. They had come to thank Don Bosco for an immense favor they had received. On the 10th they had brought to him a companion of theirs for a blessing. The youth had been deaf for two years. As usual, Don Bosco recollected himself for a moment of prayer, and then blessed him, whispering some ejaculatory prayers into his ear. Then and there they saw nothing new, to the point that the clerics simply went out. But once they were outside, they realized that the deaf youth could hear very well everything they were saying, and he even repeated the ejaculatory prayers that Don Bosco had whispered to him a few minutes earlier. Their first thought was to rush home to inform everybody about the sensational news. Then their superiors sent them back again to thank Don Bosco.

One Thursday he received a group of pupils from the Lombard seminary. Among their number there was the one who presently is the archbishop of Perugia, Bishop John Baptist Rosa. "We bowed down before him: he was seated on a simple sofa, all bent down and tired looking, in a very modest little parlor," Archbishop Rosa wrote.

"What do you want?" he asked them.

"We wanted to see you, Don Bosco."

"Ah! To see me!" He echoed. "Certainly, because of what all people say of me! But what will God have to say?"

As he said this, he raised his eyes to heaven, then turned his gaze to the seminarians, with tenderness and tears in his eyes.

"Don Bosco," he insisted, "please give us a souvenir thought to guide us in our future priestly life. Bless us, please, Don Bosco."

The Saint raised his trembling hand and blessed them. Then, with his thoughts always upon the judgment of God, he delivered this warning to them, "Always be mindful of what Our Lord may say of you, not of what others may have to say, be it good or bad."

[4] Another gentleman did not seem to understand Don Bosco's words the same way. He called on Don Bosco, and promised him one hundred thousand lire if he would obtain a certain grace from Our Lady.

"I would be satisfied to have a cup of coffee," the Saint replied.

"Why that?"

"Because a cup of coffee today is better than one hundred thousand lire tomorrow."

The Bishop remarked,[5] "None of the many prodigious works of the great Saint ever surprised me after that. They had been plainly explained by their granite based origin, the judgment that God would have passed on them."

His desire and need to shorten as much as possible his stay in Rome, advised Don Bosco to hasten his request for an audience with the Pope. On the evening of the 11th the chamber master himself, Bishop Della Volpe, together with Bishop Volpini, secretary for Latin letters, delivered the audience ticket to him. Don Bosco was happy to make the acquaintance of the former and renew his acquaintance with the latter, because he wished to ask them to try to obtain an audience with the Holy Father for the young singers of the Oratory.

His own audience was scheduled for the evening before the consecration of the church, at six o'clock. "I receive my friends in the evening," Pius XI once said to a French prelate, obviously intending this to be a proof of his benevolence. His two predecessors had also the same custom of granting late evening audience to people with whom they had confidence.

At the scheduled day and hour Don Bosco waited in the Pope's antechamber. As he sat there silent and recollected he heard a soft rustling of feet on the floor coming from the adjoining room: it was Leo XIII who, accompanied by his retinue, with a sovereign's dignity was walking past Don Bosco on his way back from a stroll in the Vatican gardens. He entered his own private library. A few minutes later, Don Bosco was introduced.

The Pope gave him a festive welcome, and did not permit him to kneel down to kiss his foot, but asked Bishop Della Volpe to bring a small armchair nearer. Since the prelate had put it at some distance from the Pope, the Holy Father himself pulled it nearer to him and bade Don Bosco sit, pressing his hand affectionately between his own, and repeating, "Oh! Dear Don Bosco, how are you...How are you?" Then he rose and said, "Perhaps you feel cold, Don Bosco, do you not?" So saying, he went to fetch a large fur, and returned with it saying in a tone of friendly intimacy, "Do you see this lovely ermine fur that was given to me today for my priestly jubilee? I want you to be the first one to use it." And he put it across Don Bosco's knees. Then, sitting once more, he again took his hand and politely asked for news about himself.

5 Festivities at Cuneo for Don Bosco Saint. Gros Monti, Turin, 1935, p. 2.

Don Bosco had been silent until then and was deeply touched by this gesture of fatherly kindness on the part of the Vicar of Jesus Christ. Now he answered, "I am old, Holy Father. I am seventy-two years old. This is my last trip, the conclusion of all my undertakings. Before I die, I wanted to see Your Holiness once more, to receive your blessing. I have been graciously heard. Now nothing else is left for me but to sing, *Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum, in pace, quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum: LUMEN ad revelationem gentium et GLORIAM plebis tuae Israel."* He intentionally stressed the words *lumen* and *gloriam,* applying them to Leo XIII, who was usually hailed as the *lumen in caelo* in the pseudo-prophecy of Saint Malachy.

The Holy Father pointed out that Don Bosco's age was less advanced than his, that he was seventy-eight years old and was hopeful that he would see his dear Don Bosco again. "Plan to live longer," he said "until the day when you will hear that Leo XIII is dead, be at peace!"

"Holy Father, in certain cases, your word is infallible," Don Bosco answered, "and I would gladly accept your good wishes; but believe me, I have come to the end of my days."

The Holy Father then asked for news about the boys, his houses, and showed a great interest about the missions. He also asked him whether he were in need of anything. Don Bosco told him about everything, particularly of the Church of the Sacred Heart which was to be consecrated the following day. In conclusion, he appealed to him on behalf of the young singers that had come from Turin, who were very anxious to see the Pope and receive his blessing.

The Pope expressed his satisfaction for what he had been told, saying that he certainly would like to see Don Bosco's boys and talk with them, and he insisted forcefully that the Salesians should strive to keep Don Bosco's spirit throughout the Congregation. "Urge the Salesians to be obedient above all," he said, "and tell them to be faithful to the rules and the traditions you are leaving them. I know that you have had wonderful results with frequent confession and communion among your boys. Continue, and see to it that in their turn, the Salesians continue to urge the boys entrusted to them to keep up with this helpful practice. I want to urge you and your Vicar to pay equal attention to the number of Salesians and to the degree of holiness of those you have already. It is not the number that enhances the glory of God, but the virtue, the holiness of the members of a Congregation. Therefore, be cautious and strict when admitting new members to your Society. Make sure first of all that

they are of proven morality."

Then, taking Don Bosco once again by the hand, he asked him confidentially what he thought about the future events within the Church. Don Bosco hesitated, saying that the Holy Father knew how public things were going on better than he did. But the Pope insisted, "I am not asking you about the present situation, for I know that myself. I am asking about the future."

"But I am not a prophet," Don Bosco replied, smiling. Nevertheless, he was obliged to comply, as he told Father John Baptist Lemoyne later when he reported his conversation to him. He told the Pope what he thought and what he knew. He never revealed to anybody what he meant by the words "what he knew."

Perhaps the Holy Father would have liked to keep him longer still had he not realized his painful condition. Seeing that the Pope was about to let him go, Don Bosco said that he had his Vicar and his secretary with him and that they too would have liked to receive the Pope's blessing, if His Holiness would graciously respond to their hopes. The Pope consented, rang the bell and had the two ushered in. Don Bosco introduced Father Michael Rua, "Ah! You are Father Rua," the Pope said. "You are the Vicar of the Congregation! Excellent! I hear that Don Bosco brought you up ever since you were a boy. Go on, continue the work that has been undertaken and keep within yourself the spirit of your founder."

"Oh yes, Holy Father," Father Rua replied, "we hope with your blessing to spend ourselves to our dying breath for the Congregation, to which we consecrated ourselves ever since we were only boys."

Don Bosco then introduced Father Charles Viglietti as his secretary. "What have you done with the secretary that was here with you last time?" the Pope asked.

"He remained in Turin, Holy Father, to wind up some business I gave him to do," Don Bosco said. "There is much that needs to be done, but I do not need to urge my sons to work. I rather have to appeal to them to use moderation. There are many of them who healthwise wear themselves out, who are not satisfied with working by day, but toil also at night."

"Oh yes!" The Pope went on, "moderation is needed in everything, the body needs due rest so that it can be used to carry on the works that are to be carried out for the greater glory of God."

"Holy Father, we are willing to obey you," Father Rua said, "but it was Don Bosco himself who gave this kind of bad example in such things."

They all smiled. Then Father Rua asked, and was allowed to beg for a grace. He explained to the Holy Father how the decree of the Holy Congregation of Rites which prescribed examination of postulants for the Salesian Society by two or three committees, was a serious obstacle to the development of the Pious Congregation. He said that it would be much easier if, in compliance with concessions granted by Pius IX, said examinations were entrusted to the particular councils of each house, which in Turin would transmit their verdict for final judgment to the Superior Council. The Pope answered that he duly appreciated the reasons he had brought up. He added that an application should be submitted in writing and the safest course would be to give it to Bishop Della Volpe, who would see to it that it reached the Pope, who would be pleased to do all the rest. The dispensation from the observance of the decrees ruling on the acceptance and admission to vows was then granted for a period of five years.[6]

With a generous blessing, he then bade Don Bosco go, with great gentleness, and had someone accompany him as far as the stairs. As Don Bosco passed them by, the Swiss Guards stiffened to attention. Don Bosco remarked, laughing, "I am not a king, you know! I am just a poor hunchbacked priest, good for nothing at all. You can stand at ease." The soldiers then came over to him, reverently kissing his hands.

A few days prior to the audience, the Pope's own nephew, Count Pecci, had gone to the Holy Father seeking a blessing, with his whole family. The Pope had told him to go and see Don Bosco, to ask for his blessing too. The count obeyed, visiting the Saint the morning of the 13th.[7] A little later when Reverend Mother Catherine Daghero, the mother general of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, found herself in the presence of His Holiness, the Pope said, "Ah! Look! A Sister of Don Bosco." He then turned to the prelates and cardinals around him and said, "This is one of the fortunate daughters of that saint Don Bosco."[8]

While Don Bosco was at the Vatican, the relics, which were to be placed into the altar stone of the main altar, had been sent from the vicariate to the Church of the Sacred Heart. Hermetically closed and sealed, the case contained a fragment of the cradle of the Infant Jesus, the relics

[6] Minutes of the Superior Council, September 12, 1887.

[7] *Summ. sup. virt. de fama sanctitatis*, no. XIX, #6 (Testimony by Fr. Dalmazzo).

[8] Bishop John Cagliero learned of this from Cardinal Guarino, archbishop of Messina, and from the mother general herself, and testified to it during the processes (See above references #10).

of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, Saint James, the martyr Saint Lawrence and of the Salesian patron saint, Francis de Sales. They were put into a gilded urn and exposed in the old chapel where, at nine o'clock in the evening, the hymn of martyrs was sung, followed by the official rite in the stillness of the night.

Don Bosco had made an application to the Sacred Congregation of Rites for certain spiritual favors, such as the privilege of celebrating the Mass of the Sacred Heart during the first three days following the consecration, and the plenary indulgence to be granted in the usual way from the 14th to the 19th, as well as a seven-year indulgence and an indulgence of 28 days (seven quarantines) every time anyone visited the church with at least a contrite heart.[9]

A Sacred Announcement, issued by the Cardinal Vicar on May 2nd, informed the faithful of the imminent consecration, and also of the timetable for the sacred services during the ensuing days. In it was stated that the church was a "universal Shrine" since "the entire Catholic world" had contributed to it "with its offerings." Hence it inferred: "That it should therefore be a reason of a holy jubilation for all Catholics and especially for the Romans, to see that after ten years of labor, obstacles, and immense difficulties, this grandiose construction was finally completed as the vow of many pious souls devoted to the Sacred Heart. It is true, that there are still several altars and several decorations which require completion, but the constantly growing population of the new districts in that area demanded that forthwith all that work be suspended which would have enhanced the beauty and magnificence of the temple, but which was not absolutely essential, mainly because it was essential to provide facilities to the faithful in a more spacious church for the fulfillment of religious duties. If several works will need completion, the good Roman population and all those who seek the glory of God would find a new incentive to provide their donations so that the sacred building might soon have all that is needed for worship and so that it might not be all too unworthy of God who would establish His loving presence in it."

In referring to the difficulties, this document issued by the Vicariate made known a great truth. It had indeed been a period of seven years of untold struggles, of heroic struggles indeed, if anyone means, as he

[9]Appendix, doc. 67.

should, Don Bosco's struggles. As a matter of fact, any of the struggles which others may have had sustained before he took over the task were mere straws in comparison. Our readers are well aware of this. Nor did the long-awaited day of May 14th put an end to all the struggles. Instead, it renewed the test of his patience up to the day he died and only to bequeath them to his successor.[10]

Everything was well prepared both for the consecration rites as well as for the solemn functions to be held the following days. Toward seven o'clock, the consecrating prelate, Cardinal Lucido Maria Parocchi, vicar of His Holiness and protector of the Salesian Congregation, emerged from the antechamber as on all great occasions and was met by the superiors and many members of the clergy, as well as by Salesians who had come from other houses, and by the boys from Valdocco and their companions from the Roman hospice. In conformity with the ceremonial, the rite was performed behind closed doors. When the doors were at last flung open to the faithful, some five hours had elapsed. Don Bosco assisted, all recollected; several eminent people assisted with him. At the end, Bishop Dominic Jacobini, archbishop of Tyre and secretary to the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, approached the Servant of God and offered him his arm to accompany him very slowly to his room, glad to have been so fortunate as to render him such a service.

Father Francis Dalmazzo was the first priest to celebrate Mass at noon as the new organ filled the temple with its harmony. Hundreds of people, the faithful and the merely curious, entered the church. The unanimous consensus was that the church was worthy of Rome and of the finest traditions of Christian art.

But we have to confess that, all in all, neither the consecration nor the church received a good press in Rome. *La Tribuna,* which was then a Free Masonic newspaper, announced the ceremony in advance on the 10th of May and recalled the origins of the temple, its architectural style and decorations in a gracious little article. *Il Cicerone* (which we have already quoted) had indeed carried a more detailed description of the church in its issue of the 8th, although it was a spiteful publication and presented Don Bosco as "one of those indefatigable, restless, and hard-working priests." The article then went on, "I went to see this church which, when it is all done, will have cost something in the area of three million lire. One can forgive Don Bosco for such an outlay of money because he really has

[10] See Vol. XVII.

erected a monument worthy of Rome." The ultra liberal *Fanfulla* referred briefly on the 15th to the difficulties and previous vicissitudes, as well as to the enormous expenses, and then it went on, "But the animating spirit of Don Bosco, the 19th century Vittorino of Feltre got into it. And next to the church there is already a hospice, capable of housing fifty orphans. There are schools for the poor where three hundred boys are being trained to have good morals, to be honest and receive an elementary instruction. The great enlightened spirit of Saint Francis de Sales must have rejoiced today over this undertaking which sprung from soil loosened up and watered by his own spirit and the inexhaustible charity of a deeply pious soul."[11] On the 15th *L'Osservatore Romano* carried an article of only a few lines, very cool in tone, and the date of the consecration was even quoted wrong. That was all.

We must not overlook *La Civiltá cattolica* which appeared unavoidably with some delay.[12] In its column dealing with Roman news, it dedicated half a page to the event of June, stressing the extreme religious significance of the event. "This consecration was a real happening," it said. "As a matter of fact it was proper that in the midst of the mud found in the new Rome where heresy has come to pitch its tents should rise the Sacred Heart of Him who with His adorable and most precious blood had purified the world, to purify also this Roman environment. We are convinced that the indefatigable zeal of Don Bosco and his well-deserving Cooperators will make the temple of Castro Pretorio a hearth of faith and love for the most beloved Heart of Jesus."

For a good start the program of festivities, which were to crown the solemn consecration, was an excellent introduction to this heralded beneficial action, as we shall relate.

Later on, an article written by the celebrated Countess Lara, a pseudonym for the poetess Cattermole Mancini,[13] appeared in Brescia. Her article had been inspired by the harmonious chimes of the bells in the new church. She could hear them from where she lived. After a poetic opening and a concise description of the church, she began to speak of Don Bosco, saying among other things, "This church which is at the present

[11] Fr. John James Dalmazzo published especially for the occasion a pamphlet entitled *The Shrine of the Sacred Heart of Jesus at Castro Pretorio in Rome, a monument of gratitude to the memory of Pope Pius IX,* Rome, Salesian Printing Works, 1887.

[12] Issue of June 1, p. 620.

[13] *Il Cittadino di Brescia,* Thursday–Friday, August 11–12, 1887. The article was entitled: *The works of Don Bosco.*

moment somewhat excessively dazzling in its gilt and colors, for everything in it is light, new, and joyful, awakens a deep emotion in all those who enter it to pray, as soon as they remember that it represents yet another miracle wrought by a man who stands as the Francis de Sales of our century. This humble and yet so powerful Servant of God is successful in everything; for all his works are blessed by heaven. Don Bosco is one of those privileged mortals who know how to conjure up something out of nothing. Not only do the greatest obstacles iron themselves out, but they even disappear into thin air before his steadfast will, made up of faith and prayers. We can already look forward now to the day, God alone knows when it will be, when that handsome head with its classical features which remind us of the profile of Napoleon I, will be seen in effigy, with a luminous golden halo around it, the halo of the saints."

After resting a while after the tiring ceremony, the Cardinal Vicar went upstairs to see Don Bosco, whom he embraced affectionately and then remained to dine with him and several other eminent guests. At the end of the repast the Saint expressed his public thanks to the cardinal for all that he had done as Protector of the Salesians, with words of veneration and gratitude. Then he went on, "Your Eminence, we have made a good start," and then he related with the utmost simplicity the story of the instant cure which had taken place the day before. He then said that he had always used the same method, whenever people, eager of obtaining graces, went up to him; namely, he suggested that they give alms in honor of Jesus, Our Lady, or some Saint or other, as a means by which they might obtain favors from God. He said that there was not a single stone in the churches of Mary Help of Christians and Saint John the Evangelist which was not signed by some grace received.

The cardinal also got up to address the assembly. He congratulated Don Bosco for having opened the church even though work in it was not yet completed, for this showed he wanted it to be given to the Sacred Heart of Jesus before it was entrusted to embellishments and ornamentations by artists. He spoke very kindly of the Salesian Congregation, saying that so far it had only procured him happiness, and not one single trouble, pain or hardship. He said he would be glad to take over the task of protector at the rate of one a day for any such Congregations. Smiling, Don Bosco said, "Just wait, Eminence, just wait, the day will come when we too will be a source of trouble for you."

"Well, here in the Church of the Sacred Heart you have a chapel that

you wish to dedicate to Saint Francis de Sales, have you not? Is he not your patron?"

"Yes, Your Eminence."

"Good, I want to pay the costs of that altar, for I hope to obtain from the protector of the Congregation that you have in Heaven whatever assistance I may need in the trials and tribulations reserved for the earthly protector of the Pious Society."

This brilliant and generous statement was greeted with a rousing applause.

The Oratory boys gave the first sample of their talent that evening when they sang the Vespers, which Maestro Galli had composed especially for the occasion. Bishop Julius Lenti, archbishop of Side, and vice regent in Rome officiated. In the meantime, Don Bosco received many eminent callers among whom there were bishops and cardinals.

The celebrations properly so-called lasted five days, and the congregation of the pious faithful increased constantly. Each morning a cardinal celebrated a Low Mass, and there was also a Solemn Pontifical Mass. Every afternoon there was a Salesian conference in various languages, then Vespers with music and sermon.

Sunday, the first day, was extremely solemn. The German cardinal, Bishop Melchers, celebrated Mass at seven o'clock. At ten o'clock Bishop Jacobini pontificated, assisted by a bishop from the United States of America. The boys from Turin sang Cherubini's Mass incomparably well. This Mass is known as the Coronation Mass. Meanwhile, Don Bosco granted continuous audiences, receiving also three bishops and the cardinal of Canossa.

At dinner Bishop Kirby sat at his right hand, Prince Czartoryski on his left. The Prince was spending most of the day within the house. There were also many other guests who shared at the family dinner.At the proper time Father Rua asked Don Bosco to kindly say a few words. Don Bosco rose to his feet painfully and leaning heavily on the table with both hands, he said with halting voice, "I drink to the dear memory of our great friend, the Rev. Margotti, who died recently. To him, the champion of the sacred rights of the Church, to him who always loved us, who came to see us so affectionately before we left for Rome, putting his renowned newspaper at our service for reports on the festivities, which we now celebrate. I drink this with a firm conviction that my zealous Cooperators will be so gracious as to help us complete the hospice of the Sacred Heart so that we can offer shelter, education and training to five

hundred children of the working classes, bringing them up in the holy fear of God so that they in their turn may bear fruit for their own benefit and that of society. I drink to Bishop Kirby, to whom I am bound by an undying friendship." Bishop Kirby answered on behalf of all the Cooperators saying that he and his friends treasured what Don Bosco had said as a toast. He assured him that he and his friends would do everything in their power to abide faithfully by his inspired will so that the hospice might be completed as he desired. At three-thirty, Bishop Charles Murray of Lyons, auditor of the Sacred Rota for France, had a lecture in French in which he stressed the timeliness of Don Bosco's institute on behalf of poor and abandoned youth and the consoling results already obtained.[14] At five o'clock, the eloquent Bishop Omedei Zorini, an apostolic missionary, delivered a sermon on the Sacred Heart. After this, the Valdocco choir sang Aldega's Vespers. In the evening, the facade of the Church, the bell tower, and the hospice were brilliantly illuminated after a very elegant design elaborated by a Salesian cleric. This brought people in vast crowds from the furthermost districts of the town to Castro Pretorio for some hours.

The Mass with general Communion on the second day of the celebration was said by Cardinal Placido Schiaffino of the Priests of Mount Olive. That morning Don Bosco chose to go down to the church to say Mass at the altar of Mary Help of Christians. No less than fifteen times after he had started the Holy Sacrifice Don Bosco had to stop, overcome by powerful emotion, which caused him to shed tears. From time to time, Father Charles Viglietti, who was assisting him, had to divert his attention so that he could continue. As he was leaving the altar, the congregation was overcome by great tenderness and gathered around him, kissing his vestments and his hands now freed of the chalice, and even followed him into the sacristy where they all voiced their desire to be blessed. "Yes, yes," he answered. He climbed the three steps which led from the first sacristy into the second, he turned around, he raised his right hand, but suddenly he burst into tears, covering his face with both hands. "I bless...I bless..." he repeated again and again, his voice stifled, unable to finish his sentence. It was necessary to take him gently by the arm and lead him away. The people were deeply impressed and moved on to follow him, but the door closed behind him.

[14] This speech is amply reported in the *Bulletin salésien*, July 1887. The information regarding Don Bosco's stay at the Sacred Heart was supplied by Bro. D'Archino, who was an eyewitness.

Who is there that would not like to know the cause of such emotion? When Father Viglietti realized he had regained his usual calm, he asked him what had happened and was told, "There appeared before my eyes the scene when at the age of ten I dreamt about the Congregation. I could actually see and hear my mother and brothers, as they argued about the dream." At that time Our Lady had said, "In due time you will understand everything." Since that day, sixty-two years of hardships, sacrifices, and struggles have passed by. All of a sudden, an unexpected flash of lightning, had revealed to him in the building of the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome, the crowning point of the mission so mysteriously outlined for him on the very threshold of life. How long and arduous had been the path all the way from Becchi at Castelnuovo to the See of the Vicar of Jesus Christ! He felt at that point that his own personal activity was drawing to a close, and he blessed the Divine Providence with tears in his eyes, as he lifted his gaze confidently to his imminent rest in the eternal peace within God's bosom.

At the same hour as the day before, Bishop Cassetta of Amiata, and president of the Religious Night Schools,[15] celebrated a Solemn High Mass. The boys sang Hayden's Mass. In the afternoon, Bishop Jara of Chile lectured in Spanish. Bishop Gottardo Scotton preached on the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Bishop Kirby officiated at the Pontifical Vespers, with the orchestra and choir executing psalms composed by different composers. Aware that Don Bosco would soon be leaving Rome, the Cardinal Vicar renewed in writing his "Congregation's congratulations for a happy journey, and for the work *fauste, feliciter* completed."

During the following three days, the Mass was celebrated by Cardinal Mazzella of the Society of Jesus, Cardinal Aloisi-Masella and Cardinal Zigliara of the Friars Preachers, while the Pontifical Masses on the 17th and 18th were celebrated by Bishop Sallua, a Dominican and the archbishop of Calcedonia, and Grasselli, archbishop of Colossae. Lectures for Cooperators were delivered by Bishop Mauri, a Jesuit, bishop of Ashkelon and formerly Apostolic Vicar in Bombay, who spoke in German: by Bishop Fortina, Apostolic Delegate for Australia, who spoke in English; and by Bishop Omodei-Zorini who spoke in Italian. Bishops Andrea and Jacopo Scotton preached on the 17th and

[15] When Don Bosco died, Bishop Cassetta was the Apostolic Almoner. This is what he wrote in his diary "with Don Bosco's passing into eternity, a true man of God, an apostolic man needed to meet the needs of so many souls in our days, has disappeared," Bishop Vestalli, Il Cardinale Francesco di Paola Cassetta, p. 407, Bergamo. Soc. Ed. Alessandro (1933).

18th respectively. Every evening, solemn Vespers were celebrated. On the fifth day, the Ascension of Our Lord, the closing day of the festivities, several important things happened. At ten o'clock the Cardinal Vicar pontificated in *nomine pontificis* [in the name of the Holy Father] with an impressive number of the clergy. After the Gospel, His Eminence delivered the final address, hailing the "industrious genius of the humble priest" upon whom the grandeur of two Pontiffs had magnanimously smiled, and expressing the hope that the "triumph of the Divine Heart" would shine forth "reflected by the magnificent appearance of the temple." Cardinal Aloisi-Masella returned for Vespers and intoned the *Te Deum* in thanksgiving at the end of it. The anthem was sung with full orchestra accompaniment. The ceremony ended with benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

Once more the voices of the Oratory choir singers were heard at the solemn requiem Mass celebrated on the 20th for deceased benefactors of the church. During the afternoon they had a group picture taken so that, when they were grown up, they might recognize themselves and recall the beloved memories of their stay in Rome.

At the end of these great celebrations, the three Scotton brothers preached a mission for the population, which lasted until Pentecost.

The boys were not expected to say, once they got back to Turin, that they had gone to Rome but without seeing the Pope. During the afternoon of the 20th, they did see the Pope. What excitement, what expectations among them when they waited in the Hall of Tapestries, hardly daring to breathe! The Holy Father made a solemn entrance, surrounded by an imposing retinue. Kneeling down, the boys at first hung their heads timidly. "Are these the sons of Don Bosco?" the Pope asked kindly of the Procurator of the Salesians who introduced them.

"Yes, Your Holiness. They are the young singers who came from Turin for the celebrations of the consecration of the new church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The celebrations were carried out to everybody's satisfaction."

"To everybody's satisfaction?"

"Yes, Most Holy Father, and there were big crowds."

"Good, blessed be God for it. Don Bosco left for Turin already. We were overjoyed by his visit. But we found him in very poor health. We need that God preserve him for a long time for the welfare of the Society and of the Church, especially in these difficult times in which we are living. He also told us about these good boys. Are they under his immedi-

ate direction in your institute in Turin?"

"Yes, Holy Father. Now they are here to receive your blessing and to kiss your holy foot."

"We shall be pleased to give them our blessing and extend it also to the pious objects with which they have come generously provided."

He then moved to the middle of the hall and said: *"Sit nomen Domini Benedictum"* and blessed them, invoking on them all the help of God. What an emotional moment! He then resumed talking; asking for news of Don Bosco, while his eyes roved over the boys whose lively, mischievous faces caused him to exclaim, "How well they look! How happy they are... Are all of them in the choir?"

"Yes, Your Holiness," Father Francis Dalmazzo answered. "They are the boys who deserved more than all the rest to come to Rome as a privilege, as a reward for their good conduct and singing talent."

"Among the things which gave us most comfort was to hear from Don Bosco's own lips that he often asked his boys to pray for the Holy Father," the Pope went on.

So that they might all kiss his foot, he graciously consented to walk around the room, commencing his tour in front of several gentlemen who had joined the boys. As he followed him, the Procurator listed the good qualities and merits of each boy, hastily giving answer to the Pope's question. He also introduced the musicians Galli, Bersano, and Bernasconi. "The organ is an ornament of the church," the Pope told the latter. "Without the melody of the organ, a church is like a body which has no soul."

He found Brother Joseph Dogliani of very youthful appearance. When he was told how talented he was, he praised him warmly. He met several priests and asked about their responsibilities. He also had kind words for Father Grosso and the others.

Then he returned to the boys; he caressed them with paternal kindliness, saying now a gracious remark, now a witty remark, to this one and to that one. The smallest of them all who had been standing behind his companions had tried in vain to kiss the Pope's foot. The Holy Father, who had already passed him by, noticed this and walked back. "How happy these dear children are," he said again. "Have they toured Rome? They must be shown everything. Let them go and see the churches, the sacred monuments, the catacombs, so that they may know the city and relate its beauties to others."

As his tour ended, he blessed them with a simple gesture of his hand and took leave of them with the words, "May Our Lord be with you

always." Then he disappeared, and they stood gazing after him, motionless. After standing dumb struck for a moment, the joy flooding their hearts suddenly manifested itself and they left the Vatican in merry chatter, quite unusual in that house of silence. They directed their steps in haste towards the Sacred Heart, arriving there in time to sing Vespers and the hymn of thanksgiving.

They left Rome on the morning of Saturday, the 21st. They had become familiarized with the residents of the hospice for a week, so when they departed, there were many innocent demonstrations of affection on both sides. Both the visitors and the permanent residents of the Roman house read out speeches, describing their joy for having known one another and their regret for having to leave so soon. They voiced good wishes for a pleasant journey and a pleasant life in Rome and their hope of meeting again. After brotherly farewells, they parted to the shout of *"Long live Don Bosco!"*

There was a stop at Pisa, which lasted two hours. They were met at the railroad station by people from the seminary who escorted them to lunch as the archbishop had arranged. These pupils of Don Bosco were given a most cordial welcome by the rector, priests, professors, clerics, and boarders, everyone claiming the right to serve them at table, and informing them of their pleasure at having seen Don Bosco only a few days before. At last the archbishop appeared quite unexpectedly. "The day before yesterday I had the pleasure of the company of the Father as my guest," he said: "today I have the pleasure of seeing his sons." He congratulated them on the lovely singing at Genoa and Rome, asked them to pray for him at the Church of Mary Help of Christians, exhorted them to be docile always to whatever their beloved Father, Don Bosco, suggested, and blessed them. After an enthusiastic send-off, they set out almost on the run to go and see the cathedral and the monuments nearer to them, then rushed to the railway station. After a second stop at La Spezia and a third at Sampierdarena, they made a triumphant return to the Oratory on the evening of Sunday, the 22nd.

Chapter 15

DESCRIPTION OF THE CHURCH AND DON BOSCO'S DEPARTURE FROM ROME

Now we must return to Rome, where there are still a few things we must bring to the notice of our readers. As we have said, Count Louis Colle had been more generous in giving money for the construction of Sacred Heart Church than anyone else. We also mentioned[1] three epigraphs written by Don Bosco himself in Latin for the three bigger bells, one of which he had dedicated to the Count, another to the Countess, the third in memory of their son. When the time came for the casting, the Saint gave the epigraphs to Father John Baptist Francesia, who was to edit them in their final wording, and told him to write another two at the same time for the fourth and fifth bell, in commemoration of the first two Communions he had administered to two of the foremost families of Barcelona who had wanted the personal honor to pay their costs.[2]

The bell tower from which the sacred bronze bells could make their deep, grave, or clear and high-pitched tones heard is of travertine stone, and surpasses for beauty all the other bell towers of Rome. For fifty years it remained without the spire that was to serve as a crown, but it was recently crowned by the most magnificent and gigantic statue of the Sacred heart that anyone could have wished, and it is visible as far away as Saint Peter's Square.

The Church of the Sacred Heart turned out to be so expensive for Don Bosco in every sense that we cannot pass by without giving it at least a look. Don Bosco revealed himself a man of broad vision right from the beginning when, without any means and already committed to the completion or maintenance of so many other undertakings, he undertook this too, in obedience to the wishes of Leo XIII. According to the originally

[1] See Vol. XV, p. 123 (Italian edition—omitted in the English edition but generally referred to on p. 95).

[2] Families of Don Emanuel Pascual and Doña Dorothea. Appendix, doc. 69.

drafted plan, the church was to have measured forty meters in length. He added twenty-eight more meters, prevailing against the architect who was reluctant to do it.[3] It measures thirty meters in width and is built in the form of a Latin cross. Its classic grace and the majesty of the Bramante style makes it a holy building well worthy of gracing a city in which sacred architecture has worked artistic miracles throughout the ages.

The facade too is built of Tivoli travertine stone and is adorned by four well- sculptured marble statues of Saint Francis de Sales, Saint Augustine and two Angels adoring the Cross which, with its outstretched arms, majestically dominates the facade. There are three doors, exquisitely carved by the young artisans of the Oratory. In the middle, the three magnificent mosaics represent the Sacred Heart, Saint Joseph, and Saint Francis de Sales. The decoration is provided by pillars of black Balma granite and exquisite intaglio works.

Inside there are three naves separated by smooth granite columns and solid pillars. The whole of the vast interior is so harmonious that it enchants the eye of the spectator, captures his spirit and lifts his mind to God.

We will not speak of the minor decorations, the carvings, corbels, and cornices, all of them harmoniously and beautifully tuned with the general architectural plan. We will only allude to the paintings, both large and small, of which there are some one hundred and fifty, not counting the dome. This was the work of Virginio Monti's delicate paintbrush. Monti also painted the masterly pictures on the ceiling, the four Evangelists in the arches along the transversal nave, and the ninety smaller pictures decorating the two small side naves. But his masterpiece is the dome, which depicts the glorification of the Sacred Heart. The beautiful picture of the Savior, finely represented in realistic movement and posture, is showing his Divine Heart to the two Virgin-Saints Margaret Alacoque and Catherine of Racconigi, who are depicted gazing at him with enraptured eyes. A number of angels surround the group, holding emblems of the passion or lilies of purity, while some are bowed down in adoration. Seraphs also are praising the Sacred Heart with musical instruments. Around the group, all rapt in contemplation, one can see Saint Francis de Sales, to whom some angels hold out his own written works; Saint Teresa,

[3] This spacious enlargement made the big choir, which Don Bosco wanted possible. For, should the Salesians lose parochial control of the church in course of time and under the pressure of circumstances, they would then be able to isolate this section of the church and turn it into a domestic chapel, because that portion of the church was built on a floor belonging to the Congregation.

her face all aflame; Saint Bernard, holding out the office of the Sacred Heart he himself had composed; Saint Bernardine of Siena, holding a tablet on which the name of Jesus was engraved; and Saints Augustine, Francis of Assisi, and Aloysius Gonzaga. The entire picture breathes an aura of paradise, which leads to devotion.

Because of the limited time at his disposal and the immensity of his undertaking, Monti had called on two experienced artists to whom he entrusted other parts of the church. Caroselli painted the four triangular arches of the dome and several pictures along the two main naves, the frescoes of the four greater prophets, the twelve Minor Prophets, the twelve apostles, the sibyls Eritrea and Cumana. A pupil of Seitz, Zuffoli, painted Jesus among the children, Jesus the Good Shepherd, and Jesus instituting the Holy Eucharist. He is the author of the three mosaics on the facade.

The ceiling of the two major aisles is in the basilica style; that is, it is made up of finely gilded caissons, standing as the background for fine paintings. The pavement is very dignified, being made of varied, choice marbles blended into a well thought out design.

There are six side altars, four of which are smaller in size, and situated along the smaller side aisles. To the left of one entering the churches are the altars of the Crucifix and Saint Anne. To the right, those of Saint Michael the Archangel and Saint Francis de Sales. Two bigger side altars face each other at the end of the transversal nave, one in *cornu evangelii* [on the Gospel side] dedicated to Mary Help of Christians[4] with a framed picture by Rollini, the other a *cornu epistulae* [on the Epistle side] consecrated to Saint Joseph also with a painting by Rollini.[5] The walls and ceilings for these six altars are decorated with paintings referring to individual patron saints. In the intersection separating the altars there are four confessionals surrounded by frescoes symbolizing the Sacrament of Penance. At the far end of the church to the left (as you enter), the two areas between the last pillars and the wall of the facade are filled by the baptistry with fourteen small pictures illustrating the mystery of regeneration, all done at the city of Turin's expense. To the right of the one who enters, there is a majestic statue of Pius IX sculpted by Confalonieri. The church is an everlasting tribute to Pius IX. Robed in pontifical garments,

[4] A gift from Prince Torlonia who had it removed from a church in the vicinity of his own grounds in Via Nomentana.

[5] Marquis Vitelleschi substituted it with another.

the Pope stands with one hand raised in the act of imparting a benediction, while with the other he holds out the decree approving the Pious Salesian Society.

The gaze of anyone crossing the threshold of the temple goes instantly to the great altarpiece at the main altar, which depicts the Sacred Heart in His glory amid cherubim's and seraphim's. It had been painted by Professor Francis da Rodhen, framed sixteen meters high, with six alabaster pillars, each six meters tall. Precious decorative work and rare stones enhanced the beauty on all sides of the altar's mensa where the Divine Sacrifice is consummated and where the Blessed Sacrament is kept.

This outline of a description does offer the reader some idea of the church as it looked upon completion, but in May, 1887, there was still much that had to be done. We can draw this from the farewell letter written by Don Bosco to Leo XII on the eve of his departure from Rome:

Rome, May 17, 1887

Most Blessed Father:

I am leaving Rome with great satisfaction for the charitable and truly fatherly welcome Your Holiness gave me. The church and the school of the Sacred Heart are now functioning and the people living in the densely populated district now have every convenience to fulfill their religious duties. We still have to complete the hospice for our poor orphans, and hope to do so if God grants us life. We still have to dispose of the debt contracted for the construction of the facade of the church. If Your Holiness could either entirely or in part come to our assistance for the remaining sum of 51,000 lire, our finances would be again in order.[6]

6. The Pope had approved the following inscription on the facade:
Templum sacrosancti cordis Iesu
A Pio IX Pont. Max.
Solo empto inchoatum
Sodales Salesiani
Cultorum eiusdem SS. Cordis
Studio et conlatione
Erigendum
Munificentia Leonis XIII
Et novis piorum subsidiis
Fronte adstructa cultuque addito
Perficiendum curarunt
Anno Ch. MDCCCLXXXVII

All of our little orphans, who now number 250,000, pray every day for the good health of Your Holiness, for whom we all labor with a willing heart.

Please forgive my bad handwriting. Humbly prostrate before you, I implore your blessing for all the Salesians.

Your most grateful son,
Rev. John Bosco, Rector

The cost of the Sacred Heart continued to weigh heavily upon the Congregation. In June, spurred by requests for help from the missionaries, the Prefect General wrote:[7] "The thing which oppresses us the most is the enormous expense contracted for the Sacred Heart Church in Rome. Only when all these debts will be paid, shall we be able to breathe again." When Father Anthony Sala went to Rome to examine the situation at close range, he reported to the Superior Council, in the presence of Don Bosco on April 28th. He said that he had all work suspended, save for that in progress at the main altar and the altar of the cardinal vicar. He said he had found debts piled up on debts, for a total amount of approximately three hundred fifty thousand lire. He suggested that in order to go ahead they should take out a loan. But it was decided that certain property inherited by the Congregation should be sold, and the loan got thumbs down. In November, Don Bosco himself sat down to write the following letter to Bishop Della Volpe, personal secretary to Leo XIII:

Turin, November 6, 1887

Most Dear and Reverend Excellency:

The last time I had the honor of paying my respects to the Holy Father in Turin, he was so gracious as to tell me that in the event of any great necessity, I was to appeal to you, so that any business matter would receive prompt attention.

I am now in this situation, as I try to dispose of all the debts for expenses contracted in building the facade of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. There are still 51,000 lire to be paid, and the charity of the Holy Father led me to hope he himself

[7] Letter from Fr. Celestine Durando to Fr. Riccardi, Turin, June 30, 1887.

might pay it. I am in a serious predicament, and so if his inexhaustible charity were to come to my assistance now, this would be the best of times.

Our financial administrator is going to Rome to settle all matters pertaining to the expenses involved in this construction. He will call on Your Excellency; to receive whatever best answer you may give him.

Our orphans, who now number over three hundred thousand pray every day for His Holiness and never forget your own so well deserving person.

Please bear with this awful handwriting of mine. I am no longer able to write. Give me your blessing and believe me in Jesus Christ,

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

We have already referred elsewhere to a letter the Saint had written on the same matter, two weeks prior to his death, to the Duke of Norfolk.[8]

A handwritten note written by Don Bosco for Father Francis Dalmazzo shortly before leaving for Rome lets us clearly see how many and what kind of difficulties they were sailing through.[9] This is how it reads: "There is no one to supervise the entrance or not of supplies. - Keep an eye on the prices. - Who is keeping check on any material which has to be taken elsewhere? - Very little work is being done. - There is theft going on, both within the house and outside of it. - Building materials are being wasted, especially boards. - The scaffolding under the domes should be built and then dismantled. - The trouble might be solved by appointing Leone[10] as assistant and have someone substitute him in the kitchen or by appointing as assistant someone who is experienced."

In the same memorandum, he even goes into the detailed needs of the

[8] See Vol. XVII, p. 484.

[9] From the minutes of the Ladies' Committee in Marseilles, May 20, 1887: "The completed church was consecrated a few days ago, and this miracle of Don Bosco's prowess fills one with confidence in all his works, when one considers the difficulties he met in Rome, where gifts are given without being received. Don Bosco himself says that this church was built with *Aere Gallico* [French money]."

[10] The Coadjutor Brother Leone Lidovani.

Salesians themselves, urging the director to "provide the necessary clothes and linen for the Salesians." Such detailed care on behalf of his sons is all the more moving when we consider how he himself was so considerate that he was afraid of causing any disturbance in the house because of the care he knew was taken in preparing food and waiting on him in his room. One day he remarked to Father Francis Dalmazzo: "Poor Father Dalmazzo! You have to spend money for Don Bosco! But I hope someone will come and give me alms, and then I'll pay for everything."[11]

He did indeed find people to give him alms.

One day, for example, a good man appeared, humbly dressed, who would not give his name, but said he wanted to see Don Bosco. Father Michael Rua would have liked him to tell him what the problem was all about, but the man replied that he would only tell it to Don Bosco. In his charity, Father Rua went to beg the Saint to listen to what the poor fellow had to say. After their interview Don Bosco said, "That good man brought me an offering which I have never received from any Roman prince."

When several people called on him the evening of the 17th, he stated his plight to them with his habitual charm, expressing confidence that Divine Providence would help him. The following morning, quite unaware of what the other was doing, and not even meeting each other, two gentlemen brought him the money he needed for his journey. When he set out on his way to the station, a third man came up to him and handed him an envelope saying, "Here is the money for the journey." The envelope contained one hundred lire, just as the other two other men had each given him: one hundred lire. Thus, whatever he needed for himself and his two companions was dropped into his hand.

What kind of trend of thought might he have had when the shrill whistle of the railway engine warned him that the train was taking him far from Rome, while the quickening rhythm of the wheels told him that he was now beyond the Aurelian walls, fast approaching the immense solitude of the countryside which was then far more desolate than it is today? He had gone to Rome twenty times. It is almost impossible that anyone leaves Rome without expecting or at least hoping to return there some day. This time the idea of a return did not enter Don Bosco's mind. As he took leave of people he knew and was friendly with, he had said farewell

[11] *Summ. sup. virt.*, no. XI, *De fortitudine,* #119 (testimony by Fr. Dalmazzo).

for good, making a date with them in paradise. Everyone answered that there was still certain hope of meeting again, but he kept repeating, "Yes, I hope so; we shall see each other again in paradise."[12]

How memorable was the first journey he took in 1858! At that time Italy had still been split up into isolated sections and there was no railway between Genoa and Rome. He needed to get a passport, draw up his will in the presence of a notary and witnesses, board a boat and sail to Civitavecchia. What a torture that seasickness! Jumping out of the stage coach, he touched the ground of the Holy City with the emotions of the ancient Roman pilgrims. That was the only time that he had toured the city. He descended into the recently explored catacombs of Saint Callistus. He had climbed up to the dome of Saint Peter's. Count de Maistre, in whose house he had been a guest, had introduced him to as many patrician households as he could, and also into the palaces of cardinals. He had been received twice in audience at the Quirinal Palace by Pius IX and once in the Vatican. During these audiences, the Pope had given him suggestions to lay the sound foundations for the Pious Society. With his own hand the Pope had made annotations on the draft of the Rules, and told him also to write down his dreams. The young cleric, Michael Rua, who had then followed the Servant of God everywhere like a shadow, was now sitting beside him as his Vicar.

Just about nine years went by between the first visit to Rome and the second. He had left Turin in January 1867 with Father John Baptist Francesia, who later recorded the journey in a thick volume. For about two months he had lived like a true apostle, in the pulpit, in the confessional, at the bedside of the sick, paying visits and receiving visits. He was there to settle conflicts related to the appointment of bishops. Then nearly the whole of Italy was united beneath the scepter of Victor Emanuel II. The government seat was Florence. No way could be found to agree on how to provide for the appointments needed for many vacancies in the dioceses in the territories annexed to Piedmont. Don Bosco succeeded in this by using the politics of the *Pater Noster* [" The Our Father"]. He took the first steps to obtain approval of the Salesian Society. Roman noblemen vied for his presence to celebrate Mass in their private chapels, so widely spread was the general reputation of his holiness. With the frankness of saints, he uttered harsh truths to the

[12] *Summ. sup. virt.*, no. XIX, *De pretioso obitu*, #161 (witness Fr. Rua).

former king of Naples.

He returned to Rome in 1869. What maneuvering did he have to use in order that his newly founded Society might be looked upon with an indulgent eye! But it took the miracles of Mary Help of Christians to do it: the recovery of a dying man, an attack of gout dispelled, pneumonia arrested in its development. The Pope could not have been more fatherly to him. When he left the city again, he carried along the coveted approval of the Salesian Society.

The Vatican Council called him back to Rome in 1870. On the eve of the Epiphany "the voice of heaven" was heard by the "shepherd of shepherds" through his lips. He exercised considerable influence over the thinking of many eminent churchmen in favor of the dogmatic definition of the papal infallibility. The Pope sent for him and said, "Your enemies are my enemies, too."

After Rome was occupied, his first four Rome journeys, requested both by the Pope and by the government, were made in order to iron out the difficulties connected with appointing bishops for a number of vacant dioceses. At the same time he pursued his own difficult course, attempting to obtain the approval of his Rules. On the fourth of these latter visits to the city, he felt he had attained his end, but the Cardinals' committee fell short by one vote. On the evening of April 3, 1874, which was Good Friday, the Pope said to the secretary of the committee, "I will supply the missing vote." Thus was the decree drawn up.

He made ten more trips to Rome between the years 1875 and 1882, mainly on account of matters concerning the Congregation, which he wished to see on a firm basis when his time would come to depart from this world. In 1876, he consented to read the traditional Good Friday address before the Arcadian Academy. In 1877, he accompanied *Ad limina* Bishop Aneyros, the archbishop of Buenos Aires, on his visit. In 1878, he rendered delicate and outstanding services to the Church during the Conclave and predicted that the triple tiara would go to Cardinal Pecci. In 1880, Leo XIII entrusted to him the construction of the church of the Sacred Heart at Castro Pretorio. Every year the conviction that Don Bosco was a saint had gained ground in all walks of Roman life.

The next to the last journey to Rome in 1884 was made in order to unmask the adamant opposition encountered in attempting to obtain the granting of privileges. He had been imploring this for ten years. At last the direct intervention of Leo XIII won the battle for him. "Your life

belongs to the Church," the Pope had told him on that occasion.

All this chain of memories must have passed again and again through Don Bosco's mind as he was traveling farther and farther away from Rome on that day, May 18, 1887, with the certainty that never again was he to return. Worn out in body, but comforted in spirit, *cursum consummavi* ["I have run my course,"] he must have repeated to himself, preparing his soul for the last journey toward the splendors of that Rome where Christ is Roman.[13]

[13] *Purgatorio XXXII,* 102. Dante refers to the Heavenly Rome, where Christ is a citizen, therefore, Paradise.

Chapter 16

THE LAST FEAST DAY OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS CELEBRATED WITH DON BOSCO / THE TWO WEEKS SPENT AT VALSALICE / DON BOSCO'S LAST NAME DAY CELEBRATION

Don Bosco was anxious to get home to Turin because it was nearly time for the celebration of the feast day of Mary Help of Christians. Yet, his strength was not good enough to enable him to travel the 420 miles between Rome and Turin all at once. Therefore, a fairly long stop at Pisa, as guest of the most amiable Archbishop Ferdinand Capponi, had been scheduled. The Archbishop left nothing undone to show him how delighted and how honored he felt at having such a guest. He assigned Don Bosco to the chamber where Pius VII had slept. An entire day and two nights in that peaceful household restored him greatly. Sorry to lose him so soon, the Archbishop wished to receive his blessing on the morning of the 20th, after which he took his hand and kissed it tenderly. Humble and confused, Don Bosco expressed all his gratitude, as only he knew how, for all the kindness with which he had been treated.

It was already the sixth day of the novena. Our travelers arrived at the Oratory while the whole community was kneeling at the feet of Mary Help of Christians for the evening service. Father Michael Rua arrived just in time to give benediction, which Don Bosco received from the choir loft. Then he went to his room at once hoping to avoid the crowd of boarders that would have assaulted him as they came out of church. He greeted them instead from the balcony as they thronged, and acclaimed him, in the playground below. Later that evening, the light in his window attracted their gaze, and everyone felt happy now that they knew their Father was once again in their midst.

No patrons had as yet been chosen for the festivities when Manuel Pascual Bofarull, his wife and their three children from Barcelona showed up. Immediately Don Bosco asked the couple to accept that task, for which they were grateful, considering it an outstanding favor. In their turn, they asked Don Bosco to administer First Communion to their little daughter.

On the last day of the novena Father Rua delivered the usual talk to the Cooperators. Don Bosco sat listening to it in the sanctuary, next to Bishop Leto. The crowd, which never stopped looking at him, then streamed into the two sacristies, hemming him in so closely that it took him more than a half hour to walk through them, and no less than an hour to gain the staircase. He was in good humor, talking, smiling, and greeting people with his habitual cordiality. Yet, he could not altogether disguise the general weakness, which was evidenced by his tired gait and drawn face. This sent a wave of hidden sadness to all who saw it, the same sadness felt in the presence of someone very dear and whose days seemed to have been numbered.

Never in past years had the church of Mary Help of Christians seemed so small for the crowd of townsfolk and of visitors from many places. It was truly exceptional. The religious fervor of the crowd increased as soon as people saw and heard about the miraculous graces granted by Our Lady. On the eve of the feast, a little girl was brought to the Servant of God as he stood in the sacristy surrounded by the faithful. The child's countenance seemed already to have signs of death. At the request of her parents, he blessed her and urged them to put their trust in Mary Help of Christians. No sooner had he reached the threshold of the sacristy than the two lucky parents pushed their way through the crowd to get to him, their faces radiant with joy, for the little girl had opened her eyes and seemed to be returning to life. The morning of the feast itself a young man who had entered the church on crutches walked out of it balancing them with his hand.

Another blessing of Don Bosco was followed by a true miracle. In the month of January, a fifteen-year-old girl of Turin had undergone a great shock when, in an open assembly, her father had been dishonored and maltreated for business reasons. So great was the girl's reaction to the disgrace that she was running the risk of losing her life. Five months of medical care had done nothing. She was always in bed, and at times she was not even able to recognize her father and mother. After praying, her parents made a vow to Mary Help of Christians. And at the end of the novena, they brought her to Don Bosco to receive his blessing. Don Bosco blessed her. Soon the sick girl regained her perfect health. Anyone who had seen her as she had been, could not but acclaim it as a miracle.[1]

Something very strange also happened in Don Bosco's room. Three

[1] Report by the father, Maggiorino Giorcelli, a manufacturer, Turin, August 25, 1887.

women went to the oratory taking along a poor girl who was barely able to stand on her crutches. They were eager to have her blessed by Don Bosco, and helped her up the stairs to the second floor landing near the door of his antechamber. The secretary, Father Charles Viglietti, tells the story in his diary. He was obliged to walk past them several times, but he turned a deaf ear as they begged to be allowed to see Don Bosco. The Saint was holding an audience with some very important foreign visitors and it seemed unlikely that anyone else could see him that day. Wearied at last and touched by their incessant pleas, he allowed them inside. He himself waited outside for them to come out and then usher in others. Only a few minutes later, the young girl appeared still on crutches. Father Viglietti could not explain what got into him. He went over to the girl and addressed her with a certain familiar voice, "What kind of faith is this? You go in for Don Bosco's blessing on the very feast of Mary Help of Christians, yet you go away just as you came here! Away with those crutches, walk without them, go and hang them up in the sacristy. Don Bosco does not impart his blessings for nothing." Then and there the girl seemed dumbstruck. She handed her crutches to her mother and went downstairs to the church unsteadily, but once there she found she had fully recovered.

This occurrence had a sequel sixteen days later. A canon of Torrione Canavese, that girl's native village, went to the Oratory on June 9th, together with the Archbishop's secretary, Canon Forcheri. They both informed Don Bosco that the village was in an uproar. What had happened? The physicians had scheduled the girl for surgery. The legs were to be amputated for gangrene, but when she appeared on the day scheduled for the operation, to their immense astonishment, they no longer found any trace of gangrene. Both prelates were anxious to meet the young priest who, in Don Bosco's antechamber had given the girl so effective a lecture that she had repeated it to all her fellow villagers. They asked Don Bosco about him and he said it could only have been Father Viglietti. Viglietti, however, knew nothing of what had happened and when he entered the dining room after supper to accompany Don Bosco to bed, he was met by a general burst of laughter. Don Bosco had told the superiors about it and now he turned to Viglietti smiling and said, "I guessed it was you at once, because I do not know of anyone else who could be brazen enough *[faccia d'tola]*[2] like you, to be a craquer (a tall stories teller). Little by little you are

[2] Properly, a face of "tin," a Piedmontese expression meaning a bronze face, said of someone who is not ashamed of anything and pretends to be innocent.

pushing Don Bosco out of business...and I will have to look to my laurels!" Here he was referring to what had happened in the house of Mr. Olive, which we already mentioned.[3]

Pilgrims carried the news of such heavenly favors everywhere, as well as others of which we do not know all the details. These miraculous events increased popular devotion toward Don Bosco's Madonna, as Mary Help of Christians was better known. By now the devotion to our Lady under this title was so universally polarized on the Valdocco shrine that even when her apostle was dead, piety among the faithful did not decrease either in intensity or in number.

Don Bosco's days, from the feast of Mary Help of Christians to that of Saint John, passed peacefully without noteworthy variations other than a stay at Valsalice for about two weeks. The most alarming aspect in his state of health was the increasing swelling in his legs which made walking more and more painful and difficult for him. It was suggested that to ease it, he should have someone anoint them with certain oil extracted from herbs. At first he objected, "My health is as Our Lord wishes it near being." But since his sons seemed to be confident that this would help him move with greater ease, uninhibited, he yielded to their wishes, more to please them than with any hope of effective results. "Thus the two of us will both practice patience, you skinning me and I being skinned by you. As of now I appoint you my physician," he told Viglietti.

The remedy prescribed did nothing positive for him, but instead it only increased his pains. When the doctors heard of this, they advised him to stop the painful treatment. Luckily, if his legs were sick, his mind was never sick. The correspondent from Parma of a Liberal Turin newspaper was right when, in an article entitled Don Bosco is Walking,[4] he said, "I have been hearing for many years now that Don Bosco suffers from swollen varicose veins in his legs which have him walk with great difficulty. Though Almighty God may not have favored Don Bosco as far as his legs, He certainly made up for it generously by endowing him with an indomitable will power which never retreats in the presence of any obstacle, for he continues to walk unperturbed toward his goals." This opening phrase then led into an account of the new steps taken for the opening of a school in Parma.

At the beginning of June, Don Bosco related a dream. For some years

[3] Vol. XVII.

[4] *La Gazzetta di Torino*, July 14, 1887.

he had been repeating his request that a booklet be written on how rich people should use their money. We have already had many occasions to explain how strict he was on this topic. Even the Salesians thought that the way he spoke in certain cases to rich people was too daring. It sounded as if he wanted to discard the more lenient opinions of some theologians on the understanding of "superfluous wealth." When he saw that his ideas were contradicted, then he stopped insisting on them, but that thought was deeply set into his mind and he never gave it up.

At any rate, this is what Don Bosco said on June 4th: "A few nights ago I dreamt I saw Our Lady, who reprimanded me for keeping silent about the obligation of giving alms. She said to me that many priests were going to perdition because they neglected the duties imposed on them by the sixth and seventh Commandments, but particularly did she stress the evil use of riches, *"Si superfluum daretur orphanis,"* she said, *"major esset numerus electorum: sed multi venenose conservant," etc* [If the surplus were to be given to the orphans, the number of the elect would be greater. Instead, many hold on to it like poison, etc.]. She deplored the fact that priests are afraid to speak out from the pulpit on the obligation of giving one's superfluous wealth to the poor, and so the rich accumulate gold for their coffers.

This is how Father John Baptist Lemoyne, an utterly authoritative witness, described Don Bosco alone in his room during the hours of the evening: "When Don Bosco is alone in his room at night, he lets his thoughts flow freely and thinks over his projects, and spends long hours motionless just doing this. Whenever he foresaw difficulties in any one of his undertakings, he would study ways to solve them. One by one he used to visit all of his houses, he would think of their welfare and how to improve them. He mentally visualized all his Salesians, no matter in what part of the world they might have been, and talked to them because love was his moving force in all things." As a confirmation of this, Father John Baptist Lemoyne refers to a letter, which the Saint dictated to him on June 30th. It was addressed to the cleric George Tomatis who was in the school of Randazzo. He signed it himself. Probably Tomatis had written to him for his name day, and had expressed his fears that Don Bosco might have forgotten him.

Turin, June 30, 1887

Dear Tomatis,

You are thinking of me, you picture me as talking to you and

as receiving my blessing. My dear son, I will tell you that I too, think of you. You see, when I am alone, I can see all my beloved sons in the stillness and silence of the night. I can see you all one by one. I think about what you need and what would be best and possible for you to do according to your individual character and temperament, and then I bless you.

Oh! My beloved sons, if you could only know what love I have for you, I believe you would even suffer on account of it. So just imagine, dear Tomatis, if I do not pray for you! You may rest assured that as long as Don Bosco has any life in him, he will never allow any day to pass without praying fervently for you, or without blessing you.

I am happy to know that you are content. Continue battling courageously the battles of the Lord with saintly energy against the eternal enemy who is both his and our own enemy. Appeal to Mary Help of Christians. Be very devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and be not afraid of anything.

Onward then, always onward in perfection, make sure that every day you advance a good step up the great ladder of holiness.

God bless you together with all my other dear sons of Randazzo. Continue praying for me and believe me always in Jesus and Mary,

Most affectionately yours,
Rev. John Bosco

Then Father Lemoyne resumes: "These are the last few days of Don Bosco's life. From now on, the stage of his holy actions will be that humble little room where so many hundreds of thousands of people have gone to obtain graces, comfort, and advice. It will be that room reached by millions of letters which come from all parts of the world, from every village in Europe, and describing all sorts of sorrow, anguish, pain, noble intentions, with accents of agony, hope, joy, and charity; letters to which Don Bosco had untiringly written a reply either himself, or he had others answer them, as he entrusted this task to his more closely trusted sons; that room where enormous sums of money had passed through his hands, money sent by Divine Providence to help the upkeep of his houses, and for which his heart intoned a continuous hymn of thanksgiving; that room where so many things had been planned out for the Glory of God; where

so many natural and supernatural virtues had been concealed by the mantle of humility, and whence the Saint's prayers had soared to God and to Mary Help of Christians, imploring countless graces."

Some time between June and July, at Calliano near Penango, a boy was bitten by a dog. The child's parents were afraid the dog might have had rabies so they accompanied the boy to his uncle in Turin for anti-rabies treatment. The doctor examined him and said that first it should be ascertained whether or not the dog really had been affected with rabies. But the dog could no longer be found. The boy was then introduced to Don Bosco. When the Saint was told of the situation, he said, "Begin a novena. Let the boy make his Confession and receive Communion in the Church of Mary Help of Christians. Do not turn him over to the doctors. The dog will come back."

Just as he was saying this, the dog did reappear, and it was found that it did not have rabies. In his amazement, the doctor of Calliano gave great publicity to the occurrence, to the point that people were still talking about it many years later.

A premature heat wave so exhausted Don Bosco that he was persuaded to go to Valsalice on July 4th. As he was on his way down to the carriage, which was waiting for him in the courtyard, he stopped at the door of the infirmary. Here the coadjutor Charles Fontana was suffering from lung problems. "I will go to see him," he said, when he heard that he was about to breathe his last. But then he did not go into the infirmary. However he did not forget his promise. He did not enter but he had someone convey these words to him: "Don Bosco did not come because he did not want to close your eyes. I'll be waiting for you at Valsalice. Come and see me."

Fontana recovered so rapidly that he was indeed able to visit Don Bosco at Valsalice, and his recovery was so thorough that he lived until 1912.

Once at Valsalice, Don Bosco immediately felt a definite benefit from the cooler air, as was made evident by the cheerfulness he displayed in his conversations, even though he did more listening than talking. He took particular delight in listening to the recollections of the early days of the Oratory. Since he obviously enjoyed this so much, his older sons would recall one incident after another. One evening at supper, Father John Garino cheered him considerably by telling how, at the time when the police made a house search at the Oratory, a newspaper was being sold in the streets to the shout of: "Don Bosco in prison! One cent a copy!" Don Bosco was walking through the streets of the town with him that day, so

he gave him a penny to go and buy one. That was a year of insane furor against the priests. Once, as Don Bosco was crossing Piazza Savoia, again with Father Garino, he encountered two street women who declared loudly: "All of these priests ought to be strung up." To which Don Bosco replied quickly: "When they are as deserving as you are."

On another occasion, Don Bosco started talking about the ease with which he had been able to retain in his memory the whole content of a book, after having read it once, when he was a young man, and said that in this way he had committed to memory the contents of many kinds of books. This served him as an important source of knowledge for the future. Then he broke off all at once, exclaiming, "Oh! How much wiser Don Bosco would have been had he concentrated on reading and learning by heart one single chapter of the *Imitation of Christ,* and on putting it into practice!" There were many priests listening to him when he said this, among them Father Tallandini of Faenza who had arrived in Turin for his name day.

At Valsalice he received a report from Prince Czartoryski about the status of his problems. Although his father had become more indulgent after August had returned from Rome, he still did not want to let him go until he had completed all the paperwork related to the transaction of what was due to him by right of being the first son, which he had already begun doing three years earlier. He had, up to that time, signed over to his son his own estates and property; but there was still new capital to be added. And last of all, he had to obtain the necessary authorization from the Emperor of Austria. Naturally, the young man would have retained a personal fortune of his own which he could claim as his when he would relinquish his title to his younger brother, in the event that he entered religious life. He wrote from Paris, but was about to go with his father to Vienna, and from there to Cracow where the Czartoryski family was to be visited by the Imperial Prince at the end of the month. "I may possibly be exposed to many distractions," the prince wrote Don Bosco, "but I tell you about all these troublesome things, as my spiritual director. I am still determined to do the will of God and follow my vocation. I want to come back to Turin as soon as I can. I appeal to your prayers, dear Father of mine!"

Don Bosco replied immediately:

Turin, June 15, 1887

My dear Prince August,

Your vocation is now being tested and I think that this is good

for you. I bless the Lord that you keep the same good intention, which agrees with the view of the Holy Father.

I myself am always of the same opinion and viewpoint. The Salesian Congregation is always open to you if, as you say, you wish to come and stay with us for a more or less lengthy period.

Meanwhile, I am praying and you must pray too, that God permit all of us to persevere along this road, which assures us of paradise with greater certainty.

Cordial regards from your friends, the Salesians. May the Holy Virgin guide us all to Heaven. So be it.

My regards to your august Father and the rest of the family.

Your good and most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

He left Valsalice the evening of June 23rd so that he could be present at the two academic entertainments staged for his name day. At both of them, the entertainment offered singing and music, verse and prose, and various gifts— all revealed to the large audience the love that his sons bore toward their beloved Father.[5] Father Piano, a past pupil who was at the time pastor of the Church of the Great Mother of God, rendered the following testimony in a short talk: "How often when facing the problems of our ministry does the mere recollection of your words encourage us! How often do we recall to mind your loving face, your penetrating glance, your fatherly advice, and strive to emulate them ourselves, when we find ourselves surrounded by a swarm of children! How often did I hear, to my infinite delight, people say of your sons: 'Ah! One can tell that they were brought up by Don Bosco!' Although we live far away from this beloved Oratory, we still look on it as our home. Our thoughts return to it often, and instantly we conjure up your image, Father. Whenever we have an opportunity to come back and talk to you, life seems better to us, the exercise of virtue seems easier and help from God seems more certain." He then recalled the mutual affection which once bound the Father to his sons and the sons to their Father, and ended with these words: "We still feel the love we felt for you then. It is this love of ours that enables us to look on your glory as our own, and which induces us to enroll greater numbers of

[5] Fr. Fasani, prefect at Nice, brought the tribute of his friends and protégés in France, by delivering a noble message (see Appendix, doc. 71).

people as your sons and Cooperators. It is the gratitude we feel, the benefits we have received, that make it imperative for us to love you. Was it not here at the Oratory that the majority of us were fed and clothed when we were destitute? It is to the Oratory that the majority of us owe the position we now fill in society. It is the Oratory that we have to thank for the sound principles, holy maxims, and wholesome upbringing, which enabled us to persevere in virtue. We owe you everything, and would you want us to forget you? Ah! This tongue of mine will be stilled, before it ceases to sing your praises. This heart of mine will beat no more, before it ceases to love you. We hold that loving you is to us a symbol of loving God."[6]

Everyone was filled with the sad presentiment that this was going to be Don Bosco's last name day celebration. The lyrics written by Father John Baptist Lemoyne and the music composed by Dogliani had linked one of the very early songs to one, which was to be the very last. It aroused nostalgic longing in the hearts of the older pupils of bygone days. Don Bosco felt it too, for at every four strophes sung by the first chorus, a second chorus repeated as a refrain the two verses which the boys of the Oratory had sung, the first time his name day had ever been celebrated:

Come, friends
Don Bosco awaits us;
Perfect joy
Awakens in our hearts.

It is a pleasant day
Inviting us to joy;
Let us hasten to the summons
Of feasting and delight.

Thus ended a whole cycle of loving manifestations in which the boys in particular participated with genuine enthusiasm and its recollection was going to be indelibly recorded in their souls for the remainder of their lives, as it can be still seen in the testimony of the few survivors of those days. "The celebrations of this year were splendid, heart-warming, most cordial," the author of the diary wrote.

[6] In the joyous recurrence of the nameday of that most excellent of Fathers, Don Bosco, his former sons in token of their gratitude. Turin, Salesian-printing works, 1887.

Chapter 17

VISITS TO LANZO AND VALSALICE / DON BOSCO'S LAST BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

After the name-day festivities, Don Bosco had, Charles Gastini, as usual invite the past priest-pupils for an August 11th meeting, and the lay past-pupils for a meeting on the 14th of August. But he could not be with them because he was at Lanzo and his health did not permit him to get to Turin. He sent a telegram to the former: "Regret absence, wish you a most pleasant meeting and merriment." And to the latter: "Rejoicing with you, dear children, wish you good appetite, happiness, holiness, fear of God." At both these meetings, Father Michael Rua substituted for Don Bosco. A committee made up of both priests and laymen was sent to Lanzo, to extend good wishes to him on behalf of them all. Don Bosco received the committee not in the house, but in the meadow adjoining the school. Father Griva, pastor of Cunico d'Asti and head of the committee, wrote the following report: "Don Bosco was so touched that at first he could not get a word out. He looked at us with that kind and keen look, just as he had so often done before. The eyes are still the same, but oh, his appearance told us that he was suffering greatly."[1] Don Bosco recalled that, just as he was receiving them now in a meadow, so had he received his boys in the Valdocco meadows. There was talk of Patagonia and of his Golden Jubilee Mass, for which he wanted a Patagonian choir of two thousand to come to Turin. He thus spent an hour of sheer happiness with them, at the end of which he blessed them, saying, "Pray for me, so that I may save my soul." Lastly, he recommended that they bring word to the Oratory that no one was to worry about his health.

He had already been at Lanzo since July 4th. Both his doctors and the superiors had persuaded him to go there, to breathe better in that cool and oxygen-laden air and to escape the dangerous effects of the heat of Turin. He had not been at Lanzo since the 1884 feast of Saint Aloysius. He

[1] *Bollettino salesiano*, October 1887.

always had such a great affection for that school! The school stands partly on the slope and partly on the summit of a hill all free of buildings. The slope is high and wide and all covered with grass. The summit has a wide and easy to walk on path which ends up under a bower. At the bottom of the valley you can hear the rustle of the River Stura. On the right you can see the foot hills of the Alps, and on the left of one (looking at it), there is a vast and pleasant plain. Turin stands on the farthest side of the horizon. Don Bosco took a walk up there every evening, halting now and then at such a picturesque spot. Seldom he would walk a little, but never for long. He moved along in a wheelchair, generally pushed by Father Charles Viglietti or by others living in the house, though at times well-known callers would also take a hand. As he sat down in the wheelchair, this is what he said to the committee of past pupils who had called on him: "I used to challenge the skinniest guys to the high jump, but now I have to sit in a wheelchair and ride along with other people's legs." He often had conversations under the bower with a few of his close friends. Once, when he was all-alone with only the coadjutor Peter Enria, he looked pensively toward Turin, then sighed and exclaimed, "My boys are there!" On another occasion he asked him whether he could still recall an old *Tantum ergo* he had composed and began to sing it in a feeble voice, but with warm feeling. Some evenings Father Viglietti went down to the river, passed the classic Roman bridge with its one bold, single arch, and climbed up the far slopes and from some hilltop he would hail Don Bosco, with a wave of his handkerchief. Don Bosco very happily would respond in the same way. In a word, everything possible was done to keep him amused and help him restore a little of his former well being.

All the authorities of Lanzo hastened to get to see him and pay their respects. Even the parliamentary deputy Palberti went. Ladies and gentlemen who were there on vacation, curious to see him, attended the award ceremony in great numbers on August 7.

We have copies in our archives of four letters that he wrote in July. The first one was addressed to a well deserving lady, Mrs. Magliano:

Lanzo, July 6, 1887

Dear Mrs. Magliano,

Last Sunday I had hoped we might have a little time for ourselves to talk about ourselves and the greater glory of God, but this was impossible. If it were not too much for you to take a walk up here, I think that this would be possible. There are several

trains daily and we could have a peaceful talk. You could spend your free time with our Sisters with whom you could have a repast and get whatever you might need. What do you say to that? The climate here is magnificent. I expect to be here the whole month. May God bless us and may Mary guide us to heaven.

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

In the second letter, Don Bosco graciously responds to the wish of an adult who wanted to become a Salesian coadjutor. He did profess after the Saint's death and died in 1893.

Lanzo, July 18, 1887

Dear John James Dalmasso,

To my great satisfaction I received your letter full of filial affection towards me. May God be blessed! I will have yet another Salesian to work together with me to win souls for heaven and to give greater guarantee of the salvation for both your soul and mine.

We will talk about what work you will do when you get here. At the present time, all our efforts to get money are concentrated on giving assistance to our missionaries in America.

They give their lives for souls and we gladly give our purse to assist them.

I cannot write any more. May Mary guide us all along the road to heaven. Amen.

Your most affectionate friend in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. Come to live with us whenever you wish. We await you with open arms.

The third letter was addressed to Baroness Azelia Fassati, wife of Ricci des Ferries:

Lanzo, July 24, 1887

Mrs. Azelia,

God wants us to go to heaven, but only through tribulations. We are delighted to hear of the improvement in the health condition of the son of Count Francis de Maistre, then, lo and behold, a new catastrophe; i.e., a new merit to be acquired in the eyes of God. But we are hoping and praying. The thorns will prick us, but they will certainly be turned into roses for our blessed eternity. I will pray and our little orphans will go to Communion for this new need, but you kindly help us too, with your usual zeal.

How is mama, the Marchioness? We pray for her to God every day, for some reason or other. She must go to heaven with you, and naturally Mr. Charles will be along side of us.

I am here at Lanzo, half blind, half or entirely lame and nearly dumb. But this is a good penance for me, for having talked too much out of turn.

My hand is no longer good for writing. May Mary guide us in all things. Amen.

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. I have just this minute received word that our distinguished benefactor, Count Cole of Turin, is seriously ill. I warmly recommend him to the charity of your holy prayers.

The health of Count Francis de Maistre's son continued to worsen until the fall when his father, having lost all hope of his survival, telegraphed Don Bosco from Savoy, "My first born son, Andrew, dangerously sick; beg blessing." He now had pneumonia. His high fever, an obstinate cough, and the doctor's auscultation was indicating that one of his lungs was obstructed, threatening the poor boy's life. When the attending physician said that he could no longer take alone the responsibility for the boy's sickness, the boy's father wrote a telegram to be sent to a Parisian specialist. But before sending it off, he appealed to Don Bosco's prayers. The Saint replied by telegram, giving his blessing, and promising that with his boys, he would pray to Mary Help of Christians. He urged the family to be calm. Such a reply was sent late at night. It was then immediately known that the boy had spent a peaceful night and that his lungs were quite clear by morning. He no longer had any fever and his cough had gone. The doctor's auscultation could no longer tell which

lung had been obstructed. The doctor from Paris could only confirm with greater certainty that he was thoroughly better, that, in fact, an instant recovery had taken place. When the winter was over, his father took Andrew to visit the tomb of his benefactor. And in order that he might better appreciate his debt of gratitude toward the Servant of God, he had him give Father Michael Rua an envelope containing two one-thousand franc notes. The boy continued to be healthy and strong from then on.[2]

The fourth letter calls for some explanations. Teodolinda Pilati, widow of the late Donini, of Bologna, is already known to our readers as a generous Cooperator. In June she had sent word to Don Bosco that she wanted to invest the fortune her husband had left her in works of charity. Don Bosco replied saying that nothing was more essential in these new times than helping poor abandoned boys to be educated in the Christian faith, to make them good citizens, good workers, good family heads and to prepare good priests by a careful fostering of vocations, as the Salesian institutes in Europe and America were now doing. Thinking that the lady also meant to assist the Salesian houses, he advised her to sell whatever property she could dispose of and to give over to him or his representatives the money she received for it. But she explained the reasons why this proposal was not feasible, though she did say that she would transfer her credits to him. Not knowing what the circumstances were, Don Bosco found her observations fully justified.[3] The benefactress did not delay to give a proof of her good will, for in July she sent him fifteen thousand lire, for which the Saint thanked her in this letter:

Lanzo, July 26, 1887

> I have just this moment received your generous offering for our orphans and our missionaries who dedicate their lives on their behalf. Four days ago I should have started on the missionary expedition to Quito and Chile, and I was waiting for some special act of charity (such as yours) like manna from Heaven. May God bless you? Only God knows the souls that will be saved with this act of charity, and those souls who will enjoy the glory of paradise thanks to this immense act of charity. I will pray a lot and particularly for you and for your relatives both living and deceased.

[2] *Summ. sup. virt.*, no. XVII, *De Donis Supernis et miraculis in vita*, #28 (Fr. Michael Rua's) testimony.
[3] Appendix doc. 72 A–B. Two letters only signed by Don Bosco.

May God be blessed who inspires you to do good works during your lifetime. It is certain that you will find them well insured.

I will see that all our little orphans offer up at least one Holy Communion for your pious intention. At the present day, their number already surpasses three hundred thousand.

I can barely write. My days are rapidly drawing to an end. I would like you to come and visit our dear children in the house in Turin or in other houses, but I do hope to be able to see you one day gloriously enjoying eternal bliss.

May God bless us, and Mary guide us to heaven. Amen.

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. J. Bosco

Around mid-January 1888, she heard that there had been an improvement in Don Bosco's health and she wrote to Father Rua: "May the Lord be blessed a thousand times and again a thousand times for having saved so precious a life and for a long time still, we hope. Don Bosco is like a second father to me, so you can readily imagine how anxious I was whenever the newspaper arrived. My heart would beat violently as I searched for news of our beloved patient. Mary Help of Christians has listened to many prayers that have been addressed to her, and may she be blessed for all eternity."

Don Bosco had written Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda for the feast of Saint Cajetan, expressing his good wishes and promising prayers in his name and in the name of the whole Congregation. The archbishop, who was always so kind to him, said in his reply:[4]

"Please accept my most affectionate thanks for all your goodness. And you may be sure that my poor heart still retains the same feeling of esteem, admiration, and gratitude toward you and the zealous members of your Congregation, whose progress I would dearly like to be able to witness for many long years to come under the holy guidance of its founder." At the end of the letter he signed himself "with fraternal affection in Jesus Christ."

Don Bosco's birthday, which followed right after this, was not a very cheerful one, for Don Bosco was afflicted by harrowing ailments. "It is pitiful to see him," we read in the diary under the date of August 15th:

[4] Turin, August 10, 1887.

"He does not talk and his breathing is heavy." A few of the superiors and several boys representing the Oratory from Turin went to fete him. Telegrams came pouring in from the Salesian houses and from Cooperators. Mrs. Pilati, who was just mentioned, sent him a second offering of twenty thousand lire to which he replied:

Turin, August 15, 1887

Dear Mrs. Pilati:

Blessed be the holy Virgin Mary and thanks unto her for having paid the expenses of the feast of Our Lady's Assumption into heaven and of the festivities of my own humble birth in such a generous measure, by the hand of your own charitable person.

May God reserve a fitting place for you, his daughter, at His side and at the side of Mary, your protectress.

God bless us. Please bear with my bad handwriting.

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

A number of compositions were read out at table, to which he listened with the habitual good grace he always displayed on such occasions. Father Peter Guidazio had called on his Latin muse, and delivered a polished elegy. The speech by Father Charles Givarello, the director of Mathi, was very much appreciated. He had offered Don Bosco some of the first fruits from the Mathi orchard, some fine bunches of grapes. He touched all hearts with his evocation of the past and his symbolic flight of fantasy. "When we look at these grapes," he said, "our thoughts take us back to the fertile hills of Monferrato, back to those happy days when you raced in joy from one hill to the other, especially on the days dedicated to the Assumption of the Holy Virgin, and plucking the first ripe bunches from the vine, you tasted the first sweetness of life. As we look at these grapes, our thoughts take us back to those hills where, seventy-two years ago today, the mystic vineyard of Francis and Margaret, with the auspices of the Virgin assumed into Heaven, produced that marvelous bunch of grapes which was to sweeten many million of people's souls. And that bunch of grapes is you, and among the millions of souls sweetened on this seventy-second birthday, it's all of us and on this rock, which could be called the mystic Salesian vineyard, or, better still, the vine press,

you, during the best years of your youthful vigor, so to speak, squeezed out during the holy days of retreat and during the Chapter meetings the juice and life from the mystic Salesian vineyard, namely, all of us delighted to be able to pay homage to you with all the respect and affection of which the hearts of sons are capable, of sons who see in you a ray of the same benevolence of our common Mother assumed into heaven. This ray blazed 1770 years after her Assumption, namely, in 1815, and once again blazes forth from this rock, to blaze anew, we hope, for many more years to come." The sentence is a long one, yet it contains a lyrical vein which, in a man so devoted to the precision of science as Father Ghivarello was, corresponds to an overwhelming urge of his heart, which reveals ever more clearly the great love that his first sons felt for their great father.

During the afternoon, there was the solemn awarding of prizes followed by the usual festive display. Father Michael Rua presided over the proceedings, but the thought of Don Bosco and his birthday prevailed dominantly throughout the whole entertainment.

Yet the day was not to pass, after all, without a cruel thorn. A letter from the Cardinal Vicar ordered the recall of Father Francis Dalmazzo, procurator general of the Congregation with the Holy See and pastor of the Sacred Heart Church, in the name of the Supreme Pontiff. Don Bosco sent Father Francis Cerruti immediately to Rome, hoping to ward off the blow, but Father Cerruti found the Holy Father adamant on the decision made, and he expected the Salesian Congregation to obey him promptly.[5] So without the slightest delay, Father Francis Dalmazzo was removed from his double office and with equal promptness Father Caesar Cagliero was appointed procurator and Father Francis Cagnoli pastor. What had caused this thunderbolt in a clear sky? A network of feminine intrigue encompassing the confessional had given rise to accusations lodged against Father Dalmazzo, which had forced the ecclesiastical authorities to take this severe measure. We might well imagine that Don Bosco would have been seized by profound melancholy for such a sad occurrence because it was unexpected. But instead, the coadjutor Enria saw, during his evening outing, that he was more cheerful in appearance than usual, and so he remarked with the confidence inspired by his goodness, "Today Don Bosco is happier than usual." To which he replied, "Yet today I suffered the greatest displeasure that has ever been given to me in my whole life."[6]

[5] The minutes of the Superior Council, August 29, 1887.

[6] *Summ. sup. virt.*, no. XI, #36 (witness Fr. Piscetta).

This testimony just as the previous ones, given by the coadjutor during the ordinary process,[7] is confirmed by Father Julius Barberis, who also testified before the same tribunal:[8] "Don Bosco told me that this was one of the greatest setbacks he ever had in his life." He too admired his serene resignation when faced with this predicament.

The serene calm which never abandoned him in all his physical and moral sufferings came from above. At Lanzo, a small opening allowed us to find out the supernatural source of his mystical peace. A Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, Sister Felicina Torretta, had been assigned to the Lingotto kindergarten in Turin as superior. Before going to her new destination, she went to Lanzo to receive the blessing of the Servant of God. It was an August afternoon, about two o'clock, when she went up to the antechamber to be admitted to his presence. She did not see Father Viglietti, so she went straight into Don Bosco's room. The door stood wide open, and what did she behold — Don Bosco in ecstasy, in the attitude of someone who is listening to something. His face was intent, his smile sweet and serene, his outstretched arms held upward, while he kept nodding his head, indicating quite plainly that he was holding a conversation with some supernatural being. He looked taller than usual. At the sight, the Sister went forward. When she was only two steps away from him, she said, "Praised be Jesus! May I, Father?" She did not receive any reply. She repeated the same words again and again, raising her voice, but he did not seem to hear. So she waited, gazing at him for about ten minutes, until she saw him make the sign of the Cross with so reverent a bow of his head that she could not describe it. He then rested his hands on the table with an expression of great joy on his face. Suddenly he became aware of the presence of the Sister, and apparently quite startled said, "Oh, Sister Felicina, how you startled me!" "Ah Father, I said, 'May I come in' several times, but you did not hear me," she said. Rightly in her report did the Sister say that at that time Don Bosco was unable to stand upright unless someone supported him; and yet, during that heavenly dialogue, he stood upright without any effort.

When Father Lemoyne was hearing this report from the Sister after the death of Don Bosco, he kept on manifesting great delight until at last he exclaimed, "Do you know, Sister Felicina, that you are telling me something that I too witnessed in our house of Foglizzo? The same pos-

[7] Summ. CFR also Summ. Apostolic process o. 790 (Fr. Pischetta's testimony).

[8] No. XIV, *De heroica fortitudine,* p. 664.

ture with his arms uplifted, the same smiling countenance, with a heavenly expression suffused by a white light, the attitude of one who is listening, and the continued nodding of the head just as you describe, and then the leave-taking with the reverent bow and sign of the cross. We are two very lucky people."

In a letter written to us July 18, 1930, the Sister added that Father Lemoyne had also told her of the year and the circumstances when this occurred, though she could no longer remember them. It is however probable, not to say certain, that it occurred the following October 20th.

During a conversation with Father Philip Rinaldi, who was then director of the Oratory and Church of Saint John the Evangelist; Don Bosco uttered solemn, prophetic words. When Rinaldi went into the Saint's room one day,[9] he was looking at a world map. Putting his finger on Australia, he said that the Salesians would go there too. "But we'll need time" Father Rinaldi answered. "They will go, they will most assuredly go," Don Bosco replied.[10] Then, pointing to Spain, he resumed, "Your field of action will be here." This came true about two years later. But what has not come about so far (March 1936) is all that Don Bosco added after a few moments' pause-and the facts strike fear into us. He spoke of three very frightful upheavals in which that Catholic nation would be both the stage on which they unfolded and their victim. He also specified that in the last of them much blood would be shed, including Salesian blood.[11]

A man, who was a scientist, greatly esteemed both in Italy and abroad, even though he wore the religious habit, gave Don Bosco evidence of his profound esteem and sincere veneration. We speak of Father Denza, whose name was mentioned in connection with the establishment of meteorological observatories in America. Perhaps because of the frequent letters he received from the missionaries at that time, Don Bosco wished to have the learned Barnabite with him at Lanzo. The school director wrote to him and invited him there. On August 17th, Fr. Denza wrote the following answer

[9] From 1883 to 1887, Fr. Rinaldi walked every week from St. John's (at Porta Nuova) to the Oratory to go to Confession to Don Bosco and speak with him about the Sons of Mary, whose director he was.

[10] They did, in 1922. In 1999 there were 132 confreres in the Australian province, which includes also Samoa and Fiji.

[11] Fr. Rinaldi told this to a respectable Turinese lady. He used to speak with her with a father's trust, for he was her spiritual director. By the time this volume went to press in 1937, the frightful prediction had been borne out: the Spanish Civil War began in July 1936, and by its end three years later 97 members of the Salesian Family had been slain by the Republican Government: 39 priests, 26 coadjutors, 22 clerics, 2 sisters, 3 aspirants, a Cooperator, and 2 employees.

from Montaldo Torinese: "My affection and veneration for dear Don Bosco is immense and God knows how happy I would be to stay there with him a few days. But now I am here in the countryside where, thanks to God, my health is improving remarkably. Then too, it is very probable that at the end of the month I will have to leave here for a few days to attend the meeting of our meteorological association at Aquila. So it is therefore impossible for me to get to Lanzo now. Later, it may be easier, but I do not know how long Don Bosco will be staying there. Meanwhile, please thank him warmly for me and tell him that I too will never forget him. With God's help, I hope to see him soon. Tell him also that I have had very encouraging news from Montevideo. It seems as if the government of that country is taking the observatory to heart."

Don Bosco remained at Lanzo until August 19th. He wanted then to attend the retreat for the aspirants which was beginning at Valsalice. He left at four o'clock in the afternoon, and traveled directly to the school; upon his arrival sad news awaited him: a telegram from Alassio announced that Father Alexander Vignola lay near death. Don Bosco prayed for him with the director, Father Louis Rocca, and sent his blessing. These prayers were said at seven-thirty in the evening. A second telegram arrived at eight o'clock p.m., saying that Father Alexander Vignola had passed the critical stage of his sickness and showed remarkable improvement. But this only helped to delay his death for two weeks, enabling the patient to regain consciousness so that he might prepare himself for the great journey. He gave back his soul to God on September 3rd.

Father Alexander Vignola had attended the full high school programmed course at the Oratory and had habitually made his confession to Don Bosco. When he was making up his mind about his future, he consulted the Saint who said, "Do not worry. God wishes you to be a Salesian." At these words, which he used to repeat, Father Vignola felt great comfort in his heart, together with the steadfast determination to obey. He was one of those humble and industrious Salesians whose lives were lived almost unnoticed yet who are, nevertheless, the backbones of the house in which they live. He was assistant for a number of years at Alassio, first in the high school then in the classical college. He also taught Greek in the high school grades. He felt it essential to be among the boys always, to keep them cheerful and enliven their recreation. He was remarkably spontaneous in offering his services to his superiors, whenever he saw that there were problems. "I'll do it!" he would invariably say in such moments. That was why he was nicknamed "Father, I'll do it!'

Don Bosco never neglected any opportunity to give evidence of his devotion to the Holy See. As the time approached for the feast of Saint Joachim, which then was celebrated on August 21st, he sent from Valsalice reverent good wishes for a happy name day to Leo XIII. He received this reply by telegram from the new secretary of state, Cardinal Rampolla: "Holy Father thanking Salesians for good wishes addressed, blesses cordially; prays the Lord to strengthen resolutions made during retreat with special grace."

Like a loving father, Don Bosco also recalled the name day now and then of his priests, clerics and boys, addressing little notes to them, or giving them a holy picture with a few words written on it in his own handwriting. On this particular August 21st, for example, he sent Father Joachim Berto a holy picture of the painting of Saint Joseph revered in the church of Mary Help of Christians, and wrote on the envelope: "Long live Father Berto, long live Saint Joachim, 1887." On the back of the holy picture: "Dear Father Berto, may Mary be your guide to heaven. Rev. J. Bosco."

He had not presided at any meetings of the Superior Council since May 25th, but had entrusted this task to his vicar. At Valsalice however, he did preside at the afternoon meeting on September 12th, during which the executive staff of the Oratory was about to be appointed. He made the four following statements: "1. I want outings to be abolished for the Festive Oratory. 2. Wine is to be offered to the musicians under the porticos only on very solemn occasions, to continue the ancient tradition. 3. No coffee and pastry or sweets to be given to the musicians every time they are called upon to perform. 4. The house prefect is not to buy or sell anything without the express consent of the director, who alone is thereto entitled." He then ordered the secretary to include these express wishes of his in the minutes of the Council *ad perpetuam observantiam et rei memoriam.* [Something to be kept and remembered forever].

He prolonged his stay at Valsalice until the end of the retreat. But his health grew worse during the last ten days of September, for he was often seized by headaches and fevers. Three times in one week alone, he was prevented from enjoying the celebration of the Mass. "Yet he is always cheerful, and works, writes, and grants interviews," Viglietti wrote in his diary, "and while he himself would be in need of some kind of comfort, he only thinks about comforting other people."

Father Viglietti tells us little or nothing about these audiences granted at Valsalice. He refers only to the visit of two bishops from the United States of America, without mentioning their names, and also the arrival

of the family of Mr. Louis Marty Codolar from Barcelona. But we do know some details of other matters, from other sources.

To reward his three best pupils, Father Rinaldi, the director of the house of Faenza took them to the Oratory in September, and from there, he accompanied them to Valsalice to introduce them to Don Bosco. The Saint greeted them kindly, holding out his hand to be kissed. But from the smallest boy, a twelve-year-old in the second year of high school, he pulled his hand back; he looked him in the face and remarked very seriously, "We are not friends!" The poor child came away heartbroken. As soon as he was outside he burst into tears. Father Rinaldi tried to explain that it had been a joke, but the boy could not regain his composure. He prayed, he went to Communion, and at last an inner voice prompted him to break a certain promise.

It must be explained that his mother, who had been widowed for some years, had at first refused to grant her son permission to make the trip, for she was afraid that Don Bosco would influence him into becoming a Salesian. When the youngster reassured her, however, that he would never let anyone snare him, she gave him her consent.

Moved by this inner inspiration, he retracted his earlier determination, placing himself entirely at God's disposal. He was later readmitted to Don Bosco's presence, who declared with a smile, "Now we are friends!" He then put his right hand on the boy's shoulder, adding, "And you will never leave Don Bosco." He then took three medals, giving them to him one at a time, explaining, "This is for your mother, this is for your sister, and this is for you." It was a mystery to the boy how Don Bosco could know his family situation, just as he had done with the other two boys. Upon returning to Faenza, he finished high school, he overcame some obstacles, and entered the novitiate at Foglizzo in October 1891. This, in short, is the history of the vocation of Father Eneas Tozzi, who today (1936) is provincial of the Salesian houses in England.[12]

What happened to Father John Baptist Tamietti, director of the school of Este, was unique. Before taking leave of the Saint at the end of the

[12] Fr. Tozzi (1875–1959) was born at Lugo in the Ravenna province. After his ordination in 1897, he was sent to England as master of novices. He spent the years 1902–1926 in South Africa, then was recalled to England as provincial. The English province also included Ireland and South Africa. With the outbreak of World War II and the cut-off of communication between the Axis and the Allied nations, Fr. Peter Ricaldone nominated Fr. Tozzi as his personal delegate for the Salesian provinces of England and North America. Fr. Tozzi also served as provincial at New Rochelle (1941–1944) and twice at San Francisco (1941–1942, 1946–1950). In that role and as director of the house of formation in Newton, N.J. (1950–1953), he shaped a great many Salesians, as he had done earlier in the Anglo-Irish province. In his retirement he was one of the last living links to St. John Bosco, whose spirit he faithfully passed on.

retreat, he asked him whether he had anything to tell him. They were strolling along the second floor corridor at the time, and Father Tamietti was supporting Don Bosco. Don Bosco replied, "Yes, come into my room." When they were inside, Father Tamietti asked what it was that he wished to say. "Several things, but... Then he hesitated, as if absorbed in thought, before exclaiming, "Ah!" Then his breath grew heavy, his face became red, and he could not say a word, only sighing repeatedly, "Ah! Ah! Ah!" When Father Tamietti saw this, he begged him not to take the trouble, for he could have told him what he had to tell him at some other time.

This happened at four o'clock p.m.. Later in the day, when Father Tamietti was saying good-by to him in the same corridor. "I'm leaving tomorrow; if you have anything to tell me, I am at your service." Don Bosco again drew him into his room, sat down like someone overcome by immense sadness, and looked at him affectionately. He tried to speak but was unable. All he could utter was, "Ah! Ah! I can't." "Don't strain yourself, Don Bosco," Father Tamietti said. "You can talk to me some other time, or else write to me. Meanwhile, give me your blessing."

We can imagine how worried he was when he departed. He realized that Don Bosco had something serious to tell him. He was more upset that he did not know whether it regarded him personally or his school, the present or the future. When he heard that Don Bosco was sick, he came to Turin for the Christmas holidays. As soon as he was at Don Bosco's bedside, Don Bosco told him, "Oh! Dear Tamietti, thank you for having come to see me." He then took his hand and looked at him for a long time without speaking, revealing secret tenderness, but not even at that time did he give any hint of what it was all about.

There truly was a mystery in all this striving to speak without ever getting the words out. It does not seem improbable that the secret reason for this silence was in connection with a prediction and its fulfillment. One day Don Bosco had told Father Tamietti, "You will work until you are fifty, but you will live to seventy-two." Born in 1848, Father Tamietti was stricken in 1898 by a violent typhoid fever, from which he recovered, but with his mental faculties severely impaired. He went on living thus, unable to carry out any occupation, until 1920. All this was exactly as Don Bosco had predicted.[13]

When talking especially with the superiors, Don Bosco made frequent allusions to his forth coming death. One September evening, as he

[13] See also Vol. XIII, 531–532.

was eating supper in his room, he chatted intimately with Father Moses Veronesi, the director of the agricultural settlement at Mogliano Veneto. Knowing him to be an expert in economics, he said, "I have very little time to live ahead of me. The superiors of the Congregation do not realize it, for they believe that Don Bosco will live on for a long time still. I am not sorry to die, but I am concerned about the debts of the Sacred Heart Church. Father Dalmazzo is good, but he is not an administrator. Just think of all the money that was collected!... What will my sons say when they find all these obligations?... Pray for my soul; I will not be here at the time of next year's retreat."[14]

Then, as they turned to some other topic, Father Moses Veronesi reminded him how a few years previously he had told him about the age to which he would live, provided he was good; now that condition was causing him some anxiety. "Well, let's do away with the condition," Don Bosco said. "I'm going to heaven soon to get a place ready for you; you'll come there accompanied by many others." Father Moses Veronesi, who was born in 1851, ended his mortal life at the venerable age of seventy-nine.[15]

Father Paul Albera, the provincial of the French houses, also had a last conversation with Don Bosco that was filled with emotion. When he went to say good-bye, the Saint bade him sit down beside him, and asked many questions about the house of Marseilles and the Salesian Confreres there, adding that he would have liked to give him some money for the French novitiate, but that Divine Providence had not sent him any. "But at least I mean to pay for your journey," he said. "Here are fifty lire in gold. It is all I have. He then looked at him very affectionately and said, "You too are about to leave. They are all leaving me. I know that Father John Bonetti will be leaving tonight. Father Michael Rua will be leaving too. They are leaving me here alone." He had tears in his eyes as he spoke. His emotions increased as he said, "Don Bosco still has so many things to tell his sons, yet he will not have time enough to say them." Since Father Albera also had begun to cry, Don Bosco made an effort and said, "I am not reproaching you. You are only doing your duty by going away. God be with you. I shall pray for you and I bless you with all my heart."

Most interesting was Don Bosco's conversation with Father Julius

[14] In connection with the debts at the Sacred Heart, when Fr. Anthony Sala was sent to Rome to investigate the situation at close range, he found that they amounted to a total of 350,000 lire (minutes of the Superior Council, October 26, 1887).

[15] See Vol. X, p. 23.

Barberis on September 13th. It had been decided that the institute of Valsalice was now to be used for another purpose: the well-off boarders were going to be replaced by clerics studying philosophy. At the end of the council meeting, Father Barberis remained alone with him. The Novice Master asked him with all confidence, why, after he had always opposed such a change of purpose, had he now changed his mind. Don Bosco answered, "From now on, I will be here to safeguard this house." As he said this, he kept looking steadily toward the big staircase which led from the upper-level garden to the portico of the big lower playground. After a moment he added, "Get the draft plan ready." Since the school had not been entirely finished, Father Julius Barberis thought that he wanted to see the building completed. So he said, "Good, I'll draw it up. I'll submit it to you this winter." "Not this winter, but next spring," Don Bosco answered. "You will not submit the plan to me, but to the council." Meanwhile, he kept looking at the staircase. Only five months later did Father Barberis begin to understand what the Saint had meant, when he saw him buried at Valsalice in the very center of those grand stairs. He finally understood everything when the design for the monument to be erected over Don Bosco's tomb was presented in the spring, although Father Barberis had not spoken a word about the September conversation to anyone.[16]

Don Bosco returned to the Oratory the evening of October 2nd. Mr. Luis also sat in the carriage with him. As they came to the gates of the grounds surrounding the boarding school of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, Don Bosco bade the coachman halt, saying he wished to call once more on the nuns. The details of his visit may be found elsewhere.[17] The boys were expecting him at the Oratory. As he appeared, he was greeted by an enthusiastic acclamation and when after climbing the stairs he appeared on the balcony, they all unanimously struck up their old song: "Come, friends, Don Bosco awaits us." Several hundred boys kept their eyes on him as they sang, and this moved the family of Mr. Luis to tears, for they all said they had never witnessed anything so touching. As he listened to their singing, he paced slowly around his little room where he was to continue dispensing advice and comfort both to his sons and to strangers, but only for a short time.

16 *Summ. super virt.*, no. XVIII, *De pretioso obitu* (testimony of Fr. Barberis).
17 Vol. XV, pp. 556–557

Chapter 18

THE APOSTOLIC PREFECTURE OF BISHOP FAGNANO

During these two years (1886-1887) the most important event in Salesian America was the arrival of Don Bosco's sons in Tierra del Fuego. Don Bosco had urged the Prefect Apostolic to hurry up, but problems of various kinds obstructed any swift execution of his wishes. Also, it was not until 1887 that at last the intrepid prelate, Bishop Fagnano, was able to establish his residence in the heart of the mission entrusted to him by Leo XIII.

Anyone looking at the extreme tip of South America on the map will receive the impression that an immense surface of ice that had been afloat most suddenly had crumbled into a hundred pieces drifting in as many directions: this gives us an idea of its primitive shape.[1] That bizarre archipelago, consisting of an infinite number of islands of all sizes, which originally had been one compact mass connected with the remainder of the continent, is known as Tierra del Fuego. It was given this name in 1520 by the Portuguese, Ferdinand Magellan, for during his navigation he noticed columns of smoke rising up in many different places, a sign of fires kindled in the forests by the natives to protect themselves against the southern cold. Yet, the temperature there is not as severe as in the territories around the Arctic Pole, for the latitude of Tierra del Fuego is more or less the same as that of the Netherlands and Denmark.

This territory can be roughly subdivided into three regions. First and foremost, we must consider the Big Island which is the actual Tierra del Fuego itself, with a surface of 48,000 square kilometers. To the southwest lie the islands scattered over the surface of the sea from Beagle Channel to Cape Horn. The principal islands of this group are Londonderry, Gordon, Hoste, and Navarino. Lastly, to the northwest one sees a third cluster of

[1] In order to understand what is said here, nothing will help more than the lovely map of Tierra del Fuego drawn by our own Fr. Albert DeAgostini for the Società Editrice Internazionale (SEI).

islands constituting a line which extends from Cape Pilar to the Brecknock Peninsula. The most important of these is Desolacion' at the western entrance to the Strait of Magellan, Santa Ines, Clarence, and Dawson. Among these larger islands which represent, so to speak, the backbone of the Tierra del Fuego archipelago, innumerable small and even tiny islands are scattered, separated one from the other by a most intricate network of tortuously winding canals constituting a genuine labyrinth.

The whole territory measures approximately 72,000 square kilometers in surface. Politically speaking, it had been regarded for a long time as *"res nullius* [land of no one]." The unsuccessful endeavors to have people live in the Strait of Magellan, the terrifying tales of shipwrecks and the preconceived convictions about the sterility of the soil and the severe climate had contributed to this condition. But, once the Strait of Magellan became important as a sea route connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, and intelligent capitalists had begun to develop the cattle industry, then the two neighboring countries of Chile and Argentina began to act so as to secure these distant territories for themselves. Their rivalry ended in 1881 when, under arbitration by the King of England, the Borders treaty was drawn up: A line was drawn up dividing from north to south, the Great Island, namely from the Cape of the Holy Spirit near the eastern entrance to the Strait of Magellan up to the Beagle Channel. Thus 50,000 square kilometers were allotted to Chile in the west and 22,000 kilometers to Argentina to the east. Argentina also established its control over Isla de los Estados, which faces Cape San Diego.

The islands are inhabited by natives of three different tribes, designated by the names of Alakalúf, Yagáns, and Ona. The first two live in the western and southern islands: the Alakalúf tribes occupy the area between the Brecknock Peninsula and the western channels of Patagonia north of the Strait of Magellan; the Yagáns live in the Beagle Channel, The Great Island, and all the innumerable islands which lie scattered south of it. The Ona tribes are all located in the Great Island [Tierra del Fuego]. All the explorers who for about three centuries sailed through the archipelago of Tierra del Fuego agreed in their description of the pitifully primitive living conditions of these tribes. The living conditions prevailing among the Ona tribe in the eastern section of the Great Island escaped the attention of everyone. The Ona tribesmen are physically superior to the others, and they resemble the Indians of Patagonia. The famous naturalist Darwin, who visited the lower coastal areas of Tierra del Fuego to a great extent, erred in believing that its inhabitants were

cannibals with no notions of either God or of immortality.

It has not been easy to establish the number of inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego. In 1884, after the accurate census taken by the Protestant English missionary Bridges, the Yagáns were said to be 945. In 1880, Bridges estimated the Alakalúf at 3,000. The bigger concentration of inhabitants was that of the Ona stock. In 1880, according to the calculations of Bridges, they numbered 3,600.

These were the territories and the people to whom Don Bosco, spurred by a supernatural impulse, had devoted his operative thinking even when very few people in the world paid any attention to them, and they were rarely mentioned in Europe, and when they were, it was only with superficial knowledge.

The principal reason for which Don Bosco was pressing Bishop Fagnano to dispense with all delays was that he knew, how, for some time now, the envoys of error had been hard at work in those regions.[2] Ever since 1863, the British Protestant mission had sent three missionaries to Beagle Channel, to the south of Tierra del Fuego. They had a steamship and a sailing boat to help them. They roamed the entire coast of the island, without neglecting any area whatsoever, displaying great wisdom and taste in the localities where they chose to establish residence. The Bible Society of London spared neither money nor anything else which might serve its purpose. Every month, without fail, their steamship journeyed back and forth to the Falklands where there was an Anglican bishop in residence, and where the routine communication with the mother country was concentrated. Yet, with all this, the religious harvest reaped by the mission was very meager. It suffices to say that after approximately twenty years, there were no more than about one hundred Christians. And in what condition these lived! Our own Father Joseph Mary Beauvoir, who saw them, describes their condition as follows:[3]

Oh! Poor creatures, those nine or ten orphans we saw at the orphanage! What pity they aroused in us! It was ten degrees below freezing, half a meter of snow lay over the entire ground, and these poor little girls (ranging between eight and fifteen years in age), were barefooted, even though two or three of them were afflicted by rickets and were sickly in appearance. Please note that they must have been wearing the best they had, because we had sent word in advance, that if they did not mind, we

[2] Our main source of information here is the correspondence of our Salesian missionaries.

[3] Letter to Fr. Michael Rua, August 23 and 24, 1887.

would like to visit them. We saw hardly any boys at all. Who knows where they hide them! We saw only very few men or boys over the age of 15, and these too, looked so wretched with their few rags, that our beggars would have had compassion for them. The Protestant missionaries make them work for what little food they eat, for the rags and the instruction they give them, if indeed they give them any. Besides the orphanage, we also visited the church which was nothing more than a big room with only two benches on either side, a small table, some kind of desk and a stove in the center of it. On the walls there were posters with various inscriptions on them in big letters, among others *Long live the Queen! Long live the Republic!* They told us that the room is also used as a classroom for the Indians. We also visited two huts of native families. Oh! My heart breaks merely to think of it! I saw a few women in rags huddled around a stove, some sort of cot of boards and branches in the corners, a few dirty rags hung on the walls, a tin utensil and a bottle or two constituted all their equipment, supplies and furniture for the whole family. All the members were herded together inside those unsanitary huts. God only knows how much that meager roof and poverty stricken utensils must have cost them! But you must not believe that the most reverend missionary lives in the same way with his own wife and family. Ah no! They reside in a very comfortable cottage, well stocked with everything that can make life pleasant, and not only in desert territory lying 55 degrees south latitude, but even in Buenos Aires itself. For theirs is a lovely little house, very elegantly furnished and carpeted, with double windows, with shutters and lattices both inside and out. We will not mention that they have food and liquor, preserves, sweetmeats, and sauces for all tastes, which have been properly invented by the gourmet Englishmen and which would confound even the best gastronome. What can I say about such complicated tastes since I am both profane and ignorant in such matters? If I were to try to describe the lunches and banquets given for the captains of the Argentine ships by the former missionary Bridges, who is now a wealthy merchant and property owner, I would be sorely embarrassed at trying to find adequate and sufficient words. It is enough that I tell you, over and above what I have already said, that there is always chicken in abundance, mountains of eggs, game, and fish before everything else.[4] The Indians are excellent hunters and fishermen at one and the same time, and they keep him well provided with all he wants. He has fresh milk and

[4] The remarks about the lunches and banquets were based on reports given to me by ship captains.

milk preserved in cans, and dairy products comparable to the best anywhere. In various parts of the island he has herds of cows (and he sometimes sells their meat at 5 scudos, and/ or 25 francs per arruba).[5]

True enough, Captain Bove, who had led an exploration to Tierra del Fuego in 1882, spoke with the highest praise of the Reverend Bridges just mentioned, but it is easy to understand why. At first Bridges had been cool toward him, but later on he had been extremely hospitable to him for several days, even lending him his own two seafaring crafts after the shipwreck, which is already well known to us. For this and also because the Italian explorer was anxious to return to that part of the world, did he speak of the missionary in such complimentary terms in his reports. But it is indeed strange that at the time Bishop Fagnano was there, the English missionaries did not speak Spanish, despite the fact that they lived in Argentinean territory and also that they taught their converts nothing other than to speak Pidgin English. Father Beauvoir always needed an interpreter whenever he was with Bridges or with other Protestant ministers since he could not speak their language.

Little by little, as the Argentine government took greater interest in Tierra del Fuego, the influence of these missionaries threatened to become more and more disturbing. In view of such a possibility, Father Rua had already sent Bishop John Cagliero, on May 29, 1886, a copy of a letter which Bishop Poyet had written to Don Bosco. Bishop Poyet was the prothonotary apostolic in Jerusalem and he was very well informed of the situation in Tierra del Fuego. Among other things, he wrote, "It is indeed a disgrace that Protestant ministers got there before Catholic missionaries did, but this disgrace will be much greater if they take advantage of the presence of the governor general now established in that area to let the natives see how the Argentine government generously protects them."

The Argentine government was not so blind as not to realize that it was in the national interest to help the new Prefect Apostolic who would train these poor people to be subjects useful to the Republic by getting them to live a stable kind of life, and teaching them, together with the true Faith, also agriculture and civilized trades. Furthermore, there was a law that stipulated that in the event that the natives were converted, they were to be encouraged to become Catholics. But unfortunately, the fate of the nation was then in the hands of the Freemasons, and from this Mr. Bridges sought to draw his own advantage. For no sooner did he hear speak of the

[5] An "arruba" is a Spanish-Portuguese measure corresponding to between 25–32 pounds.

Prefecture Apostolic, than he rushed to Buenos Aires where, with the help of his fellow believers and the Freemasons, he succeeded in presenting a petition to the Argentinean Parliament in order to obtain eight square leagues[6] of land for his own mission, as a reward for the services rendered by him to civilization and the Republic in those far-away territories. The Catholic parliamentary deputies opposed the petition for three reasons: First of all, the Constitution then prevailing stipulated that the Indians were to be civilized by means of their conversion to the Catholic faith, and not to the Protestant church; then the speculative aspect attached to the Anglican missionary's activity could barely be disguised, for he was wholly concerned with enriching himself and his family; and finally, his own activity strove to consolidate British influence in the area.[7] These and other arguments were brought to light, especially by the two Catholic deputies Estrada and Goyena, but the sectarian press so whipped up public opinion that the eight leagues were granted as requested.

How differently were the dealings of the Catholic missions in Patagonia! Don Bosco's poor sons had built two fine churches, opened four schools for boys and girls, founded various pious associations, and crossed the desert wastes of Patagonia many times in search of the Indians from one side of the country as far as Rio Colorado and from the other border to the then mysterious Lake Nahuel-Huapi, to the summit of the Andes, a distance of one thousand five hundred kilometers from Carmen de Patagones.... and all of this in only six years! Yet, local authorities, besides being seemingly unaware of it, were persecuting the missionaries as they often did, when, for example, in 1887 Father Dominic Milanesio was imprisoned, and found guilty of nothing more than having a genuine apostolic zeal.

Nevertheless, toward the end of 1886 the President of the Republic changed, and a man of good common sense, by name Dosse, took the place of the sinister Wilde who would have put an end to every trace of religion. It was then that Bishop Cagliero wrote:[8] "The hope of a better future is dawning in our hearts, both for ourselves and for our missions." Indeed, the new minister of state seemed prepared to give him seven thou-

[6] One league corresponds to 1,154 meters.

[7] So as not to attract too much notice, he hoisted the Argentine flag outside his residence whenever the Argentine ships passed that way; ands raised the Chilean flag whenever Chilean ships passed by that way. Apart from such instances, he kept the English flag hanging on the flagstaff. When the Argentine government appointed a territorial governor in Tierra del Fuego, the governor sprang a surprise on the missionary Bridges purposely, by visiting him unexpectedly to find the British flag flying from the flagpole, whereupon he ordered him to lower it.

[8] Letter to Don Bosco, Patagones, November 12, 1886.

sand escudos for the church then being built at Patagones. Father James Costamagna, the Provincial, paid him a formal courtesy visit on November 27th, to have him remain steadfast in his good resolutions. He gave, as the reason for his visit, his desire to convey to him the respectful homage of the Salesians and of their founder, Don Bosco. On this occasion, without being asked, the Minister spontaneously told him that the idea of the mission in Tierra del Fuego was uppermost in his thoughts, and that he would do everything he possibly could to help Father Joseph Fagnano and see that the Salesians were established there in fullest freedom and with an adequate subsidy. Seeing that he was moved by such fine sentiments, the Provincial told him that he apparently was an arm of Divine Providence, which, at that time, had inspired the thought of this mission in the Supreme Pontiff and in Don Bosco. An arm had been lacking to set all this in motion, and the Provincial said that he hoped that Minister Dosse might now provide that arm.[9]

While this interview was taking place, Bishop Fagnano was already exploring the area in Tierra del Fuego, which had been awarded, to Argentina. In its determination to set up some government there, the authorities became aware that this could never be accomplished without adequate briefing on the territory. Mr. Ramon Lista was therefore sent to explore the eastern coastline of the Isla Grande in November 1886. The expedition under the leadership of the above gentleman, a high-ranking officer from the War Department, consisted of Dr. Polidoro Segers, an army surgeon, and twenty-five soldiers commanded by a captain. Availing himself of this propitious opportunity, the Prefect Apostolic succeeded in being assigned to the party as a chaplain.

They sailed from Buenos Aires on the Villarino on October 31st and reached Patagones on November 3rd, remaining there a week for their final preparations. Their departure was prefaced by an open-air banquet to which Bishop Cagliero too was invited, who later on wrote to Father Lemoyne: [10] "As you can see, even missions are inaugurated with banquets, beneath a handsome pavilion of four big walnut trees, whose shade is by no means harmful, and embellished by the placid zephyr of our spring season." Both the Vicar and the Prefect Apostolic considered this government expedition as the opening of a new Salesian mission.

They weighed anchor on November 12th. On their route they put in

[9] Letter to Don Bosco from Fr. James Costamagna, Buenos Aires, November 29, 1886.
[10] Patagones, November 12, 1886.

at Santa Cruz where Bishop Fagnano was able to see his two fellow Salesians, Father Angelo Savio and Father Joseph Maria Beauvoir who, as we have said previously, had been working there already for a year in his own jurisdictional territory. On the 21st they landed safely at Saint Sebastian's Bay, which opens deep to the northeast of the Island and was the destination of their voyage.

It took both time and hard work for them to disembark. First of all, they had to land forty mules that were to transport the expedition members and their baggage, as well as fifty sheep, and dried and canned foods to last them for six months. At last, about ten o'clock on the 24th, all members of the expeditionary force assembled in a little valley to the southeast of the bay, at the foot of a beautiful little hillock, and on the banks of a clear stream of water which flowed about one hundred meters away from them, cutting through the small plain and irrigating the soil which was rich with fertile vegetation. Here they set up their camp. They had chosen the spot with care, since it was protected against the wind and also offered the possibility of self-defense in the event of any attack by the natives. When the Bishop saw that everything was in good order, he set up his portable altar and celebrated Mass, imploring the blessing of heaven upon his mission that was just beginning.

However, soon tragedy visited the party. At dusk a big fire in the direction of the northern shore indicated the presence of Indians. The leader of the party, escorted by fifteen soldiers, went out on a tour of reconnaissance at dawn on the 25th. Toward midday, they came upon a tribe of the Ona people who abandoned their wretched huts at the sight of the platoon and took swift flight. The soldiers pursued them, cutting off their road to retreat, encircling them and awaiting orders. Mr. Lista sought to persuade them, by friendly gestures, to surrender, but not understanding a thing, and intimidated by the hostile stand of the soldiers, the natives hurled a few arrows in their direction for sole answer, though they did not wound anybody. Since all his efforts to make himself understood proved useless, the leader first ordered his soldiers to shoot, and then to charge the natives with drawn swords. Just as the captain was heading the attack, he was hit by a wooden arrow in the left temple, and fell to the ground unconscious, blood streaming from the wound. Then, his men flung themselves in rage on the enemy and slaughtered anyone who tried to resist them. Twenty-eight were slain, thirteen were taken prisoner, among them two suckling infants and their mothers, a ten year old girl who was wounded and died shortly afterward, and several small boys and girls.

Only two men were able to flee, even though they were wounded, and soldiers chased them with rifles.[11]

Don Bosco was not told about this futile and barbaric military gesture. How his apostolic heart would have grieved we already know by the effect that a report by Bishop Fagnano had, when he later told him of things which occurred, such as, among others, the capture of several Indians so that they might be used as guides and porters to carry the baggage. In the struggle one Indian had been killed. When Don Bosco heard this report read aloud, he deplored the fact that Salesians should travel with soldiers who were killing the Indians. "I want the missionaries to travel alone, without an armed escort!" he exclaimed, "otherwise their preaching will bear no fruit. It would have been better had they not gone there at all, than in such a fashion."

It will be easy for everyone to understand the reaction of so zealous and ardent a man as Bishop Fagnano when he heard of this massacre. Father Louis Carbajal relates the account given to him by a distinguished officer who had formerly belonged to Villarino's headquarters:[12] "We were on a scientific-military expedition in Terra del Fuego, headed by Mr. Lista ," he said. "He was a man of harsh, violent temperament, and had given orders that the soldiers were to fire on a number of poor Indians, some of whom fell, never to rise again. Father Fagnano, who was chaplain of the expedition, stared to run as soon as he heard the shots. He saw the leader of the party, twenty-five soldiers and a few natives who were wounded, groaning and crying. At that the priest Fagnano turned into a hero. He courageously went up to the leader of the party and bluntly told him that he had committed a crime. We all feared for his very life, for the chief now flew into a rage, and now became pale in the presence of that man of God who in the heart of that lonely place stood there like a prophet, condemning the cruelty of the soldier. Twenty-five rifles were ready and at the slightest hint they would have shot the breast of that brave man. Ever since that time I realized that Bishop Fagnano was a genuine hero, worthy of admiration."

The surgeon too, as he tended the wounded,was full of indignation for the manner of dealing with those helpless, half naked people who were running away without any hostile gesture against the expedition. This event is all the more horrible in our eyes, inasmuch as it was later discov-

[11] Ramon Lista, *Viaje al país de los onas* [Journey in the Land of the Onas], p. 74.

[12] L. Carbajal, *The Salesian Missions* (San Benigno Canavese, 1900), p. 111.

ered that the nature of the Ona Indians is characteristically gentle and mild. In successive encounters the natives of the island never gave any trouble to the whites and only ran away in fear.

In the afternoon of the 20th, the tents were removed and the party set out on the march southward. After many ups and downs they reached Thetis Bay to the extreme south of the island, at the entrance to the Lemaire Strait. They had covered the entire length of the island and now they camped in a comfortable locality, and enjoyed some days of rest, during which the Bishop took the opportunity thus offered to send Don Bosco a detailed report on the basis of his daily notes.[13] There he baptized some of the natives who had been with them and were destined to be sent to Christian households in Buenos Aires to complete the religious instruction they had summarily received. He took an interest in one large tribe which went to see the encampment every day. Twice a day did he gather the boys and girls of the tribe in his tent to teach them how to pray. In a second report to Don Bosco,[14] Bishop Fagnano wrote about the Ona Indians: "How easily the national government could civilize these poor natives if only it would give them some rations of food and build a school for boys and another for girls, as the center of the mission! I believe that in two or three years, these unfortunates could be employed as day workers in farming or as sailors. They would constitute a hope and a refuge for shipwrecks in and around Tierra del Fuego." There were frequent shipwrecks in those seas swept by terrible winds. Twice had Father Beauvoir's life been endangered when sailing on ships submerged by storms. The undertaking mentioned here will be carried out in all its dimensions by the undaunted missionary after Don Bosco's death and will be brought to a good stage of its completion with daring means.

To his regret he was obliged to abandon these poor souls on January 16th, because the expedition was about to set out on its return journey. On the 25th, he landed at Patagones, the place of residence. It was truly a miracle if, on the voyage, the ship was not swallowed by the raging waves during a fearful storm. He had gained three noteworthy advantages from his explorations: he now had a fair knowledge of the area; an approximate idea about the conditions in which the Indians were living, and reached the important realization that it would be wiser to establish the Mission at Punta Arenas, today known as Magallanes, since that was the focal point

[13] This report is dated January 2nd. It was published in three installments in the *Bulletin*, in November and December 1887 and February 1888.

[14] Patagones, January 26, 1887. It was published in the *Bollettino salesiano*, February 1888.

of communications with Chile, Tierra del Fuego, and the Malvinas. And also because his prefecture covered the Chilean section of the archipelago of Tierra del Fuego and the Malvina islands, as well as southern Patagonia, or government of Santa Cruz where Father Savio and Father Beauvoir were already working.

Toward the end of February, he left Patagones for Buenos Aires, intending to move heaven and earth in his endeavors to find protection, subsidies, and personnel, so that he could set seriously to work on his mission. Meanwhile, he wrote to comfort Don Bosco on March 1st: "Rejoice, Don Bosco, for one of your sons has reached the 55th degree of latitude South where day begins at two o'clock in the morning and ends at ten-thirty (this is December 24th), and where this son of yours has been able to already clothe two hundred natives, to preach the Catholic faith, while he has already baptized some of them."

There had been a Catholic missionary, an Irishman named Father James Foran, in the Malvinas called, by the British who owned them, the Falkland Islands.[15] He had habitually spent the summer months of the year there, returning to his native country at the start of the cold season. When the mission was handed over to the Salesians, he retired, since he was old and ailing; but he had left a church for them and had paved the road for them by recommending them to the British authorities. Toward the end of 1886, as we see from a letter from Father Charles Tomatis to Don Bosco,[16] Fr. Foran, on his way home, had intended to pass through Turin, visit the Oratory and plead the cause of the Catholics in the Falklands. It seems that he continued on his way after all, as we see from a Latin letter he wrote to Don Bosco from England, November 14, 1887. After describing the needs and aspirations of those Catholics, he urged that the Salesians should provide for their needs as soon as possible, or else give up the idea of taking care of them.[17] Bishop Fagnano too wrote:[18] "Send me a priest who speaks English well, so that I can send him to the Falklands. The poor Catholics living in the Falklands! They have not seen a priest in two years and are exposed to the ridicule of the Protestants." Another Latin letter from a British military chaplain addressed to Don Bosco October 15th of that same year on the same subject is very touching. A kind lady

[15] The Argentine government protested periodically over this occupation of a territory which it considered as forming part of the Argentine Republic.

[16] San Nicolas de los Arroyos, October 12, 1886.

[17] Puntarenas, August 7, 1887.

[18] Appendix, doc. 73.

had informed him of the heartrending pleadings of those fellow believers with no religious assistance whatsoever.[19] Echo of those pleadings even reached Cardinal Simeoni, the Prefect of Propaganda who, in December, asked Don Bosco why the Salesians were delaying their journey to those Islands. Father Rua answered him on January 3rd.[20] There was no Salesian priest who spoke English, but during the *tempora* of December, Father Patrick Diamond,[21] an Irishman, was ordained in Buenos Aires and sent to the Falklands.

Bishop Fagnano did not find Bishop Cagliero at Viedma. He was to see him again several months later, but where and how, he would never have imagined, even though the life of a missionary is always open to surprises. The Vicar Apostolic was busy with a very long-lasting mission and with far-reaching effects. Accompanied by Father Dominic Milanesio, Father Bartholomew Panaro, and a coadjutor, he rode along the course of the Rio Negro, planning to reach the Cordilleras, cross them and go down to Chile, as far as Concepcion. This meant a journey of a little less than one thousand miles. The report sent by Bishop Fagnano to Don Bosco, from Roca, on January 17th, stands as an historic page of the Salesian Missions in Patagonia. It is included in the appendix of this volume in its entirety.[22] But that consoling beginning had a quite sad epilogue as a follow-up.

Everything had gone well, without any serious mishap for about eight hundred miles right into the very heart of the Andes, despite privations and discomforts of all kinds connected with the journey. Nine hundred ninety-seven Indians, nearly all of them adults, and seventy-five children born of Christian parents had been baptized. One hundred and one nuptials had been blessed, he had converted hundreds of sinners to the thought of doing penance. The Holy Eucharist had been administered to eight hundred fifteen people, among whom were six hundred natives. He had confirmed one thousand five hundred thirteen people in the Patagonian wastelands, and one thousand five hundred people in the Chilean territory. Then came something totally unexpected. It was the morning of March 3rd. They had left Malbarco on the banks of the Neuquen River and were riding through the crags of the Andes when in a place known as Aguas Callientes, and precisely through a mountain chain

[19] Appendix, doc. 74.

[20] Appendix, doc. 75.

[21] He was born in Kibea, the diocese of Derry, and had passed his novitiate at San Benigno in 1882–1883. Fr. Del Turco and Bro. Tarable accompanied him.

[22] Appendix, doc. 76.

called Mala Cohuello. The Bishop's horse suddenly pranced, leaping and kicking wildly, causing the saddle to slip sideways, and galloped off madly down a narrow path which sloped downward between great boulders coasting the edge of a bottomless precipice. Those were moments of anguish experienced by his companions who could do absolutely nothing to help him. The Bishop kept his presence of mind and kicking his feet free of the stirrups, leaped off the horse as soon as he spotted a less uneven ground. If he had not made that quick and daring move he would have gone down that precipice and he would have been crushed to death, as a dull thud a bit later indicated that the infuriated animal had done.

His companions went rushing down to where he had fallen, lifted him from the ground and asked him in alarm how he felt; but he could not speak and was barely breathing. When he somewhat recovered and saw how they were weeping, he said: "Do not act like children! Of all the ribs I have, I think I have cracked only two of them. God's Will be done. This too will pass."

There was no water; there was no shade. They revived him with sips of Mass wine. Then, since they could not remain there surrounded by mountains, they put him on a horse and continued their descent toward the Nauquen River, taking all-possible care of him. After a march of some hours, hours of agony for the patient, they shielded him from the rays of the sun in an abandoned hut so that he might rest a little. Then they set out once again, though it was extremely arduous and dangerous to ford rivers over rocky beds. Every movement of the horse was agony to the patient. At last, they reached the home of Señor Lucas Becerra in the moonlight. Señor Lucas Becerra, just that morning at dawn, had said good bye to the Bishop with the most exquisite signs of Christian courtesy, after having offered him hospitality during the four days of the Mission. When he saw him again in that pitiful condition he provided him with the best of care, using all possible means to care for him, right away concocting and applying home remedies which might have the best of results. At the same time he sent for medicines at the Franciscans of Chillan, Chile.

A careful medical examination showed that two ribs on his left side had become loose, and that he had muscular ruptures and lung lesions. He had also bruised the left thigh bone from his hip to the knee, and his face and arms had abrasions produced by the pebbles where he had fallen. He had a very high fever for four days, with acute pains in his lungs. Then he slowly began to get better. The good Christians of Malbarco swarmed the

place as they brought him eggs, chickens, fruit, and vegetables with a cordiality that touched everyone. However, more than anyone else, Se§or Lucas and his wife deserve infinite gratitude, for they surrounded him with the best and most delicate attention for twenty-five days. On March 12th, the patient, Bishop Cagliero, could finally get off his bed for the first time. But it was only on March 25th; the feast of the Annunciation, that Bishop Cagliero could celebrate Mass.

The Franciscans of Chillan had already immediately informed the Salesians of Conception, and Father Evasio Rabagliati had responded right away. On the morning of the 28th, Bishop Cagliero, escorted by some stout men placed at his disposal by Señor Lucas, left the house amid the town's people who hardly stopped showing him signs of affection. The group set out for Concepcion on April 3rd, Palm Sunday. Bishop Fagnano, as soon as he heard about the dreadful accident, hurriedly went after the trail of the missionaries.

The Argentine government, notified about the accident and not knowing exactly the place where it had occurred, telegraphed all the border authorities and asked them to provide all possible assistance to the Bishop and his group.[23] But we do not exactly know the results of the government's kind intervention.

When news about the accident reached Italy, Don Bosco was in Rome. The details were made known through the Spanish Bulletin which was then in Buenos Aires.[24] Fr Costamagna sent, in advance, the April issue of the *Bulletin* to Turin. Writing to Fr. Michael Rua on March 29th, he said: "Three days ago I sent you the April issue of the *Bulletin* to inform you about Bishop Cagliero's terrible fall from the horse. I suppose they have sweetened up the pill for Don Bosco, lest he should be frightened and get sick."

From Rome, Fr. Michael Rua wrote to Fr. Celestine Durando, from whom he had received the *Bulletin* , on May 4th: "I read the *Bulletin* from America. I am aware of the accident that occurred to Bishop John Cagliero. We are trying to inform Don Bosco on everything, yet in a manner not to alarm him.

The news, however, had preceded the *Bulletin.* As a matter of fact, two days before, Fr. Michael Rua had written to Fr. Celestine Durando,

[23] Correspondence from Buenos Aires, July 8, 1887, in the Corriere Dictorino, August 8, 1887.

[24] The Spanish *Bulletin* was printed at the Oratory from 1886 on. The *"Bonariense"* then cut down to a modest format, stopped being printed in 1887.

"Please tell Fr. John Baptist Lemoyne that I have already apprised Don Bosco about the fall of Bishop Cagliero, in a way which did not seem to alarm him."

But one thing is "not to be alarmed," and quite another, "not to feel grief." Don Bosco never lost his poise, no matter what the mishap, opposition or threat. But the suffering of his children had a repercussion on his fatherly heart. That was revealed by the following words written by Fr. Michael Rua to Bishop Cagliero on May 28th,"Ah my dear bishop. We have certainly tried to sweeten up the pill of your fall for Don Bosco, 'our Papa'; however, he was affected by a painful anxiety until he got the news of your recovery."

At Conception, Bishop Cagliero recovered pretty well, so much so that he traveled far and wide throughout the Republic for more than a month. He minded what was required of his priestly ministry with a good and strong will, but he was always accompanied by Bishop Fagnano, who longed for the day on which he could have freedom of action and return definitively among the people of Tierra del Fuego. Meanwhile, on April 19th, he managed to make a short trip to Ancud to have an understanding with John Augustine Lucero, the bishop on whom Puntarenas depended as far as the section of the Tierra del Fuego which belonged to Chile. He got his confidence so quickly that without any difficulty he received the commendations needed for the civil authorities.

When it was time for them to depart, Divine Providence ordained that both Bishop Cagliero and Bishop Fagnano should travel together and by an unforeseen route. In his love for religious poverty, Bishop Cagliero intended to go by land to Buenos Aires, crossing the Andes in the direction of Mendoza. This plan met with strong opposition among his Chilean friends and benefactors. In their opinion, a bishop ought not to expose himself to the discomfort of such a long and dangerous journey, through towering snow-capped mountains, especially after what had happened to him on his outward journey. "If I am a bishop, I am also a Salesian," he answered, "therefore I have to find the cheapest route to travel by." When a gentleman heard him say this, he went and bought two first class tickets on a steamship sailing from Valparaiso to Montevideo; thus the two prelates left for the capital of Uruguay on May 16th, passing through the Strait of Magellan and consequently, right by Punta Arenas.

It was May 24th when they entered the Bay of Punta Arenas. On so solemn a day, they would have liked to go ashore, say Mass and inspect the future residence, but the weather was bad. It was impossible to cast

anchor, so they had to settle for taking possession of the Mission by blessing it from a distance and putting it under the protection of Mary Help of Christians. Bishop John Cagliero wrote Don Bosco a letter from Punta Arenas, which opened with these words: "My last letter to you was dated in January and sent from the middle of the Patagonian desert. Since then I have been unable to write you, for want of both strength and time! But other people have written you on my behalf, and I am still grieving over the way your paternal heart must have suffered on my account because of my accident in the Andes. My health is now continuing to be satisfactory. I hardly feel the consequences of the fall any longer, although at times the left bellow does not blow as well as it did before. But the doctors I consulted assure me that there are no pulmonary lesions." He then told him about the journey already made and what still lay ahead of him, then continued: "Lest we may not be taken unawares by delays and lack of time to wish you a happy nameday for the feast of Saint John, I'm sending you my good wishes now, wishing you all the blessings of heaven and all the joys of this world, dear Father. May these increase in number and volume, until the end of time both for you and for us and for the Congregation. May you love us and bless us always, every day, so that we can accomplish our mission in these far away territories of the earth in a holy manner, and so that we may save our own poor souls." They reached Montevideo on June 4th and then traveled on to Buenos Aires. At Buenos Aires Bishop Cagliero presided at a conference of provincials he had called and which was all the more remarkable inasmuch as all the seven Salesians of the first missionary expedition of twelve years before[25] were fortunately and fortuitously present. Bishop Fagnano was eager to begin the evangelization of his poor natives of Tierra del Fuego once and for all. If money is the backbone of warfare, neither can Catholic missions be founded nor kept up without it. Our prefect did not venture to hope for any assistance from his fellow Argentinean Confreres, who were burdened by debts. He maneuvered as best he could, sharpening his wits which in financial matters were exceptionally alert and even audacious. At last, after he had secured a priest, a cleric, and a coadjutor[26] from the provincial of Buenos Aires, he entrusted himself into the hands of Divine Providence.

The missionaries landed at Punta Arenas on July 21st. At the present

[25] Bishops Cagliero and Fagnano, Fr. Costamagna, and the priests Cassini, Allevena, Tomatis, and the coadjutor Belmonte.

[26] Fr. Anthony Ferrero, the cleric Bro. Fortunato Griffa, and the coadjutor Bro. Joseph Audisio.

day, Puntarenas is a town with thirty thousand inhabitants.[27] It originally comes from a colony of deported felons established by the Chilean government in that area in 1843, and owed its early important development and increase in population to the progress made by steamship navigation, to which it offered an excellent harbor. It lost considerable transit trade at the opening of the Panama Canal, but later gained by the development of sheep farming. Today it offers a convenient export harbor for almost all products of southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego and is a well-known port for loading supplies. The European settlers have transformed it into a small cosmopolitan town, both elegant and modern. Two Salesian churches and their adjoining schools are among the noteworthy buildings of the town. But at the time of which we are writing, it was still a wretched conglomeration of shacks, offering no attraction whatsoever. It suffices to say that there were no more than one thousand inhabitants until the year 1890.

At first, the Salesians lodged in a small inn for which they paid sixty francs a day, a sum which, considering their financial predicament, was equivalent to financial failure. Help came from Turin. Luckily, Bishop Fagnano had aroused fervent interest in his mission in both Santiago and Valparaiso. As soon as his friends there heard of his predicament, they collected several thousand escudos for him. Thus he was able to buy a house with nine rooms, a garden and some grounds for building. On August 7th, he wrote to Father Lemoyne: "We are at fifty-two and a half degrees south latitude, which makes us the most distant of all the dear sons of Don Bosco, though we are perhaps the ones closest to him in the tenderness he has for us."

They were not only faced with financial and climactic difficulties. The governor was hostile to religion and allowed evil friends to egg him on. He told Bishop Fagnano straight out that, since he was not a Chilean, he could not remain at Punta Arenas. Under the law, no one who was not a Chilean citizen was allowed to wield any ecclesiastic authority in territories belonging to that republic. Rome had no jurisdiction at Punta Arenas. The only person who had any control there was the bishop of Ancud. This was meant to be the final straw, but instead it became a defensive weapon, for the Prefect Apostolic was quite in the clear with the local Ordinary. Furthermore, he showed the fiery representative of the government an authorization written for him by the President of the Republic, as well as letters of recommendation from important citizens of

[27] It has been known as Magellanes ever since 1928.

Chile. But not one of these would have helped him had the wife of the governor not intervened. It was she who rescued her husband from his embarrassment, enabling him to beat a dignified retreat. In the end, he became so reasonable that in August he agreed to attend in person the solemn consecration of a wooden chapel that the Bishop had set up.

There was no need to wait for Salesian missionary activity to commence. Soon the festive oratory and schools opened for the children of immigrant parents. At the beginning of October, the Bishop administered First Communion to the pupils. He persuaded their parents to attend the ceremony too, which was the first boost given to the prevailing situation of religious laxity, for it brought people into church who had not been there for a long time. The Indians of southern Patagonia came often to Punta Arenas to barter goods. This offered the Bishop excellent apostolic opportunities. On November 5th he was able to write Don Bosco: "A tribe came here in October and remained a week. When it left, everyone promised they would come back again soon, bringing many more of their companions. I went to see them, taught a little catechism, and firmly impressed on them that they should not give themselves unduly to drink, since it is a wrong and ugly thing to do both in the eyes of God and the eyes of man. I also told them that they should not imitate the bad Christians. I was pleased to see that they listened to what I said, and there were no disorders during the few days they spent with us. They promised me, in fact, that when they would return, they would all come for instruction so that they may be baptized."

The great missionary was deeply longing for his mission to begin among the people of Tierra del Fuego. "I will not find peace," he wrote Father Joseph Lazzero on October 8th, "until I have found means with which to redeem them from the bondage of ignorance, poverty, and especially the bondage of the devil." One of the things he needed most indispensably to engage actively in his mission would have been a steamboat for traveling around the islands and channels in search of the natives. Since at that time he had no possibility of buying one, he rented a schooner named Vittoria, of forty-ton capacity. With it, toward the end of 1887, he visited Dawson Island, the central point of concentration of the Yagáns and Alakalúf Indians who went there with their canoes. He explored the Chilean section of Tierra del Fuego. Both in the one and the other place he encountered many natives, talked with them, invited them to get to Punta Arenas, gave them clothes and food and was happy to hear them say, "You are a good captain." That capitano bueno of theirs became

the habitual form by which those poor persecuted natives addressed their God-sent apostle.

A short while before our dear Father closed his eyes to the light of this world, he was comforted by the sight of one of the first flowers plucked in that distant land which formed the object of his dreams and his anxiety. In his first explorations, Bishop Fagnano had found a little orphan girl of the Ona tribe, about eight years old, whose parents had recently been killed. He took her back with him to Patagones, meaning to entrust her to Mr. Lista, so that he might place her in some school in Buenos Aires. But just as the child was about to be separated from him, she clutched at the Bishop's robe, weeping frenziedly, begging him not to leave her with those evil men who had slaughtered her father and mother. The leader of the expedition then asked whether he would keep her himself. He handed her over to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, who instructed her for baptism. When Bishop Cagliero went to Italy in December, 1887, he brought her with him, together with two Sisters, to Turin, so that Don Bosco could see her.

Having been adequately prepared, the child knew fairly accurately who Don Bosco was and realized how lucky she was. As the Bishop introduced her to the Servant of God, he said, "Here, dear Don Bosco, is one of the first fruits offered to you by your missionary sons *ex ultimis finibus terrae*[from the ends of the earth]." The little Indian girl knelt down in front of him and in her still semi-literate way said, "Thank you, dear Father, for having sent your missionaries to save me and my brothers. They have opened the gates of heaven to us." It would be impossible to describe Don Bosco's emotion at the sight of her or at the words she uttered. When she went back again to America, she never forgot the impression the Saint had made on her. But she went to heaven herself not long afterward.

It is not our intention here to relate the history of Bishop Fagnano's mission. When he went to his grave, worn out by his age, his work, and moral tribulations, a whole network of missionary stations covered his vast prefecture. All of them were planned by his fertile brain, all of them brought to life by his superhuman energy, all of them kept active by his many heroic sacrifices. The mortal remains of this magnanimous apostle rest today in the church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus he himself built at Punta Arenas, but his spirit hovers over the territory ranging from Santa Cruz to Usuaya. His memory still lives on and will survive in the hearts of all Salesians everywhere throughout the world. These are the men

trained by Don Bosco who have become instruments for his magnificent and infinite plans. Or we should say: These are the men with whom Divine Providence surrounded its Servant, the humble Don Bosco, after summoning him for a world-wide mission, so that they might validly assist him in carrying out his plans.

South of the Great Island there lies a magnificent lake named after the missionary. "Lake Fagnano" it was called by the two who discovered it, both Argentinean officers who had great esteem and devotion for this incomparable son of Don Bosco. A famous geographer and explorer, the Swede Otto Nordenskold, says rightly, "This name given by the men who first discovered the lake in honor of someone who did so much to improve the living conditions of the natives should be respected."[28] Our own Father Albert DeAgostini feels that he should stress yet another merit of Bishop Fagnano, namely, his contributions to the industrial and commercial development of Tierra del Fuego.[29] In the monumental book by DeAgostini we have only to look at the illustrations of the final chapter dealing with the tribes of Tierra del Fuego to form an idea of the material transformation these poor tribes have undergone, thanks to the solicitude of the Salesian missionaries under the guidance and example of their great superior. These certainly were not the ideals for which Bishop Fagnano did so much and suffered so greatly, as one can readily understand, but it is in the nature of things that the flame of the Gospel sheds the radiance of civilization and progress around it wherever it shines.

[28] Records of the Scientific Society of Chile, 7:158, note.

[29] My travels in Tierra del Fuego, Società Editrice Internazionale, footnote, p. 9.

Chapter 19

REQUESTS FOR SALESIANS FROM FIVE REPUBLICS IN SOUTH AMERICA

Something which deeply impressed Leo XIII in regard to the Salesian Congregation was the appreciation of Don Bosco's Salesians, which seemed to increase steadily, shown by the reports sent in by representatives of the Holy See in those intensely democratic republics of Latin America. Even the governments themselves did everything possible to persuade Don Bosco to establish his houses in their territories. It even occurred that the presidents of such nations appealed to the Pope, begging him to exercise his authority, so that their wishes might be fulfilled. For Don Bosco, these were all things that he had clearly foreseen in his dreams about the missions. He had predicted all of them with equal clarity to his astonished sons. It is true that his predictions were not restricted to any near and foreseeable future. Yet, Divine Providence disposed that he should not leave this world without first having glimpsed at least the dawn of their fulfillment. For during the last two years of his life, Don Bosco received formal applications from Chile, Venezuela, Peru, Colombia, and Ecuador, all nations that he had seen revealed to him in those prophetic manifestations. Thus it was still Don Bosco who held in his hands the initial seeds to be planted there. From these seeds the flourishing local Salesian undertakings and organizations soon developed extensively.

Here we cannot but perceive a truly providential sign. The Isthmus of Panama was then being built to connect the two Americas. This gigantic undertaking, which established direct communications between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, would facilitate, to an extraordinary extent, immigrations to the surrounding republics. Now we know how many Italians emigrated to settle in those rich territories. So it was in the design of God that priests were already living in them to provide for the moral and spiritual needs of the people who emigrated into those countries. Assistance to immigrants formed part of the missionary program of our holy Founder from the very beginning.

We have carefully gathered data concerning these early days of Salesian activity, tapping all the most reliable sources to ascertain the role played by Don Bosco and we will now list them in this chapter.

CHILE

Saddened by the sight of the state of abandon in which many poor children of the lower classes were living, a very zealous Salesian Cooperator, Father Dominic Benigno Cruz, vicar general of Concepción, Chile, could see no other solution than to have the Salesians get there. Nor was he the only person who thought of this. Several bishops in Chile had voiced the same conviction. Encouraged by such support, he began and maintained active correspondence with Bishop John Cagliero, describing the needs of the country in his letters, and pleading for his help.

As he wrote, other people were at work, fired by his example. His secretary, Father Spiridione Herrera, an excellent priest and fervent Salesian Cooperator, had secured and was holding a plot of land for the Salesians. It measured one hundred and twenty-five meters on each of its four boundaries, with a house already under construction. Part of the house was already used to shelter some dozen poor boys who, under his own direction, were learning a trade as best they could. He had read about the early days of the Oratory in the Bulletin, and had gathered the boys around himself, imparting an education to them in the same way Don Bosco had done, although his work as secretary and priest prevented him from dedicating any intensive care to them. A professional training school could be installed there, and this was urgently needed since the Freemasons had already opened such a training school to the peril and increasing detriment of the children of the working class.

Father Dominic Cruz was fondly thinking of yet another plan. The vast territory of Araucania, which was populated by small Indian tribes, was under the jurisdiction of the diocese of Concepción. The majority of these native tribes were still unbaptized and had always lived in a state of warfare with the civilized population. At last, in 1884 the Chilean government had forced them into subjection to the laws of the country and had drawn thousands of settlers, Italian, Swiss, and German farmers, into their uncultivated territory so that there was now a great concentration of Catholics, Protestants and infidels in the region. There was an urgent need to provide for the spiritual needs of all these people. The exceptional scarcity of clergy in the diocese made it impossible to send even one single priest there. This was the reason why the good vicar was pleading and

hoping for the help of the Salesians for such a mission. The government would have provided a house, a church, and financial support. One or two residential centers in Araucania would have represented a tremendous advantage to the Patagonian missions, especially by providing supplies for the missionaries next to traveling through the Andes, since only three or four days would have been needed to reach from Lake Nahuel Huapi any residence of their confreres without having to return to Buenos Aires or Patagones which were so far away.

Every two weeks Father Cruz would write to Bishop Cagliero to try to wrest an encouraging promise from him. We should not think that Cagliero was in any way indifferent to the requests of the vicar. As a matter of fact, he had planned to cross the Andes on his next journey, to push as far as Concepción . He also instructed Father Dominic Milanesio and Father Bartholomew Panaro, who were due to undertake a long missionary journey to Malbarco at the foot of the Andes, to go even further on and visit the Chilean city of Marlbarco. Father Milanesio went there at the beginning of 1886. Great was his surprise when he heard how people praised Don Bosco and the Salesians. Even the President of the Republic, although he himself was of secularist tendencies, did not hide his liking for the new Congregation. Once, the Sisters of Divine Providence gave him a book in which the goals of the Salesians were discussed, and he was deeply impressed. Since the nuns insisted that he ought to summon some religious Congregation to take charge of the boys who were discharged once they reached a certain age, he said, "I will send for the Salesians."

The arrival of Father Dominic Milanesio was a festive occasion for the vicar general, who embraced him saying, "Permit me to embrace a son of Don Bosco who is the very first to enter our country." Father Milanesio discovered that he was very well informed about the Salesians because he was a regular reader of the *Bulletin.* The missionary sent Father Joseph Lazzero an extensive report of his visit on March 16th, asking him to inform Don Bosco in turn.

On May 1st, the vicar wrote directly to Don Bosco, setting forth in a long letter his two plans, asking for at least six priests and some others who were not priests, promising to pay all their traveling expenses. Don Bosco dictated to Father Charles Viglietti the terms of the reply that was to be sent. Father Viglietti translated it into Spanish, and Don Bosco signed it. The Servant of God would have liked to send not six, but fifty missionaries to the diocese of Concepción, if only he had known where to find them. Indeed, though he himself was old and sick, he longed to go

there himself, knowing that there was such a deplorable scarcity of priests. But he did hold out one shining hope, promising that in September, when the General Chapter would meet, the possibilities of finding the necessary staff would be discussed. Would he please be patient therefore until the following October, for then he could give him a more definite reply.[1]

We do not know what he wrote in October, though we do know that in the same month he wrote to President Balmarceda.[2] Our archive files are silent about this issue until February of the following year, 1887. This is a regrettable gap, for during this time, the matter was settled. As a matter of fact, on February 21st, a moving ceremony was celebrated at Almagro, in the church of the Sisters, before the first altar dedicated to Mary Help of Christians on American soil. A miniature replica of the farewell ceremony usually held at the Valdocco shrine for the departure of the missionaries, was held. Six Salesians, headed by a young priest, Father Evasio Rabagliati,[3] left the Atlantic shores to journey through the chain of the Andes to the Pacific coast. All the directors of that Province were present. The provincial, Father James Costamagna, delivered a brief sermon evoking Don Bosco's figure so vividly that everyone felt that they could see him there. Five days later, when reporting on it to the Saint, Father Evasio Rabagliati began: "The purpose of this letter is to inform you of something very important: the opening of the first Salesian house at Concepción in Chile!"

Their journey was long and fraught with dangers.[4] One must also admire the courage of the travelers, none of whom were trained for such an undertaking, nor even adequately informed about the difficulties they were to encounter in crossing the rugged mountains once they had passed Mendoza. They reached their impatiently longed for destination on March 6th, and a great crowd awaited them at the railroad station. They appeared in the company of the vicar general, Father Espiridion Herrera, and a young lawyer, Michael Prieto, who was there to represent the Catholic Youth Association. All three had traveled three hours by train from Concepción to meet them. The various representatives of the population were present. Several members of the clergy and the secular authorities followed them as far as the convent of the Sisters of Divine Providence

[1] Appendix, doc. 77.

[2] Letter from Fr. Evasio Rabagliati to Don Bosco, Concepción, May 22, 1887.

[3] The other five were the priests Fr. Scavini and Fr. Daniele, the clerics Amerio and Burzio and one coadjutor.

[4] One can read the description in the *Bollettino salesiano*, July 1887.

where they were to be lodged temporarily. A crowd of people filled the adjoining church to sing with them a thanksgiving hymn.

After a few days in that peaceful dwelling, they took possession of the resident school already mentioned, which had been put under the patronage of Saint Joseph. Then the whole town vied to contribute whatever they might need for the chapel, or in the way of furniture, linen, or kitchen utensils. Poverty reigned supreme, but the director wrote:[5] "Frankly, for my own part, I have seen the birth of the house of Buenos Aires amid a thousand difficulties and privations, always poor and burdened with debts, and yet progressing more and more every year, until it has become a house which shelters three hundred boys, assembled by Divine Providence under the Salesian banner, and I can say quite frankly that I see excellent omens for the house of Concepción in Chile." Subsequent events fully justified his words. Where they had entered without anything, they had everything they wanted within a very short time. Soon also, a great many boys attended the festive oratory which was inaugurated the first Sunday after they took over the house. Little by little, classrooms and workshops were opened without any long delay.

Following arrangements made by letter, Bishop Cagliero should have arrived before them or a little after them in Concepción, to inaugurate their house with solemnity. But "man proposes and God disposes." The matter of his fall, as we have seen, upset all these fine plans. Yet it was an ill wind that blew some good, for the mishap made him known throughout the Republic. It gave rise to a universal veneration for him and permitted him to enjoy a triumphant reception wherever he went.

Everyone was eager to see this great son of Don Bosco at Linares, Valparaiso, Los Angeles, Talca, and Santiago, the state capital. In all of these towns everyone seriously tried to get some Salesians. Personal acquaintance enhanced the fervor in such expectations. On May 14th Father Evasio Rabagliati wrote to Turin: "The Catholic newspapers published everyday what the Salesian bishop was doing, what he said and where he went. During the month and a half he was here in Chile, he did not have a day's respite to breathe freely. But he was comforted and calmed down when he remembered the trips made by Don Bosco in France."

He was somehow generous in his promises. Impatience, too, conferred to his words a greater significance than they actually possessed.

[5] Letter to Don Bosco, March 25, 1887.

Nevertheless, when he came to Turin in December, he pleaded the cause of Chile with great eloquence before the Superior Council, though the extent of the effect could not be seen until after the death of Don Bosco. After Concepción, the house in Talca was the next in order of time to be opened. As soon as Bishop Cagliero left, a priest had concluded negotiations on his behalf, paying with his own money for an immense and very spacious building to be used as a professional-technical training school. This was inaugurated within 1888. Then in 1891 it was the turn of the house of Carmen in Santiago for which negotiations had already been in progress with the government ever since 1886. All that came afterward, no longer concerns the life story of Don Bosco.

By that time the name of Don Bosco echoed from one end of Chile to the other, evoking general admiration. No sooner did the Salesians arrive than telegrams bombarded them from bookshops in Santiago and Valparaiso, asking for as many copies of Don Bosco's biography as were available no matter in what language they might be printed. A month before their arrival, a copy of the bishop of Milo's *Don Bosco y su obra* [Don Bosco and His Work] had been put in circulation at Santiago by the Sisters of Divine Providence and had sold rapidly among the more eminent members of the clergy and the lay population, including ministers of state. Perhaps this was the book the President of the Republic had seen, as we mentioned early on. In order to satisfy these insistent demands, a Chilean edition of this booklet had to be printed.[6] It appears that the new house was progressing extraordinarily well, if Bishop Cagliero's secretary was able to write in August: "The house in Concepción prospers, the number of boys and attendance at the holy Sacraments are increasing." Then his pen traced a sad comparison. Such joys were unknown at Patagones. The locality persisted in its religious apathy to which we have referred elsewhere. Therefore, Father Anthony Riccardi continued: "At times, or whenever even for a moment we forget Don Bosco's last words, we are overcome and frustrated by discouragement because of the little or nothing accomplished here but oh, how comforting in such moments is just remembering him, "Go. You will sow and others will reap."[7] Wherever the Salesians worked, Don Bosco was always with them to instill in them courage, hope, and comfort.

We have not yet said all that relates to us about Chile while Don Bosco

[6] Letter from Fr. Evasio Rabagliati, May 22, 1887.

[7] Letter to Fr. Lazzero, Patagones, August 19, 1887.

was alive. In a letter dated October 15, 1887, the vicar general of Concepción wrote to Bishop Cagliero to inform him that three gentlemen were setting out for Turin and would be traveling on the same ship on which he would be traveling to Italy. "On this ship there are three Catholic lawyers of this city," he wrote, "whose names are, Barros, Cox, and Mendez. I urgently recommend them to your Excellency, especially the first one who is the editor of *Libertad Catolica,* and an outstanding champion of the Church. The other two also are very good men, and very talented."

The three men were the cousins who wished to study Don Bosco's work at the source. They arrived in Turin on December 7th. Introduced by the bishop, they were given a cordial welcome at the Oratory, and Cagliero himself escorted them to Don Bosco's room. One of them described their meeting as follows:[8] "Don Bosco sat on a shabby sofa; his head was bent, his eyes full of tears, his whole countenance was brightened by a heavenly smile. He can no longer dress himself nor walk without assistance. The three of us fell on our knees before him and kissed his hand with respectful veneration. He pressed our hands firmly for a few moments, looking at us one by one with a look that was not of this world and which aroused pure joy within us."

He then bade them sit all around him and spoke with a low, halting voice, "Those who do not know me seek me out; but those who do know me, have only contempt for me. Not so long ago someone who saw me in the street in France, pointed me out to another, saying, 'Look, that is Don Bosco!' But the other, looking at me with astonishment, replied, 'What? Is it possible that that is Don Bosco? Pah!' And that other person turned his back scornfully. Are you all lawyers? Well, I'm a lawyer myself against the devil. We have fought much together, day after day. I have pummeled him thoroughly, but he too has given me good beatings. Just look at what state I am in.'" The author of the article commented: "Don Bosco said all this with such a candid air, with such a simplicity, charm and holiness, that we felt we were speaking with an angel that had come down from heaven. He usually keeps his eyes down, in a pensive meditative way; but when he lifts them up, his glance is of superhuman sweetness and such as it penetrates you in a supernatural manner ... I can only speak of this man with veneration, nor can I think of him without thinking at the same time of the attributes of God."

[8] Article by Mr. Mendez in the January issue of *Libertad catolica.* He also wrote the logbook of their voyage in *Diario ilustrado.* A relative of his published the portion having reference to December 7th on June 10, 1930.

Not daring to prolong their visit with him, lest they should weary him, the visitors then rose and in the presence of Don Bosco said, "We see that you are tired and unable to talk. We are about to go to Rome. We will tell the Holy Father to pray for you, for you are indispensable for your Congregation and for the Church. The prayers of the Pope will be omnipotent."

"No, gentlemen, do not pray that I recover," Don Bosco answered. "Beg God instead for the grace that I may have a good death, so that I may go to heaven and from there I will be able to give much more help to my sons, so that they may work for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls."

One of the three, the journalist Barros, was bothered by a painful arthritis which tormented him and was especially painful in his hands, to the point that, after having written but one page, he would be forced to suspend his work, as if his fingers and arm were paralyzed. He had come with the hope that Don Bosco might cure him. The Saint took his hands and held them between his own for a long time. At last he said, "You are cured, but you will always feel some slight pain, so that you may not forget the grace granted you by Our Lady." When Barros was in his room, he wished to put his hand to the test immediately by writing to his wife. He sat down and wrote a long letter of twenty-four pages. Ever since that time his hand was never again incapable of rendering due service.

Our friends from Chile were overcome by surprise when they encountered a fellow countryman of theirs who was well known all over Chile for his books on religious subjects, for the importance of his family, and for his own priestly zeal. He was now a Salesian novice! We mean Father Camillo Ortuzar of Santiago. He had gone to Europe with the intention of entering a Jesuit novitiate, but while talking it over with his mother who lived in Paris, he listened to her advice and went first to consult Don Bosco. As the Saint heard his opening words, he interrupted him, and asked him abruptly, "Why don't you become a Salesian?"

"Really, I never thought of it," he replied.

"You'd like to work, right? Well, here you will find bread, work, and paradise."

Just then the bells of Mary Help of Christians rang for the midday Angelus, which Don Bosco said together with him and then invited him to dinner, bidding him sit beside him at table. Father Ortuzar, who had not given any importance to what had been said to him a little while before, returned now and then to the subject of the Jesuits and their novi-

tiate. Don Bosco kept whispering to him the same words over and over again, "Bread, work, and paradise; those are three things I can offer you in the name of our Lord." Then the visitor began to reflect until at last he said that he would accept. Whereupon the Servant of God said, "Don Bosco will soon be no more, but Father Rua is already here to take his place. He will be in charge to give you bread, and you will certainly not want for work! Don Bosco hopes to get to heaven to provide you with paradise on behalf of God."

Naturally, Father Camillo's first thought was to return to Paris to explain his change of plans to his mother and to pick up his personal belongings, since all he had with him were the clothes he was wearing. "Do not worry," Don Bosco told him, "your mother will be glad to endorse your decision. Go without further adieu there to your new duties and bear in mind that you will never have any cause to regret having obeyed like a good soldier of the Lord." That same evening he set out for Valsalice, accompanied by Father Julius Barberis, to begin his novitiate.

The Chilean's mother did not make the slightest objection. Already two months had elapsed since that day when, unexpectedly, his fellow countrymen saw him suddenly appear before them at the Oratory. In the article previously quoted, Mr. Mendez wrote: "There is no one happier than he. He overflows with happiness. He talks continuously of Don Bosco, in whom he has a blind and absolute faith, and regards him as an oracle from heaven." We can confirm that it was indeed so. Father Evasio Rabagliati confirmed to Father Rua: "This is a fine acquisition. He is highly respected in Chile."[9]

Father Camillo Ortuzar lived in humble, genuine simplicity in our midst, No one who saw and frequented him would ever have suspected that he had ever held high offices in his native country, and still less that the true reason which had induced him to leave his home town had been his determination to escape once and for all the risk of becoming a bishop.[10]

VENEZUELA, PERU, COLOMBIA

The first house founded in Venezuela was that of Caracas, the capital of that republic, seven years after the death of Don Bosco. But the ground work had already begun in 1886. That year Bishop Crispolo Uzcategui

[9] Letter, Concepción, December 24, 1887.

[10] In 1903, an interesting short life history was printed at Sarriá. Diego de Castro, *Biografía de Don Camillo Ortuzar de la Pia Sociedad de San Francisco de Sales.* [Biography of Fr. Camillo Ortuzar, Priest of the Pious Society of Saint Francis de Sales].

called on Don Bosco at the Oratory to tell him of the plight of his desolate diocese. The animating spirit behind it all was Fr. Richard Arteaga who began promoting the enrollments of Salesian Cooperators and then *perseveravit pulsans* [he kept on knocking] after the death of the Saint, until his successor graciously responded to his burning desires. We have copies of three letters addressed to him and signed by Don Bosco, in 1887. The main topic discussed in them is the organization of the local Cooperators, whose Director he had become, by Don Bosco's appointment. The zealous priest never tired of increasing their numbers, and succeeded in enrolling more than six hundred. This explains the overwhelming progress made by the Salesian Congregation in Venezuela in so short a time.[11] The Congregation today is also in charge of the Mission of the Upper Orinoco.

The Salesians first entered Peru three years after the death of the Founder. The School of Saint Rose was then founded in Lima, the capital. But already, on June 23, 1886, Don Bosco had received a visit from the President of that republic, with his son. He seemed to be fairly well informed about us and expressed warm disposition towards it. Father Viglietti escorted him on a rapid tour of the Oratory, since he did not have much time. As he left, he said he hoped to return on some future occasion. During his talk with Don Bosco, he affectionately begged him to open one of his houses in the capital.

It is of no little interest to discover that the Pious Union of the Salesian Cooperators took root so quickly in areas so far away from where the Salesians were active. The credit for their early enrollments should go in great part to the Spanish *[Salesian] Bulletin.* The advertising picked up momentum and a lot of boosting with the correspondence from Turin. It was from Turin that together with certificates, also pamphlets, holy pictures, medals, and various other communication devices were sent to the Cooperators and sympathizers, thus making Don Bosco's work known.

In reference to Lima, we have two letters written in 1887 to a certain Joseph Yimenez, both bearing Don Bosco's own signature, as we were able to verify; they both revealed an impressive activity among the Salesian Cooperators.[12]

The fame of the Servant of God spread all over the republic because of an incident regarded as miraculous. Before this incident, nothing was

[11] Appendix, doc. 78 (A, B, C).

[12] See ch. 18, p. 17, footnote 22.

known either of Don Bosco or of his works. The Franciscan provincial of Lima dispelled his boredom during an ocean voyage by thumbing through the pages of a book relating the life story of Don Bosco. We can well surmise that this was *Don Bosco y su obra* [Don Bosco and his Work]. Don Bosco was quite unknown to him. Unexpectedly the winds began to howl, the sea grew furious, and a terrible storm broke out. Tossed by the waves, the ship was so battered that shipwreck seemed imminent. The captain himself said later that all hope was gone. The pious religious took his stand among all the passengers, invited them to kneel as best they could and pray to the Holy Virgin Mary, asking that out of deference to her servant, Don Bosco, she might save them from this catastrophe. He promised that, if they were saved, he would have the book printed and have thousands of copies distributed widely among his people. As soon as the vow was expressed, the storm dropped, fair weather returned and the ship was able to proceed safely to port. The Franciscan friar did not forget his promise. He ordered a paper edition of Don Bosco's life to be published and distributed throughout Peru to bishops and priests, rich and poor, to anyone, in short, whether they wanted it or not. The life of Don Bosco became a topic of general conversation, and caused people in many places to hope that the benefits coming from his houses might soon be extended to Peru. The provincial himself told this story to Father Evasio Rabagliati in 1890, when the latter was a guest in his convent.

Something very similar happened in regard to Colombia. A lady from Bogotá in 1883 had witnessed in Paris the miracle of the dying youth, who was invited by Don Bosco to serve his Holy Mass.[13] This lady did not stop writing to her friends and relatives in Colombia about it, magnifying the holiness of the Italian priest who worked miracles and his great deeds in the field of the education of the young. Little by little, the politicians too began to take interest. More than anything else, their attention was caught by his professional and technical training schools, since there was a great need of them in that country. But no one knew how to carry them out. From words they passed to deeds. On November 1, 1886, while in Rome, Don Bosco received a letter from Joachim Velez, the ambassador of Colombia to the Holy See who wrote: "The well deserved fame of the foundations of workshops, schools, and hospices for poor boys, all due to your charity, has reached us here, and everyone who is concerned with the welfare of the poor ardently hopes that the people of Colombia may ben-

[13] See Vol. XVI, pp. 174–175.

efit from all that you have done for modern society." Then on behalf of his government, he was asking that a draft agreement be sent quickly, so that a few Salesians might go to the capital of the Colombian Republic. The Superior Council replied: thanked him for his confidence in the Congregation, but regretted the fact that on account of the scarcity of personnel which was needed for all the many commitments already taken, it was impossible to comply immediately with the request. A delay was therefore requested. Meanwhile, the Minister was asked to contact the Procurator General, Father Francis Dalmazzo, or better still, to contact Bishop John Cagliero, director general of the Salesian Missions.

About three months later, on January 21, 1887, the archbishop of Bogotá, Bishop Joseph Telesforus Paul of the Society of Jesus, applied to Don Bosco for not one, but two houses, namely a professional training school for the poor boys of his city and a mission for the natives in the area. Don Bosco could only give a reply much like the one sent to the previous request.

The ambassador to the Holy See did not hesitate to confer with Father Dalmazzo, and after various meetings, he believed he had good reason to hope. Whereupon he promptly informed his government. The president of the Republic did not wait for anything more but cabled the authorization for him to enter negotiations with Don Bosco. He wrote to Turin on July 11th. On October 18th, the archbishop renewed his request for the twofold foundation. There was work going on behind the scenes as well. On November 11th Don Bosco received a letter from the secretary of state, Cardinal Rampolla, which read: "The Government of Colombia has informed the Holy See that it would be glad to see the Reverend Salesian Fathers found and operate a professional training school of arts and crafts in the city of Bogotá. The Holy Father, too, would be happy if this wish were to be fulfilled as soon as possible, for he does not doubt that the industriousness of the worthy sons of Saint Francis de Sales would bear excellent fruit to the advantage of the young people of the capital. I am therefore appealing hopefully to Your Reverence, asking you to benevolently take up the aforesaid request from the Colombian government. I wish to inform you that the representative of Colombia to the Holy See has all the necessary instructions to form an agreement with Your Reverence about the number of Salesians required for this purpose, and about everything else required to assure the requisite stability of the house in question. Thus the meritorious congregation of which you are the very worthy superior will see a new area for its activity open before it. I am

hopeful that the harvest reaped will be abundant."

Lack of staff was not an excuse, but a fact. Yet, such highly authoritative pressure advised Don Bosco to try to find some compromise which was not to be balanced between a "yes" or a "no", but instead between 'sooner' or 'later.' This must have been the consideration which prompted him to answer that Bishop Cagliero would be empowered to negotiate, with a possible view to an agreement. Exactly at that time the Bishop was on his way to Turin, whence he could have carried on the negotiations. Then came the death of Don Bosco. All this took up time. Three months later, Cardinal Rampolla was once again urged by the Columbian representative to the Holy See to renew his request with Father Michael Rua, to whom he wrote on April 24th: "Last November I wrote to the late lamented Don Bosco, urging him to lend a benevolent ear to the urgent request of the government of Colombia regarding the foundation of a professional training school for arts and crafts in Bogotá, and the worthy superior, whose death is rightly mourned by the Salesian Congregation replied on November 30th that he would "seek to comply with the wishes of the Colombian Government as soon as possible." Now, at the renewed insistence of the representative of that Republic, I must request that you, Most Reverend Father, do not delay too long the enactment of the excellent intentions voiced by your late lamented predecessor, but instead bear in mind that the Salesians, to whom management of the above school for training in arts and crafts is to be entrusted, should arrive in Bogotá at least by the beginning of the year 1890."

At last! There was still a year and eight months ahead of them, an adequate time to come down with something positive. In 1890, they were indeed able to open a school in Bogota, the Leo XIII school, with professional training courses, a public church and assistance services for immigrants. A glorious name, that of Father Michael Unia, the apostle of the lepers, soon resounded throughout Colombia, and that name is still repeated by citizens from every walk of life and every race and color with the most sincere admiration.

ECUADOR

As far as we know, there were no public manifestations on behalf of either Don Bosco or his work in the Republic of Ecuador prior to 1885, when Mr. Tobar, the undersecretary for public instruction, informed the two assemblies that it would be a very wise thing if the Salesians were brought into the country. He had known them in Chile, where some news-

papers from Argentina, with articles about them, had gotten into his hands. When he returned to Quito, he had the Jesuit superior there lend him the bishop of Milo's book *Don Bosco y su Obra,*[Don Bosco and his Work], which gave him an adequate idea of the Congregation and its founder. Here is a passage taken from his speech before the assembly: He first spoke about the need to open sound training schools, then pointed out that the country did not have qualified teachers for them, and finally he asked`, "Will it be possible to engage teachers having the requisite qualifications from abroad?" To which he replied, "It appears that we could, if we take into consideration a new religious order which is now miraculously expanding all over the world. The Salesian Order, one might say, is the outcome of the blending of the goals of Catholicism and the trends peculiar to this century of steamboat and electricity. The rapid pace at which it has grown and the quickness with which its schools are filled up with pupils are proof enough of the importance of the objectives it pursues." He then outlined the story of the order, as he himself had learned about it from the source already quoted.

His proposal was so well received that Joseph Camaño, President of the Republic, together with the archbishop of Quito, Bishop Joseph Ordonez, decided to apply to Don Bosco to have some of his sons get to the capital of Ecuador. He did not negotiate personally, but instructed Mr. Ballen, Consul General for Ecuador in Paris, to do so with Don Bosco instead. Mr. Ballen obeyed, by writing to him a letter on August 7, 1885.

We can readily imagine what the answer was. Courteous thanks, assurance of good will, and a request to wait a few years for lack of staff. There was no answer. Since the archbishop had to go to Rome at the beginning of 1887, the president did not feel it would be too much if he were to wait a year and a half, because he intended to give the prelate full power to negotiate and conclude the matter.

The bishop landed in France at the beginning of January, 1887, and traveled from there to Turin. He had a long talk with Don Bosco, telling him that he did not intend to go away until he had been promised at least four Salesians. Overcome by his insistence, Don Bosco at last said he was ready to let him have them, but on the condition that the Holy See did not raise any objection at so small a number being sent.

Satisfied with this initial victory, the archbishop continued on his way to Rome, where he informed Leo XIII of the dire need his diocese had of Salesian priests. Not only did the Pope approve, but he even told him to write and tell Don Bosco that the Pope himself wanted him to send

Salesians to Quito.

Wherever the Pope was concerned, Don Bosco no longer made any distinction between a wish or an order. He immediately decided to obey. Before receiving his message, however, foreseeing how the matter would end, Don Bosco had remarked in a humorous tone on January 18th, according to what Father Lemoyne wrote: "Now I have the idea of getting an expedition ready as soon as possible and send missionaries to the Republic of Ecuador. That is a missionary center where also vocations can be found."

Word of this intention of his soon spread around the city. During the first few days of the new year, when charitable people are in the habit of putting their hand into their wallets, a very meritorious priest who had done much for popular instruction and education, and who was also the author of many excellent little books for elementary schools, Father John Scavia,[14] wrote an affectionate letter to "the dear and venerated Don Bosco" to whom he was bound by cordial friendship, to say: "May the Lord bless and render fertile your charitable plans on behalf of the Republic of Ecuador. Were I still a young man, I would be happy to join in this mission; but at my age, all I can do is help by contributing prayers and a donation. I am sorry that I cannot do much, as both of us would wish. My inheritance has already been bequeathed by my will to the diocese of Alessandria in the form of legacies, and to thirty-two nephews and grand-nephews of whom I am very proud. Yet I am able to dispose of my annual income, and will draw one thousand lire from the funds intended for charity to put them at your service for the mission in Ecuador. This will be the widow's mite for the huge money-box of Christian charity."

The archbishop, after taking care of his business in Rome, returned to Valdocco on February 12th, and here the terms of an agreement were drawn up and signed by him and Don Bosco on the 14th. This is the last document of the kind which bears the signature of our Saint.[15]

Immediately afterward, the prelate went on his way to Paris, where without delay he put the signed draft of the agreement before Mr. Flores, plenipotentiary minister of Ecuador in France, so that he could look it over, approve it on behalf of the government and forward it to Quito for official publication. The minister did not find anything in it that might have raised objection, so he countersigned it and sent it off. On March 7,

[14] He lived in Turin, though he came from Castellazzo Bormida. He died in 1897. Among other books, his *The months of the year, Man and the Universe*, and *A Hundred Tales from Sacred History* were very popular.

[15] Appendix, doc. 80.

Don Bosco decided to write to the president of the Republic who sent him a very kind reply.[16]

Now Don Bosco had to contact the above mentioned consul general in Paris who was empowered to give him what he needed for the fares.[17] A setback made it necessary to postpone the departure of the missionaries which was scheduled for September 10. When the applications were made, there were no more berths available on the French ship which was weighing anchor on that date for Ecuador.

The first public announcement regarding Don Bosco's new undertaking was printed on August 12th by *L'Unità cattolica.* The Superior Council chose the personnel for the new expedition during its evening session of the 18th. It was to consist of eight Salesians, with courageous Father Louis Calcagno[18] as their leader. He had just returned from Uruguay where he had gone with the expedition of 1878, still as a cleric.

Preparations for this mission entailed new sacrifices. They did not have to worry about their fares; but a great deal of money was needed for all the rest. The urgency of raising a sufficient amount of money brought home the realization of all that was needed on many different fronts, especially in Rome for the church of the Sacred Heart, and for the mission in Tierra del Fuego. Worried by this increasing financial strain, Father Rua suggested in a Council Meeting on October 10th, that the mission in Quito be taken as a reason for making an appeal for alms. Don Bosco asked Father Bonetti and Father Lemoyne to draft two circulars, one of a more comprehensive nature which would include an appeal for all the missions, the other more limited would include an appeal on behalf of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. In both circulars, it was felt that it would be wiser not to mention the predicament of the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome. The first circular is dated November 4th, the second circular is dated December 20th, and both were printed as a supplement to the *Bulletin.* Father Pozzan, the *Bulletin* editor, asked him how quickly he was to get all the letters mailed out. "You have three months' time," he was told. This was an unusual reply which caused some surprise, because in other instances of this kind he had always said it was to be done as quickly as possible. Don Bosco died three months later. Both these circu-

[16] Appendix, doc. 81.

[17] Letters from the archbishop to Don Bosco, Rome, January 20th and 26th; Paris, February 16th, 17th, and 25th, 1887.

[18] Besides the director, there were also the priests Frs. Fusarini, Santinelli and Mattana, two clerics, and two coadjutors.

lars were translated into French, Spanish, and German, and are the last documents of this kind ever to appear with Don Bosco's signature.[19]

The farewell ceremony took place with all its habitual solemnity in the church of Mary Help of Christians on December 6th. First, the missionaries had gathered around Don Bosco in his room, to hear his last souvenirs. Among other things he told them, "Love poverty and fraternal charity. Read your Rules and obey them always.[20] Although he had no strength at all, he wanted to come down to the shrine. His two secretaries helped him enter the sanctuary. The sermon was delivered by Father John Bonetti, but as Father Charles Viglietti wrote in his diary, "The loveliest and most edifying sermon was delivered by poor Don Bosco who literally crawled along." Through Bishop Della Volpe he had sent the Pope the following telegram: "Prostrate in spirit, implore from the Holy Father benediction for Salesian missionaries destined Ecuador." He gave the missionaries two letters of introduction he had written, one for the president of the Republic, the other for the archbishop of Quito. This is how the second letter read:[21]

Turin, October 6, 1887

Most Reverend Excellency:

I am happy to introduce to you eight humble Salesians destined to found a Salesian house at Quito under the protection of your Most Reverend Excellency and the other authorities of the honorable Republic of Ecuador. I hand these beloved sons of mine in Jesus Christ over to the hands of your Excellency, the hands of a loving Father who will help them always with timely advice, spiritual and temporal assistance. They are coming with the best of good will to fulfill the expectations of Your Excellency and to work with all their might for the Christian education and training of poor and abandoned boys in particular. When there will be more of them, they will be happy to dedicate themselves to the spiritual and moral welfare of the tribes which may be in need of their help in order to discover and persevere along the road to heaven.

[19] Appendix, doc. 82.

[20] This detail is found in a biography written by Fr. Louis Calgnano and edited by his traveling companion Fr. A. Fusarini, which is treasured in our archives.

[21] The original is in the archepiscopal files in Quito.

With the conviction that I am entrusting my sons to good hands, and that in your Excellency they will always find a father and a protector in every need, I thank you sincerely for your kindness in advance, and remain with veneration while imploring your pastoral blessing upon them and upon myself.

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. Our missionaries also have a letter for the President of the Republic in which I recommend them to his protection and charity as well, adding that we are prepared to refund any expense which may exceed the sum he had stipulated in his charity. If your Excellency should see fit, you might read this letter.

When there were enough sons and daughters of Don Bosco in Ecuador, they really did devote their attention to actual missionary work in the vicariate apostolic of Mendez and Gualaquiza, which they established in 1893.

Deeply moved by Don Bosco's humble recommendations, the archbishop replied: "I hope that (the Salesians) will reflect the charity of Your Reverence in their own actions, so that they may provide solid consolation to me in the midst of all the tribulations which are inseparable from my office." But the mortal eyes of the Saint no longer saw these written words. After fifty-three days of traveling, the missionaries arrived in Quito on January 28, 1888, the eve of the feast day of Saint Francis de Sales. Father Louis Calcagno cabled word of their safe arrival to Don Bosco and it was read out to him the morning of the 30th. He understood what was read to him and blessed them. It was the last blessing he ever sent to his sons beyond the ocean.

Chapter 20

SALESIAN EXPANSION INTO FOUR NEW EUROPEAN NATIONS

When Don Bosco stood on the threshold of eternity, Italy had two more Salesian houses, while another house already in existence was undergoing a radical transformation. France and Spain were developing the houses they already had. The first Salesians had arrived in England. Belgium was about to open its doors to them. Portugal was continuing its request; and in other European countries, the press gave more and more attention to the Salesian Congregation and its founder. During Don Bosco's last sickness and after his death, hundreds and hundreds of letters arrived at the Oratory from all over the world. There was a vast consensus which revealed how extensively the rays of Don Bosco's holiness had shed light in the world of that day and age. While reflecting the last echoes of his industriousness, the pages of this chapter will also give us a sample of his gratitude. There will also be a digression devoted to what was being said and written about the Italian Saint in a country which was locked within the ethnic checkerboard of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

ITALY

The house of Parma, which Bishop Villa had wanted to see founded in 1879 had encountered insurmountable difficulties. When the bishop died in 1882, he bequeathed the former Benedictine monastery, which was his own property, to Don Bosco, on the condition that a hospice be established within three years. In the event that this condition was not honored, then the property was to be transferred to the seminary at the end of said term. However, since the legacy was not properly worded, neither Don Bosco nor the seminary could enter into possession of it. The latter was not entitled to any such possession under the prevailing law governing the confiscation of ecclesiastic property. It was then taken over instead by the state.[1]

Yet, hopes were not entirely relinquished in Parma. Bishop Tescari,

[1] See Vol. XV, pp. 253, 254.

who, when a canon of the cathedral, had played so decisive a role in the negotiations that had led to the legacy, did not forget the issue when he was created bishop of Borgo San Donnino. The new bishop of Parma, Bishop Miotti, adopted the plans of his predecessor as his own. This gave rise to an exhausting series of bureaucratic transactions which lasted until 1887, when, at long last the state land department put the Benedictine monastery and orchard for auction on July 9th. "At long last, this drawn out drama of the long-awaited orphanage has entered its final act," the bishop wrote.[2]

Don Bosco appointed a trustee who would show up at the auction and bid for an anonymous person. The building was awarded to his trustee for a total sum of thirty-four thousand lire. Yet the board of the state did not yield ownership of the property until the week before Christmas. Nor was it all over even then. A whole host of tenants had first to be dislodged, relinquishing the collecting of rent, since the insistence on it would have entailed vexation and endless expenses. All this caused the matter to drag on so long that Don Bosco did not live to see the end of it. All the same, we can assert that the house in Parma was the last ever opened by Don Bosco in Italy.

The house was not inaugurated until November, 1888, and was expected to take care also of a parish and a festive oratory. The house took a foothold quickly and was soon enhanced by the arrival in the city of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. On May 6, 1889, Marchioness Zambeccari was able to write to Father Michael Rua from Bologna: "I spent a week in Parma, and I was delighted to know about the satisfaction of the people and the esteem enjoyed by the Salesians there."[3]

The orphanage of Trent was inaugurated in 1887. We have already adequately covered the negotiations which led to it.[4] As soon as the bishop, the mayor, and the Congregation of Charity agreed with Don Bosco on the contract he had submitted,[5] the Salesians set out from Turin, and arrived in Trent on October 15th, where distinguished Cooperators met them at the railroad station. Our friends hoped that the orphanage was but an initial step on the part of the Salesians in the process of later founding a house of their own in the city, so that instead of merely helping a decaying institution to flourish anew, they could develop an educational insti-

2 Letter addressed to Fr. Celestine Durando, Parma, June 6, 1887.

3 Among Don Bosco's own authentic writings (file 966), we found the complete draft of an agreement between him and the Marchioness regarding the foundation of an orphanage in Parma. There is no indication as to the date; but it must refer to 1876. Although there was no conclusion to this, we think that we ought to publish it in the Appendix (doc. 84), since he wrote it himself, and it is covered by his own amendments.

4 See Vol. XVII p. 774 and pp. 538–539.

5 See Vol. XVII, p. 825.

tute of their own where Don Bosco's methods were going to be applied.

Because Don Bosco so wished, a radical transformation took place at the Valsalice school under his supervision during the last few months of his life. The plan of introducing a new order of things there first cropped up in the Superior Council meeting held on March 14th, when Father Michael Rua proposed that some repairs be undertaken at Valsalice, to restore what had been ravaged partly by the earthquake and partly by bad weather. He also had suggested the building of a new chapel following an already existing draft design. Don Bosco said that before beginning any work, the condition of the school itself had to be studied as well as the number of its pupils attending it had to be looked into. When he was told that there were no more than fifty pupils, and that it did not seem there was any likelihood of having more, he said, "We should think it over and consider whether it would not be better to use this school for some other purpose."

To back up this idea, Father John Bonetti recalled how Don Bosco had agreed to assume the direction of the Valsalice school solely in compliance with the wishes and indeed almost under orders of Archbishop Gastaldi, despite the unanimous negative vote of the confreres. He also pointed out that the staff was not at ease there, because of the discrepancy in the social condition of the superiors and their pupils. Father Julius Barberis then intervened by pointing out that the following year, the house at San Benigno would no longer be big enough to accommodate all the clerics leaving Foglizzo after their novitiate. Father Francis Cerruti suggested to see if it were not the case of having some fifty clerics live at Valsalice. But the suggestion of dividing the clerics who were studying was not agreeable to Father Julius Barberis, because it would have disrupted the unity of spirit and direction. Don Bosco listened, but said nothing. Further study of the problem was deferred until two weeks after Easter.

On April 19th, the agenda called for reopening the debate on the same topic, and it was then agreed to do away with the school of Valsalice. As to what was to be done as a consequence of such a step, discussion was again deferred until some future date. All the same, the Superior Council wished to go on record as declaring that in all and every event, Don Bosco would remain absolutely free to make whatever decision he saw fit.

During the meeting held on June 27th, Father Rua submitted an estimate of the costs for the construction of a laundry for the convenience of the Valsalice school. This estimate amounted to seven thousand and one hundred lire. Opinion was divided as to the basic elements of the matter; yet they all agreed unanimously on one point - namely, that work hereon should

be held in abeyance. At the end, Don Bosco put in a word of his own. "We might turn Valsalice into a formation house for our clerics," he said. The members of the Chapter heard what he said, but no one commented on it.

Debate regarding the Valsalice school was resumed on August 18th, with Father Rua presiding, but nothing at all was concluded. During the afternoon session of August 23rd, the majority maintained that the entire reform should consist solely in adopting a two-fold monthly tuition program: one calling for thirty-five lire, the other of forty-five per month. It was thought that this would have brought new life to the school and it would have facilitated the access to a greater number of residents by enrollment of boys of the middle class. Don Bosco did not raise any objection. But during the days that followed he must have explained his true feelings on the subject to Father Rua, for on September 13th, the latter overruled all conflicting opinions and came straight out with the proposal of a radical re-organization of Valsalice, saying that the formation house for cleric students was to be established there. There was some discussion as to whether or not the boys might remain when the clerics were there, but the day was carried by those who were not in favor of mingling the boys and the clerics, on the grounds that it would have been out of place. Put to a vote, the proposal of bringing all the cleric students to Valsalice was unanimously approved by the Superior Council.

At that meeting, the required staff was immediately elected, and Father Julius Barberis was appointed director. During the month, the clerical students from San Benigno who were on vacation at Lanzo and the others who had ended their novitiate at Foglizzo, all went to their new headquarters which in a short span of time was made ready to offer comfortable accommodation to its new residents. In order that there might be no doubt, suspicion or misunderstanding anywhere, Don Bosco renamed the house SEMINARY FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS, and he had this written over the main entrance in big letters. It was under this new name that he brought the new requalified house to the ecclesiastic and civil authorities. Thus a new era, rich in varied and glorious undertakings, began for Valsalice.

BELGIUM

The first Salesian house ever founded in Belgium was sealed by a special intervention from heaven. How much Bishop Doutreloux, the bishop of Liège, had striven during the past three years, in order that Don Bosco might make up his mind and open a professional trade school in his town! He had even talked about it with Leo XIII, and had not given up

hope when he realized it would be impossible to see his hopes fulfilled as quickly as he would have wanted, but had instead resorted to prayer.[6]

He was deeply worried because of the news of Don Bosco's health in 1887, and when he heard that his condition was deteriorating, he decided to go to Turin. Before he left the diocese, he requested that prayers be said in every monastery so that he might be successful in the purpose for which he was setting out on his journey.

He arrived on the evening of December 7th, the eve of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, and after checking into a hotel,[7] he went to the Oratory. It appears that he was unable to see Don Bosco immediately, and that instead he conferred with Father Celestine Durando who was still in charge of all negotiations for new houses. He saw Don Bosco the following morning with Bishop John Cagliero and Father Durando. The evening before, already informed of everything, Don Bosco had agreed with the other superiors that they still should take their time. But when the bishop was before him, to Father Durando's utter astonishment, he immediately said "Yes" to the bishop's request, as though the problems discussed the day before no longer existed. Don Bosco invited the bishop to dinner at midday and the prelate offered him the support of his arm as far as the dining room. The Saint thanked him for his compassionate gesture with cordial words. At the end of the meal, the good bishop was about to repeat his courteous gesture, but Don Bosco humbly declined. In his diary, Father Charles Viglietti wrote: "We were all touched by the eminent prelate's tenderness. He seemed to have been reared in love for Don Bosco just like one of us. We were likewise edified by the humility with which Don Bosco declined the Bishop's attention."

Among the recollections of that meeting, the Bishop never forgot the impression that a certain action and remark of the Saint made on him. As he was on his way to dinner, the Greek scholar, Bishop Pechenino, Don Bosco's old and faithful friend who happened to be there with other guests, urged Don Bosco to hope for a speedy recovery. But as he walked, Don Bosco smiled, and raised his eyes and his head to indicate the skull on his dresser. It was a very swift glance and gesture to which Pechenino paid no attention, but the Bishop did and when he came again to Turin in April 1888, he informed the members of the Superior Council about it.

[6] See Vol. XVII.

[7] It has been published that he accepted the offer of hospitality extended to him by the Oratory; but this does not tie in with what he wrote Fr. Rua on Mar. 25, 1888. Since he had to go to Rome, he asked him to indicate some nice hotel in Turin, because he had not been too satisfied with the one at which he had stayed before.

After the meal, the topic discussed was the importance and effectiveness of frequent Communion in reforming one's life, especially the life of the boys, and in directing them toward perfection. Turning to the bishop, Don Bosco suddenly exclaimed, "Therein lies the great secret!" He said it with a feeble voice, but his tone had such faith and love that the prelate was deeply moved, as he later told Father Rua.

When he left the Oratory, he took with him the comforting certainty that all the many prayers offered up had not been in vain; but he was unaware, just as at first the superiors themselves were unaware, why Don Bosco had changed his mind between the night before and the morning after. Only Father Viglietti at first, and later Bishop Cagliero, were aware of the secret. On the morning of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, Father Viglietti went to Don Bosco, wishing to read something to him from the columns of *L'Unità Cattolica* but was told, "Take a pen, the ink well and some paper and write down what I am going to dictate to you." Whereupon he dictated, "Actual words spoken by the Immaculate Virgin who appeared to me last night: 'It is pleasing to God and to the Blessed Virgin Mary that the sons of Saint Francis de Sales open a house in honor of the Most Blessed Sacrament at Liège. It was here that the glory of Jesus first became public and it is here that the same glory is to spread to all families of the city, and especially among all the many boys, who in all parts of the world, are or will be entrusted to the care of the Salesians.' Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, 1887." Then he stopped. As he dictated these words, he wept and sobbed, and the emotions shook him up even later. When Father Viglietti saw that he was calm, he picked up the newspaper but when he began to read an article about the missionaries who had left for Ecuador, he had to stop, for, at the point where it spoke of Mary Help of Christians protecting the Salesians, sobs formed like a lump in Don Bosco's throat and the tears almost choked him. In his diary, he wrote: "These are solemn, extraordinary moments... One has to experience them in order to form an idea what it is like when God speaks."

Just then Bishop Cagliero entered the room, and Don Bosco told Viglietti to read to him the heavenly words. The Bishop was amazed and kept silent for a few moments, and then he said, "I too, was against the idea. But now the decree has come. There is nothing to do but to obey." It was agreed that nothing should be said to the bishop of Liège about it, but instead he would merely be told that his application had been granted and then to tell him what had moved Don Bosco to such a decision much later, when everything was already underway. It was then that Don Bosco

uttered his famous words, "Until now we have walked on a sure path. We cannot go wrong. It is Mary who leads us."

Subsequent happenings did not take long to prove that it was indeed the Madonna who wanted the house to be founded in the city of the *Corpus Domini.* The bishop had a most luminous proof of this, as he told his guest, Bishop Cagliero, some time toward the end of 1888. At his return to his diocese, Bishop Doutreloux set to work to build the house. He had a suitable piece of ground on which to build, but the price cost an arm and a leg. He sent for the owner to try to persuade the man to settle for a more reasonable amount. As soon as the man heard it was for an institute of Don Bosco, he agreed to sell it for fifty-thousand francs, but with the notary deed. "If you agree to that, we can call the notary and draw up the contract immediately," he said. Very gratified at the sum now required, the Bishop, who did not have the fifty thousand francs, asked him to wait until evening. When the man had gone, he went to pray alone before the Blessed Sacrament. At sundown, a pastor of his diocese went to see him, saying he had brought with him some money from someone who wished to remain anonymous, but who wanted the bishop to invest that money in a charitable enterprise already known to him.

"Oh! There are so many in the diocese!" the bishop replied. "There is the organization for the poor, and then..."

"No, no, bishop," the pastor interrupted, "this person wants his money to be used for something special on which Your Excellency is now engaged. Please bear in mind that the sum is substantial."

"How much is it? Tell me."

"Fifty thousand francs."

"Oh! Give it to me. It is our Lord who has sent you to me."

He took the money and he himself went to give it to the owner of the land in person, and an hour later the contract had been signed and payment done.

There was great talk in Liège about the forthcoming foundation, and even more about Don Bosco. When the Bishop had returned from his journey, a businessman of Liège chose to visit the Oratory during a trip to Italy. His impressions may be seen in a letter written December 23rd from Florence to *La Gazetta de Liège.*[8] He had the good fortune of seeing Don Bosco before he was constrained to his bed, never to rise from it again. Father Durando introduced him. "I was touched to see this venerable old man seated on a shabby sofa, bent beneath the burden of his years

8 Appendix, doc. 85.

and the fatigue caused by a lengthy apostolate. He was so drained of strength that he was no longer able to stand upright. However, he raised his head which had been drooping, and I was able to see his eyes that were somewhat dim, although still full of a bright goodness. He speaks French very well, he spoke slowly, and found it hard to speak. He was able to express his ideas very lucidly. He welcomed me with Christian simplicity, both dignified and cordial. I felt deeply touched at the sight of this old man constantly besieged by visitors, even though he was all but dying, and yet he was showing affectionate and sincere interest for everyone who went near him!" The Saint spoke about Bishop Doutreloux with admiration, and praised his interest in the working classes.

The bishop was deeply worried about Don Bosco's life. When word of a sudden improvement was circulated during the course of his sickness, he wrote to Father Rua:[9] "Praised be God and may Mary Help of Christians be thanked a thousand times! The Paris newspapers reported your blessed telegram today, announcing that our holy and dearly beloved Don Bosco was out of danger! I am as happy as I would be if he were my father! You should not wonder at this, for it has been now a very long time, and especially after my journey to Turin, that I feel as if I belonged to the Salesian family and so intensely that I myself am unable to describe it. Don Bosco himself gave me the certificate of my adoption, with words so charitable that I will never forget. Tell him how happy I am and convey to him my thanks and my good wishes."

On January 21st he sent to Turin the architect Hellepute, a professor at the Catholic University of Liège, for he planned to entrust the building of the school to him and wanted him to inspect Salesian houses and institutions so as to form an adequate idea of what he had to do. In recommending him to Father Rua, he wrote:[10] "I dare to ask for the grace of access to Don Bosco's presence for this model Christian, so that he may receive his blessing." But when the architect reached the Oratory, Don Bosco's condition was very serious indeed.

After Don Bosco's death, Bishop Doutreloux transferred to Father Rua the affectionate devotion he professed for the Saint. When he had to go to Rome, he told him he would stop over in Turin to see him, and added:[11] "It is my intention to visit the grave of our dearly beloved and deeply lamented Don Bosco." He undertook nothing for the building

[9] Liège, January 2, 1888.
[10] Liège, January 21, 1888.
[11] Liège, March 25, 1888.

under construction without consulting him. He was always firmly convinced that the house of Liège was destined to have a magnificent future.[12] Father Rua went to Liège in May, 1890, and it was then clearly evident how highly the bishop esteemed Don Bosco's successor, for he wrote to Father Durando:[13] "Am I to tell you how much he has edified us with his exquisite courtesy, coupled with his inner virtues? He won the hearts of us all with his words that are so full of unction and piety, and with his gentle countenance. I could not bless Divine Providence enough for having made it possible that we had him here to bless the cornerstone of the Orphanage of Saint John Berchmans."

He was always paternally tender toward the sons of Don Bosco who were sent to Liège and with their little artisans. As a way to remember the day when Don Bosco consented to his pleas, he always went to celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Conception with them, every year. He said a special prayer for them during his thanksgiving after Mass and during his evening prayers. Whenever he returned home after a journey, his first visit was always to the orphanage. Whenever he had eminent visitors, he would take them to visit it. The novitiate at Hechtel, which was opened in 1896, should always vividly remember the charity of this distinguished prelate shown particularly during its early years, which were very difficult. He himself chose to escort the first novices there in person and called on them four times in five years. He died in August, 1901. Hechtel was a modest village which had not seen a bishop from *ab immemorabilial* [from time immemorial]. He once wrote to the director, Father Tomasetti, solely to recommend that he keep the beds of the novices far from the walls which were still humid. He took delight in saying again and again, "Don Bosco promised me that six years after coming to Liège, the Salesians would triple their number in Belgium." The Salesians first went there in 1891, and in 1897 they had three houses, having opened two others at Tournai and the already mentioned house at Hechtel, besides the original one in Liège.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

We do not have any houses of which we can speak in Czechoslovakia, but we only wish to draw on some information to single out the first seeds sown in that territory, out of which there blossomed into the present a prosperous number of Salesian institutions in that youthful Republic. The seeds were sown slowly, and slowly did they take root in Bohemia during the life of Don Bosco.

[12] Letter to Fr. Rua, Liège, April 8, 1889.
[13] Liège, May 15, 1890.

Bohemia, which formed part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, has its own language, literature, and history. After the year 1880, naturalistic tendencies began to exercise sinister influence in the field of education. Good Christians did not stand by idle, but fought this tendency with every legal weapon available. In this connection, the tough battle waged by the Catholic writers who had gathered under the aegis of the magazine *Vlast* [the Homeland] against the pedagogical errors of their adversaries, was well worthy of note. The magazine featured frequent articles by educators who were concerned about finding effective remedies against the evils produced by anti-Christian propaganda and especially among the children of the working classes. The climate was therefore already propitious when the first news about Don Bosco reached the country.

The attention of all cultured people was increasingly directed towards the remarkable industriousness of the saintly Italian educator. The first pamphlet on the life and works of Don Bosco appeared in Bohemia in 1882. It had been written by a school teacher of Smichov, a suburb of Prague.[14] She re-edited the pamphlet in 1885; she improved on the new edition with a better format and a picture of the Servant of God kneeling before a little statue of Mary Help of Christians with his autograph in facsimile, with the invocation: *Maria Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis.* She dedicated the booklet to the chairperson of a committee of women who took care of the hospices for children and kindergartens in Prague,[15] and whose name was Maria Riegrová. The magazine *Vlast*, which often wrote about Don Bosco, presented a delightful review of the first edition of the initial publication,[16] and other periodicals also published flattering comments.

In this way, people became so well acquainted with Don Bosco in Prague and in other cities of Bohemia, that when he died, several newspapers[17] reported the event as something of worldwide interest. In 1889, the professor Joseph Flekacet published his translation of Don Bosco's French biography by DuBoys into Bohemian.[18] The first word about Don Bosco had come to Bohemia by way of France and not from the neighboring country of Austria, since the Bohemian people felt a closer ideological affinity with the French. So the aforesaid authors drew their inspiration from French sources. In all of their works the tendency prevailed to stress in particular the value of the

[14] Barbara Pazdernikova, *Krestankse'* (The Work of Christian Charity), Prague, 1882.

[15] The title is identical to the first edition. The pamphlet has only ten more pages.

[16] Year 1 (1884), no. 9.

[17] *Prarskè Vecerui Novivni* (The Evening Newspaper), January 25th and February 8th, 1888; *Lidove Lisky* (the People's Sheet) of April 1, 1888.

[18] It was printed in installments in *Vlast,* 1888–1889.

professional training schools just as Don Bosco had organized them.

This literature, which might be termed "Salesian", induced Bohemian citizens to try to establish direct contact with Don Bosco, and the Rev. Joseph Kousal's visit to Don Bosco was particularly memorable. He went to Turin during the summer of 1887; he had been sent by the government of Rieger to have a closer look at the Salesian system. In our opinion, the envoy was not the most suitable person to be sent on such a mission, because he was the chaplain of a reformatory school and he was interested in some educational method more suitable to the rehabilitation of poor young delinquents. Indeed, when he called on Don Bosco at the school of Lanzo and told him why he had come, he noticed that the Saint gazed at him in wonder and then heard his reply, "You have been misinformed. We do have poor, abandoned boys here, but not juvenile delinquents, for whom there is a state institution called La Generala. You might go there if you wish."

Such words did not stop him from visiting the Oratory, but he failed to appreciate its spirit entirely. It required much more than a fleeting overall glimpse to enable a civil servant trained in Austrian bureaucracy to understand something about the Oratory, or Don Bosco's educational system, which relied on filial trust and holy freedom! The Oratory, so it seems, appeared as the epitome of Utopia. He believed that so many boys together could be neither sufficiently supervised nor disciplined. Yet in his report there was at least this positive reflection: In making a comparison between the Oratory and La Generala, he did say that charity reigned in Don Bosco's house whereas in the state institution one could only see "Free Masonic humanitarianism." With respect to the truth we will add that later, when he was better informed, Kousal formed quite another opinion, for in 1934 he wrote about the newly canonized Saint with greater understanding and high praise.

Another Czechoslovakian went to see Don Bosco, but he was the founder of a religious Congregation. We mean to speak of Father Clement Petr, born in Susici. Ordained a priest in 1880, he was tormented by the doubt whether or not he ought to embrace the religious life. No matter how much he prayed, his spirit could never see enough light. He therefore prayed to God for the grace of meeting someone whose advice might enlighten his mind. In 1886, some Bohemian priests journeyed in a pilgrimage to the Eternal City and he joined them. In Rome, he obtained a private audience with Leo XIII who, after listening to him said, "Go, my son, and teach students preparing for the sanctuary." He was then assistant rector in the major seminary, and interpreted the words of the Vicar of

Jesus Christ as the voice of God himself. On the way back he called on Don Bosco and studied in detail his houses in Turin. This gave him the idea of founding something similar to them in his own country for the benefit of youth and the education of the clergy. It seemed to him that this was what God wanted from him. Despite the opposition from his friends and acquaintances, he resigned from the office that he had been assigned to. With a few young men, he laid the foundation of the Congregation which then became known as the congregation of the Brothers of the Blessed Sacrament, whose aim was that the members sanctify themselves and others with an intense faith and a sincere love of the Holy Eucharist. Father Petr, too, experienced how much it cost to found a Congregation. Yet in the thick of his struggles and sufferings, the comforting word of Don Bosco got to him. Towards the end of 1887, a student of theology was sent by Fr. Petr to Don Bosco in order to get his advice about the foundation of the aforementioned Congregation. He received the following answer: "Tell him to begin. Mary Help of Christians will do the rest." Indeed, once he had successfully overcome his obstacles, he was comforted by the sight of his new religious family firmly established on solid foundations.[19]

Another Czechoslovakian priest, John Boll, of the archdiocese of Ostrihon (a city which is today annexed to Hungary and known as Esztergom), had correspondence with Don Bosco. He was ordained a priest in January 1883 and was afraid that he would soon be retired since he was exposed to the danger of perhaps being forced to abandon his priestly activities on account of his health. He had never been really well throughout the years he had lived in the seminary, but now he felt much worse. Troubled by such a sad prospect, he chanced to read about the miracles ascribed to Don Bosco during his journey to Paris. This reading impressed him so deeply that he thought to appeal to his prayers. So he wrote to him in June, describing his critical condition and imploring his help. For a reply Don Bosco sent him a holy picture of Mary Help of Christians with these words written by his own hand across the back of it: *Maria sit tibi auxilium in vita, levamen in periculis, solamen in morte, gaudium in coelo. Mariam cogita, Mariam in voca, ieiunium et oratio valde tibi proderunt Taurini, 23 Junii 1883, Joh Bosco sacerdos.*[May Mary be your help in life, your aid in difficulties, your solace in death, your joy in heaven. Think of Mary. Pray to Mary. Prayer and fasting will give you strength. Turin, June 23, 1883 John Bosco, Priest]. To receive it, read it,

[19] *Cesley lidumil apostel mladeze p.klement petr* (a clerk who was a philanthropist and an apostle of youth) in the collection *Tivot* (through Life).

and not suffer any further ailment was one and the same thing. He became a pastor in several parts of Slovakia, and was last at Zavod, near Bratislava, where he died on December 24, 1934, at the age of 75. He always treasured the holy picture that had been sent to him and kept it always in his Breviary, considering the words of the Saint as his program for living.

ENGLAND

The first Salesian house in England was opened in 1887, but the initial hopes to have one dates back to 1876. The husband of Countess Irene Dzierskrai Moracoska of the grand duchy of Posen, Charles de la Barre Bodenham of the county of Hereford, was seriously sick. The Countess wrote to Don Bosco, hoping to obtain his recovery. The wording of her letter tells us that she knew him more than superficially.[20] She asked for prayers and expressed her intention of sponsoring the foundation of a Salesian house in London, if her prayers were answered. "Your Congregation is always very dear to our heart, increasingly so," she wrote, "and we hope to see it established in London before we die. Perhaps we are already on the way to succeed, if we obtain the grace for which I implore your help." But her husband died in 1880.[21] The times were not ripe yet. The London chapter of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul also took steps. Just as in Buenos Aires, Paris and elsewhere, the Society of Saint Vincent, always in close contact with human suffering, hoped for Don Bosco's help in London on behalf of poor and abandoned boys. On behalf of the general board, the secretary, Walter Hussey Walsh, wrote to him on January 21, 1884. He had known Don Bosco ever since 1877, when he had called on him in Turin together with Earl and Countess Denbigh, Mr. Lane Fox and Miss Fitzgerald.[22] On March 13, 1878, he had spoken about him and his institute at a meeting at which Cardinal Manning happened to be present. Then in January, 1884, Lady Herbert of Lea published an article in *The Month* on the same subject, concluding with the statement that Don Bosco had expressed his desire to found a house in London. The secretary just mentioned brought this article to the attention of the board that same month and also wrote about it to the ailing ecclesiastic assistant Father Lord Douglas Hope who replied that he was delighted if Don Bosco would go to London. Nor was this all. Dudley

[20] See Appendix, doc. 86.

[21] The Countess had no children. The title of Bodenham and the estate passed into the hands of Count Lubiensky, a great admirer of Don Bosco and a fervent Cooperator.

[22] Cfr. Vol. XVII.

Leathley, an honorary member of the board who had just returned a few days previously from Italy where he had called on Don Bosco in the company of a friend, reported that he had expressed encouraging words regarding a possible foundation of a Salesian house in London. These then were the circumstances which had advised the aforementioned writer to address the letter in question to Don Bosco.

The whole set of circumstances led to hope for a favorable answer. There was so much need that someone would help and care for the poor youth of London. "At the present time," Mr. Walsh wrote, "we have but one hospice for working class youth in this city of four million people, for it is only Lord Douglas who provides a home for Catholic workers. We did have a patronage run by the Brothers of Charity from Ghent, but now these religious have gone away and the house is closed." Their departure had been caused by lack of funds to keep the house open and by the intrigue of concealed adversaries. At the top of the letter Don Bosco wrote: "Father Durando to talk about it." He meant that it was to be discussed in a Superior Council meeting, but the minutes say nothing about it.

The board of the association of Saint Vincent resumed discussion about it in 1886 and in a printed report issued that same year, the life and works of Don Bosco were summarized in three closely written pages, ending with the statement that his method could beneficially be introduced in both Great Britain and Ireland. Experience later confirmed how right this statement was both in the one and the other portion of the United Kingdom, but we had to let things take their course.

We are happy that we have reason not to neglect the third part of the United Kingdom. An application was received from Scotland the same year that the Salesians went to London. Since he had many Italians living in his city, Bishop Eyere, the archbishop of Glasgow, wished to have a Salesian priest who might take care of them, especially since their children were being lured toward the Protestant faith. In writing to Don Bosco about this, he recalled with pleasure that he had already met him in Rome and mentioned that a certain Mr. Monteith of Carstairs was very anxious to bring the Pious Salesian Society to the archdiocese. Don Bosco had someone translate the letter, then he wrote on it: "Father Rua to talk about it in all seriousness." This meant he wished the Superior Council to take the matter into serious consideration. At the meeting held on November 30th, Father Rua read out the letter of the application, but unfortunately the answer was negative, since the Rules did not permit Salesians to live so isolated. But they did promise the archbishop that they

would try to find some good and zealous diocesan priest. Meanwhile, it was hoped that they would soon have personnel who spoke English, so that they could open an orphanage in Glasgow or some other town of that same archdiocese.[23] When only a few formalities remained with which to comply in regard to the final acceptance of the London house, a word of advice from an authority might still have succeeded in upsetting the entire project, had Don Bosco, always wise in his decisions, not been firm as well in seeing his plans through to their conclusion. Bishop John Butt of Southwark, under whose jurisdiction the new house would have been located, paid a call *'ad limina'* in May 1887. When he heard that Don Bosco was in Rome for the consecration of the Sacred Heart Church, and that he was about to accept a house in the Battersea area, he called on him to dissuade him from such a plan, on the grounds that the locality was poor and that it was impossible to keep only even one priest in that area. When he got back to his diocese, one of his priests who had called to pay his respects congratulated him on having been able to speak with a saint.

"With a saint?...And who might that be?" he asked.

"With Father John Bosco of Turin."

"Him, a saint? A saint he may be, but after his own fashion. He is so obstinate in his ideas. Do you know who really did give me the impression that he was a saint? His Vicar, Father Michael Rua, a genuine ascetic individual. He listened to me, took note of what I said and assured me he would bring it before the Superior Council. But when I took my leave, Don Bosco, who could hardly stand on his own feet said, 'Bishop, the Salesians will be going to Battersea. We will have a magnificent church and vast recreation grounds. The house in Battersea will be one of the biggest in our whole Congregation.' Now where is Don Bosco going to find that much space to accomplish all this? Not unless he goes to the public gardens of Battersea!"

The priest to whom the bishop confided all this, Father William Cunningham, passed it on to the Salesian provincial, Father Eneas Tozzi, when he called on the Salesians at Battersea to congratulate them on Don Bosco's canonization. Here we can complete his account by copying several sentences from a note written to Father Durando by Father Rua on May 4, 1887: "The matter of the London house is so far advanced that it would be hard to retreat now, without cutting a sorry figure. Nevertheless, let us try to delay matters as much as possible, if we can do nothing better. The bishop, under whose jurisdiction we are going to be, was here, and

23 This letter, written in English by Fr. Redahan and signed by Don Bosco, is in the archive files of the College of St. Peter, Bearsden, Glasgow. See Appendix, doc. 87 A–B.

yesterday I had to call on him. Perhaps he will call on Don Bosco too."

To honor Bishop Butt, we must add immediately that, when the Salesians arrived, he welcomed them with paternal cordiality and when he saw them work he let go of all his negative prejudices. Another Bishop Butt, his nephew, who today is the auxiliary bishop of Westminster, inherited a warm affection for the sons of Don Bosco from his uncle.

It will be helpful to our readers if we supply some summary description of the Battersea district and environment. The great British metropolis is divided into two parts by the river Thames. The seat of Westminster's archbishop lies on the north bank, the episcopal seat of Southwark on the south. The latter has jurisdiction over the working class district of Battersea. During the lifetime of Pius IX, a parish had been erected and dedicated to the Sacred heart of Jesus, but only a little while later, the pastor had abandoned the church, and it had been impossible to replace him. This left the Catholic population, consisting for the most part of Irish workers, almost entirely without religious assistance. If they wished to receive the Sacraments, they had to take a very long walk to the nearest parish. And we should not even talk about the youth and the sick people of that area! That was where Divine Providence had summoned the Salesians.

The Countess of Stackpool, whose name we have already mentioned several times and who lived at Villa Lante in Rome, did more than anybody else to help bring the Salesians to London. Likewise Don Bosco's great friend, Archbishop Kirby, rector of the Irish seminary in Rome, warmly encouraged that foundation. Although he was 85 years old, he called on Don Bosco three times in 1887, and begged him to cut off all delays. On May 12th, since he had some good news for him and yet was unable to go outdoors, the Bishop wrote: "Yesterday I had the honor of an audience with the Holy Father, and he deigned to express his great delight and satisfaction that you have agreed to take over the London church of Countess of Stackpool. I wanted to tell you this much in person today, but being presently confined to bed with a cold, I have to forego this pleasure, just as I have to forego attending the testing of the organ." As far back as 1885, the Duchess of Norfolk had informed Don Bosco how happy she would have been to see in London a hospice similar to the one she saw before her then, but then the Salesians suited for it were still in the process of completing their formation program.

The countess, who had built the former parish church of Battersea entirely at her own expense, wished to rescue the Catholics of that district from their abandonment. She felt she had no other way than to appeal to

Don Bosco. She had first seen him in 1881and had been so impressed that she had written of him:[24] "I can still remember quite clearly the sound of his voice, his words, and see his glance and his blessing." She had also thoroughly understood the spirit of his houses, and therefore felt that the presence of the Salesians in that district of London, "a nest of poverty and vice," would be a genuine blessing for the infinite number of poor boys who lived like vagabonds in its meadows.

But in order to restore things, *in pristinum* [the way they used to be] there were a number of conditions to be looked after, such as the transfer of the property which had been handed over to the Ordinary, the restitution of many sacred vestments, and a number of canonical and legal formalities with which to comply. In order to clear the way, she thought best to humbly submit a petition to Leo XIII. She wrote a draft and she brought it in September to Turin, so that Don Bosco might look at it and put it into good Italian. Father Rua took it, touched up its new version, and made it definitive.[25] It appears that Leo XIII took action through Cardinal Simeoni, the Prefect of Propaganda.

Before the Salesians departed for London, Don Bosco sent over Father Francis Dalmazzo to get information on the situation *de visu* [first hand]. The expectancy for the arrival of his envoy caused some confusion, almost as if Don Bosco were about to arrive in person. This rumor created such feverish expectations that it was necessary to make a public denial.[26] On October 9th Father Dalmazzo was the guest of Father Galeran, a French priest in London who was a naturalized British subject and rector of a church near Battersea, specifically at Wandsworth. In a letter to Don Bosco dated October 15th, he describes the environment where Don Bosco's sons were awaited, as follows: "This noble British land will realize later the immense grace conferred upon it by Mary Help of Christians. The number of poor, vagrant, abandoned boys in every corner of this immense Babylon is incalculable. The zeal of the British clergy is unparalleled; but most of the harvest is lost for want of laborers. Souls are lost because there are not enough priests to do all the work. Dear Father, the souls that cost Our Lord so dearly cry out to you and await you. I do not know of any district in London in greater need of you than Battersea. I am also chaplain in

24 London, November 29, 1881. We do not know whether it was addressed to Fr. Rua or Count Cays, since there is no indication of the addressee.

25 Appendix, doc. 88. The document is important, because it contains the history of whatever happened before. The additions and changes provided by Fr. Rua are printed in Italics.

26 *The Catholic Press,* September 29.

a big prison where I see so many people. How often in my heart have I not invoked Don Bosco and his sons! Venerated Father, it will not be long before you rejoice at having taken possession of this capital in the name of Jesus Christ, for many are the sins committed here; many are the souls who live in ignorance and are lost. Blessed be the feet of the men who come to us in the name of him who loved children so dearly."

The Salesians would immediately be given the administration of the parish corresponding to the former parish of the Sacred Heart. When the Bishop knew of the wishes of the Pope, not only did he not raise any objections, but he even wrote and spoke personally to the nearest pastor, from whose jurisdiction the above territory was now again to be severed, and urged him to turn over everything with good grace to the Salesians as soon as they would show up. The church that the countess had built was made of iron outside and of wood inside. Although there were other similar churches, she had only intended this structure to be a temporary one. The schools next to the church were built of brick. They were big, spacious and high structured, with some two hundred and fifty boys and girls attending them. A surrounding walled-in area measuring 2,500 square meters was a piece of land of a respectable size for London. In the course of time, a larger church with an adjoining house and two playgrounds, one for the residents and one for day students, could easily have been built on it. It took years to achieve all this, yet it is an accomplished fact today. The bulk of the population consisted of poor working class families, though there were some well-to-do Catholics who were willing to help the newcomers. One detail worthy of note is that Saint Thomas More, who lived [at Chelsea] on the opposite shore of the Thames, owned a garden in the vicinity, and used to cross the river in his boat every morning after serving Mass to take breakfast in the countryside to gladden somehow his heart.[27]

Three Salesians assigned to Battersea left Turin on November 14th. They were an Irishman, Father Edward Patrick MacKiernan, who was to be pastor and director, and an Englishman, Father Macey, who was to be parochial assistant and catechist, and the coadjutor Rossaro, who had made his three-year profession. As we did early on, we will translate from the French the account of their arrival given by Father Galeran: "They arrived in the thick of a dense fog, to bring light to Battersea. One needed great spiritual insight to be able to say at their arrival: How fair their feet are! They were bespattered with mud to their very shoulders. But

[27] Fr. Dalmazzo's letter addressed to Don Bosco. London, October 15th and 21st, 1887.

they were surprised to find a well equipped and welcoming little home awaiting them. Our good Rossaro is waiting for the sunshine. I promised him he would see it in a few days. He still has faith but he has lost hope."[28]

Don Bosco had given them several letters of introduction and recommendation. Certainly there must have been one for the Bishop too, although we found no reference to it. Another was for the Duke of Norfolk, which our readers may have read in the previous volume.[29] A third letter for Father Galeran is mentioned by the addressee in one of his own letters to Father Rua[30] which reads: "I am sending you the answer to the letter that the most revered Don Bosco was so kind as to write to me." A fourth letter, addressed to the Italian consul in London was worded as follows:

> Turin, November 14, 1887
>
> Dear Consul:
>
> Allow me to introduce to you two pupils of mine; one is an Irishman, the other is an Englishman. Their names are Edward MacKiernan and Charles Macey, and they were educated in Italy and ordained priests. I am now sending them both to London to take over the parish in Battersea which has been entrusted to the care of the Salesian Society. They will also take charge of the moral well-being of British youth, and especially of the poor Italian boys living in the above mentioned parish and in other parts of London. I therefore warmly recommend them to your protection, so that they may carry out their mission in peace and with much profit.
>
> With this trust, I wish to extend to you my most cordial thanks in advance and beg you to accept my most respectful regards while I am honored to remain,
>
> Your most grateful servant,
> (signed) Rev. John Bosco

From all that we have said so far, we can gauge how helpful Father Galeran was to our confreres during the first difficult days. On Sunday, November 22nd they asked him to be so kind as to come and introduce them to the population in the name of Don Bosco. Although he had already preached four times that same day, he could not refuse, and so he

28 Letter addressed to Fr. Rua. London, November 22, 1887.
29 Vol. XVII, p. 524.
30 London, November 22, 1887.

preached a fifth time, late that evening, and with fraternal warmth. Two days later, writing to Father Rua he exclaimed: "Now the Salesians are sailing full steam ahead! Let them do their job!"

Father Francis Dalmazzo had taken leave of his host the morning before. "My house is no longer the same," the priest wrote.[31] "After he left, it has become a desert, for I looked on him as a friend of long standing, and in his company it was far sweeter to me to labor for the greater glory of God. In fact, my rectory had become a Salesian house with a perfect union of hearts but a most imperfect union of language. Never did we come to know better what was the confusion of Babel. Father Francis Dalmazzo did his best to try to speak English, but despite his boldness, he was condemned to silence. My assistants in the parish did not know any French at all and still less Italian. But I myself have become so English by now that my ears are unable to take in any language other than English. Yet with the help of God, we spent some happy days with the procurator general, who is a genuine son of Don Bosco."

During those first few months our Salesians did indeed sail, but not full steam ahead, as Father Galeran said. Adverse winds and dangerous cliffs endangered their fragile bark. Luckily for them, they were not discouraged. In spite of all adversities some good was being done. Let us listen once again to our faithful witness:[32] "Today all three came to lunch with us and we gave them a thoroughly British meal. They have their difficulties and setbacks in Battersea in this initial period. There is always the Mount of Olives, then the crucifixion and lastly the resurrection. But one has to wait for some problems to iron themselves out as best they can. Time puts things right, and time is in the hands of God. All told, these two priests have done wonders here already. On Christmas Eve they sat in their confessionals until eleven-thirty at night. On Christmas Day their church was full for all six Masses. Communicants, especially among the men, were very many. The people are fond of the Salesians and like their sermons."

While this volume is in the process of being printed, our British Salesians are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of the first Salesians in London. That first house, from which all the many other Salesian houses in the United Kingdom blossomed, has fully fulfilled the evangelical allegory in the Gospel of the grain of mustard seed which sprouted and grew into an immense tree.

31 Letter previously quoted to Fr. Rua.

32 Letter addressed to Fr. Rua, London, December 27, 1887.

Chapter 21

THE LAST RAYS OF TWILIGHT

We now enter the last four months of Don Bosco's tormented existence. Although he was out of bed during October, November, and two-thirds of the month of December, it took all his courage to drag himself around and keep busy. He said Mass every day in his small, private chapel for as long as he was able, always assisted by a priest. During the daytime, he gave audiences, but he never got up from his chair. Twice a week, in the evenings, he would hear the confessions of the pupils of the upper classes, while the Salesians of the house went to him daily for the same purpose. Once, when talking with Father Joachim Berto about the welfare of the Oratory boys, he said, "For as long as there shall be a breath of life in me, I shall dedicate it entirely to their well-being, to their spiritual and temporal advantage." Father Berto, who used to make his confession to him, once told him he did not intend to make his confession to him because of the excessive exertion it caused, since he saw that Don Bosco was weaker than usual and that his breathing was heavy. He added that he would be happy even if he could prolong his life for but a single instant. "No, no, come as usual," Don Bosco, said. "I need to talk with you. The very last word that I will be able to utter will be uttered for you."

He found it increasingly difficult to talk and breathe; nevertheless, he received all kinds of people with his usual calm and serenity. At times, when he realized he could not continue a conversation, he would distract his visitors with playful questions: "Could you give me the name of some factory where they make bellows?" The astonished visitor would then ask whether he had an organ or harmonium in need of repairs. "Yes, indeed," he would say, "the organ here in my chest does not want to work any more. I ought to change its bellows. Please excuse me if I cannot talk as loudly or as freely as I should." Without a word of complaint, he made them understand his condition and the reason for his careful way of speaking.

Every once in a while there were callers from France. On October

11th, he was introduced to a Frenchman suffering from some kind of mental derangement which, however, allowed him to have tranquil, lucid moments during which he had full awareness of his state. The Saint suggested that the man be brought back to attend his Mass, during which he would pray for him. The man came back and attended his Mass and was even able to receive communion. As he was leaving, he said that he believed he was completely cured, and Don Bosco assured a lady relative who had accompanied him that the grace had been granted.

On the 13th of that month, the Most Rev. Grolleau, bishop of Evreux, showed up at the Oratory expressly to ask Don Bosco to open a Salesian house for his diocese. There had been talk about it ever since 1882. The bishop had wanted to turn over to him a boarding high school at Neubourg that had been built and was being run by two priests who were brothers, and which he wished to see converted into a professional trade and agricultural boarding school. Count Charles de Maistre, a member of the bishop's diocese and a very close friend of Don Bosco, acted as go-between at that time. It had not been possible then to grant the request for lack of personnel, but the bishop had been touched by the courtesy of the letter written in answer to the Count's inquiry and now wanted to thank Don Bosco personally and at the same time to beg him not to forget the matter. "For a long time," he wrote, [1] "your revered name has been known to me, and so too are the great works God has permitted you to accomplish, and I am happy to assure you now of my respectful benevolence." A year later he had again written to him through the Count. He had also spoken with the Saint in Paris, agreeing that they should wait for the hour designated by Divine Providence. Now he believed that this hour had come. The boarding school could not go on in its present state. The government seemed inclined to purchase it to establish a trade and agricultural school. Under the climate then prevailing, it was easy to see that this institution would then be converted into a hot bed of ungodliness at the very heart of the diocese. On the bishop's letter Don Bosco wrote for Father Durando only this: "File it." This meant that, for the time being, he saw no possibility of taking any action. In fact, it appeared from the Bishop's letter that the financial situation of the institution was garbled.[2] Nor was the bishop of any different opinion apparently, for their correspondence ceased until October 1887, the time of his visit to Don Bosco

1 Evreux, June 7, 1882.
2 Evreux, June 4, 1883

at the Oratory. When the good prelate returned to his diocese he sent him an offering of five hundred francs in his new role as Salesian Cooperator, and thanked him for the hospitality extended to him. "I am delighted to have seen you," he wrote, "I am delighted to have seen your institute, I am delighted to have received your blessing. I do not know what will become of our plans; but certainly, if God manifests his divine will, I will do everything I am capable of to see them through, with the support of his grace and your prayers." The letters the bishop wrote reveal a heart of gold and a true pastoral zeal, but he had to admit that, under the terms proposed, there was little likelihood of success in the undertaking.

That same day, a large group of pilgrims belonging to the Catholic Workers' Associations arrived in Turin from Northern France, led by the renowned Leo Harmel, while en route to Rome to attend the priestly jubilee of Leo XIII. There were 953 people in the group, some fifty priests among them, traveling on two trains. The first of these arrived at the station of Porta Nuova at five-thirty in the evening, followed shortly by the second train. Don Bosco sent a few French Salesians to greet the leader of the party and tell him how much he regretted being unable to extend his hospitality to the pilgrims. This would have been both an honor and a joy to him. However, the facilities at the Oratory could not accommodate so many people. But because he wished to show them how dearly he esteemed them, he said he would go to see them, to congratulate them on the filial piety that was leading them to the Pope in Rome, and to wish them a pleasant journey. Leo Harmel gratefully acknowledged the message and sent word to him about the most convenient time for such a visit.

The pilgrims were gathered for supper at the Sogno Restaurant, located in the magnificent Valentino Park, when Don Bosco arrived around seven o'clock with Father Rua. Immediately, the French pilgrims crowded around him with an enthusiasm that touched him. Leo Harmel and the chaplain of the Society of Saint Vincent stood on either side of him, helping him to walk. He halted at the entrance to the restaurant and sat down and when all the workers had completely surrounded him, some inside the restaurant and some outside, he gave them his blessing. He would have liked to speak to them, but his weakened voice was inaudible even to those nearest to him. At his request, Father Rua then delivered a brief but very apt speech on his behalf.[3] After the address, the pilgrims filed past Don Bosco, kissing his hand and kneeling to receive a medal of Mary Help of Christians,

[3] See the *Bulletin salésien,* November 1887.

and now and then, a word or two from his own lips. From time to time he said to the laymen, "May Mary Help of Christians protect you and guide you to heaven." To the priests, heading their own small group of pilgrims, he said, "May Our Lord grant you the grace of bringing many souls back to him." When a priest from Chartres told him that he knew Father Charles Bellamy, he said, "If Father Bellamy is your friend, you are my friend also, because Father Bellamy is a great friend of mine." The majority placed silver coins in his hand, which he, in turn, handed over to Father Rua. The people of Turin who witnessed this scene were greatly impressed by the veneration which the French Catholics showed Don Bosco.

However, this demonstration ruffled the so-called democrats, who released their venom in an article entitled: *"The Shrewd Don Bosco."*[4] It was thoroughly repugnant, it insulted the Pope and workers of the pilgrimage, and poured out abuse against "the notorious miracle worker of Valdocco." The authorities should not have allowed such insolence to go unpunished, for it only shamed Italy in the eyes of the foreigners. But such was the climate of the times. With great indignation, Father John Bonetti addressed a strong protest to His Majesty's attorney general but he labored in vain.

A French newspaper [5] speaking of this pilgrimage also mentioned this meeting with Don Bosco. It recalled that a French bishop had recently referred to Don Bosco as an "eagle of charity" and continued, "It was quite natural for the French workers to be all eager to see this great and venerated friend of the sons of workers hold his hand over them for a brief moment. Don Bosco fulfilled their hopes by going to where they were gathered. Deeply moved in the presence of this holy priest, they all received his blessing and a souvenir."

Even though he felt his strength ebbing from day to day and though he suffered considerably when standing, until December 20th, Don Bosco refused to have his frugal meals served to him in his room. Assisted by his secretary, he used to go instead to the common dining room, well aware that the mere fact of his presence would have made the superiors happy. He seemed to be more cheerful when there were strangers at table, as frequently occurred. On October 16th, Mr. Marty of Barcelona, with his whole family, ate with him [6] (he is mentioned in this volume),[7] as well

[4] *La Gazetta Operaia*, October 15, 1887.
[5] *L'Union Maluine et Dinannaise of St. Malo-Dinan*, October 23, 1887.
[6] Cfr. Vol. XVIII.
[7] Cfr. Vol. XVIII.

as Bishop Sogaro and a black priest. The apostle of Africa was due to leave for Rome, and so he arose from the table before the others and knelt with his companion in front of Don Bosco, asking for his blessing.[8] The Spanish party departed that evening.

The new novices were getting ready to receive the cassock at Foglizzo on October 20th. With total indifference to his very poor health, Don Bosco did something that no one would have ventured to ask or even hope for. He went to officiate personally at the ceremony, accompanied by Father Rua and Father Viglietti. Certainly, it was no recreation for him to have to travel two and a half hours by train and coach. At the house, a number of pastors and lay gentlemen considered themselves fortunate to sit at his table and attend the ceremony. He gave the cassock to ninety-four young men that day. The next morning he preferred to take a tour of San Benigno, rather than return immediately to Turin. He wanted to pay a debt of gratitude to Father Benone, who was ninety-three years old, and had always been very fond of him and on many occasions had helped him considerably. He therefore wanted to see him once more before departing for eternity. He felt that this departure was so near that, as he was leaving Foglizzo, he remarked to Father Rua, "I will not come back here next year. You will come to officiate at this ceremony."

In the plain, which lies between Foglizzo and San Benigno, lies the Orco River, which has a wide and stony riverbed. There was no bridge at that time and the river had to be crossed by boat if the water was high, otherwise, the river could only be crossed by wading or by coach. Don Bosco had to use the coach and suffered intensely as it jolted. He had intended to say only a few words to the pastor and then continue his journey, but he was reckoning with a pastor who, despite his advanced age, still possessed enough energy to impose his own will. He kept him for dinner. When they parted, they gave each other an appointment in paradise. The Saint was utterly exhausted when he finally reached Turin. That was his last railroad journey.

During one of the following nights he saw Father Joseph Cafasso in a dream, which he related on October 24th. In that dream he and Father Cafasso visited all the houses of the Congregation, including the ones in South America. He saw the conditions of every house and the state of each individual. Unfortunately, his failing strength did not enable him to relate the details of all that he had seen.

[8] See Vol. XVII.

Father Anthony Sala had returned briefly from Rome, where he had been sent, as we have already related, to look into the financial situation. Don Bosco was anxious to know what his findings were and what conclusion he had reached. We can find both answers in the minutes of a Superior Council meeting that took place on October 28: A total debt of three hundred and fifty thousand francs; work suspended, save on two altars; and a proposal of taking out a loan. A few evenings later, as he was leaving the dining room and heard someone mention that debt, he stopped at the head of the table and exclaimed, "Oh this will mark my death!" *[Oh! Questo é la mia morte].*

The signs of his imminent death kept creeping up into his brief conversations. For some time, Father Sala had been negotiating for the purchase of a plot in the cemetery, where Salesians who died in Turin could be buried, but he could never reach a conclusion. Don Bosco now urged him to speed up the negotiations. "Settle this question," he told him one day. "If there's no place ready for me at the cemetery when I die, I'll have them carry my body into your room. When you have that ugly sight lying before your eyes, you'll hurry up to find a place." He said this in so comical a way that, despite the sadness of the topic, he made everyone present smile. Father Philip Rinaldi related how, making the same recommendation on another occasion, Don Bosco had said, "If you don't prepare a place for me, you'll have me in your room for six days." His body did remain unburied exactly six days and, though not actually left in Father Sala's room, yet it was entrusted to him while he awaited authorization for the tomb into which he was eventually placed [at Valsalice].

Don Bosco also said something mysterious when he went to see the Salesian Father Louis Deppert, who was seriously ill and had already received the Last Sacraments. He went to comfort him and told him, "Take heart. It's not your turn this time. Someone else will have to take your place." No matter what he may have meant by this remark, the fact of the matter is that Father Deppert recovered and Don Bosco was the first one to die at the Oratory. But when Don Bosco took to his bed and it was found too uncomfortable for the services that the infirmarians had to render, he was moved into the very bed where the now recovered Deppert had previously lain.[9]

Those who had more contact with Don Bosco could not but feel anxiety when they saw how he was failing, and feared that he would soon die.

[9] Nevertheless, Fr. Deppert died in Turin on June 18, 1889.

He was aware of this and as a good father he did his best to comfort them, reassuring them that the Congregation would not suffer on account of his death, rather that it would undergo an extraordinary development. In order to cheer them up, even when he was unable to eat his meals with the others, he would nevertheless have someone escort him to the dining room where he sought to keep up the spirits of his sons with his "fooling around". In the meantime, he was unobtrusively preparing them for the great misfortune. At times, when he felt worse than usual, he had someone wheel him there on a chair. He would be in their midst, listen to what they said, give out instructions, and urge them all to put their trust in Divine Providence.

He could not come down to the church on All Saints' Day, as he had always done to say the rosary for the dead together with the boys, but he carried out this pious practice all the same, reciting the prayers with his secretaries and with some coadjutors who had gathered in his private chapel. Yet, a few evenings after this he went out for a ride by coach with Father Viglietti, who laughingly told him that there was one Salesian who habitually praised to the skies every other religious Congregation, but never mentioned the Salesians, or if he did, it was not in reverent terms. Don Bosco replied that if he should hear the Salesian in question do this again, he should say to him: *Tamquam fera se ipsum devorans* [like a wild animal eating himself]. He also went out on November 15th, but only to call on Dr. Vignola, one of the Oratory doctors who had been sick in bed for several days.

Toward the end of November, Father Lemoyne went to see him one evening. He spoke with him about discipline among the boys and asked what the best means might be to make the boys' confessions spiritually profitable. Don Bosco spoke only with difficulty, with heavy breathing and he said, "Last night I had a dream."

"You mean you had a vision."

"Call it what you like, but these things increase most frightfully Don Bosco's responsibility before God. Yet it's true that God is so good!" As he spoke, he wept.

"What did you see in that dream?" Father Lemoyne asked.

"I saw how one should warn our young students and how he should warn the artisans. I saw the means for safeguarding the virtue of chastity. I saw the harm which befalls those who violate this virtue. They feel good and then all of a sudden they die. Oh to die because of vice! There was only one theme in this dream, yet how splendid and grand it was! But now

I can't speak at any length; I don't have the strength to put my thoughts into words."

"Well, don't tire yourself out," Father Lemoyne said. "I'll keep note of what you've told me, and from time to time I'll remind you of the things you've mentioned in passing, and you'll explain the dream as you see fit."

"Yes, do that. It's too important a theme, and what I saw could serve as a norm in so many circumstances."

Unfortunately, Father Lemoyne, not believing that Don Bosco's death was imminent, and always finding him tired or absorbed in doing something else, deferred asking the questions he had intended to ask. So our good Father departed for eternity without telling him anything more.

Don Bosco conferred with Father Francis Cerruti about how things were going at the Oratory, on the evening of December 4th. He had sent for him expressly at about six-thirty. As soon as Father Cerruti appeared in his room, Don Bosco said, "I do not have anything serious to say. All I want is that we talk a little and that you brief me in detail about how things are faring in the house." These words surprised Father Cerruti, since it was the first time since he had been transferred to Turin that Don Bosco had questioned him directly on the subject. They talked at length. Question followed question. Father Cerruti rendered a full account of everything. Among other things, the Saint confidentially expressed a doubt he had. He had always wanted the financial administration of the Oratory to be in the hands of one person alone, and all receipts of money and payments to be channeled through one and the same office. He now felt that Father Rua did not agree with this. Father Cerruti was able to clear up this doubt for him by proving that his vicar felt about it the same way as he himself did and was making every effort to rearrange things in this way, although as yet, without success.

Then Don Bosco made a recommendation. We have already mentioned how Father Dominic Belmonte, who had been elected prefect general of the Congregation at the general chapter in 1886, was the *de facto* director of the Oratory, whereas Father Celestine Durando continued to act in the capacity of prefect general. This was all right for as long as Don Bosco was still alive, but he felt that once he himself was dead, inconveniences could arise. So he insisted that things be done the right way as soon as possible.

At length, he asked Father Cerruti how his health was, in a more fatherly and affectionate way than usual. "Look after yourself," he said. "It is Don Bosco who is saying this, who in fact orders you to do it. Do

for yourself all that you would do for Don Bosco." At that Father Cerruti could not control his emotion, whereupon Don Bosco took his hand, saying, "Take heart, dear Father Cerruti! It is my fond hope that we will be happy together in paradise." The frail health of the prefect general of studies justified such concern, and the fact that he had deserved a lot of the credit from the Congregation during the period of its consolidation explains why Don Bosco was so paternally anxious about him.

The outstanding event of November was the clothing of the clerics, a unique event since among them there was a Pole, Victor Grabelski, who had a number of academic degrees; also a former French officer, Natal Noguier de Malijay; and a young Englishman who, however, did not persevere in his vocation; and finally, towering over all the others because of his physical stature and social standing, Prince August Czartoryski. They all received the cassock from the hands of Don Bosco. The last cleric mentioned had at long last wrested consent from his father, had arrived in Turin on June 30th and had become a postulant on July 8th. His family believed that he was drawn to the Congregation by a passing fancy and that he would be back home again once he had tasted the first privations of a life so very different from the one to which he was accustomed. So it is easy to understand their reaction when they received an invitation to be present at the ceremony which amounted to severance from his past life which, even though not irrevocable, still was nevertheless pretty fundamental. Some of his family wrote in favor of it, others against it. His father, to whom August had spoken about a trial period that was to last a year and a half, felt that he was donning the cassock too soon, for not even six months had gone by. Nevertheless, in the end, he did decide to go to Turin. His wife, the stepmother of August, showed up, with his two half-brothers, an aunt, and the family physician.

Everyone was hopeful that they could dissuade him from his determination. For this reason they arrived a few days ahead of the scheduled date for the ceremony, which was set for the 24th, so as to have time to carry out their attempts. His aunt, particularly, was very angry because she suspected that pressure had been brought to bear on the sickly young prince for secret agendas. Aware of their intentions, he would have foregone the pleasure of their company; but instead, he abided by the advice of his superiors who told him to treat his relatives with the proper affection. His relatives harped on family affection and family interests. There were some genuinely dramatic moments in their talks. With unfailing gentleness but equal firmness, August succeeded in holding his own on

the subject of his vocation from start to finish. At last, his family made a virtue of necessity and attended the clothing.

This took place in the Church of Mary Help of Christians before an immense congregation which had assembled at the news of such an interesting event. Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda would have been glad to officiate, but he was prevented from so doing. Don Bosco moved slowly into the sanctuary with the four aspirants. After the singing of the *Veni Creator* Don Bosco invited them with the words of the ritual to take off the old man and put on the new man, handing each of them the sacred habit he had already blessed. Then Father Rua climbed into the pulpit, and choosing as his initial theme the text from Isaiah *Filii tui de lunge venient* [Your sons will come from afar], he preached so well that Don Bosco himself could not have done better. The ceremony ended with the solemn *Te Deum* and Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament. The Polish party then went upstairs to the Saint's rooms amid the applause of all the Oratory boys. As his relatives took leave of Brother August, as the new cleric was called from that day onward, they did so with princely courtesy. But the storm clouds had not been dissipated at all. Later his father resumed his attacks, even carrying the matter to the Holy See, asking that his son be prohibited from taking the perpetual vows in the Congregation. However, nothing could shake his steadfast determination.[10]

On the evening of that happy day, before going back to Valsalice where the novitiate was located, Br. August went to thank the Saint who blessed him and said, "We won a wonderful victory today. The day will dawn when you are going to be a priest and by the will of God will do much good for Poland."

The entrance into the Congregation of a Polish Prince, Br. August, initiated a steady and increasing flow of young Poles toward Don Bosco's house. The generosity of the Prince enlarged the house at Valsalice with a well-fitted apartment to house any Poles who got there, until a school exclusively for Poles was founded at Lombriasco. Here young men would be trained and then later on be sent back to Poland to found academic and trade schools. Today the Salesian work in Poland is outstanding in number, and flourishing in quality in an almost miraculous manner.[11] The Polish

[10] You can find in doc. 89 of the Appendix a very important note written by Fr. Lemoyne about some incidents between Bro. August and his family.

[11] We can see how benevolently people already felt in important Polish circles about the Salesians in a letter written by the Jesuit priest Ladislaus Czencz, editor of *Pedakcya Missyi Katolikich* of Cracow, who promised Don Bosco to engage in propaganda on behalf of the Salesian work See Appendix, doc. 90.

Salesians can boast of a cardinal all their own, His Eminence Cardinal August Hlond, archbishop of Gniezno and Posnan and primate of Poland.

It was always a happy day for Don Bosco whenever he saw any of his past pupils. But his past pupils experienced no less amount of joy whenever they saw him. The day after the clothing just described, he received one of them who was very much attached to him, Father Vincent Tasso, a priest of the Mission who became bishop of Aosta in 1908. Don Bosco listened to him for about half an hour, then as he took leave of him, he pressed his hand with warm affection, and repeated three times the words of the Apostle, *Iam delibor, iam delibor, iam delibor* (the hour of sacrifice is at hand).[12]

Two weeks later he was again gladdened by the visit of another past pupil. It seemed as if he had become younger after he recalled the visitor's former companions, the adventures of those bygone days, and especially the evident divine protection given to his works which had then only just begun. This man had been the life and soul of those faraway outings: Charles Tomatis of Fossano, of whom Father Lemoyne speaks often in the third and fourth volumes of these Memoirs. When he got into Don Bosco's presence, he fell to his knees, exclaiming with great tenderness, "Oh! Don Bosco. Oh! Don Bosco!" Nor was he able to say anything more. The Saint told him to come back to spend Christmas with his son, at the Oratory. We shall meet him again around that time.

When he was returning home from his last outing on December 20th, he was about to ride down Corso Regina Margherita toward the Church of Mary Help of Christians when a stranger stopped his coach. He was a gentleman from Pinerolo, a past pupil of the Oratory during its very early days. Words cannot describe the pleasure the Servant of God felt in greeting him. He had come to Turin on business and had not wanted to go away again without seeing Don Bosco. Knowing that Don Bosco would have to ride along that street, he was waiting for him in the middle of the road.

"How are things with you, my dear?" Don Bosco asked.

"So-so. Pray for me," the man answered.

"And how are you with your soul?"

"I try to be always a worthy past pupil of Don Bosco."

"Excellent, excellent! God will reward you. Pray for me, too."

So saying, he blessed him, but when he was leaving, he added, "Please take care of the salvation of your soul. Always live as a good Christian."

[12] Letter addressed to Fr. Rua and dated Turin, February 4, 1888.

He received a number of letters from Italy and abroad, especially from France, every day, in reply to his circular of November 4th. Nearly always there was money inside. His secretaries opened the envelopes, took out whatever was inside, attached it to the envelope, and then put everything in front of him so that he could easily take stock of it and dictate the nature of the replies that were to be written. But he chose to reply with his own hand to an excellent Cooperator from Marseilles, Mrs. Broquier, who had sent him a substantial sum of money.

Turin, November 27, 1887

To our charitable and kind mother Mrs. Broquier:

I received the generous sum of 500 francs for our poor missionaries. May God reward you generously. They go gladly to lay down their lives for the natives of America, while you give from your purse; both one and the other are serving the Lord, and are laboring to win souls for heaven. Those who work to save souls, save also their own soul.

More over: Anyone who gives alms to save souls will be rewarded with good health and long life. But let us give much if we wish to obtain much.

I look forward with keen pleasure to having you, your husband, your son-in-law and your daughter visit me in Turin next spring. We will have a good time together.

May God bless you all and guide you up to here.

I can no longer walk or write, save very badly. The only thing I am still able to do, and that I do gladly for you and all your relatives, both living and dead, is to pray for you every day so that your wealth which represents so many thorns may be transformed into good deeds, that is, into flowers with which the angels will weave a crown to adorn your head throughout eternity. So be it.

Pray, too, for this poor mortal who will always be,

Your very affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco[13]

[13] Mrs. Broquier thanked him on December 20, as she sent him her good wishes for Christmas: "Thank you, my Father, for the affectionate words you were so good as to write me last month. I am truly grateful to you, for I know well how weak you are and how costly your time is."

These offerings were nearly always accompanied by requests for prayers in order that spiritual and temporal graces might be obtained, or were sent in thanksgiving for favors already obtained from Mary Help of Christians. The immense faith that people had in the power of his intercession may be gauged by what a Sister of the Visitation wrote him on December 1, 1887 from Freiburg: "Is it not true that Our Lord easily performs miracles and you easily obtain them?" Usually he would acknowledge receipt by means of a printed note to which he added his signature. At other times he would draft a few lines indicating what the secretaries were to answer. The last letter on which he scribbled such indications was dated November 30th and had been sent by a certain Victorine Roux, a Cooperator of St. Gervais-les-Bains in Haute-Savoie: "I had planned to send you the offering we owe to your Congregation at the end of the year on my own behalf and that of the other members of my family (her husband and two sons), so that we might be worthy to share in the many precious social and religious undertakings in which you engage," she wrote. "But in answer to your appeal dated November 4 which I received today, I am sending it now, without waiting until the date I had in mind. Please bless me and my whole family." Don Bosco wrote, " The cleric Festa to see and take care of it." This meant that the cleric Angelo Festa, his second secretary, should see to it that a reply be sent in French.[14]

A nun of the Heart of Mary sent him one hundred francs from Blon near Vitre in the department of Calvados, adding, in reference to the lady who had given it to her for him: "She walked twelve miles on foot to bring me this one hundred franc note and she is eighty-two years old."[15]

A pastor from Fiumicello in the diocese of Gorizia was eighty-six years old. His trembling hand could no longer write, yet it was capable of taking money out of his wallet. He asked a colleague from Scodovacca to write to Don Bosco and send him the very last gold napoleon[16] that he possessed.

These tidbits of correspondence are only a sample of what Don Bosco was dealing with and it should suffice, for if we ventured further into it, we would never end.

His missionary circular letter was the occasion for a proposal *sui generis* [unique]. The deputy administrator of the Industrial Commercial

[14] The Countess of Camburzano had written a letter to him which proves the affectionate interest displayed by the Turin aristocracy toward Don Bosco.

[15] Letter, December 5, 1887.

[16] A French coin worth 20 francs.

Bank of Turin, Hector Chiaramello, asked for his "saintly cooperation" to help him place thousands of shares in the hands of good people on the condition that these same people would be content to invest their capital at five percent interest, and the surplus be turned over to the Salesian missions. He assured Don Bosco that this operation would net him an annual income of more than fifty thousand lire. Always reluctant to engage in any banking, agricultural or colonial transaction which might have a commercial flavor, no matter the promise of substantial profit they might have held, our Saint gave orders that a negative reply should be sent to him. Throughout his lifetime, he never strayed one inch from his chosen way of conduct which was to live relying on Divine Providence, without any excessive anxiety about the future.

The above circular letter came into the hands of a fairly well known Protestant minister known as Deodati who lived at Castrogiovanni, now known as Enna, in Sicily, and tempted him to give Don Bosco a sample of his biblical erudition. So he wrote him a long letter, beginning with a protest because, instead of leading the pagan natives to the pure and holy Gospel left to us by Jesus Christ, he was rescuing them from their pagan way of life to hurl them into the arms of Roman Paganism, or Anti-Christianity. Then, with an immense wealth of quotations from the Scriptures worthy of a better cause, he denounced and deplored all the tragic consequences which were stemming from such a plan of missionary action. At a given moment he acknowledged one of his requests. "I am sorry," he wrote, "because possibly, in quite good faith, you may emulate Ignatius of Loyola who believed he was doing something good to expiate for his sins when he founded the poisonous Jesuit Society, a Society which has been harmful even to the Church of Rome itself. It is quite probable that you will leave behind just such a name." Later on he uttered an apocalyptic threat and ended on this comical wish: "I would like you to see the light, yet as the Apostle Paul did when, in his zeal for the Jewish faith, he persecuted the Church; yet God called him. So may God call you, so that what you now do, and believe to be good for the Church of Rome, you may be doing it then for Christ alone." The Protestant hydra hissed at Don Bosco right to the end of his days, but this time was contented with praying for the conversion of the "unfortunate man".

Besides the sufferings he was already enduring, Don Bosco had to face an additional one, namely his fear that soon he would have to stop saying Mass. He obviously suffered when he was celebrating Mass, he was uttering the words with difficulty, in a faint voice, often choked by

overwhelming emotion. His strength had waned so much that he no longer turned around to say *Dominus vobiscum,* and while another priest gave out Communion, he himself sat down and waited for him to finish. Still another priest at the end of the Mass recited the three Hail Marys and the other prayers, while he followed them only mentally. Now, after a very bad night, he was unable to celebrate Mass on December 3rd, but instead attended the Mass celebrated by his secretary and received Communion. He burst into tears at the *Ecce Agnus Dei.* He celebrated Mass on the 4th and on the 6th. He attempted to say it once more on the following Sunday, which was the 11th, though he only got through by a most painful effort.[17]

Yet on certain evenings, if the weather permitted, he still took a coach ride, by order of the doctor. Once outside the city limits, he would walk a few steps, being supported by somebody. On December 16th, two remarkable things occurred on just such an outing. On the drive to the city limits, he quoted snatches of Latin and Italian poetry for Frs. Rua and Viglietti, stressing not only their moral and religious significance, but also the beauty of the expressions. Father Rua felt sure that he had not read them ever since he had attended high school back in Chieri. On the way home, as they were driving up Corso Vittorio Emanuele, they saw Cardinal Alimonda walking with his secretary under the porticoes. He bade Father Viglietti get down from the coach, go and tell him that he would like to speak with him, since he was unable to walk over to him. Father Rua likewise jumped to the ground. His Eminence turned around swiftly and as he did so, he held out his arms exclaiming: "Oh! Don Bosco! Don Bosco!" Then he climbed into the carriage, and kissed and embraced him effusively. The passers-by stopped to look at this touching scene. Then, the two of them alone, they drove on slowly as far as Via Cernaia, where they parted. Fathers Rua and Viglietti took their seats again and drove to the Oratory. When he arrived there, he climbed the stairs with the greatest difficulty and as he put his foot on the last step, he turned to Father Rua and said, "I will not be able to climb these stairs again." Indeed, when he expressed the wish to go out once again, the evening of the 20th, he had to be carried downstairs in his armchair.

Immediately after the departure of the missionaries for Ecuador, Divine Providence granted Don Bosco great happiness with the arrival of Bishop Cagliero. The increasingly alarming news about our Father's

[17] Fr. Rua's circular letter for the houses, dated December 26, 1887.

health had given him to understand quite plainly that the tragic moment could not be far off; so he felt it urgent that he should hasten to receive Don Bosco's last blessing with his last breath. The Confreres who accompanied him to the dock of Buenos Aires, were saying sadly to one another, "He is going to assist our beloved Don Bosco during his last moments!" As we already know, he traveled aboard the *Matteo Bruzzo* of the Veloce line, with the three lawyers from Chile. With delicate courtesy, the management of this shipping line telegraphed Don Bosco from Genoa on November 29th to tell him that the ship, which had weighed anchor from Las Palmas on the 28th, would arrive in Genoa on December 4th. Don Bosco, who had known for some time that Bishop Cagliero was coming back, was so delighted that, even before he docked, he sent Father Lemoyne to Genoa, to welcome him home in his own name and on behalf of the Superior Council, right on board ship. But there was a delay of two days on account of a violent storm.

The bishop arrived at the Oratory on the evening of the 7th, and was met by most festive manifestations, though he kept his eye on the closed windows behind which his Father was waiting for him. He entered, followed by the three Chilean lawyers, by Father Anthony Riccardi and Father Valentine Cassini. The Saint was sitting on his plain sofa. The bishop fell on his knees and Don Bosco embraced him, pressing him to his heart and then, leaning his head on the bishop's shoulder, he kissed his ring as he wept. The five men who had entered the room together with the bishop also knelt around him, while the superiors of the Oratory stood at a respectful distance, silent and deeply moved.

Don Bosco was the first to break the silence. The terrible fall suffered by Bishop Cagliero had vividly come to his mind again. "How is your health now?" he asked at once. At his reassuring reply, he blessed God. Then the introductions followed, while the bishop was looking sadly at the Servant of God. How old he had found him after only three years!

The presence of the bishop of Liège prevented him from engaging in any intimate conversation with Don Bosco until after the feast of the Immaculate Conception. After that date, Bishop Cagliero seized every opportunity to sit with him, and let him know so many things that he knew would make him happy. He saw how, despite his complete weakness, he still heard the confession of anyone who went to him for this purpose. He too, wished to take advantage of it, for he was afraid that quite suddenly it might be impossible for him ever to lay bare his soul to him again. During the course of the processes he testified, "He gave me such

advice that I never forgot, for it was the fruit of his accomplished experience and attuned to my own age and the dignity with which I had been endowed as bishop and vicar apostolic."

The bishop also testified before the judges of the tribunal about another very important matter. We know well enough, and few others knew it as well as Cagliero, that Don Bosco's fatherly sentiments for the boys were imbued with something celestial. Now, because of the affectionate familiarity which the loving Father displayed toward him during those last days, he once said, "I am glad you have come back. Don Bosco has grown old, you see, and is no longer able to work. These are the last few days of my life. All of you are now expected to work, to save the poor boys. Now I will confide to you a fear that I have." Here his eyes grew wet, but he went on, "I am afraid that some of our Salesians may have interpreted wrongly the love that Don Bosco had for the young and that my habit of allowing them to come so close to me when they were making their confession may lead them to excessive affection towards them, and pretend to justify themselves by saying that Don Bosco did the same with them both whenever he talked with them in private and when he heard their confessions. I know that some are letting their heart get the best of them and I am afraid of the dangers and of the spiritual harm which may come from this." The bishop reassured him that no one had ever misinterpreted his way of dealing with boys. "Do not worry," he said, "leave that fear to me. We will be watchful. This is something you have stressed many times for us and we will stress it in our turn for others."

We found an original manuscript of Cagliero in which he wrote some things that Don Bosco had said to him during the month of December, as a souvenir. This is his memorandum:

Help the Congregation and the Missions. These must be extended to the coasts of Africa and to the Orient.

Tell the Holy Father that until now it has been kept secret, but that the special purpose of the Congregation and of the Salesians is to uphold the authority of the Holy See, wherever they may be and in whatever work they may be engaged.

Under the present circumstances, it is my earnest wish that you remain in Italy until everything has been settled after my death.

Give your attention wholeheartedly to the Congregation and the Missions. Help the other superiors in every way you can.

People who wish to obtain graces from Mary Help of Christians should help our Missions, for then they may be sure of obtaining them.

Have no fear at all; Our Lord will help you all. *Fidem habete.* Have faith.

I ask but one thing of the Lord, that I may save my own poor soul (weeping).

I beg you to tell all the Salesians to work with zeal and enthusiasm: work, work.

Work always untiringly to save souls.

I bless all the houses of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. I bless the Mother General and all the Sisters. May they all strive to save many souls.

Put all your affairs in order. Love one another like brothers; love one another, help one another, and bear with one another.

I bless the houses of America; Father James Costamagna, Father Louis Lasagna, Father Joseph Fagnano, Father Evasio Rabagliati, and the Salesians in Brazil; Archbishop Aneyros and Bishop Espinoza in Buenos Aires; I also bless Quito, London, and Trent.

Alter alterius onera portate; exemplum bonorum operum. [Bear one another's burdens; the example of your good deeds].

Spread the devotion to Mary Help of Christians in Tierra del Fuego. Oh how many souls Our Lady will save through the efforts of the Salesians!

For the tests [in the houses of formation], the superiors should practice obedience and have others practice it.

My *strenna:* devotion to Mary and frequent Communion.

Twice did he recommend work to the Salesians, repeating the word: work, work!

Sister Angela Vallese had returned to Italy with Bishop Cagliero from Patagonia, and so had Sister Teresa Mazzarello from Uruguay. The sisters had brought along a little girl from Tierra del Fuego who had been entrusted to them by Bishop Fagnano. Bishop Cagliero introduced her to Don Bosco on December 9th in the way we have already described.

"What a sacrifice for Don Bosco, not to be able to say Mass!" Father Viglietti wrote in his diary, "and this on the feast of the Immaculate Conception!" But by now he no longer hoped that he would again be able to approach the altar. Yet he concealed this grief just as he concealed his other physical and moral torments beneath an habitually calm exterior. He continued at times to be cheerful and joked about his infirmities. In reference to his back, which obliged him to walk so bent, for example, he would repeat two well-known lines of a popular Piedmontese ditty:

Oh! schina, povra schina,
T'as fini d'porte' bas-cina.
(Oh, my back, my poor back.
you are through with carrying loads.)

Then one evening, to the two priests who tenderly but sadly were helping him to his room after supper, he repeated these lines that he had made up himself out of compassion for his own legs:

Oh gambe, povre gambe,
Che sie drite che sie strambe,
Seve sempre 'l me' confort
Fin a tant ch'i sia nen mort.
(O my legs, my poor legs
Whether crooked or straight
may you always be my support
as long as I am not dead.)

All the same, he did not want the superiors to have any illusions which might prevent them from taking the necessary precautions dictated by prudence while waiting for his inevitable death. He had gone to supper with them, but a few moments later he got up and returned to this room. "Have courage," someone remarked, "we still have to attend your golden jubilee Mass." At these words, he halted on the threshold, turned around in the direction whence the words had come, stared at the speaker, and exclaimed, "Yes, yes, we shall see... my golden Jubilee Mass?... That is a very serious matter, very serious!"

The last joyous manifestation to take place at the Oratory during the lifetime of Don Bosco was on December 11th, — it was an academic entertainment in honor of Bishop Cagliero. At the end of it, the prelate recalled the days of his youth and the youth of Don Bosco, and expressed the burning love the Saint had always felt for the young. He enchanted his listeners with his enthusiastic and graphic way of speaking, though everything he said was veiled by a certain sadness felt by all, without any need to voice it with any sensible sign. All the same, no one would have believed that Don Bosco's death was so imminent.

The traditional vintage from the trellised grape vines outside his windows was another dear and intimate family celebration. Because of one of those delicate intuitive thoughts so habitual to him, Don Bosco had

deferred it long enough so that Bishop Cagliero might take part in it. Sitting on the balcony, he took pleasure in watching his sons, led by the bishop, as they picked the bunches of grapes, cleaned them, and merrily ate them. This delightful break from routine was honored by the presence of yet another bishop and a provincial of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who was accompanied by a religious of that same order. Not even at that time did he choose to depart from the tradition of sharing his grapes with families who had a special claim to his friendship. On December 26th, Count Cravosio thanked him for the gracious thought and the excellent grapes he had sent him, adding, "All I regret is that you chose to deprive yourself of them in order to make a gift of them to us. Yet this is evidence that I have a secure place in your thoughts, while genuine affection has bound me to you for years. I cannot hope that my prayers be acceptable to God, for I am in the habit of sinning seventy times seven times every day; but in this instance, for the sake of Don Bosco's health, I flatter myself that the good Lord will deign to find them acceptable, since they are addressed to him with all the affection of which the heart of your loving servant is capable."

On Friday, December 16th, the young priest, Father Bersani of Bologna, who was preaching in the church of Saint John Evangelist during Advent, called on him and had dinner with him. At table Don Bosco whispered something in his ear and then squeezed his hand so forcefully that he made him cry out, "You are hurting me!" The Saint looked at him, smiling, then asked, "When will you come back to have dinner with me?"

"I do not know," was the answer. "I have many good friends in Turin and to see them all, I have to have dinner with them by turns, around noon."

"Very well, but come and see me again soon."

"I will try to come again around the end of next week."

"Come at the beginning instead, otherwise it will not be possible for you to see me any longer."

Father Bersani called on Don Bosco about the middle of the week, but Don Bosco had been confined to bed since Tuesday, so he never saw him again.

The total waning of his strength became evident on December 17th. It was a Saturday, on which day it was his habit to hear the confessions of boys of the upper classes around six in the evening. That evening, perhaps thirty of them were shuffling their feet outside the door, waiting for the secretary to let them in. Brother Festa appeared to say that he did not think they ought to tire him, because he was very sick, indeed. But the

boys did not go away. When the cleric saw this, he thought a moment and then went to tell Don Bosco, who at first said he did not feel equal to the effort; then, after a moment of silence, he added, "Yet, this would be the last time I can ever hear their confession!" Not heeding either his words or his tone of voice, Festa tried to dissuade him from it. "You have a fever and you can hardly breathe," he told him.

But Don Bosco, with tenderness in his voice said again,

"Yet, this will be the last time! Tell them they may come in!"

They entered and he heard their confession. That was really the last time he ever heard the confessions of the boys. We say specifically "of the boys", for on the 19th, he again heard Father Berto's confession, giving him as his penance to repeat often the ejaculatory prayer: "Oh Mary, be my salvation!"

His legs could no longer support him even for one single step, so he was moved here and there in a wheel chair. Nevertheless, he still wanted to eat his meals at the dining room table.

On December 16th, Father Durando had written to the new procurator general, Father Caesar Cagliero: "Don Bosco is growing noticeably thinner every day. He is so weak that he is no longer able to walk from his room to the dining room. He has to be taken to and fro in a wheelchair. Poor Don Bosco! Unless Our Lord performs a lasting miracle, it is physically impossible for him to live much longer."[18] He liked to see benefactors and friends at the dining table, and so he invited several of them on the 18th, so that they might visit an exhibit of things that Bishop Cagliero had brought from Patagonia, and which later on were going to the Vatican exhibit. Already over a year before, Don Bosco had sent orders that his missionaries were to collect weapons, native work, and artifacts for that same exhibit which played an important part in honoring Leo XIII during the celebrations of his priestly jubilee. He remained downstairs with the guests after dinner, showing warm affection to everyone. Then, when he got back to his room, he remarked to Father Eugene Reffo of the Fathers of Saint Joseph who had accompanied him, "I have always loved you, dear friend, and I always will. I have reached the end of my life. Pray for me; I will always pray for you."

At supper time that evening, he no longer gave any sign of vivaciousness. In fact, when Father Lemoyne went up to him, he saw that his eyes were glassy; he did not seem to hear when people spoke to him. This only

[18] This letter is now in the files of the provincial archives in Rome.

lasted a moment, but it was a very sad symptom!

Next morning, Father Viglietti found him so much better that he asked him to write a few words on some holy pictures he wished to send to some Salesian Cooperators.

"Gladly," Don Bosco answered, and he began writing; then, when he had written on only two of them, he said,

"You know, I really cannot write any longer. I am tired, you know."

Father Viglietti said quickly that the two he had written would be enough. On the back of the first one he had written: "Oh Mary, obtain for us from Jesus good physical health, if it is for the good of our soul, but assure us of eternal salvation." Then on the back of the second: "Perform good deeds as soon as possible, for there might not be time and thus you would be cheated."

However, he did not want to stop writing: "This is the last time that I write!" he said.

Then he continued writing on those holy pictures, "Blessed are those who give themselves entirely to God in the days of their youth."

"How many people intended to give themselves to God, but were cheated, because they did not have the time!"

"He who delays giving himself to God is in great danger of losing his soul."

"My children, save time and in eternity time will save you."

"He who sows good deeds will reap a great harvest.

"If we do good, we will find good in this world and in the next."

"At the end of our life, we shall reap the fruit of our good deeds."

It was at this point that Father Viglietti interrupted him, took him by the hand, and said, "But, Don Bosco, please write something more cheerful! These things only make people sad!" He looked at his secretary with eyes full of tenderness and seeing that he was in tears, he said with an indescribable smile,

"Poor Charlie! What a child you are!... Do not cry... I already told you, these are the last holy pictures on which I shall ever write."

Then he changed his theme in order to please him and continued:

"God bless us and save us from all evil."

"Oh Mary, protect France and all Frenchmen."

"Give generously to the poor, if you want to become rich."

"Date et dabitur vobis" ["Give and it shall be given you].

"God bless us and may the Holy Virgin guide us through the perils of this life."

"Children are the delight of Jesus and Mary."

"May God bless and generously reward all our benefactors."

"Sacred Heart of my Jesus, make me love Thee more and more."

"Sin is the great enemy of God."

"Oh Mary, be my salvation."

At this point, he went back to the thoughts which so upset Father Viglietti:

"At the end of our lives, we shall reap the fruit of our good deeds."

"He who saves his soul, saves everything; he who loses his soul, loses everything. He who protects the poor will be abundantly rewarded when he will face the Divine Tribunal."

"Anyone who protects orphans will be blessed by God in the dangers of this life and will be protected by Mary at the moment of death."

"How well rewarded we shall be for all the good we do during our lifetime!"

"He who does good during his lifetime, will find good in death. *Qualis vita, finis ita.* [Our death will be just like our life].

"I pray for you every day; and you please pray for the salvation of my soul."

"Oh Blessed Virgin, give my soul the powerful support of your assistance at the hour of my death."

"In paradise one enjoys all blessings and for ever."

Here he put down his pen, for his hand was very tired.

All the tasks which had been a habit with him, came unavoidably to their end one after the other. That morning, he gave his final audiences. For the last forty years he had dedicated his morning to counseling, blessing, comforting, helping, and cheering all who went to see him. This was undoubtedly one of the most strenuous tasks of his whole life. Now he was so exhausted that he seemed unable even to breathe. The endless series of visitors ended with Countess Soranzo Mocenigo at twelve-thirty on December 20th.

In the evening he went out on a coach ride for the last time. But for the first time he permitted his sons to carry him downstairs in his chair, for they implored him to allow them to do it. He was accompanied by Father Bonetti and Father Viglietti, who began talking of other Salesians who were all anxious to bring him help and relief. He kept silent until all of a sudden he came out with, "As soon as we get home, Viglietti, remember to write this for all the Salesians in my name: "The Salesian superiors are always to show great benevolence toward their subjects and in particular they should act courteously and charitably toward all employees."

It seemed, at first, that the fresh air had done him good. When he got back home and had been taken up to his room, he said affectionately to the one in charge of those carrying him,

"Write it all down, will you? I will pay it all in one lump sum."

A little later his attending physician, Dr. Albertotti, went to see him and found that his condition was much worse, so he had him put to bed. When Brother Festa asked him how he felt, he replied, "Now it only remains for me to draw a good conclusion that all may come to a good end." As people usually do in such cases, someone said that he would feel better when he had rested a little; but he made a sign of denial with his hand and then said, stressing his words, "It only remains for me to draw a good conclusion that all may come to a good end."

Before going out for the drive, he had written on a holy picture: *"Maria tu nos ab hoste protege et in mortis hora suscipe."*[Mary, defend us from our enemy and welcome us at the hour of our death!]

Then on another picture: *"Mary, give me your powerful help at the hour of death."*

He took a little soup and then got into that bed, from which he was never to rise again.

Next to him on the night table there was the *pars aestiva* [summer volume of the Breviary]. When Father Lemoyne looked it over, he came across a number of paper bookmarkers on which were written fine sayings from the Holy Scriptures, the Doctors of the Church and even Italian poets. Those sayings had been kept where he could see them for forty-five years.[19]

Letters bearing good wishes for Christmas began to pile upon that night table. They came from all over, and many came from France. The saintly soul of Miss Louvet [20] included a five-hundred-franc note together with her good wishes, as an expression of her noble sentiments. She wrote: "I avail myself of this occasion to send also my good wishes for a prosperous and happy New Year. But for you, Reverend Father, all years are good years, because all your days are full and meritorious in the eyes of heaven. Unfortunately, this is not so with me." The good benefactress was indeed right. Don Bosco's days were truly *dies pleni* and rich in merit. She had no idea, however, how near the moment was when all his merits would earn for him a heavenly crown.

[19] Appendix, doc. 93.

[20] Cfr. Vol. XV, ch. 19. On December 28th Fr. Engrand wrote to Fr. Michael Rua's secretary: "Miss Louvet asked me to convey to Fr. Rua her expression of deep sadness in the present circumstances, Don Bosco treated her in a privileged way and she is grieved just as a child who loses her father!"

Chapter 22

THE FIRST ELEVEN DAYS OF DON BOSCO'S FINAL SICKNESS

Our beloved patient remained in bed for forty-two consecutive days, during which time his illness progressed through three distinct stages. He got steadily worse from December 20th until the 31st. From January 1st until the 20th, hopes came back; but from that point on, his condition took an irrevocable turn toward Don Bosco's rapid end. Before we give a detailed account of the above, we would like to take a cursory look at the general bearing of the Servant of God throughout this long and painful time. To do this we could not do better than to rely on the testimony of an excellently informed witness, Coadjutor Brother Peter Enria, who kept watch at his bedside every night. This brother described with the utmost simplicity Don Bosco's habitual bearing when he read the following statement during the ordinary ecclesiastical process:[1] "He was greatly resigned and faithfully lived his motto: 'Be active, suffer, be silent,' which he himself often quoted to me when he was well. Now that he was unable to be active, he suffered and was silent." Naturally, he kept silent about his suffering, but did talk up to the end and as much as he could for the sake of doing good in various ways.

His physician caused dismay among the superiors when, on December 21st, he told them that the patient would not survive longer than four or five days if he continued in his present condition. As a matter of fact, he had no appetite at all, and no one knew what could be given him to eat: he was tormented by frequent retching attacks. He had very heavy breathing and ran a fever. Yet his peace of mind was evidenced by his good-humored jesting with those who waited on him. As his secretary was serving him some soup, he pretended to hold the bowl for him, so that he could more easily raise the spoon to his lips, "Ah you would like to eat it yourself.

[1] *Summ.*, p. 907.

Right?" Later in the evening, when he had recovered a little, he listened to a newspaper report dealing with the jubilee of Leo XIII. He also glanced through the registered or insured mail that had arrived. Around eight-thirty in the evening he said, "At four o'clock today I thought that there was nothing more left for me but to die. I no longer was aware of anything. But now I feel much better." He then took a little nourishment and said to his secretary, "Viglietti, give me some iced coffee...but make sure it's hot." He was smiling.

The ominous words of the doctor had prompted the superiors to arrange in advance for everything that needed to be done to ensure the material condition of the Oratory once Don Bosco was dead. And so, with Father Michael Rua presiding, the Superior Council members met in the afternoon to discuss various matters of routine administration and to deal with the predicament they were in. After much discussion, they decided to have Don Bosco acknowledge a debt to the principal trustees of the house for services rendered but not paid for by him. It was agreed that Don Bosco's heir would be obliged to repay all outstanding debts out of the capitals hand-deposited by him and still available. The parties concerned would have their documents legally registered and filed a mortgage on behalf of the designated heir. They agreed also to have Don Bosco declare and legally certify that he had received and deposited money from private individuals, and that he would personally endorse the application for a bank loan at one hundred thousand lire, at simple interest, repayable in fifty years. The Superior Council members also decided to cable Villa Colon' in Uruguay and to contact Nice with instructions to sell the two schools immediately to tontine societies.

In the meantime, Don Bosco's friends and benefactors, completely unaware of his critical condition, sent him their cordial good wishes for the forthcoming Christmas holidays. From Nice, for example, Baron Héraud wrote him a very witty and characteristically humorous letter, to which we have already alluded.[2] The Oratory, as usual, sent out a short circular letter with Don Bosco's signature, inviting people to the Midnight Mass in the church of Mary Help of Christians and wishing them a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

The following day, Dr. Vignolo relieved the Superior Council members of their anxiety by declaring that the imminent death diagnosed by the

[2] Appendix, doc. 94.

attending physician, Albertotti, on the previous day, no longer existed. Since it was most important that Don Bosco be well nourished, Dr. Vignolo himself made for him a cup of broth from meat extracts. He then gave the patient a thorough medical examination which lasted a full hour. It was incredible to observe how this skillful doctor was able to encourage his patients. Although sick himself, he got out of bed to attend to Don Bosco and continued to do so during the following days, lavishing on Don Bosco all the cares that a mother would give her child. Again and again, Don Bosco thanked him with tears in his eyes.

Everyone in the house now shared the anxiety of the superiors. The boys divided themselves into classes and groups and took turns praying before the Blessed Sacrament, day and night at half hour intervals, pleading for Don Bosco's recovery. Don Bosco himself had told the older confreres and superiors, "Pray for me, all of you. Tell all the Salesians to pray for me, so that I may die in the state of grace. That is all I ask."

Don Bosco's condition now alternated between more or less long intervals of improvement and relapse. Toward noon on December 23rd, when he felt extremely sick and could not retain any food, he said to his secretary, "See that you are not the only priest here. I need someone to be ready for the Extreme Unction."

"Don Bosco, Father Rua is always in the next room. Besides, you are not so seriously sick that you should talk like this."

"Do those in the house know how sick I am?" He asked.

"Yes, Don Bosco; it is known not only here but also in all of the other houses, and by now, all over the world. Everyone is praying."

"So that I may recover? I am on the way to eternity!"

He gave souvenirs to everyone who came near him as if he were about to leave them. To the catechist general, Father John Bonetti, he said, pressing his hand, "Be always the strong support of Father Rua." Later he said to his secretary, "See that everything is kept ready for Holy Viaticum. We are Christians and we gladly offer to God the gift of our existence."

Three gentlemen came from Belgium, expressly to see him. Don Bosco said he would receive them provided they promised to pray for him. "Promise to pray for me, for the Salesians, and especially for the missionaries," he said and blessed them.

Later, feeling a violent surge of nausea, he asked Father Charles Viglietti whether it disturbed him to witness these signs of his illness.

"Nothing upsets me, dear Don Bosco, except to see you suffering and not to know how I can ease your sufferings." Don Bosco then said, "Give

my regards to your mother. Tell her to strive always to rear her family in a Christian way. Tell her she is to pray for you, too, so that you may always be a good priest and save many souls."

When Father Bonetti returned, Don Bosco greeted him with a gesture and talked a little, again insisting that everything be made ready for the administration of the Extreme Unction. Then he turned to Father Rua, who had just entered, and pointing to Father Viglietti, he said, "True enough, there is this fellow here... but it would be wiser if there were several of you."

A few hours before, he had dictated a note that Father Viglietti was to send Mr. Luis from Barcelona, his regards. In the afternoon he again told Viglietti to greet him on his behalf and to ask him to remember the Salesian missionaries. He added that he himself would always remember Mr. Luis and his family and would await them all in Paradise.

Bishop Cagliero called on Don Bosco, who asked him, "Do you thoroughly recall the reason why the Holy Father must protect our missions? You will tell the Holy Father what until now has been kept secret. The special mission of the Salesian Congregation is to uphold the authority of the Holy See, wherever they may be, or in whatever work they are engaged in... Under the protection of the Pope, you will go to Africa... You will cross the whole continent... You will go to Asia, to Tartary and other places, too. Have faith."

The principal members of the house: Father Dominic Belmonte, Father Joseph Lazzero, Father Joachim Berto, Joseph Rossi and Joseph Buzzetti, as well as others alternated in spending a little time in Don Bosco's room. Although it was difficult for him to talk, he gave each of them an affectionate welcome. He would give them a mock military salute, his hand raised to his forehead, or he might raise and drop his hand. Sometimes he pointed to the person entering and remarked to whoever was nearest to him, "Can you see him? That's him!" Occasionally, as he extended his right hand and clasped the hand of anyone kissing his own, he would say, "Oh my dear! You are always dear to me!"

When the missionary, Father Valentine Cassini, sat down beside him, Don Bosco exchanged a greeting and then whispered into his ear, "I know your mother is in financial difficulties. Talk to me freely about it, but only to me, so that no one else may know your secrets. I will give you whatever you think she needs, and no one else should know about it."

He inquired after everyone's health, eagerly asking whether they were adequately protected against the cold and whether they needed anything. He asked Bishop Cagliero and others how they had spent the day, what each had been doing, and in what special work they were engaged in. For

those who kept vigil by him or waited on him, he expressed his fear that their health might suffer for lack of sleep or adequate recreation. But those who nursed him were indefatigable. In the Process already mentioned, the Coadjutor Peter Enria testified, "During his last sickness I nursed him every night for as long as he lived. Ever since the very first evening he said, "Poor Peter! Bear with me! You'll have to spend a lot of nights nursing me!" Almost offended, I told him that I would lay down my life for his recovery as many of my companions were ready to do."

His sons loved him too much not to be prepared to make any sacrifice to serve him but also Don Bosco's heart was always inflamed with the purest paternal affection for them. To illustrate this, Father John Lemoyne recalls what Don Bosco had said some years before, "The only regret I shall feel when I have to die will be that of leaving all of you."

This great charity urged him to try to distract the attention of anyone who was obviously suffering at his bedside. Father James Cerruti, who called on Don Bosco on the evening of the twenty-third just as the boys were having their snack, had difficulty concealing his emotions. Seeing this, Don Bosco asked him, half seriously and half in jest, "Have you already had your snack? Ask Father Viglietti here whether he has already eaten his." But in all this love of his, there was one notably more unique than rare aspect, which made each one feel as if he were his favorite.

Not all the events of the twenty-third have been entirely reported. There was a long consultation between Don Bosco's attending physician, Albertotti, and the two specialists, Doctors Fissore and Vignolo, who had ordered his bed moved to the middle of the room. After finding nothing organically wrong with him they declared that, for the moment, he was not in any imminent danger. Wishing to test their patient's strength, Dr. Vignolo asked Don Bosco to squeeze his had a tightly as he could.

"Be careful, I will hurt you, doctor," Don Bosco warned him with a laugh. "I will certainly hurt you."

Thinking he was joking, the doctor repeated, "Squeeze it hard, harder." At a certain moment the doctor hurriedly withdrew his hand. "Do not think about dying! With all the strength you have in your body, you could even challenge me to a wrestling match."

When the physicians were gone, the stately figure of Cardinal Alimonda appeared. He approached Don Bosco and embraced him tenderly. Don Bosco removed his nightcap and said, "Your Eminence, please pray for me, so that I may save my soul." Then he added, "I recommend my Congregation to you. Be a protector to the Salesians."

Seeing that Don Bosco was weeping, His Eminence tried to comfort him, exhorting him to unite his will to the Will of God and reminding him how hard he had labored for Our Lord. Then, noticing that Don Bosco was still holding his nightcap, the Cardinal put it back on his head. Deeply touched, Don Bosco said, "I have always done whatever I could. May God's holy will be done with me."

"There are few people who can say what you say, when they are about to die," the Cardinal replied.

"These are difficult times, Your Eminence," Don Bosco interrupted. "I have lived through hard times...But the authority of the Pope...the authority of the Pope... I told Bishop Cagliero here that he is to tell the Holy Father that the Salesians are for the defense of the authority of the Pope, wherever they work, or wherever they may be. Remember to tell this to the Holy Father, Your Eminence."

"Yes, dear Don Bosco, Bishop Cagliero answered, standing at the foot of his bed. "I will remember it. Do not be afraid! I will give your message to the Holy Father. But you must not be afraid of death, Don Bosco," the Cardinal said, changing the subject. "You have warned other people so many times to be ready for it."

"He talked about death with us so many times," the Bishop agreed. "In fact, this has been his favorite topic."

"I said it to others," Don Bosco said very humbly, "but now I need other people to remind me of it."

Then Don Bosco requested the Cardinal's blessing, and when His Eminence took his leave, he again embraced and kissed Don Bosco with deep emotion.

A few minutes later, the patient's confessor and schoolmate, Father John Baptist Giacomelli, entered. They remained alone for a few minutes, during which time some of the superiors, who had withdrawn to the adjoining room, recalled the prophetic words Don Bosco had pronounced in 1885 when Father Giacomelli was seriously ill: "Be lighthearted and do not fear. Don't you realize that your task will be to assist Don Bosco in his dying moments?"[3]

Don Bosco had expressed his desire to receive the Holy Viaticum so determinedly that no one wanted to assume responsibility for delaying it. Preparations were now made to give it to him the morning of the twenty-

[3] Cfr. Col. VXII.

fourth. As soon as he was told, he said to Father Viglietti and Father Bonetti, "Help me, help me to receive Jesus... I am confused. *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum.* "[Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.]"

The procession, consisting of altar boys and all the priests and clerics free to take part in it, emerged from the main entrance of the church and entered through the main door of the Oratory. When Don Bosco heard the singing, he was deeply moved. But when he saw the Blessed Sacrament borne by Bishop Cagliero, he burst into tears. Wearing his stole, Don Bosco looked like an angel. When the solemn moment came to receive the Eucharist, all wept, and many even sobbed. From that moment on, Don Bosco's condition seemed remarkably improved. No more vomiting, no more difficulty in breathing, and he even slept for some hours, which he had been unable to do for quite some time.

Before noon he said to Father Celestine Durando, "You are in charge of thanking the doctors, on my behalf, for all the care lavished on me with so much charity."

He was again very restless at six o'clock that evening, but instead of thinking of himself, he thought of others. "Viglietti," he said to his secretary, "you did not realize what it meant to care for the sick until now, did you?" Now and then he repeated in Piedmontese dialect, "I no longer know what to do or say." He called Father Rua and said, "I would like to have another priest, as well as Father Viglietti, with me tonight. I am afraid I will not be alive tomorrow morning."

After eight o'clock p.m. he said to Father Viglietti, "Look on my desk. There is a notebook of memoirs...you know the one I mean. See that you take it and then give it to Father Bonetti, that it may not end up in anybody's hands." The notebook referred to was a kind of agenda booklet made up of pages from a bookkeeper's ledger that he had someone cut to the size he wanted and tightly bound together. It carried this handwritten title: *Memoirs from 1841 to 1884-5-6 by Rev. John Bosco for his Salesian sons.* It contained practical instructions for his successor on procedures and policies to be followed, and we published them in Chapter 10 of the previous volume.[4] Don Bosco had written the *Memoirs* in 1884 when he believed he was at the end of his days, and during the following two years he had made some minor additions.

[4] See Vol. XVII, Ch. 10.

To Father Viglietti he then said, "Please be so good as to look into the pockets of my clothes, as well. You will find my wallet and my purse there. I do not believe there is anything else, but should there be any money, give it to Father Rua. I wish to die in such a way that it may be said, 'Don Bosco died without a penny in his pocket.'

All these manifestations made such an impression on the superiors that Bishop Cagliero himself wanted to administer the Extreme Unction. But before this was done, Don Bosco asked that someone seek the blessing of the Holy Father for him, and this was done immediately. After receiving this last sacrament, the patient spoke of nothing but eternity, with an occasional recommendation to Bishop Cagliero, who was about to go down to the Church of Mary Help of Christians for the celebration of the Pontifical Midnight Mass; he said, "I ask but one thing of the Lord: that I may save my poor soul. Please tell all the Salesians to work zealously and fervently. Work, work! Work unceasingly to save souls." Then he dozed off.

The newspapers began to carry reports of his sickness. On the twenty-fourth of December, *L'Unità cattolica* was the first newspaper to mention it with the following simple reference: "We here announce, with all the grief and anxiety that can be readily shared by our readers, the news that, for the past few days, our incomparable Don Bosco's condition has worsened, and we greatly fear for his irreparable loss. We recommend him to the prayers of Catholics, since the hope of any improvement now lies with God alone."

Upon reading this, Countess di Camburzano, whom we have already mentioned, wrote a letter to Father Rua, in which she expressed her sorrow: "If Almighty God would welcome the sacrifice of my own useless existence in exchange for so dear and precious and essential a life as that of Don Bosco, I would gladly offer it up this very moment, feeling certain that he would pray for me and obtain God's mercy for me."

In Paris, many were saddened by the news that Don Bosco was about to die. There was a constant stream of ladies seeking news at the bookstore of Josse, the editor, whom they imagined to be fully informed of everything. He wrote to Father Rua immediately, "his heart utterly distraught," imploring him "with genuine anguish" to answer him soon. Josse, however, never saw the answer, although it was sent promptly. That Christmas Eve, as he was going home after having made his confession in order to receive Communion at the midnight Mass, he suffered a fatal heart attack. He had loved Don Bosco so much that his family attributed

his death to his grief over the tragic announcement.[5]

On the twenty-third of December, *Le Gaulois* had raised the first alarm among his Parisian friends by way of an article entitled: *"Don Bosco's Agony."* Madame de Combaud, who had extended her generous hospitality to him in 1883, wrote to Father Rua immediately: "I cannot tell you how grieved I am. Your blessed Father's countless friends are praying." She then asked him, "as a grace," to preserve some personal belonging of Don Bosco's for her, so that she might treasure it as a relic. Others made the same request.

Also reporting on Don Bosco's agony, the *Novelliste of Lille* spread the news in the northern part of France. Soon bulletins on Don Bosco's illness became standard feature in the press of several countries. As a result of this publicity, a steady stream of telegrams and letters poured into the Oratory, all asking for further information. Many people from Turin went to the sacristy to learn something more definite, and the visitors' book on the main floor was soon filled with the signatures of outstanding personalities. Christmas dawned much less merry than usual. The patient celebrated it in his room by attending Mass at dawn and receiving Holy Communion, two things he was doing regularly every morning. Canon Bossi, the superior of the *Little House [of Divine Providence]* and the second successor to Father Joseph Cottolengo,[6] went to visit him at noon. Don Bosco, who was feeling better, reminded him of how they had first met, when he was still a boy, at Castelnuovo. Then, hearing the hum of boys' voices at recreation in the playground, he said to Father Viglietti, "Dear Viglietti, why don't you go to enjoy a little recreation, too? I would not want you to get sick on my account." And a little later he joked, "Viglietti, try to figure out some way to get rid of all my infirmities and bury them under the stony bed of the Stura." He referred to the River Stura, on the banks of which he had spent many hours a day during the summer at Lanzo.

Bishop Cagliero had sent a telegram to Cardinal Rampolla, asking for the longed-for-blessing of the Holy Father for Don Bosco. Now the

[5] In reply to a sympathy letter from Fr. Rua, Mr. Josse's daughter wrote (January 25, 1888): "Reverend Father, you ask whether we are going to continue our interest in your splendid work. It is both a duty and a genuine pleasure for us. We would be happy and proud to continue in the sweet commitment contracted by my father and to prove our filial love for him by doing all that we possibly can for his beloved orphans."

[6] Founder of the *Little House of Divine Providence,* down the street (via Cottolengo) from the Oratory. Cottolengo (1786–1842) was canonized in 1934, the same year as Don Bosco.

Secretary of State replied: "Holy Father, grieving for Don Bosco's infirmity, prays for him and sends blessing requested." Don Bosco was greatly comforted by this message.

He had already received the visits of three prelates: Bishop Pulciano of Casale, Bishop Manacorda of Fossano, and Bishop Valfré di Bonzo of Cuneo. On Christmas night, the two resident bishops of Turin, Bertagna and Leto, went to visit him.

During those days, the little girl from Tierra del Fuego was giving proof of sensitiveness which would have been enough to discredit the rash judgments made by some scientists on the absolute inferiority of the natives of Tierra del Fuego. The poor child could not resign herself to the fact that Don Bosco was so sick. She often went running up to the mother superior to ask her how he was. She exclaimed with childish simplicity to whomever she met, "Don Bosco is sick!" And every once in a while she went to the chapel and prayed before the Blessed Sacrament for his recovery.

But Don Bosco's improvement was only temporary. It stopped abruptly on the night of the twenty-sixth of December. For several hours, those who were nursing him were in a state of alarm. After attending Mass and receiving Communion, he put himself at the disposal of the doctors who had met for another consultation. He remarked to Father Viglietti, *videamus quantum valeat scientia ac peritia trium medicorum* [" Let us see how good the knowledge and experience of the three doctors is!"]. The doctors' opinion was more reassuring than had generally been hoped for.

The readers should remember that past pupil Charles Tomatis had been invited by Don Bosco to spend Christmas at the Oratory with his son. He did indeed show up together with his son. He was allowed to enter the patient's room, after the medical consultation, to say good-bye before leaving. Falling to his knees beside the bed, almost in rapture, the past pupil could say nothing but, "Oh, Don Bosco! Oh, Don Bosco!" with a tone of voice which expressed all of his soul. Raising his hand, the Saint blessed the father and son, and then raised his eyes on high as if to say that he would await them both in Heaven. When they had gone out, he called for Father Rua and told him in a very weak voice, "You know, he does not have much money. Pay their fares in my name."

Cardinal Alimonda was about to go to Rome for the Papal jubilee, but he did not have the heart to leave Turin without once more seeing Don Bosco. However, the doctors ordered the patient to observe total silence,

and had also given orders that no one, not even the residents of the house, was allowed to call on him. When the Cardinal had called a second time, he was resigned to the sorrowful prospect of neither seeing him nor speaking with him again. He merely asked for news of his condition, without even going upstairs. But this time he disobeyed, and as soon as he saw the ravages of sickness on Don Bosco's face, he could not restrain his tears. He embraced Don Bosco, kissed him twice and blessed him.

Shortly afterward, the mother general of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians was ushered in, having come from Nizza Monferrato with one of her assistants to see Don Bosco. He gave them his blessing and, with a gesture, indicated that they were to extend the blessing to all the houses and all Sisters of their Congregation. "Save many souls" he said, as he was saying goodbye to them.

On the twenty-sixth of December, Father Rua made known to the Salesians the first official bulletin on the state of Don Bosco's health. The brief announcement ended with the words: "Our hopes are with God and Mary the Most Holy Help of Christians. To this end, there is a perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at the Oratory, as in many other houses. Let us pray! Let us pray! Let us pray!"

The feast of Saint John the Evangelist added new suffering to the old one. It had now become necessary "to work around him," as it was expressed in the diary, which obviously alludes to rendering him bodily services. His worn-out and exhausted body made such movement, as these services required, a major problem. Only Father Bonetti and Father Viglietti performed these services with the doctor. The patient's head reclined on Father Viglietti's chest, and they turned him from side to side until he could endure it no more.

Yet, his troubles were not over yet. He still had to change beds. Father Rua, Father Belmonte and Father Joseph Leveratto were sent for. While they were talking with Dr. Albertotti on how he could be moved with a minimum of discomfort, Don Bosco remarked in a joking tone to Father Belmonte, "What you have to do is this: Tie a rope around my neck and drag me from one bed to the other." What a job that transfer from one bed to another was! Father Rua fell on the second bed beneath the weight of Don Bosco's body. Father Viglietti supported Don Bosco so that Father Rua could slide out from under him.

Still heroically calm, the poor patient only smiled. When he was safely in the new bed, he asked who had moved him and thanked them one by one. When he heard that the new bed in which he was lying belonged to

Father Viglietti, who lately had been sleeping in the adjoining room, he became anxious. "Where will you sleep tonight, Viglietti?" he asked.

Sanitary considerations made this removal from one bed to another almost a daily necessity. Don Bosco already suffered a great deal when anyone changed his pillows or raised him higher in the bed; so it can be imagined what it meant for him to be lifted from one bed to another. But, he never stopped joking about it. When he was asked whether it hurt him to be moved, he replied, "Well, certainly it does not make me feel any better."

He needed a more comfortable bed, since the one he had made the lifting and moving him very difficult. Father Rua sent someone to buy a new bed at the Porta Palazzo market, where beds for sale were always displayed; but that day there were no beds at all on sale. So they exchanged beds and gave him the one from a room nearby which had been used by Father Louis Deppert and in which the Servant of God was to die, according to a presumed prediction.[7]

Toward evening, the new editor of *L'Unità cattolica,* Father Dominic Tinetti, called on him. With a feeble voice, and barely able to pronounce the words, Don Bosco said to him, "I recommend the Salesian Congregation and our missions to you, as in the past. We will always be friends, until we reach Paradise." In the issue of the twenty-ninth of December, the worthy successor of Father Margotti described the patient thus: "His face, which has lost none of its habitual calm and serenity; his glance which is, as usual, gentle, alert, and full of tenderness; his complexion, which is precisely as it was before, his keen, lucid intelligence which we might even say is brilliant, are singularly in contrast with the weakness which deeply affects him, and with the feeble, strained voice which hardly comes out of his lips."

We will now glean some sentences from one of the letters addressed to Don Bosco or to others at the Oratory on December 27, 1887. The one who writes is Natalie Cornet, from Montlucon: "Thanks to you, Reverend Father, I was able to overcome my misfortunes, and despite difficulties of all kinds, I have been able to raise my seven children in the holy fear of God and love for their neighbor. Very often I raised my eyes to your portrait which I have in my chapel, and in my more desperate moments, I felt that I could hear you saying to me, 'Take heart, my dear daughter, Our Lord allows to suffer those

[7] Cfr. Vol. XVIII, p. 392.

whom he loves.' Yes, Reverend Father, you taught me to love Mary Help of Christians, the great consoler of your holy life, and I do thank you, Reverend Father, for you taught me to be strong when tested."

Now various superiors begged Don Bosco to pray that he might recover, but he never consented to do so. His reply was always the same, "God's Holy Will be done with me." In fact, when he repeated the ejaculatory prayers suggested to him, he would keep silent if anyone tried to persuade him to say, "Mary Help of Christians, help me to recover."

A bulletin on Don Bosco's health now appeared regularly in many Italian and foreign newspapers, at times accompanied by articles about him or his Congregation. In order to obtain information, news correspondents would mingle with the crowds besieging the house at various times during the day. News about special public and private prayers for Don Bosco were coming from far distant countries. Religious institutions in particular stormed heaven unceasingly to obtain the grace of his recovery. People wept and prayed in the homes of many Cooperators. On the morning of December twenty-eighth, something very touching happened. As Countess Salino entered the main door, she asked for the latest news about Don Bosco and was given a copy of *L'Unità cattolica* of the day before which mentioned a slight improvement in his condition. Quite beside herself with joy, the noble lady took her purse from her pocket and thrust it into the hands of the doorkeeper, begging him to tell Don Bosco he was to get well soon, and that meanwhile he should accept the offering of those few coins. They took out of that purse twenty gold coins. Count Prospero Balbo, his son Caesar, and Countess Callori were allowed to visit Don Bosco. The countess came close to the bedside, knelt down, asked for his blessing and then left the room immediately, for she could not control her grief at the sight of him. She was a courageous woman, a loyal benefactress, steadfast, and constantly generous.[8]

The Servant of God every once in a while insisted that his doctors tell him the truth about his condition and he encouraged them to speak frankly. He would add, "I'd like you to know that I am not afraid of anything. I am well disposed and quite calm." Besides, he had no illusions about his condition. Father Paul Albera who arrived from Marseilles, said to Don Bosco, "This is the third time that you have reached the gates of eternity, Don Bosco, but then you came back, thanks to the prayers of your

[8] Countess Callori's name appears in many volumes of *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco* and is warmly accepted by the Salesians.

sons. I am sure that the same thing will happen this time."

Don Bosco answered, "This time there will be no coming back!"

A news correspondent of *Le Figaro,* Saint-Genest, called on Father Durando requesting to see Don Bosco. He was cordially received and accompanied to the waiting room where Doctors Albertotti and Fissore happened to be. In answer to the journalist's question, Doctor Fissore said, "Don Bosco is finished, gone, and we have no hope to save him. He is suffering from a cardio-pulmonary ailment, he has lesions on the liver and complications of the spinal cord with consequent paralysis of the lower limbs. He cannot talk. His kidneys and lungs hardly work."

When asked what might be the cause of such a disease, the doctor replied, "There is no single cause. It is the result of general exhaustion, the result of a life worn away by unceasing work and continuous worries. Don Bosco is simply worn out because of too much work. He is not dying because of any particular disease, but he is like a lamp which is slowly dying for want of oil."

With that, he and Dr. Albertotti entered the patient's room, following Father Celestine Durando who left the door ajar, so that the visitor could see inside.

After the doctors had examined Don Bosco, Father Durando went out to say that, on being told that the representative of the Parisian journal was there, Don Bosco wanted to thank him for the benevolence which had always been displayed by that journal toward his undertakings. So Dr. Fissore granted permission for him to enter, though he cautioned him against making the patient talk. In his report to the newspaper, the journalist concluded as follows: "Don Bosco lay in a humble little iron bedstead, in a room which looked like a monastic cell. He made an effort to smile with his sweet and angelic face and his eyes gazed at me tenderly, then he slowly and with difficulty held out his hand to shake mine. His lips moved as if he were trying to say something. I bent down, put my ear to his lips and heard him say, in a voice like a sigh, 'Thank you for your visit. Pray for me.' Oh, saintly man! In his humility he told me to pray for him! He knows perfectly well that there is no hope for him, yet he is always kind, resigned, and awaits death with the utmost serenity."

The physicians noticed a marked irregularity of pulse and weakness of voice. They also detected a greater quantity of albumin, an unmistakable sign of the rapid decline of his vital strength. They stressed the fact

that these symptoms might subside, either totally or somewhat, with the possibility of a better prognosis. They again forbade the patient to have visitors except for those who were habitually in attendance, and who would not excite him in any way.[9]

During the day, Father Rua sent out a laconic and rather low-keyed bulletin to the other houses, exhorting everyone to pray with fervent faith.

Dismay, grief, faith in God and the Virgin Help of Christians were the three sentiments which appeared most frequently in the increasing numbers of letters that arrived as soon as the newspapers carried reports of the gravity of Don Bosco's condition.

Il Corriere nazionale of Turin wrote on the twenty-eighth of December: "Quite a few innocent and deeply virtuous souls are making ardent vows, some to offer to God part of their life and some their entire lives, in order to obtain a longer period of time for their sincere friend, the tender father of youth, who wore himself out for their welfare."

Il Cittadino of Genoa wrote on the same day: "Rarely has an illness aroused such anxiety, and rightly so, for by his virtue Don Bosco has succeeded in winning over the esteem and love of all people and has achieved world-wide fame."

Don Bosco spent all of December 29th in a state of semi-consciousness, only regaining lucidity for a few moments now and then. During one such lucid period Father Bonetti asked him for a souvenir for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. His reply was, "Obedience. Practice it and have others practice it."

Those who assisted him took advantage of other such lucid moments to ask him two questions. One of those concerned a privilege enjoyed by the Capuchins which had been extended to the Salesians. The Salesians had been granted the privilege, lets call it so, whereby no member of the Congregation could make his confession to any religious but a fellow Salesian. They wanted to know Don Bosco's opinion, and he made it understood that he would prefer to reject such a privilege. Then they also wished to know whether the superior general should have anything to do with the election of the mother general of the Salesian Sisters, and it seemed that he was in favor of it.

Toward evening he sent for Father Rua and Bishop Cagliero. Mustering what little strength he had, he said to them and indirectly

[9] *Unità Cattolica*, December 29, 1887.

to all the Salesians, "Put your affairs in order. Let all of you love one another like brothers. Love one another, help one another, and bear with one another as brothers. You will not lack either help from God or Mary Help of Christians. Recommend prayers that everyone pray for my eternal salvation. *Alter alteris onera portate - exemplum bonorum operum* [Bear one another's burdens. The example of good deeds]. I bless our houses in America, Father James Costamagna, Father Louis Lasagna, Father Joseph Fagnano, Father Charles Tomatis, Father Evasio Rabagliati, Bishop Peter Lacerda [of Rio de Janeiro], and the Salesians in Brazil. I bless the archbishop of Buenos Aires and Bishop Espinosa; I bless Quito, London, and Trent. I bless San Nicolas' and all our kind Italian Cooperators and their families. I shall always remember the help they have given to our missions." Then he added, "Promise me to love one another like brothers... Recommend frequent Communion and devotion to Mary, the Most Holy Help of Christians."

In reference to these last words, in his third circular letter of the thirtieth of December, Father Rua wrote:[10] "During a brief moment yesterday evening when he was able to talk with less difficulty, as we were all gathered around his bed (namely, Bishop Cagliero, Father Bonetti and I), he said, among other things, ' I recommend to the Salesians the devotion to Mary Help of Christians and frequent Communion.' Whereupon I said, 'This counsel might serve as a *strenna* for the New Year to be sent to all the houses.'

'Let this be the *strenna* for a whole lifetime,' he rejoined. Then he agreed that we might use it also as the *strenna* of the New Year."

Around eight o'clock on the evening of the twenty-ninth of December, Bishop Cagliero imparted the papal benediction to him, but first Don Bosco wished the bishop to recite the Act of Contrition aloud, while he followed it with his mind. Then he said, "Spread devotion to Mary Most Holy in Tierra del Fuego. If you only knew how many souls Mary Help of Christians wishes to win for heaven, through the work of the Salesians!"

Then he fell asleep. Late that night he woke up far more serene and calm. He asked for something to drink, but it had to be denied because of his too frequent vomiting, and so he said, "*Aquam nostram pretio bibimus*

[10] Circular from Fr. Rua, December 30, 1887.

[we pay to drink our own water]. We must learn both how to live and how to die."

On the morning of the thirtieth of December, when Father Cerruti went to see Don Bosco, and told him that Baroness Cataldi, one of the most generous benefactresses of the Congregation in Genoa, had called at the Sampierdarena hospice to leave an offering of four hundred lire, urging that prayers be said for the recovery of Don Bosco. He added that he had thanked her in Don Bosco's name, and that he had given her the blessing Don Bosco had sent her from his bed. "Yes, I do indeed bless her," Don Bosco said, deeply touched.

The economer general, Father Anthony Sala, had gone back to Rome, but was summoned back home by telegram. He arrived late at night. As soon as Don Bosco heard of his arrival, he asked Father Lemoyne, anxiously, what news Father Sala had brought with him. The news was not good. Worried as he was, Father Lemoyne was tactfully evasive in his answer so that Don Bosco would prepare himself to hear what Fr. Sala had to communicate to him. Don Bosco hoped, and repeated this many times, that he would not leave any debt for his sons. Instead, now the debts for the church of the Sacred Heart were crushing. It is always humiliating for one's pride to leave debts behind when one leaves any place, and especially when one is about to leave this earth. God allowed his Servant to bear also that cross.

But Father Sala had brought at least one good piece of news. According to the agreement regarding his fees, Count Vespignani, the architect of the church, should have received one hundred fifty thousand lire, based on five percent of the construction costs. This represented an enormous sum for the Congregation, especially in its present circumstances. In view of this, Father Sala had asked the architect not to stand rigidly upon his rights. The Count left it to Father Sala to determine whatever amount should be paid to him for his services. The economer hesitated, saying that whatever he might suggest would be less than the actual debt. "Just speak out and we shall see," the Count urged. So Father Sala suggested that in addition to the money already paid to him in installments, he now accept only twenty thousand lire. "I will accept for Don Bosco's sake," the noble count replied generously.

Even though his room was in semi-darkness, Don Bosco recognized Father Sala as soon as he entered. But it appears that Don Bosco did not wish to discuss business matters with Father Sala, for Father

Viglietti's diary remarks merely that Don Bosco took Father Sala by the hand and asked how he was. The economer general told him at once that his sons in Rome were praying for him, and that Cardinal Parocchi was very upset over his sickness and sent him his blessing. Don Bosco thanked him and then spoke with difficulty and haltingly, "Make all the arrangements for my burial, otherwise, look out, for I will have them transfer me to your room. See that you keep Father Rua fully informed on matters regarding the financial situation in Rome."

"I will. I am completely at your service and if I can be of any use to you, I will consider myself fortunate."

"Yes, you can help, especially when I need to be moved from one bed to the other, also to relieve those who nurse me. Since I was confined to bed, there has been someone who has insisted on being by my side, every day, and who even comes now and then during the night to look after me."

From that moment until his death, Father Sala went, every now and then, to move him or sit by him, both during the day and the night. He was tall and muscular, and so Don Bosco felt less pain when he had to move him from one bed to the other.

He brought to the Confreres news from Rome. Roman princes, bishops and cardinals were constantly asking for news of Don Bosco. The Holy Father, himself, sent someone to inquire every day. The Salesians from other houses wrote, out of similar concern, for the same thing. In Barcelona, in order to satisfy everyone who wanted news, three information centers had to be opened. In Paris, Don Bosco's sickness made the house at Ménilmontant more widely known.

Father Rua sent the circular letter he had written for the Salesians to some people who were especially close to the Salesian family, such as, for example, Father Francis Picard, the superior of the Assumptionists and owner of *La Croix.* This true friend of Don Bosco replied on December 30th: "We share in your anguish and are praying with you during the present sad circumstances. Your venerated and holy Founder must look joyously upon the end of his labors. Nevertheless, I hope that the Lord will grant the prayers of the countless people to whom he has given his assistance and who are all crying out to heaven, asking that he be healed. Thank you, dear Father, for having treated me as a friend, by sending me the detailed reports you reserve for the members of your Congregation. I would be very grateful, if you would continue to do this, for you are well aware that we have long been in contact with you,

for Don Bosco's concern is our concern. Our whole Congregation is praying together with your own, and relies on the prayers of our dear and revered Don Bosco."

Fear that Don Bosco might soon die persuaded the superiors to begin preparing his resting place in the basement beneath the altar of Mary Help of Christians, for even should permission to bury him there be granted immediately, it would not be possible to build the tomb during the brief period between his death and the time, specified by law, for his burial.

Don Bosco had already expressed his wishes in this matter, and Father Sala arranged for work to begin immediately. Meanwhile, in obedience to instructions from the Oratory, the procurator general called on Senator Correnti, secretary of the Order of Saint Maurice, to ask him to request authorization for the burial from Crispi, the prime minister. When Correnti heard how sick Don Bosco was, he began to weep, for he loved him dearly,[11] and he promised all his support, adding that the Oratory should feel free to call on him for whatever they needed. But he also cautioned the procurator general to do nothing while burying Don Bosco which might hint at veneration of a saint, as this could be interpreted by suspicious liberals in government circles as a maneuver of the clerical party. As we shall see, matters took quite another turn.

The advice given by Correnti was a sign of the times: prevailing political climate was poisoning the minds and corrupting the members of the party. The liberal press did not spare even the venerable patient. "The whole ('black') world of Turin is in turmoil, fearing an imminent catastrophe," one could read in an article from Turin published by the *Secolo XIX* of Genoa on the twenty-eighth of December. This was followed by a loathsome insinuation as to the cause of Don Bosco's disease, and even Crispi's own paper, *La Riforma,* announced his forthcoming death with the most vulgar expression. During the preparations for Don Bosco's burial, news like a ray of sunshine suddenly awakened hope in all hearts. It really did seem as though on the last day of the year, the thousands of prayers raised to heaven had moved the goodness of God, for the physicians noticed a very definite improvement in Don Bosco's condition, and no longer found any symptom which might jus-

[11] Cfr. Vol. XVI, pp. 357–364.

tify fear of an imminent peril. "Blessed be God," *L'Unità cattolica* wrote on January 1, "Who has brought us this consolation at the end of 1887, just on the threshold of 1888."

Chapter 23

TWENTY DAYS OF RELATIVE RESPITE

The year 1888 opened up with the festivities in honor of Leo XIII's priestly jubilee. The festivities were shared by the whole world with such an outburst of faith and love that perhaps they stand unique in the history of the papacy, up to that time. In the midst of such general and holy rejoicing, the goodness of God had granted the Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and the Cooperators, a tenderly joyful New Year, waving away the scythe of death which had seemed about to strike down the precious life of their beloved Father. Words of joy had replaced the manifestations of grief that had filled the previous days, and wishes were expressed for a lasting improvement as well as promises of continued prayers. A lady wrote from the Principality of Monaco to say that she was prepared to offer up her own life for this purpose. Father Rigoli said, "If God would accept my life in exchange for that of Don Bosco, I would offer it up to him with the greatest humility of my heart."

Confidence in Don Bosco's prayers and their effectiveness was unlimited. Some people asked Father Michael Rua for things that belonged to Don Bosco as relics. Others begged him to have the patient touch letters in which their special intentions were expressed, or asked him at least to put these letters on his bed, still others reported graces received thanks to his intercession. A noble lady, a Cooperator from France, wrote on January 4th: "In the furthermost corner of France, in my remote little village, I learned of his sickness from the newspapers on Christmas Day. The news dimmed the beauty of the feast. The other day I was, so to speak, on the look-out to know whether Mary Help of Christians was not going to intercede on behalf of her Servant and, yesterday, thanks be to God, I heard that all danger was over, at which my soul experienced infinite joy. Insignificant and resigned as I am, I had not dared to write, fearing that my letter would pass unnoticed in your vast place where people are praying and beseeching God on behalf of their

Father. But today I can no longer restrain myself and will look for one word, but one little word, which may reassure my heart fully and stoke up my hopes that he who was so compassionate with me and prayed for me will continue to live for the welfare of us all. I will not dare to say that I have been praying for him every day, since my prayers are so insignificant, that it is only great arrogance if I speak of them; but I did pray and will continue to do so. May God keep this good Father, and may I, in my great tribulations, be able to tell myself: "Don Bosco knows about it and is praying for you." Certainly it is a selfish sentiment to defer the hour of your reward by prayer; but why then are you so sensitive to our sufferings? Why do you want to comfort us all? My physical suffering, which has not ceased (in fact, it has increased) becomes more and more endurable, since I know that you are sharing it." Everyone who wrote to him, wrote with exquisite delicacy. In short, it was a world-wide consensus of love and veneration which is unparalleled, since it all centered around a simple priest.

Meanwhile, the January issue of the *Salesian Bulletin* published the customary letter to the Cooperators, giving them an account of all that had been accomplished in 1887 and informing them of what was planned for 1888. Besides Don Bosco's signature, the letter contained nothing more than four thoughts he had dictated, and which were distinguished from the rest by italics. A summary of detailed information about the Saint's state of health followed the letter. These are the thoughts which he dictated:

1. If we want our spiritual and material affairs to go well, we should first of all strive to make God's works go well, promoting the spiritual and moral well-being of our neighbor with our alms.

2. If you want to have some favor more easily bestowed on you, you yourselves bestow a favor; that is, give alms to others before God and the Virgin may bestow it on you.

3. With works of charity we shut off the doors of hell for us and open the gates of Paradise.

4. I recommend to your charity all that which God has designed to entrust to me during almost fifty years. I recommend to you the Christian education of youth, vocations for the priesthood and the foreign missions; but most particularly do I recommend to you the care of the poor and abandoned boys who have always been most dear to my heart here on earth and who, by the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ will, I hope, be my crown and my joy in heaven.

On New Year's day news came like a thunderbolt that Count Colle had died. The heart disease which had been troubling him more than usual since the summer had proven fatal. Great precaution was taken in informing Don Bosco, for he had loved him dearly. Father Rua, who was often summoned by Don Bosco in those days for long and confidential talks, at a suitable moment spoke to him about it. The incomparable benefactor had sent word as late as December 18th. Some time before, Count Colle had promised to contribute for the purchase of bells for the Church of the Sacred Heart, when he knew of the inscriptions on them. He learned of this much later, and no longer recalled what sum had been stipulated; hence he asked Don Bosco to inform him of it again.[1]

Something a bit strange happened at Count Colle's funeral. A newspaper of Toulon announced, together with the death of Count Colle, also the death of Don Bosco. The Provincial in France, Father Paul Albera, who was in the city, was shocked by the unexpected news and rushed to ask for an explanation. The editor replied: "Everybody knows what close friends Count Colle and Don Bosco were. During the last few days, Don Bosco was on the verge of death. It seemed a wonderful idea and a clue to me, for a fine article, if I said they had both died at the same time."

On January 3rd, seeing that Don Bosco's health improvement which had begun on the 31st still continued, Bishop Cagliero asked Don Bosco for permission to go to Nizza Monferrato to attend the religious clothing of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Smiling, Don Bosco replied, "Go, by all means, and bless the community on my behalf. But will you be coming back?" He meant to ask whether he would return straight home after the ceremony, without going elsewhere. He felt very keenly even the temporary absence of the original main superiors of the Oratory. The feeling of loneliness turns out to be a great burden for sick people, especially when they are advanced in years.

No one could possibly imagine that Don Bosco hoped he would escape death. As a matter of fact that evening, when he had changed beds, he said to his secretary, "Are you Father Viglietti?"

"This is Viglietti, yes," the secretary replied.

"Well, dear Viglietti, do you know why, some years ago, when Bishop Cagliero was leaving for America, I did not want to let you go with him?"

"Yes, now I understand why."

"Good, I am pleased that you understand and that you realize....

[1] Appendix, doc. 95.

I told you, do you recall? It is you who are to close my eyelids."

Father Rua did not let himself be carried away by the optimism shown by others. His cautious language used in the bulletin issued on January 2nd for the Salesians, the Sisters and the Cooperators, is a proof of it: "The serious sickness of our beloved Don Bosco has not grown any worse; nevertheless, his improvement is very slow. It seems that imminent danger of death has been averted. He wishes everybody good spiritual and physical health for the year that has just begun and prays to God for it; he also prays that you may all advance in virtue as you should. In conclusion, since for the time being there are no alarming signs regarding the sickness of our dear Don Bosco, I will limit myself to issuing a health bulletin on his condition only on days when I shall have relevant news to communicate. Do not stop praying."

It did seem that in one specific instance, Our Lord was listening to the prayer of his Servant. A boy near death and a cleric who had pleurisy at the Alassio boarding school was recommended to Don Bosco. He told the person who brought him the news, "Ah it is I, myself, who am now in need of the prayers of others." It was not the first time nor even the second that he had given such an answer under similar circumstances. Yet both the boy and the cleric recovered.

To be a past pupil was always a priority claim on his special loving kindness. A past pupil of the Oratory, now employed in the Turin Department of Public Health, Dr. Bestenti, gladly took part in the medical consultations regarding Don Bosco, for he dearly loved his good Father. Once, when he happened to be alone with Don Bosco in his room, Don Bosco asked, "Now tell me something. Are you able to live comfortably on your regular salary as doctor for Town Hall?"

"Yes, fairly comfortably," the man answered.

"Now what are you thinking of doing."

"I am looking for a wife."

Don Bosco, who always showed him great affection, concluded: "Then I will pray for you."

At times, his mental faculties were dimmed. Thus, on January 6th, he said to Father Viglietti, "You might as well tell Father Rua to keep an alert eye on me. I do feel somewhat better, but my mind knows nothing any more. I no longer recall whether it is morning or evening, nor what day or year it is, nor whether it is a weekday or a Sunday... I no longer find my bearings... I do not know where I am... I barely recognize people... I do not recall events... I think I'm praying all the time, but am not sure that I

do.... So you must help me."

It was a general belief that his improvement was due to a special grace granted in answer to the countless prayers that were being said. On January 7th, those who assisted him could not believe their own eyes when they saw him eat some breadcrumbs, an egg, and then drink coffee. Before eating, he removed his cap, made the Sign of the Cross, and said grace in tears. They were very much afraid that that food would do him harm, but he kept it down. Then with extraordinary spriteness, he began asking a thousand and one questions. He wanted to have news about Rome, about the Pope, about the jubilee festivities, about Bismark's politics, about the politics of Crespi. He was eager to have news of the Oratory and wished to talk with some clerics, Angelo Festa and Dones among them. He had not been so well for a long time.

About six o'clock that evening he sent a message to Father John Baptist Lemoyne, "Viglietti, ask Father Lemoyne to explain this to you. How can anybody who has been twenty-one days in bed,[2] almost without food, his mind extremely weak, suddenly be himself again, understand everything and feel strong, almost strong enough to get up, write, and work? Yes, right now I feel strong, just as though I had never been sick. And I will let you know the rest. It is something so deep that I myself fail to understand it. Should anybody ask how this happened, one might answer this way: *Quod Deus imperio, tu prece, Virgo, potes...*[what God can do with His power you, Virgin, do it with prayer] And these secrets remain secret up to the tomb."

Father Viglietti pressed him to unravel this mystery, saying, "Let us at least, know about it!"

"No," he replied. "Here we have to stop. Besides, the idea of the supernatural fades away. The important thing is God's intervention in human events. The manner of His intervening is secondary. Charles, my hour has not yet come. It may come soon, but not now."

Whatever one may think of it, it is beyond all doubt that this sudden halt in his sickness enabled him to settle many matters, give instructions regarding the material management of the Oratory, and make decisions regarding the personnel in some houses. At times, shaking off a kind of drowsiness, he pointed out steps or paperwork that had to be initiated, measures to be taken, legal procedures long forgotten by those in charge to be followed. Not even the doctors could disguise their astonishment

[2] As a matter of fact, it had been eighteen days. But before December 21st, he had risen late and gone to bed early.

when they saw how active and lucid his mind was.

In Rome, Cardinal Alimonda, who had already obtained a second blessing from the Holy Father after the one obtained by Bishop Cagliero, was beside himself with joy at hearing he was so much better, and so he wrote to Don Bosco:

Rome, January 7, 1888

Dear Don Bosco,

My heartfelt felicitations on the improvement in your health. Fervent, humble prayers were said everywhere, especially by the Salesians, your sons, imploring this grace from God; and now we are happy that God and the Blessed Virgin Help of Christians have graciously heard our prayers.

Most Revered Father John, you cannot possibly imagine what kind of concern and how much concern the Church of Rome has for your venerated person. Cardinals, archbishops, ladies and gentlemen, everyone, I might say, keeps anxiously asking me for news of you. They know that I am from Turin and imagine that I am fully informed of everything, so they want details about Don Bosco from me. The Holy Father himself, while solemnly giving an audience to pilgrims, just as I was presenting him the offering of my archdiocese, asked me very anxiously, "How is Don Bosco?" And it is obvious that again he sends you his apostolic benediction.

Thanks to God Who does not abandon his Servants, but Who wishes to see them all loved, revered, and blessed by the whole Church.

I already went to see the Sacred Heart Church and liked it very much; but I will go back again and look at everything more closely at greater leisure.

I beg you to remember me in your fervent prayers, dear Father John, as I also recommend myself to your worthy sons in Turin. With the confident hope of embracing you again soon, fully recovered in strength, I am.

Your servant and friend in Jesus Christ,
Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda, Archbishop

We have already mentioned the visit of the Duke of Norfolk on January 8th, when he was on his way to Rome as a special envoy of Queen Victoria to the Pope on the occasion of his jubilee. This gentleman and fervent Catholic remained kneeling beside Don Bosco's bed for nearly half an hour. He accepted some messages for the Holy Father and talked about the new house in London, and insisted that it should be modeled after the Turin Oratory, and also about matters concerning his own country, and about the missions in China. Don Bosco said something on behalf of Ireland. The Duke asked him to bless him and departed. Five days later, Don Bosco had someone write to him in Rome, or he himself wrote, recommending to him the church of the Sacred Heart.[3] He made the same recommendation to Brother August Czartoryski, who had gone from Valsalice to see him. We do not know what Don Bosco did, but we do know that Bro. August, in deference to the wishes of the Saint, managed to have two hundred thousand lire sent to him for this purpose during the course of the year.[4]

Taking advantage of Cardinal Alimonda's stay in Rome, Don Bosco instructed Father Rua to address a petition to the Holy Father for a subsidy and to humbly submit it through His Eminence. But the cardinal suggested that it had better be channeled through His Eminence Parocchi, who would have submitted it relying on his twofold power as Protector of the Congregation and as Vicar of the Pope. "By this, I do not mean to deny my support to your petition," Alimonda went on,[5] "and as soon as I can have a special audience with the Holy Father, I will not fail to speak with the most cordial concern about the Sacred Heart Church, its needs, its commitments, and the sacrifices made by the Salesians."

The Saint forbade Father Rua to make public, after his death, the seriousness of the debts not yet paid for the construction of the Sacred Heart Church. During the course of the processes Father Rua testified that Don

[3] Cfr. Vol. XVII p. 525 (Italian); pp. 484–485 (English).

[4] Brother August helped pay the expenses also of the clothing of the clerics at Foglizzo. The material for the cassocks had been bought with five thousand francs received from Count Colle; Brother August paid for the making of them, as we see from this little note written by Don Bosco two days before taking to his bed:

Turin, Oratory, 12-15-87

Dear Father Barberis:

Here is the bill that our manager Joseph Rossi gave me for the expenses of the clothing of our clerics. Please give it to Prince August Czartoryski, who will pay it in whatever measure his charitable heart may deem fit.

Most affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

[5] Letter to Fr. Rua, January 23, 1888.

Bosco thus forbade him "for several reasons," without specifying what these were. But the main reason can only have been the fact that the chief cause of the trouble had been a bad administration, as we already said once, quoting Don Bosco's own words. But while imposing secrecy on the matter, he assured him that Divine Providence would not fail to help him. As a matter of fact, as Father Rua testified during the process, the results fully justified his unlimited trust in God; for, after his death, although no mention had been made of any financial difficulties, help was offered in such measure that it was not only sufficient to meet the general needs of the house but it also provided an average of one thousand lire a day toward payment of the church debt, and this lasted the whole year. Indeed, during the year 1888, more than three hundred and forty thousand lire were sent to Rome. The most wonderful thing in all this was that frequently the money came from unknown sources, such as a check for sixty thousand francs sent by someone who preferred to remain anonymous.

Don Bosco's mind seemed not to be able to detach itself from the needs of the houses. He gave his secretary a second message for Father Lemoyne the evening of the 8th of January, saying that he was to write about what he said in the *Bulletin.* "I am sorry I am unable to help you as I used to, by going in search of charitable alms in person. I spent my very last cent before my sickness and I am now without any money, whereas our boys continually ask for food. What are we to do? You have to make it known that anyone wishing to do charity to Don Bosco and his orphans, is to do it immediately, since Don Bosco will not be able to either come or go."

A statement made by Dr. Fissore outside the Oratory premises, but which found its way to the Oratory, caused much sadness. While at the Cottolengo hospital, he said that Don Bosco had no more than two months to live. While everyone had been holding on the tender hope that he would recover, those words now came as a cold shower which, however, did not extinguish all hope.

Interesting news came from Poland. Many crucifixes blessed by Don Bosco had been sent to Poland in order to satisfy the piety of so many people. It was now announced that miracles had taken place; and many of them were reported to Father Marenco by the mother superior of the *Retreite* of Turin, a noble Polish lady who had once almost become engaged to the father of Prince Czartoryski. Among other things, she told him of a dying man who had not gone to confession for more than twen-

ty years, who showed no signs of wishing to, but who had wept when he saw one of the crucifixes blessed by Don Bosco. He pressed it to his heart and he instantly recovered.

Letters arrived continuously, addressed to either Don Bosco or Father Rua. This fact alone would be sufficient in itself to show in what high esteem Don Bosco was held and not only in Italy, but also abroad. Many of these letters have been kept, and we now intend to look through them with some breadth, but with three restrictions: We will restrict ourselves to gleaning from the letters received the first twenty days of January; we shall concern ourselves only with the correspondence from abroad; and we shall also quote only what seems to be in any way worthy of special notice. We will follow a chronological but not a topographical order.

Some nuns wrote from Grenoble: "Of all the welcome letters we have received during the past few days, without any doubt the one which brought us the most joy was that in which we found good news about our dear and saintly Father." A gentleman from Liège: "I just read in the newspapers that heaven has bowed before the fervent prayers offered up for your recovery. I experienced so much joy that I could not wait to offer my felicitations. I am so presumptuous as to believe that I myself have contributed toward your recovery with my own prayers." A noble lady from Belgium: "There!" I said to myself, "yet another protector of mine who escapes, yet another consoler who disappears! But when I prayed before the Tabernacle, imploring God to leave this good Father of ours here on earth, I was comforted by a feeling of faith and trust. An inner voice told me that Don Bosco's protection would have been even more effective for me in heaven. From that moment on, unaware whether he is still alive or already dead, I pray to God to assist him in his last journey, or I address prayers to him as of now, if he is already in heaven." A lady from Alsace: "I could never possibly pay my debt toward you, most beloved Father. Not satisfied with having set me free from my ailment, you have also set my soul free from crushing sorrows, especially at the moment of my confession. Confidence has taken the place of the fear that I felt before God. My heart is quite transformed and this transformation was brought about by the prayers of my dear father Don Bosco."

Mr. Blanchon of Lyons, who wanted to help found a Salesian house in that city, wrote to Father Rua: "Could the amount of prayers that we are offering ever make up for their scant value and support your own prayers, so that our saintly good father Don Bosco may be spared for his sons, his boys, both the older and the younger ones, his boys who are so fortunate,

and all those who have need of him?" A lady from Lille wrote Father Rua: "You certainly understand us well, if you understand how beloved Don Bosco is here! How could he not be loved wherever he is known?" Madame de Combaud wrote Father Rua also from Paris: *"Deo Gratias!* [Thanks be to God] I just received your telegram which filled my heart with joy. Don Bosco's sons have stormed heaven and in his mercy, God has graciously heard their prayers. May he be blessed forever! My thoughts and my heart are constantly with the Oratory of Via Cottolengo. I feel that I am sharing the joy of Don Bosco's sons. How lovely the *Te Deum* in your immense church will be when it will be sung by so many loving and grateful people!" A lady from Lyons wrote: "When you passed by Lyons, you were so kind and encouraging that we have treasured the remembrance of that visit. I trust in your prayers and hope for help." A housewife from Moulins wrote: "Kneeling down in spirit by your bed of suffering, my husband, my sons and I pray that you will deign to send us your blessing." Another homemaker wrote to Father Rua from Amiens: "A thousand times thank you for your news about our dear and beloved father, Don Bosco. We pray to God every day that he may recover very soon, so that he may be restored to his sons to live long among them and continue for many a year to come, to be the comfort of his whole beloved family around him, as well as of this more distant family which loves him with no less tenderness, feeling itself happy to be considered as children of Don Bosco." Again a housewife from Belgium wrote: "We were very upset to hear how poor your health is. My husband and I pray to God that he spare you still for this world, so that you may comfort those who are afflicted. I, my dear husband, and my children would consider ourselves fortunate if we could receive your holy blessing."

A lady from Paris, who had lost her job, and who now was forced to sell papers, wrote to Don Bosco with the hope he would obtain for her from Mary Help of Christians, the grace of earning her daily bread. "Father! I am very happy to know that you are better and I thank and bless God with all my heart for it. What would become of me, if you were no longer in this world? A thousand thanks to the one among your sons who was so kind, so charitable, as to send me news of you." She had sent an offering and a certificate as a Salesian Cooperator had been sent to her.

A lady from Bordeaux wrote to ask Father Rua for prayers for her suffering family: "There is no need for me to tell you how well I understand and participate in your anxiety and grief over the precious health of our

good Don Bosco. I pray for this good Servant of God and of his holy mother every day." Countess de Maillé wrote Father Rua from Nantes: "Since I heard of the poor health of your saintly director, I have been living in a state of painful anxiety which is easy to understand, since it was my good fortune to meet him and to learn how to appreciate his goodness and eminent virtues. I was therefore very happy to read a health bulletin of December 31st this morning, announcing a marked improvement. With a full heart I join my own weak prayers to your own, in giving thanks to God." A lady wrote to Don Bosco from Saint-Etienne to express her intense sorrow at the news of his illness, and then went on: "Together with other ladies of my acquaintance, I beg you ask the Blessed Virgin, who never refuses anything to you, to listen to our prayers and grant what we ask, by granting you many more years in which to do good on behalf of all categories of poor unfortunates. I, myself, was so desperate that I no longer had confidence in anything, until I knew that you were praying for me."

A lady from Duren, from the Rhine Province of Prussia, wrote to Don Bosco, expressing her sorrow and promising to pray with all her family and concluded with these words: "May you always intercede for us before God and the Blessed Virgin." From Bollendorf, in the archdiocese of Trier: "I pray to God with all my heart for you. All my friends who have had the fortune to receive comfort from your holy prayers have instructed me to tell you how unhappy we are at knowing that you are sick. We are all praying for you, dear Father, and likewise do we all recommend ourselves to you who are so dearly beloved by God! Yes, to you, you, great and faithful servant in the vineyard of Our Lord!" From England someone wrote: "Oh reverend Father, I pray that God send your sickness to me, while sparing you for the welfare of his Church and the benefits of souls. I am a nobody, I do no good in the world, I only offend the Divine Majesty every hour of the day. Sickness and suffering would offer me a way of atoning for my sins and would decrease my punishment in the next world." A nun from Brussels wrote to Father Rua: "Say a good word to him for me, I beg you. Tell him that should the Blessed Virgin summon him unto her, I will gladly continue to do whatever little is in my power for his sons, but on the understanding that he will not forget to pray to the Holy Virgin for me when he shall enjoy her presence. May this good and revered father deign to bless me."

A certain Cornelius de Thier, a doctor of law and attorney from Jemmapes, in Belgium, wrote Father Rua in Latin, asking for a favor. He

said he would send him the rosary beads to be blessed *" a sancto, illustri ac eminentissimo patre Dom Bosco* [by the saintly, illustrious, and eminent Father, Don Bosco,]" or to place it at least in his holy hands for a moment or, if he were already dead, to touch his body with it. Two ladies wrote from Malines, Belgium: "Your serious illness has made us very unhappy. Although we only know you through spiritual affinity, we share the same devout feelings of those who had the good fortune to meet you. We have joined our prayers to theirs." A twelve-year-old girl, who had made her first communion two years before, wrote from Beziers, France: "My father, although a good father, does not go to the Sacraments. I have heard that you obtain many favors from our Lord, so I beg you to give thought to this, too, for which I am fervently praying to God. I hope you will listen to the prayer of a little girl who is grieved at seeing her beloved daddy so far away from God."

A certain Mary von Hornstein, "a very unworthy cooperator", wrote from Rinningen in Baden: "Please take care of yourself. We are so fortunate as to benefit from your prayers, your advice and your blessing! Bless our seven children, of whom I can honestly say, just as your good settlers did at San Nicolas' in Argentina, 'If you want them, they are all yours.'[6] Neither I nor my husband have a fonder wish. I kiss your hands tenderly, with the most profound veneration." From Lalaire, France: a certain lady from Clok described her past life, her neglect of certain duties, her uncertainty as to the present condition of her soul, her terror about her eternal future. She concluded imploring him to say one word, only one word, which might give her peace. "God has consoled many a soul through your ministry. Oh! Implore him for the same grace for me!" From Valletta on the Isle of Malta came congratulations on his improved health and good wishes that God save him for the love of those dear to him and for the welfare of humanity. From Mons, Belgium, a Julius Honorez, who had seen Don Bosco in the house of Madame de Combaud in Paris, asked Father Rua to send him a copy of Don Bosco's biography so that he could send it to the wife of Sadi Carnot, the president of the French Republic, and asked him to recommend him to Don Bosco's prayers.

[6] In the French and Italian *Salesian Bulletin* of December 1887, there was a report of a visit by Bp. Cagliero to the San Nicolas' school and the Italian colony in the area. The letter alludes to a phrase in such report. When the Bishop noticed a swarm of boys, girls, and little children, he asked their parents whether he might hope that at least a few of these little cherubs would be given to Don Bosco as a gift. "What are you saying, Your Excellency?" those good people replied, "Not only a few, but all of them. If Our Lord were to give us twice as many, we intend to offer all of them to Don Bosco and Mary Help of Christians."

The illusion as to the extent of his health improvement had Bishop Guigou from Nice say these words: "You know how everyone is expecting you for Lent in Cannes. Do not fail to come." A Mr. Hosg from Haarlem congratulated him in Dutch on his restored health. Even Father Viglietti yielded to glowing hopes. On January 15th, he made the following statement in a letter he wrote to *The Leonardo da Vinci* of Milan, which appeared in the 18th-19th issue of the *L'Osservatore Cattolico:* "Now that all danger has passed, all that remains for Don Bosco is to recover his strength so that he can return to his many sons who are all anxious to see once again his revered fatherly face." The heart conjured up the vision of fulfillment of its own desires. More important to us however, in closing this survey, are the lines in which Viglietti says: "The interest which, I might say, the whole world has shown for Don Bosco at this perilous moment is touching and difficult to describe."

The Lyons weekly *L'Eclair* of January 14th raised the question why Don Bosco enjoyed such popularity and gave the answer: "Because the halo of sanctity shines forth from his brow. So great is his reputation for holiness that people turn to him in order to obtain miracles. But what confirms his genuine holiness is the way he himself seems to be unaware that he is a favorite of God. He urges people to pray so that they may obtain Divine favors, but it is not temporal gain which inspires him to pray either for himself or for those who appeal to his intercession. Don Bosco's eye is far-reaching, looking way beyond space itself."

The Holy Father kept Don Bosco's health in mind. On January 11th, he gave an audience to a Piedmontese pilgrimage; among them there was the missionary, Father Cassini. As he stopped before him on his way around the hall, Cardinal Alimonda introduced him. "Oh good!" the Pope said, "What news of Don Bosco have you? We heard he has been very ill, but that now he is a little better."

"Yes, Holy Father," Father Cassini replied, "the latest news I have is encouraging. Don Bosco is improving."

"Thanks to God for it!" exclaimed the Pope. "Pray that he may be spared. Tell him that the Holy Father remembers him and sends him his apostolic benediction. The life of Don Bosco is a precious one, and if he had died during these days he would have cast a grim shadow over our celebrations in Rome."

Father Cassini was also present during the audience given to an Argentinean group on January 30th. Monsignor Ichaque, canon of Buenos Aires cathedral, introduced him, as a member of his delegation

and as representative of the Salesian houses of South America. As the Pope heard the canon tell him all the good accomplished by the Salesians in that faraway region, he held Father Cassini's hand tightly and asked him how many houses the Salesians had in South America, and if there was indeed so much the good that could be done, whether the Salesians met with any opposition, and whether or not the people loved them.

"The Salesians are very much loved," the monsignor replied in answer to this last query, "for they work very hard."

The Pope then recommended that the Salesian houses and missions be helped with protection and advice. Then again he blessed Don Bosco.

From January 12th on, many French, Belgian, Swiss, British, and German pilgrims visited the Oratory on their way home from Rome, and all were anxious to see Don Bosco and receive his blessing. As far as he could, Don Bosco gave them a cordial reception, recommending his sons to their charity and himself to their prayers. At times, when he heard that some people had not been allowed to see him, because of doctor's orders, he expressed regret.

Father Rua told Don Bosco on January 13th of the general interest following his sickness and of the number of people who flocked to the Oratory entrance. He also said that not only the Catholic press, but even those newspapers that had been hostile to him were now writing about him with respect and sympathy. To which Don Bosco answered, "Let us always do good to all, and harm to no one."

Something strange happened during those days. At an hour when there was hardly anybody in the church of Mary Help of Christians, a little boy, three or four years old, from the neighborhood, but unknown, wandered into the church. He took one of the candles lit by the faithful and started slowly pacing up and down with a serious air, holding the lighted candle in his hand, murmuring unintelligible words pronounced in the form of psalms. When Father Louis Pesce, who was in charge of the sacristy, asked the child what he was doing, he replied unhesitatingly that he was holding the funeral service for Don Bosco. Twice more the scene was repeated and some began to take it as an omen that Don Bosco was soon to die.

Instead, the most serene confidence that he would recover reigned at the Oratory. In fact, the uninterrupted prayers of the boys at the altar of Mary Help of Christians stopped. Neither the superiors in the house nor the members of the council gave any thought to that incident; not even Father Rua himself, absorbed as he was in so many other matters. Then,

when calm had replaced the anxiety of the previous weeks, the *Gazzetta,* as usual, had the impudence to write that there had been no genuine illness of Don Bosco, but that it had all been used as a ruse to raise money.

The Servant of God did not lose his sense of humor. After attending Mass and receiving Communion on the morning of the 15th of January, he joked about his breathing difficulty and repeated the joke about the bellows. "You would do me a great service if you could find some manufacturer of bellows who could come and fix my bellows." As he was talking, a sweet comforting smile lit up his face, renewing hope.

During the course of the day, he remarked suddenly, although he had not looked at the calendar for some time, "Tomorrow is the feast of Saint Marcellus. Send Marcellus a basket of those grapes that have been donated to us." Marcellus was Dr. Vignolo's son, who was then convalescing from a serious illness.

In order to make the breathing easier, the doctors had ordered a comfortable arm chair to be used when he would be able to leave his bed. But as he talked with Father Celestine Durando, he said quite explicitly that it was useless.

Almost every day, as he took nourishment, a new napkin was put over his chest. When he noticed it, he asked, "What is this?"

"The convent of the Good Shepherd sent several dozens of napkins as a present for Don Bosco," Father Sala answered.

"Then please remember to thank them heartily for me."

On the evening of January 17th, Father John Baptist Francesia gave a hand in the compassionate task of lifting him bodily from the bed.

"Oh there was no need to disturb such a celebrity for so little," Don Bosco said. "Father Sala, you alone would have been able to do it."

This operation was always painful, especially because of his bedsores. Therefore Father Sala said, "Poor Don Bosco! How I am hurting him!"

"No, you should say instead, 'Poor Father Sala, how hard he has to work!' Don Bosco said. But just leave it to me, I will return you this service in good time."

On another occasion, seeing that he was suffering greatly, Father Sala asked him what he could do to relieve him. "I think that I have sunk too far into the mattress," Don Bosco answered. Father Sala put an arm beneath his thighs, another under his back and, strong as he was, lifted him bodily while Father Charles Viglietti slid a quilted coverlet underneath him. Father Sala was obliged to hold Don Bosco in his arms for several minutes, so that Father Viglietti might have time to do this. Then he

lowered him again so that he was almost seated, and Father Viglietti fed him a few spoonfuls of broth with breadcrumbs in it. Then Don Bosco looked at Father Sala as if he had something to tell him. Father Sala asked in what way he might be of assistance. "What I need is to eat a salame," Don Bosco replied, laughing, "then things would go better, wouldn't they? But now, let me try to get some rest."

On the 18th of January he had an important visitor: Archbishop Goossens of Malines, Belgium, with his vicar general and other eminent priests. They exchanged only a few words, and then his visitors withdrew, profoundly moved. He kept silent for a while, then a little later he turned to Bishop Cagliero at his side, "Take the Salesian Congregation to heart. Help the other superiors in every way you can." He was silent for a few minutes and then he continued, "Anyone who wished to obtain graces from Mary Help of Christians should help our missions and they may be sure of obtaining them."

One evening, he was apparently suffering greatly, especially from his bed sores, and now and then he would move, as if seeking relief. All of a sudden, he motioned to Father Sala that he wished to speak to him. Father Sala bent his ear close to his lips, and Don Bosco said with a smiling countenance, "Tell the doctor that he would be acquiring everlasting fame if he could find a way of replacing my posterior every time it hurts me." When the doctor came, Father Sala repeated what he had said, while Don Bosco smiled amiably. He always tried to keep those around his bed cheerful.

But there was something that filled all those who waited on him with the greatest admiration— his angelic modesty. It was a torture for him to be lifted and cleaned, but his demeanor was such that he could be compared to the saints whose bodies lay beneath some altar. Instinctively, he would keep covering up his neck and shoulders with a shawl lying on his pillow, even when he appeared to be out of his senses.

On the 20th he was visited by the Most Rev. Francis Philippe, the titular bishop of Lari, of the Congregation of the Sons of St. Francis de Sales at Annecy, auxiliary to Bishop Tissot of the same Congregation and also bishop of Vizagapatam, from Indostan.

With sure hand, Father Viglietti wrote in his diary: "Although slowly, Don Bosco's health is steadily improving. One might now say that all he lacks is the strength to leave his bed." Never was any prediction as wrong as this one.

Chapter 24

THE FINAL BLOWS AT THE BREAKING DOWN OF DON BOSCO'S BODY

Don Bosco's body resisted its final dissolution most tenaciously. One might say that death had to chisel away his body bit by bit, prolonging his agony into a slow martyrdom. Myelitis was the main factor, which caused his general breakdown. Looking at it from another aspect, one might say that his sickness was a crucible in which one could perceive how pure the gold of his virtue was. An unfaltering serenity, a delicate charity, the most sublime resignation to the will of God, were the three things that were most admired in him during the forty days he lay on his bed of suffering.

Bishop Cagliero had not yet perceived the first symptoms of relapse when he said to the patient on January 21st, "Dear Don Bosco, it now seems that the peril that all of us feared has been warded off. They have asked me to go to Lu for the Feast of Saint Valerius, the patron of that locality which is so dear to you, and which gave us a number of people, especially Sisters, for our missions."

"Go ahead, I am glad," Don Bosco, answered. "But you will not be away for long, will you?"

"As soon as the festivities are over, I will pay a brief visit to our boys at Borgo San Martino and then come back."

"Then go ahead, by all means; but make it fast."

The bishop set out, but that "make it fast" kept echoing in his ears all the time he was away from the Oratory, keeping him in a state of apprehension.

His relapse became more evident the morning of the 22nd of January, nevertheless he was still able to attend Mass and receive Communion. After that, the physicians decided they would have to operate. For some years, he had a growth of raw flesh as big as a walnut on his sacrum, which had made sitting or lying down most painful. He had preferred to endure this painful infirmity, never mentioning it to his attending physician, out of a feeling of dignified and virtuous reserve.[1] Only now the doctor had noticed it and real-

[1] Apostolic process, *Summ.*, pp. 490, 493.

ized what a torture it was for him to lie down. He therefore suggested to have it cut off. As obedient as a child, Don Bosco submitted himself to the operation. Two other doctors were present. Dr. Vignolo removed it quickly, taking him unawares, since he had given him to understand that the operation would have taken place on the following day. At that sudden pain, Don Bosco cried out. The operation was perfectly successful, and the Saint gratefully pressed the doctor's hand. Later he said that he felt wonderfully relieved. Father Sala entered the room a few minutes later, and asked him how he felt.

"They removed it in a masterful way," Don Bosco said.

"Poor Don Bosco, how it must have hurt you."

"I do not believe that the piece of flesh they cut away felt anything."

There was also another great penance that he endured. Being incapable of moving, it frequently occurred that his bed was soiled. Once he remarked to Father Sala, "You know how scrupulously clean I was; now that is no longer possible. I am always in the midst of filth."

Around ten o'clock, Archbishop Krements of Cologne and Bishop Korum of Trier called on him with some friends. Though he spoke with difficulty, he recommended to them the poor boys and asked them to implore the blessings of the Holy Father for him.

On the morning of the 24th of January, he was visited by another great prelate, Bishop Richard, the archbishop of Paris. Don Bosco wished to receive his blessing, and the bishop granted his wish, but then he too knelt down, asking Don Bosco to bless him in return. "Certainly, I bless both you and Paris," Don Bosco answered. At which the archbishop said, "I will speak to my city of Don Bosco and say that I am bringing Don Bosco's blessing to Paris."[2]

He was so sick during that afternoon that the doctors said he had relapsed into the condition of the month before. When the physicians had gone, Don Bosco sent for Palestrina, a young sacristan for whom he had great respect, and had his secretary tell him that in all the free time he had, he was to pray to Jesus and Mary, so that during his last hours, while awaiting his death, he might have a lively faith. Then the young man was ushered into Don Bosco's presence, and the Saint, deeply moved, said the same thing to him, and blessed him. Toward evening, quite the contrary of what usually occurs to people who are sick, Don Bosco felt relieved, due to the prayers of that good young man as he said to Father Lemoyne.

[2] Fr. Temmerman had come that last week from Belgium to Turin to speak with Don Bosco on the subject of frequent Communion. He was unable to talk with him, but he learned from Fr. Rua what Don Bosco thought on the topic. Before an assembly of ecclesiastics at the Eucharistic Congress in Antwerp in August 1890, this priest reported the outcome of his interview on the 20th of that month, as one may read in his speech which was published in the Minutes of the congress. It makes interesting reading (Appendix, doc. 96).

He grew worse again on the 24th of January, and asked that he be prompted ejaculatory prayer. His difficulty in speaking was increasing, and it tore at one's heartstrings to have to listen to him. When Father Anthony Sala gave him something to drink, he said, "Try to find some way so that I can rest." They instantly tried to make him as comfortable as possible. When it seemed that he was actually falling asleep, he suddenly shook himself up and clapped his hands together, shouting, "Run, run quick to save those boys!... Mary Most Holy, help them!... Oh! Mother, Mother!"

Father Sala hastened to the bedside immediately, asking what he wanted. "Where are we now?" he asked.

"At the Oratory in Turin."

"And what are the boys doing?"

"They are at Benediction in church, praying for you."

There was neither water nor ice which could slake the burning thirst that racked him during those last few weeks, so seltzer water was provided, for it did seem to bring him a certain relief. But he imagined that it was some expensive drink, so he resolutely refused to take any. In order to reassure him, the coadjutors Buzzetti and Rossi both had to prove to him that it only cost seven cents a bottle.

Coming back on the 26th of January, Bishop Cagliero went immediately to Don Bosco's bedside. Don Bosco was going through an hour of great suffering. When he saw him, he muttered with difficulty, "Save many souls in the missions."

The next day, still inclined to be hopeful, the bishop made another attempt to find out whether the beloved Father would recover or not. In order to do so, he asked him whether he would authorize him to go to Rome, for without his consent, he said he would not budge.

"You may go, but later," Don Bosco answered with an immense effort.

"But please tell me, Don Bosco, if by going after the feast of St. Francis, I can be at peace. I have to go to Sicily, as well..."

"Yes, you will go and will do a great deal of good, but wait until later."

It was obvious to what he was alluding with that "later." Once he regained a little of his strength, he said again, "Your coming here was very timely and advantageous for the Congregation in these moments."

In the midst of his suffering, he was unable to gain any relief by changing his position. The one who assisted him suggested to him to remember Jesus, who was suffering on the Cross, without being able to move neither on one side nor on the other. "That is what I do all the time," he answered. In moving him to the other bed, Father Bonetti said, "How we hurt you, poor

Don Bosco! We are all so clumsy. Think of the passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ." He nodded "yes."

Father Francis Dalmazzo arrived toward evening. Don Bosco looked at him tenderly, squeezed his hand, and said, "I recommend to you the Congregation! Uphold it and defend it always." Then he said to Bishop Cagliero, "The Congregation has nothing to fear. It has well trained men."

It so happened that toward the evening Father Sala was alone with him in the room and, choosing a moment when he seemed to breathe more freely, he asked, "Don Bosco, you are feeling very bad, are you not?"

"Yes, I am," he answered, "but everything passes and this too will pass."

"What might I do to give you a little relief?"

"Pray!"

So saying, he clasped his hands and began to pray. After allowing him to rest a few minutes, Father Sala resumed, "You must be happy now, Don Bosco, thinking that you have been able to found houses in different parts of the world and firmly establish the Salesian congregation after a life full of difficulties and hardships... "

"Yes," he replied. "What I did, I did for Our Lord... More could have been accomplished... but my sons will do that... Our congregation is guided by God and protected by Mary Help of Christians."

At eight o'clock that night he had difficulty in making himself understood, even in gesturing that he understood. Bishop Cagliero, Father Michael Rua, and others stood around his bed. The talk was about the epigraph to be carved on Count Colle's tombstone. Father Rua had suggested: *orphano tu eris adiuutor* [You were a helper for the orphan]. But Bishop Cagliero preferred: *Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem* [Blessed are those who understand the humble and the poor]. All of a sudden, Don Bosco who had seemed not to be heeding what they said at all, opened his eyes and with great effort, succeeded in saying in a fairly intelligible way, "Carve this: *Pater meus et mater mea deleliquerant me. Dominus autem assumpsit me.*[My mother and father left me. God himself adopted me]."

By now the joyous news that Don Bosco was on the way to recovery had spread all over the world. Letters of congratulations were arriving from all over, even from remote places—even from Grodno, or Gardinas, in Lithuania. One can well imagine how people felt at the Oratory when they read, for example, of the hope voiced by Countess d'Oncieu that she might soon see Don Bosco again in Milan, or what Father Lemoyne's mother wrote to her son: "He is a man in whom everyone takes interest. In Genoa no one talks of anything else but his sickness and hopes for his recovery!"

What trust people put in his prayers! A Susanna Poptovska of Podolia in the Ukraine wrote: "Your prayers call down many miraculous favors from heaven, dear Father, upon all who turn to you, even in our remote land. Therefore, I have the utmost confidence that the graces I am seeking will also be granted, thanks to your intercession. Dear Father, you will not refuse me, will you?"

Don Bosco had a nephew by the name of Louis, who was a disgrace to his family. He was the second son of Joseph. He had been educated at the Oratory and, after interrupting his studies, had once more resumed them and had succeeded in becoming a secretary in a law court. Now for some years he had been living at Gravellona Lomellina with a woman who was separated from her husband. His saintly uncle, who was very fond of him, had spared neither reprimands nor reproach; but since it was like talking to a stone wall, he no longer wished to see him. Don Bosco granted him a brief interview a few months before he died. [Since the family property had remained undivided after the death of his brother Joseph, it was necessary to discuss division of the share that belonged to Don Bosco, as a Salesian, from what belonged to the family]. Now this wretch vowed that he would have filed suit in regard to the portion owned by Don Bosco, in order to reclaim it. This would have been very unpleasant, but God had already numbered his days, for Louis hung between life and death from the end of January until February 6th, when he was ushered into eternity.

Don Bosco's condition grew steadily worse. During the day of the 27th of January, all that night and the following morning, he was frequently delirious. But he heard Mass and received Communion. During the Divine Sacrifice, he was several times overcome by drowsiness, after which his breathing became heavier. When the celebrant came to the Agnus Dei, Father Joseph Lazzero, who was assisting Don Bosco, asked, "Do you wish to receive Communion this morning, Don Bosco?" Don Bosco muttered to himself, "The end is near... " Then he turned to Father Lazzero and said aloud, "I intend to receive Holy Communion." So saying, he removed his cap and clasped his hands. At the same time his face became so absorbed in contemplation that those who were watching him were filled with lively faith.

He was often heard to repeat, "They are confused." And then, "Be brave!... Always forward!" At times he would call someone by name. That very morning he must have cried out a hundred times, "Mother! Mother!" In the evening he invoked, "Oh, Mary! Oh, Mary! Oh, Mary!" with clasped hands. Father Joachim Berto asked him, whether he would let him put on the scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. He nodded and was manifestly pleased when he did.

He gave his last souvenirs to everyone who got near his bed, saying mostly: "We shall see one another again in heaven!... Have prayers said for me... Tell the boys to go to Holy Communion for me." He also said to Father John Bonetti, "Tell the boys that I'll be waiting for them in heaven!" Then a little later, "When you talk or preach, insist on frequent Communion and devotion to Mary Most Holy."

Father Joachim Berto had placed an indulgenced crucifix in his hand. He lifted it often to his lips. Father Bonetti had given him a holy picture of Mary Help of Christians and he looked at it and said, 'I have always had complete confidence in Mary Help of Christians!" Again he said to Father Bonetti, "Listen. Tell the Sisters that if they keep their rules, their salvation is assured."

The doctors found him much worse and did not hold out the slightest hope of saving his life. Dr. Fissore told him, "Be brave, Don Bosco... There is hope you may be better tomorrow... It has happened other times... This bad weather has an impact on you!" Don Bosco, immobile until then, smiled and shook his finger, "Doctor, what do you want to do? Raise the dead? Tomorrow?... Tomorrow. I will go on a longer journey." Then he said to Father Joseph Lazzero and Father Viglietti, who were near, "Help me please."

"Gladly, Don Bosco. In what way can we help you?"

"Help me to breathe," he answered almost jokingly.

Up to the 28th of January at lunch and dinnertime, he usually sent Father Charles Viglietti to the dining room of the Superior Council to wish them a good appetite on his behalf.

During the first hour of the night, he cried out, "Paul, Paul, where are you? Why are you not here?" Everyone in the room imagined that he was calling Father Paul Albera, provincial of the houses in France. After a little while, he said again, "They are confused." Then, in a loud voice, Bishop Cagliero said, "Keep calm Don Bosco, we will do everything, everything you wish."

Don Bosco seemed to make a great effort then, and lifting his head for a moment, he said in a firm voice, "Yes, they mean to do it, but they do not." Then he fell back on his pillow.

Once he asked, "Who is there? Who is that boy?"

There is no boy here. It is the clothes hanger," Enria answered.

"Oh! Sorry!"

Yet, he made signs as if someone were near him and suddenly clapped his hands, as he used to do in his dreams, whenever he saw something which frightened him.

"Is no one here? No one?"

"We are here," Father Sala said, approaching him. Don Bosco's teeth

were chattering as though he were overcome by shivers. He passed a very restless night. The feast of Saint Francis de Sales dawned. Bells had to be rung, and there was to be singing and solemn services. Yet, sadness reigned in all hearts. Even the sacred liturgy seemed an omen of an imminent mourning. In the Epistle, Saint Paul says to Timothy:

"The time of my deliverance is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. For the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice which the Lord, the just Judge, will give to me that day; yet not to me only, but also to those who love his coming."

As the sub-deacon was chanting, many heads were bowed and tears were running down many a cheek. It seemed as if the voice of the Lord were saying: "Don Bosco's pilgrimage is over."

Some felt that the patient ought not to receive Communion that morning, since he seemed to be out of his mind. His secretary was opposed to the idea, for he hoped that when the moment came, Our Lord would restore his consciousness. Viglietti himself said the Mass. The door leading from Don Bosco's room into the chapel was open. After the elevation of the Host, Don Bosco turned to Father Sala, who was with him, and said, "What if I felt nausea after Communion?" Father Sala assured him that there was no such danger. When the priest came to him with the Sacred Host, Don Bosco had dozed off. A few moments earlier, Father Sala had warned him that Our Lord would soon be coming to him and had put a stole on him and had spread a white linen cloth over his chest. Yet, he did not move. But as soon as Father Viglietti said in a loud voice: *"Corpus Domini Nostri Jesu Christi* [The body of Christ]", the patient shook himself up, opened his eyes, gazed at the Host, clasped his hands and, after receiving Communion, lay in contemplation, repeating the words of thanksgiving which Father Sala prompted to him. This was the last Communion Don Bosco received. He again lapsed into delirium. There is rightful reason to believe, that a month before, Don Bosco had foreseen or had had a premonition or had foretold his mental breakdown on this date. The day after Don Bosco had been forced to bed, Father Rua had asked him...since he was his director and confessor...for a renewal of the dispensation from saying the breviary. And Don Bosco had replied:

"I grant you the dispensation until the feast of Saint Francis de Sales. After that, if you will need it, you will have to ask Father Lemoyne for it."

We have used the word "delirium," though his failing strength did not deprive him completely of his lucidity of mind for, toward ten o'clock, fully in command of his faculties, he asked Father Celestine Durando what the time was, what was going on in church, which feast was being celebrated. When he

remembered that it was the feast of Saint Francis de Sales, he seemed happy. When his doctors came in, he lucidly exchanged a few words with them.

His physicians, who together with Dr. Bestanti had held consultation almost every day, now disclosed that there was no hope of recovery for the patient. When they had gone, the patient dozed for a little while, then woke up and asked Father Durando, "Who were those gentlemen who just went out?"

"Didn't you recognize them? They were your doctors."

"Oh I see; tell them that today they are to stay with us for… "

He wanted to finish the sentence and say, "for dinner", but he could not get the words out. That evening he recognized Count Incisa, committee chairman of the feast of Saint Francis de Sales, and also Bishop Rosaz of Susa, who had delivered the homily of the saint. Bishop Rosaz, who died in great sanctity, was a close friend of Don Bosco and used to come and ask for his advice on difficult matters, especially those connected with a Congregation of nuns he had founded.

During that day, Don Bosco had said to his secretary, "If someone comes asking for my blessing and I am not able to speak, you must lift up my arm and make the Sign of the Cross. You will say the words and I will have the intention in my mind."

He no longer understood anything in his almost continuous stupor, save when someone spoke to him of heaven and of matters concerning the soul. Then he would nod his head, and, if prompted to say a prayer, he would do so by moving his lips. When Father Bonetti suggested: *Maria, mater gratiae, tu nos ab hoste protege* [Mary Mother of Grace, protect us from our enemy]. Don Bosco added: *in mortis hora suscipe.* [And welcome us at the hour of our death.] Again he repeated several times that day, "Mother! Mother!" Then at times, "Tomorrow! Tomorrow!" About six o'clock in the evening he whispered, "Jesus… Mary… Mary! Jesus and Mary, [*in manus tuas domine commendo spiritum meum*] I give you my heart and my soul… Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit… Oh, Mother… Mother… open the gates of heaven for me." Then he began repeating phrases from the Scriptures, the phrases which had guided his entire life, and had become the maxims followed in his works: *Diligite.... diligete inimicos vestros… Benefacite his, qui vos persequuntur… Quaerite regnum Dei… Et a peccato meo… peccato meo… munda… munda me.* [Love… Love your enemies… Do good to those who perscute you… seek the kingdom of God and from my sin, from my sin… wash… wash me]. When the Angelus bells rang out, Father Bonetti urged him to greet Our Lady, saying: *Viva Maria!* In a devout and moving voice he repeated: *Viva Maria!*

One of the last words which Don Bosco ever said to Father Rua was this: "Make yourself loved."

Chapter 25

THE END

It seems as though people who are greatly loved can never die. Accustomed to looking to them to find light and strength in life, hearts and minds are unable to believe that what is precious to them might ever be taken from them. At the Oratory, this state of mind endured until the last days of January. In some people, it extended beyond the limits of credibility. The reason for this was that people were hoping for a miraculous intervention of heaven.

On the night of the 30th Don Bosco turned his head slightly towards Enria, who was then constantly in attendance as night male nurse, and said, "Say... but... but... goodbye!" Then very, very softly, he began to recite the Act of Contrition. Now and then he exclaimed, *"Miserere nostri, Domine"*. ["Have mercy, O Lord."] In the dead of night, he would raise his arms heavenward now and again, clasp his hands and repeat, "Your holy will be done!" Later, as his whole right side became slowly paralyzed, he let his right arm lie motionless on the bed. But he did not stop raising his left arm, nor repeating, now and then, "Your holy will be done!" After that he spoke no more; but the whole day on the 30th and the following night, he continued to lift his left hand in the same way, probably intending to signify his renewed offer of his life to God.

Everyone in the house now knew how grave his condition was. Yet, on the feast of Saint Francis, some boys had written on a sheet of paper: "Oh! Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, Most Holy Mary Help of Christians, Saint Francis de Sales our patron Saint, the poor undersigned boys: l. Peter Dondina 2. Louis Orione 3. John Martinasso 4. Joseph Rossi (first year high) 5. Gabriel Aimerito 6. Augustus Bertazzoni 7. Rev. Joachim Berto—offer their own lives to God in order to obtain that the life of their most beloved father and superior Don Bosco may be saved. Ah, we implore you, graciously accept our offer and answer our prayer." This petition was placed beneath the corporal during a Mass celebrated for Don Bosco at Saint Anne's altar by Father Joachim Berto

and served by young Louis Orione. Another six boys signed their names on the same paper, going to Communion for the same intention.[1] Our Lord must not have failed to bless the holy, generous intention of those twelve pious youths.

Unfortunately, all hope had now vanished. Science was forced to retreat, unable to bring back any life to a battered body decaying after half a century of struggles and fatigue. The newest worsening of his disease was noticed on January 20th, the first day of the novena of Saint Francis de Sales, and continued in its slow progress until the feast day of the patron saint, and on which day the venerated patient became paralyzed and lost the power of speech.

Ever since he was unable to speak, he seemed completely out of himself. At ten o'clock Bishop Cagliero recited *Litaniae pro agonizantibus* [the Litany for those who are in agony]; then he gave him the blessing of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, while some of the directors stood around him. They prompted him ejaculatory prayers. Father Charles Viglietti kept moistening his lips with wine. Father Joachim Berto, who for so many years had been his personal secretary and his right arm in many a critical situation,[2] wanted to claim part of this devoted service for himself. Father Anthony Sala put on his shoulders a shirt which had belonged to the saintly Pontiff Pius IX, which Don Bosco had carefully guarded.

The doctors said that Don Bosco would not live beyond the evening or before sunrise. The news spread in a flash all over the Oratory, causing great anguish. The Confreres begged that they might look on him once more, so Father Michael Rua permitted them all to go in and kiss his hand. They gathered in small, silent groups in the chapel and then filed past his deathbed, one by one. He lay there on his humble bed, his head slightly raised, but inclined somewhat toward his right shoulder, propped up on three pillows. His face was not drawn, but calm; his eyes half-closed; his right hand spread out on the quilt. On his chest there was the crucifix, and he was clasping another one in his left hand. At the foot of the bed there was his purple stole, the symbol of his priesthood. With tears in their eyes, his sons approached the bed on tip-toe, kneeling beside it, to imprint their last

[1] They were: Bernard Cerri, Peter Olivazzo, Joachim Bressan, Florence Magrinelli, Peter Orsi, and John Pacchioni.

[2] During the previous days Fr. Berto had had the consolation of hearing Don Bosco say with his own lips, "You will always be my dear Fr. Berto."

kiss on his sacred hand which he had lifted to aid them so many times. Salesians from neighboring schools—Saint John's, Valsalice and San Benigno—were also there. The students of the upper classes and the older ones among the artisans took turns after the Salesians. The sad and most love-laden procession continued throughout the day. The majority carried medals, crucifixes, rosaries, holy pictures, had them touch Don Bosco with the intention of treasuring them later as dear and blessed souvenirs.

A telegram came from the Republic of Ecuador to announce the arrival of the Salesians at Guayaquil. Father Rua let Don Bosco know about it in a loud voice, speaking as we do to a person who is hard of hearing. It seemed to some that he had opened his eyes, turning them heavenward.

At twelve forty-five when, for a brief instant, only his secretary and Joseph Buzzetti were standing near his bed, Don Bosco opened his eyes wide, he stared twice, at length, at Father Charles Viglietti, he lifted his left hand which was free, and rested it on his head. As Buzzetti saw that gesture, he burst into tears, exclaiming, "That is his last farewell." Then he relapsed into his previous immobility. The secretary continued repeating ejaculatory prayers. Then Bishop Cagliero and Bishop Leto took turns in continuing these prayers. Father Francis Dalmazzo gave him the blessing for the dying, saying the accompanying prayers.

Around four o'clock in the afternoon, Count Radicati, a great benefactor of the Oratory, went to see him. An old schoolmate of Don Bosco at Chieri, Father Eugene Francesco, remained in a corner of the room weeping for an hour. At six o'clock Father Francis Giacomelli appeared,[3] put on his stole, and said some ritual prayers. Since it was late that night and Don Bosco did not seem about to die immediately, several of the superiors went to bed, though Father Rua and others did not move. The dying man lay motionless, breathing heavily. He remained like this the whole night long. Coincidentally, the Archdiocese of Turin was commemorating the office of the Prayer of Jesus in the Garden, when our Redeemer, with only three disciples near him, was in agony and sweating blood. Surrounded by his first pupils and his main collaborators, Don Bosco was entering into a painful agony, and the sweat of death was moistening his forehead.

[3] Fr. Giacomelli (1820–1901), Don Bosco's former seminary companion, was his confessor from 1873 on.

He entered into his death agony at one-forty five in the morning on January 31st. When Father Rua saw that he was failing rapidly, he put on his stole and resumed the prayers for the dying, which he had already begun to say some two hours earlier. The other superiors were hastily summoned. Some thirty people between priests, clerics and laymen filled the room and knelt praying.

When Bishop Cagliero entered the room, Father Rua passed the stole to him, and moved over to Don Bosco's right hand side: he bent down to whisper into the beloved Father's ear, and with a voice choked by grief said, "Don Bosco, we, your sons, are here." "We beg you to forgive us for all that we have caused you to suffer and to give us your blessing once again as a token of your forgiveness and your paternal benevolence. I will guide your hand and pronounce the blessing formula." All bowed their heads. Doing violence to his own heart, Father Rua lifted his paralyzed hand, pronounced the blessing formula over the Salesians present and absent, and especially over those who were the farthest away.

At three o'clock a telegram came with the apostolic blessing sent by Cardinal Rampolla. Bishop Cagliero had already read the final prayers, *"Proficiscere"* [move on!]. At four-thirty the bells of Mary Help of Christians rang out for the Angelus, which everyone recited softly. Father Bonetti whispered his *Viva Maria* once again into Don Bosco's ear as he had done the day before. The death rattle, which was heard for about an hour and a half, stopped. His breath suddenly became free, calm, but it was a matter of only a few seconds. Then he stopped breathing. "Don Bosco is dying!" Father Dominic Belmonte exclaimed. The people, who in their weariness had been sitting down, leapt to their feet and got closer to his bed. He breathed then three times, with short intervals. Don Bosco truly was dying. Staring at him, Bishop Cagliero said, *"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, assist me in my last agony. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, may my soul breathe forth in peace with you."*

Standing in a circle around him, Father Rua and the others lived out their own painful anguish together with their Father. Don Bosco was dead! With a sigh, Bishop Cagliero then intoned: *Subvenite, sancti dei; occurrite, angeli Domini...suscipientes animam ejus suscipiat te Christus, qui vocavit te* [Come saints of God, angels of heaven, accompany his soul to paradise. May Christ who called you, take you to himself]. He blessed the holy body and prayed to God for its eternal rest.

Then Don Bosco's stole was put around the neck of the revered departed, and the Crucifix he had so often kissed was placed in his hand. It was now four forty-five a.m. Don Bosco was seventy-two years and five and a half months old.

Everyone knelt down; the *De profundis* was recited between groans and sobs. If there was anyone who had to speak in the presence of the lifeless remains of Don Bosco, that was Father Rua, and Father Rua spoke and said, "We are doubly orphaned. But let us be comforted. Though we have lost a father on earth, we have gained a protector in heaven. Let us prove ourselves worthy of him, by following his holy examples."[4]

Until ten o'clock the room was filled with Salesians who prayed and cried. A cross with four lit candles was placed by the window which was on the left side of the bed and opened onto the covered balcony.

During community Mass, the boys recited the rosary for the dead and all Masses said were offered up for the repose of Don Bosco's soul. A solemn High Mass for the dead was sung at ten o'clock. "Sadness" was carved on all foreheads.

The infirmarians then washed the body, clothed it, and placed it in an armchair with the assistance, guidance and direction of the physicians Albertotti and Bonelli who wished to demonstrate their deep affection for their deceased friend to the very end. Brother Enria shaved him. Deasti, the photographer, and the artist Rollini took photos of him in the chair. They had already done so as he lay on the bed in the position in which he had died. The superiors did not feel like consenting to having a death mask made, for they could not bear the thought of the face of their beloved father being coated with plaster. Out of the same feeling of respect, they did not consent to him being embalmed. Dr. Fissore himself had said, "I have known Don Bosco for many years. I have so much respect for his body that I could not find it in my heart to profane it by embalming it." The same physician made a solemn declaration before the whole superior council when he heard about the spiteful insinuations

[4] More dead than alive, Fr. Viglietti was then told to go to bed. He went to rest with his family, so that Dr. Vignolo, who was his uncle, could tend to him. Fr. Rua instructed Fr. Bonetti to keep up his diary, at least so that the more outstanding events would be recorded. Fr. Lemoyne relates something very strange: the clock on the belfry of the church of Saint Francis de Sales had stopped in 1865, the hands on the dial remaining still for a number of years at four-twenty. Fr. Lemoyne had taken note of the hour, believing that it might have connection with the hour when Don Bosco's work would be interrupted by death. Some years later the hands of the clock moved again because some day students, climbing the belfry, had for fun turned the wheels. But with this idea in mind on the day of Don Bosco's death, Fr. Lemoyne went to look at the clock. To his astonishment, he saw that after so many handlings, the hands again pointed to four-twenty.

published by *Secolo XIX* declaring that medicine could not even suspect that Don Bosco's sickness had been caused by anything else but his enormous work.

The tragic news which spread all through the city in the early hours of the afternoon caused a profound, general impression. Many stores and offices remained closed, with notices outside: Closed on account of Don Bosco's death. People crowded into the main entrance of the Oratory asking whether they might see his remains. Since there was not enough room, only the better-known visitors were granted access. The others were told that they would be able to see it the following day in the church of Saint Francis, which was then being transformed into a funeral chapel.

The body was seated in the armchair in the corridor behind the private chapel and was clothed with the purple vestments of the Mass. A Crucifix was in his hands, the head was bare; his biretta stood to his right hand on a pri-dieu on which there was a crucifix between two candles. The face was turned to the right, the features apparently unchanged. Had the pallor of death not made a strange contrast to the purple vestments, one would have thought that Don Bosco was sleeping peacefully. His sons came one after another to pray and kiss his hand. Large numbers of priests, a great many aristocrats and devout ladies regarded it a privilege to be permitted to come and see him. They moved slowly, on tip-toe, as though afraid to wake him from his slumber. No one felt any repugnance about putting their lips to the alabaster-white hands. A reverent, devout stillness prevailed in the room. Toward dusk, a number of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians came to kiss the hand of their saintly Founder and Father, also on behalf of their far-away Sisters. The mournful pilgrimage continued uninterruptedly until evening.

Newspapers sold rapidly in the streets of Turin. *Il Corriere Nazionale* had to print three editions all in the same day, and were immediately sold out. The name of Don Bosco passed from lip to lip, with signs of profound sadness.

Now thought had to be given to his burial. Meeting at eight o'clock, the members of the superior council made a solemn promise to Mary Help of Christians that if, by her grace, through her intercession, the civic authorities granted permission to bury Don Bosco in the basement of her church, or at least in our house at Valsalice, work would soon commence on the decoration of her shrine, something which had already

been a treasured project of the Servant of God. Yet while they were seeking the support of heaven, they did not neglect their own obligations on earth, as we shall see in the following chapter. "What an evening! What a night!" Father Bonetti wrote in that dreadful hour. "This is our first night since Don Bosco died! Oh evening! Oh night, which has come to us all too soon! Oh! Don Bosco! Oh! Father! Watch over our sleep from heaven, watch over and smile upon our vigils from above."

Father Rua, Don Bosco's zealous vicar, holding in check the feelings of his heart behind the idea, of duty had already sent the sad news of the event by telegram to the Holy Father, to Cardinal Alimonda, the Salesian houses, and a certain number of benefactors.[5] He had also written the following circular letter and had it printed and mailed. Thirty thousand copies had been translated into French, eight thousand into Spanish.

Turin, January 31, 1888

To the Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and our Salesian Cooperators:

It is with anguish in my heart and with eyes swollen with tears and a trembling hand that I give you the most painful news that I have ever announced, or that I could ever announce in my lifetime. I announce to you that our most beloved Father in Jesus Christ, our founder, friend, the counsellor and leader of our life, is dead. Ah! This is a word, which pierces our very souls, which stabs through our heart, setting free a river of tears.[6]

The private and public prayers addressed to heaven for his recovery delayed this blow to us somewhat, staving off this wound, this blow, this most bitter plague, but they were not good enough to save it, as we had hoped they might.

There is nothing to comfort us in this hour, save the thought that God so willed it, and He is infinitely good and does nothing which is not just, wise, and holy. Therefore, we reverently bow

[5] For a month the Salesians of America lived with a painful uncertainty. The telegram had been addressed to the Archbishop of Buenos Aires and said: "Bosco dead, Rua successor, Cagliero." It had cost about one hundred twenty lire; but it did not reach its destination. Under its own name, the Havas News Agency communicated its contents to the newspapers. It was believed that it was a fraud. It may also have been that the Archbishop was away and that his secretaries had not thought it essential that they pass on the information immediately and forgot about it, so that it was lost.

[6] This last sentence was eliminated in the French translation.

our heads in resignation, and adore His high designs.

For the time being there is no need for me to say other than that Don Bosco died the death of the just, a calm and serene death, comforted in good time by all the comforts of religion, several times blessed by the Vicar of Jesus Christ, visited by prelates eminent in their piety and many illustrious persons, both ecclesiastic and secular, Italian and foreigners alike, assisted with filial love by his sons, tended with love and outstanding expertise by outstanding doctors. Nor will I tell you of his virtues or of his works, for the time is short, and my heart is heavy.

For the time being I will only say that, a few days ago, Don Bosco said that his Congregation would not suffer on account of his death since it was protected by the valid intercession of Mary Help of Christians and because it was sustained by the charity of our Cooperators who would continue to help it.

For our part, we add that it is our profound conviction that this will indeed be so, because from heaven, where we have every reason to believe he has already been gloriously welcomed, Don Bosco will still act as our most tenderly loving Father now more than ever, wielding his beneficial loving influence yet more effectively over us before the throne of Jesus Christ and of his divine Mother, and the blessings of heaven will be showered upon us still more abundantly.

I have been appointed to take his place and I will do my best to live up to the general expectations. Assisted by the deeds and counsels of my confreres, I am confident that the Society of Saint Francis de Sales, which is sustained by the hand of God, assisted by the protection of Mary Help of Christians, comforted by the charity of our meritorious Salesian Cooperators, will continue the work of its eminent and lamented Founder, especially in the field of assistance to poor, abandoned youth and the foreign missions.

Yet one more consideration. Following the example of our glorious patron, Saint Francis de Sales, whenever Don Bosco read or heard words uttered or written by persons benevolently disposed toward him, he many times expressed his fears that after his death, people would think that he did not need any prayers and thus would leave him longer in Purgatory.

Therefore, in keeping with his wishes, and as a token of filial love, I recommend to you all that you say fervent prayers for the repose of his soul, well aware that Our Lord will know to whom they should be applied.

Salesians, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Cooperators, boys and girls entrusted to our care, we no longer have our good father here on earth. We shall see him again in heaven if we treasure his counsel and faithfully follow in his virtuous footsteps.

Your most affectionate brother and friend,
Rev. Michael Rua

N.B. The revered Don Bosco died on January 31st at four forty-five in the morning. He will be buried on Thursday, February 2nd, at three o'clock in the afternoon. His funeral Mass will be celebrated at 9:30 in the morning in the Church of Mary Help of Christians.

A priest of Moncrivello, Father Perotti, writing on February 2nd to Father Bonetti, aptly voiced the general impression made upon all who had read this letter: "I very much liked Father Rua's calm and reassuring words. His letter has maintained and almost increased public confidence in the continuity of Don Bosco's works."

After the superiors and the members of the Salesian Family, no one could possibly have felt the loss of Don Bosco more keenly than his first past pupils of the Oratory. Therefore, their committee immediately issued its own circular letter addressing all the past pupils.

A flood of condolences followed the flood of prayers for his recovery and the flood of congratulations upon his improvement. The first who comforted Father Rua was the famous Jesuit, Father Secondo Franco, who called on Father Celestine Durando and said, "I have come to congratulate you, because you have a saint in Paradise." Many people wrote their names in a special visitors' book.[7] Telegrams and letters came

[7] Giustina, to whose insults and slander we have frequently had occasion to allude, wrote: "E.A. Giustina, editor of *Cronaca dei tribunali,* is proud to have been the pupil of a man he always respected deeply and sincerely." These words would not have been true at all, unless they were to be understood as a just recantation. In his periodical (February 4th), he published a curious article. We ought to add that for some years he had not only desisted from attacking Don Bosco, but he had even informed him how he regretted his recent past.

in bundles, also from far away countries. Since we cannot render an account of all of them, however, we have to make but one single exception for the man who, during the last four years of Don Bosco's life, was his angel of consolation. When he arrived in Genoa on January 31st, Cardinal Alimonda telegraphed to ask if he could hope to find Don Bosco still alive, were he to leave that city immediately. Learning of his death, he wrote to Father Rua: "It is useless to tell you how bitter was the news from your telegram! My dear and venerated Don Bosco chose not to wait for me so that I might kiss his sacred hand once again and beg him to intercede for me with God! Let us bow before the will of Our Lord!" In all these sympathy letters, the theme so to speak was obligatory, and it was that Don Bosco had no longer need of prayers, but rather that he was to be prayed to. Some in one way, some in another, all proclaimed him a Saint. Quite a number of people begged, as a great favor, to have some article he had used or a bit of his hair.[8]

Newspapers of all editorial persuasions and all nations sang the dead man's praises, with the exception of *La Gazzetta del popolo* of Turin. It preferred to keep silent, since it could not say anything bad about him. Even worse, it announced his death only in the usual obituary list of the city which was issued daily by City Hall. Even a comic periodical of Turin which was printed in Piedmontese dialect was honest enough, although it was also anti-clerical in sentiments, to apply the Sub-Alpine proverb to the editor of *La Gazzetta,* saying that by this gesture, he had proved that it was indeed true that as one grows older, one loses the best.[9]

During the early hours of February 1st, the blessed remains were devoutly moved to the church of Saint Francis. Shortly before this, it

[8] The historian Cesare Cantó wrote to Fr. Rua:

Feast of Our Lady's Purification, 1888, Milan

Reverend Sir:

After having admired Don Bosco's inexhaustible charity, upright evangelical spirit, and unfaltering patience for forty years, I can only pray to him now that in heaven, he may implore the grace that I too may die with the same faith and hope as he.

Cesare Cantó

It would be as well that we reproduce at least a sampling of the letters of condolence in the Appendix. All those who had met him or seen him, delighted in mentioning it as a great boon. This provides a precious documentary for a fuller acquaintance with our Saint. See Appendix, doc. 99.

[9] *'l Falabrach,* February 5, 1888: "My dear Botero, it really is true that as one grows old, one loses the best of one's self and this time, you really overdid it in your excessive zeal." On February 3rd, *L'Unità cattolica* wrote very aptly: "Honest men are in the habit of omitting reference to those they are unable to say anything <u>good</u> about. The true Free Masons prefer to keep their peace about people of whom they can say nothing <u>bad</u>."

seemed that a true grace had been granted to Brother Bona, the coadjutor who was holding the bucket of holy water. He had been enduring great pain in one leg for more than a month. That very morning he had found it extremely difficult to go up and down stairs. Mentally, he had appealed to his dear Father and at the very moment that Father Bonetti sprinkled the corpse with holy water, Bona felt his pain disappear completely.[10]

The church had been completely decorated with black mourning drapes. The remains of the Saint were not lying on its funeral bier, as is usually the case, but was seated instead in an armchair on a raised platform. Many candles burned all around it. The boys filed past, looking at their father with tearful eyes as he sat there as though asleep, his head inclined slightly to the left, his appearance calm, composed, almost smiling, the eyes half closed, looking at the picture of Jesus Crucified which he held in his clasped hands.

The little church was opened to the public at eight o'clock. The coming and going of visitors lasted from morning until night in such great number that the police had to be engaged to control it, making sure that the exit was different from the entrance. Anyone who saw the streets at Valdocco at this time must have had the impression that the whole of Turin was flocking to the Oratory. Inside the house a lot of praying was going on.

One comment was repeated continuously, almost like a password: *He was a saint!* Innumerable people handed to a priest medals, holy pictures, rosaries, handkerchiefs, and books of prayer so that he might put them near his venerated remains or placed them only for an instant in his hallowed hands. What an intense emotion! How many tears! During the afternoon the crush increased beyond all control, so it was prohibited to bring any more personal objects to be touched by the hands of the deceased. The church of Mary Help of Christians was likewise crowded throughout the day. All entrances were closed by eight in the evening; but later, they had to be opened again to admit so many people who had come from different parts of Piedmont.

The most moving moment of the day came late at night when Don Bosco's sons said goodbye to the remains of the their Father. All the Oratory boys went into the little church at nine p.m. and knelt on the ground to say their prayers. Then, in the midst of that solemn silence, Father John Baptist Francesia stood up to deliver the usual "good night" talk to the hundreds of kneeling boys. "Do you see our beloved Father

[10] Letter from Bona to Fr. Rua, February 2, 1888.

here, so calm, so serene, with that smile dwelling on his lips? It looks as if he would like to speak to you, and you almost expect him to stand up and address you. But alas, he is no longer able to repeat those tender instructions that he gave us so many times. He is no longer able to talk to us. For this reason the superiors have called on me to take his place. Now, what am I to say to you from this place, where Don Bosco did so much for you? I will only repeat the last thing he left said for you. When he was asked what last souvenir he wished to have passed on to his boys, he answered: *"Tell the boys that I await them all in Paradise."* The general recollection was so intimate and absolute that you could almost have heard the heavy breathing of the listeners. And Don Bosco, with the calm serenity of death, looked like one about to bless his beloved children who did not know how to tear themselves away from him. When orders were given that each class leave the church and go to its dormitory, they all remained where they were, as if they had not heard, gazing tearfully at his beloved face for the last time. When at last they started moving out they all had their heads still turned up to the exit door to have a last glance of him.

All through the night the Salesians kept vigil and prayed by the remains of Don Bosco. Father Rua remained kneeling beside it for a long time, absorbed in deep meditation.

Before eight in the morning on Thursday, February 2nd, the corpse was removed and placed in a triple coffin, clothed in its sacred vestments. At that moment a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians was led near the coffin. She was imploring for the grace of sight. Her name was Adele Marchese. Ever since September 1887, specialists had declared that she was suffering from *gutta serrena* [amaurosis], a disease which rejected all kinds of treatment. When she reached the coffin, she took Don Bosco's hand and put it to her eyes. Then she said, "I can see him." Again she brought the hand close to her eyes, and said even louder, "I can see everything. I can see quite well." Her Mother Superior put a handkerchief over her mouth to stop her from shouting, and Father Bonetti had someone take her away. She had truly recovered her eyesight! Father Lemoyne writes: "I did not know her. One night I was called to assist a dying nun. Among the sick nuns I noticed one whose eyes were brilliantly shining in the dim light coming from a little lamp that lit the room. I then had an idea. "Are you the one to whom Don Bosco has restored the eyesight?" I asked. "Yes, Father," she answered. The Chilean gentleman Barros who had come to Turin with his two

cousins together with Bishop Cagliero was an eyewitness to this miraculous recovery. He had come back with his cousins the day of Don Bosco's death. When he returned to his native country, he talked and wrote about it enthusiastically.

The coffin was carried through the side door to the church of Mary Help of Christians and placed on the catafalque, which had been built beneath the dome. Many French, Swiss, and Irish pilgrims, who were on their way to Rome, lined up on either side as the coffin was carried through the courtyard. Inside the church, the area accessible to the congregation had been filled already for hours. From outside, one heard the subdued noise made by the infinite multitude thronging the square and overflowing into the avenues which led into it. Bishop Cagliero officiated, and the choir sang the Mass he had composed in 1862. The church was ablaze with candles, and lit further by a number of torches and lamps.

The coffin should have been closed and sealed before it was brought into the church, but permission had been granted by the municipal authorities to delay this so that many Salesians who were coming from other localities might have the comfort of looking at the face of their Father for the last time.

The coffin was closed officially at two o'clock in the afternoon in the presence of the members of the Superior Council and some hundred other people, some Salesians and some lay collaborators. Father John Bonetti had drawn up the minutes and Father Ernest Vespignani, a calligrapher, had copied them, and the manuscript was now placed in a glass vial, hermetically sealed, at the foot of the corpse, after the superiors and several eminent people had signed it.[11] When the leaden plate had been welded on the coffin, the walnut lid was placed over it and secured with screws. "Farewell, sacred remains of Don Bosco," one Turin newspaper wrote, very aptly voicing the sentiments stirring in the hearts of all present at that same moment.[12] "You are now gone forever and with you has also gone the star of charity, the apostle of youth, the father of the working classes. With you will be buried the loving glance which could convert, the harmonious voice which through spoken words evangelized, that hand which was lifted in benediction, the feet which brought boun-

[11] Appendix, doc. 100.
[12] *Il Corriere Nazionale,* February 3rd.

ty wherever they trod. Farewell, venerated remains. You are going under ground, but his great soul remains hovering over his undertakings and still alive and eloquent with his examples."

Chapter 26

FORMALITIES NEEDED FOR DON BOSCO'S BURIAL AND LAST FUNERAL HONORS

It was no easy undertaking to arrange for a fitting burial for Don Bosco. Not only his sons, but also his admirers, were absolutely set against the idea of seeing his mortal remains left in the common cemetery. The superiors, as we have mentioned, hoped that they could bury him in the vaults of the Church of Mary Help of Christians. If this plan failed, they wanted to take his coffin to Valsalice. The legal steps taken with the Royal Prefect's Office in Turin were continued at the Ministry Office of the Interior in Rome. Immediately, serious obstacles dawned in regard to the first plan. The appeal was then carried to the King, the Queen, the Duchess of Somaglia, and the Hon. Bonghi, to Correnti. Fair promises were given on all sides, and there truly was great interest; but Francesco Crispi, the prime minister, dissuaded His Majesty, reminding him that other people might take advantage of the opportunity to stage clerical demonstrations. In those days, the so-called clericals were openly despised, and basically even the Government was fearful of their very shadows.

Nevertheless, the superiors were not discouraged. Besides, Father Anthony Sala had a bright idea. He called on the prefect and the mayor of the city to tell them both that, rather than take Don Bosco's remains to the public cemetery, he would take the steps necessary to send them to Paris or Barcelona where they would certainly be welcomed as a treasure. This threat had a positive effect; for it was thoroughly understood what kind of a dishonor would be provided for the Turin authorities, and what kind of a disfavorable reaction would have been created in the whole world if such a thing had happened: it would have aroused a universal censure.

"But what is so wrong about burying Don Bosco in the public cemetery?" the prefect wished to know.

"Because Don Bosco expressed the wish to be with his sons after his death," Father Sala replied, "and I will never allow him to be buried in the

public cemetery no matter what the cost."

"Remember that lengthy formalities will be required to send the coffin outside of Italy."

"In reference to this matter, the local authorities will not deny me what is not denied to any other citizen should he ask for this authorization. A simple telegram to Barcelona will bring me an immediate and willing confirmation."

"The municipal authorities could assign a very honorable site..."

"The municipal authorities treated us very badly when I applied for a burial lot for Don Bosco and his sons in the cemetery."

Here Father Sala informed the prefect that the municipal authorities had always denied his request, that the sum of nineteen thousand lire required for the purchase of a burial lot in the cemetery had to be paid in installments, and had finally even addressed an insolent letter of rejection to the Oratory. The prefect was unaware of this earlier cause of friction between the municipal authorities and the Salesians. At that time all decisions had to be shelved since the royal prefects were not authorized to make recommendations to the state department for burials within the city limits.

At the same time, other steps were being taken in Rome. The procurator Father Caesar Cagliero, and Father Anthony Notario applied for an audience with Crispi. They first had told him about Don Bosco's death. The prime minister was most courteous and told them, "I knew Don Bosco even before you did. I remember how good he was to me when I migrated to Turin." With the tact which so distinguished him, Father Caesar Cagliero seized on his words to ask him to authorize the entombment of Don Bosco in the crypt of the Church of Mary Help of Christians. The prime minister hedged, and brought up the difficulty created by the laws.

"It was precisely for this reason that we have come to see Your Excellency, to ask that you be good enough to make an exception on behalf of Don Bosco," the procurator said.

"That would be too spectacular an exception. It would create a dangerous precedent. Could you not bury him at one of your resident schools? That could be easily authorized and Don Bosco could remain with you. As far as other details, speak with my secretary, Pagliano. Everything can be arranged. See whether he is still in his office. He may have gone out to lunch. Let's try it."

When they saw Pagliano, they realized that the minister Crispi had

already spoken to him. He treated them with every possible deference, and read out to them the articles of the sanitation laws prohibiting burial within the city. Any exception required a decree of the parliament and, considering the times, who knows what kind of a pandemonium would have happened in the chamber! He, too, then asked whether there were not some resident school near Turin. As soon as he heard of Valsalice, he said, "Excellent! Bury him there. You will gain two advantages. Your wish to keep Don Bosco with you will be gratified and we will be spared public comment, not to mention the regret of having to deny your request."

They went back to see Crispi and he endorsed the solution, but he too, just like Correnti, recommended that the funeral should not have the appearance of a clerical demonstration. Then he spoke very highly of the deceased. Besides all this, *La Lega Lombarda* of Milan published a letter written by "an illustrious Salesian Cooperator" who stated that he knew that Don Bosco, in 1852, had welcomed Crespi at his dinner table, and that he had even made his confession to Don Bosco, thus giving the impression that his spirit was, after all, inspired by the Gospel. In those days the news made the rounds of several newspapers and was never denied.

Bishop Emilian Manacorda, Bishop of Fossano, one of Don Bosco's sincerest, most steadfast and generous friends, was a guest at the house of the Sacred Heart. He was anxiously awaiting the return of the two Salesians to know the result of their interview. "A wonderful idea!" he exclaimed when he heard about it "The school of Valsalice is the ideal place for Don Bosco's burial! There he will rest among his young clerics and be an inspiration to them. When you return to Turin, persuade the superiors to go along with this idea. I would even go so far as to say that should they actually obtain permission to bury him at the Oratory, they should not do it. Valsalice is the proper place." Father Anthony Notario departed for Turin immediately to inform the Oratory of the proposed plan.

Realizing that the follow-up of these beaurocratic formalities would have obliged them to apply for a delay of burial exceeding the period prescribed by the law, they knew they had to remove any excuse for a refusal, and a possible reason might even be in connection with any possible emanations from the corpse. To eliminate this possibility, Dr. Bestenti and Dr. Albertotti went to the Church of Mary Help of Christians before the closing of the coffin and poured corrosive sublimate into the corners and the

side padding of the coffin. Thanks to this precaution, they could be certain that the corpse would not generate any noxious odor, even if it had been unburied for a month. In his process, Dr. Bestenti gave more evidence of his great love for Don Bosco. Because time was running short and there was no ladle available, he had to hand squeeze into the coffin the sponge saturated with the corrosive solution which he had mixed in a pail. Father Celestine Durando warned him that the solution would burn the skin of his hands, but he only replied that they had already done their share of work and they might now let him do his. He said he was quite happy to render this last service to his father, as any worthy son should. As a matter of fact, he got so sick that he had to lie down for ten days. His hands had been burnt so badly that he was running a fever.

Now everything was ready for the Saint's funeral translation. Toward three o'clock in the afternoon of February 2nd, the suburbs of Turin looked almost deserted, but the streets in the area of Valdocco were alive, swarming with people, for the newspapers had said that the funeral procession would pass that way. As far back as the memory of man could recall, never had so vast a crowd attended the funeral procession of a simple priest. An overall survey estimated that two hundred thousand people turned out to mourn and honor Don Bosco with their presence. Those who saw it and remembered did not think that the estimate was exaggerated. In a memorandum, Don Bosco had recommended a modest funeral, wanting only his sons to follow the hearse; but how could they prevent anybody from attending, being drawn to the scene by their impelling urge of gratitude, love and veneration?

As the procession emerged from the Church of Mary Help of Christians, it turned right into via Cottolengo and then entered Corso Principe Oddone, turned into Corso Regina Margherita and proceeded to via Ariosto, where it doubled back in the direction of the Church.[1] Eight Salesian priests carried the coffin on their shoulders. As the coffin passed by, people bared their heads and many knelt down. Frequently, the exclamation was heard, "He was a saint!" Father Rua, head bowed, immersed in his great sorrow, followed immediately behind the coffin, between Father Celestine Durando and Father Anthony Sala. The other members of the Superior Council followed them. Behind them there was an immense crowd of priests and laymen, some to render personal homage to the deceased, some as representatives of institutions or public authori-

[1] As far as the order of the procession, cfr. Appendix, doc. 101.

ties. There was even a sprinkling of foreign representatives. Two long rows of servants in livery, bearing the arms of the various patrician families of Turin, led by the footmen of City Hall, filed on either side of the procession.

Just as the leaders of the procession, composed of two groups of the Children of Mary, were already mounting the steps of the Church, the far end of the processions was still proceeding along Corso Principe Oddone. It was now six o'clock. The square and both sides of Via Cottolengo were jammed with people, as far as the eye could see. This huge, compact mass of humanity was as devout as people can be only during the more solemn moments of a sacred church service. Beholding the sight of the immense crowd, the police-force deputy remarked as he passed by Father Joachim Berto, "What could all our police force do with such an immense crowd, if it were not restrained by the respect and veneration for the deceased?"

Only the section of the street which faced the center gates was clear. The boys of the Oratory stood behind the enclosing fence of the shrine. Only the Children of Mary and the numerous clergy entered the Church. As soon as the casket moved towards the entrance, the Oratory band struck a funeral march; the bells filled the air with their mournful tolling. A great blaze from a thousand candles shone through the wide, gaping doors, heralding his return, engulfing the coffin in a sea of light. Of the three bishops who walked ahead of him, two, Bishop Leto and Bishop Cagliero, advanced with their respective attendant priests to the sanctuary, one of them taking his place *in cornu epistulae* [on the epistle side], the other *in cornu evangelii*[on the Gospel side] of the main altar, while the third, Bishop Bertagna, standing on the steps before the altar rails, was waiting for the coffin to be brought before him.[2] The various representatives took their place at the far end. In the midst of a deep, religious silence, the bishop of Capharnaum imparted the ritual absolution.

The procession was so solemn and impressive that one might have described it as an apotheosis, as a triumph rather than a funeral service. "There was no publicity to assure such a gathering," Father Michael Rua testified,[3] "there was barely time enough to send a mortuary letter to the

[2] Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda telegraphed his keen desire to get at once to Turin from Genoa on the evening of January 31st, but he also advised that his state of anguish over the loss of a dear friend would have made it impossible for him to preside at the burial services.

[3] Proc. op. *Summ.*, p. 1032.

Cooperators, while all the newspapers, without even being asked, carried the announcement of his death." In all truth, although the Oratory had known how much Don Bosco had been loved in Turin, no one could have possibly predicted such a remarkable public participation, such a devout demeanor, or such an indiscriminate mingling of social classes. Julius Auffray, editor-in-chief of *La Défense* of Paris, said that two things in Italy had made a very deep impression on him: the papal jubilee in Rome and Don Bosco's funeral in Turin; furthermore, certain details he had found at Don Bosco's funeral were even more astounding. *L'Unità Cattolica* of February 3rd could well publish, without any trace of exaggeration: "Don Bosco's funeral procession was in no way inferior to that of a king."

Once the absolution was imparted to the mortal remains and the public was permitted to enter, there was another extraordinary sight. The congregation rushed to the coffin to touch it, kiss it and to remove a fragment of anything that was on top of it: the wreaths of flowers were crumbled into a thousand pieces. The funeral pall, the symbols of his priesthood, and the coffin itself would have undergone the same fate had there not been a stalwart group of municipal guards there to restrain and stop the onslaught.

After the multitude had thinned out and the doors were closed, the Salesians brought the coffin back to the Church of Saint Francis, where they hid it while waiting to complete the negotiations for its final burial place.

Gradually, as the residents of the Oratory returned to their own quarters, instinctively lifting their eyes to Don Bosco's rooms, they experienced for the first time the feeling of an infinite emptiness that has been produced among them by the disappearance of the guardian angel of their house. Yet, something miraculous happened. When the entire community had assembled, an aura of peace, serenity, and mysterious joy pervaded every corner of the house and each heart. The people who had been weeping only a little while earlier, now felt so at peace that they felt as if they were still living in the days when Don Bosco lived there among them, his children. It was true that Don Bosco was, after all, alive and not far away. It was he who had spread all around so much peacefulness!

Almost to complete the peacefulness of the Oratory, more than to bring comfort in their grief, a letter came from Cardinal Mariano Rampolla, in which Leo XIII himself had dictated the following most significant expressions.

Rome, February 2, 1888

Dear Sir:

The death of the Rev. Don Bosco, who enjoyed a universal esteem, affection and admiration for the institutes of Christian charity he founded, as well as for the zeal with which he constantly worked to further the welfare of souls and for all that he had done so that the Most Holy Name of God might be echoed and be venerated even in the furthermost corners of the earth — the loss of this Apostle has left a great void. The Church mourns him as well as his sons who in him had a most loving Father and a model of the finest virtue.

And I can say that this tragic loss had an even more grievous effect on the heart of His Holiness inasmuch as he had a warm affection for this worthy priest and always felt great esteem for his many undertakings which are all richly endowed with holy and salvific fruits. He turns to the divine mercy and goodness and begs that this blessed soul be generously rewarded in the glory of Heaven.

He cordially imparts his apostolic benediction to the whole Salesian Society firmly believing that it will be comforted in the sorrow which now oppresses it, and encouraged to persevere in the holy endeavor it has inherited from the deceased who devoted indefatigable efforts to this same endeavor throughout his long life here on earth.

I join the Holy Father in voicing these sentiments and wish you every success while I remain in great esteem,

Most affectionately at your service,
Cardinal M. Rampolla

A singular gesture from Divine Providence completed that unforgettable day. While marching in the procession with his colleagues, Dr. Bestenti was troubled by an ominous thought. What if City Hall had opposed the interment of Don Bosco at the school at Valsalice? Suddenly he left the procession to go straight to City Hall where he found an official letter about to be sent to the royal Prefect's Office. When he asked what it was all about, he was told that it concerned the interment of Don Bosco at Valsalice. The physicians of the Public Health Office had rejected the request. But Bestenti, who was employed

by that very same department, stopped the letter, summoned his three colleagues and protested against their decision taken in his absence. He talked so eloquently and persuasively that the vote was canceled and another, more favorable one, taken.

Chapter 27

THE MORTAL REMAINS OF DON BOSCO LAID TO REST AT VALSALICE

Not every hope of burying Don Bosco at the Oratory had been abandoned. A petition to the king, requesting this favor, was making the rounds of the Turin aristocracy. The saintly Princess Clotilde had already recommended the matter to her brother, Humbert. A telegram from Rome at eight o'clock in the evening had provided a glimmer of hope. Influential people were still dealing with this matter, both at the capital and in Turin. Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda and Prince Eugene Carignano of Savoy had their hands in it. They tried to bring up the precedent case of Father Louis da Casoria to support their petition. However, the Superior Council decided to hasten the preparations at Valsalice. The municipal authorities had granted a respite of two days, delaying the interment, but that would expire the evening of the 4th, and if there were no forthcoming decree authorizing burial in the Church of Mary Help of Christians and no place prepared at Valsalice, the regulations of the Health Department would oblige the mayor to send someone to pick up the coffin and have it taken to the public cemetery. There was no time to lose.

Meanwhile, the curiosity of many people was pricked up, since they were anxious to know where Don Bosco would at long last be buried, but they could not get any hint from the Oratory. The Little House of Divine Providence had offered as a temporary grave in the cemetery the one of the famous Father Verri.[1] The rumor was allowed to circulate, since it helped to conceal the actual plan which, if revealed, some newspapers would have certainly used to stir up public opinion which would in turn have raised opposition against such a privilege. At Valsalice, work went on in silence, day and night, to get the

[1] This zealous apostle of Negro girls and boys had died at the Little House of Divine Providence of Cottolengo.

tomb ready. This was indeed a wise course of action; for if the last lingering hopes regarding the Church of Mary Help of Christians had vanished, the urgency of having the remains of Don Bosco buried would have requested that everything at Valsalice be ready, otherwise there would be no escape from the mandatory burial in the public cemetery.

Those hopes were indeed slated to vanish, for Minister Francesco Crispi was not going to retreat from his position as he had stated in a letter to Hon. Ruggiero Bonghi, who passed the information to the superiors in Turin. Since he had to give a justification for his refusal to the influential deputy, the prime minister had written: "I personally took care of the application which the priests of the late Don Bosco had addressed to me a short time ago, and which you recommend in your own letter, regarding the interment of his remains at his own school in Turin. I would have liked very much to grant the request, out of respect for the outstanding personality of the deceased, but the interment within city precincts is in open conflict with the standing regulations of the Health Department and any exception, which as in this particular instance you seem to consider reasonable, would only leave the door open to a continuous violation of the municipal regulations. Thus far, this cabinet has never authorized any such burial, and it is my strict duty to forbid it. That is why, to my deep regret, I am obliged to deny your request." Ever since February 3rd, the outcry of the sectarian press had made itself heard once they got wind that some sort of negotiation was afoot. They were anxious to cross it and so they maliciously insinuated that Crispi had refused authorization because he had been informed that it was all "a clerical maneuver."

The authorization from the prefect at Valsalice was sufficient to bury him there; so, while efforts continued in Rome, contact with the prefect was also not suspended. Count Lovera di Maria, the prefect, seemed unable to make up his mind, since he was as usual afraid of the press. At last, he did hesitantly tell Vigna, the engineer, who was acting as intermediary on behalf of the Oratory, that he would not sign the decree before he had personally measured the distance between the burial place and the surrounding villas. Actually, the regulations did not even prescribe any distance once outside the city walls. Yet, the engineer, sick and tired of all this maneuvering, left his office, hired a coach, and drove to Valsalice to estimate the distance in a more or less approximate survey, and returned with the figures.

As we have already said, the two day grace period was going to

expire the evening of the 4th. Beyond that time, it would be illegal to keep the corpse within the city limits. Understandably, with great anxiety they were waiting for that blessed decree. Father Anthony Sala especially was on edge and about to run a fever. He did not intend to let Don Bosco's body be taken to the public cemetery at any price, not even if it was going to be placed in a temporary vault. It had been agreed that, if necessary, the corpse would have been hidden in his own bedroom on the top floor, and in a remote wing of the house, so that it might escape detection in the event of a police raid. But as God so ordained, the document arrived at four-thirty, and everyone breathed freely again. An hour later, the hearse was already on its way taking Don Bosco toward Valsalice. Before the coffin was placed on the hearse, Father Michael Rua kissed it in tears. Bishop John Cagliero followed the hearse in the coach that the Saint had used for his afternoon outings. Father John Bonetti and Father Anthony Sala rode along with him, all reciting the Rosary. Two other coaches followed, one with an officer in charge, and four grave diggers. The uncertainty which had lasted until the last minute, together with fear that some ugly trick by the press would be used, had obliged the Salesians to keep all plans concealed even from their friends. Therefore, the removal of the body was carried out without anyone even being aware of it.

The hearse entered the courtyard of Valsalice at six o'clock in the evening. The clerics met it with lighted tapers and accompanied the casket to the chapel, eight of them carrying it on their shoulders. Orders received by the officer representing City Hall stipulated that burial was to take place that same evening and that he was to make an official report of it, but the workmen had not quite completed the vault. The clerics sought to gain time by prolonging the chapel services, intoning the office for the dead when the funeral ceremony came to an end. The inspector shrewdly guessed the cause for this innocent delay, but pretended not to notice it. The men who were to witness the burial were kept happy with a few glasses of wine, and convinced that Don Bosco's coffin was already in the vault, they signed the commitment and went home. Their leader came up to Father Guy Barberis and whispered, "I am a past pupil." He said goodbye and left.

Remotis arbitris [when the witnesses left] the coffin was placed in a small vault before which festive drapery had been hung to conceal the hiding place. Everyone was strictly forbidden to mention the matter to anybody outside the school. Don Bosco's body remained

there two more days. Not a word leaked out. There was no danger, therefore, that some evil minded person might create an uproar about it, a calamity that might have caused very serious consequences. This was all the more to be feared because, in order to put pressure on the authorities certain sectarian newspapers had triumphantly published the announcement that, despite applications, petitions, and the intervention of important people, Don Bosco was to be buried in the public cemetery after all.

Luckily, no imprudent move was made so that on Monday, February 6th, he was buried without incident, quietly, late at night, so that not even the neighbors would know. The superiors of the council and several superiors of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, together with their Mother General, witnessed the event. Bishop John Cagliero blessed the grave. Then the coffin was lifted and placed in its vault. Anguished silence reigned while the masons worked rapidly, removing forever from the eyes of his children, the coffin which contained the mortal remains and beloved likeness of their father.

Once the tomb was walled up, the one hundred and twenty clerics assembled in the chapel to chant the evening office for the dead. Then Bishop John Cagliero gave a short talk. The superiors were entrusting a precious treasure to the confreres of the house of Valsalice, a tomb which would one day become glorious. They were to tend it well and to welcome warmly any Salesian from anywhere who came to visit the tomb. They should be the first ones to visit the tomb often to find inspiration and renewed fervor, to practice the virtues of the Saint buried there. After a brief reference to Don Bosco's main virtues, the bishop continued, "The early Christians were inspired to fight for their faith, to suffer and to die for Jesus Christ, drawing their strength from the graves of the martyrs. Saint Philip Neri learnt to be the apostle of Rome by visiting the Catacombs often. Thus will you and all of us, too, draw from this tomb, if we visit it frequently, that same strength which upheld our own Don Bosco in his greatest battles while he labored for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Let us warm ourselves up at the flames of love which continuously blazed in his heart and made him not only the apostle of Turin, Piedmont, or Italy, but also of the most remote corners of the earth."

Father Michael Rua likewise said a few words, stressing that it was Divine Providence who entrusted the remains of Don Bosco to the confreres of Valsalice. He told them that, "during the last vacation period,

all the superiors had unanimously agreed that the resident school for well-to-do youths would be continued, but that some amendments were to be made in the original contract so as to facilitate admission for a larger number of boys. Then, when it had been announced that the house at San Benigno would have been too small, plans had been changed within a few minutes, and with a unanimity which but a few minutes earlier would have seemed impossible. Every obstacle had been removed, especially the one related to the prestige of the institute, for it had been decided instead to abandon the resident school altogether, and establish a house of formation and missionary school for the Salesian clerics there. Don Bosco, who only a few days previously had agreed that the resident school was to be kept open, but with modifications, had likewise gladly approved changes which had been promptly carried out. Why did he remind them of this? To make them understand that, had the house remained a resident school, permission would not have been granted for the remains of Don Bosco to rest there with his sons, nor could they have been permitted to remain at the Oratory, for the state department had refused the application unconditionally, nor would he have been permitted to be buried at Valsalice, because the authorities, both municipal and scholastic, would have forbidden it since the house was a residence for boys. But God, who had ordained that Don Bosco was to be taken away from us, also chose to leave his body near us for our consolation and to have events happen the way we have described. So one could truly say that it was a Divine Decree, which entrusted his custody to the confreres of Valsalice. Therefore, they should show themselves worthy of such a destiny and, by the practice of the virtues of Don Bosco, they should make sure to please him, knowing that his mortal remains were in their midst, as a father dwelling with his sons."

Don Bosco's successor did not stop here, but he went on, "I will now leave three special souvenirs for you:

1. In compliance with the wish expressed by Don Bosco and the intentions of the Church which orders us to pray without distinction for all the faithful until such time as they are declared Venerable by its supreme tribunal, recite at least a *requiem aeternam* whenever you come by his tomb.

2. Go every once in a while near that sacred tomb to make your med-

itation, and to draw strength to practice virtue and, if at times you will feel somewhat lax in the observance of our Rules, if at times passions which seek to lure you into sin will rise up in your hearts, direct those thoughts and lift up your eyes towards this tomb and swear fidelity to God no matter what the cost; swear that you will wage battle against sin, no matter what the sacrifice, and also invoke our dear Father in your temptations and troubles, and Don Bosco from Heaven, where we have well founded reason to know that he is already, will obtain the graces that you ask for.

3. Every time that you turn your gaze in that direction, try to imagine that you are standing before a mirror from which you may copy every visible virtue. Scan your own reflection and try to imagine a voice issuing from the tomb saying: *Imitatores mei estote sicut et ego Christi* [Be imitators of me just as I am an imitator of Christ]. In all your actions think: How would Don Bosco have behaved under such circumstances? Then indeed will come true what we read in the psalms of the Prophets: "*Defunctus, adhuc loquitur.* [He is dead, and yet he still speaks]."

The superiors returned to the Oratory comforted by the fact that everything had succeeded so well, and grateful toward everyone who had lent them a helping hand. Before supper, the clerics of Valsalice gathered around their director, Father Julius Barberis and signed a letter to Father Michael Rua which had been drafted by Father Andrew Beltrami, one of their companions, to promise him that they would faithfully put into practice his souvenirs and instructions, and to render their first tribute to him as their new Rector Major[2]. The letter was taken immediately to Father Rua, to whom it was read aloud after supper in the dining room of the Superior Council.

When news of his burial circulated around the school, several owners of houses and villas in the narrow Salice valley wrote letters to thank the mayor of Turin for having made it possible for Don Bosco to be buried so near to them.

The vault had been tunneled through the wall of the landing where two flights of steps leading from the upper courtyard joined the immense stairway connecting the lower courtyard. The coffin remained there,

2. Appendix, doc. 102.

undisturbed for a year, until a funeral chapel was built for it, with funds pledged by a few past pupils; then it did have a better burial place, at a higher level and more becoming. A Latin epitaph stated the dates and places of his birth and death and described him simply as *"Don Bosco, Father of Orphans."* A few past pupils of Valsalice then had another inscription set there commemorating the time they had spent at the school and vowing their gratitude to the venerated priest. This stone tablet which appears on the wall to the left, climbing the stairs, reads: *"Separated by their chosen careers—the sanctuary, science, the forum, the armed forces —yet always united in mind and heart—the past pupils of the School of Valsalice—to their beloved Father, Don Bosco—as a memorial of their eternal affection."*

From 1889 on, the casket was not touched until sixteen years later (1906) when the official recognition of the corpse, by order of the Congregation of Rites took place. On that occasion, the open coffin remained on display for a few hours in a large hall, while the lining of the casket was being refurbished, after which, it was replaced in the vault to await its triumphal removal in 1929.

Despite the distance, Father Rua always managed to visit this glorious tomb at least once a month. Occasionally, if unable to do so, he more than made up for it abundantly during the retreat, which was attended by a great many Confreres every year. Visitors streamed continuously, drawn by their veneration for the Saint of God and by their faith in his power of intercession. Pilgrims journeyed there from all over Italy and many European countries. Rare indeed was the pilgrimage which passed through Turin on the way to Rome, that failed to visit Don Bosco's tomb to render him homage. Not only people of the working classes, but also people of the nobility, both Italian and foreign, went to Valsalice for this pious purpose. This stream of visitors, which began immediately after his burial, continued without interruption and, indeed, increased as time went by, until the day when the sacred remains were removed and exposed to public veneration in the Church of Mary Help of Christians.

Requests for things which had once belonged to Don Bosco reached the Oratory daily in increasingly larger numbers. To gratify the pious wishes of the more understanding benefactors, at least, Father Michael Rua consulted Father Anthony Sala and Father John Bonetti to see what could be done. They had seen an excellent precedent in Pius IX, for whose relics people had begun to make requests from all over the world

immediately after his death. The relics were sent to them. They now followed this example.

In his spiritual testament of 1884, published in the preceding volume, Don Bosco wrote: "When I am buried, my vicar, in agreement with the prefect, should send all the confreres these last reflections of my mortal life." Don Bosco had put down his thoughts in the form of a letter to the Salesians. Immediately on February 7th, Father Rua ordered several hundred copies to be printed so that there might be one for every confrere, on a paper format which could easily be kept inside the Rules book or some book of devotion, thus making it easy for everyone to read frequently this loving and touching document.

Letter written by the hand of our dearly beloved Father, the Rev. John Bosco, for all Salesians, with instructions to his successor to have copies made hereof for everyone after his death. This is to be received and treasured as his spiritual testament, inspired by the great love he had for his beloved sons in Jesus Christ.

My dear and beloved sons in Jesus Christ:

Before leaving you for eternity, I have certain obligations toward you to fulfill, and this way I will respond to a fervent desire of my heart.

First of all, I thank you with the warmest affection of my heart for the obedience which you have shown me and for all that you have done to support and expand our Congregation.

I am leaving you here on earth, but only for a little while. I hope that the infinite mercy of God will make sure that all of us meet together one day in the blessed eternity.

I beg you not to cry at my death. This is a debt that we all must pay, but afterward we will be generously rewarded for every effort made out of love for our Master, our good Jesus.

Instead of weeping, make firm and efficacious resolutions to remain steadfast in your vocation unto death. Be watchful and make sure that neither the love of the world, nor your affection for your relatives, nor the desire of a more comfortable life, lure you into the great mistake of profaning your sacred vows and thus betray the religious profession by which we have consecrated ourselves to the Lord. Let no one take back what we have given to God.

If you have loved me in the past, continue to love me in the

future with your exact observance of our constitutions. Your first Rector is dead. But our real Superior, Jesus Christ, will not die. He will always remain our Master, our Guide, our Model, but bear in mind that, in due time, He will also be our Judge and the rewarder of our fidelity to His Service.

Your Rector is dead, but another will be elected[3] who will take care of you and of your eternal salvation. Listen to him, love him, obey him, pray for him, just as you have done for me.

Farewell, dear sons, farewell. I await you in Heaven. There we shall talk of God, of Mary, the mother and mainstay of our Congregation; there shall we bless for all eternity our Congregation, since the observance of its Rules has powerfully and effectively contributed to our salvation.

Sit nomen Domini benedictum ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum. In te, Domine, speravi, non confundar in aeternum.

Rev. John Bosco

In this same Testament Don Bosco had included a number of brief notes to distinguished men and women benefactors, to be sent to them after his death. Father Michael Rua detached those addressed to people still living in 1888, and sent them just as they had come out of the pen of the Saint. This precious souvenir aroused a profound feeling of gratitude and veneration in them all.

Very aptly, *L'Unità Cattolica* wrote that one should pray, not weep, at the tomb of a Saint. As we look through the large number of letters addressed to Father Rua after Don Bosco's death, we find eulogies of his holy life and words of infinite faith in the power of his intercession, more than any sorrowful lamentation. But there was more than that. Already on February 8th, Father Rua informed the Superior Council that Cardinal Lucido Parocchi, Protector of the Congregation, had advised him to take steps with Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda so that, as archbishop of Turin, he apply to the Holy See asking that, in derogation from ecclesiastic prescription, permission be granted immediately for the preparatory phase in the process of

[3] When the Saint had prepared this letter, Fr. Michael Rua had not yet been appointed Vicar with right of succession.

beatification. Don Bosco had barely descended into the tomb when the path of his true glory before the world had already begun to take shape.

Chapter 28

OPINIONS ON DON BOSCO'S HOLINESS DURING HIS LIFE AND AFTER HIS DEATH

The inspired author of Sirach wrote of holy men: "Their seed and their glory shall not be forsaken; their bodies are buried in peace, and their name lives unto generation and generation; the people will declare their wisdom and the congregation proclaim their praise."[1] This is what happened and continues to happen in connection with Don Bosco. Hardly had he descended into the peace of the tomb than, already admired and beloved when alive, he continued to fill the world with the echo of his fame, calling forth praise in all languages without waiting for the infallible judgment of the Church to assign him to the glory of the altars and make his veneration universal. We can say that the voice of the people anticipated the voice of God, or that it was really the voice of God himself which later was made manifest through the channel of the ecclesiastic magisterium. The opinion that he was a saint had followed him during his lifetime. It now became a profound conviction, and a worldwide one immediately after his death. We now propose to turn the pages of the compendiums of the processes to find authoritative sworn testimony of such a reputation, for when surveyed all together, they will enhance more and more the splendor of our Father before our eyes. We shall, however, restrict the number of witnesses quoted. It will be enough that we recall seven non-Salesian and twelve Salesian witnesses. In reference to everyone, we will quote only that which they declared to be their own personal knowledge and the most significant section of their testimony. We do not need footnotes. When we quote their names, anyone who wishes to, will easily find reference to them. Let this be a wreath of evergreens placed on the glorious tomb of our venerated Founder, or if one so prefers, a harmonious choir of voices raised in tribute to his loving memory.

[1] Sirach 44:13–15.

Among those who were not Salesians, we will give priority to a layman, a man of the people: one John Bisio, a shop owner. He lived at the Oratory for seven years from 1864 onward, and always remained in contact with Don Bosco. He first had the desire to meet him when he heard a priest of his native village describe him as a saint. There is one feature in his testimony which is outstanding. He had accompanied Don Bosco several times to small villages in Piedmont; he had noticed how many people knelt to receive his blessing as he passed by; how others stood at their windows or doorways to look at him, while mothers held out their children so that he might bless them. "He looked just like the Nazarene in the midst of children," he said.

Two priests who knew Don Bosco intimately were Father Felix Reviglio, the pastor of Saint Augustine in Turin and Canon Ballesio, the vicar forane of Moncaglieri. Father Reviglio had frequented the Oratory ever since 1847, and was later a resident at the hospice, so he had enjoyed an intimate friendship with the Servant of God throughout his lifetime. He had always regarded him as a saint worthy of the glory of the Altar and said that this opinion was not only widespread among his pupils but also among strangers who had thus expressed themselves, and he heard them. He also referred to priests who, when they had Don Bosco as a guest at their table, were honored to put aside the silverware and other things he had used during the meal. They looked on these things as precious relics, once the Servant of God was dead. Father Ballesio too, who was a pupil at the Oratory for eight years starting in 1857, enjoyed a constantly progressive intimacy with Don Bosco all his life. "I would not know which saint ever enjoyed a greater reputation of holiness among all categories of people, both ecclesiastic and secular," he said. He also said he was firmly convinced that the devotion shown by the Salesians and the Cooperators toward the Servant of God was rather an echo than the cause of the universal confidence people had in the power of his intercession.

In the early volumes of *The Biographical Memoirs* we came frequently across the name of Canon John Baptist Anfossi. He had attended his high school courses, his philosophy and theology courses at the Oratory from 1853 on. When he left, he maintained a filial relationship with Don Bosco, who always regarded him as one of the family. He had heard several classmates, especially Father Francis Oddenino, with whom Fr. Anfossi had shared meals for twenty-four years, at the time of his testimony say that as a cleric, Don Bosco had been greatly esteemed

for his holiness by his companions. While still a cleric at the Oratory, Anfossi had been sent by Don Bosco on several errands to bishops, and on these occasions he had heard them speak high praises of the holiness of the man who had sent him to them. Bishop d'Angennes, the archbishop of Vercelli, could not stop praising him in the presence of several canons. How the fame of his holiness had spread beyond the frontiers of Italy, the witness experienced during his travels to France, Belgium Holland, and Germany. Whenever he came to any sacristy, wishing to celebrate Mass, many people would ask him whether he knew Don Bosco. When he answered that he had been a pupil of his, he found himself treated with extreme courtesy, held back at length to long conversations since they all wanted to know more of his works. This is how he ended his testimony: "I always admired the holy life of the Servant of God and the conviction of his holiness is still in my mind. In fact, it grows stronger every day, and it has never occurred that I heard anybody say anything contradictory to the universal opinion that Don Bosco was a saint."

Who is there who does not know Father Leonard Murialdo, the founder of the Fathers of Saint Joseph, whose cause of beatification is now in progress? It is well known how much he helped Don Bosco in the early days of his festive oratories in Turin. His relationship with Don Bosco dated back to 1851. "It is a fact that even prior to his death, the Servant of God enjoyed a reputation of holiness among a great many people, both of the working classes and of the aristocracy. This fame also spread abroad. I had proof of it myself. A few years before Don Bosco died, a lady of Saint Stephen in France, sent a trusted priest expressly to Turin to ask him to call on her, since she hoped she might obtain the grace of recovery from sickness, thanks to his blessing. Several times in France I also heard people speak in praise of him as a man to be admired by all." When asked what he had to say about his holiness *post obitum*, he replied: "I see that people feel esteem, reverence and devotion for the Servant of God, and this can be said not only of the working classes, but also of pious, wise, and discerning people, and not only people of Turin, but also from elsewhere and even foreigners."[2]

Two bishops testified as eyewitnesses. The first of the two was Bishop

[2] On January 2, 1891, the Archbishop of Paris was receiving the respectful good wishes for the New Year from his assembled clergy and when he came to Fr. Joseph Ronchail he embraced him and said: "Here we have the superior of the house of Saint Don Bosco. The Church has not yet proclaimed him a saint, but it will do so." (Letter from Fr. Ronchail to Fr. Belmonte, Paris, January 8, 1891).

Vincent Tasso, of the priests of the Mission, bishop of Aosta, who had entered the Oratory high school in 1862. He stated: "When I left the Oratory because Our Lord had summoned me elsewhere, I grew steadily more and more convinced of the holiness of the Venerable one. Even when I compared him to other people of great charity and virtue with whom I had contact, he always seemed to be, in my eyes, the most outstanding person I had ever met, as far as virtue, great works, and supernatural qualities. This conviction is still growing, just as my veneration for him grows. The more I study him, the more do I admire and venerate his sanctity. It is therefore my conviction that the reputation of holiness that he enjoyed was neither imaginary nor artificial, but soundly based upon his actual merits, favored by God with graces and miracles so as to glorify his Servant and elevate him to the glory of the Altar. I sincerely trust that this may very soon come to pass."

The other bishop is the renowned scholar of moral theology, Bishop John Baptist Bertagna, titular bishop of Capharnaum and auxiliary bishop to Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda. He had known Don Bosco since his childhood, since he had received instruction in Latin from him during the fall vacation for a number of years. Later, especially after he became a priest, he maintained constant intimate contact with him. This is his well-pondered opinion: "Don Bosco was looked upon as an extraordinary man, and many people considered him a saint. Many attributed miracles to him. The fact of seeing him, the last eight or ten years of his life, already full of health problems, always besieged by all kinds of people and yet always calm, never showing the slightest sign of impatience, never showing that he was in a hurry, never doing rashly what he was expected to do, all this, in my opinion, is a good reason to say, if he was not a saint, he certainly gave the impression of being one. The success of his main work, that which represented practically the purpose of his whole life I mean his Congregation is what to me proves more convincingly than anything else that Don Bosco was a saint."

Now let us listen to Salesian witnesses who had far greater opportunity of studying the Servant of God at closer range than the previous witnesses. Some of them had observed him in his everyday life for years and years, and were accustomed to seeing him in the intimacy of his home life. They saw him under those circumstances in which as a rule, people do not trouble to exercise any great control over their actions. With so many constant and intimate contacts, it is humanly speaking impossible

that he could have concealed his defects, had any existed. That is why one's intimates do not always share with strangers the admiration for the virtues of people who are still rated among the greatest saints. But in regard to Don Bosco, exactly the opposite was the case. The greater and the more constant intimacy one enjoyed with him, the more one became convinced that he truly was a saint.

We will begin with his trusted Father Joachim Berto. He was a student at the Oratory from 1862 on; he made his confession to Don Bosco until January 1888; furthermore, for a period of twenty years from 1866 until 1886, he was his personal secretary and was treated then and later as his particular confidant. In order to better evaluate his judgment, we have to bear in mind that he was diametrically opposite what is generally considered to be an enthusiast, or a sentimentalist. He was a good man, certainly, but cold in temperament and somewhat stern in character, which gave even Don Bosco cause to exercise his patience. Yet he never harbored the slightest doubt that Don Bosco was a saint, not even for a moment. In his long deposition, we find his judgment condensed in the following sentence: "I can testify that the reputation of holiness enjoyed by the Servant of God took shape spontaneously, just as light comes from the sun, or heat from fire, and water gushes from its spring. So, naturally, Don Bosco's fame spread out over the world because of the splendor of his virtues, because of the infinite richness of his supernatural gifts, because of his splendidly valuable writings, because of the many exceptional recoveries which came about thanks to his prayers and blessings, but mainly because of the rapid expansion of his houses in the two hemispheres." During the questioning period, he quoted some important opinions expressed by others which he had heard with his own ears. Here are a few of them: In 1879, he happened to be in the antechamber of Cardinal Dominic Bartolini while Don Bosco was in audience, and he overheard Bishop Caprara say, "Once Don Bosco is dead they will beatify him, and I will have to act as the devil's advocate." The Bishop spoke like this because he was the Promoter of the Faith for the Congregation of Rites. On April 15, 1880, Don Bosco sent Father Joachim Berto to Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda, who was then living in Rome, to deliver some papers to him concerning the missions. On that occasion, the cardinal said, "How fortunate you are to live with a man who is truly a saint!" When a pupil of the Oratory returned from his vacation, he told Father Berto that he had been presented to Princess Mary Victoria, the wife of

Prince Amadeus of Savoy, and that the princess told him, "How lucky you are to live with a saint!"

Father Secondus Marchesio of Castelnuovo lived for thirteen consecutive years during Don Bosco's lifetime at the Oratory. After his death he traveled through the area around Becchi, calling on people who had known Don Bosco or had heard someone in their family speak about Don Bosco. He gathered all kinds of information, recollections, and anecdotes to be used in his biography. Dr. Allora of Chieri told him that at the Chieri seminary, where he himself had studied, the fellow students of the Servant of God had looked on him as a saint. Other eyewitness statements of the same kind, which were collected by him, can be read in the first volumes of the *Biographical Memoirs,* written by Father Lemoyne. As for himself, this is how the witness put it: "I always felt great esteem and veneration for Don Bosco and still do so. I look on him as a saint. I never heard anyone express any opinion opposed to the reputation of being a saint."

Now let us turn to one of those men to whom we may apply the well-known proverb: *Il n'y a pas de grand homme pour son valet de chamber* [No man is great in the eyes of his valet]. We mean to speak of Peter Enria, the coadjutor brother who first came to the Oratory in 1854 when he was 13 years old. He was later at the personal service of the Servant of God for a long time. To the judges of the cause of beatification who questioned him, he replied in a similar manner and gave his personal recollections. Finally he burst out with this curt statement: " I have lived with him for so many years, I have admired his virtues, and I cannot help but believe that he is a saint."

Another Salesian likewise from Castelnuovo, Father Angelo Savio, was a pupil at the Oratory from 1850. He went to Marseilles in 1880 with Don Bosco and had much to do with him in administrative matters. He then went to the missions. He was a very positive man and this is how he voiced his own opinion: "Don Bosco was an exemplary priest, endowed with outstanding virtues. I am convinced that he is now with the blessed in Heaven and I hope that in due course the Church will declare him a saint and raise to the Altar a priest to be imitated, a new model of a priest. Both in Italy and America, many people have said to me many times, 'You are fortunate to be sons and followers of Don Bosco, for he was a saint.'"

The first Procurator General of the Congregation and first pastor of the Sacred Heart church in Rome, Father Francis Dalmazzo, went to the Oratory in 1860, once he had left another school at Pinerolo. He was

fifteen years old when he entered the Oratory to attend the fifth high school grade. He was from a well-to-do family and found it difficult to adapt. Had he not witnessed with his own eyes the famous multiplication of loaves at Don Bosco's own hand[3] in the first few weeks of his residency there, he would never have stayed. Two outstanding features of his deposition are of particular interest to our case: while speaking in general of Don Bosco's virtues, he said in reference to himself: "During the thirty or so years that I lived close to the Servant of God, I must candidly confess not only that I never saw anything calling for reproach in him, but rather that at all times, I had to admire the way he practiced every Christian virtue, so that I became convinced *de visu et de auditu* [from seeing with my eyes and hearing with my ears], that it was true what I often heard being said, namely, that he was a saint." Then he made the following statement in reference to his reputation of holiness: "I have traveled through France, Switzerland, Belgium, England, and all over Italy, and everywhere I always heard people refer to Don Bosco as another Saint Vincent de Paul or Saint Philip Neri. Often, at reiterated insistence, I was obliged to tell stories about him to which people listened very eagerly. Our people have always had a deeply rooted conviction of Don Bosco's holiness, no matter whether they were learned or quite simple folk, and they all recommended themselves to his prayers. They were convinced that God would grant them graces because Don Bosco had interceded for them. This conviction was even more fully expressed among those more eminent in virtue and of greater wisdom. I have even seen many bishops and archbishops from far-away places who, when traveling *ad limina,* went expressly to Turin just to call on Don Bosco. Among others I can quote two Vicars Apostolic from China who came to the Vatican Council and then, upon leaving Rome, went to Valdocco to see Don Bosco. They were drawn there by the fame of his holiness. Although I cannot recall their names, I saw them with my own eyes and talked with them. In August 1874, Pius IX asked me for news about Don Bosco, then he exclaimed, "Ah! That is no uncultivated woods (Bosco). It is rather a fertile, fruitful one which has already done much good and will do even more!" I heard Cardinal Lucian Bonaparte, who had an extraordinary veneration for Don Bosco, say, "Recommend me earnestly to Don Bosco's prayers, for he is a saint." Cardinal Lawrence Nina once said

[3] *Biographical Memoirs,* Vol. VI, p. 453.

to Leo XIII, what he later said to me, "Your Holiness asks what my opinion is of Don Bosco? I do not think he is a man, but rather a long-armed giant who has succeeded in embracing the entire world." Then, in reference to the *post obitum* years he said, "Quite recently, when I displayed disgust at something printed about Don Bosco in a religious magazine, a very distinguished gentleman said, 'By now Don Bosco's holiness is so great and widely known that no matter what one may say or write about him, nothing more can be added to his merits or to the opinion that people have formed about him.'"

When speaking of the time after his death, the witnesses all stressed the continuous pilgrimages to the tomb of the Servant of God which was visited out of sheer devotion for the mortal remains it contained, and not out of curiosity. One such eyewitness was Father Louis Piscetta, who as director of the Valsalice house was very well informed and deserves to be quoted above all others. After a detailed description of the devout on-going visits by people, high-ranking personalities and pilgrims, he commented: "Their devotion consists in invoking his intercession with the hope of obtaining graces, in asking for things that once belonged to him so that they may wear them on their person or treasure them as relics, in asking for his pictures which they treasure, in placing letters containing requests on his tomb. Such letters were immediately removed and kept in a room together with votive plaques and silver votive hearts. These pilgrimages began immediately after his death and still continue. I may also add that the devotion above described was also immediately manifest. I believe that such devotion was first born and kept in the hearts of people because of their conviction regarding his holiness and the power of his intercession."

One of the best informed witnesses on matters concerning Don Bosco was undoubtedly Father John Baptist Lemoyne, who became a Salesian when he had already been a priest for two years, in 1864. He is quite well-known to our readers. We will glean only a few of the most outstanding depositions, all concerning things which happened in Rome. The first of these happenings has to do with a very wealthy Polish gentleman, a fervent Catholic and generous sponsor of ecclesiastical vocations. When Father Lemoyne was in Rome with Don Bosco in 1884, this man called on the Servant of God and begged him to go and bless a sister of his who was sick. Don Bosco consented and that pious family met him on their knees, as people usually do with saints. This gentleman assured Father Lemoyne that in Poland even the chil-

dren had heard Don Bosco's name. This was confirmed by the statements made by hundreds of youths who escaped with great risk and danger from sections of Poland belonging to Russia, Austria, and Prussia and later became Salesians. Something which Leo XIII said to Bishop Emilian Manacorda who, in turn, repeated to Father Lemoyne, is also of great significance. The Bishop of Fossano had delivered the funeral eulogy at the Sacred Heart church for Don Bosco's month's Mass. He expressed the pious hope that Don Bosco would be elevated to the honors of the altars. His eulogy was published. Then, when the bishop was received in papal audience, he stood aside so that the Pope might overlook his presence. But as soon as the Pope caught sight of him, he beckoned to him and said, "I read your eulogy for Don Bosco and I liked it. I, too, share your opinion." The Procurator General, Father Caesar Cagliero, also told Father Lemoyne that he had been told by Cardinal Lucido Parocchi that His Holiness had said to him, "Don Bosco is a saint. I regret that I am old and will be unable to cooperate for his beatification."

Father John Baptist Francesia, who lived in great intimacy with the Servant of God for thirty-eight years, is more qualified than any other to talk about him personally. Indeed, his depositions are noticeable for their number and length. We will content ourselves with quoting only one hitherto unknown episode to serve our purpose. Countess Matilda de Romelley, née Robbiano, who lived in Belgium at that time, was asked by Pius IX, when he received her in audience, "Have you seen the treasure of Italy?"

"I am looking at one right now, Holy Father," she replied.

"I mean, have you seen Don Bosco?"

Realizing that the countess did not know who Don Bosco was nor where he lived, he told her about him. She then went to see him and was so enraptured that afterward she never went to Italy without going to Valdocco, "to see the man that the Holy Father had qualified as the treasure of Italy," as she always said.

Father Julius Barberis was yet another Salesian who had enjoyed intimate contact with Don Bosco for many years as a few others had. "Now, I do not know whether any other priest ever aroused such enthusiasm as Don Bosco did during his lifetime," he said, "or whether any other was universally believed to be a saint, even when still alive. "This reputation was quite universal and continued without interruption; nor did it stem from any mortal quality such as that of being a great man: it was born,

maintained, and enhanced solely by his life, his extraordinary virtues and his exceptional works of charity. During his many trips, Fr. Julius Barberis spoke with a great number of Salesian Cooperators, with men of great learning and importance, with high-ranking prelates, and realized not only the great esteem they had of Don Bosco but also the devotion to the Servant of God. "Wherever I go," he said, "people ask me about the cause for his beatification. Everyone wished to know more or less when it would end. You can see that everyone hopes that the Holy See would pronounce a favorable decree."

Father James Cerruti, the companion and confidant of Dominic Savio at the Oratory, knew Don Bosco very well indeed. He was inclined to look upon the value of Don Bosco's works as a proof of his holiness. "This conviction of his saintliness which was rooted in all categories of people did not stem merely from their personal liking for him," he said, "but instead it was based on the fact that his undertakings had grown in number and were spreading out far and wide every day. Personally, he had nothing that could have produced such an effect. The ability of founding and developing so many houses without any kind of subsidy other than charity, of keeping them open and supporting them by means of charity alone, could not have come about other than by the grace of God who used Don Bosco for His own glory and for the welfare of our neighbor. Herein lie the roots of that devotion that people felt for him and which lasted throughout his lifetime and still continues on. Indeed, it grows stronger every day since he died." Fr. Cerruti stated that he kept this opinion about the sanctity of Don Bosco within himself, and that he felt that it was growing more and more every day.

In clarifying his own position in regard to Don Bosco before the tribunal, Cardinal John Cagliero just described the impression he had when he first met the Servant of God: "The impression that I had when I showed up at the Oratory and asked to be accepted, and when he actually accepted me, was the impression that he was a peculiar priest both because of the manner and the charm with which he welcomed me, also because of the respect and deference shown to him by my own pastor and other priests. That impression was never destroyed nor did it even decrease, but instead it grew steadily for the thirty-three years during which I lived at his side until 1885, when I departed for the missions. This time does not include the two years I spent abroad, founding our first houses in Argentina." Going back to his high school years, he recalled, "Although we boys of the Oratory considered him as an affec-

tionate father and dealt with him with a trust and familiarity that was even more than filial, we nevertheless felt such respect and veneration for him that we behaved in his presence with a practically religious gravity, mainly because we were intimately convinced that his life was a holy one." Then while speaking of the later years, he continued, "Ever since I first knew the Servant of God, my belief in his saintliness grew constantly, and I still feel it growing." When trying to bring out the cause of such a conviction, he described it in the following manner: "If I am to voice my own personal opinion, I will say quite frankly that I do not ascribe my belief in Don Bosco's holiness so much to the supernatural gifts with which God had endowed him, and of which I was frequently a witness, but I do ascribe it to his outstanding virtues, which he practiced to a heroic degree and constantly until his death. Among these virtues were especially his ardent charity, his unwavering serenity, his fortitude, equanimity, and gentleness of character even under strained and critical circumstances, under fierce and powerful oppositions and contradictions. That, in my eyes, was the greatest miracle of all and it made the deepest impression on me the entire time that I lived close to him."

We will quote only two incidents among the many alleged by Bishop Cagliero, also because they are not so well known. In 1871, Don Bosco was seriously ill at Varazze. At that time, the whole of Piedmont prayed for his recovery. Now, the saintly bishop of Alba, Bishop Galletti, confided to witnesses that he had offered his own life to God in exchange for that of Don Bosco, thus explaining his reason for so doing: "My own life is worth little or nothing, whereas the life of Don Bosco is not only precious, but of great use for the interests of the Church. In comparison, my own life is without value. His life is the life of a saint, and we know that saints are not sent into this world for nothing." The other incident happened in 1893. When Cagliero returned from Patagonia and Leo XIII congratulated him during an audience on the progress made by the missions and the prosperity of Salesian houses in Europe and America, he added, "One can see that Don Bosco is helping you and protecting you from Heaven. Pray to him and he will continue such assistance and patronage. He was a saint. You should all imitate all of his great virtues."

If Bonaventure while writing the life of his seraphic Father, was a saint writing the life of another saint, Father Michael Rua, who lived so many years of his life with Don Bosco, was a saint who lived the life of

another saint. He had modeled himself with the meticulous solicitude of a loving and devoted disciple after the pattern of Don Bosco's life so that one might well say of him *conglutinata est anima eius animae illius* [that his life was intertwined with that of Don Bosco]. Never will there be any greater authority than Father Rua to judge the saintliness of Don Bosco, for he himself was a saint. We feel that two statements of his are of capital importance to our theme. The first concerns his own personal feelings: "As for myself, I can safely say, as indeed I now declare, that the more I reflected and still reflect on the life of Don Bosco, on his virtues, on the miraculous happenings which we're wrought thanks to him, all around him and for his sake, the greater grew and shall continue to grow my conviction, my intimate belief that he was truly a saint." His other testimony reveals for us in what manner he saw the holiness of the Servant of God take shape and reveal itself. "When I recall the virtues Don Bosco practiced during the course of his life, I always wondered at the heroic degree to which he exercised them. Nevertheless, I think I ought to add that I saw how constantly he practiced the same virtues, so that we might say that his perfection increased over the years, instead of any one of his virtues waning in its intensity. I could find no other words with which to describe his progress in virtue than to say that he was like the sun which grew steadily more intense and set out of the world's scene at full noon."

Father Michael Rua accompanied Don Bosco on three important journeys: to Paris, to Barcelona, and to Rome. In reference to the first he said, "When I was his companion in Paris for about a month, I realized that the reports of my fellow Salesians who had accompanied him to other towns had not been exaggerated." After a brief summary of all that had happened in the great French metropolis, he concluded, "I was astonished to see how Don Bosco, who had never been in that city before, who was a foreigner in the midst of a people who at that time were hostile to Italy, was treated with such manifest veneration. I could attribute this only to the great regard everyone felt for his charity and holiness."

As for Barcelona, Father Rua described the eagerness people displayed in trying to see him, for his fame of holiness had reached them in advance. It was not only the lower classes who were so eager to approach Don Bosco to implore him to pray for them and to bless them, but also people of the aristocracy, writers, and bishops. After stating all this, he repeated, "Only his reputation as a saint could have attracted

that many people."

He went with him to Rome several times, but he lingered especially in the description of their last trip. "I had gone with him to Rome several times, I had already witnessed the great esteem and veneration people felt for him. The remarkable thing about it was that instead of diminishing, their fervor increased continuously. By 1887, it was no longer individuals or specific families who looked for his blessing, but entire religious communities, whole seminaries, pious associations, who called on him, drawn by the fame of his sanctity, eager for the privilege of looking at him, of imploring his prayers and of receiving his blessing."

Father Rua recalled two incidents connected with Leo XIII, one during Don Bosco's lifetime, the other after his death. When the well-known strife between Don Bosco and the archbishop of Turin was about to be straightened out, even though very severe terms were imposed on Don Bosco, His Holiness remarked to people present, "Don Bosco is a saint and will not refuse to sign this." After his death, during an audience granted to Father Rua, the Pope referred to Don Bosco as a saint three times, saying that Father Rua was fortunate to be the successor of a saint.

Father Rua also described how the devotion to Don Bosco developed after his death, stressing that this had occurred, even though nothing was published about the graces obtained through his intercession. "This shows how deeply rooted the personal devotion to the Servant of God was, because of the infinite number of graces that were obtained everywhere through him," he said. "It is my belief that, apart from the fact that it is general and ingrained in people, the devotion to the Servant of God is also very pleasing to God, who delights in revealing His magnificent goodness toward mankind through the intercession of His servant."

After all that we have reported here, it would be interesting to know just how Don Bosco felt about his being the object of such manifestations. Father Giordano, of the Oblates of Mary, who had been a confidant of Don Bosco, felt just such curiosity and had asked him about it. Once, when he was on his way to Genoa in the company of the Servant of God—so Father Francis Dalmazzo testified, having heard it from his own lips—he asked, "Tell me now, Don Bosco, when you see how many extraordinary things you have accomplished, all the houses you have founded, and how revered and esteemed you are by all, for they even call you a saint, what do you feel about yourself? It is not possible that you do not feel any gratification. What do you say?" Don Bosco reflected a

moment, then looked heavenward and replied, "I believe that, had Our Lord found an even lower and weaker tool than I, he would have availed himself of it to perform His works." We may find another opening for probing his innermost thoughts on this topic in the words uttered by him to Father John Marenco in 1886: "Had I had a hundred times greater faith, I would have been able to do much greater things than I did." This means that he only saw himself as only a humble instrument in the hands of the Almighty, and that in all he had accomplished, he saw only the human frailty of which he himself might have been guilty, instead of their providential significance.

This is truly the way of thinking of a saint and in this way of thinking we perceive the touchstone of his genuine holiness.

Chapter 29

THE TESTIMONY OF DON BOSCO'S MIRACLES

Public opinion which had qualified Don Bosco as a miracle worker during his lifetime, did not cease to proclaim him as a miracle worker even after his death. Christian people are perfectly aware that it is God who performs miracles. However, the popular mind tends to simplify, even when it is not ignorant of the primary cause of anything miraculous, and will gladly dwell on the secondary cause, since this is closer to it and represents in its eyes the tangible understanding of the supernatural occurrence, namely, the powers of the intermediary.

Many have been the exceptional graces obtained already, such as unhoped-for recoveries from sickness, remarkable conversions, solutions of intricate problems all obtained through the intercession of Don Bosco, not only in Italy but practically in every corner of the globe. The graces attributed to his intercession during the first months following his death seem to us to be so closely related to his biography that we feel that we should take them into account, now that we have come to the end of our task. Among the many graces, we will only select a few, not more than eighteen, and will not extend our investigation beyond the first year after his death.

Naturally, we do not claim to attribute any more than human belief to the stories we are about to relate, though they are based on depositions which exclude any facile credulity. We will also omit any presentation or quotation of documents, merely assuring our readers that we have such documentation in our files and have carefully investigated them in each individual instance.

The wonders began, one might say, at the very moment that the Servant of God gave back his soul to his Maker. There are two outstanding and reliable incidents of this kind, the one occurring in Piedmont, the other in France.

The family of Count Cravosio was one of many patrician Turin fami-

lies where Don Bosco was always wholeheartedly welcomed.[1] His daughter Rosa, who had seen him many times in her home when she was a girl, had become a nun with the teaching Dominican Sisters of Mondovi-Carassone, and had taken the name of Philomena. During the sickness of Don Bosco she was already the Mother Superior of the convent of Garessio and was suffering greatly from spiritual torment and physical infirmities. She had therefore written to her mother, asking her to go and request the blessing of the Servant of God for her. But she did not receive a reply from her, for reasons we can well understand. Before daybreak on January 31, 1888, after a sleepless night, the nun fell into a doze and behold, Don Bosco appeared before her, standing at the foot of her bed, wearing his usual cape, the sleeves folded back, his hat in his right hand. He looked youthful, cheerful, full of vitality, just as she had seen him during her childhood at home. "Oh! Don Bosco!" she exclaimed at the sight of him. "Did my mother tell you about me? I am so upset and I feel so weak that I am no longer capable of doing anything worthwhile."

"I know that your mother was supposed to come to see me," he answered, "but she was unable. You see, while I was in this world, I was able to do some little things for you and your family. But now that I am in Heaven, I can do a lot more and now I mean to do whatever I was unable to do then because I had to work so hard for my boys and all my houses."

"If that is the case," the nun said, "please obtain for me from God strength and health and loosen up my heart, so that I may pursue the ways of God and do good, just as you did, so that I too may reach Paradise."

"Do you not realize that you are perfectly well, and that your heart is full of good will? Get up. God is with you."

At these words she woke up. She no longer felt any trace of her sickness, and all her sad thoughts had yielded to an immense faith in God in her heart. She was overwhelmed with joy and full of gratitude. She got up and went to the chapel to thank God. Only then did she realize she had been dreaming.

Great was the amazement of her fellow nuns when they saw her in their midst. As soon as their devotions were over, they clustered around her, and asked a thousand questions: how had she been able to get up, where had she found the strength to get to church, and how was she feeling in that very moment...Very simply she told them about the apparition

[1] See *Biographical Memoirs*, Vol. VI, pp. 133, 141.

of Don Bosco. When they heard that Don Bosco was no longer among the living, the Sisters became hesitant, for the latest news had mentioned an improvement in his condition. But a little later they came to know that Don Bosco had died that very same morning at four forty- five.[2]

Something very similar occurred in France. Father Tropheine, the pastor of Senas in the diocese of Arras, used to correspond with Don Bosco. In his last letter he had written with humble insistence and asked him to obtain through his prayers the conversion of the rector of the Academy of Aix who was very sick. He was thinking of the Christians who were grieving that a man with such authority and so near death should refuse to receive the Sacraments. This would have necessitated the scandal of giving him a civil funeral. Don Bosco had sent a word in reply: "Dear Father, have faith; within three days you will see fulfilled the grace you desire." Early in the morning of the designated day, the pastor suddenly saw his own room flooded with light and Don Bosco, enveloped by a ball of fire, was in the act of blessing him and saying: "*vous etes exaucé* [Your prayers were answered]." Two days later the newspapers announced the date and hour of his death, and at the same time a letter arrived, informing him that the prayers had indeed been answered in full. The day and moment of the apparition was exactly January 31st, at four forty-five in the morning.

On February 1st, while Don Bosco's mortal remains were exposed to the public inside the chapel of Saint Francis, two things happened which are well worthy of note.

Among the youths, who in January 1888 had offered their lives to God at the Oratory in order that Don Bosco's life might be spared, we noticed that the second name listed was that of Louis Orione. The student of those days, who today is the venerable Father Louis Orione, loved to relate something that happened to him that same day on February 1st. Together with a few schoolmates, he had received the task of getting the articles held out by the crowd, of touching the body of Don Bosco with them, and then handing them back. Suddenly, driven by an unexpected inspiration, he ran to the Salesian dining room which was only a few steps away from the church, snatched a big, sharp kitchen knife and started slicing a loaf of bread with it. He meant to roll the bread into little pellets have these pellets touch the sacred body of Don Bosco, treasure some of them as relics for any emergency that might arise, and give away some of them. The inconsiderate haste with which he sliced the bread proved fatal. As he

[2] Sister Philomena was later elected Mother Vicar of the Mother House, where she died on April 6, 1905.

made the first strike, he sliced off the index finger of his right hand (Father Orione is left-handed). Instantly an anguished thought came into his mind— Would he still be able to become a priest if he were without that finger? He wished to be a priest more than anything else in the world. What should he do? He wrapped the unlucky finger in his handkerchief and bound it as tightly as he could, then rushed back to Don Bosco's body, holding the right hand with his left. There, with fervent faith, he brought his bleeding index finger so close to the dead hand, that he touched it. At the touch, the index finger was healed instantly. When he told people about this, Father Orione always felt that he could still see a drop of his own bloodstain red the snow-white hand of Don Bosco's body. Meanwhile, he showed people the scar and said that he could use his right index finger just as he did before, suffering not the slightest disability.[3]

Another instantaneous recovery took place that same day and in the same place. On January 24, 1888, the famous Turin professor Lawrence Bruno wrote to Dr. Augustine Santanera, the attending physician of Henrietta Grimaldi of Asti: "I saw our dear young patient a few days ago and was obliged to stand by the diagnosis of my first visit to her. She apparently does have a tumor in the ovary or to the left of it in close proximity. Unfortunately, it seems to have grown already to a considerable size, since it is not but a finger away from the navel." In continuing the description of the tumor, he at length concluded "that it would already be a good thing if the tumor could be rendered stationary and benign, so as to permit the patient to live, if not to enjoy good health." He added that, unfortunately, the unavoidable day would come "to consider the dangerous necessity of laparatomy." Faith accomplished what science could not. Lost in the infinite crowd of people that filed past the lifeless body of Don Bosco like one restless wave after another, the young woman mentioned above succeeded in touching him and immediately she felt an immense relief. She was cured. This extraordinary cure was not even taken into consideration by the judges during the cause of beatification of the Servant of God since at that time, the woman's family was unable to submit the certificate containing the diagnosis of Professor Bruno.

During those few days when there was a steady stream of people coming and going to the Oratory in their eagerness to look at Don Bosco's remains, a lady of Turin, Josephine Chiesa, had a dream which,

[3] This incident was also published in Rome by the Orionist Fr. Barbarino in the *Parochial Bulletin* of All Saints, December issue, 1926.

in itself, would not be of any interest to us had it not been confirmed exactly by a fact. The lady had fallen four times between the years of four and twelve; the first time, her leg was dislocated; the other three times, the leg was fractured to the point that for eighteen years she had to use a crutch and then walk with a cane for another two years. On the advice of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, she begged Don Bosco to restore to her the full use of her leg. One night, when she was dreaming, she felt that she too was one of the crowd that had gone to see the mortal remains of Don Bosco in the church of Saint Francis. Don Bosco raised his arm and said, "You will fall yet another time, but then you will be cured." She awoke startled, but so full of confidence that, although the surgeons advised her to have her leg amputated so that she might be free of the atrocious pain, she refused to give her consent. She really did fall for the fifth time, tumbling downstairs, causing a double fracture of the same limb. She remained in bed for four long months. After a novena to Don Bosco, she regained total use of her broken leg, and was able to walk without any support and with the utmost ease.

This other incident occurred a few days after the death of Don Bosco. A man named Joshua Collina of Tossignano, in the district of Imola, was undergoing epileptic seizures every fifteen or twenty days since 1881; at times there were two or three seizures during the same day. He called on specialists, he underwent the treatment they prescribed, but he derived no benefit whatsoever from it all. The attacks came upon him no matter where he might be, and he did not have the slightest warning symptom in advance which could have prevented him from dangerous falls. When people were still talking everywhere about Don Bosco's death and began using little pieces of cloth which were attached to pictures of the Servant of God, he too was able to obtain one such relic, and he wore it on his person. From that moment on he did have two attacks at a short interval from one another. They were both very mild and there was also an advanced warning symptom. That was the last trace of his disease. Then months and months passed and nothing of the kind occurred to sadden him. He waited until two full years had passed, then wrote a report of the grace received and had witnesses confirm it.

Around the middle of February, the effect of Don Bosco's intercession was revealed to a Parisian gentleman, Raoul Angel. He had suffered horribly for two years with senile marasmus. His decline was rapid and alarming, therefore he agreed at last, after many medicines and treatments, to go and spend the winter in the south of France where, he was

assured, the climate would do him good. Once he settled in Cannes, he felt worse than before. He could not digest, was forced to keep to his bed three or four days a week, he could not walk, he could not stand the strain of talking. Even the presence in his room of people of whom he was most fond, caused him irritation. At this point, let us listen to Countess Victoria Balbo-Callori who on May 28, 1895 wrote to Father Rua: "When Our Lord summoned unto Himself our venerated Don Bosco, it was only natural for people to think that it would not be long before he occupied an eminent place in Heaven, and that the great Servant of God would obtain abundant graces from him. Therefore, aware of the anguish of these dear friends of mine, I instantly thought of him and prayed to God in my heart that, if he wished to glorify Don Bosco his Servant, he would inspire them to pray to him, asking for his recovery of which they now despaired. Without writing anything at all, I mailed to them in a simple wrapper the copy of the *National Courier* containing the report of Don Bosco's holy death." The hopes of the countess were fulfilled so thoroughly that the patient had even planned to go to Turin to recommend himself to the protection of Don Bosco at his very tomb. His friends in Turin could barely recognize him, he appeared so wasted away. Every day of the novena he was making, he drove his coach out to Valsalice. Full of faith, he asked Father Rua to celebrate a Mass at the private altar of the Servant of God on the ninth day. During this Mass, both the patient and his wife received Communion very devoutly. After Communion the old man began to feel an appetite. He had some coffee and milk with bread and butter, something he had not been able to do for a long time. While he was eating, he felt himself better and stronger. He gratefully accepted the invitation to dinner with the superiors of the Council, at which table he partook of ordinary, everyday fare. In a word, he was fully recovered.

When he returned to Paris a few days later, he called on Cardinal Richard, and he was happy to confirm what His Eminence had told him, namely, that only Don Bosco could have cured him. His attending physician, who had sought to dissuade him from undertaking the trip to Turin, could not believe his own eyes when he saw him so peppy. Among other things he said, "You are quite well, I will not deny that, but your disease is such that it will come back within five or six months from now." He went to the countryside, in Burgundy, and there he met the renowned Father Monsabré, a friend of his who was so touched when he saw the change in him that, as he congratulated him, he could not restrain his tears. From that time on, Mr. Raoul Angel returned every year to the

grave of Don Bosco as a pilgrim, and never ceased from contributing financially to Don Bosco's undertakings. He brought along his son in 1894, saying to him in the presence of the Salesian superiors, "If you still have your father, you owe it to Don Bosco."

Again during the month of February, we find reference to two graces, one temporal and the other spiritual. Both occurred in the same family. A widow, Nicole Carpi, née Morando, of Genoa, who was resident in the parish of Saint Fruttuoso, fell from a low wall about a meter in height on August 15, 1887. It caused some pretty serious internal lesions which prevented her from lying down and much less from attending to her usual domestic duties. She continued in this state for six months, trying to cure herself as best she could. When a doctor told her that her trouble was internal, she was reluctant to put herself into the hands of a doctor. Around mid-February 1888, she thought instead of entrusting her plight to Don Bosco, who had died only two weeks before, and who knew her. She prayed to him with all possible fervor. The following night she was able to sleep in her bed for the first time, and very well. She dreamed about Don Bosco. In the morning, when it was time for her to get up, she no longer felt any pain but began to attend to her household chores immediately, as she had formerly done, even the heaviest ones. From that day onward, she no longer had any reason to complain about her health problems.

This above mentioned lady had a brother, aged forty-two, who worked in the port of Genoa. One day a huge bale of cotton fell on top of him aboard ship, and almost crushed him to death. When he was rushed to the hospital, the doctors said he was in a serious condition and there was no hope for his survival. With great tact and delicacy, they mentioned the Sacraments to him, but he would not listen, for he had turned resolutely away from every and any religious practice many years before. His sister, the Capuchin chaplain of the hospital, and several of his relatives, all tried to persuade him, but he was adamant. In desperation, his sister prayed fervently to Don Bosco and begged him to touch the heart of the unfortunate man. She first prayed to him on Saturday, June 9th, and she prayed again the following day. At last the grace was granted. On the evening of the 10th, the dying man made his confession quite spontaneously and the next morning he told her how happy he felt. He died a little later with signs of sincere repentance.

An even more extraordinary recovery than the ones mentioned so far occurred also in France, in March 1888. A Sister of Charity, Marie Constantine Vorbe, aged thirty-six, had been in a pitiable condition for

eight months at Versoul in the diocese of Besançon. One or several internal ulcers of the stomach caused her to vomit blood and restricted her entire diet to milk. Her breath gave forth an unbearable foul odor. Her left side had her suffer atrocious pain to the point that she was obliged to keep her arm stiff, otherwise her pain would have intensified.

A certain Mrs. Roussin suggested, in March 1888, that she make a novena to Don Bosco. The whole community joined her in this. But she only grew worse instead of better. On the seventh day she seemed more dead than alive. When the physician examined her, he found a small picture of Don Bosco, with his signature, on her painful left side. The sick nun herself had put it there and she told the doctor, "Tomorrow I will be cured, I will get up and eat some bread." The doctor answered smiling, "Yes, you certainly can get up, if you wish, but do not insist on eating bread."

She passed a very bad day and an atrociously painful night. She dozed off for about half-an-hour the morning of the eighth day. Then, at four-thirty, she woke up refreshed, feeling that nothing more was wrong with her. As a matter of fact, she was able to turn over in bed without feeling any pain. Her side no longer hurt her. All she felt was a great weakness in her legs. She called the infirmarian and told her she was cured. Soon the whole convent was in an uproar. With the permission of her superior, Sister Constantine got up from her bed of suffering, dressed without any assistance, and went down to the dining room where she ate breakfast, to the amazement of the other nuns. Afterward, she attended a solemn High Mass in the chapel. The next day she set out on a pilgrimage, with all the other sisters of the community to a shrine perched on a hilltop in the neighborhood.

The doctor who knew all her past history hesitated when he was asked to write out a declaration. He said that, although he was unable to explain the phenomenon, he preferred to wait and see what would happen to the sister within the period of five years. Father Rua, however, received a report of what had happened from the local chaplain, whose name was Isidore Mathieu, a professor of philosophy in the Vesoul seminary, and from the mother superior as well. They both told him what the doctor had said. Now, when the doctor himself testified during the process and wished to speak also of this recovery, he wrote to Sister Fulgenzia, the superior, to ask news of Sister Constantine. She replied on June 12, 1895: "Sister Constantine, who was a privileged protegé of your good Father Don Bosco, is still here at Vesoul where she continues looking after the orphans and is in excellent health. She did not suffer any relapse after her

recovery. In fact, her health, which had formerly been frail and run down, is now excellent and strong."

Sardinia too is represented in this long list of graces obtained during the first few months following the death of Don Bosco. The rector of Zerfaliu in the diocese of Oristano, Father Joseph Manai, had a fistula at the corner of his left eye for a number of years. Every now and then it swelled, causing his eyes to water and prevented him from seeing things clearly. Qualified doctors could not offer him any hope of recovery, unless he underwent a dangerous operation which would have prevented him from saying Mass for some months. Being a Salesian Cooperator, he wrote to the Oratory, asking for one of the customary little scraps of cloth used by Don Bosco during his last sickness. He received it in April and he addressed this prayer to Don Bosco: "Oh father Don Bosco, I firmly believe that you are in Heaven. If this is so, please see that this disease of mine disappears as soon as possible." As he said this, he took the relic and touched his diseased eye with it. It all happened in an instant. The swelling and the fistula disappeared without leaving any trace.

In the fall of 1888, Don Bosco brought one of his blessings to the Mother House of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians at Nizza Monferrato. Any community would be terrified if a case of black diphtheria were to break out in it, especially a community where several hundred young girls were gathered. This terrible sickness affected Sister Josephine Camusso, just as winter was approaching. Had the civil authorities been aware of it, they would have ordered the immediate closing of the school. In such a desperate situation, the superiors, full of faith, took a handkerchief that had once been used by Don Bosco and wrapped it round the sick nun's neck. The mother vicar rolled a small scrap of linen which had once belonged to the saint into a little ball, dipped it in water, and put it into her throat. As the relics touched her, her raging fever subsided, the mercury in the thermometer dropped. The physician who had said that very day that the Sister would die, was astonished at her rapid recovery and said that there was something miraculous about it. A few days later, just as though nothing at all had happened, Sister Josephine resumed her normal life.

What happened in Portugal on December 8, 1888, is not merely a miracle, but a very great miracle, as indeed Cardinal Aloysius Masella, the prefect of the Congregation of Rites, qualified a year and a half later. Sister Mary Josephine Alves di Castro, a Sister of Saint Dorothy who lived in the School of Covilla in the diocese of Guarda became seriously sick in March.

The diagnosis indicated tuberculosis. From September on, the patient grew so weak that she was no longer able even to sit up in bed. Her extraordinary confessor, Father Nicholas Rodriguez, a Jesuit, who saw her several times, wrote saying that she looked just like a corpse. One day he brought her a relic of Don Bosco. On merely kissing it, the patient felt that her heart had opened up to hope and she experienced an inner peace.

She began a novena to Mary Immaculate on November 22nd, asking, through the intercession of Don Bosco, that she obtain her recovery. During the night on the fifth day of the novena, she finally fell asleep, something she had not done for a long time. During her sleep she felt someone tap her on the shoulder and call her by name. She woke up, startled. Not knowing what was happening, she fainted. She was unable to say later whether her passing out lasted for a long time or not; but she did recall having seen Don Bosco, who said, "I would like to do what you are asking for, but I cannot do so because Our Lady is angry with you. Nevertheless, do not lose heart; I will help you." So saying, he disappeared.

To understand the reason for this gentle reprimand we have to think back to a Confession made by the nun prior to her sickness. "I felt that I was living a life of great tepidity," she writes, "for I frequently committed faults, remarkable for a religious. On April 11th, I went to Confession, but, to my amazement, I found that my confessor acted with great roughness toward me, and this discouraged me considerably."

During the night after the apparition, she was awake; she lost her strength and fainted again. Then the Immaculate Virgin herself appeared, together with Don Bosco, who was kneeling in front of Our Lady, begging her to forgive the sister, adding that, after this, she would steadfastly keep her good resolutions. Then the Virgin said to the sister, "I will not abandon you, if you will mend your ways." It only lasted for a brief moment, but when it was over, the sister's soul was flooded with joy.

She began the novena for the feast of the Immaculate Conception on the 29th with unparalleled fervor. On the fourth and fifth day of the novena she was visited again by the Holy Virgin and by Don Bosco. This time Our Lady said, "If you promise to serve me with greater fervor and to be more faithful to my Divine Son, on my feast day you will regain the health you have lost." In the meantime, her state of health continued to cause great preoccupation. For three consecutive days the blood spitting that bothered her before became more frequent and threatening. The blood spat out, exhaling a terrible odor.

Despite the aggravation of her sickness, the patient was waiting trustingly for the dawn of December 8th. The vigil brought her a violent fever. From three to four o'clock in the morning of the 8th, she felt she would spit out all her lungs. Then she quieted down and slept for a while. At last, she heard the well-known voice of Don Bosco, who woke her up and told her these comforting words: "Get up! You are healed! Do not forget what you promised." The sister leapt out of bed and lay prostrate on the floor for a few moments, aware that there was nothing more the matter with her. Nevertheless, she went back to bed again to await the community's rising bell. At five o'clock she dressed neatly and went down to the chapel and attended two Masses, on her knees. Then she went with her dumbfounded sisters into the dining room where she ate with a hearty appetite.

Sister Mary Josephine was twenty-nine years of age, and had been in religion nearly ten years. When the Jesuit priest was told about it, he decided to personally study what had happened and found her to be in excellent health, busy at her duties. He wrote that he saw her once again eight years later and still found her active and blooming in health.[4]

The incidents we are now about to relate took place, or at least began to take place, save with one exception, in January 1889. That would be, approximately, the first anniversary of Don Bosco's death.

Joan Steckwell, an English lady who had married a man named Renaudin at Sâo Paulo in Brazil, was already suffering from rheumatic fever when, in January 1889, she nearly died with an attack of enteritis. Her husband was a good doctor and also a good Catholic. He realized that she would not have lived more than another forty-eight hours, so he sent for Father Gastaldi to come from the Salesian school to administer Extreme Unction. While waiting for him to come, Mr. Renaudin recalled how devoted his wife was to Don Bosco, so he directed a humble prayer to him and placed on her head a few of Don Bosco's hairs and a piece of cloth the Servant of God had once used. The effect was so immediate that by the time the priest arrived with the holy oils, the patient had recovered completely. Indeed, even her rheumatic pains had disappeared from that moment onward. "These pains had been the consequence of her rheumatic fever and had caused her suffering for a long time," so her husband wrote. Pains in her right knee, which she had after a mishap some thirty years before, also disappeared at the same time. Thus did Don Bosco

[4] The local Curia undertook a thorough investigation of the miracle, but we do not know what became of the Acts of the process.

reward Dr. Renaudin for his charitable services rendered to the Salesians of that place.

In the Salesian school of Faenza, the fifteen-year-old boy Louis Piffari was taken ill with grave pleurisy and pneumonia in the right lung the evening of January 24, 1889. On the fifth day, two doctors found alarming symptoms. The director, Father John Baptist Rinaldi, cut a fragment of linen from a cloth used by Don Bosco during his final sickness and put it on the boy's chest. On the morning of the 30th he woke up, feeling that he was cured. The doctor, to whom the infirmarian had not wished to tell anything, was speechless when he saw the patient. He even wanted to make thoroughly sure that it was the same patient that he had been treating during the previous few days. The boy was so fully recovered that by Sunday, February 5th, he was playing his double bass trombone in the band, without any effort and no consequence at all for a good length of time. Dr. Liverani completed his certificate on February 13th as follows: "I hereby declare that this almost instantaneous recovery is completely alien to the normal course of such sickness."

Sister Elvira Lopez, a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians of Buenos Aires, had cancer of the stomach. As usually occurs during the final phase of this fatal disease, she was unable to retain any food for fourteen months. She was even unable to take some broth. She was barely able to retain a fragment of the Host at Communion. When all human hopes had faded, she felt she should invoke the help of Don Bosco, and she began a novena. On the eighth day, the eve of the anniversary of his death, she called her Mother Superior and said, "Mother, I am hungry. May I eat this peach?" She ate it without any trouble and then said, "But that is not enough for me. I am very hungry!" She went to the dining room where she was served bread, meat, and fruit. She ate it all to the amazement of her Sisters. From that day on she resumed her community life entirely. "*En la curación de esto caso ha intervenido una fuerza subrenatural* [A supernatural power intervened in curing this patient]," the attending physician declared on April 20th.

We will now suspend our stories about recoveries from physical ailments to turn to the account of a miracle of divine grace brought about through Don Bosco's intervention. It concerns a poor lady from Chile who had sunk into the abyss of sin, not only by committing the most deplorable immoral acts, but also with detestable deviations in matters of faith and religion, getting to the point of hating God. She was falling from one abyss into another when by accident, she chanced one day to read an article in a

newspaper about Don Bosco. She instantly started having a strangely mysterious liking for him, to the point that she was impatiently eager to know everything she could about his life. Little by little, her liking for Don Bosco became veneration. Then a fierce battle between good and evil took place within her heart, but pride and fear of what people might have thought of her kept her still in bondage to her wicked past. Yet secretly she was imploring Don Bosco to help her escape from the clutches of Satan. Torn by remorse, yet incapable of breaking her own chains, she would at times burst into bitter tears, alone in her room, in front of a picture of the Servant of God, until at last one day she made what was for her a heroic resolution: to spend the whole of January 1889 in pious practices, promising the saint that she would not commit any grave sin during that period. If he could bring about a change of heart in her, she promised to spend the rest of her life working on behalf of his undertakings. She also asked him for the grace of meeting a priest in whom he might instill his own spirit of charity, so that he might extend a helping hand to her. She set the last day of the month as the deadline for such a grace to be granted.

It was the 28th of the month and the sinner had not yet met a minister of God who could take care of her soul. Discouraged but not yet beaten, she made one last desperate appeal to Don Bosco, determined to make amends for all the scandal she had given. A dream came to comfort her the night of the 29th. It seemed to her that she was on a frail craft adrift at the mercy of the waves in a stormy sea. Just as she was about to be submerged by the waves amid the breakers, an unknown priest appeared, holding out his hand and saying with a quiet, gentle voice, "Have faith, my daughter. I am here to save you. If everyone has forsaken you, I will not forsake you."

Here it ought to be said that, during the course of the month, she had tried to talk with a few priests in Concepcion; but they had all politely declined to respond to her. They did not even want to listen to her, since they were convinced that they could not possibly give her absolution because of the proximate occasions of sin by which she was notoriously surrounded.

She woke up, shaken, and she promised Don Bosco that, if the priest she had seen in her dream happened to be a Salesian, she would conquer her instinctive reluctance, which had so far kept her away from the Salesians, and would consider him as a messenger from Heaven. She left her house on the morning of the 30th and almost mechanically turned her steps in the direction of the Salesian school, where she had never been before. She found it closed because the community had gone out for the

day and would be back in the evening. Almost carried by a superior power, she went back the next day. When she entered the church, she saw that it was all set up for a funeral Mass, and shortly afterward, a solemn requiem Mass began. The lady did not know that it was the anniversary of Don Bosco's death. When she left the church after Mass, she felt a radical transformation taking place within her. Then the kindness and patience of the Salesian director, who was the priest she had seen in her dream, did the rest, so that in a relatively short time, her transformation became complete and lasting.

A recovery which also, from the way it took place, might be called a resurrection from death to life, was the re-acquired well being of Mrs. Marina Cappa, wife of a shopkeeper, Charles Dellavalle, of Turin. For five years she had cancer of the womb. When Dr. Ramello examined her after the first year of her sickness, he told her husband bluntly, "There is no hope for your wife. She should remain in bed to suffer less pain, as long as it will be possible to prolong her life. This will prolong her life somewhat." Then the doctor happened to meet Father Dalmazzo, who was on his way from Saint John the Evangelist to go and see the woman, since he was her confessor. "Go and comfort that poor lady. She needs you more than she needs me. Art and science are no longer of any use to her." Nevertheless, as people do on such occasions, specialists were called in for a consultation and medicine was prescribed for her; but these were merely placebos to keep her strength and relieve her pain. They could not fight the disease for, as her doctor wrote very explicitly in a statement on May 22, 1889: "We know of no cure for this disease."

The poor lady was by now nothing but skin and bones, and in January of that year it all but seemed that she was about to die. In view of her desperate condition, her sister who was a nun of the Visitation convent of Genoa, wrote to tell her brother-in-law to recommend her to Blessed Margaret Alacoque, whose cause of canonization was then in progress. When the doctor read the letter, he told Mr. Dellavalle, "Go ahead, pray, make a vow. If she were to recover, I would be the first one ready to certify it as a miracle; but certainly God will not upset the course of nature." He said this because he did not believe in the possibility of any miracle.

But a miracle did happen, through the intercession of Don Bosco and in a most spectacular manner. Two Daughters of Mary Help of Christians were calling on the patient one day, and left a relic of Don Bosco with her when they left, exhorting her to make a novena to Don Bosco. She asked permission of her husband, and began it on January 31st, immediately

placing the relic against the diseased part of her body. Her husband, on his part, promised that, if she recovered, he would offer two hundred lire to Don Bosco's undertakings and would desist — albeit reluctantly — from any further opposition to the aspirations of his daughter Antoinette, so often expressed; namely, her desire to become a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians.

During the first days of the novena, there was nothing new to see. Rather, on the very last day, February 8, 1889, the poor lady was so sick that it was decided she should be given Holy Viaticum. While she was waiting for Our Lord to come to comfort her, she said to her daughter, "Bring me Don Bosco's picture" for she could not endure the pain any longer. Once she got it, she put it to her lips, she kissed it and she said fervently, "Save me, Don Bosco. I have always spoken out in your defense when your enemies spoke badly about you. Save me, if you can, and I will always be faithful to you."

The Viaticum was brought to her. To the amazement of everybody, she sat up in bed all by herself. How long it had been since she had done any such thing! After she had received Communion, the doctor arrived. Looking at her for a moment, he exclaimed, "Lady, you are cured! You are making fun of us doctors. Come, throw away your medicines, for they are no longer of any use to you."

The sick woman got up and sent for a dressmaker, anxious to have once again the essential elements of a wardrobe, because all her clothes had already been given to needy people, thinking that she would no longer need them. As a precaution, her husband wanted her to undergo one more medical examination. No more ulcers were found! Even her legs, which had been as thin as two sticks, seemed to look fuller. Three days later, she walked to the nearby church of Saint John Evangelist. Again, on the following day, she walked as far as Valsalice to pray at Don Bosco's tomb. The fifth day she set out for Liguria where she had relatives. After more than four years in bed, after eight months without food, she was able to walk quickly and eat normal meals with other people. She lived until 1896, and she died of a completely different ailment at the age of fifty-six.

Here we should stop and not go beyond the time limit we have established for ourselves. However, the case just described reminds us of a similar incident which also happened in Turin less than three months later on January 31, 1889, and is, in a certain sense, related to this occurrence just mentioned. A lady from Turin, Louise Piovano, née Fagiano, had a uterine ulcer and was doomed to die. After some time in the hospital, she

returned to her poverty-stricken dwelling, where charitable ladies of the town called on her and brought her supplies. One of these ladies was Baroness Ricci des Ferres, née Fassati. She told the lady of the recent recovery of Mrs. Dellavalle, advising Louise to follow her example. She gave her a picture of Don Bosco, to which a fragment of cloth he had once used was attached. Gratefully, Mrs. Piovano began a novena on the Saturday before Palm Sunday. But being a pious Christian, she was just as anxious that her husband, who for many years had wanted no part of religion, be converted, as she was about getting her own recovery. She therefore began this novena to Don Bosco for this double intention. She made every effort she could to endure her disease, by keeping on her feet as much as she could. She was poor and had to do her own housework.

The Servant of God appeared to her in a dream one night at the beginning of the novena and encouraged her to pray and hope. He appeared to her once again on the last day, during the night between Easter Sunday and Monday. He was very handsome in appearance and he was wearing a magnificent stole. He called her by name and said, "Be of good cheer. God has answered your prayers."

She felt reborn at that very moment. No longer did she feel any pain, nor did she suffer any further loss of blood, nor any feeling of exhaustion. Instead, she was conscious of a great desire to move around and to eat. Nor was this all. In the morning, her husband got up at an early hour and she heard him leave the house. She followed him unobserved and saw him enter the church of Saint Philip, their own parish church. He spent a while in prayer, then went to Confession and attended Mass and received Communion. She went home ahead of him and when he returned, she asked him what had happened to make him leave the house so early in the morning. "I went to fulfill my Easter duty," he answered. "Here is the certificate." That day a twofold ray of joy had entered that modest household which was gladdened by the presence of three children.

This shower of heavenly blessings obtained through the intercession of Don Bosco continued unceasingly and in abundance. Really, the four miracles submitted to the severe investigation by the Church and acknowledged as such on its authority, are sufficient to confirm his holiness. But the knowledge of the innumerable other graces which are generally attributed to our saint serve to strengthen our faith, increase our Christian piety, and enhance the glorification of the all powerful bounty of God, who, today no less than yesterday *per sanctos suos mirabilia operatur* [works wonders through his saints].

Chapter 30

THE SUCCESSION

After all that we have stated in detail in the last volume about Father Michael Rua's appointment as Vicar General to Don Bosco with the right of succession,[1] it might seem as though upon the death of the Servant of God, everything was to proceed automatically as far as the transfer of authority. Instead things did not run so smoothly. All of this does belong to Don Bosco's posthumous biography, just as the other things described in the last few chapters do, and it should therefore not be overlooked.

As a premise we will mention the most essential data regarding the state of the two Congregations in reference to personnel and the different houses of the Congregations as of January 1888.

The Superior Council of the Pious Salesian Society was presumably constituted as follows:

Rector Major:	Rev. Michael Rua.
Prefect General:	Rev. Dominic Belmonte, director of the Salesian Oratory in Turin.
Spiritual Director:	Rev. John Bonetti.
Administrator:	Rev. Anthony Sala.
Councillor:	Rev. Celestine Durando, acting prefect.
Prefect of Studies:	Rev. Francis Cerruti.
Prefect of the Professional Schools :	Rev. Joseph Lazzero, in charge of correspondence with the missions.
Secretary:	Rev. John Baptist Lemoyne.

It remained thus constituted until the *General Directory* was printed,

[1] Vol. XVII, ch. 10, pp. 273–284. The last two lines of the sentence on p. 284, in which an error occurs, should be struck out, and substituted by: "to continue in office upon expiration of the initial term."

once the difficulties which we will now relate had been overcome. In this directory and on the same page after the list of members of the Superior Council there was a space followed by three special offices. These were:

Honorary Spiritual Director Emeritus: Bishop John Cagliero, Bishop of Magida, Vicar Apostolic of Patagonia and Vicar General for all Salesian Houses of South America.

Novice Master: Rev. Julius Barberis, director of the house of Valsalice.

Procurator General: Rev. Caesar Cagliero, Director of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Hospice.

We can spot only three changes between this roster and the one of the previous year: the substitution of Father Rua's name for that of Don Bosco, the titular appointment of Bishop Cagliero as Vicar General for the South American houses and the appointment of Father Caesar Cagliero as Procurator General instead of Father Francis Dalmazzo.

There were 869 perpetually professed members in the Pious Society, 95 who had made their triennial profession, 276 novices and 181 postulants. Among all of these there was a total of 301 priests.

Four houses were under the direct jurisdiction of the Superior Council: the Oratory, and the three Houses of Formation of Valsalice, San Benigno, and Foglizzo. The other houses were grouped together into the various provinces.

Four of these provinces belonged to Europe:

1. The Piedmontese Province — Father John Baptist Francesia, Provincial.[2] The houses: Borgo San Martino (which had taken the place of the initial foundation of Mirabello), Lanzo Torinese, Mathi, Nizza Monferrato, Este, Penango, Saint John Evangelist, Mogliano Veneto.

2. Ligurian Province — Father Francis Cerrutti, Provincial. Houses: Varazze (which had been transferred there from Cherasco), Alassio, Sampierdarena, Bordighera, La Spezia, Lucca and Florence.

3. French Province — Father Paul Albera, Provincial. Houses: Nice, Marseilles La Navarre, St. Cyr, Valdonne (Italian chapel), La Ciotat (Italian Chapel), Providence (at Ste. Marguerite near Marseilles), Lille, and Paris.

4. Roman Province — Father Celestine Durando, Provincial. Houses:

[2] The names of the houses are listed according to the chronological order of their foundation, starting from the older houses.

Magliano Sabino, Rome and Faenza. Houses attached, but beyond the geographical borders of the above jurisdiction:

In Italy, the houses of Randazzo and Catania;

Outside of Italy, the houses of Utrera, Barcelona, Trent, and London.

South America had two provinces:

1. The Argentine Province - Father James Costamagna, Provincial. Four houses in Buenos Aires (Our Lady of Mercy, Almagro, La Boca, Saint Catherine); one house at San Nicolas' de los Arroyos and one at La Plata. This province also included the houses of the Vicariate Apostolic of Patagonia, i.e. the parishes and schools of Carmen de Patagones and Viedma, besides the missions of Santa Cruz, Punta Arenas, and the Malvine Islands in the Prefecture Apostolic of Southern Patagonia. There were as yet no stable residences in Tierra del Fuego, although missionaries had already been there. The house at Concepcion in Chile was attached to the above province, and, that same year, also the new house at Talca.

2. The Uruguayan and Brazilian Province — Father Louis Lasagna, Provincial. Houses: Villa Colón, Las Piedras and Paysandu' in Uruguay; houses of Nichteroy and Sâo Paulo in Brazil. The house of Quito in Ecuador was also attached to it.

After the death of Don Bosco, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, who had also begun printing their *General Directory* in 1877, received their copies for 1888, with a preface to it written by the Mother General, Sister Catherine Daghero. It gave the following figures: 169 perpetually professed religious, 221 sisters who had made their triennial profession, 100 novices and 30 postulants. The Mother General and the Council resided at the Mother House, in Nizza Monferrato. The sisters had 35 houses in Italy, 4 in France, and one in Spain, but 6 in Argentina, including the 2 in Patagonia, 3 in Uruguay, making a total of 51 houses. Of these houses, four were called Provinces, namely the houses of Turin, Trecastagni in Sicily, of Almagro in Buenos Aires, and Villa Colón in Uruguay. There were two novitiates, at Nizza Monferrato and Almagro.

One should look beyond the mere figures of these statistics and try to look at the organization behind them, for while the numbers are small, yet the organization meant everything. The statistics are slight in comparison with the later developments and also, if one wants to, in comparison with the fame of Don Bosco's Congregation all over the world, which led peo-

ple to imagine thousands of people active in hundreds of institutes. But if we look only at the numbers in themselves, they are, humanly speaking, an extraordinary figure. As a matter of fact, if we consider only the number of the perpetually professed religious, between Salesians and the Sisters, Don Bosco had over nine hundred priests and Sisters scattered in one hundred and seven different houses at his command. All of the houses had been founded by him in an age when opinion was relentlessly hostile to similar institutions which had been suppressed by the State and were even then attacked unceasingly by the newspapers, so as to prevent any possible attempt to have them rise again. Yet Don Bosco had intelligently avoided all violence and any machination and still succeeded in gathering around himself a dedicated group of volunteers who, under a new garb, were restoring the life of the congregations that had been dispersed. A simple priest, without any financial support, had relied solely on the help of Divine Providence, which he served with all the resources of his intelligence and good will. He was an enterprising genius as he went on choosing and training people after his own heart to carry out his plans, inventing ways and means by which he could defend himself from the threats and thrusts of his adversaries, and solicit charity from the people to raise the funds he needed for his mighty undertakings. He was gifted with an iron will ready to face any obstacles, with an invincible will to start all over again every time an initiative of his had failed. From this perspective, the number of results achieved is gigantic, not to say, downright miraculous.

But the thing, which matters most, is the organization. It avails little to recruit men and women together and multiply projects, if there were to be no cohesive force to weld them together as members of one sole body, and if there were to be no focal point of vital energy within the body to keep it active and promote its development. It is exactly here that we should admire Don Bosco's creative wisdom. Right from the early beginning he had never dreamed of castles in the air, but he kept in view a well defined plan which he gradually elaborated into a systematic coordination which was less apparent than real. It was less apparent during its preparatory phase, but it became very evident along its arduous path when he was building milestones. Then, looking back, one could realize that it had all been done according to a logical plan with a specific goal in mind. This is the reason why, at the end of his mortal career, he was able to assure his heirs and successors that there would be no reason to fear for the Congregation. He had given an organic solidity to his Congregation which would have given security for the future, and such a powerful inner vitality that would have con-

stituted the secret of its inexhaustible dynamic activity.

The acid test came along with the succession. It is easy to understand that a lot depended on his successor: not only as far as the keeping of the status quo of the institutions but as far as the proper regulating of the momentum provided by the founder. The man called upon to succeed Don Bosco was endowed to an eminent degree with all the required qualities indispensable to that role. Today, any whim to contradict is forced to silence when the eloquence of deeds is heard. But there was an initial period, luckily a short one, when doubts were expressed even in high circles. Already certain cardinals, as our readers are aware, had voiced their fear or, rather, they had a deep-rooted conviction that when Don Bosco would die, then his Congregation would instantly fall apart. Such an opinion, not an isolated one, outlived its author, to the point that as soon as Don Bosco died people began talking about the possibility of the folding of his Congregation as if it were a real danger to be responded to with strong measures. Among the measures most widely talked about there was that of dissolving the Congregation and affiliating its members to another congregation having similar aims. The reason advanced to justify such a radical step was the presumptive lack of properly formed men capable of holding the Congregation together.

What is worse is that such apprehensions reached the point of shaking the confidence that Leo XIII had in the Congregation. Until that time he had only a few rare, brief, and insignificant contacts with Father Michael Rua. No wonder, then, if his humble mien and his almost ingenuously simple way of speaking, had given the Pope the idea that a man of far different temperament was required to succeed Don Bosco. He therefore shared the fears of the prophets of doom to such an extent that he began toying with the idea of affiliating the Salesians with the Scolopian Congregation.

But two things happened to turn minds away from such plans. One of these was the providential presence in Rome of Bishop Emilian Manacorda. When the good bishop of Fossano caught wind of the gathering storm, he immediately, on February 1st,went to work to penetrate the thick of such prejudices in order to dissipate them and tried to enlighten people as to the true state of affairs. His knowledge of the Roman Congregations, where he had begun his career, made it easy for him to gain access wherever he needed to go. He called on all the more influential cardinals in particular, especially those who were close to the Holy Father, most of all the Vicar of His Holiness and the new Prefect of the

Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.[3]

Knowing the Salesians as thoroughly as he did, he was able to convince people that they were closely united, and that among them there were men of great ability who had reasonable cause to look in the face of the future with assurance. His zealous efforts paved the way for the victory of the cause.[4]

But it was the procurator, Father Caesar Cagliero, who delivered the final blow to all such maneuvers. When the Cardinal Protector hinted that a plan was then under discussion which would affiliate the Salesian Congregation to some other Order, he replied categorically that the better men in the Congregation would have availed themselves of their inalienable right to reclaim their full freedom, and that he would be the first of them to give an example. This statement opened the eyes not so much of Cardinal Parocchi who was least in need of it, but of other people too, when they were informed about it. And so it happened that the testimony of Bishop Manacorda, strengthened by the stand taken by Father Caesar Cagliero, finally dispersed completely the storm clouds.

But while Father Caesar Cagliero was keeping the superiors informed of what was happening in Rome, the superiors in Turin found themselves face to face with a serious problem. In 1885 Don Bosco had informed the Chapter orally of Father Rua's appointment as his vicar and future successor, since this appointment had been made by the authority of Leo XIII, and communicated by Cardinal Lawrence Nina and Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda to the Servant of God. But Don Bosco had not read out nor mentioned any decree. A document, which we shall see shortly, did exist, will give us the date of this Roman decree. But most likely, neither Don Bosco nor anybody else in Turin ever saw it. If it had ever been in Turin, Father Joachim Berto would have taken care of it, as he did with all other documents concerning the Congregation, and following his habitual custom, he would have made a copy of it before putting it away safely. Furthermore, in his circular dated All Saints' Day 1885, in which he had

[3] When Card. Ferrieri died on January 13, 1887, he was succeeded as Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars by Card. Masotti, who had been fairly gracious to Don Bosco when still secretary to that same Congregation. The name of Card. Bartolini is also mentioned among those most assiduously approached at this time by Bishop Manacorda. But he had already died by October 2, 1887.

[4] Fr. Lemoyne quotes the following words uttered by this beloved Bishop at St. John the Evangelist hospice, in the presence of the witnesses Bishop Leto, Fr. Notario, Fr. Brunelli and others: "Don Bosco was fond of me and I always loved him like a father. I am happy to have been an instrument in overcoming the immense difficulties he encountered in trying to obtain the approval of his Rules, and in helping him succeed. How wonderful it would be if I could promote his cause and die with the relic of Blessed John Bosco on my chest."

informed the Salesians of the measure taken, Don Bosco had said that the Holy Father had informed him that the selection of Father Rua as vicar was agreeable to him. Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda had passed this information on to him, though he did not mention any papal decree nor the future succession. Father Notario, who assisted the Procurator in all that had to be done at the time, was convinced then and even now that the decree disappeared when it was sent to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. This opinion is not without some likelihood if we recall that, at that time, the Cardinal Prefect was inexorably convinced that once the Founder died, the Salesian Congregation would inevitably fall apart.

The lack of any such decree and their ignorance as to why it should be missing, placed the superiors in a serious predicament, since they were uncertain whether Father Rua had been appointed vicar with right of succession, or vicar only during the lifetime of Don Bosco. They carried their doubts to Cardinal Alimonda, so as not to be guilty of any irregular course of action. His Eminence told them that truly enough, the appointment was also extended to right of succession, but he nevertheless advised Father Rua all the same to refer the matter to the Holy Father and ask for further instructions, and to refer it also to the other members of the Superior Council, asking them to write and tell Cardinal Parocchi about it. They immediately acted upon his wise counsel. On February 8th, Father Rua submitted a detailed report to the Holy Father, beginning as follows:

"I have informed Your Holiness of the tragic loss we have suffered, through the good offices of the Most Eminent Cardinal Secretary of State, and I now kiss your sacred foot as I lay prostrate before you and make a humble act of submission, avowing my affectionate attachment to the Holy See and to Your Holiness. I come to put before you my doubts as to my present standing, seeking a solution from your great wisdom."

He then described briefly how the paperwork formalities had gone on in 1884, and expressed the reasons for his own doubt as follows:

"With these premises the doubt came to my mind whether the office of vicar entrusted to me during the life of Rev. Don Bosco regarded also the future succession. It is true that the petition drawn up by Bishop Jacobini on behalf of Your Holiness dealt with a vicar with right to a future succession, and the letter of Cardinal Nina spoke of the future of the Salesian Congregation after the death of its founder. All the same, I do not know whether Don Bosco really did propose a vicar and future successor or merely a vicar during his own lifetime. In a book of memoirs (written in his own hand), which he entrusted to me, I also find a note

where the book speaks of the procedure to follow in keeping with our Constitutions when electing a new rector major, in which it reads: *It must be borne in mind that these pages were written in September 1884 before the Holy Father appointed a Vicar with the right of succession, therefore let it be amended as it is necessary.* Yet despite all this, my doubts still linger, especially since we have not found either the original or a copy of the decree of appointment as vicar. Since it was urgently necessary that we inform people of the death, with the full consent of the Superior Council, I signed the necessary letters with my own name and surname, but without qualifying myself in any way. With their consent, also in view of the necessity of taking certain measures, I have continued to exercise the same authority as before; yet all of this was done with the mental reservation of appealing to Your Holiness as soon as I could, to seek enlightenment on the doubt expressed here."

At the end he humbly implored:

"Most Blessed Father, aware of my weakness and inadequacy, I must humbly request that you turn your wise eyes toward someone better qualified than I, dispensing me from the arduous office of Rector Major, while I assure you that with the help of God I will never cease from devoting my humble best to the welfare of our Pious Society in whatever position I may be placed, with all my strength."

If Father Michael Rua's humility could find its satisfaction in the practice of the doctrine *Ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari* [Love to be ignored and to be considered as nothing], the other superiors did not think the same way at all, for they were well aware that they were interpreting the unanimous sentiments of the other members of the Congregation. So, led by Bishop John Cagliero, they all addressed a fervent letter to the Cardinal Protector, submitting to him considerations which, according to them, would have been valid enough to advise the confirmation of Father Michael Rua as successor of Don Bosco.

Turin, February 9, 1888

Most Reverend Eminence:

The Rev. Michael Rua, formerly vicar to our venerated founder, Don Bosco, whose irreparable loss we are now mourning, has placed before the Holy Father a doubt which he fosters regarding the successor of our Founder, and has requested enlightenment from the great wisdom of His Holiness, and he is now awaiting it.

We, the humble undersigned, would for our part be most happy were the Holy Father, who in his paternal goodness of heart wished to see the welfare of the Salesian Congregation, assured and therefore urged Don Bosco to propose and appoint someone as his vicar, to confirm as our new Rector Major, i.e. the superior general of the humble Society of Saint Francis de Sales, that same Rev. Michael Rua mentioned above who, at such time was proposed and appointed as his Vicar by Don Bosco himself. Furthermore, since we are considered among the major Superiors, we are acquainted not only with the wishes of the electorate, but also with those of all our members, and are therefore in a position to assure you with the most categorical conviction of our heart that the announcement that the Holy Father is appointing the Rev. Michael Rua as our Superior General would not only be met with the uttermost submission, but would also be hailed with sincere and most cordial joy.

We will even add something also: even if we should proceed to call an election under our Rules, the unanimous conviction prevails that Father Rua would be unanimously elected, in deference to Don Bosco, who always treated him as his foremost confidant and right arm, and also in view of the esteem that all have of him for his outstanding virtues, for his remarkable ability in governing our Congregation, and for his singular capacity to deal with business matters, of which he has already given us remarkable evidence under the guidance of our unforgettable and beloved Founder and Father.

We humbly submit these reflections for the consideration of Your Most Reverend Eminence, should you see fit, in your well known wisdom, to speak of this to the Holy Father, to whom we are proud to look always as the Supreme Ruler of the Pious Salesian Society, and to whom we here promise that we shall labor, suffer, live, and die in support and in defense of the Apostolic See, just as our Don Bosco, of happy memory, taught us to do with words, with his writings, and with his example.

We cannot forego this propitious opportunity to express our inner feeling of gratitude and acknowledgment of Your Most Reverend Eminence, also on behalf of all our other confreres, for the paternal kindness with which you have until now acted as our Protector. We beg you kindly to continue extending to us your

treasured benevolence, and we promise you that we shall do everything we can, with the new Rector Major who will be assigned to us, to make sure that your office as Protector to the Salesians may not be more difficult than it has been so far.

Now we have all the more confidence that our dear Father will lovingly intercede for us before the throne of God and the august Queen of Heaven, Mary Help of Christians.

May Your Most Reverend Eminence be so kind as to remember all of us always in your fervent prayers and, while in our insignificance, we implore the good God to repay you for all you have done and will do in the future for the Salesians, we are happy to remain with the greatest esteem and most profound reverence,

Your most humble and obedient servants,

+ John, Bishop of Magida, Vicar Apostolic of Northern Patagonia; Rev. Dominic Belmonte, Prefect; Rev. John Bonetti, Spiritual Director; Rev. Anthony Sala, Administrator; Rev. Celestine Durando, Councilor; Rev. Joseph Lazzero, Councilor; Rev. Anthony Riccardi for Rev. Francis Cerruti, Councilor (momentarily absent but hereto in agreement); Rev. John Baptist Lemoyne, Secretary; Rev. Julius Barberis, Novice Master.

His Eminence had already given his attention to the reasons advanced by Bishop Manacorda and Father Caesar Cagliero, and he was very pleased with the letter. When he reported on the matter of Don Bosco's succession to His Holiness during an audience on February 11th, he obtained the Pope's confirmation of Father Rua as Rector Major of the Salesians. This is how he informed Bishop John Cagliero on the matter:

"Happy to have obtained the fulfillment of the legitimate aspiration of your good self and your worthy confreres from His Holiness, I hasten to communicate the good news to you, most dear Bishop. Praised be Our Lord, *qui mortificat et vivificat, deducit ad inferos et reducit.* [He gives death and life; he takes you to the netherworld and brings you back].

At the same time, he forwarded the official decree by which Father Rua was appointed Rector Major for a period of twelve years, commencing February 11, 1888, with the express provision that this procedure was *una tantum* [exceptional] and was not to create a precedent. The new decree was registered, as was customary, at the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. In this decree it said that the original decree issued on November 7, 1884, was therein confirmed, so then it had not been mere-

ly a verbal disposition to be communicated unofficially. Father Rua submitted the decree officially to the Superior Council during the afternoon meeting of February 24th.

The Salesians who had signed the letter to Cardinal Lucido Parocchi sent a report of all that had happened to the other Salesians with a circular letter dated March 7th which so concluded:

"As you see, most dear confreres, over and above the excellent qualities that already commended him to us so highly, the new Rector was appointed personally by our late lamented Father and Founder Don Bosco. Rather, he was assigned to us by the very Vicar of Our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no need for us to use many words to recommend him to you, for we are more than confident that you will all love and obey him, not only out of a sense of duty, or because of the esteem you feel for him, but also in deference to the Holy Father and in grateful remembrance of Don Bosco, to whom the new Rector Major was for more than thirty years the most trusted confidant, and whose spirit was instilled into him from his earliest years."

Once this matter had been successfully concluded, it was necessary that Father Rua go to Rome to pay his personal respects to the Pope. He therefore left for Rome during the first half of February. While awaiting audience, he called on cardinals and prelates and was generally given an encouraging welcome. The Holy Father granted him an audience on February 21st. The Pope first spoke of Don Bosco, whom he qualified as a saint. Then he gave Father Rua two pieces of advice: that he should consolidate thoroughly the houses already opened by Don Bosco, without trying to hurry and open others; and that he should make sure that the novices were thoroughly trained. He repeated that Don Bosco had revealed himself a saint also in his behavior toward the Vicar of Jesus Christ. Then he asked for news of the Salesian houses and missions. When the General Procurator was ushered in, he urged him to make a model house of the house of Rome, since this was a very important establishment. Father Rua went back to the house of the Sacred Heart overcome with happiness, and wrote out a report of his interview with the Holy Father as soon as he could. He had it printed and enclosed it with the first circular letter he addressed as Rector Major to all the Salesian houses on March 19th. In this circular he asked that, without any delay, all memoirs concerning the life of Don Bosco were to be coordinated, since some eminent people had urged him to initiate the cause of his beatification as soon as he could. Then came a paternal exhortation: "We should deem ourselves fortunate

indeed to be sons of so great a Father. It should therefore be our concern to uphold and in due course develop further all that he himself had begun, faithfully following the methods he had used and had taught us, and to strive to imitate Don Bosco as the model given to us by the Lord Himself in our manner of speaking and behaving in His Goodness. This, most dear sons, will be the program that I shall follow in my office. May this also be the goal and endeavor of each individual Salesian."

Directing his gaze then beyond the limits of the Salesian Congregation, Father Rua was about to address himself also to the Cooperators for the first time as Don Bosco's successor, when a fortunate discovery facilitated his gesture. It seemed impossible that while preparing his spiritual testament, Don Bosco would have overlooked the ranks of those people who had given him such valid assistance in founding and maintaining his undertakings. In fact, he had not forgotten them, at all. A letter addressed to them was found among Don Bosco's papers, with a note: "To be sent out after my death." The April *Bollettino Salesiano* gave the announcement, and, just as he had done, for the letter addressed to the Salesians, Father Rua ordered this letter to the Cooperators to be printed too, in a convenient size and an adequate number of copies, and be sent to them during the month of May. This is what Don Bosco said:

> My dear Benefactors,
>
> I feel that the end of my life is approaching, and that the day is near at hand when I will have to pay the common toll to death and descend into the grave.
>
> Before leaving you forever here on earth, I have to pay a debt that I have with you and thus gratify a great desire that I have in my heart.
>
> The debt I must pay is one of gratitude for all that you have done in helping me give a Christian education to so many poor boys and lead them to the path of virtue and of work so that they might turn out to be a comfort to their families, beneficial to themselves and to society, and especially so that they might save their souls and thus be happy throughout eternity.
>
> Were it not for your charity, I would have accomplished little or nothing; but thanks to your charity, we were able to cooperate with God's grace, dry many tears and save many souls. Thanks to your charity, we founded many schools and hospices in which thousands of orphans, rescued from destitution, wrested from the

dangers of godlessness and immorality, were and still are kept and trained to be good Christians and honest citizens by means of a good education, by means of study and the learning of a trade.

Thanks to your charity, we have established missions to the far corners of the earth, in Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, and have sent hundreds of evangelical laborers to extend and cultivate the vineyards of the Lord.

Thanks to your charity, we have set up printing shops in many cities and villages, and have published and distributed among the working classes several million copies of books and journals in defense of truth, for the growth of piety and the defense of morality.

Thanks to your charity, we have erected many chapels and churches, where for centuries and centuries until the end of the world, the praises of God and of the Blessed Virgin will be sung every day and many souls will be saved.

Convinced that, after God, all this good and much more was accomplished thanks to the powerful assistance of your charity, I feel the need to express my deepest gratitude before I end my days here on earth and thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

But if you have helped me with such kindness and perseverance, I now ask you to continue helping my successor after my death. The undertakings that I have begun with your support no longer need me, but they will continue to need you and all those who, like yourselves, are eager to sponsor what is good here on earth. I therefore entrust them all and recommend them to you.

For your encouragement and comfort I leave to my successor this task: in all community prayers and individual prayers which are said now and will be said in future in our Salesian houses, our benefactors are always to be remembered, and in all these prayers there should also be the intention that God may repay the charity of our benefactors a hundred times over, also in this world, by granting them good health, harmony within the family circle, prosperity in their country estates and in their business affairs, and by rescuing them and keeping them away from the reach of all harm.

For your encouragement and comfort I will also point out that the surest way of obtaining pardon for sins and to make sure that we enjoy life eternal is to extend our charity to little children: *uni ex minimis*, to a little abandoned child, as the Divine

Master Jesus assures us. I also would like to point out that since, at the present day, the lack of funds required to educate and train the poorest and most abandoned boys in the faith and in moral virtues is felt sharply, the Holy Virgin herself has become their patroness. She, therefore, obtains many graces both spiritual and even extraordinary temporal graces for the men and women who helped them.

My Salesians and I have witnessed the manner in which many of our benefactors, who in the beginning had only scant means, became very wealthy indeed, after they had begun to extend their charity to our young orphans.

In view of this and trained by their own experiences, many of those benefactors, now one in one way, now in another, have said these or similar words to me on several occasions: I do not want you to thank me when I give alms to your children. It is I who ought to thank you who have asked me to do so. For since I began to help support your orphans, I have tripled my good possessions. Another gentleman, Anthony Cotta, often came to bring alms to me in person, saying: The more I bring you money for your good works, the more my business prospers. I can prove with facts that Our Lord is repaying me a hundredfold here in this world for what I give you for love of Him. He was a distinguished benefactor of ours until the age of 86, when God summoned him into eternity, there to enjoy the reward for his charity.

Although I am weary and drained of strength, I wish I could go on talking with you forever, to recommend my boys to you, for I am about to leave them. Yet now I must stop and lay down my pen.

Farewell, my dear benefactors, Salesian Cooperators, both women and men. I was unable to make the personal acquaintance of many of you here in this life, but that is not important. We shall all meet in the hereafter and in eternity we shall together rejoice at all the good that, with the grace of God, we were able to accomplish here in this world, especially for the benefit of poor children.

If Divine Mercy shall, after my death, find me worthy of being welcomed into Heaven, by the merits of Jesus Christ and thanks to the protection of Mary Help of Christians, I shall always pray for you, for your families, and for all those dear to you; so that one day they all may join us in Heaven to praise the majesty of our Creator throughout eternity and to

enjoy the rapture of its divine happiness and sing the praises of His infinite mercy. Amen.

Always your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Father Rua could not have wished for a finer letter of introduction. Yet, the Cooperators did not wait to receive this precious letter in order to make known their sentiments to Don Bosco's successor. Although during the saint's lifetime, no reference to that effect had been issued, they had all unanimously looked on Father Rua as his natural successor. From among the avalanche of letters which arrived at the Oratory after January 31st, we will single out only the more significant and warmest phrases among them during the first seventeen days after Don Bosco's death.

What ties of tender friendship had existed between Don Bosco and the de Maistre family! Count Charles, who was in France, wrote on February 1st: "Is the news that I read in the newspaper really true? Is our dearly beloved and most venerated Don Bosco now gone to Heaven? I am writing to you, the first among his sons who is intimately known to me, to find out the truth. I am indeed afraid that it is truly so! Well, then I will say that I transfer to you all the reverent love we felt for your father. We were so happy to think of him as our father! There was never a joy, an anxiety or a sorrow in our life that we did not share with him! We will now do the same with you. Our deep attachment to Don Bosco will apply now to all his sons, and to the whole Salesian Congregation with which we are affiliated. Please, dear and venerable Father Rua, continue to give us the love that your father gave us."[5] Likewise, Sister Maria Teresa Medolago de Maistre, a Sister of the Sacred Heart, so concluded a long letter: " I will pray for you, Very Reverend Father Rua, asking Our Lord to comfort you and help you bear the burden you have assumed in the government of your religious family. I hope that our venerated Don Bosco will spread his mantle over his beloved first-born son, as once the prophet Elijah did over Elisha."

The canon archpriest Ramello wrote from Pinerolo: "I shall pray for

[5] Likewise his brother Francis, in writing to Fr. Rua from France on February 2, recalled with sadness the deep friendship Don Bosco had felt for his family. "The death of our beloved Don Bosco is a grievous loss to the de Maistre family, for the friendship of this holy man was an incomparable treasure which the entire family enjoyed immensely. In the trials which it pleased Divine Providence to send us, a line or a word from Don Bosco always brought the greatest comfort to our troubled hearts."

Your Reverence, who were called by the *Man of God* to succeed him. In you I venerate the new Superior of the Salesians. May you please also take the place of that loving Father whose death we mourn." Father Charles Stoppani, the archpriest of Ossola in the Novara region, wrote: "From today on, I intend to revere in you and to love in you Don Bosco, whose name is an epic poem that will be unraveled by his sons until the end of the world for the good of religion and of society." The pastor Father Neri of Naples, who had extended his hospitality to Don Bosco in 1880 and who always gave fraternal lodgings in his own home to any Salesian passing through his home town, wrote: "As for me, I shall not fail to extend to you and all the Salesians the respect that I extended until now to Don Bosco and his sons." Father Orestes Pariani, the pastor of Galbiate in Brianza and one of *ab initio* [the early] Cooperators,[6] wrote: "I feel it is my duty that I extend together with my condolences, also my congratulations and best wishes to Your Reverence for the sublime but arduous office you now occupy as Superior General, and I am happy indeed that I already made your acquaintance some time ago and have become your friend, so that in the future you will continue to extend your benevolence toward me."

Charles Brovio, a past pupil who was the diocesan president of the Workers' Associations and the local president of the Nizza Monferrato division, who had received many tokens of Don Bosco's benevolence, wrote: "I arrived home calm and contented, because before I left the Oratory I had found my second father in Your Reverence, and had an opportunity to shed tears of sorrow for the death of my first father in the arms of his worthy and beloved successor who will always from now on look on me as on a son, even though I am unworthy to bear this sweet name by which our father, Don Bosco, used to call me." Louis Roasenda, a past pupil from Bergamo, wrote: "We must rejoice for those who are left behind and for the houses that Don Bosco left, that the successor he chose already some time ago in the person of Your Reverence is certainly the best indicated and capable to keep and further the prosperity of the institutes he founded."

The historian Cesare Cantú wrote from Milan on February 16th: "The venerable Don Bosco has already begun to obtain graces from Heaven by filling the void he left with someone, who though I will not say is equal to him, is nevertheless worthy of succeeding him and of render-

[6] See Vol. XVI, p. 336.

ing his disappearance less harmful to religion and to society. How gladly would I have paid my respects to his representative, had I known him, at the funeral services celebrated with such noble, piety in the church of Our Lady of Grace.[7] Foster the spirit of charity and abnegation which Don Bosco instilled in the hearts of these youths."

Monsignor Peter Tarino, the canon archpriest of the Biella chapter, wrote: "When a person like Father Michael Rua who, for such a long time, was in close contact with the spirit of the illustrious deceased, stands at the helm and heart of all this activity; and when so many intellects are united around him, all of them associated and guided by the selfsame sentiments and spirit of sacrifice, there is good reason to believe and to hope that not only will the Congregation of Don Bosco continue to prosper in its fertile interior life, but that it will also develop and expand far beyond the present confines by which it is encompassed."

Bishop Francis Derenelli of that same noble patrician family, who had been one of the first Cooperators and for many years had been the director of the Cooperators of Verona, said: "Father Michael! Now we will close our ranks around you and revere you as our superior. We intend to seek and find in you the willpower of Don Bosco, his authority, and our own leadership."

Bishop Brandolini, the Bishop of Ceneda, wrote: "Don Bosco has appointed you as his successor; in the midst of such misfortune, no better arrangement could have been thought out." Bishop Guarino, the archbishop of Messina, wrote: "You, who so well reproduce his virtues, will assuredly obtain from God, through the intercession of your saintly and illustrious Founder, such vigor and strength in your activity, as to make his departure from us far less bitter." Cardinal Sanfelice, the archbishop of Naples, wrote: "May God grant Your Reverence, who are already imbued with the spirit of your Founder, the grace to safeguard fully this same spirit in all the houses he founded which are now entrusted to you."

Very many were the letters that arrived from France. Only a few people who had known him personally, made reference to Father Rua himself. Mrs. Quisard, the well known Cooperator from Lyons, eagerly assured him in her letter of condolence that, as it had done in the past for Don Bosco, her family would in the future do everything possible for Father Rua, Don Bosco's most privileged son, his right hand and succes-

[7] This funeral service was celebrated February 15. Fr. Rua had sent the Economer General, Fr. Sala, as his representative.

sor. She also begged him to permit her family to share in the blessings and graces of which Don Bosco would surely appoint him agent and intermediary. The patrician household of Count Villeneuve at Hyeres which was very devoted to Don Bosco, wrote: "We shall always love Don Bosco's worthy successor." The two Lallemand ladies, both mother and daughter of La Reole, had had an extensive correspondence with Don Bosco. The daughter in particular now revered Father Rua with the selfsame filial affection she had previously displayed for his own venerated spiritual Father. Mindful of the paternal kindness of Don Bosco, Marchioness Saint-Seine wrote from Dijon: "When I think back over all the things he was so kind to tell me, I know that his creation will not perish. Don Bosco had faith in you, and he was aware that Our Lord looked after you in a very special way. Therefore, the hearts of all those people who loved the Saint we have mourned, will turn to you, and I would like to remind you of the time you spent here in Dijon." In 1883, when Don Bosco was on his way home from Paris, he and Father Rua had accepted an invitation from this same noble Christian family.[8] Levrot, the engineer of Nice who does not need to be introduced to readers, wrote to his "*bon pere* [good Father]" Rua as follows: "Don Bosco's friends will now become your friends; may his sons realize their good fortune and be proud to live and die in affectionate friendship with the successor of that great saint, and under his loving, fatherly guidance."

We will now skip other remarks by French friends of Don Bosco, to turn to the Catholic Women's Association of Marseilles. All the Ladies of this association at their meeting on March 12th, signed a letter in which, after voicing their grief over the death of Don Bosco, wrote: "Our association is happy to meet once again in you the chosen, favorite son of the saint, and we will deem ourselves fortunate to assist you with filial zeal. We also thank Our Lord for having summoned you to continue so great and wonderful a Congregation. We beg Him to render your task a comfort to you, and your burden light through the intercession of your venerable Founder." In a postcript to the letter, Father Guiol, the pastor, joined the ladies of the committee in offering his most respectful regards to the venerated Father Michael Rua, and rejoiced that Divine Providence had chosen the man who was to continue the work of the saint so quickly, saying that all the efforts sustained by the saint had already opened the gates of Heaven to him. Father Rua replied on the 28th of the same month to

[8] See Vol. XVI, p. 216.

both the Association members and the pastor.

Similar manifestation came also from other parts of the world. Madeleine Ochninger, who had spoken with Don Bosco, now wrote from Wierzl, Austria, to assure Father Rua on her own behalf and in the name of her whole family, that as Don Bosco's heir, he could rely on their devotion and most steadfast concern for the Salesian undertakings. The Madrid Senator Lastres[9] also wrote, telling Father Rua that in him he recognized the only person who could have been called upon to continue the work begun with such rare genius and fervent faith by Don Bosco.

We do not feel that a few quotations from the Italian and foreign newspapers will be out of place here, since it is of great historical interest that the favorable opinion pronounced by the press on the selection of Father Rua as Don Bosco's successor be confirmed. *L'Eco d'Italia* of Genoa wrote on February 2nd: "Don Bosco's work could not have been entrusted to better hands. The *Eco of Bergsamo* on the same day had these words, "Since we have been enrolled by Don Bosco among the Salesian Cooperators and without any merits of ours we extend our sincere and most affectionate respects to his worthy successor."

La Difesa of Venice of February 29th brought word of Father Rua's return from Rome in a correspondence from Turin and added: "Tomorrow or Sunday, I will go to kiss Father Rua's hand and also on behalf of *La Difesa*, I will assure him of the confidence that all good Christians have in him that he will continue the truly miraculous and holy initiatives undertaken by the man of God, Don Bosco, under the auspices of Mary Help of Christians. There is no one more capable than Father Rua to continue them."

The editor-in-chief, Mr.Auffray, had attended Don Bosco's funeral and wrote in *La Defense* of Paris on February 3rd: "I wanted to write an obituary for the death of this remarkable priest; but after what I have seen, I feel I ought to change register. Especially so, now that I have talked with Father Rua, I realize that the Salesian undertakings will not fail." *Das Cassianeum* of Bavaria published an open letter from its editor, Schmidinger, to Father Rua: "We congratulate you, most reverend Sir, for the heritage bequeathed to you by the will of the blessed deceased. We are sincerely glad that this heritage is now in such excellent hands." *La Gazette de Liége* of June 21st carried a long article about Father Rua, relating the role he had played in the foundation and direction of Don

[9] See Vol. XVII, p. 596ff.

Bosco's Congregation and describing his personality and eminent qualities. It also said: "Just as Moses on his journey to the Promised Land, Don Bosco could not halt. He created and went on his way; but Father Rua will be the one to providentially continue his work and wisely consolidate it."

The assurances of obedience on the part of the Salesians were just as he had every right to expect, and we do not need to make any special reference to them. Of such manifestations the most solemn and significant one was most certainly the vote called by the General Chapter in 1898 when, with almost unanimous consensus, he was re-elected Rector Major. The Mother General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, who had not dared to express with her own words her sentiments on the occasion of a recent visit, wrote to him in February. The following passages in her letter seem to us to be well worthy of note: "It is so great a comfort and such a consolation to myself, to my council, and each and every individual Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, that we have Your Reverence for our superior. I could not express it in words. We shall thank God for this immense boon for the rest of our lives, and will pray that he will assist us to be less unworthy of you, by endeavoring to live up to our holy vocation with the greatest possible fidelity. Dear and Reverend Father, I know that your task as our Superior will entail sacrifices for you and will cause you much concern, but we will pray fervently that Jesus reward you amply for it. For my part, I promise that I will do my utmost to render lighter your burden in directing us by incalcating the need for prompt obedience, unlimited confidence and a holy, reverent and filial affection toward you, Reverend Father. All superiors and Sisters shall look to you, after God, as to our Father, our leader, our support, our councilor, our all!"

Thus did everything resume its normal rhythm. Facts did not disappoint expectations after a time, but indeed exceeded what had been hoped for by a wide margin. Half a century after the death of Don Bosco, if we now look back, we see how the three goals listed by Bishop Manacorda have been fully attained: unity, ability to work, look to the future.

Even Leo XIII himself had doubted whether the Society would hold together, nor had he made any secret of his opinion. On March 22, 1888, he granted an audience to Bishop Cagliero, and when Cagliero spoke of the constant unity existing among all the Salesians after the death of Don Bosco, the Pope confessed quite candidly that he had indeed feared for it, but that now he was thoroughly satisfied.[10] How many religious orders

[10] Letter from Fr. Riccardi to Fr. Joseph Lazzero, Rome, March 22, 1888 (Appendix, doc. 108).

and congregations, even among the most important, did not suffer from some internal divisions in their early days? Despite all its early trials, the novelty of its conception, the complexity of its structure, the diversified origin of its members and the international nature of its houses, the Salesian Congregation never passed through even the smallest crisis which might threaten to break up the compactness of its unity. The spirit of Don Bosco was and still is that binding force which firmly holds together the older parts of the structure as well as the new ones. And what is memorable is that the more it assumes the aspect of a miracle the less it is actually noticed.

That our Congregation never lacked capable men, was made evident immediately during what was perhaps the most critical period of its existence under Don Bosco's first successor, namely, when the time had come to consolidate the edifice built by the Founder and to bring it to fulfillment. For the complicated didactic systems of the classic, non-classic, or professional training schools of both the Salesians and their pupils, for the complete formation programs and religious discipline of the personnel, for the vast complexity of the missionary activity, for the promotion of good literature, the Congregation either already had or actually discovered at the opportune moment men who were endowed with the necessary talents to respond to everything. And because of the availability of these men not a single house founded by Don Bosco suffered any setback. The assistance given by technically prepared people who had been assigned to every branch of activity was always available and suited to the growth of any undertaking.

The whole world can verify for itself, without any need of providing further proofs, that the future fulfilled the confident reassurances given by the far-seeing Piedmontese bishop. We would rather recall the end of the dream Don Bosco had in November 1881 about the status of the Pious Salesian Society. The admonishing angel ended his final recommendations with a phrase which was like a flash of light revealing the future. For the heavenly envoy spoke thus: "*Qui videbunt, dicent: a Domino facitum est istud et est mirabile in oculis nostris* [Those who will see will say: The Lord has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes.]"[11] According to the angel, this hymn would have been addressed to God by those who observed what happened at the end of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century, i.e., precisely

[11] Ps. 118:23.

the period of Father Rua's rule. We who were already spectators during that period and also during the period that followed are doubly justified in taking as our own the cry of the heavenly messenger: "The Lord has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes."

Earlier Documents and Events

DOCUMENT 1 [Italian, pp. 872–878]

An Interesting Episode

This entire narrative was written by Father Lemoyne, who left it in draft form with the intention of turning it into a chapter in his planned final volume of The Biographical Memoirs, *if God had granted him the time to complete them.*

Don Bosco had many dealings with Marquis Ignatius Pallavicini, who had promised him a sum of money for the benefit of the Salesian house of Sampierdarena. When some influential persons came to know the Marquis's intentions, they showed up at a bad time to give him their advice: it was not a good idea to help a foreigner, a Piedmontese, in preference to a Genoese; it would be better to make a donation to one of the very many institutions of Genoa. And that is what he did. Toward Don Bosco the Marquis retained his benevolence, but at his death he left him nothing.

When Don Bosco went to Genoa, he called upon the Marchioness, the daughter of the late Marquis and his sole heir. She had married Marquis Marcellus Durazzo. Don Bosco said to her: "I have come to you, dear Marchioness, to remind you of your father's intention of making an endowment to our house of Sampierdarena. I have no right to it and don't pretend to have any. But it seems to me that you might somehow—as seems best to you—come to the aid of these poor boys."

In a rather curt tone the Marchioness answered him: "I know that my father had meant to do that, but I also know that subsequently he changed his mind. I believe there were about forty thousand lire involved."

"I am not claiming anything," Don Bosco remarked. "But I know for sure that your father, the Marquis meant to do something for us. I'm not asking for forty or fifty thousand lire, just for a little bit of help—maybe two thousand, four thousand lire—to honor the Marquis's memory, and also because the house of Sampierdarena is in bad straits."

"I can't do anything for you, at least for now."

"That's for you to say. But I will tell you that by acting this way you'll certainly not draw God's blessings, as you'll find out."

Stung by that mysterious threat, the Marchioness blurted out sarcasm. If her words could not offend a saint's self-esteem, yet they wounded the heart of a man begging for charity for his poor little sons. Don Bosco left the house, and the Marchioness ordered that if he ever showed up again he should not be let in.

When he returned to Turin, Don Bosco took out a letter, which Marquis Pallavicini had written him, promising to remember him in his will, and he sent it to her. The letter was never returned, nor was there an answer.

From that time on it seems, indeed, that disasters had entered the Pallavicini house. After a series of lamentable events, Marquis Durazzo went blind. Then there was the separation between his son and the son's wife. Marquis Durazzo's son was involved in various commercial affairs and especially in the *Veloce* business, and had suffered heavy losses. The Marchioness was obliged to sign one promissory note after another. Enormous sums were entailed—millions and millions of lire—so that the notary, who knew his business very well, said to her one day as he was handing her another note to sign, for a million (I think): "Forgive me, My Lady: do you know what you're signing?"

"Yes, I know," she replied.

"In that case, all right," said the notary.

Meanwhile, at Sampierdarena the necessity of buying a property of the Marchioness near the Salesian hospice had become evident. If anyone else had come into its possession, he would have been able to put up a large factory which would have overlooked our house and the playgrounds, and would have made it impossible for us to stay there.

So it was necessary to induce the Marchioness to sell. That mission was entrusted to a certain Mr. DeAmicis. This gentleman, therefore, called on the Marchioness one day and waited for an opportune moment to tell her that Father Dominic Belmonte, the director of Sampierdarena, had asked him to undertake this mission.

"And I," the Marchioness answered, "don't want anything to do with Don Bosco."

"But why?"

"Because Don Bosco is that sort of person who..." and her description showed not just coldness but even contempt.

"But if I may be permitted to ask, tell me what grounds do you have to think so poorly of Don Bosco."

So the Marchioness related her earlier dialogue with Don Bosco. Without showing his astonishment, DeAmicis listened in wonder to that prophecy of Don Bosco, which, as far as the Marchioness was concerned, was reason to be angry with him.

"Madam Marchioness, my opinion is contrary to yours," he said. "I know Don Bosco, I see his works, and I can't possibly believe that Don Bosco is what you say."

"Well, you may keep your opinion, and I'll keep mine."

"Yes. But, you know, I agree with a great many other people—not to say with everyone—in thinking well of Don Bosco, while you have no one, or very few, who share your opinion."

"Enough. I'll say no more about it; for Don Bosco I'll do nothing," interrupted the Marchioness.

And DeAmicis reported to Father Belmonte the sorry outcome of his mission.

Meanwhile, the marriage came to a separation. Then the Marchioness sent word to DeAmicis to call on her in her chamber, where she used the alcove as her bed. The room was magnificent: all gilded furniture, so that it looked like a temple, with candelabra, silks, damasks, carpets, and a profusion of precious objects. The lady was leaning on her writing desk, crying her heart out.

DeAmicis came in. The Marchioness said to him, "Do you see what point I've come to?"

Madam, I understand the depths of your grief. Be patient; let's put things into God's hands once again. For now, there's no remedy. Set your heart at rest, resign yourself. However, I would like to suggest to you...."

"Don't speak to me of Don Bosco," the Marchioness snapped at him, with a gesture that meant "Stay a good ten steps back; remember the distance that separates you from me."

DeAmicis left, resolved not to call on her again unless summoned. Only after fifteen days did she send for him.

Seeing the Marchioness so obstinate, DeAmicis finally exclaimed to Don Bosco one day when he met him, "We're not getting anywhere with her, you know!"

"Yes, yes," answered Don Bosco. "The deal will be done, but when I'll no longer be around. And you'll act as the intermediary."

DeAmicis remembered those words, even though at that point he had lost all hope.

Don Bosco, in the meantime, fell sick. DeAmicis went promptly to see

him and found that he was gravely ill. As he was leaving, he said to the Saint: "I have to go to Rome with an Italian pilgrim group. I'm compelled to leave, and I'm sorry to leave you in this condition. But when I come back, will I see you?" Obviously he was afraid he would never see Don Bosco again.

"Go ahead," Don Bosco replied with a smile. "Be at ease. You'll see me, and you'll be on hand for my funeral."

Don Bosco had told this gentleman, who was rich, "You are destined to do a lot of good." Another time, when DeAmicis asked him whether he would be saved, he stated, "Yes, but you'll sink almost to the brink of a precipice, and then you'll rise up and be saved."

DeAmicis then returned to Genoa and called on the Marchioness, whom he had to accompany to Rome. He said to her, "I have just come from Turin, where I called on Don Bosco."

"And how is he?"

"Very bad."

"Poor man! I'm sorry to hear that." This woman was, deep down, very good, a charitable lady, but she had too many prejudices against Don Bosco.

Arrived at Rome, she went with DeAmicis into the halls of the Vatican for an audience. As soon as the Pope saw DeAmicis—he knew that he had been in Turin—he queried him solicitously, "So, tell me, how is Don Bosco?" DeAmicis informed him, while the Pope showed a most lively concern for Don Bosco.

The Marchioness was struck by this, and when she got out of the audience she remarked to DeAmicis, "What esteem does the Pope have for Don Bosco!"

"Rightly so, dear Marchioness. It does not surprise me. The Pope knows who Don Bosco is."

DeAmicis returned to Genoa, then hastened to Turin to see Don Bosco, whose death had been announced by telegrams and newspapers. The Saint's prediction was fulfilled precisely. DeAmicis arrived a few moments before they closed the casket, and he was able to see his friend's remains, kiss his hand once more, and assist at his funeral.

During the first months of 1888, Fr. Rua was busy just setting in order all the temporal matters concerning the Congregation, regularizing the rights of his succession with the Government. Father Rua turned his first thoughts to the purchase of the Durazzo property, to free the Sampierdarena hospice from a vexation which would not have been too be far off on account of the continuous development of factories in that city.

Before his death, Don Bosco had asked other influential persons to intercede with the Marchioness to induce her to sell. Her first reply was that she meant to sell the land at issue as a building lot. Then she said that the lowest sum she required was 200,000 francs, to be paid with a notary act. And she was talking about selling only one part of the lot. Finally, she answered to the person beseeching her to sell that she would not want to sell unless she sold by contract the entire property. So the outcome of this proposition was always a resolute "no." To someone who once asked her the reason why, she said, "Because Don Bosco promises to pay and then won't pay."

Don Bosco finally had this offer made to the Marchioness: she should fix whatever sum she liked, including even the property's sentimental value in the price, and without fail he would satisfy her. He was ready to pay even 300,000 lire. He said, "It's a necessary expense, and God will provide." The Marchioness would not hear of it.

Once Don Bosco was dead, the business of the Marchioness was going down. The *Veloce*, for various reasons, had cost her son, the Marquis, heavy sacrifices. In the city it was said—and it was known too—that he might also go bankrupt.

Father Rua summoned Father John Marenco to Turin during the first months of 1889 to see how the Marchioness might be induced to cede her property. When the situation was looked, into a conclusion was evident: dealing with her by letter was useless. It was better for Fr. Marenco to approach her in person. That is what was done. As soon as Father Marenco was announced, she received him. That surprised him, for it was said that if Don Bosco himself had come, he would not have been let in.

The Marchioness was struck by the manners of the director of Sampierdarena, although she understood at once what his purpose was. Father Marenco explained the predicament of his house and said quite plainly that he had come to her because she was the only person able to guarantee the future of the hospice.

"You see," replied the Marchioness, "although I didn't want to sell to Don Bosco, I did understand how, if I sold it to others, I would have ruined his hospice, and I told the Marquis, my son: 'Poor Salesians; if we should sell that property to others, we'll ruin Saint Cajetan's Hospice for good, and we would force them to look for a place somewhere else.' I didn't want to sell it to Don Bosco, but neither would I have sold it to others."

Father Marenco thanked her heartily and pressed his plea.

"But look," the Marchioness rejoined, "in our present condition and with all those rumors about our possible financial failure, if we should sell that property, people would say that we were compelled to get rid of that property, that we've begun to sell off. That would cause our creditors to panic, and my son's name would be compromised before the public."

"But," commented Father Marenco, " this is not the case, for others to say that it was sold out of need, since it would actually be sold out of charity. Everyone sees, everyone knows, the need we have of that lot, and hence there wouldn't be any gain, but rather a real sacrifice, on your part. The Lord, you may be sure, will reward you abundantly."

"If that's the case," replied the Marchioness, "I have no objections to raise. All that remains is for my son to be of the same opinion. If he consents, as I hope, consider the matter settled."

Father Marenco left with his heart greatly comforted.

An instantaneous, miraculous change had taken place within the Marchioness Durazzo-Pallavicini. Over the years she had revealed to her son Don Bosco's request, and now she also told him of this last proposal. Meanwhile, some speculators, who were aware of what was going on, had several times approached the Marquis about buying the lot. They were ready to pay 200,000 lire. They intended to profit from the Salesians' need for it and net themselves some 50,000 or 100,000 lire. They planned to lay the foundations of a factory so that the Salesians, on seeing what was actually happening and supposing that very soon they would be stuck with nearby tenants of every kind who would have seen and heard whatever was happening in their house, would have been willing to pay any price to be free from such a peril. And the head of this group was by reputation a good Catholic, who went to church regularly, a gentleman all for the Pope and the faith. This scarcely sensitive way of acting did not seem to agree with the religious sentiments that he professed. Their broker revealed their less than generous plan to DeAmicis.

One fine morning, Marquis Marcellus Durazzo summoned DeAmicis and told him: "Come on, let's go to Sampierdarena to Saint Cajetan's Hospice. On account of that property of ours they'll never leave me a moment's peace. I foresee that they'll be capable of persecuting me as long as I live. So now I want to get rid of that annoyance. You've already taken the part of the intermediary so many times in this business. Please come along."

DeAmicis got into the waiting carriage and, with a light heart, headed for Sampierdarena. Upon entering the hospice, they met Father Marenco under the porticoes. He received the Marquis with much courtesy and showed him around the workshops, the classrooms, and the dormitories. The Marquis was utterly delighted by everything he saw. Then they went up to the terrace over the porticoes, and stopped almost directly in front of the room usually occupied by Don Bosco.

Here the Marquis turned to Father Marenco. "That's the lot you need?" the Marquis asked as he was pointing to it.

"Yes, sir! It's that section, ten yards beyond those posts supporting that bower."

"Very good. Let's make the deal, then, for 50,000 lire due at the signing with the notary public."

"Oh my lord the Marquis! Thank you! Thank you!"

"And tell me, Father Director—why do you want to buy just that part of the property? Couldn't you buy all of it?"

"My lord the Marquis! Certainly that would be wonderful, but you know quite well that I wouldn't know where to find the money. Up to a certain point I can go, and I've got the cash! But beyond that...."

"Take it, take it," DeAmicis chimed in.

"You may buy the whole place. I want only another 50,000 lire, to be paid in installments over several years on whatever day we agree upon," replied the Marquis.

I do not know whether Father Marenco heard those last words. He felt that he was going to faint, for an instant he saw nothing, and he had to grab the railing for support. The Marquis watched as two big tears rolled down his cheeks.

When Father Marenco had recovered from his daze, Marquis Durazzo continued: "Now, as good businessmen, we love to do this rightly. What will you give me as a guarantee?"

"Oh my lord Marquis," Father Marenco answered readily, "what can I give you as a guarantee? Only one thing. I'll come someday to have lunch with you at Pegli."

"Excellent! And bring all your boys."

With a handshake, they parted. The Marquis and DeAmicis got into their landau. DeAmicis commented: "My lord the Marquis, you've truly done a good deed by cheering up the Salesians. I'm sure that you won't be wanting for blessings from the Lord. How happy Don Bosco must be!"

At these words, the Marquis shuddered from head to toe, and two really big tears welled up in his eyes.

"I've never seen you cry. I don't think you've ever shed a tear in your life," DeAmicis said. The Marquis was unusually joyful that day, as he showed in many ways.

The day agreed upon for lunch at Pegli finally came. All the boys, including the band, went there by train. They were welcomed with great festivity. A lavish dinner was prepared for them. The tables were spread out in a delightful spot within that magnificent garden famous all over the world. The Marquis and the Marchioness sat down with Father Marenco and all the boys. It was a really fine day. The Marchioness herself was so changed that she seemed always to have held the Salesians and their youngsters close to her heart.

Finally, the day for signing the contract arrived. DeAmicis was somewhat put out because he had not been invited to be present. Suddenly, the Marquis showed up [at his home]: "Mr. DeAmicis, please come and spend the day with us. That way you'll be present for the contract signing, for which you worked so hard to bring it to this happy ending; and at the same time you'll act as a witness. So your name will be perpetually on record in the notary deed as a souvenir and a testimony of this event." DeAmicis went, entirely satisfied.

Father Marenco had brought along the 50,000 lire. The notary read the deed contract, and when he came to the point concerning the other 50,000 lire to be paid in installments over ten years, the Marquis turned to Father Marenco. "Of course," he said, " I will never receive those 50,000 lire, because the Salesians do not have the money to pay me. But that doesn't matter. I absolutely insist, however, that when the first installment comes due, you, Father Director, shall come to pay it to me." In that fashion he indicated that he intended to work things out in some other way.

And the contract was signed. Thus were fulfilled the words which Don Bosco had spoken to DeAmicis, "The deal will be done, but when I'm no longer around. And you'll act as the intermediary."

But the Lord, on that very day, blessed Marquis Durazzo in a stunning fashion. He had risked funds in a certain speculation that turned out well for him. With the profit, he paid off all his promissory notes, whose value, it was said, amounted to some 8,000,000 lire, and he still had a net gain in cash of 1,300,000 golden lire.

SALESIAN BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY

The following list of biographical sketches are of persons whose names appear in this volume. Our selection includes names of Salesians who are most outstanding in the history of the Salesian Congregation. We include them for the readers who are unfamiliar with this history.

ALBERA, PAUL (1845–1921), Father

Paul Albera, from None in the province of Turin, entered the Oratory in the fall of 1858. He made his religious profession in 1862. After his ordination in 1868, he was appointed prefect of the Oratory, a post he held until 1871. As director of the Salesian house at Sampierdarena, a suburb of Genoa, he had responsibility for the Sons of Mary and helped Don Bosco in preparing the first missionary expedition (1875). The print shop which he initiated there in 1877 printed the *Bollettino Salesiano.*

In 1881 Father Albera was appointed provincial of the Salesian houses in France, with headquarters at Marseilles. He remained in that position ten years, and, despite the anticlericalism of the times, the houses in France grew from three to thirteen.

Father Albera was called "the little Don Bosco." A man of action—above all, interior action—his main concern was spiritual formation. He became spiritual director of the Salesian Society and a member of the superior chapter in 1892 after the death of Father John Bonetti (see below). The rector major, Father Rua (see below), asked him to compile the Director's Manual and to conduct extraordinary visitations of the provinces of France, Spain, Belgium, and South America; the last journey took three years.

In fulfillment of a prophecy of Don Bosco, known only to Father Philip Rinaldi, Father Albera was elected rector major in 1910, succeeding Father Rua. He headed the Congregation during the trying years of

World War I. The depth of his personal piety and asceticism imbued the numerous circular letters which he wrote to the Salesians, as well as the Director's Manual.

Exhausted by his many journeys as rector major in visiting the houses and strengthening the confreres and Salesian cooperators, Father Albera passed the last years of his life in precarious health. After his death he was interred at Valsalice, alongside Don Bosco and Father Rua, whose sterling virtues he so faithfully reflected.

BARBERIS, JULIUS (1847–1927), Father

Father Barberis had the distinction of being the first novice master of the Salesian Congregation, appointed by Don Bosco in 1874. "We will always be friends," the saint told fourteen-year-old Julius on his entrance into the Oratory in 1861. "One day you will be my helper," he added. Father Barberis was a quiet, gentle person, very much attuned to Don Bosco's spirit, prudent and kind with his young charges, demanding yet patient and understanding.

He was born at Mathi in the province of Turin, made his first vows in 1865, and was ordained in 1870. At the University of Turin he earned his doctoral degree in theology in 1873. As master of novices for twenty-five years he formed a veritable host of young men into zealous, hard-working Salesians who looked up to him for inspiration and guidance, among them the Servants of God Andrew Beltrami and August Czartoryski. Don Bosco used his experience to set up novitiates throughout Europe. From 1892 to 1900 he was a member of the superior chapter. From 1902 to 1911 he was provincial of the central province. In 1910 he was elected spiritual director of the Congregation, a position he held till his death. Truly a man of God, gifted with enviable simplicity and extraordinary goodness, he mirrored the fatherliness of Don Bosco to all his novices. His *Vade Mecum*, the first textbook on Salesian spirituality, is still a valuable introduction to religious life.

BEAUVOIR, JOSEPH (1850–1930), Father

Joseph Beauvoir was born in Turin, made his vows in 1870, and was ordained a priest in 1875. Three years later, when Don Bosco asked him whether he would volunteer for the South American missions, he accepted and left that same year. After a short stay in Uruguay and at Buenos

Aires, he headed for the mission fields of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. He was perhaps the missionary who worked the hardest and the longest to keep in touch with the Indians.

As military chaplain, he took part in General Villegas's expedition to the Andes in 1882–1883 and was awarded a silver medal for his priestly zeal. He then spent twenty-five years evangelizing the Indians of southern and western Patagonia. His love for them prompted him to compile a small dictionary of the Onas Indians which was later amplified and merged with the highly praised work entitled *Los Shelknam Indigenos de la Tierra del Fuego*, dealing with the traditions, customs, and languages of the local natives. Father Beauvoir accompanied a group of Indians who represented Tierra del Fuego at the 1892 Colombian Fair in Genoa. He died in Buenos Aires.

BELLAMY, CHARLES (1852–1911), Father

Charles Bellamy was ordained to the priesthood in his native city of Chartres in 1881. Since his fond desire was to minister to young workers, he consulted his pastor, who retrieved from his trash basket a brochure he had recently received and gave it to him. Father Bellamy read it and pursued his calling. Later, he used to quip that he found his vocation in a wastepaper basket! In 1882, he first met Don Bosco in Paris. The following year he made his novitiate and was perpetually professed in 1884.

Father Bellamy founded the Salesian oratory, secondary school, and trade school at Menilmontant in Paris. In 1891 he opened the first Salesian house in Africa, at Oran, Algeria. Some years later, ill health forced him to retire to the Salesian house at Charlemont, near Geneva. A man of keen intelligence and an excellent speaker, he wrote several books about Don Bosco. He died in Lausanne, Switzerland.

BELMONTE, DOMINIC (1843–1901), Father

Dominic Belmonte, born in Genoa, went to the Oratory in 1860; and, although seventeen, he was advised by Don Bosco to begin high school. He studied music and became a proficient choir director and composer. Professed in 1864, he was ordained in Turin in 1870. After serving as prefect at Borgo San Martino and catechist at Alassio, in 1877 he returned to Borgo San Martino as director, where his predecessors had been Fathers Rua and Bonetti (see below). In 1881, he was appointed director of the

school at Sampierdarena, where he also taught theology, headed musical activities, and became first pastor at the church of Saint Cajetan. In 1886, Father Belmonte was chosen prefect general of the Salesian Society. On the death of Father Bonetti in 1891, he was named postulator of Don Bosco's cause. Though he gave up his active musical career, he sponsored the musical training of the Congregation's most noted musician, Father John Pagella.

Don Bosco had told Father Belmonte that if he took care of himself, he would live beyond sixty. But he felt he could not spare himself any work. He died in Turin at the age of fifty-eight.

BERTO, JOACHIM (1847–1914), Father

Joachim Berto entered the Oratory in 1862 and joined the Salesian Congregation three years later. Even before his ordination in 1871, he was chosen by Don Bosco to be his secretary, a post he retained for twenty years, until ill health forced him to retire. During these years he accompanied Don Bosco on his most important trips to Rome on the Congregation's affairs and to Rome and Florence in delicate negotiations between the Italian government and the Holy See. He was a great help to Don Bosco in carrying out his voluminous correspondence and in safeguarding confidential documents concerning the above negotiations. His accounts of these journeys constitute some of the most precious archives of the Salesian Society. He was one of the privileged few who witnessed many of Don Bosco's wonderful deeds. While carrying out his secretarial duties, Father Berto also carefully kept a diary and authored several devotional and ascetical booklets. As catechist for the Oratory students, he cultivated the sodalities of the Blessed Sacrament and the Altar Boys. To his last days he was a skilled and well-loved confessor at the Oratory, where he died.

BOLOGNA, JOSEPH (1847–1907), Father

Joseph Bologna came from Garessio in the province of Cuneo and entered the Oratory in 1863. He was a companion of the saintly lad Francis Besucco, whose virtues he made his own. He joined the Congregation in 1868 and was ordained in 1872. In 1878, Don Bosco sent him to Marseilles to open Saint Leo's Festive Oratory, which he directed until 1892, when he was appointed provincial of the houses in southern

France with headquarters at Marseilles. Six years later he was sent to Paris and named provincial of northern France and Belgium. His last days were saddened by the government's anti-religious legislation, which closed the northern Salesian houses. He died in Turin while on a visit to the Oratory.

BONETTI, JOHN (1838–1891), Father

John Bonetti was born at Caramagna in the province of Cuneo. He came to the Oratory in 1855. Father Matthew Picco, who taught him in his senior year, called him "a priceless youth." John was one of the young men who, in December 1859, banded with Don Bosco to found the Salesian Congregation and was elected a member of the first superior chapter (see Vol. VI, pp. 181–183). He won high honors in philosophy and theology and soon became a well-known writer. Together with Fathers Michael Rua (see below) and Dominic Ruffino and others, he was one of the early chroniclers of Don Bosco's words and deeds. His book *Cinque lustri di storia dell'Orarorio di San Francesco di Sales* [English edition: *Saint John Bosco's Early Apostolate*] merits special mention. Its wealth of detail constitutes a small library of Salesiana, and of course it is a primary source for much of what it recounts.

Father Bonetti was a capable public relations man. Gifted with a fine intellect and a brilliant imagination, he was also a great storyteller. Like Don Bosco, he defended the Catholic Church against the attacks of vociferous Protestants. A man of balanced zeal, warm piety, and deep spirituality, he was elected spiritual director of the Salesian Congregation in 1886.

When he died in 1891, he fulfilled Don Bosco's prophecy that he would be the first member of the superior chapter to follow him in death. Blessed Michael Rua hailed Father Bonetti as "a tireless apostolic laborer, a valiant champion in promoting God's glory and the salvation of souls, an amiable counselor in comfort and advice."

BORGATELLO, MAGGIORINO (1857–1929), Father

Born at Varengo in the province of Alessandria, Maggiorino Borgatello first met Don Bosco at the age of sixteen when he entered the Oratory. He liked Don Bosco so much that he decided to bind himself to him for life. He took his vows as a Salesian in 1877 and was ordained a priest in 1880. In late 1888, after recovering from a severe illness through Don Bosco's intercession, he volunteered for the missions of Patagonia

and Tierra del Fuego, where he labored twenty-five years. In 1893 he founded a museum of Indian artifacts and natural history in Punta Arenas, Chile. Its collection is priceless, and the museum has now been named in his honor. In 1925, on the occasion of the golden jubilee of the Salesian missions, Father Borgatello published a history of the apostolic endeavors of the Salesian missionaries in those far-off lands. In 1928 he also authored a grammar and glossary of the Alakaluf Indians, and in 1930 his biography of Monsignor Joseph Fagnano (see below) was published. He spent his last years as assistant pastor of the basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin.

BRANDA, JOHN BAPTIST (1842–1927), Father

John Branda came to the Oratory at the age of twenty-six after completing his studies as a surveyor. He patiently took up Latin, donned the clerical habit, and made his first vows as a Salesian in 1869. Ordained in 1873, he was first assigned to Marassi, then to Valsalice, and finally, in 1881, to Spain to help initiate Salesian work there. Don Bosco told him, "Go to Utrera, but you will be there for only a short time. A lady from Barcelona will call us and will provide the means for opening a large school there." In fact, in 1885, Doña Dorothy de Chopitea, as Don Bosco had predicted, wrote to him, and soon afterward work started on a technical school at Sarria, Barcelona. In 1889 the rector major, Father Rua, called Father Branda back to Italy to direct the Saint Teresa Festive Oratory for girls in Chieri. In 1900 he was sent to Zurich and in 1908 to Lorraine to assist Italian immigrants. In 1918 he was recalled to the Oratory, where he spent his last years as spiritual director to countless souls. Outstanding at all times was his love for Don Bosco, influenced in part by the extraordinary events he himself had witnessed.

BUZZETTI, JOSEPH (1832–1892), Brother

CAGLIERO, JOHN (1838–1926), Bishop and Cardinal

John Cagliero, born in Don Bosco's hometown of Castelnuovo d'Asti, was received by Don Bosco into the Oratory in 1851 (see Vol. IV, pp. 200–204) and was among the original members of the Salesian Society (Vol. VI, pp. 181–183). In 1862 he was ordained in Turin and appointed spiritual director of the Oratory. He was endowed with an exceptional talent for music, and from that talent came a steady flow of sacred and recre-

ational music which was the delight of the Oratory. Such composers as Giuseppe Verdi and Lorenzo Perosi praised his art. Father Cagliero obtained his doctorate in theology at the University of Turin in 1873.

But Father Cagliero is best remembered as an intrepid missioner. In 1875 he led the first group of Salesian missionaries to Argentina, where they carried out a ministry to the Italian immigrants of Buenos Aires. Soon, however, Father Cagliero penetrated the interior of Patagonia. He opened a trade school at Almagro in Buenos Aires and another at Villa Colon in Montevideo. Don Bosco recalled him to Turin in 1877 to become spiritual director of the Congregation, an office he filled until 1884, when Pope Leo XIII nominated him vicar apostolic of northern and central Patagonia. The first Salesian bishop, he was consecrated in the church of Mary Help of Christians in Turin. Immediately afterward he returned to South America and was welcomed by Father Joseph Fagnano (see below), with whom he explored Tierra del Fuego, meeting up with the various Indian tribes. In 1887 he crossed the Andes to open the first Salesian house in Chile, at Concepción (breaking two ribs along the way when thrown from his horse high up in the Andes). In December of that year he returned to Turin to assist Don Bosco on his deathbed.

After Don Bosco's death, Bishop Cagliero returned to Argentina. In 1908 he founded Patagonia's first hospital at Viedma. Pope Pius X appointed him minister plenipotentiary of Costa Rica and apostolic delegate to the countries of Central America. In 1915 Pope Benedict XV named him cardinal (the first Salesian so honored), and in 1920, bishop of Frascati.

He died in Rome in 1926. In 1964 his remains were brought back to Argentina and solemnly laid to rest in the cathedral of Viedma, his first episcopal residence. For further details see the indexes of Volumes II through XV.

CIBRARIO, NICHOLAS, Father

COLLE, LOUIS

Count Louis Anthony Colle, his wife, and their only child lived at Toulon, France. While Don Bosco was visiting Marseilles in February 1881, their pastor called on him and begged him to come to Toulon to bless the boy, Louis, who was dying of tuberculosis at the age of 17. When he met the boy, Don Bosco was struck by his resignation to God's will and "the utter candor of his soul." Though encouraging him to pray

for healing if it should be for the good of his soul, he prepared the boy for death. Louis died on April 3 after telling his parents, "I am going to Heaven. Don Bosco told me so."

Don Bosco thought it would be edifying to write the boy's life. He sketched a draft and then had one of the French Salesians complete the job (in French). It stressed young Louis's generosity, mortification, patience, and piety. Louis became a frequent visitor to Don Bosco in his dreams and visions.

Count and Countess Colle became distinguished benefactors of the Salesians for the rest of their lives. They preserved seventy-seven letters from Don Bosco, sent between May 1881 and April 1887, plus one designated for posting after the Saint's death. The Count died on New Year's Day 1888, thirty days before Don Bosco; we have no information at hand concerning the Countess's last days.

COSTAMAGNA, JAMES (1846–1921), Bishop

James Costamagna came from Caramagna in the province of Cuneo to study at the Oratory at the age of twelve. In 1867 he made his first profession, and less than a year later was ordained a priest. In 1874 Don Bosco sent him to Mornese as spiritual director of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, a post he held for three years. In 1877 he headed the third missionary expedition to Argentina. He accompanied General Julius Roca as chaplain on a military expedition calculated to subdue the tribes of the Pampas. He saved many Indians from the vengeful attacks by the soldiers and brought them to the faith. (See Vol. XIV, pp. 217–220, 223.)

In 1880, on Father Francis Bodrato's death, he was named director of San Carlos School in Buenos Aires and provincial of South America. He was a stern person. "I want sterling Salesians" was his motto. He himself set the example in promoting the genuine spirit of Don Bosco, correcting all deviations and weaknesses. He brought in the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians for the care of the girls of Almagro. In 1882 he began publishing the Argentine edition of the *Bollettino Salesiano* and two years later, *of Letture Cattoliche*. To counteract the anticlerical spirit of the public schools of Buenos Aires, he opened more festive oratories for the teaching of catechism. He was also in demand as spiritual director of religious communities. In 1887 he opened a house at Talca, Chile, and the following year he toured neighboring countries for future Salesian foundations.

Appointed apostolic vicar of Mendez and Gualaquiza, Ecuador, he was consecrated bishop in the church of Mary Help of Christians in 1895. When his return to Ecuador was blocked by the anticlerical government, he went to Buenos Aires; Father Rua appointed him visitor to the Salesian houses of South America, with residence in Santiago, Chile. In 1902 he was granted permission to visit his vicariate for three months, a visit he repeated the following year. Eventually he obtained permission to enter Ecuador and set up his residence among the Jivaros.

In 1918, suffering from a heart condition, he retired to the novitiate house at Bernal, Argentina, where he died.

DALMAZZO, FRANCIS (1845–1895), Father

Francis Dalmazzo entered the Oratory in 1860. After a few days, unable to adjust to the frugal meals, he wanted to return home. On the morning he was to depart, after going to confession to Don Bosco, he saw him perform a miracle by multiplying a few buns into hundreds for the boys' breakfast (see Vol. VI, pp. 453–455). Astounded, he decided to remain at the Oratory, became a Salesian, and was ordained in 1868.

From 1872 to 1880 he was director at Valsalice; subsequently he was appointed director and pastor of the school and church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Rome and procurator general of the Salesian Society at the Vatican. Toward the end of 1887 he was sent to London to open a Salesian house; afterward, from 1888 to 1894, he was rector of the church of Saint John the Evangelist in Turin. In all these undertakings he won the admiration and good will of all who came in contact with him.

Finally, in 1894, in deference to the wishes of the bishop of Catanzaro, he assumed the direction of the diocesan seminary, which was staffed by Salesians and, within a short time opened also a small secondary school. That same school year, an assassin shot him down; he died forgiving his assailant.

DOGLIANI, JOSEPH (1849–1934), Brother

DURANDO, CELESTINE (1840–1907), Father

Born at Farigliano di Mondovi, Celestine Durando entered the Oratory in 1856, and on his very first day met Dominic Savio, with whom he later founded the Immaculate Conception Sodality. On December 18,

1859, with other young clerics, he joined Don Bosco in forming the Salesian Congregation (see Vol. VI, pp. 181–183). He was ordained a priest in 1864. The following year he became a member of the superior chapter and held that office for nearly forty years. From 1886 to 1903 he also served as provincial of a loose unit of Salesian houses in Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Father Durando was well known for several highly praised school publications. In 1869 Don Bosco directed him to compile the collection Italian Classics for the Young (see Vol. IX, pp. 51, 196–197, 391). From 1869 to 1885 two hundred and four volumes were published, nineteen of them edited by Father Durando. He also authored an excellent Latin grammar and dictionary.

Father Durando distinguished himself by his zealous ministry in the confessional. "A silent man," wrote Father Rua, "he lived a career of good works, rich in merit. Wherever he passed he left the image of a truly priestly Salesian spirit." He died at the Oratory.

DE AGOSTINI, ALBERT (1883–1960), Father

Father De Agostini was outstanding as both a missionary and a scientist. A native of the province of Vercelli, he professed as a Salesian in 1902 and was ordained in 1909. Arriving in South America, he made Tierra del Fuego his particular field of evangelization and exploration, recording his observations on both paper and film. He published ten books about the Andes, Patagonia, and Tierra del Fuego. He traversed tens of thousands of miles, baptizing thousands, anointing thousands, witnessing hundreds of marriages over a period of more than forty years. He retired to and died at the Oratory.

FAGNANO, JOSEPH (1844–1916), Father, Prefect Apostolic

Joseph Fagnano came from Rocchetta Tanaro in the province of Asti. At twelve he enrolled in the Asti diocesan seminary. When the seminary closed in 1859, the seminarians were encouraged to transfer to the Oratory in Turin, but Joseph returned home. After serving as an orderly in the army hospital at Asti, he decided to resume his priestly studies under Don Bosco's care. He was soon won over by the happy family life he found at the Oratory and by Don Bosco's serene fatherliness. What most impressed him, however, was Don Bosco's telling him his sins, circumstances and all, during his general confession. That convinced him

that he was talking to a saint, and he decided to stay with him. Joseph made his first vows in 1864 and was ordained in 1868.

In November 1875, since one of the ten confreres who were assigned to the first Salesian missionary expedition was unable to go, Don Bosco asked Father Fagnano to replace him, and he gladly did so. From Buenos Aires he went to San Nicolas de los Arroyos and converted an old home to a boarding school. The following March it was ready for occupancy by 144 boarders and as many day students. In 1879, he was made pastor at Patagones, in northern Patagonia, where he built a church and two schools, (one for boys, one for girls). He formed a school band and set up a meteorological station, soon given official status by Argentina. When a military expedition was sent out against the Indians, Father Fagnano zealously volunteered his services as a chaplain so as to extend his pastoral care to the hunted natives, of whom he baptized thirty.

Appointed prefect apostolic of southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, he sailed to Punta Arenas in 1887 and then to Dawson Island, where he established Saint Raphael Mission, which the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians staffed in 1890. At Punta Arenas he set up a weather station and a church. In Tierra del Fuego, where a lake has been named after him, he founded a mission which became an Indian settlement. When the government withdrew funds, he had to abandon the project. Father Fagnano died in Santiago, Chile.

FASCIE, BARTHOLOMEW (1861–1937), Father

Born at Verezzi in the province of Savona, Bartholomew Fascie enrolled at the age of fifteen as a student in the Salesian high school at nearby Alassio. After graduation, he moved to the Oratory to continue his studies at the University of Turin. It was during this period that he felt attracted to Don Bosco's saintliness and the Salesian life. In 1883, after obtaining his university degrees in letters and philosophy, he delayed joining the Salesian Congregation for family reasons and returned to Alassio as a teacher of literature in the Salesian high school. In 1890 he finally decided to become a Salesian and a year later made his perpetual vows. His sound intellectual formation, spiritual maturity, and love of work hastened his ordination to the priesthood in 1891.

He exercised his Salesian apostolate first at Alassio and then at Este and Ascona, Switzerland. From 1897 to 1910 he was director at Bronte,

Sicily, and provincial from 1907 to 1913. He filled the same office in Tuscany and Emilia from 1913 to 1920. While he was still provincial, Father Paul Albera appointed him prefect general of studies in 1919 when this office became vacant. Subsequent general chapters reelected him to the same post. Having completely absorbed Don Bosco's spirit in his frequent contacts with him, he became its jealous guardian and faithful interpreter. Among his writings, outstanding is his booklet on Don Bosco's preventive system, which was adopted as a textbook in all teachers' training colleges in Italy. He died of a stroke on January 31, 1937, shortly after delivering a panegyric in honor of Saint John Bosco on his feast day in the basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin.

FEBBRARO, STEPHEN, Father

GHIVARELLO, CHARLES (1835–1913), Father

Charles Ghivarello, born at Pino Torinese in the province of Turin, entered the Oratory at the age of twenty and received the clerical habit from Don Bosco the following year. He was a friend of Dominic Savio. In 1859 he was one of the young clerics who cast his lot with Don Bosco and became a cofounder of the Salesian Congregation and a councillor of the superior chapter (see Vol. VI, pp.181–183). He made his first vows in 1862 and was ordained in 1864. In 1876 he was elected economer general and filled that office until 1880, when Don Bosco sent him to Saint-Cyr as director of the Salesian orphanage. Two years later he was appointed director at Mathi and filled that office until 1888.

At his ordination Don Bosco had predicted that Father Ghivarello would be an excellent confessor, and it was in that ministry that he best revealed his fatherly goodness. But he was also a talented architect, engineer, and agriculturist, and in those capacities rendered valuable service to Don Bosco and the Salesian Congregation. At San Benigno Canavese, where he spent twenty-five years of his life and where he died, he built the school chapel and a machine shop.

GIORDANO, LAWRENCE (1856–1919), Monsignor

After studying with the Salesians at Lanzo, Lawrence Giordano joined the Society in 1872. His first field of apostolate was France, where he was ordained in 1878. He went to Villa Colon, Uruguay, in 1881, and

thence to Brazil, where he served as director and later as provincial (1908–1912). He published several books and was a tireless worker for the Gospel. In character he was large-hearted, intelligent, and self-sacrificing. In 1916 he was named prefect apostolic of the Rio Negro (Brazil), a mission entrusted to the Salesians two years earlier. On one of his apostolic journeys he was felled by a mysterious illness and died in a few days.

LASAGNA, LOUIS (1850–1895), Bishop

Louis Lasagna first met Don Bosco in the summer of 1862 during one of the latter's outings with the Oratory boys (see Vol. VII, pp. 164, 166, 179–180). He received the clerical garb in 1866, made his first vows in 1868, was ordained a priest in 1873, and joined the second missionary expedition to South America in 1876. As director and provincial, he achieved marked success in the fields of education, social action, agriculture, vocations, and church construction. In 1893 he was consecrated bishop and entrusted with the evangelization of the Indians of Mato Grosso state, Brazil. He died in a train wreck at Juiz de Fora, Brazil.

LEMOYNE, JOHN BAPTIST (1839–1916), Father

Father John Baptist Lemoyne was the first great chronicler of the life of Saint John Bosco and of the beginnings of the Salesian Congregation. From their first providential meeting in 1864, Father Lemoyne esteemed Don Bosco as a man of outstanding character and holiness. He not only strove to understand and acquire his spirit, but he also took upon himself the task of committing to writing anything of significance that Don Bosco did or said. Information concerning earlier events he painstakingly gathered from eyewitnesses and other sources.

In 1883 he came to the motherhouse as editor of the *Bollettino Salesiano* and secretary of the superior chapter. The four-plus years that followed he spent in cordial intimacy with Don Bosco and heard from the saint himself the story of the arduous road he had to climb in his youth to arrive at the priesthood, and of the wonderful manner in which Providence guided the Salesian work.

After Don Bosco's death, Father Lemoyne was formally charged with the compilation of available materials for the life of the saint. Forty-five large volumes of galley proofs bear witness to his dedicated research and provide the material for the nineteen volumes of the *Memorie biografiche*

di don Giovanni Bosco, the first nine of which he authored. Noteworthy among his other works are a two-volume life of Don Bosco and a biography of Mamma Margaret, Don Bosco's mother. He died in Turin.

MARENCO, JOHN (1853–1921), Bishop

John Marenco was born in Ovada in the province of Turin. He applied to Don Bosco to become a Salesian in 1873, while he was a third-year theology student. Discerning his fine personal qualities, Don Bosco accepted him as a novice without further discussion and admitted him to his religious vows the following year. He was ordained in 1875. Five years later Don Bosco sent him to Lucca to open a new house. The talents he showed as a director induced Don Bosco to recall him to Turin and entrust to him the construction of the church of Saint John the Evangelist.

In 1888 Father Rua sent Father Marenco to Sampierdarena as director, in 1890 appointed him provincial of the Salesian houses in Liguria and Tuscany, and in 1892 made him vicar general of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Finally, in 1899 Father Rua named him procurator of the Salesian Society with the Holy See. He filled that office until 1909, when Pope Pius X appointed him bishop of Massa Carrara and eight years later titular bishop of Edessa and apostolic internuncio to the republics of Central America. Within four years he established an archdiocese and a vicariate apostolic in Costa Rica, reopened diplomatic relations between El Salvador and Honduras, founded two interdiocesan seminaries in Nicaragua and San Salvador, and strengthened ecclesiastical discipline. In 1921 Bishop Marenco returned to Turin because of failing health, and there he died a few months later.

MARTINI, MAGDALENE (1849–1883), Sister

A native of the province of Turin, Magdalene Martini came to the Salesian Sisters in 1875. She aspired to the missionary life, from her first years as a sister living a life of continuous and hidden self-denial. When Mother Mazzarello asked for candidates for the 1879 missionary expedition, Sister Magdalene was the first to volunteer. Though she was professed only three years, she was appointed superior of the sisters in America; she had already been prepared for such responsibility by her prudence and her profound faith, as well as the guidance of Don Bosco. She needed all her virtues to deal with daily hardship and opposition in

Argentina. Matters had barely settled down when she was stricken with an illness that compelled her to spend most of her last two years as an invalid, offering her sufferings for God's glory and the good of her neighbor.

MILANESIO, DOMINIC (1843–1922), Father

Dominic Milanesio, a native of Settimo Torinese, in 1866 called on Don Bosco for advice about his vocation. As a result of the advice he became a Salesian, making his first vows in 1869. In 1873 he was ordained a priest. A member of the third missionary expedition (1877), he first worked in the Boca district of Buenos Aires, but in 1880 he became a full-fledged missionary in Patagonia, which he crisscrossed at incredible sacrifice, winning the love of all.

When in 1883 the leading native chieftain, Manuel Namuncura, decided to surrender to the Argentinean government, he asked Father Milanesio to act as an intermediary, as recounted in this volume. It was he again who, on December 24, 1888, baptized the Namuncura's son Zepherino, whose cause of beatification has been introduced. Father Milanesio was rightfully called the "Father of the Indians." He died in Bernal, Argentina.

NOTARIO,

PROVERA, FRANCIS (1836–1874), Father

Although Francis Provera of Mirabello had long nurtured a calling to the priesthood, he was unable to answer it until 1858, when he met Don Bosco and came to the Oratory. He immediately impressed the saint with his success as an apostle in the festive oratory. Subsequently he became a talented high school teacher. He took part in the first Salesian profession of triennial vows in May 1862. Between 1862 and 1870 Don Bosco made him prefect of the Oratory, Mirabello, Lanzo, and Cherasco in turn, for he showed rare ability in managing the economy of the houses. He was ordained in 1864. His health began to fail around 1869, and he asked Don Bosco for a change. In 1870 the saint brought him back to the Oratory to teach philosophy to the seminarians, and again he displayed wonderful teaching gifts: careful preparation, powerful memory, ease and clarity of expression. These abilities also served him well in the pulpit. In 1872 Don Bosco appointed him to the supe-

rior chapter. When he died, after a long, painful illness, Don Bosco lamented that "the Society has lost one of its best members." He is mentioned often in Vols. V–X of *The Biographical Memoirs*.

ROSSI, JOSEPH, Brother

RUA, MICHAEL (1837–1910), Father (Blessed)

Michael Rua was born in Turin. As a pupil of the Christian Brothers' school he first met Don Bosco at the age of seven, and an unbreakable bond was forged between the two. In 1852 he donned the cassock, and from then on his life was so closely intertwined with that of the founder that he has been dubbed "Don Bosco's double." In January 1854 he and three other youths of the Oratory gathered in Don Bosco's room to band themselves into what was to become the Salesian Congregation (see Vol. V, p. 8). The following year he privately took his first vows. While studying theology he took charge of the Saint Aloysius Festive Oratory in Turin. In 1859 he accompanied Don Bosco on his first visit to Rome, and at the end of that year Michael Rua, though a subdeacon, was elected by his peers to be spiritual director of the new-born Society of Saint Francis de Sales (see Vol. VI, pp. 181–183).

He was ordained a priest in 1860 and three years later became the first Salesian director, assuming charge of the junior seminary at Mirabello. On the death of Father Victor Alasonatti in 1865, Don Bosco recalled Father Rua to the Oratory to assume financial responsibility for the Salesian Society. He was Don Bosco's right-hand man. As Father Eugene Ceria states: "Don Bosco could not have asked for a more devoted son, a more loyal interpreter of his every wish, a more tireless and intelligent worker, a more enlightened mind, and a superior of more unchallenged authority ... fully dedicated to his mission, totally imbued with [Don Bosco's] ideas and amply qualified ... to be the founder's worthy spokesman at all levels" (see Vol. XIV, p. 1).

In 1884, at Don Bosco's request, he was appointed his vicar by Pope Leo XIII, and four years later, at the founder's death, he became rector major, a position he held for twenty-two years. During that time the Congregation grew from 64 houses to 341, extending beyond Europe to North and South America, Africa, and Asia.

Father Rua was often defined as "the living rule" because of his fidelity to Don Bosco's concept of Salesian life and mission. Though he

may have given externally an impression of strictness, he was a gentle, warm, and thoughtful superior, so much so that he rivaled Don Bosco in gentleness and fatherliness.

Twelve years after Father Rua's death at the Oratory, the process for his beatification and canonization was begun. He was declared Venerable in 1953 and beatified in 1972. His feast day is October 29.

SALA, ANTHONY (1836–1895), Father

Anthony Sala, born near Como, entered the Oratory in 1863 after giving up the management of his family's silk mill. He was a gift from God to Don Bosco. Since he showed special administrative talent, he was assigned to help Father Alasonatti, the Oratory's treasurer, who was then in poor health. Entrusting himself to Don Bosco's guidance, Anthony made his profession in 1865, and in little more than six years became a priest.

In 1875, Father Sala was appointed counselor of the superior chapter, replacing Father Ghivarello. Because of his particular ability, Don Bosco put Father Sala in charge of remodeling the motherhouse of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Nizza Monferrato and of constructing the new houses at Este, Cremona, Chieri, and Randazzo. In 1880 Don Bosco appointed him economer general, a post to which he was reelected almost unanimously in both 1886 and 1892. He supervised the construction of Saint John the Evangelist Church and school and directed the planning of the Salesian exhibit in the National Exposition of 1884 in Turin. He also lightened Don Bosco's burden in building the church of the Sacred Heart in Rome. During Don Bosco's final illness he offered the lowliest of services in the sick room.

Father Sala worked restlessly to his dying day. He died at the Oratory after a brief illness.

SAVIO, ANGELO (1835–1893), Father

Angelo Savio, from Castelnuovo d'Asti, was a compatriot of both Don Bosco and Father Cagliero. He entered the Oratory in 1850. He was already a deacon when he took part with the first group of young men who banded with Don Bosco to form the Salesian Society in December 1859 (see Vol. VI, pp. 181–183); they elected him economer general, a post to which he was reelected in 1869 and in 1873. He was ordained in Turin in

1860. As economer he was entrusted with all construction. In 1885, at the age of fifty, he went to the South American missions, opening houses in Chile, Peru, Paraguay, and Brazil. A tireless and fearless worker, he was also a man of deep prayer and great trust. He died while on a missionary journey in Ecuador, after eight years of fruitful mission activity.

UBALDI, PAUL (1872–1934), Father

A native of Parma, Paul Ubaldi entered the Oratory in 1882 as a student. He became a Salesian, taught at the Oratory, and was ordained in 1895. Having earned doctorates in literature, philosophy, and theology, he taught the Greek classics at the Salesian high school in Valsalice (Turin) and then at the University of Turin (1909–1913) and in Catania (1919–1924). Later he was professor of Latin and Greek Christian literature at the Catholic University of Milan (1924–1934) and in the seminary of Venegono (1932–1934).

To promote an appreciation of ancient Christian literature in Italy as a discipline in its own right and not as a dispensable appendage to the classics, in 1912 Fathers Ubaldi and Sisto Colombo founded the review *Didaskaleion* and the Didaskaleion Library. With courage, competence, and sacrifice both founders edited the review until 1931. The publication of *Didaskaleion* and Father Ubaldi's tenure as professor in the Catholic University of Milan resulted in the establishment of departments of ancient Christian literature in many universities of Italy. Father Ubaldi also published critical editions, commentaries, and translations of the ancient classics, as well as many learned studies in various reviews.

Above all, Father Ubaldi was a true priest among the university students. He brought to the halls of the university the educational method of Don Bosco, which seeks to make of each student a friend to be brought to Christ. He died in Milan.

VACCHINA, BERNARD (1859–1935), Father

Born at Revignano d'Asti, Bernard Vacchina entered the Oratory in 1871 and grew under Don Bosco's eye. In 1876 he donned the clerical habit during his spiritual retreat at Lanzo. While his fellow novices remained there for a while, Don Bosco called Bernard to the Oratory to assist the newly entered pupils. Volume XIII of these Memoirs (pp. 639–645) has a charming description of his vicissitudes as a teacher under

Don Bosco's fatherly guidance. In 1877 he made his perpetual vows and, volunteering for the missions, two years later was sent to Uruguay. After a brief stint at Villa Colon, he became secretary of the internuncio at Buenos Aires, where he was ordained in 1882 and exercised his priestly ministry in the difficult parish of the Boca district. Five years later, the vicar apostolic of Central Patagonia appointed him director at Viedma. After some thirty years of zealous missionary work, he retired to Saint John the Evangelist school in Buenos Aires, where he continued his priestly work, which was made ever more fruitful by his physical sufferings, until his death.

VESPIGNANI, JOSEPH (1854–1932), Father

Born at Lugo, Joseph started his secondary schooling with the Benedictines and then entered the seminary of Faenza for his philosophy courses. While there, a virulent pneumonia nearly took his life. After an uncertain recovery, he continued his theological studies and, though still sickly, was ordained a priest in 1876. He hoped to live at least long enough to say three Masses, and yet, three months later, he felt strong enough to go to Turin to see Don Bosco. So impressed was he by the fact that Don Bosco could read his conscience that he stayed with him for a whole year. He made his religious profession on Christmas Day 1876, and the following year Don Bosco sent him as novice master to Argentina with the third missionary expedition. After spending seventeen years with Father James Costamagna, he succeeded him in 1894 as director of Pius IX School in Buenos Aires and later, as provincial.

In 1922 he was recalled to Turin as a member of the superior chapter and remained in office until his saintly death. In 1948 his remains were brought to Buenos Aires and entombed in Saint Charles Church. As novice master, confessor, writer, and founder of nineteen Salesian houses, he earned the admiration of all. Outstanding is his book *Un anno alla scuola del beato Don Bosco*.

VIGLIETTI, CHARLES (1864–1915), Father

Charles Viglietti was born at Susa in the province of Turin. He received the clerical habit from Don Bosco in 1882 and made his perpetual vows the next year. On various occasions Don Bosco entrusted him with special tasks that offered the young cleric opportunities to assimilate

the Founder's spirit. Brother Charles then became Don Bosco's secretary in his last years and, as such, accompanied him to Spain in 1886. On December of that same year, he was ordained, and from then on he took filial care of Don Bosco as his health gradually worsened. He lovingly assisted the saint until his death on January 31, 1888.

In 1896 Father Rua sent Father Viglietti to Bologna to open the first Salesian house there, which he directed until 1904. During those years he also erected a monumental shrine to the Sacred Heart of Jesus next to the school. From 1904 to 1906 he was director at Savona and from 1906 to 1912 at Varazze. In 1907 he undauntedly faced vicious lies and attacks from the Freemasons against the Salesians, but in the end, truth triumphed.

Father Viglietti was a talented and prolific writer. He spent his last years at the Oratory, passing away after a painful illness.

Appendix of Documents

1.

LETTER TO A SALESIAN FROM COUNTESS GROCHOLSCKA

Of this and the following letter we only found the copies left by Father Lemoyne in galley proof form. It is very probable that they were both addressed to the editor of the French *Bulletin*.

February 15, 1891

Reverend Father:

Everyone who has been healed by the intercessory prayers of Don Bosco should write in, to show how this holy priest obtained graces.

I was in Cracow in 1886. On March 11th I contracted pleurisy, lung fluxion and pulmonary congestion. My twin sister, Stephanie, sent a telegram to Don Bosco saying: *Pray, dear father; my sister is in danger of dying.*

Dr. Peter came from Paris and found me at death's gate. He did everything he could to save me, but I had already entered my death agony. All at once the doctor comes over to me, feels my pulse and cries out: "She is healed."

Father Rua wrote a letter to a certain Madame Bellini, who was staying with us, asking her for news of me. He believed I was dead because no one had had time to write. At that time Don Bosco was in Spain. Father Rua said to him: "Countess Wanda Grocholscka must surely be dead," to which Don Bosco, replied: "Not at all; she has recovered and right now she is eating her breakfast." Then Father Rua asked: "Where did you hear that piece of news?"

Smiling, Don Bosco replied: "I have received a telegram from Heaven!"

And so, thanks to his holy prayers I have been healed, as I can safely affirm.

I am, reverend Father, with the deepest respect,

Countess Wanda Grocholscka, née Radziwill
Pau, Villa Sperata, Porte Neuve

2.

A NUN'S LETTER TO A SALESIAN

May 22, 1891

Reverend Father:

It may perhaps be somewhat late to write now and tell you what we know to be extraordinary concerning your venerated Founder and Father, Don Bosco. I believe that God Himself wanted this delay, for despite my intention of writing, I forgot to do so when I did have an opportunity.

This is the story: An unhappy lady, who died about two years ago, had given some pious person to understand that she was a mulatto and a pagan, but that she was eager to be instructed and embrace the Christian religion. This same pious person spoke of her to a kind Jesuit Father, who informed the bishop, who in turn had someone ask our Reverend Mother to take her into our community, to instruct her for holy Baptism. Insistently this wretched lady manifested a fervent desire for the Sacrament and played her part like a genuine actress. All the same, our Mother Superior was not without her doubts.

Two days before the day scheduled for the ceremony, just as our chaplain and we ourselves were seeking more information about her, a letter came from your venerated Father Superior to tell our Reverend Mother: "Do you happen to have such and such a lady in your convent? Tell this prodigal daughter to go back home to take care of her blind mother and her children." This was truly the lady of whom I have spoken. Who could have told him about her status?

This letter from Don Bosco was an answer to a recommendation that our Reverend Mother had written to him about a young lady suffering from epilepsy.

Speaking of her, your venerated Father wrote: "Tell her to keep her promise faithfully. (She was a convert from the Protestant faith). As long as she will be faithful, the more the Blessed Virgin will look after her." Alas, she soon became unfaithful and her disease returned.

Now, Reverend Father, permit me to join in your prayers so that we may obtain through the intercession of your saintly Father, the recovery of one of our sisters who is sick; I also want to recommend my mother to him, for she is blind and unable to resign herself to the Holy Will of God.

Our very worthy Mother Superior sends you her respects and asks that you present to God all her responsibilities and concerns.

Please, accept my own respectful regards, Reverend Father.

From our convent in Monaco,
Sister Zenobia of the Holy Child Jesus

3.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE LYONS GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY WRITES TO DON BOSCO

Lyons, January 2, 1886

Dear Father:

A few months ago you were so kind as to attend a meeting of our Society and inform us about the success obtained by you and your missionaries in Patagonia, and how you have redeemed that territory for Christian civilization and consequently for the economic development of the workers from both the Old and New World. Again quite recently, you were so kind as to send us more precious documentation on this subject, thus furnishing us with evidence of the generous efforts made by your priests.

The Board of our Society could not fail to appreciate the services thus rendered to the contemporary geographic science, as understood at the present day: *the study and improvement of Mankind and of foreign matters.* I am therefore happy to inform you that, during our last meeting, the Board awarded you a silver medal as a recognition of the important activity related to the estab-

lishment of civilization in the territory of Patagonia. Since we cannot assign this to you other than at one of our solemn meetings, however distant in time, I would be most grateful if you would let me know what date I should have engraved on it after these words: *To Don Bosco – Salesian Priest – Civilization of Patagonia*—which we mean to have engraved on one side of the medal.

With most respectful regards,
Louis Desgrands
President

4.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY OF LYONS

Lyons, December 7, 1886

Reverend Father:

Our president, Monsieur Desgrands, has informed you that our Society has awarded you a silver medal for the work accomplished by your missionaries in Patagonia.

The solemn assembly meeting, during the course of which there will be the award of prizes decreed by our Society, will be held on Sunday the 19th of this month at 1:30 P.M.

We would be indeed flattered and happy if you were able to attend such meeting, (or at least have a delegate to represent you) so as to receive this medal from the hands of our president.

You should have no doubts whatsoever about the delight the people of Lyons would experience at seeing you again and being able to acclaim you.

We have just now received a letter from your secretary, the Rev. Angelo Festa who promised us a report on Patagonia for a later date. We shall look forward to it gratefully.

He also asked, on your behalf, if we could furnish you with some information about the origins of the Chinese people.[1] Do they descend from Noah or from Arphaxad, son of Sem?

[1]See Vol. XVII, p. 596.

This is an historic query, which is hard to deal with, and few are the scholars capable of addressing it.

Nevertheless, Monsieur Desgrands is sending the letter on to the Rev. Lebouc, the curate at Vernaison near Lyons. He lived in China for a long time, where he was a first-class mandarin. He is very learned and we hope that he can indicate how to solve this problem for us.

I will let you know his answer as soon as I receive it.

Pray accept, etc.
The secretary
Debize

5.

TOAST PROPOSED BY THE ENGINEER, LEVROT

By giving me the honor to be invited to his table together with the elite of the Salesian Cooperators in the town of Nice, our dearly beloved Father Don Bosco chose to extend to me yet another honor: that of calling upon me to take the floor on his behalf and render honor to a member of his numerous family, a member who is particularly dear to him.

He is a father who calls upon a son to welcome a new brother.

The word of our father is unparalleled in sweetness and no other word can replace it; and so I accepted this task reluctantly, even though so sweet to my heart; I hope my heart will make up for what I lack in talent.

Don Bosco loves his children tenderly. You will recall how a short time ago, barely a few years, the Holy Father, the Pope, deigned to honor one of our number at the request of Don Bosco, unbeknown to the party concerned, by bestowing a distinguished favor on him, by creating him knight of the noble and glorious order of St. Gregory the Great.

That happy and privileged person is the one who now has the honor of addressing you.

At that very moment—why should I not confess it?—I mumbled something against Don Bosco. I was confused by the idea of having insignificant people preferred over the great. Perhaps it is a weakness of his, for Don Bosco loves the little ones so dearly! Nevertheless, I said so then and I now repeat it to you today: the token of honor solicited by Don Bosco and benevolently granted by the Holy Father was awarded not to

any individual, but to all the Cooperators of Nice who have assisted the Salesian school; in a certain sense I was constituted standard bearer for them all. It was with this conviction that I accepted the noble distinction and I accepted it only with that understanding.

But everything that Don Bosco does he does right, and in the end he is always right, and thanks to this fact today, a son of Nice of ancient stock and origin is able to welcome a new brother into our noble family, this new brother being a son of Nice by adoption, and chosen this time to be among the illustrious. Furthermore, thanks to this situation created for me, to speak in Don Bosco's name and in a certain sense, in the name of the city of Nice, as well, I am able to extend a more fitting welcome with greater honor to the new chevalier.

But I am keeping you all on pins and needles. Forgive me. You are anxious to know who the new recipient is: he is here and you yourselves will point him out.

Look for the one who among all of us is the most eminent for his learning and his great heart—That is the one! The most devoted to Catholic initiatives, the most charitable toward the poor, toward the workingmen—That is the one!—The most devoted of all to Don Bosco and his houses, the one who has made his name known from one end of France to the other; one might say, who made him known all over the world, by the wonderful book that you all own—That is the one—If you wish me to carry the matter even further, so that you may know him better, then I will say: put your hand on your heart, all of you, and ask yourselves for whom you would cast your ballot if you had a choice.

All of us would cast our vote, and by acclamation, for Dr. D'Espiney.

Well then, the new knight of the order of St. Gregory the Great is—and you have said it—Dr. D'Espiney.

Was I not right when I said that you yourselves would point him out? —*Vox populi, vox Dei.*

Now that I have had the pleasure of introducing him to you, now that you have applauded him, now that we have acclaimed him, I request the honor of bestowing the first fraternal accolade—after Don Bosco—to the new knight.

We no longer stand in the armory of the old knights of the Middle Ages. Our armor and our weapons are no longer the same. The hall now is modest and simple. The grand knight is sweet and peaceful, his weapons are our own: for breast-plate we have our heart exposed, on our sleeve; for helmet we have our Catholic faith; for weapons both defensive

and offensive, we have a loving word and unselfishness. It is with such weapons as these that one can conquer souls in our own present day and age, that one can save nations.

The knights of St. Gregory the Great sheath them with honor, and I might say that the new knight here has already used them in action. Thus in embracing Monsieur D'Espiney I salute not only a newly knighted chevalier in him, but also a noble veteran of the Order of St. Gregory.

6.

LETTER TO DON BOSCO FROM A PROTESTANT LADY

December 7, 1885

Reverend Father:

A small book came into my hands where I found a collection of accounts of a great many cures obtained by people who call on your prayers for them, through the intercession of *Maria, Auxilium Christianorum*.

I am English by birth, although I have lived in France for many years, and I only know the Protestant faith. Until I read this little book, I had never believed it possible that miracles could take place in our days. Now I can no longer doubt it; and since I have been suffering greatly from a serious disease for the past 10 years, I fervently desire the assistance of your prayers both for my soul and my body.

Before making so bold as to write to you, Reverend Father, I spoke with the Very Reverend Monsieur Fabre, the Vicar General of Nice, who graciously consented to recommend me in his own name to your holy prayers and for your blessing.

Madame Visconti here in Nice spoke to me of your undertakings a few years ago.

Allow me, Reverend Father, to assure you of my profound esteem.

Madame Marie Sophie Mercier
Villa Mercier, Avenue des Orange, Nice

7.

LETTER TO DON BOSCO FROM THE BOYS AT MARSEILLES

Marseilles, March 31, 1886

Dearly Beloved Father:

Who could describe the joy experienced by your loving children on this happy day? They do not have often the pleasure of seeing their well beloved father in their midst, nor of welcoming him with an outburst of love and gratitude, and so they welcome him with rapturous love and gratitude every time Heaven brings him to them.

Yes, dear Father, your children of Marseilles love you, for they are aware of the great things you do for them with your holy institutions every day.

It is thanks to your generosity that we, poor orphans doomed to misery, were given shelter here in this house where, under the direction of deeply devoted and capable teachers, we receive the benefits of instruction and Christian education.

Your love for us inspired you to make us happy by a thousand different means. In our classrooms, by giving us knowledge coupled with virtue, our professors prepare us for a respectable career which we may be worthy to pursue, and often, according to our vocation, they even open the gates of the sanctuary to us if God calls us there.

In our various workshops we are taught crafts which will one day enable us to earn an honest living. Oh dear Father, this vigilant attention with which we are surrounded, the good example given us, the advice and encouragement lavished upon us, bear fruit, and later we shall endeavor to help others to enjoy some of the benefits you have heaped upon us. Like your first sons in Turin, of whom the story has been read to us, we will endeavor to be the pride and consolation of him who was always such a loving father to us.

While awaiting you, we beg you to accept our tokens of love and gratitude such as fill our heart. We will make every effort to repay the care lavished on us, by praying that God may keep you

for many a year, so that we may love you, and so that He may repay you a hundredfold for all that you have done and still continue doing for your beloved children of Marseilles.

8.

THE SALESIAN ACCORDING TO THE BISHOP OF MILO

A Salesian is not like a Jesuit, a soldier, so to speak, of the sacred army or, one might better say, of the elect militia that the Church mobilizes against her fiercest enemies, and especially against this modern world which is so full of pride so conceited because of its knowledge and its valor. A Salesian is not like a Capuchin, the most popular of monks, for his austerity and severity, his contempt for worldly possessions, his absolute poverty both interior and exterior, which terrify us. The Salesian is not like the son of St. Benedict who lives in solitude, and spends his life in study, in the chant of divine praises and in the cultivation of the soil. The Salesian is not a disciple of Joseph Calasanz, eminent benefactor, well deserving of the Church and of Society, but devoted only to one task. No, the Salesian is not any of these.

The Salesian is the man of self-denial and humility, the man who lives dead to himself, without even noticing it; who does good, thinking that he is doing nothing; who makes sacrifices without considering them, sometimes even unaware of them. He is the man who deems himself to be the lowliest servant of the Church when his last hour strikes. He goes wherever he is sent; he takes and adapts himself to things as he finds them, building his nest in either the exuberant branches of a tree rich in foliage, or amid the most sharply pointed, craggy stones or bare rock. His characteristic virtues are that he never complains, not even when everything is against him, and that he is never discouraged, but always puts his hope in Divine Providence.

The Salesian has something of the energy, of the industriousness, of the breadth and of the height of goals as well as the unconquerable courage of a Jesuit; he also enjoys something of the popularity of the Capuchin; he has something of the retiring spirit and working habits peculiar to monks; in short, he has something in common with all religious orders known to us, despite the fact that he truly is a new breed.

Don Bosco y su Obra (Don Bosco and his Congregation) pages 89–90

9.

LETTER TO DON BOSCO FROM MARQUIS JOVERT

Barcelona, April 13, 1886

Kind Father:

I have been suffering for a long time from a disease which is troublesome both to myself and my family. My wife already spoke to you about it the day she had the good fortune of being received in audience by you. I do not hesitate now to recommend my plight to your holy prayers, with the hope that through your intercession, the Holy Virgin may grant me the grace of restoring my health. If she does, I vow most solemnly with all my heart that I will generously contribute to the pious and holy undertakings you direct.

My heart is full of faith, but if you would deign to write to me a few lines, my Father, I am sure that this will strengthen my faith. Please send me your blessing at the same time.

I am firmly convinced that no one other than you in the whole world can obtain the grace I crave from the dear Lord. My wife told me of the interest you took in my case, so I am hopeful.

Believe me with the most sincere gratitude,

Your son in Jesus Christ,
Joaquin Jovert

10.

THE PUPILS OF THE SISTERS OF THE SACRED HEART SCHOOL OF SARRIA, ADDRESS DON BOSCO

Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis.

Sarria. April 14, 1886

Most Reverend Father:

We have been waiting for the happy moment that would bring you among us, like a dearly beloved Father among his beloved daughters, with most arduous desire, eager to express to you our

filial sentiments of respect. We have placed these sentiments within the Divine Heart, to assure that they be graciously heard.

Today, Most Reverend Father, our wishes have been fulfilled indeed and full of gratitude, our hearts give thanks to Our Lord for this new token of His Love for us. We have now a father who represents Him so worthily, and who, imitating Him, is delighted to live among children, whose happiness it is dedicating himself unreservedly to the welfare of this beloved section of His lucky fold.

Yes, we cluster around you with joy, and with the hope that we will leave your presence with renewed faith, fortified in our love of duty; so that we may be true to Jesus not only while we live here in this haven of peace and joy, but also later on, among the perils that await us outside, in the world.

In exchange for the kindness you lavished on us, we promise, Most Reverend Father, to implore the Divine Heart of Jesus that with the intercession of the Heart of His Immaculate Mother, He may shower abundantly all his choicest graces on your Congregation, on all your houses, upon your beloved flock and its beloved Shepherd.

May this beloved flock give thanks to God at the sight of your restored good health and renewed strength, and obtain from God the grace that you may live on, for many long years.

This is our desire, joined to our desire to receive your paternal blessing.

The pupils of the Sacred Heart School

11.

DON BOSCO AND THE SALESIAN WORKSHOPS

(*Revista Popular* of Barcelona, April 14, 1886)

As our readers already know, the venerable old man whose name will fill the following paragraphs is now in Barcelona. A halo of holiness shines forth from his figure, and expresses the Christian virtues and the purest faith with which he has carried out his holy mission of civilization, and directed it toward prosperity and success. It is a very great consolation to see a holy man of seventy years overcome the burden of old age, with the

help of divine grace, and be active in a mission of genuine social regeneration, while people of every social category gladly offer him their support, in the midst of the tragic sights we see before us everywhere, in the midst of the godless manifestations that offend the eyes and ears of pious people wherever the unbridled passions of the masses, encouraged in the baser instincts, threaten to overthrow and destroy contemporary society.

Don Bosco's institute is truly a Godsend; we come to realize this when we see the stores of London being pillaged, when we see the fires in Belgium and the strike at Decanzeville. It's the materialistic propaganda which originates these deeds and it's just the opposite of what Christian propaganda does, since it teaches the virtue of work, the love of neighbor, new hope in God, which make impossible the existence of social hatreds, which are the source of all kinds of evil in Europe and America. Excellent instruction is imparted to these boys in the Salesian workshops, for the foundation of which we have to thank that indefatigable priest, Don John Bosco, who is known as Don Bosco in both hemispheres, for thus far are extended the inestimable benefits of his preaching, his steadfastness and remarkable intelligence used in organizing such institutes. "There is no doubt that the work of Don Bosco is extraordinary," His Holiness Leo XIII has said. "It goes beyond human capacity, for it has never before been seen that a single man alone, lacking material means, a mere poor and humble priest, could in so short a time - not more than thirty or forty years - create the wonderful institutions at which people marvel in Europe and America. Therefore, such superhuman ability must of necessity be either diabolic or divine, and goals and achievements reveal quite plainly which of the two it is. That which seeks to promote and affirm the reign of pride can only be qualified as diabolic; so it is with the Revolution and its false miracles. But that which, on the contrary, strives to extend and consolidate the reign of self-denial and charity—namely, the reign of God in the world—must surely be called divine. We can perceive the finger of God manifest in the Salesian world, as much as its purpose is Christ, its Rule is Christ, and Christ is the weapon with which it fights, and while it sows wherever it wishes, the seed of self-denial and mortification and love, it also works for the cause of God and not for the earthly interests of Mankind." Oh, lovely words indeed, well worthy of the wise and holy Pontiff who rules the Catholic Apostolic Church of Rome!

The institute of Don Bosco had a humble beginning, such as all great Catholic institutions of charity have had and which are today

the only true healing balm remaining for the social ills, the only medicine for the woes and misery of the poorer classes which, without, it, would be incurable. One day in the year 1841, Don Bosco was getting ready to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the church of St. Francis of Assisi in Turin, and was donning his vestments, when his ear perceived cries and raucous voices unbecoming to the sacred place in which he found himself. He looked to see from whence they came and what was causing them, and found the sacristan berating a small boy and boxing his ears for having come inside the sacristy without being able to explain what had brought him there. Don Bosco talked to the boy, told him to attend his Mass and, when it was over, took him home with him, since he came to find out that he was homeless; he gave him lodging and took care of him, sharing his modest home with him. This was how the institute of St. Francis of Sales first began. In 1842 Don Bosco was already at the head of a legion of kids of some hundred people. The zealous priest assembled the boys every Sunday and feast day, and with moving, simple words he taught them the truths of faith, and trained them in Christian virtues. With the love and instinct of the Apostle, he rendered the lessons he gave his pupils a delight, so that they all looked forward eagerly to Sundays when they could again be together with Don Bosco. Together with them he went on pilgrimages and excursions to picturesque places, enhancing the pleasure of the outings with a choir of singers selected from among the pupils of his Christian school. In 1844 two hundred pupils gathered around him when he said Mass, and it was then that he gave the name of "Oratory of St. Francis of Sales" to the work and place where he started it.

After that, it developed rapidly and soon the Salesian workshops were added to it. At the present day, the impressive number of more than two hundred thousand pupils receive professional training in some art or craft and a Christian education in the institutes which depend on their venerable founder. In Turin, which was the birthplace of the Congregation, as we have already said, the Salesians have magnificent workshops, where a paper mill and a printing establishment with a steam-operated printing press and all sorts of modern equipment attract great attention. It is here that books are printed to a remarkable perfection in foreign languages. In other localities the Congregation has agricultural schools, namely at Mogliano Veneto, at St. Cyr in the department of Var and the locality known as La Navarre in the immediate

proximity of Hyeres. They also have educational schools in Uruguay and Argentina, and a mission with some hundred and thirty missionaries in Patagonia. Governments and men of widely divergent ideas have supported his undertakings, ironing out insurmountable obstacles on various occasions. Among such men, a close friend of Cavour, Urbano Ratazzi—one of the politicians who worked most for the unification of Italy, and therefore for the plundering of the Pope's lands—wanted to know Don Bosco and one day in 1854 unexpectedly he appeared at the Oratory in Turin, and listened to the zealous priest while he was explaining an incident from Sacred History to his pupils. Then he sought him out at home, and discussed with him at great length about the educational methods that one may apply when dealing with children. He came away utterly charmed by the founder of the Salesian schools and workshops. Ratazzi was extremely intelligent, despite all his religious and political errors, and he understood thoroughly the social advantages of Don Bosco's work to the point that he was determined to protect it, and exercised all the influence he enjoyed in the higher circles of the new Italian nation on his behalf.

This work of civilization already exists in the plain of Barcelona, as all our readers are aware of. Thanks to the indefatigable piety of a distinguished lady, to whom many unfortunates owe an immense debt of gratitude, the first steps were undertaken to procure the establishment of Salesian workshops at Sarria. We are indebted to Reverend Father Branda, a warm-hearted, modest, intelligent and most zealous representative of Don Bosco, for the highly powerful impulse given to the organization of the new house in all its varying departments. The visit by the holy founder of the undertaking will certainly provide a guarantee that the house will not only continue to operate, but that it will also develop and enjoy greater prosperity in the future. Yet there still remains much to be done. Substantial funds are required to equip the workshops as the reverend Fathers and the pious people sponsoring the house would like to. At the present time the premises are little more than an embryo, in as much as no more than sixty boys can be trained in the printing trade, in bookbinding, in carpentry, in tailoring, and in shoe-making and in the other crafts to enable them to earn their daily bread and create the basis for their future welfare and that of their families. Boys who lived as vagrants in the streets and squares, hall-marked for prison and penitentiaries, now find shelter in this house and are rescued

from the clutches of crime. Don Bosco intends in due course to offer a home at Sarria to some five hundred boys. Without any doubt, this generous plan will be realized with the help from Heaven. No one should be surprised, looking at all that needs to be done: the foundations have been built and the building will rise on them. If everyone will send their contributions to the house, little by little another building will be raised to hold larger Salesian workshops, the hot houses of honest citizens. In Barcelona—and when we say Barcelona we include the whole of the plain—charitable institutions such as the convent of the Little Sisters of the Poor, the home for disadvantaged children of St. John of God, the Hospital of Our Lady and of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and several others have been built for similar purposes, and this proclaims most eloquently the Christian sentiments of the population.

What a providential coincidence! The founders of the congregations who, during the 19th century, have sought to provide a remedy for two of the greatest ills of our social existence—invalid old people and uncared for children—the Reverend Fathers Pailleux and Bosco, both experienced the indescribable good fortune of seeing that the houses of the Little Sisters of the Poor and the Salesian workshops have spread out all over the world. And they can also see that the love of the people accompanies both the Fathers and the Little Sisters wherever they go. They witness the respect that even men of widely different outlook toward the doctrines of mercy which inspired them to create their institutions, feel for them, for these men are nevertheless endowed with keen intelligence and a sufficiently impartial outlook to enable them to acknowledge the immense benefits provided by their efforts to contemporary Society.

12.

CATHOLIC ASSOCIATION OF BARCELONA

Barcelona, April 12, 1886

The illustrious Don Bosco was invited to honor, with his presence, the new school premises which this association will shortly inaugurate in Calle de Llado, No. 4; and he graciously consented to do so, saying he would be there on the 15th of this month at four o'clock in the afternoon.

As a token, albeit inadequate, of that gratitude, the Board decided to award to the distinguished founder of the Salesian Workshops the medal of Honorary Member of this Association, and will deliver to him the money collected among its members.

In inviting your Reverence to this welcome and solemn occasion, which will certainly be agreeable to all good Catholics, the Board has no doubt that you will honor the proceedings in person.

P.A. of the J. D.
The Secretary
Joaquin de Font.

Sr. D.
By Hand.

13.

SONNET IN DON BOSCO'S HONOR READ OUT IN BARCELONA

April 17, 1886

Chosen one of God! ... From the filthy pond
Where poisonous mushrooms abound
You pull out a thousand thorny young shoots
That truth will enrich with bountiful fruits,
Where poisonous mushrooms abound.

Notwithstanding the spiteful caves
This colossal work where good abounds
Will bring back people to a happy life
For it is founded on Divine love.

Hail to thee ... And may you be welcome...
May our two nations, fraternally bound in Faith
Their gaze to the Vatican direct.

If your foundations bring together
With our love a sweet fragrance of the anise
Then don't deny us your blessing.

Policarp de Bofarull, Sarriá (Barcelona)

14.

INVITATION TO THE MEETING AT BARCELONA

School of Arts and Crafts
The Salesian Workshop
Barcelona – Sarriá
April 27, 1886

Sir

My dear and most Honorable Gentleman: Very grateful for the benevolence shown by all those who have cooperated with the Salesian workshops at Sarriá, and on the occasion of my first visit to this very hospitable country where I was given a welcome I will never forget, I have decided to invite you to the solemn service which will be held in Barcelona at the parish church of Belén on the 30th of this same month, at four o'clock in the afternoon, and at which His Excellency, the Bishop, will preside.

In keeping with the custom prevailing on similar occasions, a collection will be taken up and its proceeds will go to help promote the development of the workshops located in Sarriá, in order to increase in greater proportions the number of boys who can be accepted, and to provide them with a solid Christian education, together with the learning of a trade or craft which will in due course enable then to earn an honest livelihood.

In inviting you, may I request that you, in turn, invite any person you may choose to the above ceremony. In the meantime, I pray to God to reward you generously for the interest you have taken in the Salesian work.

I take this opportunity to remain sincerely at your service and as your chaplain.

Rev. John Bosco

The Order of the Ceremony:

1. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.
2. Reading of a chapter of the life of St. Francis of Sales.

3. The choir of the Belén parish church will sing a composition of sacred music.
4. Talk on the Salesian work.
5. Singing some Motets.
6. Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament.
7. Prayers for the deceased Cooperators.

Kindly note that His Holiness Leo XIII, the first Salesian Cooperator, extends a special benediction and grants a plenary indulgence to all Salesian Cooperators who shall take part in this ceremony.

15.

DON BOSCO AND HIS WORKSHOPS AT SARRIA

(*El Diario de Barcelona*, May 1, 1886)

It is not even a month yet, since the Salesian workshops recently established in the neighboring locality of Sarriá, were barely known in Barcelona. A few well-to-do families, who were spending the summer in this ancient town, attended the religious functions which are celebrated daily in the chapel of the Salesian Workshops. Some of them went to see the classrooms where the boys who have been given shelter, learn different trades and crafts; others talked about the exquisite discretion and remarkable ability of the director, the Rev. Father Branda; yet the school had not attained the great renown it now enjoys, and it had not yet attracted the attention of so many people of all social categories as it does now.

It was enough that a venerable old man, physically feeble and ailing, yet endowed with a will of iron and in full command of his mental faculties, should make his appearance in order to cause this extraordinary result; it was he who developed, far beyond all expectations, his institutes of moral redemption established in all parts of the world.

Despite the unavoidable drawbacks and deficiencies of all beginnings, when there are so many difficulties to overcome to ensure the survival of any new institute in its early phases, one could easily detect the vitality of Don Bosco's institutes in the way classes were organized and in the intelligent and zealous men who staff them already on his first visit to the Salesian Workshops at Sarria today. When we met the venerable founder of these Salesian Workshops—and this was an honor shared during the

last few days with many other people of Barcelona—we found it much easier to understand the remarkable accomplishments attained during a period of twenty years, since the ten years that preceded this period were devoted solely to preparing this undertaking of such a vast significance.

People of all social classes and status are eager to see Don Bosco during his stay at Sarria and they call on him in search of all sorts of advice. Some wish to implore from God—Who is capable of everything—through the mediation of this saintly old man, either a remedy or a relief from serious sickness. Others call on him to ask for advice for a troubled heart afflicted by misfortune, or for prayers for the repose of their dear ones. Pious associations call on him to pay their respects as to one who has filled so eminent a place among the men who have distinguished themselves in recent years in the Church of Christ. Several prelates, too, did go to Sarria to greet the famous Catholic founder. Don Bosco lends an attentive ear to great and small alike, to those who occupy the highest positions in the social ladder, to the middle class people who are landowners in our city or to humble workers and simple women of the people. To all alike who arrive in his presence, full of fervent faith, does he give his blessing and a little medal on one side of which the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is engraved, and on the other, the image of the Most Holy Virgin.

"Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us," "*Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis*," is what we read on Don Bosco's little medal, which without any doubt was the mighty talisman that helped the Italian priest accomplish his great mission which was to found many schools—the number of which increases daily—which will help arrest the ceaseless propaganda undertaken against God, and against all authority. This type of propaganda, especially in Europe, is being carried out unmolested at the present time, and is filling anguished hearts and souls with fear, even those of certain famous rationalists who see with horror that our Society is rushing frenziedly toward the abyss of godlessness and social disintegration.

All those who have been able to approach Don Bosco and who have listened to his authoritative words, have perceived in his countenance his learned intellect and powerful will. In the early days, when he was founding his workshops, Don Bosco himself learned the various crafts he wished to be taught in them, and then he taught them to his beloved children. Already at the age of eight he devoted his attention to music, and no Salesian workshop is without its own band of musicians, consisting of boys to whom the Salesians have given shelter, while a Salesian is its con-

ductor. Don Bosco also speaks a number of languages, which makes it easy for him to talk with people of all countries, which also helps him propagate new workshops.

Humility, this costly yet so preciously Christian virtue that comes so hard to human nature, is one of the virtues, which most distinguishes the famous founder of the Salesian workshops. "I do not know why so many important people come to see me," he told the very people that felt honored to keep him company during supper on Sunday last. Nevertheless, when Don Bosco is engaged in his task of developing his work, he speaks with the conviction of the founder, albeit with a simple tone of voice, with an unbreakable tenacity and almost like a prophetic gift. "The Sarria workshops will educate five hundred children," he happened to remark during the course of the conversation. And when one heard him say this, one was touched, and seemed to see how in a short time, the necessary buildings would be raised to give shelter to that greatly increased number of boys, new workshops would be inaugurated, and at the hours scheduled for prayer, a new church which undoubtedly the piety of the people of Barcelona would build in this important center for the education of the poorer classes, would be filled with the faithful.

In the thick of the inevitable difficulties which will naturally arise, in order to successfully complete this holy undertaking, the Cooperators committed to it must be encouraged by the thought that the Salesian Workshops in Barcelona have come to fill a need which is even greater than in other cities. This is an industrious city with few rivals and influenced by the propaganda of international revolutionaries, due to its proximity to France, and so the workshops render an incalculable service by reassuring families that their children will receive a Christian education, as well as learn a craft, and this will instill into them, already in their childhood, the love of God and the respect for their neighbor, obedience to their superiors and kindness toward their inferiors, should they ever have any; there they will find inspiration in Christian doctrine, which will influence them both in their family life and in the exercise of their duties as citizens. The work of the Salesian workshops is one which will be of immense benefit to the family, to Society in general and to the nation, and that is why we cherish the hope that the solemn religious ceremony which took place yesterday in the church of Our Lady of Belén, which is described in another portion of this same issue, will prove extremely providential in rendering possible within a short span of time, the aspirations of the venerable old man who was given so warm a welcome in this city.

16.

DON BOSCO AT THE VILLA OF DON LUIS MARTÍ Y CODOLAR

(*Correo Catalán*, May 5, 1886)

I write these lines on the impact of the most loving impressions I had.

I refer to the family festivities organized in honor of Don Bosco, this extraordinary apostolic man, by the kind family of Martí y Codalar, who are well known for their generosity and goodness. The mitered Trappist abbot was also present, as well as the poor boys who receive both shelter and education in the Salesian workshops at Sarria.

It would be hard to describe all that took place in those gardens rendered lovely by the radiance of spring and by the exquisite taste of the owners, for they are full of fragrant flowers, inhabited by caged wild animals, rare birds, and adorned with statues, tropical plants and everything that the fantasy and intelligence of a renowned merchant and shipping magnate could conceive and bring home from remote lands and distant territories.

The entertainment began with a carefully served banquet which the poor little boarders of the Salesians enjoyed thoroughly. After the banquet the Salesian band performed two concert pieces with great harmony and taste, superior to what one might expect from children who are only now beginning to make their acquaintance with art.

In a garden surrounded by Libanese cedars, Don Bosco and the mitered Trappist abbot took their seats; placed to one side and grouped around him were the poor children of the Salesians, and the family, friends and domestic staff of the masters of the house. With eloquent words, full of evangelical unction, the Trappist abbot improvised a speech, voicing the gratitude he felt and exhorting the children to fulfill their duty to obey, to learn, and to work, so that they might become useful to Society and later, form their own families. With a spontaneity which was delightful, he turned to Don Bosco and asked him to bless the whole group, and when the latter, deeming himself like a humble mendicant, replied that in the presence of a prelate of the Church, he is a simple priest and he ought to implore his blessing, instead of imparting one, the Trappist abbot knelt down, took off the emblems of prelatic rank as an expression of his holy humility, and kneeling with the entire assembly, devoutly received the blessing of

this frail, ailing old man, the hero of charity, founder of a magnificent congregation such as may well do honor to a saint, since its fertile harvest truly constitutes a miracle.

Then the whole group was photographed with an automatic camera held in ready for the occasion, whereafter this great father of a family which educates, keeps and instructs two hundred thousand boys, all as poor as he is, perpetuating as one may well say, the miracle of the loaves and fishes, rose to his feet, and went to inspect some of the many wonders of great merit in the garden, leaning on the arm of the amiable master of the house, Señor Marti y Codolar.

The royal white peacock spread its tail to show off and render homage to so great an admirer; the elephant displayed its white tusks and happily waved its trunk; the pelicans came waddling over to pay him tribute; and even the camels came out and went down on their knees.

The maidservants, the gardeners, the male servants, and some of the children could freely gratify their desire to talk with the venerable old man and confide their feelings to him, and he listened to them, he caressed them and behaved with such angelic kindness that immediately he established a current of an irresistible charm.

The boys of the Salesians ate a snack and were waited upon by the same ladies who had attended the festivities. When it was already near evening Don Bosco, acclaimed and speeded on his way by everyone present with genuine enthusiasm, left that hospitable house and enchanting estate to return with his sons to Sarria and the workshops.

They had been raised by the Christian sentiment of charity which flourishes so evidently in our country, and, may God be thanked for it, the first impulse, the first sacrifice, if an act of charity can be thus described, was performed by that wonderful lady, Señora Dorotea Chopitea de Serra, with her noble intentions that have caused her name to blaze forth in all the institutes of charity which honor Barcelona.

This lady who has a noble heart, who is loved by all and adored by the poor, was present and seemed as if she were seeking out the lowliest place for herself. So too, were her daughters and grandchildren present. The Pascual brothers were also present with their charming consorts and beloved daughters, while the relatives and a number of friends of the Marti y Codolar household also deemed themselves fortunate to be there, for throughout their lifetime, they will keep the wonderful and tender memory of that ceremony, in which one saw reflected the goodness and simplicity which, forever go hand-in-hand with genuine Catholic sentiments. —J.M.G.

17.

THE *TIBI DABO* TRANSFER PAPERS

Barcelona, in the rectory of the parish of Our Lady of Mercy, the fifth day of May, 1886.

Most Reverend Don John Bosco
Superior General of the Salesian Congregation:

The undersigned owners of the summit of the mountain known as *Tibi Dabo*, following the example given by our Most Holy Father Leo XIII, who entrusted the honorable task of building a temple dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Eternal City to your reverence, now prostrate at the feet of the Most Holy Virgin of Mercy, the patroness of this town and diocese, offer to your reverence the summit of *Tibi Dabo* so that you may here likewise raise a temple dedicated to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Who will hold back the Arm of Divine Justice from and call down the Divine Mercy upon, this beloved city of ours and over all Catholic Spain.

Please accept our offer, Most Reverend Father, and graciously comfort us with your holy blessing.

ARTOS DELFIN, ALVARO M. A. CAMIN, FELIPE CAMPS, GME. MORE Y BOSCH, MANUEL M. PASCUAL, MAURICIO SERRACHIMA, MANUÉL TORRABADELLA, FELIPE VIVES, ALVARO VERDAGNER, CARMEN GARRIGOLA V. a DE TORRENT, FOR d. a CARMEN FONT a. d. CALAFELL JOSE XIVIYELL.

18.

THE FIRST CHAPEL ON THE SUMMIT OF THE *TIBI DABO*

(*El Diario de Barcelona,* May 30, 1886)

With the necessary authorization and blessing of our prelate, the work on the construction of a little chapel in Gothic architectural style, to be dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus at the summit of Mount Tibi Dabo, has now begun.

The top of this mountain, which until now has appealed to the curiosity of most people because of the lovely panorama one can view from it, will now and in the future serve to render homage to the adorable Sacred Heart of Our Maker for the many wonders such as we may enjoy from there.

During the stay of the Venerable Don Bosco in this city, the pious people of Barcelona wished to honor him by offering to him as a gift the aforesaid mountain, and they will now be happy to see erected there this little monument which in great part is due to the initiative and generous unselfishness of a number of people all devoted to the Sacred Heart. The Salesian Fathers, under whose direction the little chapel is being built, will naturally be eager to terminate the buildings now begun, thanks to their own efforts. But the urgent needs of their charitable institution, which are so difficult to respond to, forces them to rely on the proverbial and never failing generosity of the population of the capital of the principality, in order to see the undertaking through to a successful conclusion.

May God grant that the modest undertaking which is now beginning, be soon completed, and serve as the foundation of another, greater and more worthy structure for this same purpose to which the chapel is now dedicated, worthy also of the people in whose midst it is being erected.

19.

DON BOSCO'S VISIT TO THE CONVENT OF THE VISITATION AT MONTPELLIER

The Mother Superior of the Monastery of the Visitation at Montpellier sent us this account of the visit of St. John Bosco, drawn from the records of the monastery.

It took place in 1886. We had then the great honor and happiness of welcoming the venerated Don Bosco, of renowned and saintly memory, at our convent, and had the joy of seeing him with our own eyes and listening to him with our own ears.

So that he might be rescued from the onslaught of the crowd which followed him everywhere and demanded to see him from all sides, we thought it best to have him enter our convent secretly through the door leading from our carriage way. Father Rua and our superior, Father Canonge, accompanied him.

In our community parlor he delivered a brief, edifying address to us all.

At the time we had a sister in the infirmary, which was seriously ill.

The whole community loved her deeply for her religious virtues, and was ardently hoping that she might recover. We asked him to come and see her, with the secret hope that he would perform a miracle for her; but after looking at her for a few minutes, as though he were trying to ascertain what the Will of God was, and how the nun's own spiritual state of soul might be, he raised a finger, pointing it to heaven, and said: "Heavenward, heavenward!"... This was precisely what happened, for the beloved sister died a little while later.

In their fervent veneration for the great miracle worker, our nuns knelt down as he passed by them, and kissed the hem of his cassock. Our superior, the Rev. Canonge followed him very closely, and noticing what they were doing, he bent down and whispered quietly with a smile: "Do not make any mistake about the cassock, because I am not a saint."

This precious visit only lasted a few minutes. The crowd, having lost track of him, realized that he had entered our monastery, and, being eager to catch a glimpse of him again, began shouting for him with holy impatience.

20.

LETTER FROM THE SUPERIOR OF THE MONTPELLIER SEMINARY TO DON BOSCO

The Major Seminary of Montpellier
Feast Day of the Visitation, July 2, 1886

Dearest Father:

You gave us a very great pleasure indeed by sending, together with your books, the precious assurance that you have not forgotten us. Thank you kindly for remembering us.

The Major Seminary of Montpellier keeps the most precious recollection of your visit here. The good people of the town, who gave you such a rousing welcome, would be ready to start all over again, and I myself am prepared to support your hands and protect you from the onslaught of the crowd. I toiled a lot in restraining the crowd eager to kiss the hand of a priest who is poor among the poor and ailing to boot.

On page 33 of your interesting booklet on the spirit of St. Vincent you write: "One cannot but feel astonishment when one learns that Vincent de Paul, overwhelmed with so much work,

and *non camminando che con pena* [able to walk with great difficulty], came downstairs from his room to give alms to some poor women..."

As I read these lines, I said to myself, "Look: this is the picture of Don Bosco, *camminando con pena* [walking with great difficulty], but *disceso da Torino per distribuire l'elemosina a povere donne* [coming from Turin to give alms to some poor women]."

But do you know, dear and reverend father, that you left me with a great sorrow in my heart? I let those poor people enjoy you entirely, while I myself did not have a chance to chat with you. Next time I shall not be so unselfish, but will lock myself in with you, and ask you what are all those little secrets of yours to lead souls to love Our Dear Lord.

When I did ask you what your secret was in governing and guiding such a great number of children with so few assistants, you replied: "We instill fear of God into them."

But that is only the beginning of wisdom. What I need to know is how you manage to guide souls to the summit of wisdom, which is the love for God.

During one of the spiritual talks to the priests who come here for their monthly retreat, we talked about the methods used by St. Vincent and St. Francis of Sales in guiding souls to perfection. We came to the conclusion that St. Vincent persuaded the soul, overwhelmed by the majesty of God, to confide in Him and deliver itself into His Hands completely, so that the Divine Charity might be spread around as much as possible, whereas St. Francis of Sales was content to teach the whole world just as he would teach a good and simple person, to seek in all things the pleasure of God.

We decided then that the method used by St. Vincent was best applicable to the generous soul, whereas the method of St. Francis was more easily applicable to everybody in general, and likely to guide a greater number of souls toward perfection.

It would be most kind of you if, dear Father, you who have carefully studied these two great saints, were to let me know if our conclusions were right.

A word from you in reply would be a charitable gesture cordially hailed by all our priests.

We have not forgotten your two good traveling companions,

either. So please be so kind as to pass on our respectful regards to Father Rua and our cordial good wishes to your young well beloved disciple.

As for you, most honored and dearest Father, kindly accept my most respectful and affectionate regards while recalling the friendship between St. Vincent de Paul and St. Francis of Sales.

Dupuy, Priest of the Mission
Superior of the Major Seminary

P.S. I have received a number of applications from people recommending orphans to me, and asking that you give them a home. These are the precious pearls destined for the Heavenly Jerusalem; should you take them in, you will be able to purchase Heaven with them. They are poor, without all and every support, even mine, for I am in charge already of so many seminarians. I believe that this is the only certificate that you require: *sicut aves coeli qui non seminant...neque metunt* [Just as the birds of the air which do not sow... and do not harvest].

21.

THE STAY OF ST. JOHN BOSCO AT THE MAJOR SEMINARY OF GRENOBLE

(May 1886)

On his way back from Spain where he has visited Barcelona, and from the South of France where he was given an enthusiastic welcome at Montpellier, Tarascon and Valence, Don Bosco arrived at Grenoble, which I believe will be the last stage of this great journey on French soil. He called on the bishop, but since His Excellency, Bishop Armand Joseph Fava, was away, he was escorted to the Major Seminary nearby, where he will reside for three days. Thus, thanks to the absence of our bishop, we have the pleasure of enjoying the company of a Saint.

This is the year of 1886, and the beautiful month of Our Lady, if I remember rightly. The May sunshine bathes the pillars of the cloister, provides light for the scene of Don Bosco's entrance through the carriage

door. The seminarians are all at the windows; their venerated superior, Fr. Robilland, with the directors, welcomes the illustrious Founder of the Salesians who is accompanied by his confessor Father Rua, followed by a number of people pushing their way up to the cloister.

It is evident that he has suffered somewhat from his journey. Fr. Robilland says quite clearly: "Reverend Father, you appear to be suffering...But no one knows better than you that suffering sanctifies."

"No, no, Father Rector, it is not suffering, but patience which sanctifies!" Don Bosco replies with a holy mischievous smile[2].

The good Father ate with us at table. As he entered the dining room with our directors, he always said out loud every time: "Buon appetito!"

By design of the *good, dear, and great Providence*[3] it so happened that the following day our team[4] was on duty in the dining room, and luckily the table where the Superiors sat fell to my share, so that I had the great honor of waiting on the future Saint John Bosco at both meals.

After the *Miserere*, it was a custom that the waiters would eat their meals. I had a sudden inspiration: it came without doubt from Heaven. I told my fellow students about it: "What if we take the tableware the Saint used for ourselves...what do you all say? If we replace them with our own money, we will not owe anything to the Economer, and *post factum* we will confess our little larceny to him."

One will readily see that we put to good use the lessons of Moral Theology imparted to us by our Professor!

"Excellent! Excellent! Let us go ahead with it!"

Without further ado we fell on the, by now, historic table. As each of us made off with the spoils in our hands, we must have looked something like the four officers of Monsieur de Marlborough:

One carried his mighty sword,
The other his flag,
One carried his armor
Another carried ...nothing at all!

There was, however, this difference: the fourth one was carrying a plate with spinach relief on it!

I do not know whether my good companions have treasured their

[2] I was present at this scene which near the parlor at the foot of the great staircase.

[3] An habitual expression of Madame de Sévigné.

[4] The team consisted of for seminarians who shared the task of waiting on four tables.

relics as jealously as I have mine; this was the *glass,* which had fallen to my share. When I entered the Chartreuse, I entrusted it to my family and on Sunday, April 1, 1934—the day of his canonization—everyone present at the Easter dinner drank from the venerable glass as they had already done on the day he had been beatified. May it so please Heaven that among my four infant nephews there may be at least one who will consecrate himself to God, become a holy priest and receive the legacy of this chalice from his grand uncle!

Now, as we were facing these utensils, sanctified by a saint like Don Bosco, we should have made a short examination of conscience: Did we drink from the Chalice of the Master out of Love, as He invited all His future Priests to drink, the night of the Last Supper? Have we severed ruthlessly all our ties with the world, with the sacrificial knife? Did we partake wisely of our corporal, spiritual and intellectual nourishment; that is to say, did we retain the moderation, prudence and wisdom the Saint taught us throughout his lifetime? In a word, have we not flowed over the *rim* of the plate of our vocation, conducting ourselves in the work of our sacred ministry according to our own individual narrow viewpoint?

Great Saint, remember our larceny in the dining room, and in your turn, make good our faults by interceding and praying for us!

The following day, the task of waiting at table was taken over by the Pontist Brothers, an association founded in the seminary to attend to our material needs. Certainly, these worthy brothers do deserve some distinction. Our fellow student, the Reverend Fassion,[5] had the honor of waiting on the Saint, at table, and as a good Israelite, *in quo dolus non est* [in whom there is no guile], he was so simple as to ask the Reverend Economer to kindly sell him the utensils used by Don Bosco. The good Canon Paillet, who was deeply pious, raised his arms and cried out: "No, no, no, and again no!"—"I was not a big thief, but only a little one," he wrote to me in 1932 in reply to a letter of mine in which I sought to freshen up his memory. "I took his glass, then I lost it. How come? I could not say." My God! After 46 years, details can easily become blurred in our feeble memories!

After a very tiresome day, for he had a lot of visitors at the seminary, Don Bosco presided over the spiritual reading in our hall of retreat;

[5] At the present time, the curate of Corbes (Isere).

instead of the spiritual reading, Father Rua gave us a talk. Don Bosco's pious confessor chose as his theme the love that God feels for us. His ardent words revealed a soul aflame. It was more a contemplation than a meditation. Next to the Saint, it became a genuine ecstasy. Big tears ran down his cheeks and Father Robilland said aloud in his sweet, persuasive voice: "Don Bosco is weeping!"—It would be impossible to try and describe the effect that these simple words had on our souls. The tears of the Saint were even more eloquent than Father Rua's inspired words. We were stirred to the very depths of our soul on that occasion. We had recognized his saintliness in the revelation of his love and we no longer had need of any miracle to be able to manifest our veneration to the Saint as we went from the hall of our devotions to the dining room.

At that time there were about 120 students in the seminary. Every one of them wanted to kiss the Saint's hand. We organized it in the twinkling of an eye. Two seminarians took turns to support his arms and all along the porticoes, on both sides, all the way to the refectory, we kissed the hands that had so often been held out to assist the orphans, the workers and the little children.

Don Bosco graciously let us have our way. This custom of kissing a priest's hand is habitual in Italy, though it is now beginning to disappear in certain regions. But in France it is a gesture of personal veneration. Who would have foregone this edifying spectacle? How delightfully it will help illustrate this report!

The next morning I encountered a fellow student, Edouard Jourdan, outside the door of the Saint in the corridor of Wing A. He had knocked at the door, but no one had answered. "I would so much like to see him;" he told me, "Where can he be?"—Just then a priest informed us that he was in the library. Without hesitation, we ran in the direction of the library. We were only a few steps away from it when the Saint appeared. We rushed toward him and fell on our knees. Jourdan said:

"Dear Father, I am undecided about my vocation. Tell me what I am to do."

"You must come with me;" was the answer; "you will become a Salesian."

In my turn, I asked what path I ought to follow, and for sole reply, I was given a negative gesture, and I was told: "No, I want no part of you." Although this was not very flattering, I was nevertheless happy to have received so definitive and decisive an answer, such as only a Saint is capable of giving.

I would like to make here a remark which is not without significance. Don Bosco said *yes* to one and *no* to the other but he said *yes* and *no* with equal assurance, with the selfsame clear, specific knowledge of the future of both the one and the other seminarian, for he was under the influence of the same inspiration. He was just as serious and concerned with my welfare in saying *no* to me as he was in saying *yes* to Jourdan.

The next morning, the Rev. Robilland introduced our class; the class of Lay Brothers, to Don Bosco in the latter's room. We clustered around him while he addressed us. What did he have to tell us? Some excellent things about our training as priests, and our preparation for the ministry of souls, but after 48 years we did not keep any specific details of them. Now we make a little confession. There was more curiosity in us than concentration and we were very much distracted by what was going on behind the Saint.

A few students had come armed with scissors. The seminarian Fassion, whose name we have already mentioned, was the boldest of them all. This is how I recall what happened: "It was our definite intention to snip the Saint's cassock, and cut off a few locks of his curly hair. It was all right as far as the hair was concerned, but he disarmed us with his keen, yet gentle look when it came to his cassock. We 'put our swords' back.

Father Anselme[6] writes me: "There were many who had scissors but who did not venture to use them. One of them handed me the scissors. Thinking that I was more courageous than the others, I was about to try my hand when I was arrested by a severe glance. Oh! That glance! ... I can still feel the effect of it, even though 48 years have gone by. It has continued to trouble me and has spoiled my pleasure in seeing and touching the Saint. Now I pray to him, invoking him every day. I used to invoke him even before he was beatified."

According to Father Rostaing,[7] Don Bosco's glance was not so severe for those who had succeeded in their little ruse as for those who attempted it. Father Anselme seems to have been too timid. "One of our fellow seminarians was so bold as to snip a piece from the hem of his cassock with the scissors, to keep it as a relic. Don Bosco noticed this and remarked with a laugh: "Father Rector, you have thieves here!"

I myself did not observe any severe glance cast by our Saint in the direction of our good Anselme, but I did hear him say quite clearly: "You

[6] Now curate at Freyzin (Isere).

[7] Now curate-archpriest at Vinay (Isere) and honorary canon.

have thieves here." I also saw his kindly smile. After all, it is quite easily explained: both the severe glance *ante factum* and the smile *post factum*. For in Saints, just as in God, justice and mercy ineffably kiss each other.

As we got out of that unforgettable audience, Don Bosco said to Jourdan: "You, my friend, must stay with me." Our beloved companion asked Father Rostaing what he ought to say in reply to the invitation of the Saint. "I advised him to go to Turin during his vacation, in compliance with Don Bosco's wishes," the priest writes. "He became a Salesian and brought honor to the Congregation, despite the fact that he was not very gifted, intellectually speaking. But to make up for it, he had a sound judgment, common sense and piety."

We learned that he rendered great services to his community at the time of political persecution. Some time around 1929 (I do not know the exact date of his death), he came to Sainte Foy de Lyon whither Cardinal Maurin, our former bishop at Grenoble, had summoned him to study and establish plans for an important house which he wanted to found there.

On the evening of the 3rd day, our spiritual reading consisted in a short life of Don Bosco which had recently been published, and in which there were some reports of graces already obtained through the Saint. I do not know who had written it (in French), but I do recall that there was a story in it about the recovery of a young girl who was already in a coma, and I also recall reading about his prowess at gymnastics, thanks to which he had succeeded in keeping away from his own village church an acrobat who delighted in upsetting religious services with his performances. It appears that he did remarkable things on the trapeze. Should he not be chosen as patron saint of gymnastic clubs, which at the present day are so much in vogue?

Thus in our hall of devotions did we read the biography of a saint who was not only still alive, but even staying in the building across from our own. There was no need of a revelation; to let us know why he had come to scold us...We have to acknowledge that the event of his stay in the Major Seminary of Grenoble was by no means an ordinary event.

It would be superfluous to say that during our recreation, we brought things to him, so that he might touch them: rosaries, pocketknives, even purses! ... The Saint always complied with delightful good grace and a tender, kindly smile. One day we had to carry him all the way from the Major Seminary to the Cathedral because of the immense crowd jamming Rue du Vieux Temple. Everyone was anxious to see and hear *Il Santo* (The Saint).

Don Bosco said goodbye to us in the dining room. These were his part-

ing words: "May the Good Lord grant you good health and holiness: good health so that you may work and holiness so that you may enter Heaven."

May his powerful intercession assist us in making his pious wish, so paternal and so supernatural, come true!

So be it.

Friar Pierre Mouton
Vicar of the Carthusian Monastery of
Motta Grossa (Pinerolo)

22.

PIEDMONTESE VERSES IN HONOR OF DON BOSCO WRITTEN BY FR. FRANCESIA

23.

LETTER ADDRESSED TO DON BOSCO BY THE CATHOLIC WORKERS OF BORGO DORA ST. JOACHIM'S SECTION

Turin, May 16, 1886

Most Reverend Sir:

The Catholic Workers of Borgo Dora who share all that concerns their honorable president and who feel the greatest esteem and veneration for you as a person, are now overwhelmed by an indescribable exultation for all the wonderful things which have turned your journey into a triumphal march.

Delighted at your return, they would like to express to you a world of congratulations, but discretion has its limits.

They would like to express to you their wishes, their hopes, their plans, but at the moment they do not have words to express all these things.

But they do have a heart and that will never fail them. On Sunday, which is the eve of the feast of Mary Help of Christians, we will gather beneath our standard, at the feet of Our Heavenly Mother and will raise our prayers to Mary together with the Catholic workers of the Oratory. There shall we give thanks to

her for having given all the working men a Don Bosco; to the workers of America, a Bishop, John Cagliero; and to our own section, so great an honorary president.

Finally, we shall implore Mary that at a none-too-distant day, the Catholic Union of Turin may receive that which was granted this year to the Barcelona Association: namely, that we too may have Don Bosco among us for one single hour, so that we can kiss his hand and receive his holy blessing, such as the undersigned now implore on behalf of the whole section, with all reverence.

The Secretary	The President
Alberto Pioton	Carlo Riva
Cesare Aureglia	Antonio Enriu
Under-Secretary	Vice - President

Antonio Coggiola
Vice - President.

24.

CARDINAL LAURENZI'S LETTER TO DON BOSCO

Rome, October 25, 1885

Most Devoted and Dear Don Bosco, Superior General:

Despite the immense and sincere esteem that I have for your most worthy person and the well deserving Salesian Institute, I cannot but recognize my own inadequacy to serve you, as you suggested in your esteemed letter of the 22nd, namely, by taking on myself and sustaining with the required assiduity and maturity, the delicate office of Protector, by giving the support and impulse that this young Congregation requires for its further development and consolidation. This is the task which can only be accomplished by an experienced, expert and authoritative cardinal such as the late lamented Cardinal Nina, and not by someone such as myself who am admittedly a novice and inexperienced in coping with important matters concerning the Holy Church. Therefore, do not be displeased if I beg you to dispense me from taking on this duty, and to turn your gaze elsewhere toward some

other more qualified person better suited than I to cope with the needs and the expectations of your revered Congregation.

I have already informed the Holy Father of this resolution on my part, and he did not say anything against such a decision. I now inform you hereof, assuring you that I am extremely grateful for the honorable preference shown to me in your proposal, and also that this will not diminish in any way the affectionate esteem and admiration, nor the interest that I am proud to profess for the most worthy Salesian Congregation.

I look forward to further meetings with you which may allow me to give you evidence of the above, and in the meantime I remain with deep affection and reverence for you and all your honorable confreres.

Your sincere and most affectionate servant,
Carlo, Cardinal Laurenzi

25.

SUMMARY OF A LECTURE DELIVERED IN ROME BY CARDINAL PAROCCHI

Honorable Ladies and Gentlemen:

I look around me, and although the assembly is a most respectable one, most noble ladies, for in keeping with your habitual kindness, you honor and confer significance on this annual meeting of the Salesian Undertakings, permit me to say quite frankly that at today's meeting, the most sparkling jewel which at other times blazed here in our midst, and conferred splendor upon the Salesian gathering, is missing. I look in vain for that venerable Apostle of modern charity; I mean to say, I look for our excellent, unforgettable Don Bosco. We would have wished him to be here to edify us and render happy with his presence this association that he has founded with his own hand, to answer our questions with the lovable smile of both a brother and apostle, and with a voice which is the voice of a brother and of a father so appropriate. But while we are here in the hospitable house of the venerable Lady Oblates of St. Francis of Rome, under the mantle of the great Lady Patroness of Roman aristocracy, he is crossing through modern Castile in Catholic Spain, forgetful of his 71 years, and perhaps at this very

moment he has carried out the very important transaction of founding a new Salesian house in Madrid, in fulfillment of the wishes of King Alfonso. He has perhaps, this very day, somewhat cooled off the flames by which even kings may be consumed, by fulfilling one of the latest aspirations of that profoundly Catholic and sincerely religious King. Yet, it is useless for us to regret the absence of Don Bosco here in our midst, for, just as Our Divine Master, he might well reply to us: *Quid est quod me querebatis? Nesciabatis quia in his quae Patris mei sunt oportet me esse?* Why did you seek me? Why be perturbed, as if my material presence were necessary? *Quid est...* Are you not aware that I have to devote myself unceasingly, without a pause, to what concerns the works of my Father? *Nesciebatis quia in his quae Patris mei sunt oportet me esse?*

So therefore let us leave the Apostle of this century free to pursue the works of God in the Iberian peninsula, and let us send him our good wishes for success in what he has undertaken. May St. Ignatius Loyola and St. Theresa of Jesus bless him. May St. John of the Cross and St. Francis Borgia bless him. May St. Francis Xavier and St. John of God bless him. May St. Peter of Alcantara and St. Louis Bertrand bless him. And lastly, may the infinite legion of Saints that Spain, the land of St. James, has given to the Catholic Church, of which that nation deserves so well for having conquered and broken the power of the Saracens for that selfsame church and for civilization, may all of them together likewise bless him. Let us turn to our own business in hand: *in his quae Patris mei sunt oportet me esse*, with a few words of praise regarding the fundamental undertakings of the Salesian Congregation, words which will be the more freely spoken because the creator of them all is not here, and Christian dignity enjoins us to respect both the speaker and the listener, and not to overtax the humility and modesty of anybody present. As evidence, we have the fine words pronounced by St. Peter of Alcantara to a lay person who was tending some sores from which he was suffering: "Slowly, brother, slowly I pray you, for I am still alive, so do not take any kind of liberty with me. *Lauda post mortem*. Praise them after their death! That's the general rule. Only exceptionally does one write about a man still alive, for in such case any high praise may lead to vanity and flattery, even if the person spoken of is considered a saint. I shall therefore feel free to speak, granted this consideration, without falling into the danger of using flattery and without any restriction speak of that marvelous and indeed miraculous undertaking that Don Bosco has created in the bosom of the

Church during our century, a creation of faith and charity; that is why, Revered Ladies, in developing both one and the other of these two themes, I will point to the moral consequences accruing from them.

On December 8th it will be exactly 45 years since Don Bosco placed the corner stone of his undertaking in Turin, on the happy day of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, where he gave instruction on the basic articles of our faith to a poor fifteen year old boy named Bartholomew Garelli. It is with him that Don Bosco began that same undertaking which, started so modestly with but one single boy in Turin, was to be so extensively developed 45 years later. In this short span of time, he has added 62 houses, of which 45 are in Italy, 12 in France, 3 in Spain, etc. without counting the missionary stations in South America, especially in Argentina, Uruguay and Patagonia...

I do not have any precise statistical data regarding the number of members of the Salesian Congregation, nor regarding the sisters of Our Lady Help of Christians who give Don Bosco the contribution of their abnegation and admirable zeal. I do not have statistical data concerning the boys educated in his houses and Oratories, nor of the savages he has civilized, nor the pagans that have been baptized, nor how much spiritual comfort which has been dispensed, but I do not believe I would be far wrong were I to assure you....*numera stellas si potes*, [count the stars if you can] and then you will be able to enumerate the good works of this humble, meek Apostle. It is enough to look at the magnificent Basilica which, under your own eyes, is now under construction, arising as if under a spell, at Castro Pretorio. It is enough to admire this temple consecrated to the Most Sweet Heart of Jesus, built with all the splendor, harmony and vastness by the generous abnegation of Don Bosco and of the Catholics of the world and especially by Italian Catholics. To be convinced of it is enough to cast a glance on the one hand, at the spacious cloister of the good religious, and on the other, at the hospice where, we have not the slightest doubt, boys will receive the selfsame education as that imparted at Valdocco in Turin, in Sampierdarena, La Spezia and a thousand other localities where the charity of Don Bosco has been extended. It would be absurd to say that this marvelous creation is entirely due to the advice given by a politician without faith such as Urbano Rattazzi. In 1847 he did indeed say: "Join forces with other men so as to ensure the stability of your undertaking, and leave someone behind who can represent you when you will be dead. Besides, who would there be to succeed you and carry out your spirit in your undertakings?" That was, so to

speak, but the seed from which the Congregation took life and shape, it was the spark which, during the following six years, was to be rekindled and developed until our present day. I am well aware that God loves to jest with the sons of men, allowing even animals to utter prophecies on behalf of His Chosen Ones. But if this did indeed give an impulse to the formation, organization and consolidation of his undertaking, then its birth, its existence and its growth must be ascribed to that faith which can move mountains, to the faith that caused a grain of mustard seed to blossom and develop into a gigantic tree. It is the faith of this Man of God which has produced the precious fruits we now admire.

Who is unacquainted with this man's life of faith? Did not the very beginning, the birth of the Congregation, first conceived on the feast day of the Immaculate Conception already prove to you that the entire undertaking had its foundations firmly established on religion, inspired by Faith? What, if not faith, inspired him to care for these boys? Was it not perhaps his understanding of how much the human soul had cost the Son of Man, his understanding of the noble destiny to which Mankind was called? Was it not his inner conviction that God has a supreme right to be adored, loved and served by all rational creatures that urged him to devote himself to these children? And is not all of this a spirit of faith? Could one doubt that faith had a hand in this? I will not touch upon the private life of this Servant of God. Let us not try to lift the veil which covers his virtues , nor the veil of modesty which shrouds him, for even if we wished to do so, it would neither be right nor fitting. But looking instead at his exterior accomplishments, and judging the seed by its fruit; then we do not hesitate to say that the achievements of Don Bosco are the end results of a living faith; and his disciples, his well-deserving disciples, continue the work started by him with that selfsame spirit of faith. Anyone who visits, even only briefly, the house which stands beside the Shrine of Our Lady, Help of Christians in Turin and who has wandered, as I have, through this city of boys, and seen them busy in their bustling workshops, or silent and motionless, studying at their desk or silently all together, some listening with great attention to the words of their teacher, some around the confessional, others kneeling beneath the wings of Mary Help of Christians to sing her praises, still others at the feet of or sitting in a circle around this new Philip a few minutes after sunset when a moonbeam comes down to lighten up the famous city and turns into gold the venerable white hairs of this Man of God on whose lips they seem to hang enraptured, listening to the few, simple words which he drops like rain on

well tilled soil, moving some to tears, moving others to laughter, but urging them all to live a new life of magnanimous resolve. When I consider all this, then I repeat and say: here the world plays no part; here the flesh and blood is knocking at the door in vain: nothing but faith can enter here! If we look at the annals and history of the Salesian Missions in South America, we will find not only the difficulties scantily mentioned in the reports to Propaganda Fide to which all people can have access, but also added difficulties and quite different ones such as: inclement weather, racially mixed population, corrupt customs, savages who have no idea of God, civilized people who are worse than the savage; foreigners who flock there for money and speculation and talk different languages (Portuguese, Indian, Spanish); superstition on the one hand and indifference on the other hand, sloth on the part of the Ministers of the Sanctuary, Governments hostile to the Church, Free Masons Societies, corrupt and broken down morals, or even morals entirely gone.

Let's put of all these difficulties together, let's combine all of these problems into a composite and without any need of a great learning. This will be good enough to give us an idea of how hard was the undertaking the Salesians of South America had committed themselves to.

That undertaking, which has wearied so many arms and exhausted so many energies of so many well-deserving orders before them, has blossomed again, in the Catholic Church, in the humble and new Salesian Congregation. This is how God has showered his gifts. The overcoming of so many difficulties and of the suspicions of governments, the fact of captivating the esteem of Bishops and clergy, the ability to disarm parties hostile to God and the Church, the possibility of going like welcomed angels of peace among those individuals who have a human face and the heart of a tiger, all this is nothing but the work of Faith. It was faith which gave birth to this Congregation, that faith which was engendered in Don Bosco's sons who will keep it, if it so please God, and if he graciously hears our prayers. If this alone were to be the contribution made by Don Bosco, it would already be quite relevant. A French novelist, who is far from being kind toward the Church, and whose name is intolerable in the House of God—for he writes even as Lucifer himself would write, should God permit him to express his feelings in written words—wrote thus only a few days ago: "Alas, what has this century, which is drawing to a close, contributed to the intellectual and moral order? Nothing. It has destroyed everything; it has annihilated everything with its skepticism. It has stirred up the masses with its mirages, and has been unable to keep its promises;

it has armed the hands of the workers, and has given them stones instead of bread; it has stirred up evil passions without satisfying anybody, and has sown the seed of doubt in many minds. This century is now waning and has been unable to replace faith with any system or concept; instead, it has deprived the masses of their peace of mind and their morals." These are, more or less, the words of a man who is perhaps one of the most godless and skeptic of French writers. Yet he says that the destruction of Faith is the greatest evil in this world! Now I say to you that, even were the Salesian Congregation to do nothing more than rekindle Faith where it is dying, and resurrect it where it is already dead, and fan it to a vital spark where it is wavering and uncertain, that alone would suffice to demonstrate that the Congregation of Don Bosco is a living act of faith.

The other lever, the other wing, is charity. The fecundity of Don Bosco's works stem from Faith and from Charity; from Faith, for Faith is the victory which conquers the world just as St. John says: *Haec est victoria quae vincit mundum, fides nostra.* It stems from Faith because God always wishes to show that He is the One who reigns. He alone is the Sole Master of our heart. *Dominus regnavit decorem indutus est.* He does not yield His Honor to anybody, and precisely for this He has given incomparable examples to us. If He, the Word of God, humbled Himself unto death for which His Father has exalted Him and gave Him a Name which surpasses all other names, it is because we poor mortals might learn to annihilate ourselves for His sake, and so that the glory due to God might be rendered unto Him. He does not want mankind, in its infinite petulance, to wrest from him His Right over what He has created. Our Lord so disposed that his mere breath could descend over all works constructed by human wisdom, and destroy them, just as a puff of wind extinguishes a flame; whereas He confers fecundity, growth and stability to those things which are planted, rendered fertile and cultivated miraculously by Faith. That is why there is a difference between the heroes of the world and the heroes of the Church, between the deeds of Saints and the deeds of the men of the world, even though they may be respectable. Thus we do see ignorant men, who barely know how to read and write, who founded religious orders which still survive at the present day. The order of St. Francis of Assisi was founded by a man who was almost an idiot, yet its healing shade has covered the earth for the past six centuries. Many other foundations planned by learned men perished, because their founders provided for everything, but omitted to make sure that their works might remain immortal, imperishable. When God confers life and

durability to anything, if we cannot deny the existence of what we see before our eyes, then we must perforce believe that this is the seal, the distinguishing feature that this undertaking started from Faith and was led invariably by Charity. And truly what is Charity, if not Faith in action? For according to theological doctrine, Christian Faith is a fundamental virtue which grows one degree when it becomes Hope, and becomes perfect when it turns into Charity. In the human and rational order, an intellectual conviction is insufficient if disassociated from facts. As a matter of fact, if someone is convinced of a thing but acts contrary to it, he reveals that his conviction is uncertain and dubious. The proof of intellectual conviction is its working out in practice. In exactly the same way the proof of a true faith is the good deeds that it produces. Show me with deeds the faith which I see not with my eyes, says the Apostle St. James. Charity is nothing more than active faith, faith formed by sacrifice, generosity and union of our hearts with God, who is among all things the greatest boon; charity is likewise open to our neighbor who represents the living image of God. Now that work, even though begun in the name of Faith, cannot be divine if it does not have the charity of Jesus Christ as its companion, and if he who puts his hand to it is rather after his purse than after the honor of God, if he seeks his own advantage, and brings grist to his own mill, seeking only his own pleasure, if he aspires to ecclesiastic or secular positions, and sets his goal on honors and rewards, striving to assure the status of his own family, enlarging his fortune and his capital, then such work cannot be other than mortal and sooner or later is doomed to perish. God is purity in essence, a pure spirit foreign to all taint of sin, and those whose works are based on the spirit of charity, emulate this same spirit. I insist on this principle, namely, that good works should be rendered fertile and watered by faith, but it is necessary that they grow and reach perfection by means of charity. There must be good principles, that righteousness and certainty, that self-offering and sacrifice, which charity alone can inspire. *Major horum Caritas*. [The greatest of these is charity].

Now I appeal to you, Honorable Ladies, and ask if in the houses of Don Bosco you find charity or not. If we do not find it here, then where can it be? Where are we to recognize it? In this eventuality, we would have to say that charity has forsaken us, has gone into exile or has perished; but that would be impossible as long as there are honest souls aspiring to their personal sanctification in our midst, and as long as there are poor people who need help, for *Pauperes semper habetis vobiscum*,

says the Lord. This act of faith was perpetuated by charity and zeal for souls through Don Bosco's Oratories. It was Charity which led so many men to join Don Bosco and which inspired them to endure so many sufferings; so many hardships, so many persecutions and sacrifices; it was Charity which sustained them until now. Don Bosco, the Apostle of our days, had in mind the glory of God and wanted that God to be known, adored and loved by the whole world. The tools used by this Apostle were not the worldly connections, or the favors of the great; he did not rely on a rich fortune, it was not his fame as a philosopher or as a man of letters. He is not rich, he is not a diplomat, except in those things which are entrusted to Saints. We know that Don Bosco is not a politician, even though he does enjoy connections with men in power. Although he is a learned individual and has written several books, he has never claimed to be a scientist. Humble and modest, Don Bosco writes just as he thinks and talks, and in his books posterity will find an expression, a symbol of that true simplicity and profound humility which is unique in the pretentious century in which we live. Don Bosco is a man of God, and his weapons are prayer, good example, mortification, sacrifice and meekness and, above all, an imperturbable patience which is evidenced by his slow and pondered movements, by his brief, carefully weighed words, by his gentle and persuasive voice. He calls friends and benevolent those who are his enemies and persecutors. With his meekness and tolerance, he is able to approach anyone, and to tame even the most recalcitrant wild beasts of the desert. I have not exaggerated in anything I have said of this just man who is known to you in person and whose biography you have read. Indeed, I feel that I have only told you a fifth of all that could have been said, and we find magnificent proof of this in the spirit which we see transmitted to his sons. He chose as his Patron a Saint who is a synonym of gentleness and Catholic charity, and gave to his Congregation the name of St. Francis of Sales, of whom he is a living picture. Nor was he satisfied to give solely his name to it, but strove instead to reproduce in it the likeness of the Saint, namely his gentleness and meekness which were to be the program, the means and the end of his Congregation. And even though the rules of the Clerics Regular of St. Cajetan of Thiene, the rules of St. Ignatius Loyola, and the rules of all the other congregations founded up to the present day may be wise rules, yet anyone who examines Don Bosco's Congregation will realize that he not only endeavored to emulate these most wise rules, but strove absolutely to make sure that the dominant note prevailing in his

own Congregation would be charity. What stands out in the Rules of Ignatius is wisdom, foresight. He is a spiritual captain, but nevertheless always a captain, a general who transformed the politics of the century into the divine politics of the Gospel, girded his loins with a sash and seized a crucifix instead of the sword; but all he did was change allegiance to another banner. His chief characteristic was foresight, adaptability, steadfastness; order and symmetry; an admirable piece of architecture, indeed a masterpiece. Don Bosco's projected plan is more simple, casual, but charity prevails: *omnis spiritus laudet Dominum* [let every spirit praise the Lord]. There is a difference between the epistles of St. Paul and those of St. John. The former strikes down all errors with a stroke of the sword; the later preaches charity in every key: *Filioli diligite alterutrum*. The Salesian Congregation, with its Oratories and its schools, constantly preaches charity. At first glance one does not distinguish the sons of Don Bosco from diocesan priests, who wear no special habit, yet their serious, dignified manner, their habits, their speech and their spirit easily reveal them as good priests full of zeal for the Glory of God, and inspired by the spirit of charity.

Fervent faith, and ardent charity: herein lies the secret of this Congregation which, in so short a time, has taken such a firm root and has spread so far and wide. Faith and charity, that is the characteristic distinguishing sign of Don Bosco's Congregation, and without it no noble undertaking can ever be born and if born, no noble undertaking, can ever last and grow.

The cardinal concluded by addressing himself very particularly to mothers of families, saying that this Man of God labored unceasingly for them and for their children; he said that mere feelings of veneration and esteem for the Congregation and its founder were not enough, but that they too, with their charity, should cooperate in all good that was accomplished. Faith would be sterile without charity; and he concluded his magnificent speech by a reference to the fine houses of charity already existing in Rome, but which were inadequate to the steadily increasing population. He also said that it would be a great gesture of charity if one were to contribute to the construction of the Hospice of the Sacred Heart and the upkeep of the boys who would grow up on the hope placed in religion and heaven, while God would generously reward one day the kind and charitable souls who gave to it, saying to them: "I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink, etc."

26.

LETTERS FROM PRELATES, RECENTLY ENROLLED AMONG THE SALESIAN COPERATORS

A) Cardinal Melchers
(see page 672. In Latin in the original)

B) Cardinal Lodovico Jacobini.

Rome, May 25, 1886

Most Reverend Sir:

I received the diploma of Salesian Cooperator you so kindly sent me, as well as the volume of Bulletins about the history of the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales. I was already informed of the great good work accomplished by this timely foundation of yours on behalf of abandoned boys. It is therefore with greatest pleasure that I accept to be enrolled in this meritorious association which enjoys so many spiritual favors granted by the Head of the Church.

In thanking you for having sent me also the above-mentioned book, I am with sincere esteem,

Most affectionately in Our Lord,
L. Cardinal Jacobini.

C) Cardinal Alphonse Capecelatro

Capua, May 27, 1886

Most Venerated Don Bosco:

I thank you most sincerely for having been so kind as to enroll me among your Salesian Cooperators, as I see from the diploma you sent me. I not only consider this to be an honor but also a genuine spiritual distinction.

I will try to enlist others, and meanwhile, as I thank you for sending me the Bulletin, I beg you remember me in you prayers in which I have faith.

With the sincerest esteem and affection,

Your most devoted and affectionate servant,
Alphonse, Cardinal Archbishop

D) Monsignor Vincent Berchialla

Cagliari, May 25, 1886

Most Reverend Father in Christ:

Although Your Reverence enrolled me already as a Salesian Cooperator in 1878, when I had the pleasure of spending a few hours with you at Lanzo, I am nevertheless grateful for the new favor conferred on me on May 1st, the diploma having been sent to me at Cagliari on the 22nd, together with the bound periodicals containing the History of your meritorious Institute.

What I am able to do on behalf of your venerable Congregation is certainly very little, since I have here a whole host of undertakings to which I must give my support and guidance. I am rather hoping that some day the wishes of my beloved predecessor, Bishop Balma, and my own, which are fervent and steadfast, namely, that a group of well-disciplined Salesians trained in a hardy spirit of mortification and zeal may come here to take charge of our abandoned boys.

Oh, what a disaster! Catechism here is taught, God knows how! There are no Christian schools, neither a school nor an oratory for the boys; we have unbridled gangs of slothful, filthy, ignorant boys neglected even by their parents. If Your Reverence could see these things with your own eyes, you could not but be moved to compassion at the sight of such degradation.

The General of the Scolopians was powerless, despite all his authority, in trying to assemble half a dozen of his scattered religious, who do little or nothing while enjoying a pension, wearing crosses on their chests, having assured for themselves wonderful and rich fortunes, despite their solemn vow of poverty.

I have my missionaries who work extremely hard, but they must bear the responsibility also of 60 Sisters of Charity, with more than half a dozen convents; this does not include the courses in Latin and Moral Theology offered to my older seminarians, together with seminarians of three other dioceses.

So whenever your sons do come here, they will find two immense tasks awaiting them: namely, two thousand boys to educate and turn into good Christian workers, and two hundred boys to be instructed in the high school, and to be helped to become good citizens.

Divine Providence can be found even in the heart of all the misery of this starving island.

I kiss your hand and beg you remember my diocese and me in your prayers.

Your most affectionate and devoted servant,
Vincent Gregory, Archbishop

27.

A DEDICATION TO THE LIFE OF MAMMA MARGARET

On this day on which thy name is honored,
I wished to give thee a token of my love
An 'mid the woods in Flora's garden
I went in search of a bunch of pretty flowers.
I sought a garland of thee worthy and then
I heard a voice: Thou seekest in vain!
Give her not flowers which die as soon as blossomed,
Seek thy flowers in Heaven, and thou wilt find them there.
Then I was led over the stars,
And in a garden fair of divine flowers all adorned,
I chose the most fragrant and most fair.
Behold the flowers which have eternal life,
Whose fragrance constantly about thee lingers!
Such are the virtues of Mamma Margaret!

(Father Lemoyne)

28.

LETTER TO DON BOSCO FROM THE CATHOLIC ASSOCIATION OF BARCELONA

Barcelona, July 14, 1886

Illustrious Don Bosco:

The deep welcoming responses that your venerable person has been able to win over from the Catholic Association during your all too short a stay in Barcelona, have received a new seal of

undying affection as a result of the recent trip of our secretary De Font to the city of Turin, where he attended the wonderful celebrations for the feast of your patron, Saint John the Baptist.

Gratified and intimately touched by the singular demonstrations of consideration and esteem given to this Board in the person of Señor De Font, for we considered it as given to us personally both by yourself and your noble fellow members of the Council, as well as by all the members of your congregation and your dear young charges, we extend our sincerest thanks to you, venerable and beloved Father, and renew the assurance of our loyal fraternity the same one as the Salesian Institute has extended to us.

May Our Lord in His Mercy permit your houses of Christian regeneration to prosper more and more every day, and may the Salesian Workshops multiply in number at the four corners of the earth, giving great joy to God and removing countless miseries.

The Secretary
Joaquin De Font

The Chairman
Barolomé Feliú

29.

LETTER FROM THE BISHOP OF PINEROLO TO DON BOSCO

Pinerolo, July 7, 1886

Most Venerable Don Bosco:

The pastor of Abbadia Duina came to see me and told me that you would be coming to Pinerolo Saturday, the 10th of this month. However, since Father Duina did not tell me at what time you would be arriving, would you please be so kind as to let me know through your secretary, so that I may send a coach in good time to meet you at the station.

I am delighted that at last you have made up your mind to come and breathe in somewhat cooler air, and while waiting to pay my respects to you in person, I am,

Your most respectful and obedient servant,
Philip, Bishop

30.

LETTER TO DON BOSCO FROM THE BISHOP OF PERIGUEUX.

Périgueux, July 8, 1886

Reverend Father:

I am honored to thank you for your generous homage you have wished to do me by sending me a French translation of your book: *The Catholic Living in the World.*

It is an excellent piece of work from every perspective. In it you give a sound exposition of the mission of the Church, seen first in itself and then in its relationship to the other religions, which oppose it. All that you say regarding the origins of Greek schism, the Waldensian and Protestant heresies etc. etc., is drawn from the most reliable sources and is beyond all criticism. Your exposition is very simple, written at times in almost a folksy manner, but even in this you only add strength to the evidence produced and the exactness of doctrine.

My sincerest good wishes for the success of this book, which it rightly deserves, and that it may do much good.

Reverend Father, please accept my most respectful regards in Our Lord,

N. Joseph
Bishop of Périgueux and of Sarlat

31.

LETTER TO DON BOSCO FROM CARDINAL PLACE

Rennes, July 8, 1886

Dear and Venerated Father:

I cannot compare the date at the bottom of this letter which I am now writing to you with that of the letter you were so kind as to write to me, and I would not have delayed answering you so long, had I not been absolutely incapable of doing it sooner, on

account of the overwhelming pressures of all kinds with which I am constantly surrounded.

You already know what my feelings were and still are toward you, venerated Father, and the Salesian family, so you will understand that, among the assurances of solidarity which I to my consolation I have received, your own was particularly welcome to me.

Please accept, dear and venerated Father, my renewed and deeply devout and steadfast devotion in the Lord.

Ch. Ph. Cardinal Place
Archbishop of Rennes

32.

LETTER FROM DON BOSCO TO LEVROT, [THE ARCHITECT]

Turin (—Pinerolo), August 1, 1886

Dear Monsieur Levrot:

I have received your kind letter of July 30th last informing me that Mme. Viscountess de Montbrun has given you one thousand francs for my undertakings. *Deo gratias et Mariae.* Would you kindly thank this gracious lady for me most warmly, the first chance you have, assuring her of my own prayers and the prayers of all my many orphans for her spiritual and temporal welfare, so that the Dear Lord, through the intercession of Our Lady Help of Christians may comfort her and may grant her good health and holiness and a long life for the benefit of our humble houses and her own merit in our Heavenly Home where the late lamented soul of her beloved husband is already enjoying the generous reward of his charity.

I authorize you to hand over the thousand francs to Father Cibrario, whose little house is in need of everything, as in fact all our other houses are, for they abound only in debts and creditors. I pray that the Good God may reward your generosity toward our poor house of Vallecrosia.

May Our Lord shower His greatest blessings on you and all your dear ones, and Our Lady Help of Christians obtain holiness,

good health and much happiness for you all, provided that this is not detrimental to your eternal happiness.

My own health, thanks to be God, has improved a little, though I still have a thousand infirmities. Dear Sir, please accept my respectful and grateful regards and pray for me who will always be in Our Lord,

Your very grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

33.

LETTER TO BISHOP CAGLIERO FROM FATHER BONETTI

May 12, 1886

Dear and Most Reverend Bishop Cagliero:

You must surely want me to give you a little news, with the same pen, which is not too sharp. First of all, you may have seen in our membership directory that this year is going to be the election of a new Mother General, since the six-year term of office, which commenced with the late Sister Maria, is coming to an end. We do not know yet whether the election will take place at Nizza or in Turin, depending on what is more convenient for Don Bosco, but in all probability it will take place during the latter half of August and in Turin. Will the Sister Superiors of South America come over for it? It would be a good thing if South America were to send its representation. Think it over and send at least Mother Provincial and the Superiors from Patagonia. You have some money in hand and who knows if some kind soul might help you out when they hear about it. If they should come, they ought to sail soon, for time is running out.

Healthwise, the sisters continue *de more solito*; we have gone along all the same this year without any trouble in their houses, though we do have a few sisters whose wings are drooping[8], but God also sends us postulants—I might even say, too many pos-

[8] In the original text, the expression used Piedomentese dialect, Fe La Benna, means precisely the way in which a hen droops its wings and clucks when feeling weak. Figuratively speaking, it means "to be indisposed, not well."

tulants, which obliges Sister Enrichetta to send some of them packing quite often, and she weeps because they do. But we act on the principle: *omnia probate, quod bonum est tenete* [test all, keep the good].

Their moral tone is high, and will, I am sure, give glory to God and honor to Mary Help of Christians, though there are also a few who give us quite a lot of headaches. (....) Should you chance to hear that I have sent some of them away, do not think that I am being heavy-handed, but that I act only out of love for the institute. Maybe you yourself were sometimes on the verge of doing the same thing, but refrained from doing it either because there was no need or because you hoped they might improve. Before we undertake any such step we do think things over, consult Don Bosco, and ask the opinion of the Nizza council, etc.

There has been some additional building in Nizza. The wing alongside the church has been enlarged to make room for almost another 100 girl boarders. For these same boarders I held a 3-day retreat, and from now on this will be repeated every year with excellent results. The Mother General left yesterday for Marseilles, taking along Sister Elena Mainard, who together with Sister Passerini, is to keep company with Sister Sampietro, who is to be Superior of a new house of our sisters with a workshop and oratory, in a house bequeathed to us at Guines near Pas de Calais, not far from Lille, by two eighty-year old sisters. Don Bosco and Father Rua hope that this will turn out to be a nursery garden for French sisters. The house is to be inaugurated around the feast of Mary Help of Christians.

We expect Don Bosco back from Spain by way of Modane on Saturday. I will not tell you anything of all the extraordinary things that have happened there, because you will have read about them partly in the newspapers and partly in our circular letters. All I will say is that the next to the last day of his stay, a committee of gentlemen went to see him and made him a gift of a very high mountain at the summit of which, tradition maintains, Satan led the Savior to show Him the kingdoms of the world; that is why it has always been called *Tibi dabo.* In a previous dream, Don Bosco had dreamt about it, and when he received the committee in audience, the words "God told me about it" got out of his mouth. I hope Father Lemoyne will write you all about it in

due time. We are increasingly convinced, every day more and more, that Don Bosco is a Man of God, and that we are truly fortunate to be his sons, especially you who are the most illustrious of us all. May God and Our Lady bless you and prepare a magnificent crown for you in Heaven, after the crown of thorns that you have worn so bravely here on earth. Give my best to your noble Curia, or I had better say your court, especially to your secretary and Father Costamagna, also to the sisters, asking them to pray for me. I am with all esteem and affection,

Your most affectionate friend and confrere,
Rev. John Bonetti.

34.

MEMBERS OF THE FOURTH GENERAL CHAPTER

The closing minutes had the following names signed:

Rev. John Bosco
Rev. Michael Rua (Vicar General)
Rev. Celestine Durando (formerly Prefect General, now elected as General Councillor)
Rev. John Bonetti (elected Spiritual Director General)
Rev. Anthony Sala (Economer General)
Rev. Francis Cerruti (Prefect of Studies General)
Rev. Joseph Lazzero (General Councillor and Director of Artisans at the Oratory)
Rev. Dominic Belmonte (elected General Prefect, formerly Director of Sampierdarena)
Rev. Francis Dalmazzo (Procurator and Director in Rome)
Rev. Paul Albera (Provincial for France and Director of the Marseilles House)
Rev. John Baptist Francesia (Provincial for Piedmont and Director of Students at the Oratory)
Rev. Louis Lasagna (Provincial for Uruguay and Brazil)
Rev. Julius Barberis (San Benigno Canavese)
Rev. Joseph Daghero (Magliano Sabino)
Rev. Joseph Monateri (Varazze)

Rev. Nicholas Cibrario (Vallecrosia)
Rev. Louis Bussi (Nizza Monferrato)
Rev. Caesar Cagliero (Valsalice)
Rev. Peter Guidazio (Lanzo)
Rev. John Branda (Sarriá)
Rev. Joseph Bologna (Lille)
Rev. Charles Farina (Penango)
Rev. John Chiesa (Catania)
Rev. Louis Rocca (Alassio)
Rev. J. Baptist Rinaldi (Faenza)
Rev. John Bensi (Lucca)
Rev. Ernest Oberti (Utrera)
Rev. Angelo Bordone (Randazzo)
Rev. John Tamietti (Este)
Rev. Charles Bellamy (Paris)
Rev. Anthony Varaia (St. Cyr)
Rev. Stephen Febbraro (Florence)
Rev. Louis Cartier (St. Margaret by Marseilles)
Rev. Joseph Bertello (Borgo San Martino)
Rev. Mosè Veronesi (Mogliano Veneto)
Rev. John Baptist Lemoyne (Secretary)
Rev. J. Marenco, Sec. (Director of St. John the Evangelist in Turin).

The signatures are missing for Rev. Ghivarello (Mathi), Rev. Leveratto (La Spezia), Rev. Perrot (La Navarre), Rev. Ronchail (Nice Maritime), and all of the American directors. Writing to Bishop Cagliero on September 3, 1886 from Valsalice, Father Lazzero said: "All the Directors attended the Chapter without exception, except those from South America."

35.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL DATA REGARDING FATHER NESPOLI[9]

Around August 1871, my mother told me of the plans Mrs. Casati had for me, namely, to help me study, and so fulfill her promise to my father.

[9] Father Nespoli was assigned to the formation house for clerics of San Benigno in 1885. He was assigned to teach literature. On leaving Alassio he remained a few days at Sampierdarena where he began to write his autobiographic memoirs, which were never completed.

I can still recall the happy, peaceful face of my mother as she gave me the news. That day I had accompanied her to a stream of water about a mile away from the village; she wanted to wash the linens. When we were half way, we came to a spot where the road branched out in three directions, marked by a three-faced pillar (always called the Pilastrello). The three faces bore respectively the image of Our Lord on the Cross, that of Our Lady, and the picture of St. Cajetan. At this spot, my mother bade me stop in front of the picture of Our Lady, and as she sat on the low parapet running alongside the road, she suggested that I go to Turin, to the oratory of a priest named Don Bosco, who was known to Mrs. Casati when she had gone to Turin for the feast of Mary Help of Christians. She said Don Bosco helped a number of boys to study, especially if they were to enter the priesthood.

I was eager to study, but had never thought of becoming a priest. Not that I felt any aversion for it, but in my mind I had always believed that only if you were rich could you become a priest, for more or less all the priests I had ever known were wealthy themselves or were from rich families. So I had never dared to aspire so high in my thoughts, and if at times I ever did conceive such an idea, I put it sadly out of my mind saying, "You can never attain it, so put your mind at ease." I would then shake my head and would laugh at myself, turning to other thoughts.

You can only imagine what and how many ideas came into my mind at my mother's suggestion. That opened up a whole new world for me. Practically stunned and surprised, I no longer know what answer I gave her. But my mother understood that I had no objections and told Mrs. Casati so, thanking her for me with that inarticulate way of an affectionate mother who is only a poor woman of the people unable to express herself, but even without words she was able to convey her feelings.

I did not feel gratitude until later, all rapt as I was in the contemplation of the idea, nor did I even know what to say. When my mother introduced me to the lady, she said: "Here is the student," with a tone of complacent laughter. I stood there embarrassed, almost overwhelmed. But the lady understood everything and was pleased.

During the two months that I still remained at home, she sent me to study under a kind local priest, a certain Father Grasselli, who at that time was attending the faculty of Letters at the University of Turin. Never will I forget these classes which only lasted for a short time. I was amazed by the great charity and goodness of the priest, for that was my very first contact with a priest.

I must admit that, in those days, the priests were something like aristocrats; and they kept poor folk at a respectable distance from them. But honest people respected them, indeed venerated them, and so did I, though I had no love for them. I respected them, but my heart was far from them, just as they were far from me.

Therefore the sight of a priest, of a young priest who, without any haughtiness at all, treated me familiarly, as one man to another, almost like one poor man to another poor man so to speak, astonished me greatly, and made me understand that priests were not all alike, as I had believed they were, but that one had unfortunately to make distinction between one priest and the other.

The pastor was harsh with us poor boys, and I looked on him more as a prison warden than as a father. He had the same effect on me as the police had, whenever he went by. He behaved the same way both in Church and even in the confessional. I recall that, at Confirmation time, I had gone to my uncle's house,[10] and when I went to make my confession, while all the others had already finished, he received me with so severe a countenance that I felt my blood run cold. " Did you have to wait to make your confession until now?" were the first words he said, closing or better slamming the door of the confessional. I have not forgotten it. I do not feel any hatred, not really, but I recall the horrible effect the words had on me, and do not forget it.

Therefore, this young priest was a true grace from Our Lord for me, for first of all I saw in him one of the multifaceted aspects of priestly charity, of which I was soon to see a complete and loving example in Don Bosco.

Don Bosco's name was not new to me. I had already read it some years previously in the *Catholic Readings*, of which he was editor. Mrs. Casati gave this magazine to us to read, knowing how eager we were to read it. How happy my brother Riccardo and I were when she made us a present of Don Bosco's *Ecclesiastical History*! How delightedly we read it! I therefore loved this man even before I met him. And when I did see him and made his acquaintance, and he placed his hand, smiling, on my head, I felt that I was looking at Our Lord standing among the children, blessing them. He reminded me of my father and I began to feel the same love for him that I had felt for my father, only with a greater reverence and trust. This was the first time that I saw a priest in the midst of children, happy to be with them, behaving kindly toward them all without making

[10] After his father died, he had gone to stay for a while with his mother's relatives at Crerunago.

any exceptions. Then my heart went out to him, and I understood what a true priest was really like.

I entered Don Bosco's Oratory on October 15, 1871. My mother and Mrs. Casati came with me: I was greeted by Father Albera,[11] who asked me if I meant to be a good boy. How could I answer anything but yes?

I was unhappy for the first few days, especially because all the others talked a good deal in Piedmontese dialect and since I did not understand it, I was mocked, and badly treated.[12] I felt myself isolated in the midst of all those many people to whom I was a stranger, and I started thinking of my brothers and my mother. But this did not last long. I saw Don Bosco, met other priests of his who were all kindness and charity. Then I too liked the Oratory. But the Piedmontese roughness of some of my companions which had made me very unhappy in the beginning, made such a lasting impression on me that whether I will or not, it keeps coming back to me now and then.

I was one of the last in my class, the first high school grade. I did not give way to despair, however, and felt challenged instead. During my first few months I could not absorb anything, being quite bewildered by this new way of life. But as soon as I got my bearings, and began to know my way around, I began to make a little progress and pushed forward, so that by the end of the first year, though I was not one of the best pupils in the class, I was not far behind them.

The teacher of the first high school grade, Father Bruna, was one of the many teachers I had at the Oratory, and I still remember him with great pleasure and contentment. I was always deeply impressed by his habitual gravity, the scrupulous way he occupied even the stray free moments he might have had to himself. I remember little of him as a teacher, but as a man I recall vividly his constancy and gravity. At first I was afraid of him and ran away whenever I saw him approaching, but once I met him face to face in the middle of a narrow passageway. "You will not run away from me this time," he said with a laugh, and asked whether I had already made my First Communion. I said no, for at home in the village it had been a rule with the pastor not to allow anyone to receive communion until they turned 12 years old. Neither the boys, our parents, nor we liked this rule. I was surprised when I saw people receive Communion so frequently at the Oratory, but I liked it; in this too, I could

[11] He was then Prefect for the day boys.

[12] He was born at Arosio in Brianza.

detect Don Bosco's own great, generous heart and I grew even fonder of him and of the Oratory.

I lived at the Oratory for nine years,[13] this time being interrupted only by the month of vacation I spent at home during the first five years. I went through all the high school grades, since Father Durando[14] had always forbidden me to 'jump' a class as the term goes; it upset me a little at the time, but I no longer feel that way about it now.

I never lost my eagerness to learn, to study all through those five years of high school; in fact, it only grew stronger. Did I improve? Here I have to call a halt and explain what I mean at somewhat greater length.

I came to the Oratory with sound moral intentions, and during the first, second and third year of high school, if they did not improve, they did not get worse either. But during the fourth year, when I was fifteen (1874-1875), I became aware of new sentiments stirring within me. At first I obeyed almost spontaneously, received the Sacraments without having to make an effort, even taking pleasure in it, and nothing deterred me from my prayers; I felt peaceful and I was at peace with everybody. But that year, obedience began to irk me. Instead of the love I had felt before for my superiors and teachers, I now felt coldness, indifference, with the exception of Don Bosco and Father Rua, in whose presence any sentiment that was not completely correct was at once stilled. They were too great, their holiness so evident, that they instinctively commanded respect even in the innermost hearts of the most undisciplined boys.

I stopped going so often to the Sacraments, although I never neglected them for longer than two weeks, but I found it increasingly difficult to prepare myself to receive them worthily. I found it difficult to pray. Besides, I no longer felt that former, profound peace of mind but instead, I was troubled, tormented by an undefined feeling of dissatisfaction and ill-will.

I also began to think about my future that year. During the first year in high school it had all seemed quite clear: to become a priest seemed to me the most natural and lovely thing in the world. But I did not feel that way four years later. I no longer had the ingenuity and frankness, which had been mine when I first came to the school.

The thought of becoming a priest grew unclear and more unlikely in my mind, and found but little acceptance in my heart. I was not afraid of the priesthood in itself, but of the obligations it entailed, against which my

[13] At that time the clerics attended novitiate there, and pursued their studies at the Oratory.

[14] Director of the school, or School Prefect as it was then called.

pride, which then began to make its presence felt, rose in revolt. I had until then the habit of baring my soul in confession to Father Rua, and he now advised me to confide my secrets to Don Bosco, so I obeyed; but this did not prevent the fog in my heart from growing thicker.

I became aware of new, hitherto unknown desires—of greater freedom, dreams of an easier life, desires of fame, of honors, of glory. At times I realized the vanity of it all, yet that did not stop these dreams from exciting my imagination. I remembered my mother, the hard work my older brother did, how sick the second one was; I thought of my two older sisters who already went out to earn their living, although they were still very young; I thought of my father. I admit that when I thought of these holy memories, the bubble of my pride was somewhat deflated, and I realized what my situation really was; but this did not last long, for soon the dreams returned, my imagination soared, and my inner struggle began again, more violently then before.

How did this all come about? This was something which, although I never asked myself explicitly why, did come into my mind now and again, almost like a reproof, for immediately my conscience answered that I was not religious, that I was not pious, nor Christian. Then how had my Christian sentiments faded, how were they now about to die out altogether? This was a most intricate and basic question and I will answer it as honestly as I know how, for I have given much thought to it.

One man may sum up the life of a poor student in two words: study and piety. He studies because he is a man obliged to work at his profession; piety, because he is a Christian. Study and piety are not two rivals, however, which battle one against the other for the exclusive dominion over a student's heart; instead, they are merely two good friends, and they are so necessary that if the one takes its leave, so will the other, or else it dies, or seems to have died, being useless, in fact, harmful.

Study without piety is a work without purpose, a work that is lost; it is, if I may say so, not study at all; for Man is inseparable from the Christian, and if the Christian is forgotten, then the Man is harmed and so is his work, inasmuch as it is the work of Man. Piety without study in a student is like faith without works, dead faith, for it has only the appearance of being alive and is a hypocritical faith.

One naturally presumes that a Christian school under the direction of priests is a place where piety and study can live amicably side by side, and in founding the Oratory, this was certainly Don Bosco's objective, just as it was his objective later when he founded the Salesian Congregation,

which was to perpetuate and develop the Oratory, to expand it in space and in time. But in Don Bosco's outlook the classroom and the church were two concepts, which completed each other. The school was to help the church; the professor had to help the priest, the confessor. In this way the classroom becomes the entrance to the temple, just as in the Middle Ages the first schools under the direction of Bishops were set up in the entrance halls of churches.

Thus can it certainly be said that the classroom is, after the church, the holiest spot, and it truly is. When I think about it, I feel that between the classroom and the church there exists the same relationship as between reason and faith, science and dogma; that the one is the basis of the other, that this is the summit of that. They are not opposed to each other, but are created for each other's completion. The classroom is the place where reason prevails, yet it is enlightened by the splendor of faith; it is in the church that faith reigns supreme, though reason waits on it. The classroom must lead to the church, as reason to faith, as Paganism to Christianity, as the classic world to the Gospel. If it does not, then it has betrayed its mission; if it grows detached from it or worse still, if it opposes the church as rival and enemy, it will destroy it, not edify it. It is then that a youth will feel himself split asunder in his heart, the thinker being separated from the believer, the creature from its Maker, Adam from Christ. Then does a battle ensue in the heart of a boy, as between two hostile powers, the school and the church, piety and study?

To my shame I must confess that I always experienced this struggle at the Oratory, though it became desperate during the last years of high school and even fatal to me, for unhappily it was always piety which lost out, and piety yielded its ground little by little, until it was almost entirely extinguished in me. I no longer prayed in church, I no longer understood church ceremonials or rituals, and knew very little about religion. I did know a bit of that catechism which was taught in class once a week; but that was not enough. That amount of knowledge was not enough for a young man at the threshold of the world of passions and living in an age of skepticism and incredulity, for a young man who felt doubts taking shape within him, without knowing where they came from and who practically inhaled them from the air around him.

The divine harmony of our religion was broken up by the way the catechism was being taught: dogma, moral teaching and cult were separated from one another and study had become abstract, divided, mutilated, without any benefit or beauty, and catechism had become the most neg-

lected book, while the catechism class turned out to be the hour most disliked and most lacking in enthusiasm, even for good boys.

Here I have to say that the catechetical instruction was entrusted just to anybody, [no tuchúnt] (see original text), as a Greek would say. As one sees, this too indicated a break between learning and faith: the person teaching the former was in no way linked with the teacher of the latter.

True enough, we were told that catechism was all-important; but that was mere words. It was said, I recall, once or twice a year, when announcing the forthcoming examinations in catechism, which are usually held before the other examinations in Don Bosco's schools.

So just when I was in greater need of it, I found that I did not have a solid doctrine, or solid knowledge of religion. I did not know anything about it and disliked it, and felt that it was a matter of but little account. Theology, books of devotional practices, the lives of saints—these were all things that evoked a feeling half irritable, half indifferent in me. Who were these saints? Men not really important. The truly great men, the heroes were Cicero, Scipio the African, and Hannibal, they were my ideals. My thoughts turned always to them, they excited my imagination, even filling my heart in church, during the Mass, at benediction when Our Lord was exposed in a blaze of light on the altar; while in my own heart everything was darkness and ice.

Toward the end of the fifth high school year I even forgot part of my Sunday prayers, and I mumbled the remainder of them badly. It was the same way with the *Ave Maria.* I recall that I attributed this forgetfulness of holy things to the unsuccessful results of the examinations; I recall that when I was taking the Italian exam and I was giving the wrong answers, to the point that the examiner became angry, I heard an inner voice say: "Look, that is the *Pater Noster* that you have forgotten!"

How could I not forget it? All seven of those holy requests were nothing but sound in my ears, of which I could not understand the meaning. The same can be said of the psalms and hymns of the Church; I did not understand and I did not make any effort to understand them; I did not like them. It was only when I became a cleric that I undertook the great effort of looking up the meaning of the word *cernui* in the dictionary, though I had sung it in church every day, without ever troubling to know what it meant throughout five years of high school.

Nor is this all: some Latin words aroused my actual distaste and I was sure they were not classic, only because I found them in the psalms and hymns in *A Companion to Youth - Giovane Provveduto.* Sometimes I

heard people talk about the writings of the saints and doctors of the church, the Holy Fathers, especially St. Augustine and St. Jerome. I had never read them, nor had anyone ever mentioned them to me in class, yet I said to myself: "How can they write better than Cicero or Sallust?"

This makes me realize that, after all, I even thought that study itself was nothing so very great; it was only worthy of the piety I had then; poor study - poor piety. Could anyone imagine a more uninspired, sterile study then that which reduces literature to just so many words, phrases and mere form? Yet, for five years all I did was delve into words and phrases. During my first year in high school I extracted all elegant forms of speech possible from an Italian dictionary, a task into which I put so much concentration that on Thursdays I let the boys go for a walk and I remained three and four hours consecutively alone in class to thumb through the dictionary. Luckily, when I went home on vacation, all my pages of phrases went up in flames and smoke, since one of my sisters had mistaken them for waste paper, which indeed they were.

In the second year of high school I read the complete works of Father Bresciani, and may the Lord forgive him for having so much precious time wasted by so many poor boys. I realized at the end of the year that that reading had betrayed me. It was somewhat late perhaps, but at least I did resolve to declare war on such books should I ever find them in the hands of my schoolmates, and this I did. I applauded when Don Bosco, around this same time, prohibited the sale or even the presence of such books on the premises of his bookstore.

Yet, without guidance as I was, I again fell victim to similar books. I still recall the boredom, the irritation experienced when I read Guidi, Chiabrera, Filicaia and Menzini; yet I read them because they were classics, so I was told, and I swallowed their bitter medicine, bowing my head in resignation and saying: "They are boring, but they are classics, they were printed in the *Classic Library Series*." In the fifth high school grade they told me that I was proud, that I wanted to think with my own head and did not heed the advice of my professors with due respect! And to think of the fact that I had made an effort to relinquish my own desires and spent the better part of my youth in doing what I was told! And to think of the fact that I, in the fifth high school grade, sat up nights to copy the more polished passages of Corticelli and Cinonio into my note books! It was summer time, either June or July, and the room was full of a heavy, noxious odor which almost took one's breath away; my companions, wiser than I, snored happily while I, in a corner behind an impromptu curtain made out of a blanket, wrote sentences tormented (I confess it) by

the fleas that continually jumped over my notebooks and overwhelmed by sleepiness. I went to bed at one o'clock in the morning and at four-thirty I was already up and around to continue my unbearable task.

This is how poor boys forfeit their time and their health and worse still, they come to believe that they amount to something on account of this burdensome effort! Then people shout that they are disobedient, if any boy with a touch of independence, rebels at such nonsense! In my innermost heart I too, rebelled against such mechanical methods, and often was unable to conceal my dislike of them which became evident in my cold and often haughty bearing while the professor was reviewing the phrases and synonyms, and explaining the works of an author, or rather while he was availing himself of an author as a pretext for exhibiting his own linguistic subtleties. I rebelled and sometimes spoke about it to my schoolmates, when I could no longer contain my anger; and yet I did what they told me, because I was scolded if I did not, and, whether I liked it or not, that was the only way to pass my examinations and become somebody.

Thus the burden of working, and working against my will, was added to the doubts that tormented me, and to the restlessness and dissatisfaction over the piety that had vanished and my worries about my vocation. I felt that what I was doing was all in vain, and over and above this; I was accused of being insolent. In short, I was so unhappy and irritable during those last few months in the fifth grade of high school that I began to hate the Oratory and draw comfort from the thought that I would soon be leaving it.

I regretted only that I would be leaving two people—Don Bosco and Father Rua—and that blessed church of Mary Help of Christians where I had gone so many times to Communion and where these two holy priests had so often brought comfort to my exacerbated and afflicted heart. Don Bosco and Father Rua were two angels of salvation to me in the fifth high school grade, for from time to time, they re-awakened in my conscience the sentiments I had had during the early years at the Oratory and this helped to counteract the unhappy influence of the school.

Don Bosco and the school - these were the two powers which fought to prevail within me, with alternating success, the latter nearly always gaining the upper hand, though it was never entirely successful in crushing its adversary.

When I was at home during vacation time, my family wanted me to enter the seminary, and was astonished to find me so reluctant. The fact is that I was never fond of it. I did not like it at all. Not because I did not want to enter the priesthood but because I did not want to be a priest like

the priests I had known when I was a child. I wanted to be like Don Bosco's priests instead. Either a Don Bosco's priest or a layman, I said to myself, for I had not yet made up my mind, despite all that Don Bosco had told me, that it was necessary to try it out.

I did try. I returned to the Oratory with a feeling of indifference and went to Lanzo for two days of retreat, but I did it reluctantly, in the worst possible frame of mind. When they asked me if I wished to enter the Congregation as a novice, I said neither yes nor no; but I became a novice and everyone believed that I would don the clerical habit *lubenti animo* when the time came. But I had very different ideas. It was just at this time that I bought Plutarch's *Lives,* of which I was so fond that I even read it during meditation. In my perusal of his *Lives* I reached the climax of my religious apathy and, absorbed as I was in the deeds of pagans, I only felt contempt for all practices of piety, spiritual reading, meditations and prayers; all of which seemed flabby, even stupid, to my eyes.

Yet it was at this time that I donned the cassock. The cassock was a reproach to me and feeling confused and mortified, albeit only to a minor degree, I resolved that I would respect it so that if one day I was obliged to take it off again, because I felt it impossible to continue living the life of the sanctuary, I would have been able to do so with my honor. It was in such a frame of mind that I entered my novitiate.

But in my case the novitiate was not a preparation for the life and virtues of a religious. How could it be, since I was at the time a Christian solely because I had been baptized as one? It was instead a catechumenate, a return to Christianity, to the origins, the primitive Christian virtues. It was then for the first time that I became aware of the spirit of Christianity, which is the spirit of self-denial, mortification, sacrifice and of battle against the old man. Such words as these which I heard continually during the talks, readings and meditations, got on my nerves, especially in the beginning, and I only succeeded in submitting myself to them by a great effort and by doing violence to my will, while my heart found a thousand objections and exceptions those rigid and precise commandments of the Gospel.

But I then began to read the Gospel, and I also read Calmet,[15] though my preference that year was still toward the profane authors. I would not think of any renunciation on this matter. I wanted to read and I did read Homer, Horace and Virgil. In his infinite patience, Father Barberis toler-

[15]Learned French Benedictine; here perhaps allusion is made to his *History of the Old and New Testaments.*

ated it, *pro bono pacis*; but I was a little dismayed by his silent resignation. I felt the baseness of willfully displeasing a person who was so patient. I began to wonder if it would not be better for me to spend my time reading other books. In short, a little at a time and almost unawares, I began to lose my feverish enthusiasm for pagan literature and, since I was anxious to get rid of my doubts about faith, religion and moral problems which had tormented me already from the previous year, I began reading polemical treaties on dogma, religion, the origins of Man, the temporal power of the Pope and a thousand other similar issues, which were swarming my mind.

I had no preconceived ideas when I began to read such books. All I wanted was to get out of those encircling walls of doubt, which gave me no peace. So my frame of mind was sincere and anxious to discover the truth. For I felt an immense need, as I had already felt during the previous two years, of a sound and firmly rooted doctrine about religion. I did not attain it that year nor the following year, but I did at least begin to concentrate my aspirations in that direction.

However, the practices of piety which I slowly began to love again, were in themselves not good enough for my taste; I wanted them to have a doctrinal basis, an unshakable foundation and not the mobile, momentary basis of the initial enthusiasm which was only the impulse of a youthful, inconstant mind. For I saw that many of my companions, who looked like and were so many St. Aloysius in their fervor, lacked a profound knowledge both in dogma and in Christian background, so that they would fail at the first attacks, the first temptation, the first trial. Theirs were fine structures, but only built on sand.

To me it was not enough to attend Mass, go to Communion. I wanted to know what the Mass was, its essence, what the ceremonies and rituals meant. I was anxious to know all the issues connected with the real presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist. I wanted to learn about the divine institution and constitutive characteristics of Confession. I wanted to know all the whys and wherefores, and would not rest until I had found an answer.

The year of novitiate went by amid such studies, desires and aspirations, and at the end of it, though I may not have been a novice, I was at least a little more Christian than I had been. That was the time for me to be a novice; but during the retreat at Lanzo in 1877, Father Barberis asked me if I wanted to take my vows and I said I would take them for three years, for this would bind me only for that period of time and I would

retain my freedom to change my mind at the end of it. For then I did not have the courage and strength to remain with Don Bosco forever, nor was I then convinced or steadfast about my vocation for the priesthood. So I said to myself: "Meanwhile I will study and then see how I feel."

The progress, which had successfully begun during my novitiate, underwent a period of standstill at first during the three-year period, which extended from 1877 to 1880, and toward the end of the period I slipped backward to a great extent. I believe that this was due to the little attention I gave to the study of religion and ascetics. I read but little or hardly anything at all of books of devotion and when I did, it was carelessly and superficially. I had no knowledge of the Bible, of the lives of the Saints or of Ecclesiastical History. I had no Christian principles to guide my profane studies of philosophy (if indeed it can be called philosophy), of mathematics and literature. If only my profane studies had been deeper, at least, but they were not even that: everything was superficial, a mere skimming, nothing in depth. Is it any wonder that one remains at a standstill or deteriorates when he follows such a standard of life and studies in such a manner?

In August 1878 I took the comprehensive examinations at Mondovì for the diploma as regular teacher for higher studies, and I passed. The following year, in 1879, in Genoa, I took the comprehensive exams for the diploma as a college teacher. I had prepared for them together with Brother Gresino and Brother Galavotti, without any encouragement from our superiors, and we were given no help save by Father Gallo Besso, who very kindly taught us mathematics. But for all the rest we were left to ourselves, and over and above this we had to teach class and assist in the dining room and the dormitory. Yet we were not discouraged by such apathy but we encouraged one another in our studies, until Our Lord allowed us to meet Father Cerruti from Alassio.

This holy priest, who had inherited much of Don Bosco's own energetic, constant and indefatigable spirit of industriousness, came to the Oratory in May 1879. We introduced ourselves and we told him that we wanted to take the comprehensive examinations for a college degree, and also of the difficulties we had with some of the superiors of the Oratory. He encouraged us to be of good cheer and to study, saying that he would speak to Don Bosco and that in due time, he would send for us to go to Alassio, from whence we could report to Genoa as pupils from that classic school.

This is what happened. After a hard struggle, we did at least obtain Don Bosco's permission and his permission alone, for all the other supe-

riors were against it, with the sole exception, perhaps, of Father Rua, that we go to Alassio at the beginning of June. It was at Alassio that for the first time we heard about devotion to the Sacred Heart, and witnessed the solemn festivities celebrated that same year.[16]

36.

HOW TO ASSURE EXEMPTION FROM THE OBLIGATION OF MILITARY SERVICE

1. A member of the Superior Council is in charge of all matters relating to the military service of our members, both ecclesiastics and laymen. Whenever necessary, all such matters will be referred to him.
2. In November the Directors will send him a detailed list of all members of the Congregation subject to military service obligations during the following year, on a special form provided for this purpose; they shall also list such members as must report during the year after having been declared temporarily unfit.
3. The Superior in charge of these matters must have the fullest knowledge of all laws and regulations regarding military drafting both in Italy and abroad, so that he can assuredly claim all the rights to which the said members of the Congregation are entitled under the law.
4. To this end it is suggested:
   a) That the Superior in charge gather detailed information about the physical and personal condition of the members concerned;
   b) That he ascertains what the family situation of said members is, so as to find out if there is any legal right herewith connected, since there are often sub-clauses to laws, which are, but little known and which may be very advantageous.
5. In cases where a member has absolutely no right to claim exemption, every endeavor must be made to obtain transfer for them from one category to another, or else to defer the term of military service until the 26th year.

[16] The manuscript ends here.

To this end it is advisable:

a) That as many students as possible prepare for exams, to get a college degree, so that they may later be registered as students in some university.

b) Others may enlist as volunteers for a period of one year; but this only after carefully pondered reflections.

6. If possible, seek to obtain exemption by means of legal naturalization in one of the countries where we have houses.
7. In the draft calls of 3rd Category, it is customary to offer facilitations on behalf of the enlisted personnel; for example, ministers of the cult in care of souls are exempt from military service when they produce the relative certificate issued by the mayor of his place of birth or place of residence. Likewise, anyone residing abroad when they produce confirmation from the Royal Consul in the place of residence. It is therefore necessary that the Superior in charge of such matters acquaint himself with the calls to arms or public banns regarding military service.
8. If, when all legal means have been used and the Salesian must still report for military service, one must seek to obtain that they be assigned to some town where there is a Salesian house; or else provide him with some good recommendations and acquaintances.
9. Every care must be taken so that the Salesian concerned correspond regularly with the Major Superiors and the Director of the house from which he has left and that if necessary, even material assistance be given him, with the greatest possible discretion.

37.

REGARDING SACRED ORDERS

Norms for the Spiritual Director of the Congregation

One of the most important tasks of any Religious Congregation is to make fitting arrangements for the taking of Holy Orders by its clerics. Nothing is too much in order that this be done properly, and therefore the following norms are laid out:

1. The Catechist of the Congregation shall make arrangements for the taking of Holy Orders by the clerics, once he has received the required information from the Provincials.

2. The authorization to be admitted to the sub-diaconate is a prerogative of the Superior Council. Special faculties shall be granted to Provincials for the missions, or whenever circumstances may call for them.
3. The Catechist shall keep a record of all clerics in the Congregation, listing them by age group and the theological course they are attending. He shall also keep records of all examinations in theology and shall not promote to Holy Orders anyone showing manifest negligence in study, or who shall not have obtained adequate marks at least six-tenths in each theology track.
4. The Catechist shall make application for dispensations on the grounds of age, and shall endeavor to remove any other impediment that may exist.
5. At the end of every quarter, the Spiritual Director will request the list of candidates for the next ordinations when he sends the prescribed circular letter to the Provincials. In their turn, the Provincials will address the same application to all Directors in the circular letter of the following month. At the monthly manifestation, the Directors shall question the candidates for Holy Orders at least three months prior to the date of ordination, in order to ascertain if they are sufficiently prepared to receive such Orders and give them the necessary assistance they may require.
6. Should he find the candidate sufficiently prepared, the Director shall propose his admission to his house council, forwarding the vote-results to the Provincial. According to the prescribed rules for the rendering of quarterly accounts, the Provincial shall forward a list of the proposed candidates to the Catechist, so that in good time he may receive the required dimissory letters.
7. Once a cleric has been approved, the Spiritual Director shall obtain the signature of the Rector Major for the dimissory letters and shall send the same to the Provincial at least one month ahead of ordination, so that the prescribed steps may be taken at the respective episcopal Curia, and arrangements made for the retreat of the candidates.
8. The local Director shall forward promptly to the Provincial and the Provincial to the Catechist, the special form whereon date and order received are specified, together with the name of the ordaining Bishop.
9. He shall also promptly collect from the local Curia the respective cer-

tificates of ordinations received. In Italy, such certificates are to be forwarded directly to the Cathechist of the congregation, but abroad they shall be sent to the respective Provincial, who shall file them.

10. Before proposing or admitting anyone to the order of sub-diaconate, the Catechist shall consult the records of the quarterly reports rendered by and received from the Provincials. If necessary, he shall get a detailed report from the individual directors of the houses where any given candidate may have lived as a cleric. No one may be admitted to Holy Orders unless in keeping with the sacred canons, *Vitae sanctitas longo tempore probata sit*, [their sanctity of life has been proven for a long time] and his spiritual director has pronounced a favorable opinion.
11. Clerics may be admitted: to the tonsure and other minor orders after completing their second year of theology; to the order of sub-deacon after the third year, as well as to that of deacon; but he may not be admitted to the priesthood until the end of the fourth year. If necessary, any exception may be made by the Rector Major or by any Provincial to whom such faculty shall have been granted. As a general rule, no one shall be admitted to the priesthood who still has to undergo examinations in a number of tracks exceeding that prescribed for that year's course, and in which they cannot undergo examination during the course of that same year.
12. Before commencing the retreat prior to receiving Holy Orders, the candidate shall be examined in connection with the order he is about to receive and the ceremonies he is to observe.
13. The fall vacation period is preferred for the admission to the order of sub-deacon, since this affords more time and convenience in which to prepare for the recitation of the Breviary, to attend the retreat regularly, to consult the major Superiors of the Society, (if this should be necessary), and also to permit said Superiors to meet in Council to examine and decide on the admission of the cleric to the first of the major Orders, after due reflection.
14. In compliance with the sacred canons, a complete spiritual retreat is to be attended, and to this end Directors are earnestly requested to grant sufficient time hereto to the candidates for Holy Orders. If possible, such retreat should take place either in the Provincial Residence or the novitiate.
15. So that the fruits of Holy Orders may be more easily kept, no newly ordained priest shall be allowed, during the first week following

his ordination, to celebrate Mass away from our houses. Only the Rector Major and, in countries abroad, the Provincials may under certain serious circumstances, make exceptions to this rule.

38.

REGULATIONS FOR PARISHES

1. In view of the purpose of the Salesian Congregation expressed in Chapter I of our Constitutions, it would seem that, as a general principle, we should not easily agree to assume the responsibility of running parishes when such are offered to us by Bishops.
2. In the event that such an offer be made directly by the Pope himself, or should the greater Glory of God and the welfare of souls, or considerations of the advisability, persuade the Superior Council to agree to found or administer some parishes, especially in foreign missions, said parishes are to be entrusted to a member of the congregation who either because of his learning and piety, or of his age and prudence, possesses the requisite qualifications for so arduous a task.
3. Arrangements shall be made immediately for a religious community to be established of no less than six members, over whom the pastor might be the superior.
4. In the event that there be a school or hospice next to the parish, both parish and school shall be administered separately, and shall have separate premises and staff.
5. In this eventuality, there are two possibilities: one, that the pastor be the superior of this Salesian community; the other, that the Superior be the Director of the house.
6. In the first eventuality, the pastor shall appoint a director for the school adjacent to the parish, to which he shall grant full freedom of action in the performance of his duties.
7. In the second eventuality, the Director shall share the responsibilities of the parish with the pastor, and will assist him according to the requirements of his own office.
8. In both instances, it is earnestly enjoined on both the pastor and the Director that they work always in good accord in solving problems, without offending either fraternal charity or the good example, which they must give to their confreres and to the faithful of the parish.

9. Furthermore, the hospice or school connected with the parish must have a chapel exclusively reserved for the practices of piety of the boys educated there.
10. Secular priests or laymen extraneous to the Congregation shall not be accepted to live with the community, since this is detrimental to the observance of the rules.
11. The pastor appointed should be *ad nutum Superioris*, in compliance with the Constitution *Firmandis* of Benedict XIV, November 5, 1744, and his appointment shall be according to the custom prevailing in Rome in regard to regulars, *ad annum*, with the possibility of reconfirmation in office in agreement with the local Ordinary. In those countries such as America, however, where the title of pastor is assumed by the Superior of the Congregation also for several different parishes, with the faculty of sending qualified subordinates to represent him in them, this last condition will not be necessary, since the local Provincial is free to change his representatives, whenever he deems this to be necessary for the greater Glory of God and the better advantage of the Congregation. But it must be noted that in such cases, it is better to inform the Ordinary of such changes and whenever possible, to make said changes only in agreement with the aforesaid Ordinary.
12. These brief regulations are set forth, without contemplating the problematic issue, which is difficult to solve, of the *Placet* or approval by the government which, once an appointment has been made, would not so easily look favorably at frequent changes of Pastors.
13. No parish shall be accepted where we have to depend on the board of trustees.
14. As to community life, contacts with the world outside and with the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, one shall abide by whatever rules prudence and the circumstances may dictate. Here below are listed the principal norms to be followed as suggested by the spirit of our rules:

#1. COMMUNITY LIFE

1. It will certainly be more difficult to observe our rules scrupulously when living in a parish rectory. But both the pastor and his assistants must, as a general principle, live a community life in regard to practices

of piety, their meals, clothing and hours of rest. The pastor shall take pains to schedule the time, which is convenient for daily meditation and spiritual reading and shall endeavor to attend it regularly with his assistants. If possible, this shall be done in church, so that the parishioners may be edified thereby.

2. Let the times be established for lunch and supper, and whenever possible, the pastor shall endeavor to be present with his confreres, unless the exercise of his ministry shall summon him elsewhere. In any case, however, the pastor shall be sure that no exceptions be made or particularities permitted.

3. It will be advisable that on the principal feast days throughout the year, some pastors from adjoining parishes or secular priests active in the parish and who usually help out during religious services, be invited to dinner.

4. There shall be scheduled hours for going to bed and getting up. If anyone is obliged to be up part of the night or all night with the sick, they may, if the Superior so orders, makes up for their lost sleep during the day.

5. The residence of the pastor shall be separate from the rest of the house, even though there may be a hospice or school attached to the parish, and it must have two separate entrances, one for strangers, the other for people of the house.

6. The pastor should make sure that his residence is furnished with due simplicity in keeping with the spirit of poverty of which he has made a profession.

7. Yet, besides the rooms where the parish archives are kept and a parlor where various meetings may take place, the pastor may also have a modestly furnished room where he may receive distinguished callers or some prelates.

#2. CONTACTS WITH OUTSIDERS

Being, so to speak, a shepherd in the midst of his flock, a father among his children, the pastor should perforce live in constant contact with the people entrusted to his care by Divine Providence, since circumstances and charity will so demand. It will therefore be advisable that, over and above the norms imparted to pastors by moral theologians and spiritual directors, in order that they become *forma gregis,* certain rules for us religious also be observed here, so that the spirit which should encompass all that we say and do may not disappear.

Ecclesiastical Authorities

1. In reference to the ecclesiastical authorities, the pastor should show deference in every possible way to the Bishop of the diocese, doing his very best to carry out all the decrees and instructions, which may be addressed to him.
2. In difficult situations he should turn to his Bishop for advice and assistance. Such trust will secure the benevolence of his superiors and he will thereby maintain good harmony with them. On solemn feasts, he should solicitously invite the local Ordinary to Church functions, or in agreement with him, invite some other distinguished prelate or ecclesiastic, also informing the Superior of the Congregation, if necessary.
3. He should make it a point to never criticize local customs, the dispositions issued by his ecclesiastic superiors, or the actions of other pastors, especially those whose parishes adjoin his own. Instead, he should try to maintain a friendly relationship with them, sometimes inviting them to come and sing a Mass, to preach or impart benediction. Prudence in this matter can never be recommended enough.

Civil Authorities

In the big cities, the pastor will rarely need to contact civil authorities. But he should, in each and every instance, behave respectfully toward them. If he is asked to give his attention to parochial committees on the occasion of administrative elections, he must behave with the utmost prudence, in agreement with the ecclesiastical authorities, and act on the advice given him by his Superiors. He should refrain from passing any judgment in public regarding any individual, or from displaying any partisan spirit. But in villages or small towns, where we may be called upon to administer a parish, it is advisable that the pastor endeavor to establish friendly relations with the mayor and other authorities, being mindful of the advice given by the Holy Spirit: "Strive to be friendly with the powerful, lest they should harm you".

Contact with the People

The spirit of our Saintly Patron was that of being all things to all men, *omnibus omnia factus*: and this same spirit, if it is to be the soul of

all Salesians, must most particularly be the soul of anyone called upon to run a parish.

But he must beware, lest his charity and zeal for souls entrusted to his care should lead him to neglect himself. The spirit of recollection and reserve, which is necessary to a priest, is indispensable in a religious. In order that he retain it and so appear in the eyes of his parishioners, he must remember the following:

1. Although one of his tasks is to sponsor Catholic societies, especially that of Salesian Cooperators, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Sodality of the Blessed Sacrament for the Forty Hours' Adoration, and for the processions with the Holy Viaticum, and also the task of attending their meetings personally, if possible, in order that they keep on flourishing, yet he must take care that he never displays any kind of partiality. He must avoid lengthy conversations, especially with members of the opposite sex. Experience teaches us that no matter how innocent or holy the purpose may be which leads to any such conversations, they nevertheless can lead to criticism and gossip.
2. It will be extremely helpful, if he is obliged by his ministry or charity to talk with any woman, that he do so in the parish office, or in some room near the sacristy, always keeping the doors open.
3. He should dispense, as much as possible, with unnecessary visits to private families, for the least of the evils therefrom accruing is the considerable waste of time. Whenever he is called upon to visit a sick person and is obliged to spend any lengthy period of time at their bedside, he shall endeavor to behave as a man of God, given to prayer. His manner should be modest and very reserved, his words full of comfort for the patient and edifying to the relatives.
4. The sick, the poor children, should be the object of his very special care. Our Divine Savior found His greatest delight in being with them, and in general, the pastor who is most loved is he who makes himself equally accessible to the children as to the poor.
5. Whenever he receives alms or has to distribute them, he should give preference to those in greater need and those who most attend the parish services and the Sacraments. In certain circumstances he may give preference to people in need who are less virtuous, in order to win over their heart. At times, this proves successful.
6. In parishes where there is also a hospice for poor orphans, the pastor will have to exercise great prudence so as not to cause any

suspicions that he is using for his own house the alms given him for the poor.

7. To assist the poor, the pastor will find great help if he organizes a St. Vincent Society Chapter in his own parish.

#3. PAROCHIAL REVENUES

1. There are no specific rules regarding alms. It will be necessary, first of all, that the pastor keep a box for alms for the poor in the church and in the event that the money collected is not enough to meet his own needs, he may draw whatever sum his prudence and charity may deem advisable from the parish revenue, but only with the consent of his Director. However, he should keep scrupulous account of all that is paid out to this end.
2. Many are the sources of revenue by which a parish is maintained. Over and above the parish income, there are the so-called rights of white stole and black stole, legacies, and alms. A special ledger for each of these sources of income must be kept, which shall be made available for examination, whenever requested, to either the Provincial or Superior General.
3. In collecting certain monies to which the parish is entitled, it will frequently occur that difficulties may arise with the people who undertook certain obligations. In order that the pastor may not become the target of any animosity ensuing therefrom, the assistant pastor, or better still, the sacristy prefect shall always be in charge of this office. But even though it is his duty to insist on keeping that to which he is entitled, he shall always proceed charitably, never separating his firmness from prudence and gentleness.
4. The pastor shall take great pains to keep the parish records in order, so that he may be able to submit them for inspection whenever requested to do so by the Ordinary.

Sodalities, Associations

As far as the foundation of sodalities or associations, which are a powerful help for the good running of a parish and contribute to the spiritual renewal of a parish, the pastor should follow the norms of the catechism *ad Parochos* or the *New Pastor* by Frassinetti.

Conclusion

Any Salesian pastor who safeguards the spirit of the Congregation, who scrupulously keeps his vows and follows these few rules, will not fail to be an apostle in the midst of the people that God has entrusted to his care and, while sanctifying himself, he will win over many souls for Heaven.

39.

ON RELIGIOUS SPIRIT AND ON VOCATIONS AMONG COADJUTORS AND YOUNG ARTISANS

#1. THE COADJUTORS

Our Pious Society is made up not only of priests and clerics, but also has lay members (Art. 1, Chapter 1). These lay members are known as Coadjutors (Rules, Chapter X, 14 and XIII, 2 and XV 3), since their special office is to assist the priest in the works of Christian charity peculiar to our Congregation. Ecclesiastical history offers us many examples of lay people who gave the Apostles and other sacred ministers valuable assistance. In all ages the Church relied on the help of pious good Christians to meet with the welfare of the people and the glory of God.

More than at any other time, Catholic undertakings, and among them, our own Congregation, can today derive most influential help from laypersons. Moreover, in certain cases they are able to accomplish more and with greater freedom than priests can.

There is an immense field open to the Coadjutors for the exercise of charity towards their neighbor and in showing zeal for the glory of God by directing and running the various undertakings of our Pious Society; by becoming shop masters in our technical schools, or by being catechists in our festive oratories and especially in our foreign missions. Therefore, in order that they may live up to their vocations:

1. They shall at all times and under any circumstance, show respect for their Superiors and for the priests, looking at them as fathers and as brothers, with whom they live bound by ties of fraternal charity, so as to form with them but one heart and one soul (Rules, Chapter II, 2).
2. They shall diligently perform the task to which they are assigned, no matter what it may be, bearing only in mind that it is not the

importance of any task which makes it agreeable in the eyes of God, but the spirit of sacrifice and love with which it is performed.

3. No Coadjutor shall undertake any work or assume any commitment for outsiders, unless he has the express consent of his Superiors.
4. The Coadjutors shall endeavor to behave always, under every circumstance and in every place, both within the house and outside, both with words and deeds, as good religious; for it is not the habit which makes the religious, but the practice of religious virtues. In the eyes of God and of men, a religious in lay clothing will be far more respected if he is exemplary in conduct and fervent, than that religious who wears the habit, but who is lax and careless in his observance.

#2. ON YOUNG ARTISANS

Among the main works of charity in which our Pious Society is engaged is that of providing a home, insofar as it is possible, for abandoned boys, for whom every effort to instruct them in the articles of the Catholic Faith would be futile unless they were provided with shelter and trained in some trade or craft. In any house where there is a considerable number of artisans, one of the members of the Congregation might be assigned to their special supervision and shall be known as Professional Councillor.

The objective of the Pious Salesian Society in giving a home and an education to these young artisans is to bring them up in such a manner that when they leave our houses, at the end of their apprenticeship, they will have learnt a craft which will enable them to earn an honest living, and be well instructed in their faith, as well as have enough schooling as their status in life will demand.

It is therefore obvious that the education given to them must have three distinct objectives: a religious-moral one, an intellectual one, and a professional one.

The Religious-Moral Objective

A sound religious-moral education will be successfully given to the artisans if the following norms are kept:

1. Great care must be taken to ensure the faithful observance of the house rules.
2. The pupils must often be reminded of God, of their duties, and

are to be taught that sound, moral conduct and the practice of religion is becoming and essential to all categories of people.

3. Every effort should be made so that the boys may know that their Superiors love them and esteem them; this can be assured by treating them with the spirit of genuine charity recommended by the Holy Gospel.
4. As an incentive for the study of catechism there should be an appropriate exam and special prizes given out with a certain solemnity to those who showed the best results.
5. The boys should also be instructed in Gregorian chant so that after leaving our school, they may participate in the religious ceremonies in their parishes and confraternities.
6. Over and above the sodalities already existing, that of the Blessed Sacrament should be introduced, wherever possible, to encourage them to go frequently to Communion.
7. Whenever possible, the smaller boys should be separated from the older ones, especially in their dormitories and during recreation.
8. Students whose conduct has been reprehensible should not be transferred to the living quarters of the artisans. Should any special consideration convince the Director that such exemption is to be made, the student in question should not remain in the same house, but shall instead be sent elsewhere, to learn a trade.
9. Every two months, the Director shall address a talk to the assistants and heads of the workshops and will listen to their remarks, if they have any to offer, providing for them, at the same time, the necessary norms and instructions to ensure proper order in the workshops; if necessary, hired shop-heads may also be hereto invited, if there are any.
10. In view of the urgent need there is for a great many such technical shop heads, so as to open new houses and extend to a great number of young people the advantages of a technical education, each member of the congregation shall seek, with his good example and charity, to inspire in their pupils the desire to enter our Pious Society, and whenever any of these pupils are enrolled as novices, they shall be sent to the novitiate, even at the cost of sacrifice.
11. It is essential that once he has completed his apprenticeship, a pupil be placed to work with kind, Christian employers, and be provided with a letter for his pastor.
12. If their conduct is adequately satisfactory, it will also be advis-

able to enroll them as Salesian Cooperators, recommending them to some Catholic Workers' Association.

The Intellectual Objective

In order that, during their apprenticeship, the young artisans may acquire that good amount of knowledge needed in the field of letters, arts and sciences, the following is established:

1. They should attend class for one hour every day after they have finished their work, while those who are in need of it, will also attend class for one hour in the mornings after community Mass and before breakfast. Wherever the laws require more hours, that should be followed.
2. There should be a school curriculum to be used in all our houses for artisans. The textbooks to be read and explained in class should also be indicated.
3. After the boys have undergone an entrance examination, they should be classified and their instruction be entrusted to some experienced teacher.
4. A superior will give them a lesson in good manners once a week.
5. No one may enroll in special classes, such as drafting, French, etc., unless they already have sufficient background in subjects taught in the elementary school.
6. At the end of the school year, examinations will be held to ascertain the degree of progress made by each pupil, and the most well deserving should receive an award.
7. When a boy has completed his term of apprenticeship and wishes to leave the school, he will be given a diploma stating his proficiency in his trade or craft, the extent of his education, and his good conduct.

The Professional Objective

It is not enough for an artisan apprentice to know his craft well. If he is to use it profitably, he must be accustomed to take on the various phases of his work and excel in doing them.

In order to assure this first goal, it would be advantageous to do the following:

1. Foster as mush as possible the individual inclination of the boys by helping them choose their craft or trade.

2. Provide them with capable, honest shop masters, even at the cost of financial sacrifice, so that the various stages of work may be executed to perfection in our workshops.
3. The Professional Councillor, as well as the technical head-master, must divide or regard as subdivided the progressive sequence of different stages of a work which make up the entire course of training. So many classes or grades should cover these stages, and then the apprentice should go shortly through all of these classes so that at the end of his apprenticeship he knows his craft thoroughly and is fully in command of it.
4. It is impossible to define the duration of an apprenticeship, since not all crafts require the same amount of time to learn them; but as a general rule, one may figure a five-year period.
5. Every technical school, on the occasion of the yearly award ceremony, should have an exhibit of all work done by the students throughout the year. Every three years a general exhibit should be organized at which all our technical schools should participate.

In order to assure ability and rapidity in the execution of work, one of the following should be done:

a) Every week there should be two marks given: one for ability to work and the other for good conduct.
b) Assign chain work, stipulating so much of a percentage top be given to the boy, according to the method worked out by a special committee that was thereto assigned.
c) The novitiate for artisan novices must be adequately equipped with all materiel needed to thoroughly learn the various professions and to form the best Salesian shop headmasters.

40.

RULES FOR THE FESTIVE ORATORIES

Article 3 of Chapter 1 of our Constitutions says that the first charitable activity in which the Pious Society of St. Francis should be engaged is to gather the poor abandoned boys, to instruct them in the holy Catholic faith, especially on feast days.

In order that this noble objective may be carried out more effectively and on a wider scale, it would provide the greatest help in both cities and towns if, wherever there is a Salesian house, a recreation center or festive

Oratory would be established for outside boys in dire need of religious instruction, and who are exposed to the risk of corruption.

To achieve this the III General Chapter deliberates, what follows:

1. Every Director shall do his best to establish a Festive Oratory joined to his own house or school, if any such oratory does not yet exist; if it does, he will endeavor to promote its growth. He shall look upon this activity as one of the most important tasks entrusted to him, recommending it to the charity and benevolent attention of wealthy local citizens, in order to obtain the necessary subsidies for it, and shall speak of it often in his talks, encouraging his confreres to give it their attention and training them to do so, never forgetting that a Festive Oratory was the initial seed from which our humble Congregation grew.
2. To perpetuate the memory of this event, and as an example and encouragement to our other houses, the Festive Oratories of St. Francis of Sales and St. Aloysius Gonzaga in Turin should be promoted and encouraged very particularly, likewise the Oratory attached to our house at San Benigno Canavese. As much as possible, clerics and the other members of the Salesian Congregation should be called upon to work in them, so that they may be trained to acquire greater efficiency in this important charitable ministry beneficial to endangered youth.
3. When assigning personnel for all the houses, the Provincial should, in agreement with the local Director thereof, appoint one priest every year to be in charge of the Festive Oratory, while the Director will be affectionately solicitous in placing at the aforesaid priest's disposal such material assistance and personal support which may be necessary for its successful running.
4. All members of the Salesian Society, whether clerical or lay members, should deem themselves fortunate to lend their services at the Oratories, with the conviction that this apostolate is of the greatest importance, since, at the present day, the Festive Oratory, especially in big cities and boroughs, represents the only possibility of salvation for many a boy.
5. In order to assure the establishment and development of an Oratory, we should first of all endeavor to maintain friendly relations with the local ecclesiastical authorities.
6. In our schools and hospices, all contact between boarders and

non-boarders must be prevented. In order to dispense with such dangers and troubles, whenever possible designate an adjacent place, with a suitable playground, with a separate chapel and necessary equipment for recreation, classrooms and shelter in bad weather.

7. Games and amusements of various kinds are recommended in particular, in keeping with the age groups of the boys and local customs, this being one of the most effective ways by which to attract boys to he Oratory.
8. For the regular attendance and good conduct of the boys frequenting the Festive Oratories, we should encourage the awarding of prizes at scheduled times, such as, for example, books, religious articles, items of clothing; likewise, lotteries, outings, simple, moral theatricals, music classes, small parties, etc.
9. The successful running of the Festive Oratory depends mainly and above all on the use of a sincere spirit of sacrifice, on great patience, on charity and benevolence toward all, so that pupils may always receive and retain a precious impression and memory and even continue to frequent the Oratory after they have grown up; likewise it depends on the promotion of the sodalities, such as the Sodality of St. Aloysius, the altar boys among them etc. etc.
10. The General Chapter approves the rules for Festive Oratories, which were printed separately.

41.

FATHER LASAGNA'S WORDS ON THE POPE, IN MILAN

I have traveled through much of Europe and of America and I was forced to realize that if our own country can boast of the most widely diversified industries, other nations surpass them greatly. If our trade is prosperous, this is nothing compared with what we see elsewhere. If you admire the magnificent buildings and monuments which the Italian genius has raised up on our native soil, I would like you to know that I have seen buildings and monuments abroad which may well stand comparison with ours. If Italy can stand first in the fields of Fine Arts, remember that by studying the masterpieces of great Italian masters, the foreigners too are learning to compete with them, and perhaps have already surpassed them. If we possess such great treasures in literature and science, even far-away countries are rightly proud

of their wonderful literature and great progress. But we have something to boast about which stills the pride of other nations. We have a glory that none can dispute; we have a most precious jewel which everyone envies us: this is the fact that we have the Pope, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Universal Church, right here on our national soil. Therefore, whenever I set foot on foreign territory and proudly proclaim to be Italian, all that people ask me is about our most wise Pontiff who stands at the helm of the one true religion. This is the one single prerogative which most excites the interest of foreigners when one talks of Italy. Oh, how great I then feel, when I am able to boast that I have seen him, talked with him, and have knelt at his feet. When I am able to say, "It is the Pope who sends me to you"; when I am given the opportunity to add, "It is in His Name that I bless you!"—this is the true glory of Italy before which all other glories are eclipsed. It is in moments such as these that I would like to be in the company of people who think about it differently. Oh, how easily I could turn them to silence! Oh! Italy, Italy, ah! Remember that your greatest boast is the fact that you are the center of Catholicism, that you have its throne in Rome,

Upon which sits the Successor of the Great Peter. [From Dante's Divine Comedy]

42.

SOME BLIND GIRLS FROM MILAN ADDRESS A LETTER TO DON BOSCO

September 13, 1886

Very Reverend Sir:

Because we were not able to gratify our burning desire in our hearts to attend the solemn festivities which took place in this city yesterday, we make so bold as to write to you this humble letter, in which we beg you respectfully to impart your coveted blessing not only to the whole of our beloved school, but also to our beloved families and to everybody who takes an interest in us.

How happy we would be if we could hear you speak to us in person, and if we were able to express the reverence and veneration which we feel so strongly for you and your holy, meritorious undertakings! But we also appreciate the thought that you will perceive this in these few lines that we are writing.

We now wish to congratulate you on the prosperous state of your pious undertakings and proffer our sincerest good wishes for success, at the same time assuring you that we will never cease imploring God fervently that He preserve you long to this world and the affection of all your beloved sons. We hope that you will be pleased with this letter and we are respectfully honored to be,

The most obliged pupils
of the Milan School for the Blind

This was accompanied by the following letter:

Milan, September 13, 1886

Illustrious and Venerated Sir:

I was happy to comply with the wishes of my pupils, who were anxious to address to you a letter of respectful greetings, in which they asked you to call at our Institute or else send us your blessing. I am not unaware of the obstacles in the way of your consenting to satisfy this first of their desires; but it will be enough if they are gratified in their second desire.

I join my pupils in their request all the more fervently inasmuch as, together with one of their number, I am proud to be listed among your Salesian Cooperators.

Kissing your revered hand, I am,

Your most devoted servant,
P. Vitali
Rector of the Institute for the Blind

43.

LETTER FROM FATHER RIGOLI TO FATHER LAZZERO

Casale Litta, September 20, 1886

Very Reverend and Dear Father Lazzero:

Today I am sending the trunk with the music and books to be shipped to Brother Dogliani, that's for your information.

I do not know what to say in regard to myself...I feel so melancholy here, as if I had lost the whole world. My home and the whole village looks like the day after a funeral. The beloved Salesians, my superiors, my colleagues, the boys, Don Bosco's sons have taken away with them everything which filled my heart and soul with happiness; for in their company I enjoyed some Heavenly hours...now I experience all the sadness of Purgatory...it will take some time before I can resign myself to it.

My whole spirit is full of the sweet, intense impressions I received in Milan with Don Bosco, my archbishop and again at Busto and Casale Litta. God sent His Blessing on these festivities. To the people of my parish it was a genuine blessing, a spiritual retreat. We will remember it as long as we live, and shall always love Don Bosco, his sons and his undertakings.

Please send me news of Don Bosco's health, for he is my most venerated father whom I thank for having come to Milan, and I also beg him to forgive me if he undertook such a great an inconvenience on my account. All my thanks as well as my affectionate regards to dear Father Lasagna.

An applause and a hurrah to dear Dogliani and his boys who edified these peasants with their singing, their piety and their holy cheerfulness. My humble, fervent thanks also to Father Rua, Father Durando and everyone who seconded my request. I kiss the hand of Don Bosco and of all my superiors.

Most affectionately yours,
Rev. Rigoli

44.

A CIRCULAR LETTER ON THE SALESIAN MISSIONS, IN FIVE LANGUAGES (*)

(*) Since the letter is more or less the same in all five languages, here we give the translation only of its Italian original. The following translation is reproduced as is from the Italian edition of the *Biographical Memoirs,* pages 715–718.

Turin, October 15, 1886

Worthy and much esteemed Cooperators:

I am glad to be able to send you a few of the interesting news which I am receiving from Patagonia and the other numerous missions already opened in South America, and to place before you, at the same time, a few sketches of the enterprises which the urgent needs of these distant people invite us to undertake as soon as possible.

Now that our Missionaries have traversed the immense plains of Patagonia from the Atlantic Ocean to the Cordilleras, and twice crossed over those famous mountains on their way to Chile —instructing and baptizing various tribes of savages as they went, at the cost of innumerable privations and perils—now, I say, under the powerful protection of Mary Help of Christians, the time has come when we should take under serious consideration the means of consolidating, perpetuating and vigorously advancing the good work already commenced.

For those tribes pacified and converted to the true Faith, having once tasted the charms of a civilized and Christian life, are not to be content with the mere passing visits of an apostolic missionary, though it be he who has called them from their social misery to the genial light of the Gospel. Naturally enough, they desire to have him continually amongst them, not only to direct, instruct and console them through life, but also and more especially to be assisted by him in sickness, and comforted by his hope-inspiring presence on the eve of entering the uncertain passage which leads to eternity.

It is therefore not surprising if His Lordship, Dr. Cagliero, Vicar-Apostolic of Patagonia, cannot bear to see the rites and comforts of our holy religion denied to those poor savages who, notwithstanding their primitive degradation, are yet his dear children in Jesus Christ. But he has neither sufficient staff nor means to satisfy their ardent desire. For in order to establish fixed residences for missionaries in the Patagonia desert according as the natives unite in colonies or villages, he obviously requires a much greater number of priests, catechists and nuns, as also a goodly store of household chattels, provisions and diverse articles, indispensable both for daily sustenance and divine worship.

These poor neophytes, though willing to assist us, can offer nothing to our missionaries save the sad spectacle of their deplorable misery. They themselves want for everything, even to be clothed and maintained, especially in the first stages of their conversion. Hence the mission is entirely dependent on the Pious Salesian Society and the charity of the Cooperators. And should we lose courage for this? Oh no! On the contrary, let us redouble our efforts in support of this charitable undertaking for which we have already labored so much.

I also feel pleasure in announcing to you that (in order to render more secure the entire conversion of Patagonia), we have resolved to open a way on the western side of Chile, and already a band of Salesians has gone there to found a college in the city of Concepción.

Thence will go forth columns of missionaries to evangelize Araucania and Western Patagonia, spreading later on, little by little, into Tierra-del-Fuego, and the Archipelagos of Chiloe and Magellan, all peopled by innumerable tribes without even an idea of religion or civilization.

Father Fagnano, who at present is visiting the Malvine Isles, intends to explore every last islet down to Cape Horn, studying at the same time the positions better adapted whereon to pitch the tents of the new crusaders who soon are going to join him.

It is difficult to imagine, dearly beloved Cooperators, how I am continually pressed and supplicated by our indefatigable missionaries and by the native inhabitants themselves, to send our fresh and not inconsiderable reinforcements of men and money.

Apropos of which Father Lasagna has returned from that distant land precisely to plead and make better known the wants and—thanks be to God—encouraging condition of our American missions; nor has he neglected any means by which he might induce us to prepare once again a numerous expedition of Salesian priests and nuns of Mary Help of Christians. He himself requires a goodly number for the mission I have entrusted to his care in the vast Brazilian Empire which in itself is more extensive than the whole of Europe put together, and peopled almost exclusively by savages who roam the immense forest of their native plains, where they have lan-

guished for ages, for some friendly hand to draw them out of the ignominious barbarity in which they have been entombed for centuries, and to which they may still be condemned for who knows how many generations, if the zeal of the missionary, sustained by the charity of the faithful, does not come to succor them and liberate them.

Induced by these powerful motives, we have decided to prepare a fresh band of missionaries who will set forth, God willing, toward the end of November. Confiding in the prompt assistance and generous supplies of our benefactors, we hope to be able to send at least some forty or fifty young messengers of peace and of the kingdom of Heaven. But as our dear Cooperators may easily understand, the outfitting of so numerous a body incurs an enormous expenditure in sacred vessels and vestments, in clothing and apparel generally, in church ornaments, school furniture and household utensils, without speaking of the not indifferent and more pressing expenses of baggage and traveling both by sea and land. Hence my only, my every hope after God Almighty, must be centered, dearly beloved Cooperators, on your generosity, that as you have succored me in the past, you may also come to my aid in the present expedition.

Wherefore I make a fresh appeal to your charity. Hearken to the missionary's voice and the imploring cry, which arises, from hundreds of thousands of abandoned wretches in those far distant regions!

Once more I implore our benefactors to make this new expedition possible to us by assisting us very especially with their fervent prayers and with whatever offering they can send us, either in linen, or linen-garments, in cloth or in clothing, in church furniture or sacred vessels, or better still, in money with which to defray the expenses of traveling and transport of luggage both by land and sea—in short, with whatever alms their piety suggests and their condition permits.

At the Oratory in Turin, whence our missionaries will set forth, we shall receive with gratitude whatever your industrious charity may think well to consecrate to this generous undertaking.

On the day selected for the departure of the missionaries, I intend to confer with my beloved Cooperators in the sanctuary of

Mary Help of Christians, and while I now invite you, I cannot help begging you to have the goodness to search among your acquaintances and friends, whoever might desire to concur with his mite to this work of humanity and faith.

We will inscribe your name and theirs in the registers of our Pious Institution, to remember you and them every day in our prayers, to implore from Heaven copious benedictions upon you and upon all those who benefit us, upon your families and upon your undertakings, confident that God will inscribe them in the Book of Life, the Book of the Predestined, for, as St. Augustine says, whoever efficaciously contributes to his neighbor's salvation saves himself: *Animam salvasti, animam tuam praedestinasti.*

May Mary Help of Christians, Protectrix and Mother of our missionaries, and of the poor Patagonian savages, obtain from God for you every most desirable benediction both spiritual and temporal.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

Charitable benefactors of our missions are requested to send their offerings directly to the Rev. John Bosco, at Via Cottolengo No. 32, Turin, Italy.

45.

DON BOSCO AND THE EVANGELIZATION OF SAVAGES

(*La Riforma*, October 31, 1886)

The well-known priest, Don Bosco, has graciously deigned to send us a circular letter in which he makes an appeal for the Catholic missions in South America and Patagonia.

It is well known that Don Bosco is the right hand of the Jesuits in Italy. His activity is so prodigious and so is his subtlety and cunning that, had he devoted his talents as trailblazer and organizer to a worthy cause, Italy would have had in him a most meritorious son. Instead, he is today a powerful and formidable enemy who does a great deal of harm by cor-

rupting the minds of our girls, already bamboozled by the devotions as Children of Mary; by stealing away from their families, from the factories and public schools, a great many boys whose hearts he inflames with the germ of clerical fanaticism.

Good material to be an industrialist, Don Bosco has realized that the key for the success of all big modern enterprises is a good market, and that is why his institutes levy the minimum of fees, which nevertheless, when added up, total a very sizable amount; pupils pay nominal fees in his schools and, whenever he asks for something, he does not scare people with lofty demands, but is content with a few liters of wine, a little bit of meat, or a few cheap articles of clothing.

Don Bosco will accept everything; his arms are always held wide open to take all that is sent to him.

This is a good lesson for the government, which keeps the costs of public education high and the entrance into any civic boarding school prohibitive in price.

There is something about Don Bosco which, at the present day, one is wont to be defined (antonomastically), as akin to the Bocconi brothers. That's the really modern type.

As matter of fact, this "Bocconi" of the Church announces that more missionaries will be setting out for South America and Patagonia. Father "Bocconi"—excuse me, I meant Don Bosco—is not satisfied merely with manufacturing these missionaries; he also sends them out of his establishment fully equipped, clothed, with baggage and money in their wallet. All done cheaply, at low cost.

He only needs to invite all the bigoted old ladies and hypocritical churchgoers of Italy to contribute toward the undertaking. Some send 5 centesimi, some half a lira, but at long last, it totals an adequate amount of money and maybe there is even something left over; thus the expedition is ready.

We do not have any foolish definite desire to wage a relentless war against the Catholic missions. The priests are trying to create something similar to Africa and Patagonia here in Italy. So if instead they go off among the savages, we will have a lot less trouble underfoot here at home. But we must not encourage them; we should instead empathize, though without getting all excited, with the unfortunate savages who by now have every good reason to defend themselves against certain imported articles.

This is not a paradox. It is the truth.

Save for a few exceptional men, such as Massaia, or some other persons who in their inspired ambition seek to accomplish something good, as Bishop Comboni does, the Catholic missionaries—no matter what traditional sentimentalism they may claim—are either fanatics, who go away in order to get killed without any justifiable reason, or troublemakers, uncouth ignoramuses who believe that they have civilized a tribe or a kingdom just because they have taught some hundred savages how to make the Sign of the Cross, when to genuflect and perform a few other exterior meaningless gestures which the savages learn to do without any great difficulty but only in a gross way, out of a sheer imitative spirit, for it is for this that the savages are the closest relatives of the apes.

Catholic missions are utterly useless as far as the first phases of a barbaric existence. To train savages to engage in some religious exercises, the jugglers and comedians would have more of an immediate success, since they are better gifted in making their meaning understood and leave a more vivid impression on the mind.

But as soon as the first germs of civilization begin to develop, the missions everywhere immediately become an obstacle in the path of progress. History proves this to us everywhere, as it does, for example, in Paraguay.

It was in Paraguay that the Jesuit rule prevailed the longest, for the Jesuits were despotic lords over all and everything; they had usurped all of their rights over the land and its people without any dispute.

Now these forerunners of the contemporary missionaries sponsored by Don Bosco turned Paraguay into a Limbo of idiots.

The whole life was organized along monastic patterns. At night all husbands in Paraguay were reminded, by a bell ringing, that it was then, neither before nor after, that they were to behave as husbands.

It is on account of this initial misfortune that Paraguay remained the country most reluctant to be civilized. It fell into the clutches of a savage tyranny and, until only a few years ago, Paraguay was closed to Europe and the rest of America more than Japan and China.

Paraguay would have become even worse than Patagonia had the Jesuits, who had been lords over that territory, not been driven out of it.

But in order to drive them out, the whole of the civilized world had to intervene, being shocked by the echoes of horror, cruelty and untold immorality, as well as by the fraudulent bankruptcy of a number of commercial establishments that the Jesuits themselves had established there for themselves.

In Africa, Italian missionaries are not doing us much good. The missionaries in Tunis, Tripoli and Algiers, who have an opportunity to exercise more easily a civilizing influence, are avowed enemies of Italy and follow an anti-patriotic politics, egged on by the Vatican which, as we have already said on several occasions, has fiefed all the missions to the French Cardinal Lavigerie, being afraid of and hating even the shadow of an Italian influence.

As soon as any good missionary appears on the scene, the Vatican is quick to replace him. Consult Bishop Sutter.

We have no need of sending any men with a tonsure to South America. In those territories we do have great settlements of Italians who with their work, their courage, do honor to their native country and procure immense resources for us. Let us send there honest workers, men to till the soil, or industrious and intelligent tradesmen. Only then will we do ourselves honor, and we may be sure of having brothers on whom we can rely, instead of enemies nurtured within our bosom.

Yesterday we reported that an American newspaper had insulted us, by saying that the only Italians known were singers, street organ grinders and coppersmiths.

We do not want the category of clerics to be added to this highly unflattering list.

46.

AN INVITATION TO THE MISSIONARIES' DEPARTURE CEREMONY

A.

Turin, November 26, 1886

Worthy Cooperators:

I wish to inform you that on December 2nd next our missionaries are scheduled to depart for America.

In order that their long and dangerous journey may be accompanied by the blessing of God, it is my intention to hold a religious ceremony that day, attended at least by our lady and gentlemen Cooperators of Turin and the surrounding area.

This service will take place in the Church of Mary Help of Christians, approximately at 3 P.M. that same day.

The Rev. Louis Lasagna, the leader of the missionaries, will give an appropriate address in the form of a regular talk.

His Eminence, Cardinal Alimonda, our most venerated Archbishop, will be so kind as to honor the occasion with his presence and impart his triple benediction with the Blessed Sacrament, and recite the ritual prayers for pilgrims over the missionaries.

On the 11th of this month, the Holy Father, Leo XIII, deigned to grant benevolently a private audience to the aforementioned priest, Father Louis Lasagna, and blessed the missionaries and all those people who had in some way contributed toward the success of this noble undertaking.

I therefore invite all those ladies and gentlemen who are our Cooperators and who will receive this letter to attend the above ceremony and to take along those whom they consider suited for the event. In view of the enormous expenses involved in sending this expedition of evangelical laborers to Patagonia and Brazil, a collection on behalf of the missions will be taken up in church.

I am happy to use this opportunity to thank you all for the assistance given me in this endeavor and to assure all of you that, together with our missionaries, the sisters of Mary Help of Christians, and all the boys in this house, I shall invoke the blessings of Heaven upon you and your families every day, and I am meanwhile honored to be with the deepest gratitude,

Your devoted servant,
Rev. John Bosco

B.

Turin (Italy) Via Cottolengo 32
November 15, 1886

For more then 43 years, the humble undersigned servant dedicated himself entirely to the education of poor abandoned boys and girls, on whose behalf some 180 houses have already been opened in Italy, France, Spain and America.

In these houses, some 200,000 children from all nations receive a sound education and are either directed to study or to learn some trade or craft, suited to their individual aptitude.

With this purpose in mind, the undersigned servant has founded a society with both clerical and lay members, who assist him in this religious and social mission.

Around 30,000 children go forth every year from these various houses, after they have learnt a craft or have completed their studies; thus are they restored to Society, as they become useful and honest citizens.

Furthermore, eight years ago we undertook the task of civilizing Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego and the neighboring islands, which still live in a completely barbaric state. Two years ago, other missionaries were sent to Brazil to teach and civilize the savage tribes that still inhabit an immense portion of that vast empire.

Eight expeditions of priests, of head instructors of various crafts, and of nuns, have already set out for South America, where more than 40 houses have been opened to give shelter and an education to young people.

During the first few days of the coming month of December, a new expedition of more than 30 people will leave Turin for South America, for the purpose of civilizing the Indians living in Patagonia and Brazil.

All of this entails considerable expense since the expedition has to be provided with everything. That is why the undersigned decided to appeal to the charity of all good Christians.

He ventures now to appeal to...N; being acquainted with your zeal for the social, religious and civil progress. The printed appeal hereto attached explains the purpose of this undertaking in greater detail.

With the hope that...N; you will deign to honor his humble petition with your benevolent consent, the undersigned together with his children, will pray that Our Lord may shower his greatest blessings on...N; and all your family.

He is happy to have this opportunity of assuring...N; of the profound esteem in which he is honored to remain,

Your most humble and obedient servant,
Rev. John Bosco

47.

a) AN IMAGINARY KING AND KINGDOM

12, Via Due Porte a Toledo
Naples, January 11, 1887

Very Reverend Father:

I have received a circular letter from Your Reverence, somewhat out-dated, namely October 15, 1886, through Chevalier Gigante, the Arauco-Patagonian Vice-Consul in Rome, Via dei Bagni 14. In this circular letter, in a generous, holy endeavor, you appeal to your benevolent Cooperators to give you every assistance they can in support of the missions in Araucania-Patagonia and Brazil, in order that the missionaries catechize, baptize and civilize the tribes who still live in a savage, idolatrous state beneath the dome of Heaven.

Looking far ahead to Araucania-Patagonia, Your Reverence has certainly not overlooked the fact that those natives, warriors by nature, but generous of heart, had already elected a king for themselves in the person of a warm-hearted Frenchman, named Orèlie Antoine de Tounens, in 1860. De Tounens succeeded in establishing peace and in unifying as one, the various tribes governed by Caciques. In agreement with the Caciques, a representative kingdom was founded and the new king signed treaties with the Republics of Argentina and Chile.

In their greed for conquest, these two neighboring Republics always laid claim to the territory of Araucania-Patagonia, though their claims were unsuccessful. Unfortunately, while visiting in Europe to negotiate with European powers, His Majesty Orèlie Antoine died and was succeeded by the noble Prince Achilles Laviarde, known today as Achilles I, now temporarily residing in Paris, at 110 Boulevard Rochechouart. It's from Paris that he continues his negotiations, so that with the support of civilized countries, he may establish his residence among the people who already acknowledge him as successor to the first founder of the kingdom.

Today it is no longer a question of mere projects; the problem to be finalized is a financial one and the way things stand, we are doing all right now.

Not long ago, a sizable delegation of leading Araucanian-Patagonian citizens went to France to pay tribute to their king and reconfirm his high mandate. In the notarial files of Paris there exists a public document drawn up by a qualified notary, from which deed it is evident that, beyond all doubt, Achilles I is the second sovereign elect of Araucania-Patagonia.

For a number of years I have headed the consular corps created by the late king and reconfirmed by the reigning sovereign and I have always maintained that since this is a very difficult undertaking, action should start with the Catholic Church and significant steps should be taken at the Vatican to plan to send missionaries to that territory, to pave the way for the subsequent opening up of the frontiers of the Araucanian-Patagonian territory, which are at present jealously guarded and defended by the natives.

His Majesty, who honors me with his confidence, found this proposal very sound and we did enter negotiations with the Vatican. In fact, a lawyer of the Sacred Roman Rota, Chevalier Carlo Lenti, domiciled in Rome at Via della Pedacchia No. 100, who is a cousin of Bishop Lenti, assistant to His Holiness, was appointed extraordinary envoy and Chargé d'Affaires for Araucanian-Patagonian affairs to the Holy See.

Now that I have explained all of this, I will inform you quite frankly that the circular letter received from your Reverence was a genuine comfort to me, and if you would send me a number of copies, I will do all I can to help your holy cause to triumph, for both in a political and religious sense, I may say that I am one of its most active sponsors.

It would be as well proper that Your Reverence personally contact His Majesty, to whom I will write very positively about this matter and arrange to meet the Araucanian-Patagonian Consul in Turin, Commendatore Felice Zanini, to whom I have also written at the same time. His address is Via Santa Chiara No. 52.

From this moment on I am at your complete service and meanwhile I remain with respectful esteem,

The Consul General Chargé d'Affaires
Comm. Giuseppe Pietro Giustini

b) THE MISSIONS IN ARAUCANIA AND PATAGONIA

(*La Sicilia Cattolica.*, January 21, 1887)

We have received the following letter, which we are happy to publish, from the Consulate of Araucania and Patagonia in Palermo, now temporarily located at Bisacquino:

Bisacquino, January 15, 1887

To the Honorable Editor of *La Sicilia Cattolica*—Palermo.

Since we are to give serious attention to the consolidation and perpetuation of the good work accomplished until now by our missionaries in the kingdom of Araucania and Patagonia, we need the generous support of the faithful, for substantial funds are needed.

You are aware of the fact that Bishop Cagliero is the Vicar Apostolic for Araucania - Patagonia, but he needs more staff and adequate means to set up permanent residences in that distant territory.

A great many missionaries have already been sent there by the Salesian Society, and very shortly other expeditions of Salesian missionaries and Sisters of Mary Help of Christians will be setting out; but the generous contributions of all the cooperators is indispensable, to equip the expedition with clothing, money and sacred vestments.

I call on you to give us your precious help by soliciting, with your widely circulated newspaper, the charity of the public to contribute to this most holy undertaking on the part of the Pious Salesian Society which, undaunted, has redoubled its efforts so that it may not fail in the upkeep of the work already undertaken.

The donations may be sent directly to the Very Rev. John Bosco, the most worthy superior of the mission for Patagonia and Brazil, in Turin, Via Cottolengo No. 32, or else to the Royal Araucanian-Patagonian Legation in Naples, No. 12 Via due Porte a Toledo.

I trust that you will be so kind as to comply with this humble request, and urge other newspapers to report that which you yourself will publish, for which I thank you.

Please, receive the respectful regards of

Your devoted servant,
Dr. Gioachino Bona
Araucanian-Patagonian Consul

Bisacquino, January 15, 1887

We call upon the good and zealous Catholics who are in a position to contribute with their alms to so holy an undertaking, to be generous, for this is something which gives glory to God and to the Church, as it does good to many souls and to true civilization.

Some months ago we sent Don Bosco 400 lire, which we had received from a pious and zealous Catholic in Palermo. We hope to be able to collect some more contributions for such a holy purpose. If other newspapers would publish this letter they would be doing the zealous Consul a great favor.

The newspaper also carried word on the association of the *Catholic Readings*, XXXIV, page 54.

c) FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S DEPARTMENT

Rome, February 10, 1887

Dear Father Rua:

I was unable to answer your letter of January 17th last, before now, since I was still-hunting for any likely information regarding the Araucanian-Patagonian kingdom.

When I first read the copy of the letter, which you had enclosed for me, my first reaction was that one should not pay any attention to it. My resolution on the matter proved my first impression right!

Here in the Department of the Secretary of State no one has ever heard about any independent kingdom of Araucania-Patagonia, nor is there any mention of it in the Almanac of Gotha. I even called personally on the accredited *envoy extraordinary* to the Holy See, the attorney Lenti, who told me somewhat long-windedly what is already stated in the *Consul General*'s Letter. From the whole set-up, I came to only one conclusion: that there are some speculators at work who are trying to play every possible card to succeed in their endeavors. As for Lenti the attorney, I do not think that he warrants any great confidence, even though he is a cousin of the Vice-Regent of Rome.

They should have asked the Propaganda, but even there they did not know anything, and *the sole piece of information that the*

Vatican had was some *verbal* statements by the aforesaid Lenti himself, made to someone at the Papal Court; but no documents have ever been submitted. Nor could there be any, since this famous 'kingdom' only exists in the sick minds of a few people. Undoubtedly, there is a region called Araucania which borders on Patagonia, *but there can be no doubt whatsoever* that this is well within the acknowledged borders of the Republic of Chile. I was able to get some reliable details from a very good friend of mine, Bishop Infante Concha, who is a Chilean and well known to our dear Don Bosco, since he played an influential part in getting some Salesians for the missions in Chile. Bishop Concha, as a matter of fact, was also telling me that some Salesians who had just arrived in South America are destined to *precisely* those Araucanian-Patagonian provinces, which will very soon be linked with the capital by the railway now under construction.

This is all the information I have been able to obtain for you. You can send a few sentences as an evasive answer to Naples.

My cordial regards also to our beloved Don Bosco and your confreres. Believe me always,

Most devotedly and affectionately,
Bishop M. Antonini
Via Testa Spaccata, No. 16

d) AN ARTICLE IN *LA STAFFETTA*

Missions—Already groups of missionaries have set out for Araucania-Patagonia, while others are now preparing to follow them in order to instruct and baptize the tribes who have elected their own sovereign, though he is obliged to remain in Europe as of now, on account of international and financial agreements. But the missions, which have the great task of civilizing and educating natives who are ignorant of everything, are in need of generous support, no matter in what form it is given. A circular letter issued by the Rev. John Bosco of the Missionary Society of Turin, calls on all the Cooperators to help the sacrosanct undertakings by sending linen, clothing, sacred vestments and everything else. And since there is need of everything in that distant territory, it is essential to call on the generosity of the faithful. We are happy to give space in the columns of our newspapers to this news item, and earnestly appeal to the

public charity, so that everyone give the support requested according to their individual capacity. The donations may be sent either directly to the Rev. John Bosco in Turin, Via Cottolengo No. 32, or else to our office in Via Due Porte al Teatro Nuovo, Naples, No. 12, from whence they will be forwarded to Don Bosco. We gladly open a subscription to this end, since we have been thereto delegated by His Majesty, King Achilles I, here in Naples, with jurisdiction over all other representatives of the Sovereign here in Italy, and the contributions of generous Christians will certainly not disappoint us.

e) FATHER RUA WRITES TO THE EDITOR OF *LA STAFFETTA*

Turin, April 9, 1887

Commendatore Giuseppe P. Giustini
Editor of *La Staffetta,* Naples.

On several occasions already we have noticed in your esteemed newspaper references to the circular letter issued December last, by Rev. John Bosco, requesting help for the expedition of missionaries to Patagonia. This reference is accompanied by an invitation to address donations either to Don Bosco personally, or else to you as delegate for His Majesty, King Achilles I.

We are sincerely grateful for the kindness shown us in informing the public about the above circular letter and we thank you heartily for it; but we beg you to forgive us for pointing out that it was not Don Bosco's intention to open any subscription with any newspaper, not to inconvenience others, by asking them to collect contributions. The purpose of the circular letter was only to invite all our cooperators and other charitable souls to send whatever they, in their generosity, might deem adequate, directly here in Turin. This was the general understanding of the circular letter in question on the part of other newspapers who contented themselves with only publishing it in its entirety, or else merely giving a summary of it.

If donations were to be sent to someone like yourself, as delegate for His Majesty, King Achilles I, this might unfortunately present the matter under a political aspect which Don Bosco is

anxious to avoid, since he has no other purpose than that of extending the knowledge of our holy religion and with it, the civilization of pagan people and savages inhabiting Patagonia, Araucania and Brazil.

He authorizes me to ask you to be so kind as to print this letter in your esteemed newspaper, so as to dissipate any misunderstanding that might otherwise arise in the minds of your readers.

With esteemed gratitude, I am

Your obedient servant,
Rev. Michael Rua
Vicar to the Rev. John Bosco

f) REPLY TO THE ABOVE LETTER

12, Via Due Porte A Toledo
Naples, April 18, 1887

Legation of His Majesty the King
of Araucania-Patagonia, No. 32

To the Very Reverend John Bosco—Turin.

I have duly taken note of the contents of your kind letter of the 9th of April, and wished to point out that in my admiration for the holy mission of Your Reverence, I thought I might be of help with some modest propaganda work, since I have a newspaper of my own at my disposal. No political interpretation of any kind could have been given to the publication in *La Staffetta* of March 28th last, since in the letter which *I signed,* I did nothing more than exalt your own charitable gesture and explain the necessity of bringing enlightenment to natives who are still enslaved by idolatry and paganism, through the holy words of ministers of our Catholic faith.

But in order to dissipate any misunderstanding, I have drawn inspiration from what was said in your letter, mentioned above, and on the 15th of this current month I published a special correction in the columns of *La Staffetta,* with which I hope you will be thoroughly satisfied.

Perhaps you felt that I had gone too far in my enthusiasm in

wanting to support a cause of such sublime humanitarian value for which I have rendered service in whatever feeble measure I could for a number of years. But I beg Your Reverence to give credit to my faith, when I say that insofar as my August Sovereign is concerned, politics is something which must be treated with all due caution, without any blatant uproar in the press.

I would very much like to be enrolled among your faithful Cooperators, so if my poor services can be of any effective help, please consider me at your complete disposal, for I will be as faithful to you as I am to my most gracious sovereign, King Achilles I.

I trust that Your Reverence will continue working for the progress of civilization and the religion of our Fathers, for you will have many devout admirers.

I kiss your hand.

Your most obedient servant,
G. C. Giustini

48.

LETTER FROM THE BISHOP OF MONTEVIDEO TO DON BOSCO, AND HIS REPLY

A.

Revered and Beloved Don Bosco:

I do believe I have some claim to call on your prayers and occupy some place in your heart: how much do I need it!

I am taking advantage of the departure of my dear Father Lasagna to send you this letter, which our good friend will elaborate upon and duly comment, for he is well informed of all that concerns me, and has been for some time. I have no adequate words to express what I feel about your dear sons and daughters living in my troubled diocese. Colòn, Las Piedras and Paysandù are fortunate to practically experience the fruits of their zeal and unselfishness and I bless the hour when the Salesians took possession of those places. May the blessings of Heaven be upon them.

God has given Your Reverence great intercessory power with Our Most Holy Mother Mary; pray for us, venerable Father; pray for me, for my diocese and also for my dear brothers and family; be not surprised if I am so obtrusive, for I am in great need.

Father Lasagna will tell you in person all that you wish to know about this country. But I have one last thing to ask you, and that is that you set up one of your professional arts and crafts schools at Las Piedras even though there may be no more than three trades taught in it. There is an urgent need for it.

My filial affection to Your Reverence, and please do not forget me, do not forget me.

Most affectionately
Montevideo, July 20, 1886
Innocencio Maria Jeregui
Bishop of Montevideo

B.

Most Reverend Excellency:

Thank you for your kindness and the support given to our Salesians and the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, who unanimously look on you as their loving father.

My dear Father Lasagna brought me your letters. But what moved me most was what he told me about the charity and protection you have shown toward my sons who left their native land and their relatives in their desire to only save souls for God.

I can assure Your Reverence that the Salesians and I will always remember you every day, and that we have started saying special prayers so that God may comfort you in the trials He is sending you, and bless your vast and sorely persecuted diocese.

From what Father Lasagna tells me, I do not think it possible that we establish a technical school at Las Piedras because it seems to be isolated from the center of commerce: it would, however, be easier to open a school in Montevideo, if Your Excellency will continue to grant us your valuable support and if the Jacksons, to whom I have already written about this matter, choose to take it to heart.

Father Lasagna will be leaving for Montevideo in November

with a large group of missionaries, and will act upon this plan which is dear to your heart as well as mine, and which is especially dear to Jesus and Mary.

I foresee, Your Excellency, that if this undertaking will enjoy your own interest and patronage, as well as the interest and patronage of the pious people of the town, it will do much good for the welfare of souls and help our religion triumph throughout the Republic of Uruguay; in fact, the whole of South America will experience its beneficial influence.

I assure you of the prayers and respects of all Salesians, and as for myself, I implore your blessing and devoutly kiss your sacred ring...

Your most obedient servant,
(signed) Rev. John Bosco

49.

LETTER FROM DON BOSCO TO MR. JACKSON OF MONTEVIDEO

September 1, 1886

Most Illustrious and Worthy Mr. John Jackson:

Our dearest friend, Father Louis Lasagna, arrived here safely, thanks be to God, the evening of August 15th last, the day of my 71st birthday. Together with the cordial regards and good wishes of all my beloved sons in America, he also gave me your own hearty congratulations, as coming from a most worthy and eminent benefactor of the Salesians in Uruguay. Touched by and grateful for your great kindness, I wish to thank you most sincerely for your welcome good wishes, which I consider to be a certain guarantee that you will further extend your patronage to us, continuing your powerful support of my beloved sons, the Salesians. While thanking you from the bottom of my heart for all the great help you have given us so far, I am so convinced of what I have just said that I am relying fully on your charity to help us carry out other plans which still remain to be carried out in Montevideo, especially on behalf of poor and abandoned youth in these troubled times. I firmly believe that you are a blessed

instrument destined by Divine Providence to help me establish a Salesian Hospice in Montevideo for poor boys, together with an adjacent church dedicated as a shrine to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. For more than to anything else, we must look to such a hospice and shrine to bring about the lasting triumph of the Catholic religion in your Republic, a great comfort for the faithful and a source of greater glory for God.

I assure you most earnestly that in helping us establish this hospice and church, you will be doing something most agreeable in the eyes of God and most beneficial to the city of Montevideo. I shall be very happy therefore to send our dear Father Louis Lasagna back to your country and city, to work there with zeal and unselfishness, even though some people feel that it would be wiser to keep him here, for the general interests of the Congregation. Instead, I will see to it that he returns there soon, together with a substantial number of my sons and daughters of Mary Help of Christians, to help him bring to completion the work already begun and commence that which must still be undertaken.

So please, may you and your worthy family help us with the fortune that God gave you, while we Salesians will place ourselves at your total disposal to promote in this republic as much good as possible and also as quickly as possible, dedicating to this mission our hearts and time, our intelligence, our health and our very life.

Meanwhile, I bless you and thank you in advance, my dear and kind sir, and I assure you in the name of God that by so doing, you will call down on yourself and your family, as well as on your country, the most special blessings from Heaven, and more important still, it will assure yourself of a fine crown and eminent place in Heaven, such as I wish you to have and for which I pray with all my heart.

Lastly, I invoke once again the choicest blessings of Heaven for your worthy self, and all your relatives and friends for whom I and my boys will always pray, while I remain with esteem and gratitude in Our Lord Jesus Christ,

Your most devoted servant,
(signed) Rev. John Bosco

50.

LETTER TO FATHER RUA FROM FATHER CARTIER

Nice, November 28, 1887

Dear Father Rua:

I took advantage of the visit here of His Majesty, Dom Pedro, to call on you in Don Bosco's name and in the name of all his sons in Brazil. I arrived last Friday in Cannes and found very bad weather. I called on a few of Don Bosco's friends, among them the Rev. Guigou, and then went to the Hotel Beausèjour. I asked if I could see His Majesty. "That is impossible! The emperor is having breakfast now and will then be leaving at once for Nice." I insisted, and was told to write my name in the emperor's Visitors' Book and then leave my call card.

I wrote my name on the card, adding "on behalf of Don Bosco" before handing it over. At length I was ushered in and received by the Viscount De Novac, His Majesty's chamberlain. He is a very cordial and most distinguished man. He did serve in the French Navy as a ship's officer. He talked about the house at Sãn Paulo and of its amiable director, whom he had met and to whom he had spoken on several occasions. He promised me that he would use all his influence with the Emperor, on behalf of our houses in Brazil.

The emperor finished his meal at 11 o'clock and granted me an interview of a few minutes, after which he had to leave to catch the train taking him to Nice. He was most gracious toward me.

He shook my hand and, first of all, wanted to hear news about Don Bosco. "How is Don Bosco? Is he in Nice? He is a great man...a saint...I am very fond of him...he does so much good. I love his houses, especially the one at Sãn Paulo which accomplishes so much good." Before leaving, I told him that Don Bosco was sorry because he would very much have liked to come in person to recommend his sons in Brazil and Nice to the emperor. The emperor replied that he also was sorry that he had to leave Cannes so soon, because, he said, he would have liked very much to call at our house in Nice. The empress was just as gracious and as eager to tell me how she venerated Don Bosco himself and

admired his undertakings. She begged me especially to ask Don Bosco to pray for the emperor and for her.

Once I made my call, I returned to Nice. The emperor was to leave Cannes on Sunday, so there was no time to lose if I wanted a second audience with him. On my way back to the patronage, I quickly wrote a thank you letter and got together a few things to give to their Majesties. Father Fasani went to Cannes on Saturday. He was received by Dom Pedro to whom I gave two copies of *Don Bosco's Life* by Dr. D'Espiney, as well as three big pictures of Don Bosco, and a copy of *Don Bosco's Ideas.* The emperor was delighted with it all, and looking at Don Bosco's picture, said: "I will not be satisfied with just looking at his photograph...I want to see him in person...yes, I will go and see him."

Let us hope that this interview with the emperor of Brazil will be beneficial to our Congregation and give great glory to God.

Now to other matters, our finances are always warring against us, and we never know which way to turn. At the present time, we are endeavoring to pay our debts! May Divine Providence help us out!

Otherwise everyone within the house is well.

Deo Gratias.

Please give Don Bosco my most affectionate regards. I long to see him here in Nice; we all love him dearly and beg him remember us in his holy prayers, especially during the novena of the Immaculate Conception...

Rev. L. Cartier

51.

LETTER TO DON BOSCO BY FATHER RICCARDI

Almagro, Buenos-Aires, March 12, 1886

Dear and Most Reverend Don Bosco:

After my last letter of the 2nd of this month, several new things have come up which I think I should tell you about, because they will be welcome news. As I told you already sever-

al times in my letters, during our stay in Patagones, our beloved Bishop, thanks to his personal charm and his frank and cordial manner which distinguishes him as the first born son of our beloved papa Don Bosco, won first of all the admiration and then gradually the general liking, which might be called affection, of both the authorities and the population on both shores of the Rio Negro.

The first encouraging result of this was the warming up of the authorities towards the Salesians and then their reconciliation on the feast of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, as I had already written to you, through the services of Father Lazzero. During these days we had to give thanks to Our Lord and to Mary Help of Christians for another favor.

The commander-in-chief of the troops along the Rio Negro, who is also a secretary to General Winter, the governor, came especially from Viedma to Buenos Aires to enroll two of his sons in our school of Almagro.

In his early years he was educated in a Jesuit school. And since he was convinced that only a Christian education helps to form good and useful citizens, because knowledge alone is not enough for a man if it is not accompanied by religion, he has now entrusted the education of his own sons to the Salesians. We were happy to welcome them and told him we would do all that we possibly could for their benefit.

This, dear Don Bosco, represents a very important step forward for our missions, in my opinion.

Now, this same Señor Roa felt a very strong dislike, practically a fierce hatred and for quite some time, for Father Fagnano and the Salesians in general, and he sought implacably to cause us trouble in every possible way, through the columns of the newspaper *La Patagonia*, of which he is the owner and editor, and is published at Viedma. As a private individual, he took advantage of his position as second authority only to the governor to thwart all our plans for converting the poor Indians in Patagonia. Only God could measure all the harm he did to the Salesians and the missions, for He alone *intuetur et scrutatur cor* [sees and searches the heart].

We therefore rightly give thanks now to Our Lord and attribute this warming up toward us and confidence in us on the part

of such a man as an exceptional grace received from Mary Help of Christians, and as I said before, I feel that this is a harbinger of a more successful future for our missions.

Recently also our beloved Bishop received a letter from Father Milanesio, telling him that he had arrived at Malbarco[17] at the beginning of February, that so far he had baptized over 500 people, the majority of them being Indians; and that he has high expectations from this large population.

He succeeded in crossing the Andes there, reach Chile, and go down to the city of Chillan on some business for the mission.

He wrote to say that they suffered great hunger when they crossed from the Roca garrison to the Malbarco settlements and that they would certainly have perished, had Divine Providence not sent them, in that deserted place, a wandering stray cow, which had been lost for quite some time, across their path. The cow was half-wild, but they lassoed it and killed it, and found nourishment with its meat.

Father Savio is still working in the settlement of Santa Cruz, and we hope to hear from him soon.

On the 3rd of this month Father Beauvoir set out for *Cabo de las Virgenes* where gold mines have been discovered and a settlement is being created. This locality is about 250 miles, or perhaps even more, away from Santa Cruz.

As soon as Father Fagnano has settled some business which is keeping him at Patagones, he will leave for Punta Arenas, Tierra del Fuego and the Malvinas.

Dear Don Bosco, these are the missions that we have opened.

But alas, dear God, how understaffed we are! All the same, we will have to go along, the way we are, at least for now.

On his two-month tour of our houses in America, our beloved Bishop saw for himself how much each house has a crying need for more help. So instead of taking anybody away to help in the missions, he was obliged to give the cassock to several novices and ordain other confreres in order to fill local needs.

At Colòn he gave the cassock to six novices and three others at Almagro.

He also conferred Holy Orders in three places—one at Colòn,

[17] At the foot of the Cordilleras

another at San Nicolàs, and the third will take place here at Almagro within a few days.

The priests ordained at Colòn were Father Giovannini and Father Solari, while the cleric Zatti was ordained sub-deacon.

At San Nicolàs, three priests were ordained: Father O'Grady, Father Rinaldi and Father Zaninetti, while the clerics Garbari and Terzuolo received minor orders.

The third ordination, which will commence the day after tomorrow, will confer the priesthood on the clerics Milano and Paolini, the order of deacon on Piovano, and minor orders on the new clerics Capriolio and Baldan.

In spite of all this, we still do not know where to turn to provide a good pastor for the parish of Viedma, since Father Remotti is sick and an invalid, to the point that as soon as possible, he will have to be sent back to Buenos Aires, and Father Piccono cannot carry such a big burden on his shoulders.

But our beloved Bishop keeps his mind and his heart steadfastly up above, *unde veniet auxilium,* [whence help will come] being undaunted despite everything, and takes all these worries on himself, finding in them new vigor to push further ahead, being convinced that the more human aid fails us, the greater and more abundant will be the grace coming from above.

Dear Don Bosco, we shall return, God willing, to our beloved home in Patagones at the beginning of next April.

Pray and have others pray often for our beloved Bishop, so that Our Lord may keep him healthy, as He has so far done, so that he can carry to completion the holy work begun for the glory of God and of Mary Help of Christians, and the welfare of many poor souls. Please pray for all of us as well, your most loving sons of America, who love you so dearly in Our Lord, to whom we pray for you every day and even every hour, with burning filial affection. Please do not forget me either, for I am in great need of your holy prayers in order to worthily correspond to the countless favors for which I am indebted to God and to Mary Help of Christians.

Most affectionately in Our Lord,
Rev. Anthony Riccardi.

52.

LETTER FROM FATHER COSTAMAGNA TO FATHER RUA ABOUT THE HOUSE OF LA PLATA

Buenos Aires, July 5, 1887

Most Reverend and Dear Vicar, Father Rua:

Your Reverence has asked me for news about our house of La Plata. This letter responds to your request.

That can be described more as a mission than a house both because there are still only two brothers assigned to it, Father Scagliola and Anthony Ruggero, and because everything that the Salesians do there has the appearance of missionary work. Poor Italians! They have come to La Plata by the thousands hoping to make money, but without having to forfeit their faith, and as soon as they saw a fairly large church being built among their own homes (although it is only of wood, it has three naves), a number of them rejoiced. But, here in America the devil is very powerful. Just imagine that there are people who pay as much as five, six or even ten *scudos* to anyone who neglects to attend Mass. I know this from a very reliable source.

Now, aware as we are that greed for money does not only blindfold the eyes, but may even cause our compatriots to tear them out, who would not exclaim, along with me: "Poor Italians!" And who would easily tell a friend of his at home: "Go! You, too, go to America, to make it in America?" He may make it in America (though that is not at all certain) but he will also lose his soul thereby.

Yesterday I went to see our confreres at La Plata, to build a Via Crucis for them and preach for the conclusion of the devotions of the month of the Sacred Heart to Whom the church is dedicated.

Do you see? Even here in this Republic, the Salesians have a church of the Sacred Heart. It really looks as though the Sacred Heart has a special love for us poor Salesians; but He will certainly expect us to return this love in a very special measure.

When I attended the academic entertainment in honor of the

Sacred Heart of Jesus prepared by the boarders of the school of Mary Help of Christians of Almagro, I felt more and more convinced of what I said early on. As they finished a dialogue, one of the two girl boarders pronounced these lines: "Therefore, every girl here must be particularly devoted to the Sacred Heart; every girl must imitate our superiors, the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, who in their turn must imitate the Salesians, their brothers, who must imitate their Father, Don Bosco, who was chosen by Our Lord to be *a special apostle* of the Sacred Heart, as we will now prove.

Don Bosco is the *first Salesian* and the one who grafted his religious family to that of St. Francis of Sales, who was granted by God special visions of the Sacred Heart, while a spiritual daughter of his, Marguerite Alacoque, promoted the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

The Vicar of Jesus, the Pope, has entrusted Don Bosco with the task of building the first church in the world ever dedicated to the Sacred Heart.

Don Bosco has an immense desire of building churches dedicated to the Sacred Heart the whole world over, as it is proven by the church built in Rome, and the other churches built at La Plata, Sào Paulo in Brazil and the Tibidabo in Spain."

For now, that is all I have to tell you, save that you ask Don Bosco for a special blessing of Mary Help of Christians for me, and that he recommend this most loving and tenderly grateful son of His in Jesus Christ to the Sacred Heart.

Father Giacomo Costamagna

53.

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO DON BOSCO BY THE BOYS OF PATAGONES

A.

Patogones, May 19, 1886

Dear Father, Don Bosco:

The boys of St. Joseph school do not want this year to go by

without celebrating your patron saint's feast. We already know that you love us more than the boys in Turin, and we too, love you very much.

Oh, how much we would like to be present at the Oratory for your feast day, so that we could take part at the academic entertainments! But the least we can do is to offer you, as a gift, a Holy Communion.

Bless this son who is gratefully yours,

Nicolas Canero.

B.

Patagones, May 20, 1886

Beloved Father:

We have heard that you love us more than the boys in Europe and that it cost you a great sacrifice to send His Excellency, Bishop Cagliero, here to help us. We, too, love you very much. I am not a shoemaker, but a student in the school. We will all receive Holy Communion on your name-day, and the band will play until evening. Then we will have recreation. After playing in the band, we shall be given a glass of wine and some cookies. I am always studying: I attend Mass every Sunday very devoutly and I always say my prayers properly and receive Holy Communion. Beloved Father, please, I'm asking for your holy blessing, and kiss you.

Your loving son,
Octavio Cordoba

54.

REPORT ON THE MISSION IN PATAGONIA SENT TO THE PROPAGANDA FIDE

(See original text, pages 740–741 and 742. In Latin).

55.

REPORT ON THE MISSION IN PATAGONIA TO DON BOSCO

Carmen de Patagones, October 14, 1886

Ever dear and most Reverend Don Bosco:

I believe you will be happy to know, even though briefly, and *per summa capita*, the smaller or larger amount of good which, thanks to the grace and protection of God and of Mary Help of Christians, thanks to the prayers of His Holiness and of many zealous souls for the glory of God and the welfare of souls, your far-away sons have been able to do in little more than 14 months in this Patagonian mission, under the guidance and thanks to the example of their beloved Superior and Leader, Bishop Cagliero.

Many were the missions held and all of them were successful.

1. The first mission, led by our beloved Bishop, began on November 3rd and ended on November 29, 1885. During this time, 14 settlements of more or less inhabited centers were visited along the shores of Rio Negro, over a distance of 40 and more leagues away from this residence. There were 135 people baptized, as many confirmed, 16 weddings were celebrated and 252 First Communions.

2. The second, which might be described as a continuation of the first, began on December 3rd and ended on July 13th of the current year.

During this mission, which reached as far away as the Cordilleras (twice did Father Milanesio cross those mountains to go to Concepción in Chile), 40 settlements were visited and, thanks to the generous assistance of the Reverend Carthusian Monks of Grenoble,[18] the missionaries were able to instruct and baptize over 700 Indians from various tribes and 500 and more natives.

They performed the marriages of some sixty couples and

18 Father Rua wrote to the Bishop on July 31st: "Even the Superior of the great Carthusian Monastery of Grenoble gave some help to Don Bosco for our missions. Don Bosco would like you to mention, when you write, that thanks to the generosity of the Carthusians, you were able to undertake some work, and extend your sphere of action. Thanks to this given assistance you may, in case of need, do as Father Fagnano did, and take out another loan." The loan obtained by Father Fagnano amounted to ten thousand lire.

administered Holy Communion to no less than 2000 persons, all living in that remote territory.

With the contributions described above, Bishop Cagliero is now able to reply affirmatively to His Eminence, the Capitular Vicar of Concepción, who for many years has been urging you, dearest Father, to send him Salesians to whom he can entrust a hospice for poor boys of the town, in addition to the very important missions at Araucania in the South. There too (and I speak of Concepción), a number of vocations could be fostered with excellent prospects; from there also, missionaries could be sent forth periodically to meet with and relieve the priests who will soon be stationed at Marlbarco, Roca and elsewhere.

3. The third mission set out from here on August 27th and ended October 7th. Our zealous Father Milanesio, besides a number of settlements along the Rio Colorado, also visited the people living at Bahia Blanca and the surrounding areas. He instructed about 50 Indians, whom he later baptized, and also prepared over sixty of them to receive Holy Communion. Among these Indians there was an old woman aged 110 years, whose name was Francesca Raninqueo; another woman was 80, and a third one over 70.

4. Other missions on a smaller scale were held during this period and practically at regular intervals every month, now by one, now by another Salesian of these two houses, over an area of about 20 leagues at different missionary stations and nearby settlements.

5. We have been able to initiate something else this year on behalf of the poor Indians: this is a weekly visit to various Indian families living in the area around Viedma, to whom we teach catechism; they live here under military control. Not having other means available, we have even shouldered the burden of buying bread for them. This costs us several *scudos* every week. But it makes them come to catechism classes more readily. By means of material bread, may God help us succeed in providing for them also the spiritual bread.

6. We have even been able to give catechetical instructions to the soldiers who are called to attend Mass for this reason every Sunday.

7. We have also organized the Sodality of the Children of Mary among both of these populations, and they are growing.

8. The practice of the exercise for a happy death has been introduced with excellent results in our own schools for boys and in the middle schools for girls run by the sisters of Mary Help of Christians.

9. The ardent, indefatigable zeal of our beloved Bishop succeeded in the almost impossible task of establishing the Association of the Apostolate of Prayer for mothers and families and older girls, first in Patagones and then at Viedma. It has proved so successful that there are already several scores of members listed, over and above the women sponsoring it. Both these pious associations have set deeper roots among the *devoto femineo sexu,* and oh, may it please God, that thanks to them we may see some hint of faith also among the adults.

10. We have not omitted offering to these people the opportunity to be converted. We have organized Sunday talks and special sermons in the form of retreat by which they may gain the Holy Jubilee indulgence. We have initiated special instruction courses and given homilies both publicly and privately when we paid them visits or when they called on us. But we have to acknowledge very sadly that everything done so far has proved fruitless and useless. In these spiritual vintages, the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians have done much, in all that concerns the girls and the previously mentioned pious associations.

I. Their schools are altogether too small, just as most of our own are, being quite inadequate to accommodate the swarms of boys and girls who increase daily in number. For this reason the Bishop is worrying about how he can raise the money to enlarge those small houses.

II. The almost total reconstruction of the Viedma church, the preparations for and actual painting of the new parish of Patagones have cost us, apart from a good deal of trouble, the mere trifle of 50,000 francs. Likewise, the missions already undertaken and which still lie ahead of us entail considerable expenses; they cost us an average of from 2,000 to 3,000 lire each.

III. We will also be financially responsible for the new missionary stations at Marlbarco and Roca. You, dear Father, must

have understood this already some time ago, from the various petitions and IOU's which have been sent to you from here.

Although Divine Providence has always come to our aid *tempore opportuno,* and, recently, through the generosity of the Reverend Carthusians, to whom we are truly grateful in Our Lord, I really must confess that the missions are genuinely in need of the assistance and charity of our worthy Salesian Cooperators.

IV. While the Bishop and a few missionaries will brave the implacable rays of the sun amid the arid desert sands to travel up the course of the Rio Negro and the Neuquen as far as the Cordilleras, pass over them to reach Concepción in Chile, preaching and administering the Holy Sacraments to a number of savage tribes, among them that of the Cachique Sayuhueque and of Iancuche, which numbers over 2000 souls, Father Fagnano will risk the inconstant temper of the sea and of the seasons to go and take over his prefecture. In a few days he will go to Montevideo to make arrangements for his departure for Punta Arenas.

V. He will perhaps call on Father Savio and Father Beauvoir along the Rio Santa Cruz, to see if trips along the coast can be arranged from that junction.

Here, dear Don Bosco, you have a list of what has been accomplished, and of what still remains to be accomplished within the course of little over a year, with the help of God and of our Salesian Cooperators.

I will skip the description of things having relatively lesser significance—the solemn celebrations, the baptisms of Indians of this area, the meetings of pious associations, and many other minor celebrations—which keep our Bishop busy all the time. The Bishop is able to draw advantage from every small event, and neglects nothing which may in any way help to strengthen the spirit of Catholicism in this unfortunate territory. The dear Lord grants us to enjoy good health, and we hope that He will take into account at least the great and ardent aspirations of doing something useful on behalf of souls.

Beloved Don Bosco! It will be almost Christmas time when you will receive this. Kindly accept the cordial good wishes that your sons of Patagonia send you through me, as they all hope that

you will *ad multos annos* continue to enjoy this joyous feast day among your dear ones.

May the blessings of Heaven descend upon your venerable head as a steady rain, and be extended to all your members, and then spread to all of your sons and encourage them in the most holy undertakings.

Bless us, beloved Father, at the beginning of the New Year and may your blessing be a pledge of the blessings of Jesus and Mary.

In conclusion, may I ask that you remember me in your holy prayers at the feet of Our Mother, Mary Help of Christians, imploring the graces of which you yourself know I am particularly in need.

Your most loving and obedient son in Jesus,
Rev. Anthony Riccardi

56.

AN INTERVIEW BETWEEN A SON OF SAYUHUEQUE AND BISHOP JOHN CAGLIERO

A son of the Cacique, Sayuhueque, accompanied by his brother-in-law and an interpreter, John Salvo, entered the parlor in our house at Patagones on July 9, 1886, asking if he might speak with His Excellency, Bishop Cagliero. While someone was trying to locate the Bishop, one of the Salesians escorted the visitors to see the new church, which was being painted, and our school. When they returned to the parlor, they found the Bishop already waiting for them and speaking through the interpreter. This is what the Cacique's son said:

"Sir, first I wish to convey to you the cordial respects of my father, as well as greetings from all our people who are now resting and in good health. We are fairly well acquainted with the Christian faith and respect the Ministers of God and the Bishop especially. That is why we came to see you and bring our greetings." Then he took a call card from his pocket and handed it to the Bishop. It was from Commander Vincent Saciar, who recommended his protegé, the son of Sayuhueque, to the Bishop, asking him to admit him to our school as a dayboy and give him an education.

With his distinctive kindliness and warmth, the Bishop enjoyed the visit, read the written note, then he told the young man that the school was always open to his little brother, and that he could send him to us whenever he wished, adding: "When you go back home, please give my regards to your father and to the Commander and tell them that we are always at their service, both by sending a priest to teach the children about God and by helping them in any way we can."

" I know," the son of Sayuhueque answered, "you do much for our people. That is why we were very happy when we saw priests baptizing our children and the babies of our tribe."

"Good," the Bishop said. "How many people are there altogether?"

"What with grown-ups and children, we total one thousand and seven hundred."

"As much as that! That is quite a large number."

"That is true, sir."

"Are there other large tribes together with you?"

"Yes, sir; the Yancuches, who total nearly eight hundred."

"Are there already many Christians among you?"

"Yes, sir; the older people are not Christians as yet, but the children are, for two young missionaries baptized them quite recently this year. Among the grown-ups my father, who is still young, was baptized in Buenos Aires; they gave him the name of Valentino Alsina."

"Wonderful. Please tell your father that Father Domenico and I must really go and spend some time with you and that we may also send him two nuns to teach the girls. When we come, we will arrange to baptize anyone who wishes. All they have to do is to keep a few rooms at our disposal where people can come to receive instruction."

The Bishop then held out his hand to take his leave, but the young man appeared to have something more to say: "If you permit, sir, I would still like to tell you something."

"Why not? At your orders! Please speak out freely."

"Sir, I have come with a proposal on behalf of my father who sends you word that he would like you to send a priest to him, to reside with us and instruct our children."

The Bishop had not expected any such request from the young man, so he was quite surprised, and touched by his fine sentiments, answered:

"Excellent! I am very happy that there is such eagerness to be instructed and educated; we really must provide for it all. We shall send

you a priest who, even though he will not be able to stay there permanently, will come often to visit you."

"I am most grateful to you, sir," the son of Sayuhueque said, "we need this because we already live among Christians and therefore we have to be educated."

The Bishop reiterated his good wishes, and again asked him to convey his regards to his father and the commandant, Vincent Saciar; then he took leave of him, giving orders to a Salesian to see if he needed anything. Then they went into the dining room where a modest repast was served to them, after which they departed very satisfied, promising to come back some other time to call on the Bishop and confer with him.

Rev. Piccono

57.

THE PRIESTS OF DON BOSCO IN FRANCE

The Salesian houses in France have now entered into a highly important phase of their religious and social activity in our country: they are beginning to provide vocations for the Salesian Congregation and for the priesthood. It is, therefore, a question of training a large number of young men in higher studies and priestly virtues, all of which requires financial resources. We also know, from a thoroughly reliable source, that the Salesian Cooperators, especially in dioceses where there are as yet no oratories, would support the intentions of Don Bosco and channel their regular offerings to this objective. In so doing, they should send contributions to the Salesian priest, Rev. Louis Cartier, at St. Marguerite, a suburb of Marseilles, or to Father Albera, Provincial of the Salesian Houses in France, at Rue des Romains 9, Marseilles.

Don Bosco desires something more. He wishes that his French friends increase the amount of their alms for this purpose, and ensure the proper formation of his priests in France with foundations.

He promises that he will pray fervently to Our Lady Help of Christians for all those who will be of assistance to him in this work of capital importance.

These few lines are offered to the attention of the whole Catholic press, and above all to those religious weeklies which are interested not

only in the development of the Salesian Congregation, but also in the increase of vocations for the priesthood.

It is known that the Salesian schools do not train only priests for the Salesian Congregation, but have also, in many dioceses in Italy, literally repopulated the major seminaries.

58.

THE URSULINE NUNS OF PIACENZA WRITE TO FATHER RUA

November 1, 1886
Piacenza, St. Ursula School

Very Reverend Sir:

I do not have the courage to write directly to your Venerated Father, Don Bosco, although I would only be performing a duty of gratitude toward him if I did, but I hope that you, Reverend Sir, will kindly interpret my sentiments to him.

It is exactly a year ago that, in a moment of dire anxiety for our community, I sought a prayer and a blessing from your Venerable Father. In his inexhaustible charity, he was so gracious as to give even more than that for which we had asked him, for he replied that, with his orphans, he would commence a novena and that our community was to begin it, too, at the same time. This was already a guarantee to us that our great predicament, which seemed practically desperate, had good hopes for a solution. But Don Bosco said: "Our Lord will grant the grace, in a manner, however, that will be more advantageous to your souls." That's exactly what happened. We acknowledge it with gratitude. Our Lord did answer our prayers far beyond our expectations!

If we only could show our gratitude becomingly, by effectively helping him in his holy undertakings!

But what can we do, with our meager possibilities? As a token of her good will, our Reverend Mother Prioress is sending 30,000 lire, and asks that you accept them in consideration of the good will with which they are offered. At the same time, we implore a special blessing and a few prayers for our Community, which sadly feels shaken by these critical moments. We recom-

mend especially, not only our novitiate, but also our boarding school where there are so few young boarders! All to the glory of God!

Lastly, I would also venture to ask Don Bosco to intercede for me so that I may obtain a very important grace, all to the glory of God.

May I then kindly ask you, Reverend Father, to convey our petitions to your Venerated Superior and plead our cause with him.

Please forgive my boldness and believe me with the greatest esteem,

Your most humble and devoted servant,
Maria Isabella De Pol
Ursuline Nun and Salesian Cooperator.

59.

LETTER FROM MR. SUTTIL TO FATHER RUA

November 4, 1886

Reverend Father Rua:

For the glory of God and of Mary Help of Christians, and in order that the value of our beloved and holy Superior Don Bosco's prayers may be more widely known in all truth, I feel that it is my duty, as though I were before the Eternal Judge, to declare what follows:

It is now two weeks today that I was desperately anxious because of an alarming turn for the worse. A quantity of pus, which alarmed even my physicians, came out of a new sore on my left leg. The leg was tightly dressed up and I was troubled with uncertainty until the next visit from the physicians on the following Saturday. What a surprise for me and for the doctors (something which could not be concealed) when we realized that the leg was in perfect condition! The cure was certain. This occurred some time between 7:30 and 8 o'clock in the morning, the hour when our Saint says Mass. Later on, our good Festa called to assure me, in the name of Don Bosco, of my *good health.* I have

steadily improved from that day, at a goodly pace. In fact, the very next day, which was a Sunday, I was able to get into a coach and drive to Church for benediction. My recovery is entirely due to our holy Don Bosco, to whom Jesus and Mary can never deny a thing. May Our Lord and the Virgin Help of Christians be blessed and thanked, and may Don Bosco be repaid a thousand times for the immense grace obtained for me; for the ulcerous infection which threatened my poor leg was actually threatening my life.

After God and Mary, I give thanks to my beloved father, Don Bosco. The cleric Festa will confirm all that I have said here.

Your most affectionate son,
G. Suttil

60.

ACADEMIC ENTERTAINMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE XV CENTENARY OF THE CONVERSION OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Turin, June 2, 1886

Sir:

As you already know, this year and indeed during these very days occurs the XV Centenary of the conversion of that great doctor of the Church, St. Augustine, whose conversion represents one of the most outstanding events in ecclesiastical history and in the history of civilization, both on account of the causes which brought it about and for the fortunate consequences it had for religion and society. Both the Salesians and their pupils are anxious to celebrate this event in the best possible way and have therefore planned to commemorate it by some sort of an academic entertainment at which a dramatic play, in Latin hexameters, will be performed. The play will bring out the event which led up to the conversion of Augustine, the event that took place in Milan and also a little later at Ostia. There

will also be compositions in prose and poetry read during the intervals. All of this will endeavor to underline the great significance and beneficial influence of this event on learning and literature. Performances will also have, as an additional feature, vocal music to recall the successful impact that sacred music had on the conversion of Augustine. I would be truly grateful if you could attend this scientific-literary commemoration, which will commence at 2:30 in the afternoon of the 10th of this month at the Salesian house of St. John the Evangelist in Corso Vittorio Emanuele II.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to wish you all of God's choicest blessings and to remain with deep esteem,

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

COMMEMORATION OF THE XV CENTENARY OF THE CONVERSION OF ST. AUGUSTINE.

1. Sonata
2. The speculative-dogmatic theology of the Latin Church in the 4th century and the new, specific direction given to it by St. Augustine.
3. Cantata: Fassò's *Ave Maria.*
4. Beneficial effects produced by Augustine's conversion in the field of philosophy.
5. *De Sancto Aurelio Augustino. Actus primus.*
6. *De Civitate Dei* and the renewed constitution of the general principles of history.
7. Cantata: Stradella's *Preghiera* (Prayer).
8. Literature according to Augustine after his conversion.
9. *De Sancto Aurelio Augustino. Actus secundus.*
10. The gratitude of Christianity to the converted Augustine. Poem.
11. Cantata: Capocci's *Laudate pueri.*

61.

LETTER FROM CARDINAL ALIMONDA TO BISHOP CAGLIERO

Turin, November 30, 1886

Most Dear and Reverend Excellency:

I still owe thanks to your dear and Reverend Excellency for the affectionate good wishes that you were so kind as to send me for the feast of St. Cajetan and the precious, comforting news of your mission which made your letter even more dear and welcome. Please do not blame me for my delay in writing you, for if anything is at fault, it is time which gobbles up the days and months so rapidly for one who has a responsibility far superior to his strength. Anyway, how much esteem and love I have in my heart for you may have been made known to you by people at the Oratory, where I call several times during the year to spend a few pleasant hours both with Don Bosco and his religious family.

All the news your Excellency sent me deserves to be made known for the edification of the public and I have made a decision on my own to have them printed in l'*Unità Cattolica.* Now, I hope you will receive my thanks by Christmas time, so that I can fulfill my obligation of proffering, at the same time, my most cordial and best wishes for your happiness on that occasion.

When Our Lord came, the whole world was dark; the whole world was like Patagonia; but He gave forth light, spread peace around him, and ensured the salvation of Mankind.

Ah, may the land now entrusted to the solicitous and zealous care of Your Excellency soon enter the realm of light, to know and benefit from the privilege of redemption!

May God preserve the first bishop ever to bring the good news to these unfortunate people with youthful strength, despite the hard work, and may He comfort you in spirit. This is my prayer with which, during Holy Advent and the feast in honor of

the birth of the Infant Jesus, I will accompany you and your worthy confreres in your hard work and glorious endeavors. But you should not forget me in your fervent prayers, for I am well aware how influential to the ears of Our Lord is the voice of him who suffers while laboring to widen the borders of His Holy Realm.

It is superfluous that I send you news of Turin, for you will often receive it from your fellow Salesians; nor could I tell you anything cheerful. Among other things, you will be sorry to hear of the death of our dear Bishop Chiesa, who has gone to take his place in Heaven before he could take possession of his new See at Casale! I recommend him to your prayers.

Today I spent nearly the entire day at the Valsalice school. There was the prize awards ceremony, which was very touching and interesting, like all the Salesian feasts. But nothing held our interest as much as our beloved Don Bosco, who was there with us; jovial, serene and tranquil as always, no worse in health, although still handicapped by his usual infirmities. May Our Lord preserve him for many other fine undertakings in the future; among them we must not overlook the departure of a brave group of missionaries which is scheduled to take place the day after tomorrow. I do not wish to forego the pleasure of attending the ceremony, nor of praying that all the blessings of Heaven may descend over that chosen group of missionaries.

It is now time for me to close. My priests and relatives all kiss the ring of Your Excellency with reverence and implore your blessing. I embrace you fondly, dearest friend, brother and spiritual son, and devoutly kiss your hand while deeming myself fortunate to be,

Most affectionately your servant in Jesus Christ,
Cajetan, Cardinal Alimonda, Archbishop

62.

LETTER FROM THE ORATORY TO DON BOSCO ON THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

a) The bookbinders

Oratory of St. Francis of Sales, January 27, 1886

Dearly Beloved Father:

Will you allow your bookbinding sons to show that they are not inferior to their companions in expressing their gratitude, esteem and veneration, such as they feel in their hearts? Allow us, dear Father, to convey to you collectively and unanimously, our good wishes and congratulations for your name-day on the feast of the Evangelist of Patmos, St. John the Evangelist.

How much we would like to tell you, if we only had a chance to talk with you and hear you say a few words of encouragement to us, to urge us to be good and pursue the path of honor and virtue, so that we may be a comfort to you, dear Don Bosco. The superiors you gave us to guide us, love us, and since they look up to you for their inspiration and to that angel of virtue, St. John, they will surely not fail to lead the wayward to His loving heart and keep in his love all those who, like all of us, want to be children of God, since we are all Don Bosco's children.

This is what we prayed for and we will continue to pray for, that Our Dear Lord may preserve you long for the welfare of all, but especially for the benefit of the bookbinders who hope so much and who entrust themselves confidently to the arms and the love of their dear Father Don Bosco and their Superiors.

(Signature follows)

b) The blacksmiths

Dearly Beloved Father:

On the occasion of the solemn feast of St. John the Evangelist, the boys in the blacksmiths' shop, together with

their assistant, promise their beloved father, Don Bosco, that they will be good and grateful and that they will pray to Our Lord for him and offer up their Communions so that God may preserve him for many years, while they wish him all the bounty of Heaven, kiss his hand respectfully and humbly undersign their names

(Signature follows)

c) The printers

Dearly Beloved Father:

Today, the feast of St. John the Evangelist, we boys of the printing shop promise you, dearly beloved father, Don Bosco, that we shall love you and be grateful to you and will pray to God to shower the blessings of Heaven on you and grant you a long and successful life for our spiritual and temporal welfare. Reverently do we kiss your hand and sign our names hereto.

Your most devoted sons in Jesus and Mary,
(Signatures follow).

d) The carpenters

Dearly Beloved Father:

Just as all good men avail themselves of any happy, suitable occasion to do their duty and express their gratitude to those who love them and do good to them, so do we, the artisans in the carpenters' workshop, together with our assistant, take advantage of this propitious occasion of your name-day, to thank you for all the benefits you heap on us constantly for our spiritual and temporal good. As a token of our gratitude, we promise that we shall respond to the care you have shown toward us, to the best of our ability.

Please accept the assurance of our affectionate respect and allow us to offer you with hearts that are so indebted to you, a fine bouquet of Communions and prayers this day, in order that God may preserve you for a long time for our own good and the welfare of others.

Meanwhile, may we ask you to pray for us who, although unworthy, sign our names here below.

(Signature follows)

e) The casting typographers, stereotypers and copperplate engravers

Dearly Beloved Father:

On this auspicious feast of your name day, our heart is full of joy, for we are able to express a little of our love and gratitude to you. We shall always love you and feel eternal gratitude for what you have done for us and always shall we implore John, the Apostle of charity, who is so perfectly imitated by you, to obtain a most generous reward for you.

We beg you remember us in your fervent prayers and we promise you that we shall try to repay your good deeds towards us with exemplary conduct, with mutual love and by living like true Christians.

Please accept these promises from our grateful hearts and believe us to be always,

(Signature follows)

f) The tailors and shoemakers

Oratory of St. Francis of Sales
January 27, 1886

Dearly Beloved Father:

On this day, dedicated to St. John the Evangelist, your sons, the tailors and shoemakers, rejoice because they have an opportunity of expressing the purest and sincerest love with which they love their father, Don Bosco, and so that we may prove it, all of those whose names are undersigned here below, promise him something:

Tailors

Peter Cenci -	4 Communions and four visits to church on your behalf
Palmiro Caccia -	2 Communions
Victor Valenza -	Idem.
Paul Maffeo -	1 Communion, and 1 visit in church
Charles Mazzuchelli -	3 Communions and 3 visits in church
John Ferrero -	3 Communions and 3 visits in church
Paul Gili -	1 visit
Joseph Sandri -	6 visits
Natal Rosso -	2 Communions and 4 visits
Alex Rosso -	2 Communions and 4 visits
John Andisio -	2 Communions and 4 visits
James Martinoli -	2 Communions and 4 visits
Joseph Martinoli -	1 Communion and 2 visits
Dominic Delfrate -	1 Communion and 3 visits
Peter Razzetti -	1 Communion and 3 visits
Mariano Cesaretti -	2 Communions
Michael Brossa -	4 Communions
Philip Bossi -	1 Communion
John Ghibaldi -	2 Communions and 2 visits
Alex Carlino -	1 Communion and 1 visit
Louis Fabbri -	1 Communion and 3 visits
Dominic Ganna -	1 Communion and 3 visits
Joseph Abete -	3 visits

Shoemakers

Peter Perlo -	promises that he will pray for you
Natale Cerutti -	2 Communions
Francis Cerecole -	5 Communions
Bernadine Meotto -	2 Communions and 3 visits
George Tomatis -	2 Communions
Alfred Barbero -	2 Communions
Anthony Locatelli -	2 Communions and 3 visits
Joseph Bruno -	1 Communion
John Bona -	will pray for you very especially
John Olivero -	3 Communions and 3 visits

Joseph Bruno -	3 Communions
Stephen Cortese -	3 Communions and 2 visits
John Armando -	4 visits
John Fassio -	2 Communions and 2 visits
John Garrone -	1 Communion
Joseph Garrone -	1 Communion
Charles Prete -	will pray for you very especially
Gaudenzio Barattini -	1 Communion
Bartholomew Girnero -	1 Communion
Crescentius Fenocchio -	1 Communion and 3 visits
Joseph Picca -	1 Communion
Michael Rossi -	1 Communion and 3 visits
Xavier Ferrero -	6 Communions and 6 visits
John Testore -	2 Communions and 6 visits
Joseph Audisio -	2 Communions and 4 visits
James Rossi -	2 Communions and 5 visits
Louis Borgna -	1 Communion and 1 visit
Joseph Orella -	1 Communion and 1 visit
John Picca -	1 Communion and 1 visit

The Assistant, cleric Travaini, assures you that he has offered up Holy Communion for you now for a number of years every day and that he promises he will continue to do so.

In asking that you graciously accept our little offering, we implore you at the same time to bestow on us the blessing of Mary Help of Christians.

63.

TWO LETTERS FROM FRANCE ADDRESSED TO DON BOSCO AND HIS REPLIES

La Croix par Nevers (Nierre) January 3, 1887.

Reverend Father:

I had promised that I would not pester you again with my troubles nor talk any more about my marriage; but I am now on the threshold of the wedding and I am afraid.

I appeal to God for a last word of advice, through you.

Almighty God has granted that you read not only into the hearts of people known to you personally but also into the hearts of those of whom others tell you. You know me, Father, and I implore you to tell me if I should marry Mademoiselle Madeleine Delamolle and be sure of Christian happiness here in this world. Are we made for each other?

Please be so good as to answer me as soon as you possibly can, and also I beg you to please burn this letter that I am writing.

My most respectful regards, Reverend Father. Please pray to Our Lady Help of Christians for me and all those who are dear to me.

Albert de Lenforme

Reply.

Turin, January 8, 1887

Monsieur:

You may marry Mlle. Delamolle with a peaceful mind, for she will make you happy in this world, provided that both of you go often with the proper disposition of spirit to Holy Communion.

I recommend my orphans to your charity; pray for me and may God bless you and the Holy Virgin be ever your guide.

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco.

B.

Paris, January 8th

Reverend Father:

Although I do not have the honor of being known to you, I dare to ask some advice from your experience. Some people very close to me saw you on the occasion of your visit to Paris and told me about your great spirit of faith. That is why I am calling on you as I explain why I take the liberty to write to you.

I had been thinking of marrying a young lady now for some

years, for I felt a profound love full of respect for her. But this plan has now fallen through quite suddenly on account of matters concerning the marriage contract.

Reverend Father, would you please examine this matter in the presence of God, and then let me know the outcome of your pious, charitable reflections. Should I attempt to renew the relationship, which has thus been broken off? In such a marriage would I find the possibility of happiness in this world and in eternity? Might not this collapse of my hopes mean that God has called me to another life?

My most respectful regards, Reverend Father. I beg you accept the enclosed offering for your undertakings.

Please address your answer to Monsieur X, c/o the Chaplain of the Military Hospital De Gros Caillou, 106 Rue St. Dominique, Paris.

Reply.

Turin, January 10, 1887

Dear Friend in Jesus Christ:

Ask advice from your Spiritual Director. If he says yes, all you have to do is to make sure that the lady of whom you speak goes to Holy Communion. As to the rest, you may be at peace. I am praying for you and recommend my orphans to you.

May God abundantly reward you for the 50 Francs, you have graciously sent me.

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco.

64.

LETTER FROM DON BOSCO TO PRINCE AUGUST CZARTORYSKI

Turin, January 5, 1887

Dear Prince:

Thank you for your kind thought in sending your New Year's gift for the poor children and for sending me with it what was

most pleasing of all: the testimony of the charitable solidarity of all my Cooperators and the assurance that I can rely on their generous contributions.

May God reward you and your family and bestow all His Blessings on you.

I am hopeful that you are well in health and that your father, the Prince, has now fully recovered from the pain he was suffering after the blow inflicted on him.

In any event, rest assured that we never stop praying to God for you and your affairs.

Please accept with the expression of my gratitude the assurance of my affectionate devotion.

Rev. John Bosco

65.

TWO CIRCULARS FROM DON BOSCO AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE

A.

Turin, March 1, 1887

Beloved Sons in Jesus Christ:

The terrible scourge of the earthquake, which brought such a tremendous catastrophe on the Western Ligurian Riviera on the 23rd of last month, and of which you have already been informed, now obliges me to write this letter, to recommend several things, which I think, are most important.

First of all, I call on you to give thanks to God and to the Holy Virgin Help of Christians, Who spared us the sorrow of losing any lives among our people, despite the fact that we have several houses located in the area stricken by the disaster. To this end, every Director should schedule a day which he feels is best indicated, on which to exhort the Salesians and the boys to make a good Confession and a good Communion and to say five mysteries of the Rosary for the repose of the souls of the people who were killed under the ruins of their houses. The *Te Deum* will

then be sung in the evening of the day scheduled, which will end with the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

Since we have suffered considerable material damage—indeed, our house at Bordighera was so hard hit that we will have to rebuild it—we must all unite in economizing on all our expenses in every house, so that we may provide for this unexpected emergency.

On the other hand, the damage suffered is great: houses to be rebuilt, poor people to be sheltered, orphans to be cared for—and the response to all this can only come from public charity. We are afraid that our benefactors will not be anymore in the condition to give us that assistance which we badly need.

I therefore recommend that no one undertake any building projects this year—no repairs, no purchases and no work—unless absolutely dictated by necessity. Each and every individual Salesian should make whatever sacrifice and endure whatever privation may be required of him, cutting down on the expenses of traveling, books, clothing and everything else insofar as possible, both within the house and outside it. With such an industriousness, we shall be able to make up at least in part for the damage suffered, repair the demolished house and resume the activity of religion and charity which are so essential to the greater Glory of God and the welfare of souls.

Avail yourselves of his tragic event to make known to our benefactors with whom you may have dealings the extent of our predicament, thus encouraging them to help us with their charity. A simple account of the situation may well inspire pious reflections in them.

Do not forget to recommend that the boys properly behave themselves, be devout toward Our Lady and live in the grace of God, so as to merit their protection at all times and everywhere, especially in sudden, unforeseen perils such as the recent earthquake which in one moment reaped thousands of victims.

But whereas, on the one hand, you will explain that such disasters are the outcome of the Wrath of God and that they cease, thanks to His Mercy, just as the Church says: *Ut mortalium corda cognoscant et, te indigante, talia flagella prodire, et, te miserante, cessare;* on the other hand, do not neglect to urge everyone to have the utmost trust in God, Who holds the whole world in His

Almighty Hands and Who has given us His Word that not a hair on our heads will fall without His consent: *et capillus de capite vestro non peribit.*

I avail myself of the propitious occasion to thank you for your prayers on my behalf and to ask you to continue with them, with the additional resolve to save your own souls by living like good religious. For the knowledge that my beloved sons live a holy life, saving souls and giving honor to the Church, is of greater comfort to me than anything else and it helps me forget my woes and injects, so to speak, new life into me.

Once again I implore God's blessing and the protection of Mary Help of Christians for you and all the boys living in your house, and remain,

Most affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco.

B.

Turin, March 1, 1887

Worthy Cooperators:

Your lively interest in all matters concerning the Salesian undertakings has me believe that you will be pleased if I report to you briefly on what has happened to us during these recent days.

You certainly must already have been informed about the terrible disaster of the earthquake which, on February 23rd last, wrought such terrible havoc, demolishing and destroying palaces and hovels alike in an instant and reaping a great many victims in Liguria.

Now, with my soul full of gratitude toward God, I will first of all inform you that we did not suffer any loss of lives nor casualties, despite all the many people who died or were hurt. The Salesians, the sisters, the boys and girls, pupils in all of our houses, were not only spared from death, but even from any wound or bruise. The only harm suffered was dismay, fear and indescribable anxiety which took hold of everybody and the insurmountable terror at the idea of being crushed under the ruins, which in many spots along the Riviera, obliged people to sleep for a num-

ber of nights and live for a number of days camping out as best they could in the open air, in courtyards and gardens.

But though we may have been saved from personal bodily harm, we have nevertheless suffered grievous material damage. In Piedmont and Tuscany, our houses and churches suffered nothing more than cracks in the walls, displacement of roofs, shifting of staircases. The houses located on the western Ligurian Riviera, which was particularly hard hit, have suffered tremendous damage. Among these, the facade of the church of the Alassio school is about to fall, while the house of Vallecrosia, close to Bordighera, is so battered that it will not be habitable again before extremely expensive repairs have been undertaken. It has already been evacuated and the public schools and the adjacent school for girls had to be closed. Some of the girls had to be sent home to their own families, and others who have no parents or whose homes have been destroyed had to be transferred to Nizza Monferrato.

As you see, this tragic disaster imposes great sacrifices on us, in order not to lose the schools, which have already cost us enormous hardships, which we cannot neglect without great damage to souls. This entails traveling expenses, repairs and maintenance of both boys and girls whose parents have likewise suffered damage as a consequence of the earthquake; in a word, we find ourselves face to face with exorbitant expenses such as would never have been conceived possible a few days ago.

I would like to point out, among other things, that the house of Vallecrosia is one of our most essential institutes for the interests of religion and the welfare of souls, since the Protestants are firmly established in that area and use all of their talents to lure the people of both sexes to join them so that they may steal their faith away. It must therefore be restored no matter what the cost.

But how can this be done? I do not mean to lose heart. Although physical infirmities prevent me from going out personally to beg for the funds of which I am in need, I hope to remedy such a tragic situation through my Cooperators, to whom I humbly appeal for their charity.

I know how warm your hearts are and feel that it is superfluous that I say a lot in order to urge you to come to my assis-

tance. I only ask you to reflect that public calamities such as this should serve as an incitement to good Christians, to induce them to bring relief to the deplorable consequences and, I might even say, to do the impossible in order to make good the damage done.

When exercised under such circumstances, besides being sweeter to both the giver and the receiver alike, charity also becomes a hymn of thanksgiving to the Lord for having spared us in the midst of such disaster; it also has the effect of a powerful prayer calling on His Mercy to save us from further disasters which might recur. God Himself told us that alms will obtain His Mercy for us and liberate us from Death: *eleemosyna a morte liberat et facit invenire misericordiuam.*

Both the Salesians and myself, desolate as we were, found great comfort during these past days in the news that a number of our benefactors living in the same disaster area had been saved, as if by a miracle. We attribute this grace to the charity they have always displayed toward us; for it is in such a way that Our Lord usually repays us a hundredfold, as He promised in the Gospel, to all those who give alms for love of Him.

This particular grace, as many others granted in the past, is a convincing proof that God and the Holy Virgin Help of Christians extend their special protection to those who, when they are able, give to us in their charity; it is a proof that God and the Virgin Help of Christians graciously hear the prayers we offer up in our houses for our benefactors, upon whom we call down the choicest blessings every day.

For my part I assure you that I will pray and urge others to pray for you and your families every day. Since we have received benefits from your charity, we shall gather ever more lovingly around Mary Help of Christians, Mother of Him Who holds the whole world in His Almighty Hands, praying to her with a constantly increasing fervor that she look after you from Heaven, extending her mighty, maternal mantle over you and liberating you now and forever from every evil.

Now there is nothing more for me to say than repeat: I implore and await your charity, so that I may repair the damage done to me by the earthquake. It does not matter if you give but a few cents in alms. Just as it is true that united we stand, so it's true that your

many modest offerings joined together may make up the money needed to repair the damage done and accomplish important things.

Please pray for me too and for the success of our institutions which, in His Divine Goodness, Our Lord has entrusted to our care and permit me to remain with the deepest gratitude,

Your most obedient servant,
Rev. John Bosco

N.B. As an acknowledgment of any personal or collective alms that may be sent to me at Via Cottolengo No. 32, Turin, either by postal money order or registered mail, a printed note will be sent to the donor as a receipt, which will be also an expression of my thanks.

66.

CIRCULAR LETTER REGARDING A MEETING TO BE HELD AT SAMPIERDARENA

April 18, 1887
Oratory of St. Francis of Sales in Turin.

Worthy Salesian Cooperators:

My earnest desire to see all the kind people who have in some way given me assistance on behalf of endangered youth gathered together, induces me eagerly to avail myself of this propitious occasion of my visit to Sampierdarena on my way to Rome, and hold a pious meeting of Salesian Cooperators from Genoa and the surrounding area.

The pious gathering will take place in the noble basilica of St. Syrus in Genoa at 2:30 in the afternoon of Thursday next, the 21st of this month.

His Excellency, the Most Reverend Bishop Sanatone Magnapo, the venerated and worthy Archbishop of Genoa, gives us well-founded reason to hope that he will preside at the pious gathering, conferring luster on it with his presence, as all of us hope he will.

he Distinguished orator, Msgr. Canon Omodei-Zorini, has agreed in his exquisite kindness to deliver a talk to the assembly.

To the greater consolation of all, I wish to recall that the Supreme Pontiff grants a plenary indulgence to anyone attending this meeting.

With the hope that our worthy Cooperators will give their kindest attention to this invitation, I pray that Our Lord bestow His greatest Blessings over them all and over those dear to them, and while begging you all to remember me in your prayers, I am honored to be meanwhile with great esteem and deep gratitude,

Your most obedient servant,
Rev. John Bosco

(Attached were the customary announcements and the schedule of events.)

67.

SPIRITUAL FAVORS GRANTED ON THE OCCASION OF THE CONSECRATION OF THE SACRED HEART CHURCH

(See page 763 of the original text. In Latin.)

68.

HOMILY DELIVERED BY CARDINAL PAROCCHI AT THE CLOSE OF THE ROMAN FESTIVITIES AT CASTRO PRETORIO

Et ego si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad meipsum

[And when Iam lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all things to myself]. St. John 12: 32

Fifteen years ago everything here was silence and solitude. Now, after many struggles, behold the most lovely new temple ever to be erected in Rome during the past ten years and to be consecrated to the

Almighty. It is a temple where mortal artistry, the generosity of the whole Peninsula and the charity of the Catholic world vied with each other, it is a temple where the might of two Popes generously smiled over the indefatigable genius of a humble priest.

This noble temple which is well worthy of the name, is the apotheosis of the Divine Heart. Conceived at first in the mind of a fervent apostle of the Sacred Heart, it was entrusted to priests who through their heavenly Patron and their Founder, drew inspiration from revelations of the inner life of Jesus Christ and will, may we not hope in vain, cause to gush forth, from these majestic ruins at Castro Pretorio, even as He did once in Sion, the fountain predicted by Isaiah and flow vitally throughout Eternity.

In the twilight of its *Encaenias,*[19] the majestic building is illuminated by fresh glory in today's solemnity. The Ascension is the apotheosis of the Divine Heart: and if a generous heart will exult whenever it is able to do good, then the Heart of Jesus rejoiced with an ever greater jubilation when, as it palpitated at the Right Hand of the Father, He manifested himself as Lord and Arbiter of all hearts.

Thus was the prophecy fulfilled: When I will be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself. *Et si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad meispum.* On this day in the precincts of the new temple, Jesus invites our hearts to be the trophies of His Heart. Who is there who would venture to refuse this invitation?

Anyone who heeds the voice of the heart will recognize its secret consolations. To dry the tears of those who are mourning, to visit the hovels, to still the hunger, to clothe the pauper in his nakedness, to assist the dying in the hour of their passing, bury the bodies of the dead in a Christian grave, to pour the balm of the Divine Blood over the souls suffering in the prison of Purgatory, to care for the conversion of sinners, to open to the light of faith minds that are blinded, to lift up those who are oppressed, to defend the sacrosanct rights of justice: these are the consolations of the human heart, the ones which prepare it to receive the eternal ones. Were not these indeed the consolations preferred by the Divine Heart? And yet, I should say that during His earthly Pilgrimage Jesus was not successful in satisfying his generous passion to do good. During thirty-three years of pilgrimage, worn out by so much suffering, followed by so many troubles, Jesus acquired the merit of redeeming not one, but an infinite number of worlds. The fulfillment of His Mighty Design was mainly reserved, however, to the Hereafter, during the

[19] *Encaenia* is the term used for the festive dedication of the temple of Jerusalem.

Life that in Freedom and Might, He was to live His Sublime Glory. His Father, Who regulates the beginnings and the course of all things, in weight, number and measure, wished His Son to enslave slavery itself, when He was about to enter victorious into His Kingdom; then He wished that he still the fearful tempests o'er the earth, when he would be sitting quietly at His Right Hand; then He wished that he should exercise the infinite Power He had received in Heaven and on Earth, once He had taken possession of both Kingdoms. This means that, from the time of His Ascension, the reign of His most beloved heart would have begun. Then His Power, no longer bound by limitations, would be effective through His charity; the very soul of His heart would be made manifest; the triumph of His Heart would be made manifest by the exuberant abundance of the benefits bestowed. *Et ego si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad meipsum.* He will draw to himself all nations, no matter whether they were civilized or barbarian, powerful or weak, suffering or happy. He will draw all ages equally in need of Jesus Christ, especially so when the civilization they boasted about pretended to be self-sufficient. He will draw to himself all classes—the rich and the poor, the noble and the humble—all professions, from the lowliest to the most lofty; the arts, letters, sciences, politics, economics, all that belongs to private individuals or the public, whether they concern temporal life or eternal life, all is subject to His Dominion, everything stemmed from the inexhaustible source of His Heart. *Omnia traham ad meipsum* [I will draw all things to myself].

He said: If I go not, the Advocate will not come to you; *Si non abiero, Paraclitus non veniet ad vos* (John 12: 32) It was necessary (in keeping with the designs of Divine Wisdom and Goodness) that the Heart of Jesus should triumph, when the hypostatic Love of both Father and Son, the Love sent forth by Both with one single mission—since one and the same is the principle from which He comes—the Divine Paraclete, could descend to Earth to inaugurate there the Kingdom of His Heart. David spent thirty laborious years to make ready for the temple and Solomon built it with the happiness of peace. Thus through the infinite Suffering of His Passion, Our Savior saved the future seeds of all times to come and he would then reap His Harvest in Joy; meanwhile the Holy Spirit, Who beautifies the universe, would have kept watch over the sublime mission. *Spritus (Domini) ornavit coelos* (Job 26:13).

There is the kingdom of brute force, proper of animals, which made Paganism powerful, through which rational creatures went back to the condition of irrational creatures. There is the kingdom of intelligence which, although it may encompass a very substantial part of our mortal

nature, does not encompass it in its entirety; there is the kingdom of sterile wonder and calculation, which can bring no joy to those who feel they were born for other things besides a cold contemplation of truth and wonderment before Beauty. There is the kingdom of the heart which, without abandoning force, when it is necessary to defend what is Right, without abandoning intelligence, which is its faithful partner, encompasses Man as he really is, destined to love and to do good and thus capable of attaining happiness both here on earth and in Heaven. This is precisely the inexhaustible kingdom of His Heart, which lives eternal.

It is here, unless my emotion leads me astray, it is here that the grace of this immense kingdom will be reflected and from the magnificence of this temple the triumph of His Divine Heart will shine forth. Just as the spirit soars from the visible order toward the invisible, thus shall we, from the completion of the exterior, magnificent yet not finished temple, soar to the infinite heights of the interior temple, by reforming every day some part of us which has been deformed by passions, by laboring daily to accomplish that other part, barely outlined by our inborn inadequacy.

Oh, Adorable Heart of Jesus, reign in this temple; come, reign supreme, and never, never leave it, until the end of Time! Complete this work of Your Own Hands, adorn with new beauty the walls hereof which exult with your chrism; reign above all within us *trahe nos post te*; make us ever worthier subjects of Your universal kingdom, take up our insignificance and bestow on it the honor to proclaim everywhere the glory of Your Kingdom, so that we may not be the unhappy wretched who will experience the terror of your justice at the final fulfillment of Your prophecy: *Et ego si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad meipsum.*

69.

FATHER FRANCESIA'S INSCRIPTIONS ON THE BELLS OF THE SACRED HEART CHURCH

On the First Bell

Floritus Colle, Vir cl. Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae Comes, domo Tholona apud Gallos, acerrimus Christianae religionis professor et in primis Salesianae familiae patronus, in sui obsequii signum et voluntatis erga Leonem XIII P. M. fecit ann. MDCCCLXXXVI.

On the Second Bell

Sophia Colle ex nob familia Ruchet Tholonensis in Gallia, matrona singularis exempli clarissima, et vestigiis Floriti viri insistens, ut suae pietatis monumentum erga Mariam Virg. Christianorum potentem extaret fecit ann. MDCCCLXXXVI.

On the Third Bell

Honori et memoriae Aloysii Colle, filii Floriti et Sophiae Buchet, qui cum vel ab ipsa pueritia, pietatis et literarum studio iam de se non spem, sed fiduciam daret, florenti adhuc aetate raptus, ne mealitia mutaret intellectum ejus, quievit in Domino XVI ann. Et menses sex natus ann. MDCCCLXXXVI.

Parentes eius dum Deo gratias agunt, qui dedit et abstulit, rerum suarum heredes pauperes Christi constituerunt, ut in beatitatem aeternam verteret quod casurum erat in terris.

On the Fourth Bell

Ad memoriam auspicatissimi diei consignandam, qua Maria de la Soledad Pascual y de Llanza nob. Puella, docili ingenio, moribus sanctissimis, vix novem annos nata, primum sacra de altari litaret, Barcinonae, in sacrario asceterii Salesiani Manuel Maria Pascual de Bofarull y Maria de la Soledad de Llanza de Pascual parentes Eius gratulantes Sept. cal. Maias ann. MDCCCLXXXVI.

On the Fifth Bell

Dorothea Chopitea de Serra domo Barcinona, vulgo mater pauperum adpellitata in signum grati animi erga Divinissimum Cor Jesu hoc sacrum aes cudendum curavit quo die Elisabeth Huelia et Serra neptis virgo candidissima primum sacra de altari litaret sept. cal. Maias ann. MDCCCLXXXVI. Heu! Paucis mensibus suis flebilis omnibus desiderata ad nuptias coelestes advolavit.

70.

LETTER TO DON BOSCO FROM PRINCE CZARTORYSKI

Paris, 2 rue St. Luise en I'Île, June 13, 1887

Dear and Reverend Father:

Papa insisted that I see this matter of the First Born Rights through to the end. The land and real estate property belonging to Papa have already been transferred to my name, as I already told you, and Papa also insists that I attend to the development of the First Born Rights in my name before coming to study with you. The reason for such haste is the fact that the Emperor has been very well disposed toward us and we have to take advantage of it, because it is advisable to settle the question of the First Born Rights in view of the imminent war...It is now a matter of transferring as well the capital to the First Born Rights and I have to submit to the Emperor the project of its constitution.

Although Papa suggests that the capital be included in the First Born Rights, this can still be done without my own personal fortune being touched, for the eventuality that I forego this heritage as first-born son (and become either a priest or a religious).

I have to go to Vienna with Papa Wednesday evening, and my address there will be at Weinhans. We shall not be staying there very long, for we are going on to Crakow (Austrian Galicia) where you can write to me at the Czartoryski museum.

The Imperial Prince of Austria is to come to Cracow at the end of the month, and he will visit our museum. I may probably find myself exposed to all kinds of distraction.

I am informing you of all these tiresome details because you are my spiritual director. I am always determined to do whatever is the Holy Will of God and follow my vocation. As soon as I can, I intend to return to Turin.

Remember me in your prayers, Father, and be assured of my most profound respect.

Your son in Jesus Christ,
Augustus Czartoryski

71.

SPEECH READ OUT ON BEHALF OF FRANCE ON THE NAME-DAY OF DON BOSCO

Venerated Father:

Today you are reaping a harvest there where you have sown so much. You will permit me, I trust, to offer you also my sheaf of gratitude and blessings.

One day in the fair land that God has granted you to love, your zeal found its space too restricted: the souls were soon not enough for one who knew their true value.

Then you recalled how Christian Rome gave to the world three fair daughters of noble lineage, or should I rather say three queens? Is there a class of people greater than the martyrs?

Italy, France and Spain lie on the wonderful shores of the Mediterranean Sea which, together with the tide of Rome, brings to them every day a breath of the old faith; they have no frontiers, for the Alps and Pyrenees do not keep them apart—they only indicate their heritage and the way in which they share their glories.

Your blessed labors had already given comfort to Italy and now you have looked on France as one who looks on those he wants to save.

This meant establishing some order in your acts of goodness, and then push on along the road to Spain. France had rightfully understood that glance of yours.

Within the great Latin family France fills a place well known to you.

She is captivated by charity, entranced by zeal, enraptured by sacrifice; like some holy contagion, an unconquerable urge toward generosity reigns supreme in her; she is unable to haggle with anyone who gives unsparingly of himself. Thus the gift of God will always find souls here prepared to acknowledge it and rejoice in it.

You are well aware, Venerated Father, that what I say is true; you know France, the true France, the way France is when she is all for God. You have listened to her heart-beats, palpitating beneath the ruins of so many great and beautiful things. You

know full well that the ancient blood of the Crusaders still runs hot in her veins, and gives life to mighty deeds in the Church of Jesus Christ.

At the awakening from a long and bloody dream in which all kinds of respect had drowned, the Pope of Rome traveled through France, amid a people on its knees. Sadness was added to sadness when you came to preach to us a crusade of charity and social redemption; shrouded in its mourning drapery, the nation lifted its head and quivered at the sound of your voice which spoke to it of salvation. France believed in you, and France loved you, for her faith and her love are for that which does not come from this earth.

The name of God is a password here in our country and it opens all doors. With this single word, you were entitled to take our hearts and hold them in your hands.

You were alone, without any certain revenue, without human support: and these were the credentials, which we needed. All that which, in the eyes of Men, is humble and weak, is revered by us as a cult of a respect, which knows no limit. Such respect finds its source in our faith. We know that God stands behind a dedicated man: and the folly of self-sacrifice has taken hold of you.

Besides, God did not remain hidden long. The grain of mustard seed has begun to sprout; to its surprise, the world saw a great tree grow up, and in its shade, just like the birds of the air, are sheltered multitudes of people who receive all the motherly attentions of Divine Providence.

Already a mighty and magnificent bough spreads out all over France. Little by little it will cover the land entirely with its healing shade; all the dear young people, of whom you are the Father, intone their hymn of gratitude.

I bring you now the echo of that hymn on a day when we may bless you and bless God Who gave you to us.

May God preserve you long for our filial affection, and our veneration. The Hand which ploughed the first furrow is the most precious among all others; may He also graciously grant unto you sons as you would desire them to be.

Thank you once again, on behalf of a nation, which does not forget how much you love it.

You will hear this word of thanks repeated until the end of time. But it will no longer be pronounced by one voice or a

nation, for nations will disappear and there will be but one big family of chosen souls, in which you will find your own.

Innumerable are those who will owe their happiness to you. You will then hear their words of thanks; they will tell you of their gratitude with a joy, which we may not know, and in a language that as yet we do not speak; it will be Heaven, and forever.

72.

TWO LETTERS TO MRS. PILATI

A.

Turin, June 6, 1887

Dear Mrs. Pilati:

I am happy to answer your kind letter of June 3rd last, and strongly approve and commend your pious intention to invest part of your fortune inherited from your beloved husband in charitable works, for these are most helpful to obtain the liberation of souls in Purgatory and most meritorious for the living in the hereafter to which we aspire.

Now this is the advice I have to give you regarding undertakings, which at the present day are most likely to procure greater glory to God and better welfare to souls:

One of the foremost needs of our present day and age is to give a helping hand to poor abandoned boys, in order to give them a Christian education, help them become good citizens, workers, heads of Christian families, and also good priests and religious. This can be done by carefully fostering their individual vocation, and this is the purpose of all our undertakings for boys and girls in Italy, France, Spain and America, and the purpose of our missions in Brazil, Patagonia and Chile, which already begin to yield their first encouraging fruits to the joy of our benefactors, our Cooperators, and ourselves.

I believe that it was Our Lord Who inspired you to turn to me for advice, for He evidently intends to use you as a tool in help-

ing support the charitable institutes He has entrusted to me in His Divine Providence, and make of you a benefactress of the Salesian houses which do not depend on the government, which does not even recognize us. This means that we are free of its influence, but at the same time direly in need of financial support so that our houses may be kept and increase in number.

With the firm belief that you will be happy to become a Salesian Cooperator, I therefore advise you to sell all the property you intend to donate for pious use, and hand over to me or my representative the money therefrom accruing, so that it may be invested entirely in charitable uses, which most likely will procure greater Glory to God and for you as well, for the good that we accomplish in life is much more meritorious, certain and beneficial than that which we may bequeath in our testament, which is often disputed and annulled, with the result that the pious intentions of the testators are betrayed.

As to our taking on the responsibility of the administration or of the education in the seminary in question,[20] at the present time this is not possible for want of staff. But we could already take in those boys of that diocese who manifest a vocation for the priesthood, and then perhaps open a Salesian Institute there later on.[21]

Lastly, I assure you that the Holy Mass will be said for the repose of the soul of your late lamented husband on June 20th, just as I will gladly have a memento during my Holy Mass for your pious intention, so that everything may turn out well to the best possible advantage of your own soul and of the souls of your relatives.

God bless you and may He repay you a hundred times over for all the good you may do in this world for the Salesian undertakings, as well as give you a reward in Eternity when the time comes.

Accept my most respectful regards and I beg you to pray for me who will not fail to pray for you, together with our more than two hundred thousand orphans, for your spiritual, temporal and eternal welfare, while I assure you that I will always remain in the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

Your most obedient servant,
(signed) Rev. John Bosco

20 At Comacchio. The management of the seminary was taken over by the Salesians in 1894.
21 This was inaugurated at the beginning of October 1899.

B.

Turin, June 20, 1887

To Mrs. Teodolinda Pilati, widow of Domini
From Bologna.
Dear Lady:

I have received your kind letter of the 18th of this month, and found the reasons you put forward to explain why you are prevented from following the advice which I felt was most suitable to your request, without knowing the situation. I therefore fully approve what you say in your letter and thank you wholeheartedly for your generous intention of transferring the credits, which you claim, to my poor orphans and abandoned boys.

Our Lord will abundantly reward you for it, perhaps even here on earth, but for such charity He will most certainly reward you in the hereafter.

I recommend all your pious intentions to Our Lord and today, in particular, I have prayed for the souls of your beloved deceased parents and for all your relatives, both living and deceased.

Kindly accept my best respects, and believe me in Our Lord,

Your most humble servant,
(signed) Rev. John Bosco

73.

LETTER TO DON BOSCO REGARDING THE MALVINE ISLANDS

(See page 772 of the original Italian Edition. In Latin.)

Comment at the end of letter: An answer was sent, stating that an English priest had been assigned to the mission in question.

74.

ANOTHER LETTER TO DON BOSCO REGARDING THE MALVINE ISLANDS

(See page 773 of the original Italian Edition. In Latin.)

75.

LETTER FROM FATHER RUA TO THE CARDINAL PREFECT OF PROPAGANDA

Turin, January 3, 1888

Your Eminence:

I herewith reply to the esteemed letter received from Your Eminence and dated December 13th last, file number 5731, concerning the mission to the Malvine Islands.

Last summer we received some letters from Patagonia, informing us that four of our missionaries were established at Punta Arenas in the Strait of Magellan, in order to look after the missions of Tierra del Fuego and the Malvine Islands.

Since our Salesian Fathers did not have any missionary among them who spoke English, they asked Father James Foran to stay a little longer in the Malvinas, so that he might take charge of his fellow countrymen living in the island, and he consented.

But when he was later obliged to depart, he asked that the mission be entrusted to our Salesian priest, Father Joseph Fagnano, as Prefect Apostolic. We told him in reply that as soon as an Irish cleric of ours had received Holy Orders, we would promptly make arrangements. Now, the cleric in question was ordained a priest last October, so Bishop John Cagliero, Vicar Apostolic, wrote to tell Father Fagnano to provide for the mission.

It is therefore hoped that care will be taken as soon as possible of the spiritual welfare of those unfortunate inhabitants.

Might I recommend our beloved Don Bosco, who is ailing, to the prayers of Your Eminence. Although he is no longer capable of talking to any extent, he never ceases to instill into us the most perfect obedience to the Holy See and urges us to give our most solicitous care to our missions in Patagonia.

We regard such instructions, as well as all the recommendations of Your Eminence, as a sacred duty and we promise to devote ourselves to them with all of our capacity.

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. Michael Rua

76.

THE MISSION AMONG THE SHAYUEQUE TRIBE

Roca, Rio Negro, January 17, 1887

Most Reverend Don Bosco,
Father Beloved in Jesus Christ:

I have just recently completed a long mission among the Shayueque tribe, which consists of 1700 persons.

For the last two months we have been living in a poverty-stricken rancho made of boards held together by mud plastering, and covered with dry branches; it is topped by a chimney cowl of dirt. Yet our accommodations were comfortable in comparison to the wretched hovels of the poor Indians and even in comparison to the more wretched hut where the mightiest family of all Heaven and Earth lived, in Bethlehem. We lived on the same rations the government provides for the Indians. I myself, however, ate my meals with Commandant Lucian with whom I made acquaintance aboard the *Pomona* on my first voyage to Patagonia. Like the good soldier that he is, he adapted himself to the life of the desert, just the same as everyone else, eating meat and rice and rice and meat, and sitting down, like everyone else, either on tree trunks or boxes, or on the saddles of horses.

Yet our catechumens, who came to us hungry for God's Word, thirsting for religious instruction, generously rewarded us for such privations. In different sections, or to different groups of the members of the tribes, 4, 5 and even 6 lessons were imparted every day.

First of all, the children were baptized and confirmed because of the legitimate fear that they might be scattered from one day to the next. Then, all the boys and girls ranging between the ages of 10 and 20 were baptized. Lastly came the fathers and mothers who for the most part either celebrated or ratified their union, which had already been contracted legitimately *et secundum legem naturae.*

Among these we must make special mention of the son of the Cacique, Yancuche, who was overcome when he saw that all of

his tribe had turned Christian and were living united in holy wedlock; he gave up his second wife and was baptized by me, ratifying his matrimonial union with the first wife.

The same thing happened with the firstborn son of the Cacique Shayueque and other chiefs who yielded to our persuasive arguments after a lot of resistance.

Shayueque had his whole family instructed and baptized. But he did not find it in his heart to relinquish his three extra wives. He often came to attend the instructions and showed interest in learning about our holy faith. He often came to see us and ate with us. Then, one day, when I really set up the last attack on him, trying to persuade him to be baptized, he offered no resistance at all; but when I told him that it was an absolutely essential condition that he should have but one single wife, he hung his head, breathing heavily and sighing, taking his time about solving what was to him a very difficult problem.

I might have succeeded with him had we not both been upset by a sudden mishap. This unfortunately occurred at the end of our mission and was in the form of orders from the government that eighty families in the tribe were to be transferred to the area of Mendoza—a foot march of about two month's duration—to found a settlement there. Since this order from the government had been delivered at gunpoint, it brought about a state of alarm and terror among all those wretched and unhappy Indians, who had not forgotten the tortures they had received from the soldiers when they had to surrender three years before.

I attempted to have this order canceled, or at least deferred, but the commanding officer told me that he could not possibly respond to my request. But I did manage to obtain a more humane manner in its execution.

We worked hard for three days trying to pacify the Indians and convince them that, by such a decree, the government did not mean to render them slaves, but instead to liberate them from the yoke of military supervision and help them share the common rights prevailing in the new settlement. We told them that since it was known they were now all Christians, the government would be forced to protect them, just as any other citizen. At that they became calmer and we were able to carry out our mission, giving instructions as best we could and baptize some two hundred more persons.

Yet, saddened that so many of his subjects were being taken from him, Shayueque would not make up his mind to receive the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, but said he would do it some other time, when he was feeling calmer.

Other *Capitaneyos* [leading tribesmen] came up to us, asking that we wash their *cabeza* [their heads], but since, for the moment, they were not ready to relinquish their polygamy, we were obliged to leave them in their savage unfaithful condition, although we did recommend them to the Infinite Goodness and Mercy of the Lord. Let us hope that the seed of His Divine Word, which we concealed within their crude hearts, may take root one day so that they, too, may become sons of God, of the Church, and heirs of Heaven.

For a few days the families that had to depart were camped along the left bank of the Rio Negro. Since many of them were still pagan, we used the three days to walk along the river bank and give them instructions underneath the aromatic shade of weeping willows, which protected us from the scorching rays of the sun as their boughs bent over to dip into the limpid water of the river. In two sessions we baptized about 70 adults and a few children; we also confirmed them. We blessed the unions of some 20 couples with a Christian marriage. As I was performing this rite, I recalled the banks of the River Jordan and the Saint who was the herald of the Savior of the World—*Ille in aqua tantum, nos autem in aqua et Spiritu sancto*—who so abundantly made up for our own inadequacy.

Altogether we baptized and confirmed about 900 people who, added to the 400 children last year, make up a total of 1300. This is the total of converts in the tribe of Shayueque, who had souls clothed with the nuptial robes of Holy Baptism. Together with the articles of faith, we taught them how to recite their prayers and say the Holy Rosary, as well as *Deus in adiutorium* and *Gloria Patri* in Latin; we taught them about the mysteries in the Indian vernacular and how to say the *Pater Noster* and the *Ave* in Castellano. Ah! It is an immense comfort and sacred satisfaction to us when we hear a big group of boys and girls begin the Holy Rosary and finish it all by themselves. Ah! May the Holy Virgin protect and defend these new members of the flock of Jesus Christ!

Father Milanesio can talk their language like an Indian. Whenever I had anything important to say to them, I talked through an interpreter, but the catechism I taught from the book which has been translated into their own tongue and they understood me perfectly.

As a souvenir of the mission, we erected two crosses among their huts and blessed a strip of land that could be used as a Christian cemetery. Our final farewell ended with a *Pater, Ave,* and *Gloria* for the Holy Father, and a 'Long live Don Bosco *ad multos annos.*'

Toward evening on January 9th we forced our horses to wade the river while we ourselves crossed the river on a small boat manned by two soldiers. Since it was dark when we reached the other side, we put up our tents, which were given to us by Mrs. Nicolini, and after eating supper in the moonlight, we went to bed; I slept in the tent, Father Milanesio in a dry hollow by the river; Father Panaro and Zanchetta behind a bush, while the muleteers kept watch over the horses as they grazed.

We woke up somewhat later than usual next morning and set out at once so as to avoid the heat of the day. Only Father Milanesio and I departed; and after a ride of about 6 leagues, we reached the ranch of a rich gentleman employed at the state department in Buenos Aires. It was a genuine oasis in the middle of the desert. A fine house, a good bed, good food and an even better heart. We stayed there a week, resting and recuperating somewhat, but we also gave instructions to 22 Indians who were employed as laborers, and baptized them.

On the 6th, after riding 6 more leagues (though I covered the distance in a rustic cart drawn by six horses), we came to the new Pueblo de Roca. As soon as I arrived I received a visit from the Commanding Officer, Quiros, who said he was at our service for anything our mission might need.

General Winter had sent telegrams to the military and civil authorities saying that they were to treat us with due consideration and, thanks to his recommendation, we were treated very well; we were lodged in a new building which serves as a school and were waited on by two soldiers, while rations were supplied for us—a general's rations for me, an officer's rations for Father Milanesio and Father Panero, a corporal's rations for Zanchetta, and simple military rations for our two grooms.

Roca is a settlement and town in embryo located in a lovely plain irrigated by the Rio Negro some 120 leagues away from Patagones, where the garrison for this immense territory which has some one thousand inhabitants is located. So far all inhabitants are supported by the government. But since it is a region where Aeolus keeps his most raging winds in a cave, and dust darkens the sky whenever they blow, (and they blow all too frequently), I have my doubts as to the survival of the settlement in the future.

Boys and girls come to catechism classes morning and afternoon at the sound of a trumpet; at dusk the grown-ups gather to recite the holy rosary and listen to a sermon.

At the end of this mission we continued our journey in the direction of the Cordilleras, some 130 leagues further on, and called at the Marlbarco settlement. If the pass in the Andes is open, thanks to the snows which sometimes come earlier than expected, we shall cross those mighty mountains and go to Chile where we are to found the first Salesian house and from there, God willing, I will be writing to you.

I imagine that you will have news from the individual directors at Patagones, Santa Cruz, Tierra del Fuego, Buenos Aires, San Nicolás and Montevideo; they are all doing their best with zeal for the glory of God and the honor of our Congregation.

But all of us have unlimited trust in your blessing and prayers, Father, and we remember you *ore et corde* every day, every hour, every minute.

Bless the wanderers of the Patagonian desert.
Your most loving son in Jesus Christ,
John, Bishop of Magida

77.

DON BOSCO'S LETTER TO THE VICAR GENERAL OF CONCEPCION IN CHILE

Turin, July 13, 1886

Venerated Sir:

I could not possibly tell you all that I felt in my mind and my heart while I was reading your welcome letter of May 1st. My desire would

lead me to send you fifty missionaries, to provide for the more urgent needs of your immense episcopate; but God does not allow me to do this, for we too feel the lack of religious vocations. I myself am old and infirm, yet my intentions would bring me flying to your assistance.

Nevertheless, I do not want to leave you without some good hopes: so I will say that, God permitting, at our General Chapter to be held in September, we will look into the possibilities of providing the required staff.

So in the coming fall we will give you a more certain and positive reply.

Please remember me in your prayers.

Your most affectionate and humble servant,
(Signed) John Bosco

78.

THREE LETTERS FROM DON BOSCO TO FATHER RICCARDO ARTEAGA OF CARACAS

A.

Turin, April 11, 1887

Dear Brother in the Sacred Heart of Jesus:

I have received your very kind letter of March 8th, which certainly brought me some precious moments of comfort and joy, for I realize that, despite the distance between us, there is no lack of good souls who take an interest in our humble, young Salesian Congregation which the Lord God has established for the benefit of society especially by educating poor and abandoned youth.

I cannot but consider excellent, from every standpoint, your proposal to establish a Union of Salesian Cooperators in your Catholic city, and we will help you in whatever is necessary. To this end, we shall be sending you a diploma as Director of these Cooperators within a few days, together with another diploma of Decurion which, you in agreement with your Reverend

Archbishop will hand to whomsoever you may decide to appoint. We shall also send you the Rules you requested, and which are now in print, and pictures of our Patron Saint, Francis of Sales and of Mary Help of Christians.

Later on, I shall be able to inform you how much a statue of St. Francis of Sales, such as you wish to buy, would cost.

In the meantime you may act as Director of Cooperators, whose names and relative addresses we would like to know, so as to list them in our records, send them the monthly *Salesian Bulletin* and their individual diplomas. I imagine you will have received 24 issues of this month's *Bulletin,* as well as your own Diploma. Please be so kind as to distribute these copies among all the kind, honorable Cooperators.

I was most touched by the affection shown for us by your Most Reverend Archbishop, and would you please convey to him my grateful respects?

I shall not fail to implore the Lord with prayers both for your venerated Archbishop, for yourself, and for all of our fervent Catholic Salesian Cooperators, and I will urge all our children here to remember you in theirs.

Meantime, I am happy to be most affectionately yours,

(signed) John Bosco

B.

Turin, July 9, 1887

Beloved in Christ:

I have received your kind and welcome letter. I see that you have not received the little picture of St. Francis de Sales nor some pictures of Mary Help of Christians which were sent to you two months ago. I am now mailing them to you now, as well as the 500 medals you requested in your recent letter.

As for the diploma of Decurion, I hope I will be able to send it to you by the middle of this month, together with the diplomas of Cooperators for the gentlemen you listed for me. We shall send you the *Bulletins* every month and, as you informed us, you will be so kind as to distribute them to the various persons you men-

tion. We would like to know without any delay the individual addresses of these same Cooperators.

We shall also be sending you some instructions on how to form the Association of Mary Help of Christians.

May the Lord God bless your great zeal for His Glory and the salvation of souls, and shower many graces upon you in this life and then crown you with eternal glory in the hereafter.

I am very sorry that you are unable to take a trip to Europe, like you said, for this deprives me of the great joy of making your personal acquaintance. But in all things may God's Holy Will be done. As for paying for the *Bulletins,* please do whatever your kind heart prompts you to do.

Please convey my respects to your Most Reverend Archbishop and thank him for his charitable attentions to us, and meanwhile believe me to be,

Your affectionate and grateful servant,
(Signed) Rev. John Bosco.

C.

Turin, August 8, 1887

Most esteemed Sir and Friend in the Sacred Heart of Jesus:

I have received your welcome letter of the 8th of this month, as well as your second list of new Cooperators.

I hope that by now you have received my last letter in which I informed you about the diplomas and medals etc. etc., which you will have received by now, for they were sent off the same day in which the letter was mailed. As for your diploma as director, this will be sent out in a few days. Next month we shall send you a few copies of the June, July and September *Bulletin.* It will be better that we keep the Diplomas for the Cooperators until some Cooperator, who belongs to the committee in charge of presenting an offering to the Holy Father on the august day of his Jubilee, gets here. Otherwise, it would cost us a lot of money. I hope that by then you will have overcome the difficulties, which prevented you from getting to Rome this winter. I can assure you that it would be an immense satisfaction for me, if I could make your personal acquaintance.

We are anxious to have the addressees of the Cooperators whose names you have graciously sent us in the two lists.

Finally, thank you for your great interest in and commitment to working for the benefit of our Congregation. I promise you that I shall pray to God every day both for you and for all your zealous Cooperators.

My respects to your Reverend Archbishop, while I am happy to remain your most affectionate friend in the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

(signed) Rev. John Bosco

79.
TWO LETTERS TO SENOR JOSEPH JIMENEZ, A COOPERATOR FROM LIMA

A.

Turin, February 2, 1887

Dear Sir and esteemed Friend:

I received your very welcome letter with the 100 Pesetas as alms enclosed, thanks to your kind, charitable heart, for our holy Missions in America. The Lord God, Who is so generous in rewarding what is done to Him in the persons of the poor, will eventually not neglect to shower the choicest blessings today on you and your family. As to the *Salesian Bulletin,* I am sending you the issue for October 1886; this was the first published in this printing establishment. I am also sending you the issue for the current month. There is no difficulty in sending it to you in Lima, so we shall continue to do so very happily, since you have been so kind as to place an order for it.

As for the books you say you are thinking of buying in Barcelona, I feel it would be more convenient if you were to order them through our bookstore here, because then you would be more certain of getting them all. I do not think that you could find all of them at our house in Barcelona, which is still in its earliest stages and you will not have available all that has been published so far in the above mentioned *Bulletin.*

I do not know of any relationship between Mr. Benito Gil and the translator in Buenos Aires, nor do I believe that you will find our books on sale in the bookstore there.

We shall write immediately to Father Costamagna who is the Superior of our house at Almagro, as well as the director in charge of all our publications there, in order to get in touch with the above mentioned gentleman. Then if you think it advisable, we will enroll him as Cooperator and send him the *Bulletin* every month.

We shall shortly send you a diploma and also one to Señor Gil, mentioned above.

Meanwhile I am glad to take advantage of this opportunity to be at your service,

Most respectfully yours,
(signed) Rev. John Bosco

B.

Turin, April 1, 1887

Dear and Most esteemed Sir:

I have received your welcome letter of March 16th, to which I did not reply until now, as I hoped to inform you that the Diploma was being sent off with today's date.

I am very sorry to hear that you are ill, but I did beg the Lord and shall continue to do so that your health may improve and also all the other plans about which you had written in the previous letter may come true.

Today we are mailing the diplomas to both Señor Gil and Señor Calderon, also the parcel of books you ordered, while we keep ready the other parcel which we shall hold until we receive further instructions. We are also sending you the pictures and medals for which you asked.

I cannot but tell you how happy I am over your great zeal and affection for our Congregation and I feel sure that if you cooperate in such a practical way for the salvation of so many souls, Our Lord will shed abundant and choicest blessings on you and your whole family here on earth and will grant you an imperishable

reward in His glory. Yes, the salvation of souls both through good, religious readings and almsgiving, as well as through good advice and lastly through prayer, is a deed of the greatest importance by which, so St. Augustine tells us, we shall undoubtedly save our own soul. May Our Lord bless you and your whole family and grant that you may live long so that you may be of assistance to the souls of many young people who are poor and abandoned and in great need of help. Let us persevere in trying to do our utmost for the greater honor and glory of God.

Wishing you the best of health as well as the fulfillment of your desire to visit us,

I remain,

Most affectionately yours,
(Signed) John Bosco

80.

THE CONTRACT REGARDING QUITO'S UNDERTAKING

Contract between the Government of the Republic of Ecuador and the Rev. John Bosco regarding the foundation of a school for boys.

In order to give assistance to the religious, intellectual and artistic education of Youth in the Republic of Ecuador, the following has been agreed upon between the Most Excellent Government of the Republic and the Very Reverend John Bosco, founder and Rector Major of the Pious Society of St. Francis of Sales:

Turin, February 14, 1887

1. The Government of the Republic of Ecuador grants to the Rev. John Bosco and his successors the use of the premises and adjacent annexes intended to be a school for arts and crafts as well as all furniture, machinery and working tools found therein.
2. The government shall pay all traveling expenses of the staff for said Institute during the first ten-year period of operation, and any traveling which may be necessary in the interests of the Institute.

3. Furthermore, the government shall pay to the Rev. John Bosco the sum of *Sucres* 4000, for the initial expenses, to be paid in four installments during the course of the first year of operation.
4. The government shall exempt the Salesians and their houses from any Customs charges and taxes, granting them free postage and other privileges, as granted to other religious orders.
5. A detailed inventory will be drawn up of all furniture, equipment and fittings now found in the institute, which are to be returned to the government whenever, *quod Deus avertat,* [God forbid] the Rev. John Bosco should leave the school, but in the condition in which said furniture, equipment and fittings will be at such time.
6. The management and administration within the institute, the discipline, the timetables in regard to the different work therein pursued will be entirely entrusted to the Rev. John Bosco and the director appointed by him.
7. The Government shall be entitled to send to the Institute, over and above the boys enrolled there by the management, any pupil that may be eligible under the required terms stipulated for enrollment in the school and shall pay a monthly tuition of Six *Sucres* for each pupil so enrolled.
8. Any boy applying for enrollment at the school should be strong, healthy and of good disposition; he may not be younger than 12 years of age and not older than 20; he must submit birth and baptism certificates, vaccinations certificate and letter testifying to his good moral conduct previously issued by his pastor.
9. In the event that any Government-sponsored pupil be affected by infectious or chronic sickness, be lacking in moral conduct, or prove harmful, for any other reason, to his fellow students, the director shall be fully entitled to expel him, but shall merely inform the government of such intention so that, if necessary, arrangements may be made to place him elsewhere.
10. The Director of the school shall be fully entitled to enroll for apprenticeship in any craft or trade he may choose, any one of the government-sponsored pupils.
11. In the event that the government might wish to reclaim use of the premises of the school, notice of such intention must be served three years in advance, and the Rev. John Bosco shall retain ownership rights over all furniture belonging to him, as well as

receive reimbursement for any traveling expenses he may have incurred for the staff.

12. The first expedition of Salesians from St. Nazaire will take place on September 10th of this current year.

Jose Ignacio
Archbishop of Quito
Rev. John Bosco.

81.

A LETTER TO DON BOSCO FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ECUADOR

Quito, May 11, 1887

Presidency of the Republic
Ecuador

Dear Sir:

I am honored to convey my respects to you in reply to your gracious letter of March 7th last.

Our illustrious and most reverend Archbishop José Ignacio Ordonen has already informed me of the terms under which the Reverend Salesian Fathers have agreed to come to this country to render their important services.

We are eager for a speedy arrival of the expedition party of missionaries promised to our Republic and have great hopes to reap great benefits from it.

I am happy to proffer my respects to you while waiting.

J.M.P. Caamano

82.

THE LAST TWO CIRCULAR LETTERS SENT OUT BY DON BOSCO

A.

Turin, November 4, 1887

Dear Sir:

I am aware how much you appreciate all religious and charitable endeavors, and that you are naturally inclined to promote them and uphold them. This engenders in me true hopes that you will give these few lines I am writing your most benevolent consideration.

You are aware that one of the undertakings most worthy of commendation and support is that of the holy missions among foreign people. Our Divine Master recommended such activity to His Apostles and their Successors, when he said: "Go forth into the world and teach all peoples"—*Euntes in mundum universum... docete omnes gentes*—this is what the Catholic Church urges us to do and she sponsors such action by all possible means. It is recommended to us by our reason enlightened by faith and by the very nature of the human heart. Therefore, that divine injunction to instruct and civilize all the peoples of the earth has been faithfully obeyed throughout the ages. Under the wise guidance of the Pope in Rome, hundreds and thousands of priests obey it today with a generosity and courage which remind us of the early days of Christianity.

Yet, despite the many legions of apostolic laborers scattered over the surface of the earth, carrying the torch of Faith and the benefits of true progress with them, a great number of nations are still deprived of this immense boon. Not only are they ignorant of the true faith, they are also in need of material and civilizing advantages which this faith has brought into the world. Therefore, not being properly instructed, there are still nations, which feed their infant children to animals; others offer them up as human sacrifices to false gods. Some sell their fellow men even as we sell cattle in our own countries; and others even slit their throats and feast upon human flesh; and all of them live and die more or

less like animals. What a heart-rending sight this is for those who have faith, a heart and human feelings!

This will show us that the Catholic missions committed to evangelize and civilize all these wretched mortals, are an undertaking worthy of the highest praise. Today especially, no well born person will fail to admire and, if they are thereto capable, support with their assistance these religious and nuns who leave their native land, their relatives and friends, sacrifice their own comforts and rest in order to become Apostles of Our Lord, benefactors and saviors of these tribes which are still abandoned to their own ignorance and barbaric customs.

As you know, this glorious role has also been entrusted to the Pious Salesian Society for the past twelve years. Since 1875, strengthened by the blessing of the Supreme Pontiff, the Salesians have been living in several parts of South America, not only for the purpose of maintaining the light of faith among already Christian people, but mainly to carry it into territories hitherto unexplored, to teach their inhabitants and bring them into the fold of the Church, to win them over for civil society. They are today active in this endeavor in the Empire of Brazil, in Uruguay, the Argentine Republic, the Republic of Chile and shortly they will also be established in Ecuador.

There are still numerous tribes still enslaved by ignorance and therefore subject to the domain of Satan living within the territories of the above listed countries. There are millions of them in Brazil and thousands in all of the above named Republics: Argentina and Chile also include Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego and countless islands which extend toward the South Pole and constitute the furthest borders of the earth. There, amid vast desert wastelands, among the gorges of these gigantic mountains, along the banks of deep, whirlpool beset rivers, numberless families of poor natives wander like herds of cattle, without any spiritual, material and civil goods to rely upon.

Well, it is exactly among these far away and most unfortunate people that the Salesian missionaries successfully carry out their work. Living there has cost them not only hardships and privations, but also shipwrecks, dangerous falls, hunger, thirst and other obvious threats to their existence. They also got lost. Yet, despite all of these troubles, they are happy to have partially succeeded in their

endeavor. They have already established a number of mission stations in that wilderness, such as those at Norquin, Santa Cruz, and Punta Arenas; others are planned in more centralized areas in Tierra del Fuego and the Malvine Islands. What comforts us the most is the fact that the people and their leaders, the Caciques, are very open to embrace the Christian religion. All of this opens our hearts to hope that, in a not too distant date, all of this land will flourish like luxuriant gardens within the Catholic Church.

But here we have a serious matter to consider, which is exactly this: in those areas our missionaries need many things indispensable to the exercise of their sacred ministry. They need other things for the savages themselves, both to bring about their conversion and instruct them in our Faith and also to introduce them to a civilized form of existence. To this end chapels are needed where they may be gathered and instructed, not only with the spoken word, but also with sacred rites and Catholic ceremonies. Sacred vestments are needed for the celebration of Divine Mysteries and the administration of the Holy Sacraments. To respond to their moral and civil needs, clothes are needed to clothe the people decently and buildings are needed to provide shelter for boys and girls who are abandoned in the desert and to educate them when they are young to act as Christians, and so to prepare them to become helpers of the missionaries to further civilize their fellow natives. Lastly, tools are needed for farming, apprenticeship and practice of various crafts and trades and so on.

Now, all of these and other similar things required for the needs described above are not to be found in such hostile territory. It is easy to imagine the expenses involved in providing them and conveying them from distant, civilized countries to where they are needed, so that mission stations may be established and maintained. Don Bosco and the Salesians know it from experience and can talk about it with the utmost conviction.

Now that I have briefly stated what the situation is, I must stress something of great importance. Please give me your attention and in your goodness of heart, deign to take the matter into your most earnest consideration: *unless they are assisted by the charity of the faithful, Don Bosco and the Salesians will not be able to keep their Missions open and will be obliged to abandon them, just as missionaries of other Congregations were obliged to*

do. I assure you that the mere thought of such a thing grieves me immensely. I hope that in His Mercy Our Lord will not sadden the last days of my mortal life on earth with any similar disaster. I hope instead that during the remainder of my life on earth and after I shall have descended into the tomb, the Salesian missionaries will be able to remain at their posts and gladden the Church by giving new sons to it, and assist civilized governments by providing them with honest citizens.

After Almighty God, I rely on the good heart of my Cooperators in order that this may be accomplished and, among their number, I consider you a most worthy one. If all the people who are in any way in contact with me would graciously offer me contributions in their charity, I would soon be able to send to the Salesian missionaries what they need to sustain them in their work, strengthen them in their zeal, and enable them in their advance to pitch their camp and hoist the banner of Christ in the furthermost frontiers of the world.

With this trust I am about ready to send off during these days a group of Salesians to Quito in the Republic of Ecuador where on the eastern slopes of the Cordilleras thousands and thousands of souls still slumber in the shadow of death, awaiting the work of the Catholic missionary. It will be this same trust that will assist me in undertaking new missions offered to the Salesians by the Pope, by the bishops and by many governments.

You will surely allow me, now that I am weighted down beneath the burden of my years and the infirmities of old age, to appeal to you also for alms to help my hundred and more missionaries who are ever present in my heart, even though they are far away from my sight. I ask you, too, for alms on behalf of many wretched savages, both grown up and still in their infancy, who have already been converted and who call me Father, even though they do not know me. I ask you for alms for many thousands more who invoke the coming of the Salesians and await them as so many angels who will set them free. I beg for your charity, in the name of Jesus Christ, on behalf of the souls for whom He sacrificed His Blood and His Life. I beg you in the name of Jesus Christ Who promised that all those who for His Sake gave their help and support to those who preached the Gospel, would share in their merits and rewards: *Qui recipit prophetam in nomine prophetae, mercedem prophetae accipiet.*

The humble priest here undersigned and the three hundred thousand boys who are today under the guidance of the Salesians in different parts of the world, will pray fervently every day before the throne of God and of the Holy Virgin Help of Christians, that they may bestow on you, on all your undertakings, the most abundant blessings, also in a temporal sense; and that they may grant you good health, peace and harmony in your family life, and prosperity in your financial affairs. Our experience has taught us that those people who support our missionaries enjoy a very special protection from Heaven in life and in death.

I have spoken of what was in my heart as to a friend, with the confident hope that I have not spoken in vain to your mind and your heart.

While awaiting your charitable contribution may I beg you to remember me in your prayers, while I remain with high esteem and deep gratitude,

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

WAYS IN WHICH HELP CAN BE GIVEN

Since many are our needs, my benefactors might help in many different ways, that is to say, by sending us linenwear, linen material, fabrics, cloth, even used clothes, (provided that they are still in fairly good condition), church furnishings like portable altars, chasubles, stoles, albs, altar cloths, missals, chalices, ciboriums and so on.

Priests may contribute by celebrating a given number of Masses for my intention, and send me confirmation thereof.

Anyone unable to respond to the above, or who prefers to express their charity by a money donation, may send it in any amount desired, even if only a few *soldi;* but in such an event where money is sent through the mail, then please make sure it is sent as registered mail, or by some other reliable means.

In the past, a number of Cooperators have come up with the commendable decision of helping the missions by adopting a missionary. The cost of the personal upkeep and clothing, not

including traveling expenses, varies from eight hundred to one thousand lire a year. A few Cooperators have done just the same for our nuns in Patagonia. The expense for each of the nuns amounts to approximately between 500 and 600 lire annually. We have referred to this practice for the interest of those who, if able, may wish to be acting as mothers or fathers in Europe to many of our brothers and sisters who, for the love of God, are today the mothers and fathers of the wretched savages in America.

The address to which you should send your offerings is the following: Rev. John Bosco. Via Cottolengo 32, Turin.

N.B. When sending alms, would you please be so kind as to write your address clearly so that acknowledgment of receipt may be sent to you.

B.

Turin, November 20, 1887

Dear Sir:

Since I have been informed of your pious and holy intentions of doing good, I dare to appeal to you and call on you for a charitable donation.

A number of years ago our priests took over missions in order to civilize the poor Indians of South America, especially in Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego.

The costs involved are enormous and that is why I am now obliged to urgently seek funds necessary to support them.

So that we may not be faced with the painful necessity of having to abandon such a holy enterprise, I am forced to call on the charity of good people by sending out to them a circular letter which spells out in plain terms our needs and which circular letter you will find here enclosed.

In order to give the widest possible circulation hereto, I take the liberty of enclosing a certain number of copies of this circular letter in a separate package, earnestly asking you to send them either by mail or some other safe means to any wealthy and charitable persons of your acquaintance who might be able to come to my assistance with offerings in money or in some other way. Should you be unable to send them, I beg you earnestly to entrust this charitable task to some

trustworthy person of your acquaintance, since I am most anxious that they be widely distributed. I will be glad to refund any expense incurred in such mailings, as soon as you let me know how much you have spent. If the number of copies sent to you is insufficient, please drop me a postcard so advising me and I will send you as many as you like.

I am hopeful that you will assist me in this charitable endeavor and I extend my fervent thanks to you in advance, and remain meanwhile with deepest gratitude,

Your obedient servant,
Rev. John Bosco

83.

LETTER TO DON BOSCO FROM THE ARCHBISHOP OF QUITO

Quito, February 1, 1888

Beloved Father and Friend:

I recently had the indescribable pleasure of receiving a letter from Your Reverence and of embracing the good missionaries you have sent me. I regard them as my sons and will always look on them as such, in fulfillment of your own recommendations, for I love you dearly. I also love the missionaries too, who indeed seemed well worthy of the highest esteem. I hope that through their apostolic labors they will reflect your own charity and thus be of comfort to me in the midst of all the sufferings connected with my office.

I beg Your Reverence to remember me in your prayers, and pray very particularly to God for all the bishops in my archdiocese.

José Ignacio
Archbishop of Quito.

84.

CONTRACT BETWEEN DON BOSCO AND MARCHIONESS ZAMBECCARI

Hospice of St. John for poor boys
of the town and province of Parma.

Mrs. Marchi Marianna Zambeccari-Politi has resolved to found a pious institute for the religious and civil education of poor boys, giving to it the title of Hospice of St. John, in her fervent desire to do something agreeable in the eyes of God, beneficial to her own soul and for the repose of the soul of her late husband John Marchi.

ITS PURPOSE AND CONDITIONS FOR THE ENROLLMENT OF BOYS

The basic purpose of this hospice must be that of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales in Turin. In order to be enrolled, a boy must be:

1. Not younger than twelve years of age and not older than eighteen. Experience has taught us that these are the most critical years in which a boy's character may more easily be straightened out and guided in order that he become a good Christian and an honest citizen.
2. He must be orphaned of both parents and have no one who might take their place.

The Rector of the Hospice shall decide in what instances exception hereto may be permissible.

3. He must be poor and abandoned. In cases in which a boy is not actually poor yet is living in a condition of moral danger, he will be obliged to pay whatever is compatible with his financial status, as a fee.

Any boy who is able must bring along a modest wardrobe, which will be properly marked out.

4. There is no limit to the number of boarders who may be enrolled; however, no less than fifty boys must come from the city or province of Parma.

Education

1. All pupils will be trained in some trade or craft so as to enable them some day to earn an honest living. In the selection of such trade or craft due account will be taken of the pupil's strength, educational background, aptitude and condition.
2. Every evening, or at whatever time during the course of the day may be most suitable, pupils will be tutored in subjects in keeping with their existing educational background and in the craft to which they have been assigned. Vocal music and the Gregorian chant will be subjects included in such curriculum.
3. It is a specific intention of the lady founding this hospice that the Superiors of the hospice concentrate particular attention on religious instruction, since the basic purpose of this hospice is to rescue boys from perils, first by making good Christians of them and then honest citizens.
4. Should the Rector think it advisable, he may allow certain pupils to pursue regular studies, but only in the instances in which the boy's moral conduct and aptitude for study offer a certain guarantee that he can succeed in a learned career, especially in the priesthood.
5. Although the age limit for enrollment is set at the age of eighteen years, pupils may remain at the hospice until such time as they are in a position to earn an honest living for themselves elsewhere, with some learned profession or pursuit of a trade or craft.

Foundation and endowment

1. In order to guarantee the permanent existence of the hospice she wishes to found, the aforesaid Marchioness Marianna Zambeccari will bequeath wither by testament or notary deed the sum of two hundred thousand francs for the purchase or construction of the building required for same, endowing it with the essential tools for its workshops, kitchen and remainder of the hospice.
2. She will either bequeath or endow the house with the capital or dividends of four hundred francs for each of the young boarders, as security for their upkeep. Should their number be estimated at fifty, the annual revenue will be in the amount of 20,000 francs.

3. The boarders will be kept at the hospice all the year around and will be provided with everything necessary to them both as far as their health and in the event that they fall sick.
4. In the endowment to which reference is made above, everything required for necessary repairs, for the payment of the taxes, for hiring administrative personnel, hiring of teachers, assistants as well as domestic staff, and the professional head instructors for the workshops is included.
5. Insofar as possible, both classrooms and workshops must be located inside the premises of the hospice.

Administration

1. The administration of the Oratory is entrusted to the Rev. John Bosco, son of the late Francesco, who will also be proprietor of the whole estate of the hospice. After his death, both the administration and property rights will pass on to his heirs in the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales.
2. Since the Congregation has already been finally approved by the Church and its members are bound by perpetual vows, the foundress is reassured that her wishes will be carried out by the Superiors of the above Congregation both now and in the future. The Superior shall provide in good time that all legal steps be taken to ensure the transfer of property to his heirs without detriment to the hospice.
3. The foundress does not wish to stipulate any binding obligation, but wishes that the hospice be situated either in the town or at least in the province of Parma. But in the event that subsequent circumstances involving locality, general conditions, or people, render the continued existence of the hospice impossible in this area, the hospice may be transferred elsewhere quite freely until such time as the reasons for its enforced transfer shall have ceased. In such an instance the opinion of the diocesan bishop *pro tempore* will be consulted.
4. If possible, the hospice church will be accessible to the general public, so that dayboys as well as grown-ups may attend holy services there, especially sermons and catechism class.

Obligations

1. Don Bosco or his heirs will fulfill all obligations imposed by the aforesaid Marchioness in either her testament or deed of endowment.
2. Every day pupils will recite together a *Pater, Ave* and *Gloria* for the pious foundress and after her death—though we pray God to grant her a long life—a requiem Mass shall be sung every year, attended by all the boarders who will make a Holy Communion and say special prayers for her eternal rest.
3. The foundress states with all formality that this memorandum is without any legal validity and should anyone at any time wish to avail themselves of its terms in any legal sense, it shall forfeit all effect, and the Superior of the Salesian Congregation become free and absolute arbiter of all things appertaining to the hospice.

85.

A BELGIAN INDUSTRIALIST DESCRIBES THE ORATORY AND REPORTS ON HIS VISIT TO DON BOSCO

I.

I will admit that as I crossed the threshold, I was not entirely free of prejudice. I imagined, and I do not exactly know why—maybe because I had often heard it said that Don Bosco was a very holy man—that I was about to enter a very pious, serene monastery, some sort of Christian oasis, in which the happy boarders were carefully defended against the burning winds from outside and from which they would emerge, unprepared for the harsh battles of life.

I was received with the utmost courtesy, and a young French priest was assigned to me as a guide; this was the good priest Roussin who did the honors of the house in an equally interesting and gracious manner.

From my first steps into workshops I was obliged to admit that I had been utterly mistaken. For I found myself in an industrial school organized on extremely practical and intelligent lines. There was nothing at all to remind one of the model types of plant, which are often forms of exploit-

ing the humblest. The inevitable monumental facade was completely missing here: no uniforms, no buttons, not even a gold-laced visored cap, no hint of any barrack-like organization. When I looked closer, I even saw that some trousers worn were a little too ample, others a little too short to indicate that they were not the actual choice of the wearer.

But the general overall aspect of the clothing I saw was perfectly decent.

As for the workshops, it was evident that there had been no possibility of drawing inexhaustibly on the funds provided by the taxpayer or stockholder in order to lavish bricks and mortar in them on a grand scale, but the overall impression was one of great practicality befitting a well run plant, developed by degrees, and where everyone was doing his assigned job.

There were shops for shoemakers, tailors, joiners, blacksmiths, bakers, and even a big printing establishment and type foundry, bookbinding shop, etc. At Mathi, the same oratory owns a big paper-mill which manufactures paper for the printing shops. Three gas-operated machines, of 10-horsepower each, supply the power for the presses and the innumerable machine tools. Everything was well arranged. There are gas-stoves all around wherever there may be need of fire; the bakery has a mechanical kneading machine and an immense oven where bread is baked and the oven does duty as a heating installation at the same time. Its steam helps heat up the church. I keenly regretted the fact that the short time at my disposal would not allow me to examine all these installations in greater detail.

As I inspected these big, innumerable workshops, I could not refrain from telling my gracious guide of my surprise at finding myself in a regular factory, not in what was thought to be merely a pious institute. He laughed heartily and answered: "The aim of our institute is not at all that of training people to become devout, but only to become good and solid Christians and capable workmen who are satisfied with their lot. Of course, we do seek to assure the salvation of their souls first and foremost, yet at the same time we also have a social purpose."

As we were joined by a compatriot of his, a certain Father Michel Volain, I asked him to give me some information about the system applied in order to achieve the wonderful results to which I was then witness. These two priests then told me that the fundamental principle of Don Bosco's institute is lack of constraint. In fact, although the rules advise the young boarders to go to the Sacraments every month, they are quite free to obey such advice or not, as they please. If they don't like it, they are even free to leave the house, but desertions are very rare.

The discipline, which I would have imagined extremely difficult to maintain in such a setting, where rebellious elements usually abound, was admirable, though there was no severity. Solely religious influence and moral authority assured it.

There are about 350 apprentices, who are enrolled at the age of eleven and a half years, and they usually complete their term of apprenticeship when they are seventeen. They then leave the house and find employment, but generally they maintain excellent relations with their former teachers. A certain percentage of them remain in the house until they are drafted into the army or get married. There are also some who never want to leave it and who form a kind of Third Order.

The monthly tuition is not higher than a maximum 15 francs per month, but this decreases progressively as the output becomes greater.

Only a fourth of the apprentices at most pay this modest fee; the others are either orphans, or have been abandoned by their parents, or taken in at their request. When I asked "Are the boys condemned to a term in a reformatory also accepted?" I was told that they were not, because that would have been contrary to the principle of liberty which prevails in the institute.

The young people are given four cents on Sundays, but when they leave the institute they are given a third of their salary as a savings nest-egg—their salary having been calculated as an average *150 francs per year*. Here, in the most practical way, the dream of allowing the worker to share in the profit, long caressed by our modern specialists in economy, has been realized!

The work length is nine hours at the most. Besides the instruction in their craft, these young people also have daily lessons in religion drawing, business, and French, as well as a sound elementary instruction. As a general rule, past pupils who are known as professional head instructors train them in their craft. The priests, who are in charge of assistance in every workshop, take no part whatsoever in teaching.

I was forgetting to add that, next to the industrial school, there is also a boarding school with about 400 pupils who attend a complete course of classical studies. This is in a way, a minor seminary, since approximately one fourth of these young people enter the Congregation, or some order. The tuition for the boarding school only amounts to 20 francs a month and three fourths of the boys do not pay any at all. In all, there are about one thousand boarders in the house. It is not difficult to visualize just how much of an expense such an establishment has to meet and one wonders how it is ever kept up. Undoubtedly, charity plays an important

part, though this institute is so wisely organized and so carefully administered that, to a large extent, it is kept up thanks to its own resources. On the whole, the workshops are kept busy with outside jobs, especially the printing shop and its affiliated offices, which I was told, is generally booked up on commissions for fifteen months in advance.

I also inspected other industrial establishments of all kinds in every country and never, I must admit, did I meet any worker who made a better impression on me than the young people I saw here.

They worked with the typical enthusiasm of their youth and national temperament, but at the same time they displayed a serene, happy composure and great ability. It was obvious that they had their hearts in their work. I noticed one young man in particular in the blacksmiths' forge who wielded his hammer so joyously that I found myself regretting I was not a painter: for had I been one, I could not have wished for a better model for an *Infant Vulcan.*

I lingered most of all in the printing shop. God forbid that I should try to criticize the printers of some of our Belgian newspapers, but I could not prevent myself from thinking how these young colleagues of theirs in Turin could well give them a few pointers.

How joyously this little world of workers enjoyed its recreation, once the work had been conscientiously done! What lively ball games, what happy races! The good Fathers tuck up their cassocks and mingle among them, like older brothers of one single, happy family! All this is done with the utmost ease of manner, yet there is nothing disorderly about it. One could not have put these young children of the people into any school anywhere. Now and then, one or the other slips away from the boisterous noise of the game to go into the church to say a brief prayer; the church adjoins the playground and it is really touching to see how fervently these children perform this act of spontaneous devotion.

It is impossible not to be impressed by the exemplary conduct these excellent Salesian Fathers have taught to these children picked from here and there. They have even succeeded in stamping out among them that inborn tendency of the Italians toward soliciting tips. I had a typical example of this when, after buying a few things in the bookstore, which is run with a droll gravity and zeal by three youngsters of no more than fifteen years of age, I found it extremely difficult to make them accept a gratuity of a few *sous* for their Sunday pocket money, because they tried to give it back to me at all costs.

I could not even begin to tell you that the relationship existing

between these young people and their Superiors is at the same time respectful, trusting and warm. There is really a genuine touch of fatherliness in these priests, and the boys really seem to be very proud of their excellent Fathers. When I asked the little urchin who let me in (for there are absolutely no solemn ushers in this establishment) whether or not the Superior spoke French, he replied with a charming display of vanity: "I should say he does; he talks *every language."*

When I saw so many happy youngsters, all so well equipped to take their places as useful members of our great human Society, I wondered how many of them would not have fallen victims to crime and vice, had it not been for this admirable institute! How many of them would not have gone to swell the ranks, already numerous, of the rebels who feel that their *lot is an unhappy one, and that it has to be done over again.*

The foolish, sophisticated world feels only indifference, contempt and injustice toward the humble religious who dedicate their bodies and souls to this sublime task of redemption, while it heaps gold and acclamations on men of letters who corrupt the minds and hearts of the lower classes by cynically flaunting their depravity in their filthy books. My thoughts carry me back to the monks who, thirteen centuries ago, saved the human species when the bloody tides of barbaric invasion seemed to have destroyed all trace of culture.

It was the abbeys of Gaul and of Germany which civilized our forefathers with prayer and labor, just as Don Bosco is doing nowadays for the savages living in our big modern cities, and whose ferocity was unveiled for us by the Paris "Commune." One may well wonder whether or not the uncouth children of the forests were no less refractory to a moralizing influence than the sickly young hooligans of our capital cities.

Ora et labora, such was and such still is the badge of faith and of Christian charity. Yes, the Church is a mother, a mother ever young and ever fertile for all the disinherited of the world....

II.

(Gazette de Liège)

One can well imagine how happy I was to be admitted to the honor of seeing Don Bosco who was so kind as to grant me an interview, thanks to an authoritative and gracious recommendation.

Before I could get to see him, I had to climb a great many stairs right to the top floor where I was shown into a very humble little room. I immediately noticed two magnificent paintings which proved that although the institute is supposed to train artisans, one may also find artists in it. I found myself in the presence of the main collaborators of the Founder: one was the Reverend Father Rua, his Vicar General, the other the Reverend Father Durando, his assistant. The former is still a young man, and instantly one recognizes him to be a man of action, whereas the second has an ascetic face which recalls to mind quite forcefully the emaciated features of St. Vincent de Paul. Since the ante-chamber was crowded with visitors from all classes of society, Father Durando was kind enough to take me into his own cell. As I entered it, I was struck by its extreme poverty. Many poor people are better lodged and have better furniture than this eminent religious and I thought to myself that the General Staff of the Salesians was apparently satisfied with a lodging like the barracks. This similitude is irreverent, I admit, but that was the thought which came into my mind. That is why the Superiors live in religious communities whose fabulous riches and legendary greed constitute an inexhaustible theme for parliamentary orators and cabaret artists. They are more hard-working than the unskilled laborers; poorer than the very poor, and they can well repeat these words of the Apostle: "I have neither gold nor silver, but what I have I give to thee: Get up and walk!"

At last I had the joy of approaching Don Bosco himself. I felt my heart beating a little faster, more than when I met with the mighty people of this world, for I was thinking that I was about to enter into the presence of one of the men whom God is pleased now and then to raise at certain times to show the world what a saint is, and what a saint may do.

Holiness—how many enlightened people smile when they hear this word! Yet, even from a purely human point of view, saints have played a very great role in the lives of people. Who would dare to deny that the deep social influence of St. Vincent de Paul was not as deep, lasting, and above all, far happier than the influence of either Richelieu or Mazarin? Who would dare to say that this providential initiative of Don Bosco, as far as the thorny labor question, would not be able to provide un-hoped-for solutions, should this initiative become generally known?

My turn to enter came while I was turning these things over in my mind. I cast a rapid glance around the most poorly, indeed wretchedly furnished room that I could have imagined and then perceived, not without emotion, the venerable old man sitting on a battered sofa, bent by age and the labors of a long apostolate.

His failing strength did not allow him to sit upright, but he did raise his head, which was hanging, and I could see his eyes, somewhat veiled over, yet still full of keen intelligence and goodness. Don Bosco speaks French perfectly, his voice is slow and shows a certain effort, but he is capable of expressing himself with remarkable clarity. He gave me a Christian, simple welcome, both dignified and cordial. What touched me profoundly was to perceive such a warm, genuine interest in everyone who went to see him, in an old man who was near death, and constantly besieged by visitors. How touched he was when he talked with me about the Bishop of Liège and his ardent zeal for everything pertaining to the welfare of the working class! In Don Bosco, the sword lies peacefully sheathed at his side, yet what spiritual energy his frail body still possesses! With a tone of deeply felt regret, he deplored how his weakness now prevented him from actively dedicating himself to the direction of all his numberless undertakings. Yet who is more entitled than he to intone confidently the canticle of the saintly old man Simeon: *Nunc dimittis servum tuum in pace?* Unfortunately, discretion forced me to cut short, far more than I would have wished, this touching interview with a man upon whom God has visibly set his seal, and who will perhaps within a few days go to receive the magnificent rewards promised to those who have fought the good fight.

Permit me to urge all of my readers who are going to Italy, to call at the Institute in Via Cottolengo. They will come away from it deeply moved, enraptured and pensive, and intimately convinced, they will repeat: Here is truth, here is life, here is the solution of the formidable social problems that the sphinx of the 19th century has put before statesmen and men who think—for it is written: "Seek first the kingdom of God and the rest shall be given unto ye."

J.B.

86.

LETTER FROM ENGLAND TO DON BOSCO
(French original)

Rotherwas Hereford, April 25, 1876

Very Reverend Father:

We grow fonder and fonder of your Congregation and hope that we may not die before we can see it established in London; perhaps it may come about if we obtain the thing for which I pray you to help us obtain.

My husband's health has been broken by great sorrow which also gravely compromised the glory of God. For the recovery of his health and in order to eliminate the cause of his illness, we are now organizing a large Novena in honor of St. Joseph, to begin on May 1st, and which will consist in

5 *Pater Noster* in honor of the Sacred Heart

5 *Ave* in honor of Mary

5 *Gloria* in honor of St. Joseph.

I venture to beg you to pray confidently and to have all the young people and your seminarians pray too.

Please, ask Rev. Father Margotti too, that he also pray for this deeply devoted son of the Church and Pius IX, that God may graciously hear us. Your work shall become our work and God will repay you.

Irene Bodenham.

87.

RE: THE ARCHDIOCESE OF GLASGOW (English original)

Glasgow, November 18, 1887

Letter from the Archbishop

My dear Don Bosco:

We have in this city a large number of Italians who are anxious to have a priest of their own race and language. An attempt is being made to draw their children from the faith, and the parents are most anxious for a priest who can look after them.

It has occurred to me that you would be able to find us a priest for this purpose, or even to send us, for a time at least, a member of your community.

Some years ago I had the pleasure of meeting you in Rome. Mr. Monteith of Carstairs was always hoping to be able to introduce into the Archdiocese the Pious Salesian Society.

Believe me to be,

Very faithfully yours,
Charles
Archbishop of Glasgow.

Reply from Don Bosco (English original)

Turin, December 6, 1887

My Lord Archbishop:

I humbly beg Your Grace to pardon my unwilling delay in replying to your Grace's favor of November 18th last. I should have been more solicitous in thanking Your Grace for the marked benevolence with which you have honored our Pious Society and my poor person in particular. But my advanced age and many infirmities are telling on me lately, so that I am often obliged to suspend duties which it would be my desire to ultimate with all possible dispatch.

I have taken the liberty of transmitting Your Grace's letter to my Vicar-General, Father Rua, who I hope may be able to find a

good zealous priest willing to take charge of our compatriots in Glasgow.

I am sorry to be obliged to inform Your Grace that the Rules of our Society do not permit of our sending one of our members alone.

I have recently accepted a church in London and I would willingly open a house of education in Glasgow or any other town in Your Grace's archdiocese, but at the present I have scarcely any English-speaking subjects.

Again begging Your Grace to excuse my long delay and renewing my best thanks for your gracious benevolence while I implore your pastoral Benediction,

I have the honor to profess myself,

My Lord Archbishop
Your Grace's very humble,
obedient servant,
(Signed) Rev. John Bosco

88.

PETITION TO LEO XIII FROM COUNTESS STACKPOOLE, REGARDING A SALESIAN HOUSE` IN LONDON

Most Holy Father:

The undersigned, humbly prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, takes the liberty to express what follows:

In 1874, the humble petitioner made a vow, in gratitude for a grace received from the Sacred Heart of Jesus, that she would shoulder all necessary expenses for building a parish church dedicated to His Most Adorable Heart. She submitted her plans to the Holy Father Pius IX, of blessed memory, and he approved and blessed them; she then returned to England and found staunch support for her project from the bishop of the diocese of Southwark, Bishop Donnell, who gave her his formal promise that the Church of the Sacred Heart would be erected as a parish. A baptismal font was decided upon; civil authorities authorized the celebration of marriages; the foundress bought all the sacred vessels, vestments, and

other things essential to the liturgical services, and finally on October 10th Bishop Donnell and his clergy, followed by the jubilant population, installed the new pastor and placed the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle. Our wishes had been fulfilled; the population now had its parish, its pastor, *and by notary deed, the lady endowing it bequeathed it all to the bishop of the diocese.*

But this state of affairs did not last long. The curate left the parish and was not replaced, so that only on Sundays a priest went to celebrate Holy Mass there from some other parish. Jesus no longer dwelt in His Church day and night and there were no more Forty Hours, no more Baptisms, no more facilities to go to Confession and receive Communion; the parish people were obliged to walk an English mile to reach the closest parish and receive the Sacraments, not to speak of the unfortunate people who were sick, who were thus deprived of the comforts of their religion. Nearly all the sacred vestments and vessels were transferred elsewhere. When Bishop Butt, the present bishop, *was begged to continue keeping the Church as a parish,* he informed the undersigned that he did not have the necessary funds nor available priests for the Sacred Heart Church, which would henceforth no longer be a parish church, but merely a chapel under the jurisdiction of the nearest established parish.

From the above, Your Holiness can see how the hopes of the lady endowing this parish have been frustrated, despite all the promises given her. Therefore, prostrate at your feet, she humbly implores you to take the following suggestion into consideration:

Since the bishop is unable to retain the Church of the Sacred Heart as a parish, because of lack of funds and available priests, the foundress of the church has turned her attention to a religious Congregation, and she went especially to Turin to ask the Rev. John Bosco *if he would be disposed to taking over the administration of the parish church, should Your Holiness entrust it to him.* Don Bosco replied that he was *always* an *obedient son* of the Holy See, and would *never refuse* to comply even with the most insignificant wishes or orders of the Holy Father, *insofar as the availability of his pious Society would permit,* and that, for the rest, he put his trust entirely in Divine Providence. All *he needed* was that the ground area which Countess Stackpoole had given to Bishop Donnell, *who* had built a wall around it, be ceded to him as his own property, and not as a house first entrusted to him today and then taken away from him at some later date. Don Bosco needs to be the owner of all the buildings existing

between the walls in question and feel free to build further or demolish what is already there, in keeping with the requirements of his Congregation. He would commit himself to provide for all the needs of the parish and also for the needs of the schools for boys and girls already existing within the present walls.

Countess de Stackpoole lastly wishes that the deed of donation issued to the Bishop of Southwark in 1874, in the presence of the notary Harting in London, be entirely revoked and declared null and void, so that at no instance might any future bishop of that diocese file claim against Don Bosco or the Salesian Congregation, who would then have become proprietors of the entire area so enclosed. This would rid the bishop of one *responsibility—it would save expenses*—besides, he would have a Congregation within his diocese prepared to give a home to the poor, abandoned children *who roam as vagrants the meadows in that far lying district* of London, which is a bed of poverty and vice, and where the presence of Salesians would prove to be a genuine blessing.

Prostrate at your feet, Most Blessed Father, the undersigned earnestly implores that Your Holiness deign to give your consideration to the wishes specified in this petition and, in her filial devotion, she kisses your sacred foot, implores your apostolic blessing, and is proud to profess herself etc., etc.

89.

REMARKS REGARDING PRINCE CZARTORYSKI BY FATHER LEMOYNE

Prince Czartoryski had been reluctant to allow his son to become a Salesian. While he had initially given the young man full freedom, he now seemed incapable of doing without him. He felt that the family had been disgraced by the son's decision. When later he fell sick, he demanded that the young man's superiors allow him to return to his family. But the young man had made Don Bosco promise him some time before that never would such an order be given to him. He had been exemplary in his strict observance of our Rules, both during his novitiate and after, and he now did not want to give way to his father, but

reminded Father Rua of the promise Don Bosco had made him. Whereupon Father Rua left the decision entirely to Brother Augustus. His father sent physicians, priests, bishops to see him, and he even came himself. He was determined in what he demanded. He said that the Salesians were speculating on the boy's inheritance, which he had renounced, together with his title of Prince, yielding the revenue from his inheritance to the first-born son of his father's second marriage. So all that remained was his own personal fortune which did not amount to much.

The Prince appealed to the Pope, who asked for explanations and gave his advice. But the father of the young man wanted him to issue an order. When he was told in reply that his son was a Salesian, he retorted that Don Bosco should never have taken him into the Congregation. When told that, albeit respectfully, his son stood by his own decision, he insisted that it was but the duty of his Superiors to order him to obey whatever his father wanted.

The Prince himself came to Turin in person, but to no avail. Father Rua, who was in France, was summoned by telegram, and stood at the side of Brother Augustus.

The Prince then insisted that his son was to be treated as his noble lineage demanded, without counting expenses. He assigned a French priest, a religious, to take care of Augustus, with the instruction never to leave him. The best doctors were assigned to be called upon to take care of him and that if they so prescribed, he was to be sent elsewhere, where the air and the climate were different. This was genuine moral violence, yet Father Rua was obliged to bow his head, for the influence of this powerful man was immense in France, Austria and elsewhere. Naturally, all these expenses were to be paid by the poor Salesian Society. First of all Augustus was sent to Torrione, where a comfortable apartment was made ready for him and he was treated like a great gentleman, with medical visits called for by his father. He remained there for about a year. Then he was sent to Savoy and later to Switzerland and now in 1891 he is at San Remo. He rides everyday with a coach drawn by two horses, and when traveling by train he uses only first-class compartments, etc. etc.

Prince Augustus was in the final stages of his tuberculosis. But holy youth that he was, he obeyed his Superiors in all things, allowing them to send him wherever they wanted, being fully ready to return to one of our Salesian houses at the first word issued by his Superiors. His sole comfort

was to listen to people talk about Don Bosco, for whom he had a deep and lasting affection.

Here we quote the first letter ever written by the Prince to Don Bosco:

Paris, December 19, 1887

Very Reverend Father:

Just as one might have feared, my trip to Turin did my health no good at all, and the doctors found that my state of health requires me to spend time in the South and insist that I leave for Algiers.

Now, confiding in your kind promise, which you gave when you wished to have my consent, I ask that you send my son here, so that I can see him before I go away.

Thank you in advance for the consolation that you are giving to a sick father who is obliged to go away for some time under these present circumstances.

Reverend Father, my sincerest respects,

Czartoryski

An answer was sent to him, saying that it would be better, if possible, that he should contact his son in writing, since his studies, the winter season, and his state of health would have hardly helped him.

90.

LETTER TO DON BOSCO FROM POLAND

Pedakcya Missiyi Katolikich

(See page 803 of the original Italian Edition. In Latin)

91.

LETTER TO DON BOSCO FROM COUNTESS DI CAMBURZANO

Fossano, December 5, 1887

Very Reverend Don Bosco:

I had hoped to hear from you, for I always regard your letters as most welcome and precious. But my hopes were dashed. Donna Cristina left us on the 29th to go back to Geneva. I gave her a little note and one hundred lire for you.

She promised she would see to it that you received it safely, if she were unable to call at the Oratory on her way through Turin.

Now I begin to fear that you may not have received it, so would you please drop me a line at once (in a sealed envelope) so that I know.

I read in *l'Unità* about how happy you are over the new Polish son that Heaven has sent you; I also read of a circular letter that you have addressed to the Salesian Cooperators. I received none of this and you know that I am very much attached to the *Salesian Bulletin.* So I am relying on your kindness in this matter.

I have had some fever and am not yet fully recovered. One of my maids, too, is sick with it. Say a word to Our Lady Help of Christians about it. She will not be able to deny you this favor.

I fully share your joy at seeing Bishop Cagliero again.

Bless me, please, and know that I remain always in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary Help of Christians,

Your most devoted daughter,
Aless. C. di Camburzano.

92.

THE CHARITY OF AN OLD PASTOR

Scodovacca, December 7, 1887

Reverend Father John:

You did not want to grant my request! Patience! But you will at least graciously hear Father Pietro Firindelli, the pastor and dean of Fumicello, who at 86 years of age gave me his last golden *Napoleon* yesterday, saying: Do me the favor of sending this coin to Don Bosco. It may be the last coin I ever will be able to send him, because I am a very tired old man. But you must beg Don Bosco to send me his picture. I tried to dissuade him, because I know how, in your humility, you dislike handing out souvenirs. I who have so many times pestered you with requests which have never been responded to, will not trouble you anymore, but will be content merely with knowing that you pray and have others pray for me. For the above named venerable dean, a man of outstanding virtue, I do however beg you to heed his request, for I am sure it will make him very happy. When you have thus gratified him, I will send you the money I am holding, also from someone else and my own offering, in response to your recent appeal and also as the fee for the renewal of my subscription to the *Bulletin* and for 3 copies of *Catholic Readings.*

While waiting for your answer, I greet you respectfully and reverently, also on behalf of Bishop Tirindelli,

Most affectionately in the Lord,
Fr. Federico Monegazzi, Pastor
Diocese of Gorizia

93.

PHRASES WRITTEN BY DON BOSCO ON THE BOOKMARKERS IN HIS BREVIARY

From Italian Poets

1.

Inferno. Canto # 34 [Translated by Lawrence Grant White–1948 Editor]

Upon this secret path my guide and I
Now trod to seek again the world of light;
And caring not for the rest, we mounted upward,
He first and I behind, until I saw
Some of these lovely gems that Heaven wears
Through a round opening far above our heads:
Thence we come forth, again, to see the stars.

Purgatory. Canto # 33 verse 142ff.

From that most Holy Water, I returned made anew
[As trees are brought to life again with their new foliage]
Purified and made fit for mounting the stars
(Dante, The Divine Comedy).
[translated by Lawrence Grant White 1948–Editor]
Canto # 33 verse 148
[As is a wheel in even motion driven]
by Love which moves the sun and other stars.

2.

Italians should believe in all lofty virtues,
The nation should expect every grace from God

And by believing and hoping, they should love
and advance
Toward the conquest of eternal truths.
(Pellico, The Angels)

From the Scriptures

1.

Omnia flumina intrant in mare et mare non redundat. (Eccle. Te I).

2.

Bonus Dominus et confortans in die tribulationis (Nahun I)

3.

Longe fac a muliere viam tuam et ne appropinques foribus domus eius (Parab. C. 5).

4.

Accipite disciplinam meam et non pecuniam; Doctrinam magis quam aurum eligite. (Parab, c. 8)

5.

Cognovi quod non esset melius nisi laeteri et facere bene in vita sua. (Eccle, te 3).

6.

Honora Dominum de tua substantia...et implebuntur horrea tua saturitate et vino torcilaria tua redundabunt. (Parab. (id) Cap. 3).

7.

Si est tibi intellectus responde proximo tuo, sin autem sit manus tua super os tuum, ne capiaris in verbo indisciplinato et confundaris. (Ecc, 5).

8.

Referet unusquisque prout gessit in vita sua.

9.

Fili, eleemosynam pauperis ne defraudes et oculos ne transvertas a paupere. (Eccl.).

10.

Ne glorieris in contumeliis Patris tui.

11.

Omnis iniuriae proximi ne memineris et nihil agas in operibus iniuriae. (Ecc. Co X).

From the Holy Fathers

1.

Si quid in te pravum deprehendris, corrige: quod rectum tene; quod deforme, compone; quod pulcrum excole; quod sanum serva; quod infirmum corrobora; Dominica praecepta indefaticabiliter lege, et per quid cavendum est, quidve sectandum tibi sit sufficineter instructus agnosce. (S. BERN. ad Sac).

2.

Hieronimus ad Demet « Teneas fidem, nec peregrinam, quamvis tibi prudens callidaque videaris, doctrinam recipas ».

3.

Portate, fratres mei, vobiscum clavem cellulae, portate et clavem linguae. (S. P. Dam.).

Validora sua exempla, quam verba, et plus est opere docere quam voce. (S. Mass. Serm. 67).

4.

Nostrae divitias, nosterque thesaurau lucra sint animarum et in arca pectoris recondantur talenta virtutum (S. P. DAMIANO, Cont. Cap.).

94.

LETTER TO DON BOSCO FROM BARON HERAUD

Nice, December 21, 1887
Nice Maritime

Dear and Esteemed Don Bosco:

Now that the Christmas festivities are approaching, I am happy to send you my most fervent and sincere good wishes, praying that the Divine Child may strengthen Don Bosco's legs so that he may leave his room and, without support either of a human arm or a walking stick, trace his steps once again both to the Church and the community dining room.

As cup-bearer emeritus, albeit not present, I would like to think of Don Bosco in this connection as a good trencherman, albeit, with moderation, because to grasp all, means to lose all. The people of Sardinia say that wanting so much breaks the pillow which means "it ruins your stomach." But in that event, Don Bosco *bona sua decoquere potest,* [he can cook his own goods] since proverb 2 of Thes. 3: 10 *Qui non vult operari neque man-*

ducet [the person who does not want to work should not eat] cannot be applied to him.

I therefore wish that Don Bosco may for many a year see served unto him *ova* in the pan, *oves* [lambs] roasted, and *boves* [cows] boiled, *quiescendo animum suum* [providing rest for his soul] and remaining *sub vite sua, sub ficu sua* [under the grape vine and the fig tree] as we read in Leviticus 27: 18 namely: peacefully enjoy his prodigious labors. *Est quod gaudeas.* [You've got reasons to rejoice.]

Now, dearest Don Bosco, *otia tranquilla agendo* [taking it easy], is the time to enlist you on behalf of my condition which is always somewhat ailing. Already *omnes sancti et sanctae Dei* have been invoked, but when *Deus non vult,* they stand quite aloof. There is not a single one to whom I appeal now; without feeling afraid that I will be told in reply: *Rebus sic stantibus ad quid venisti? Quare adhuc conturbas me?*...[Things being what they are, why did you come here? Why do you still bother me?] Nevertheless, I come now to beg you *miraculum tentare,* [try to get a miracle], for how happy you would be to know that my legs were to become stronger than your own, so that I may soon go to call on our dearly beloved Holy Father![22]

I hope therefore that *violentiam tu in sacratissimum Mariae cor adhibens* [by doing violence before the Most Sacred Heart of Mary] I will soon be again in the Vatican.

Regards from the Baroness. Very kindly...Kissing your hand raised in blessing I am, venerated Don Bosco,

Most affectionately yours,
Baron Héraud

P.S. Best wishes and regards to the Very Reverend Father Rua.

[22] He was chamberlain of the Order of Sword and Cloak.

95.

LETTER FROM COUNT COLLE TO DON BOSCO

La Farlède, December 18, 1887

Dear Friend:

I am still too tired to be able to write you myself, but even though it is not my hand penning these lines, it is my heart which dictates them. We received your kind letter, containing the in-scriptions you have honored us by engraving them on the three bells of the Sacred Heart Church. I have not forgotten that I promised you to contribute toward the purchase of them, but I have no longer any record of the amount we talked about, so would you kindly remind me of it?

I am still sick, and awaiting that your prayers addressed to Heaven bring about my recovery, for by now I have taken so much medicine that I wonder if this has not done me more harm than good. I am still staying in the country where I do at least enjoy quiet, such as I so urgently need.

My wife is well; she joins me in sending her most affectionate and devoted regards.

We heard yesterday of the safe return home of Bishop Cagliero, and that Prince Czartoryski has entered your Congregation. Father Perrot who came to visit us together with Father De Barruel, brought us this news.

Please convey our most cordial regards to Father Rua and all of your good priests.

Your devoted friend,
Count Colle

96.

DON BOSCO AND FREQUENT COMMUNION

(*Original in French*)

After polemically debating with those people who disapproved the frequent Communion of young people, Abbot Temmerman went on as follows (see this volume, page 519, footnote):

Gentleman, in our day and age there is a man whose supreme authority in the field of education of children no one can dispute; a man whose whole life has been but one wonderful chain of miracles—I allude to Don Bosco. May I tell you what this saint told me on the topic with which we are now dealing. It was January, 1888. I was then about to found an important institute for the education of the sons of the working classes, and sought his advice. I went to Turin to see him the very week that he died. He was unable to talk to me himself, but his faithful interpreter, Father Michael Rua, who later succeeded him, explained the whole organization of the Salesian works to me and revealed the secret of its prodigious power. This secret consists entirely in allowing children to go often to Communion, as often as circumstances allow, and not only certain chosen children, the elite among them, but every child, as a general principle. I thought that I might have misunderstood the advice given to me and that I had exaggerated its significance somewhat, so I wrote to Father Rua asking him for specific guidance and this is the reply he sent me:

"In the pamphlets that I enclose you will see what Don Bosco wrote about the frequent approach to the Sacraments.[23] Our venerated founder never missed any opportunity to recommend frequent Communion, which was the basis of his entire educational system. Those who do not agree with it are forever constrained to strict coercive methods." (Applause).

Well, gentlemen, the rules which Don Bosco outlines in these pamphlets may all be condensed in the rule of going as often as one can to Communion.

[23] Father Rua had sent him: 1. *A Companion to Youth (Giovane Provveduto)*, marking the instructions regarding frequent Communion. 2. *Regolamento per le case della Società di Francisco di Sales [Rules for houses belonging to the Society of St. Francis de Sales]* marking the passages regarding frequent approach to the Sacraments found in the Appendix dealing with the preventive system (Nos. IV and VIII). As a footnote, the priest added these passages translated into French.

These rules drawn up by the saintly founder did not become a dead letter in the Salesian schools, but are fully followed. I have been astonished to find out that some people are of the opinion that the men who defend the principle of frequent Communion are not concerned at all about the necessity of a thorough preparation for it, so that it is thought that the act of receiving Communion is nothing more than a more or less pious reception of the Sacred Species. To the contrary, one's zeal in preparing children to receive Communion in a fitting spirit must increase in direct geometric proportion, if I may say so, to one's zeal in persuading them to approach the Holy Table. In agreement with all leading theologians, we may not expect something beyond human capacity in urging frequent Communions, nor forget that having been created for mortal man, the Sacraments have an effect *ex opere operato,* whenever they are not received unworthily; yet we feel that the spiritual director should be more zealous in demanding a more fervent disposition. In discussing a thesis one ought always to be sincere enough not to try basely to split the indivisible members of the proposition set by the adversary. What we are asking for is exactly what Don Bosco asked: frequent Communion, together with the utmost zeal in preparing for it as best as one can every time. This is the reason why, in Salesian houses, Communion is the means that entirely ensures discipline: Communion just received is continually put before the child to rekindle in his heart the feelings of respect, gratitude and love he must feel for God Who came to dwell within his heart, while his next Communion is presented to him in such a manner that he reflects on the care he must take , in order to be well prepared for it.

During our second session this morning it was said that in a certain school, which is nevertheless a good one, the director should never have allowed any regular frequent reception of Communion. I do not want to argue about that, nor will I ask whether the rule of monthly Communion, which is practically general in all our schools, ever caused the self-same apprehensions that more frequent unworthy Communions in some schools might cause. But instead I will tell you of two eminently practical rules which were confided to me as being the secret means by which one may prevent unworthy Communions and which are held as having a capital importance in Salesian houses. The first rule consists in never allowing the children to approach the altar rails for Communion by rows. For a child should not be morally constrained to capitulate with his conscience, merely because he is afraid, or even only suspected of a bad conduct; yet such

would be the predicament of any child who found himself obliged to remain kneeling all alone in his place in a pew while all the other children who knelt with him in the same pew were at the altar for Communion. It may well be that such a child is free of the guilt of even only a venial sin, but he is ashamed and concerned because he is at fault over some omission in connection with the house rules; he feels that he would be entitled to go to Communion, but he feels unworthy; ah, may he never learn to capitulate with his own conscience, nor disregard its sensitivity, lest he become guilty of a criminal capitulation. I realize that, in following such a rule, there will be less orderliness at the altar rails at Communion time, but that is of little importance and can easily be remedied by a few simple precautions to assure proper circulation, such as for example, having the children who have already received Communion return to their seats by an aisle different than the one by which the others are approaching the altar rails. All teachers should restrain from being indiscreetly curious. It would be most inconsiderate on the part of any teacher to go and tell any boy that he has given evidence of his guilt by not daring to go to Communion. It is understood that I am not taking scrupulous children into consideration here. The second rule is that the greatest possible and easiest facility be given to children to go unobserved to Confession, without being obliged to draw attention to themselves, and their request to confess should not expose them to the suspicions of the assistant. The Salesians have the custom of giving children an opportunity to go to confession every day of the week, during prayer time in the chapel, during Holy Mass and recreation, so that no one gives it a thought or finds it extraordinary about the children availing themselves of such facilities. It is, in fact, so natural an occurrence that the director of a boarding school for girls, for example, who would find it exhausting if he were to hear everybody's confession on the Saturday, could easily ask that one group go to confession to him on one day, and so it does not seem strange that a child go to confession at any time. And as far as preventing that this should happen, not all too often the confessor can easily find one: all the confessor has to do is to cut short the confession at the slightest hint that it is turning into a little chat; in such instances, unlimited kindness will be supported by an inflexible determination. Such were the rules given to me.

I have told you, gentlemen, that I went to ask Don Bosco for his advice as I was about to inaugurate a very important institute for the education of the children of the working classes. That was a little more than two years ago, in January 1888. We found ourselves then in a critical

moment of our undertaking and our stout heart was beginning to falter: "Do not be afraid," Father Rua told me, "you will triumph over everything with the frequent approach to Holy Communion. Go ahead without fear."

Some time ago, when Father Rua visited Belgium to found the Salesian house in Liège, he chose to call on me. "Have you followed my advice faithfully?" he asked. "By God's grace, I did my best," I answered. "Then you have succeeded," he said. Truly, gentlemen, we have been successful beyond our expectations. Our school has grown at an extraordinary pace within two years: our house for daughters of the lower middle classes and orphans has over 200 boarders, and their behavior is exemplary. Some 157 of them have received First Communion and they will go to Communion every week, but they do so in complete freedom, not only in theory but also in practice. Around sixty of them go to Holy Communion twice a week; around twenty, three times a week. I think I can safely say, gentlemen, that we do whatever we wish with our children. I wish to underline the fact that, just as the Salesian houses do, we never overlook the necessity of a proper preparation. I regret that I do not have the time to tell you how this custom quickly corrects faults which are seemingly incorrigible, puts an end to squabbling and nips any incipient individual hostilities in the bud.

I realize that all that I am saying concerns the pupils of boarding establishments in particular and that the circumstances I have been describing are hard to find among children living in the outer world. In all truth, my objective was only to uphold the thesis of frequent Communion for children tutored with constant care by Christian teachers. Nevertheless, I am convinced that in parishes, thanks to parochial church clubs for the young, among the day pupils attending religious school, an enormous amount of good can be accomplished, if only one wishes: there are numerous examples to prove it. I only regret not having the time to dwell on them.

Allow me to say in closing, gentlemen, what has been accomplished in Turin at the school of Don Bosco. There were 800 boys there at the time I visited it in 1888, and weekly Communion was a general practice with all of them, while some four hundred went even more frequently. Do you know what kind of children lived there? One may well admit that the majority of them had been rescued from the gutters. What did Don Bosco make of these children? Hundreds of them are now to be found in the ranks of the Italian clergy of which they are the elite and guard of honor. (Applause). Don Bosco did not want his houses to be called other than

oratories, for he wished to stress how he regarded prayer and approach to the Sacraments as his sole tools for the sanctification of children and for the formation of men of faith and piety. Let us follow his advice and his example, gentlemen. And even though it is true that "Communion does not constitute the whole of piety nor of religion," let us nevertheless recall the words of St. Paul: *Ego (Paulus) plantavi, Apollo rigavit, sed Deus incrementum dedit* (I ad Cor. 3: 6) [I did the planting, Apollo did the watering, but God made things grow] and that it is not our business to point out to God the tools we intend to use, since Christ said: *Amen, amen dico vobis, nisi manducaveritis carnem Filii hominis et biberitis eius sanguinem, non habebitis vitam in vobis.* [I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you will not have life in you] (John 6: 54). (Applause).

Before I had these pages printed, I wished to inform Father Michael Rua about them and this is the answer he wrote me:

Salesian Oratory of San Benigno Canavese, September 7, 1890

Very Reverend Father Temmerman:

I have read what you said at the Eucharistic Congress regarding frequent Communion for children: your speech was excellent and it faithfully interpreted the views of our well beloved Father Don Bosco, of saintly memory. I am now returning the proofs to you, wherein you will find only two small corrections in spelling; I have nothing to change when it is a question of dealing with boarding pupils.

I am deeply grateful for the kind things you said about our dear Father and his educational system and fervently hope that your speech on frequent Communions for children may have repercussions in all Catholic schools and even in the seminaries.

May Almighty God preserve your good health and keep you always in His Grace. Please call on me if ever I can be of any service.

Your obedient servant in Jesus Christ,
Rev. Michael Rua

97.

THE DEATH OF DON BOSCO IS ANNOUNCED TO THE PAST PUPILS OF THE ORATORY

Turin, January 31, 1888

Dear Friend:

A tremendous misfortune this day has hit the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales and the many educational institutions subject to its direction. Its Founder and Superior, the Friend of Youth, the Apostle of Religion and of Charity, our dearly beloved Father John Bosco, is no longer with us! This morning at 4:40 he gave back his beautiful soul to God, strengthened by all the comforts of religion and blessed by the Holy Father, Leo XIII.

Although we had foreseen for quite some time the inevitable outcome of his failing health condition, we nevertheless felt the gravity of his loss. The tears of his sons, the sorrow of his friends, and the general mourning of the town, bear witness to it.

We went to kiss his blessed hand for the last time during the last few hours of our beloved Father's most precious existence, almost as though we meant to say the last words of farewell to him in this world, on behalf of all the past pupils; but his tongue had grown silent, his eyes no longer recognized any of us. He had entered his death's agony. What anguish, what heartrending grief we felt as we left that room where so many times his kindly smile had welcomed us! ... Oh! Don Bosco! Oh! Don Bosco!...

Dear friends, you know how much we all would have liked to celebrate the Golden Jubilee Mass of our Most Reverend Father Don Bosco, which would have occurred only a few years from now, and how fervently we wished he might live to see it. But Our Lord disposed otherwise: may His Holy Will be done. Even though he is dead, are we going to give him a testimony of our love and gratitude?

Already, in agreement with the Superiors of the House, the committee of past pupils of the Oratory, in order to publicly honor Don Bosco, has decided to invite all our fellow members, priests and laymen alike, who are resident in Turin and the surrounding area, to attend the funeral ceremony on Thursday, February 2nd, at 3:30 in the afternoon; and it has also decided to

urge both those past pupils who live nearby and those who live far away to make as soon as possible a small donation of no less than one lira, to contribute toward the cost of the torches to be purchased and to ensure solemn funeral services for our great Father, Don Bosco, in the church of Mary Help of Christians.

It would be appreciated if any of our members who have received any decorations from the government would attend the ceremony, wearing their insignia. We will meet in the big parlor of the Oratory. There will be specific rules as to the order of precedence in the funeral procession, but we will march in order of seniority.

We do not believe that we need say more to urge you to pay this final tribute of love to our deceased Father. Our far-away friends can make their offering by mail if they wish; we shall notify them as to the established date of the funeral services.

Please say a devout prayer for the soul of Don Bosco, who can never be sufficiently bemourned, while at the same time, we ask you to accept our own cordial regards.

For the Committee
Charles Gastini
Matthew Alasia, Secretary.

98.

A FEW LETTERS OF CONDOLENCE ADDRESSED TO FATHER RUA

Among the many hundreds of letters written in different languages, we are selecting only a few as a sample.

Vigevano, February 3, 1888

Maria Joseph De Gaudenzi, Bishop of Vigevano

Dear and Very Reverend Sir:

The death of Don Bosco marked the loss of a huge amount of blessings for the church and for society.

In his gentleness, he emulated the Bishop of Geneva, whom

he had taken for his patron saint; with the ardor of his charity toward his neighbor he perpetuated the miracles of St. Vincent de Paul; and as an imitator of St. Francis Xavier, he made great conquests for the Cross of Jesus Christ.

I was fortunate enough to know him from the beginning, which was most humble, of his innumerable and admirable undertakings, and to follow him constantly through the thick of his great struggles and, with increasing edification, I admired him as a Man of God who lived solely for the glory of the Lord, so as to expand His Kingdom and establish that kingdom in the hearts of men.

Such thoughts are a healing balm of comfort in my deep sorrow for the deceased whom we now mourn and who always honored me with his special benevolence.

As a token of my veneration and gratitude for the good work of Don Bosco in my own diocese, I have given orders that next Thursday a solemn requiem service be held for his elect soul in the seminary chapel. I shall be there to preside.

I am fully confident that already he occupies an eminent place among the company of saintly priests. Our requiem will not be necessary for his holy soul, but will assist other souls, and be certainly welcome to God inasmuch as it honors a priest in whom He chose to reveal to the world what a priest, fashioned after His Own Heart, a priest who humbly and constantly executes His Designs, may accomplish for the welfare of humanity.

May the Lord continue His Protection on the institutions of that chosen spirit we all admire. This is the prayer which comes forth from my grieving heart during these days.

Remember me to all your worthy confreres and believe me in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Your most affectionate servant,
Maria Joseph, Bishop.

Rome, February 3, 1888

Peter Rota, Titular Archbishop of Thebes

Dear Father Michael Rua:

I believe that everyone who knew our beloved and esteemed Don Bosco either in person or by reputation must be grieving over his death, just as I myself am sorely grieving. His many acts of kindness and his favors which he lavished on me when I was in Turin[24] made him always most dear to me, and I looked on him as a brother. In my room I have a picture of him which I will always treasure, together with the memories of the favors, assistance, and comfort he gave me in critical moments. I trust he is already in Heaven and I hope that I may go and join him before long, for I am old. God grant that this be soon, for *processi in diebus multis* [I am advanced in age].

Meanwhile I will knock at the gates of heaven until I hear that most sweet word: *Intra in gaudium Domini tui* [Enter and enjoy the Lord's happiness].

My Franzini[25] also recalls the kindness of Don Bosco and his associates; he will be writing to you himself, in his grief over this loss; but he too, hopes to have now a spokesman for him in Heaven

Meanwhile, with esteem and with the firm conviction that you will continue in the good work of our late lamented Don Bosco, I am,

Most devotedly and affectionately,
Peter, Archbishop of Thebes and
Canon of St. Peter's Rome

[24] *See Lemoyne, Biographic Memoirs, Vol. VIII, p. 172, 173, 174, 226 and 298.*
[25] *Father Massiliano Franzini, secretary to His Lordship.*

Rome, February 3, 1888

The Secretary of the Index

Reverend Father Rua:

We received the sad news about the death of Don Bosco. He will never be mourned enough, for he was a man of rare virtue and merit before the Church and the whole of humanity. The news was all the more tragic to me, because it arrived totally unexpected. I who esteemed and loved him so deeply felt the deepest sorrow. May the illustrious departed rest in eternal peace in the kingdom of Divine Mercy and Goodness.

My most affectionate and sincere condolences for the grievous loss of your great founder to you, Reverend Father, and to the whole Salesian Congregation. Will you kindly convey these sentiments for me very particularly, together with my affectionate regards, to our good Father Celestine Durando. I am fully confident that, from Heaven, Don Bosco will protect his institutions and obtain for them from God grace and prosperity.

My respectful regards and affectionate friendship,

Your most devoted friend and servant,
Father Jerome Pio Saccheri, Order of Preachers
Secretary of the Index and a Salesian Cooperator

Aquila, February 4, 1888

August Anthony Vicentini, Bishop of Aquila

In reply to the death announcement that you were kind enough to send me, informing me of the loss of our Venerated Don Bosco, who can never be adequately mourned, I can only express the same sentiments as voiced by everyone else at the tragic news. He was a Man of Divine Providence sent by God to confound the apathy, the selfishness and the skepticism of a corrupt and corrupting age. He was a permanent miracle of that industrious, unselfish and many-sided charity, that responded to every human need, that was living on sacrifices being rendered productive of faith, of comfort and of love. So, if our grief is sin-

cere, profound and universal, it has every reason to be so. But it is of great comfort to know that he will live on in his institutions; indeed, more alive than ever before. For, after leaving this world, he will look down on them and protect them from Heaven.

It is with such sentiments that I join the sorrow, especially of the Italian Episcopate, who in our late lamented Apostle found so mighty a support. Will you kindly convey my feelings to your confreres, assuring them of my deep attachment to their meritorious Society that has now lost its dearly beloved founder.

August Anthony
Archbishop of Aquila

Massa Marittima, February 4, 1888

Joseph Vorteo, Bishop of Massa Marittima

Very Reverend Father:

I am the least of the Salesian Cooperators, among whom I was enrolled last year without any merit on my part, on August 11th. But since I have always felt the greatest and most profound admiration and reverent esteem for that Apostle of Charity, whom Your Reverence has now succeeded in the overall direction of so many magnificent institutions erected by him to the glory of God and for the welfare of souls, I cannot but join in the condolences sent to you from all over the Christian world at the death of so great a Father. May Your Reverence deign to accept them for their sole merit of sincerity. Although I strive to pray for the repose of this great soul, I feel myself nevertheless driven to pray to him for myself and for the Church, calling on him to intercede for me before the throne of God. May he be particularly benevolent in Heaven towards the infinitely large family now left to your own paternal and meritorious care. I am at your service, humble though I am, and I beg you believe me with all esteem.

Your devoted servant in Jesus Christ,
Joseph, Bishop of Massa and Papulonia

Trevioso, February 4, 1888

The Bishop of Treviso, Apollonio

Very Reverend Father Michael Rua:

I would be unable to find words to tell you of the grief I felt over the death of the hero of charity, the Saint, Don Bosco.

I have many precious recollections of him which have now become all the more dear to me.

Our Lord felt that he was ripe for Heaven. I feel sure somehow that the Lord will now shower His Blessings even more abundantly than before on Don Bosco's institutions and that, directed as they are by the fervently zealous and excellent Salesian priests, they will continue to reap wonders for the Catholic Church.

I went to Mogliano yesterday to convey my condolences to his sons in their institutions there, but the Superior, Father Mòse Veronesi, had gone to Turin.

Please, accept my assurance of veneration and extend to me the affection which the Saint Don Bosco himself showed me.

Most devotedly and affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Joseph Apollonio, Bishop of Treviso

Rome, February 4, 1888

Cardinal Massaia

To the Vicar General of the Salesian Congregation:

If the tragic news of the death of our dear Don Bosco saddened me immensely, I leave it to Your Reverence to decide! For I loved him not only as a fellow townsman[26] and brother priest, but I also loved and revered him as an Apostle of Charity, the

[26] *His Eminence was a native of Piovà, in the Asti district.*

Father of Youth, the champion of manual labor wedded to piety and Christian instruction. Oh, had I had such a man as my companion in my Mission, how much could I have learnt from him to help enlarge the fold of Jesus Christ and guide Christian souls along the road to salvation! But Our Lord, who assigned him to another field of action, has at least granted that I look to him as an example! As a matter of fact, word about his zeal and of his apostolic industriousness has reached even there!

Now we mourn his death; but let us be comforted, since now he has begun to live in the Glory of God.

He also continues to live here on earth in his mighty works, in the religious Congregation he has left behind, and in that infinite company of his children whom he reared for the Church and Society.

I am old and feeble and it will not be long before my life comes to an end and I go to join him, but I do hope that, just as I now pray for him, so will he remember to obtain for me from God the grace of a death similar to his.

My condolences, my esteem and my special affection to you, Your Reverence.

Your devoted servant,
Fr. G. Cardinal Massaia, Capuchin

Father Denza

Dear Father Rua:

I found out about the tragic death of our beloved Don Bosco, whom I venerated and loved as my own father and whom I considered as one of my dearest friends, while here in Rome where I have been now for some time on account of the Vatican exhibit. You may well imagine my grief over the terrible loss of so great a man; yet, on the other hand, I cannot but find comfort in the thought that this charitable priest, who championed so many and such great institutions, is now enjoying the reward for so much labor and suffering here on earth and is praying to the God he loved so dearly for us all and in particular for his beloved

child, the Salesian Congregation. Nevertheless, I will not neglect to pray to God for him and even more for his Congregation, so that it may retain the spirit and industriousness with which its founder endowed it. Please, dear Father Rua, convey my feelings to all your confreres and my dear friends; I barely know how to express them, but I beg you to pray for me, for I am sorely in need of it.

Believe me always,

Most affectionately yours,
Fr. Danza

Rome, February 4, 1888

Marquis Vitelleschi

Dear Father Rua:

I cannot refrain from telling you how keenly I and my family are feeling the irreparable loss of Don Bosco whom we can never mourn enough. Though it is a terrific blow for us, it is an outstanding gain for our beloved deceased, who, we believe in our Christian hope, might have already received the immortal reward for all his many virtues. Our family was the first here in Rome fortunate enough to establish precious ties of friendship with him in 1864, when I and my late lamented wife went to Turin for the first time and made our acquaintance of that man of God. Ever since then we have received nothing else but tokens of kindness and charity from him.

I cherish a few letters from him as precious relics, especially one which gave me the firm conviction that Don Bosco was an exceptional man and truly a chosen one of God.

I thoroughly understand your own grief, dear Father Rua, and that of all your confreres at so grievous a loss, but you must be comforted by the thought that he whom we now mourn, when he left this world, he also bequeathed to us a tree which has already extended its branches not only over Europe but even as far as America, the tree being the Salesian Congregation, which no one is better suited to govern now than you yourself. Don

Bosco himself will help you in your serious task, for if he was full of charity here on earth, he will continue to protect you from Heaven, where we hope he is now and where charity reigns supreme.....

Angelo Vitelleschi

Paris, February 1, 1888

Richard, Archbishop of Paris

Dear and Reverend Father:

I want you to know how deeply I share the grief of the Salesian family. I consider it as a grace from God that, on my way through Turin, I was permitted to see once again your venerable Father, receive his blessing, and hear him tell me that he blessed *all of Paris.*

I believe, just as you do, that he is already in Heaven, yet I will celebrate a Mass for him, for the Church teaches us to pray for the dead whose virtues we have venerated most.

Please be reassured, dear and Reverend Father, of my respectful and affectionate devotion in Our Lord,

Richard Archbishop of Paris

Capua, February 5, 1888

Cardinal Capecelatro

Dear and most venerated Father Rua:

The death of our revered Don Bosco moved and grieved me profoundly. I now pay an affectionate debt by conveying my condolences to you and all the sons of this mighty father. Your Don Bosco was a true apostle of our century, one of those apostles whom Our Lord allowed to reap a generous harvest from his own apostolate. Blessed be the Lord who sent him to Italy. It is now my most fervent wish, and I believe it is shared by very many oth-

ers, that the institutes founded by this great servant of God may go on and thrive more and more.

When I heard that your father, Don Bosco, was no longer among the living, I prayed for his elect soul at Mass. But in all truth, I was thinking and hoping at that very moment that he was already praying for his sons, in Heaven, as well as for all the many people who loved him and among them, even a little, for me.

Reverend father, please remember me in your own prayers, together with the other Salesians with whom I have long been bound by ties of affection.

With affectionate esteem, believe me to be,

Most devotedly,
Alphonse, Cardinal Capecelatro
Archbishop of Capua

Tortona, February 6, 1888

Vincent Capelli, Bishop of Tortona

Reverend Father Director:

And so, despite the fervent prayers of the vast family of his sons and of all his multitude of admirers who wanted to keep this charitable and holy man with us for a little while longer, our dear Don Bosco has been taken from us! Come on now! Our Lady wanted to have him in Paradise, for he was already so rich in merits.

Hence, if this sweet and venerated person has now been taken away from our eyes, he still lives on in our hearts and his precious memory will never be erased, because of the great virtues with which he was adorned and which he knew how to instill so wisely in the worthy heirs to his God-given mission.

I read in the newspapers about the very moving and edifying spectacle of his triumphal funeral. Naturally, I too regarded it as a sacred duty to celebrate a Holy Mass for the eternal rest of his blessed soul. Then it came to my mind that all the demonstrations of affection for this Holy Man, all the prayers said for his soul, must have availed greatly in the expiation of a great many fortunate souls who will have gone to join him as he entered his

Heavenly Home. This thought cannot but bring great comfort to his orphaned children, despite their grief. They know that their beloved Father is looking down on them with an even more ardent and supernatural love, protecting them, blessing them from his kingdom of glory, while waiting to see him again in Heaven!

I myself am confident that our revered deceased, whom I was fortunate enough to have as my guest for a few days at my episcopal residence in 1875, is protecting me too; and with this trust, I am pleased to offer you, Reverend Father Director, my congratulations on your merited election as his successor in the government of the Congregation. With great esteem, I am,

Your deeply devoted servant,
Vincent, Bishop of Tortona.

Naples, February 6, 1888

Cardinal Sanfelice, Archbishop of Naples

Most Reverend Father:

The announcement of Don Bosco's unexpected death grieved me immensely. Don Bosco is yet another apostle who, according to God's mysterious plans, has been removed from the world. Even the enemies of the Church will have reason to mourn him, for there is no category of people who did not benefit from the apostolic charity of this holy priest. From now on, his sons will realize even more fully how great his protection is. May this thought, and the idea that now his virtues are rewarded in glory, bring consolation to all those who bemoan him. May God grant your Reverence, who are already imbued with the spirit of Your Founder, the grace to maintain alive in an abundant measure this same spirit in all the houses he founded and now entrusted to you.

I am pleased to end this sad missive by assuring you of my special esteem and respect while I remain,

Your Most devoted,
S. Cardinal Archbishop

Messina, February 6, 1888

Joseph Guarino, Archbishop of Messina

Dear and Reverend Sir:

The announcement of the immense loss caused for the Church by the death of Don Bosco, the new St. Vincent de Paul, upset me so greatly that I was unable to express to your Reverence and to the whole Salesian Congregation my deep grief. That man was a miracle. He was the Providence of God made tangible! How could we not grieve deeply over his death? Yet he lives now in Heaven and is powerful before God's throne. He will watch over the stupendous institutes he left here on earth and will not fail to bring new impulse and further development to them. You, who so faithfully reflect his virtues, will surely obtain from God enough strength and operative energy to make his loss less painful, through the intercession of the Saint, your illustrious Founder.

Please accept the sincere feelings of my heart, Reverend Father, and convey them to your confreres, while I am honored to be,

Your most humble servant,
Joseph, Archbishop of Messina

Vercelli, February 7, 1888

Celestine Fissore, Archbishop of Vercelli

Reverend Father Vicar:

I cannot find words to express my grief over the death of our dear Don Bosco. I was not taken unaware by the news, yet this did not make my grief any easier to bear. I was one of the first to become acquainted with his solid priestly virtues, ever since he was a student at the Convitto Ecclesiastico of St. Francis of Assisi. I had the opportunity to watch the progressive development of his virtues in his private and public life and I venture to take my stand among the first to lament the void he has left on earth, though I believe Our Lord has already rewarded him.

You, Father Vicar of the Salesian Congregation, who were always at his side, who inherited his spirit and shared his apostolic

labors and anxieties, must find comfort in the protection which, from on high, Don Bosco will extend to you in the government of his immense family and in the continuation of his works of charity.

I assure you of the sincerity of my feelings for Don Bosco, for you, for all the Salesians and Cooperators, whom I join with my prayers.

I am with the deepest and affectionate esteem,

Your most devoted servant,
Celestine, Archbishop[27]

Paris, February 7, 1888

D'Hulst, Parliamentary Deputy and
Rector of the Catholic Institute of Paris

Very Reverend Father:

I cannot tell you how greatly moved I was by your kindness in sending me a telegram to inform me of the tragic news of your Father's death. You were not mistaken in thinking that we here feel profoundly the blow which has hit all of you.

I followed with respectful interest the account of his funeral in the newspapers, and the tribute of the people of Turin to a servant of God to whom paltry red-tape regulations deny a tomb in the church that he built. I have no doubt but that his protection will extend to his Congregation now that he is gone and that you will be given the necessary strength and vision to continue his mighty undertakings. We are always ready to give our support to the house in Paris.

I assure you, Very Reverend Father of my great respect and devotion,

W. D'Hulst

[27] Two days later this letter was followed by a note delivered by Signora Antonia, his Lordship's sister; this was likewise written by the hand of the Most Rev. Celestine Fissore, Archbishop of Vercelli: "To the Very Rev. Father Michael Rua, Vicar of the Salesian Congregation, in view of the needs you may be facing on the tragic occasion of the death of your beloved Founder, Don John Bosco, I hereby offer you the donation of 1000 lire. The archbishop was the brother of Dr. Fissore who, with admirable unselfishness, rendered his free medical service during Don Bosco's last illness.

Ivrea, February 8, 1888

Richelmy, Bishop of Ivrea.

Reverend Father, beloved in Jesus Christ:

I am late in conveying to your Reverence and your whole well-deserving Congregation my sincere condolences over the grievous loss you have suffered. Yet I would not want you to believe that I am the last among those who admired our Venerable Don Bosco and loved the Salesian family.

I have prayed for Don Bosco and I hope that, in Heaven, he will remember me. Insignificant as I am, I have also prayed and will pray further for the dear Salesians and trust that they will not forget an old friend of long standing, and that, above all, they will not forsake my beloved diocese which has such urgent need of assistance and support.

I appeal to the charity of your prayers, while I am with affection in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

Your most devoted and affectionate servant,
Augustine, Bishop

Andrea, February, 1888

Baroness Scoppa di Badolato (Catanzaro)

Venerable Father:

How grieved I was to receive your announcement of the death of our dear Father Don Bosco! Ah, he wrote to tell me he wanted to see me in Turin and I went, obedient to his orders. He wished to say goodbye. He said we would see each other in Heaven and never again on earth. I bow before His adorable Will.

Father, would you let me have some relics—please grant me this grace. I can well imagine how the young man who was always at Don Bosco's side must be grieving.

This year I want to pay for one of the missionaries now abroad. In your circular you mentioned something like 700 lire. I will send this amount to you soon as a money order, and thus I will share in the merit of all that he will do for souls.

I have had Masses said, and I have persuaded several people to go to Communion, and I have added my own Communions for our beloved deceased. I had a splendid funeral service celebrated this morning in the chapel in my palace, and the office for the dead was sung. I still continue to say prayers for his blessed soul. I hope he is now in Heaven and enjoying the heavenly Glory.

Please bless me, as I kiss your hand.

My respects to those priests whom I had the honor of meeting.

Baroness di Badolato Scoppa

Palermo, February 9, 1888

Father Salvatore Di Pietro, a preacher

Reverend and dearly Beloved Father Rua:

It is with a deeply grieving heart stabbed by the sharpest anguish that I, the last of the Cooperators, join the Salesian family, mingling my tears with yours, as together we mourn our Father and benefactor of humanity.

I followed daily with fear and keen anxiety the bulletins regarding the sickness which so tormented the revered deceased. You, yourself, Reverence, can only imagine whether the news of his death grieved me. However, the thought that from now on I will have an advocate to intercede for me before God and to intercede with authority, has somehow soothed the grief of my soul.

I celebrated the holy sacrifice for his holy soul this morning, with tears in my eyes, and I have asked Almighty God to shed perpetual light on him and grant him the peace of the saints. After really long labors, he has gone to his well-deserved reward in Heaven.

Our hope that he will be praying up there for all his infinite number of spiritual children should encourage us to keep on doing the works he began for the greater glory of God.

The loving image of our dearly beloved Don Bosco is deeply engraved on my heart as I was fortunate enough to see him during five long days I spent with him (April 1884). On my way

home from preaching during Lent in Turin, I stayed with the Salesian Fathers of the Sacred Heart Church in Rome.

At the time there was a constant coming and going around that holy temple which was not yet completed. People of all languages and nations were going there to see at close range, listen to and admire the *saint.* Nor did anyone go away before receiving some little thing that his hand had touched, blessed or used. Oh dear Father, if you could only know all that I saw at that time and how my soul was strengthened anew in the faith and love for Jesus Crucified. He wanted me at his side, and we spent long hours in holy conversation. It was at this time that I saw ladies of the greatest Roman, French and German aristocracy come to the Sacred Heart church in Rome, to leave white or colored kerchiefs and other objects, so that the *Father* might use them but once and then they would retrieve them as precious souvenirs, etc. etc.

Rev. Salvatore Pietro, Salesian Cooperator
From the Retreat House of St. Eulalie,
Via Coltellieri 17

Angoulême, February 10, 1888

Sebaux, Archbishop of Angoulême

Reverend Father:

I feel I must tell you how profoundly I share your grief. One may well say that the death of the venerable Don Bosco has plunged the whole Church into mourning even though, in bewailing the loss of a devoted priest and son, she sees a chosen one rewarded for many holy deeds. You and the whole Institute have lost a Father, but before God he has become your tender and powerful protector, while at the same time he has bequeathed to his sons his own admirable spirit.

Please accept, Reverend Father, my fervent and respectful sympathy.

A. L. Bishop of Angoulême

Nice, February 11, 1888

The attorney Michel, of Nice Maritime.

Dear Father Rua:

I am just back from Rome where I presented a number of members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Nice to the Holy Father. As I introduced two children from the Patronage of St. Peter's, the Holy Father asked them if they had said prayers for Don Bosco. *"It is necessary that you pray,"* he added, *"for this holy man has done so much for you and for so many other children. From Heaven above he will hear your prayers, and continue looking after you."*

I wanted to tell you this because it will delight all the Salesians. You will know that we also bemoan our best friend, our beloved Father, whose children we were, living in the world. We could not show him our gratitude better than by taking care of his houses, which is what we hope to do, with God's help, according to our possibilities. Please remember us to your confreres and to their prayers....

E. Michel

Countess Mocenigo Soranzo

Venerated Father Rua:

Also on behalf of my husband, I wish to make a donation toward the funeral of our holy and lamented Don Bosco, to whom we looked as to our own father. In addition to the immense, indescribable grief we feel at his death, we are also in anguish on account of our son, Giusmino (who is 14 years old), whose health causes us great anxiety, since for the past month he has had a fever which exhausts him and shows no sign of abating. *We implore you to recommend his plight to Don Bosco the Saint, so that he may recover.* Please pray to the beloved Saint also on our behalf and kindly send us your holy blessing. Pray for my child. I am so terribly anxious!

Countess Mocenigno Soranzo
née Princess di Soresina Vidoni

99.

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF DON BOSCO

1. Rev. Ramello, canon archpriest of Pinerolo, to Father Rua, February 2nd: "How this dear father loved me, how many times did he not show me his affection ever since I first had the good fortune of meeting him and approaching him, in the very early days of the Salesian Oratory; and later on also, over a period of about thirty years, at least. I had one particular manifestation of his affection around the end of December last, when Don Bosco wrote me a letter in his own handwriting. I still treasure it as a relic. How many times did Don Bosco not tell me that his house was always open to me and that he was willing to take me in at any time. He always told me this during those two years that he came here during the summer to regain his exhausted energy by breathing in the air of this area.

2. Father Selva of Chiavazza (Biella) to Father Rua, February 2nd: "The humble Salesian Cooperator who is writing this takes pleasure in recalling how one day, in my father's house at Pettinengo (Biella), when my good grandfather and beloved papa were still alive, both of whom had admired the venerated deceased from the early years of his apostolate, Don Bosco came to see us. I recall where he sat when he talked with the family... perhaps at that time he was ignorant of the mission (and who could have told him of it) entrusted to him by Divine Providence...Oh, what a mission!"

3. Romano Perucatti, from Cuneo, to Father Rua, February 2nd: "You know how much I always loved the holy priest who gave me the first lessons in Christian doctrine in the years 1849–1850. I can never forget his loving advice which he, as a good Father, always gave me from 1861 to1879, nor can I forget the care he took of my own poor son, or all that he did for my brothers Giacinto and Placido."

4. The Cooperator Victoria Protasi, of Arona, to Father Rua, February 2nd: "I felt an immense love for him, even more after I had been fortunate to meet him in person and receive his sound advice."

5. Eugenie Telles de Gama, lady of honor to the Queen Maria Pia of Portugal, of Lisbon, to Father Rua, February 2nd: "I was happy that I had been fortunate enough to make the personal acquaintance of this holy father at the time of the Queen's last visit to Turin. I had the honor of accompanying Her Majesty and considered it both a duty and a privilege to call on one whom I knew by reputation and who I was most anxious to see. I will always remember his kindly manner and the gracious way in which he received me."
6. Coullié, Bishop of Orleans, later Cardinal, to Father Rua, February 3rd: "I had the pleasure of seeing Don Bosco several times when I went to Rome and considered it a grace from God that I was allowed the joy of talking with him and listening to him."
7. The Cooperator, L. Ramacle, of Auxerre (Yonne), to Father Rua, February 3rd: "No more than four years ago during the winter we spent in the South in 1883–1884, we were fortunate enough to meet this holy priest, the echo of whose name resounded in many parts of the world because of all the good he did. The good father granted us an interview at the house of La Navarre, near Hyères, and he allowed us to remain for some time. We were filled with new courage and strength in our troubles because of his kindness, his prayers, and the blessing he gave us twice on this memorable occasion. He told us of his immense undertakings, of the lottery then being organized. He also enrolled the four of us as new Cooperators. Since then he has received requests for prayers from me on many occasions and he always took the trouble to reply to my indiscreet pleadings! This venerated priest also wrote to comfort us, as he knew how to do so well, when God reclaimed our beloved child for Himself three years ago! I treasure all of these memories. I have assembled all the many notes which the lamented and venerated Don Bosco so kindly wrote me, as a genuine relic, religiously treasured."
8. The Cooperator, Reboud, of St. Marcellin (Isère), to Father Rua, February 3rd: "We thank God for having permitted us to know your well-beloved Don Bosco. The sight of a saint is a vision of Heaven. It is an unforgettable happiness. If I experienced such a delight in so complete a measure, I cannot forget that I owe it to you, Reverend Father."

9. Madame Antoinette Sassulier, of Grodno (Poland), to Father Rua, February 3rd: "My poor daughter Maria who, thanks to the prayers of the good priest Bosco, was restored to health, has been a governess now for the last three years in Warsaw... She comes to Versailles to pass her holidays here, and it was here she had the good fortune of making the personal acquaintance of Don Bosco and of receiving his blessing."

10. Marquis Angelo Vitelleschi, of Rome, to Father Rua, February 4th: "Our family was the first in Rome fortunate enough to establish precious ties of friendship with him in 1864, when I and my late lamented consort came to Turin for the first time and made the acquaintance of that Man of God. Ever since then we have received nothing else but tokens of kindness and charity from him. I cherish a few letters from him as precious relics, especially one which gave me the firm conviction that Don Bosco was an exceptional man and truly a man chosen by God."

11. Father Ravoux, curate of St. Hilaire (Orleans), to Father Rua, February 4th: "I am happily convinced that soon—and may God indeed grant it to be so—he will be admitted to the company of the Saints. I had the pleasure of seeing him, listening to him talk and receiving his blessing twice."

12. The Cooperator, Naudé, of Peronne (Somme), to Father Rua, February 4th: "I am very happy that I was able to see him some years ago during a pilgrimage to Rome and Turin. These are unforgettable memories which I hold very dear."

13. The Cooperator, Lachèze, of Angers, to Father Rua, February 4th: "We were lucky to see him in Paris at the home of Monsieur de Franqueville at Passy, and have always remembered that day as a very happy one in our lives."

14. Mr. Sutto, of La Ciotat, to Father Rua, February 5th: "I am going to the orphanage at Saint-Cyr on Monday. We are planning to start a hot-house there. When Don Bosco was in Marseilles he said to me: 'If you do not know what to do, cover the first shoots with blankets to protect them from the cold.' But I hope we shall find some glass."

15. The Cooperator, Amalie Lacomte, from Valence, to Father Rua, February 5th: "I was the first person in Valence to know him. I had the greatest confidence in him and felt the most profound veneration for him."

16. Countess de Liniers, of Champdeniers (Deux-Sèvres), to Father Rua, February 5th: "It is now almost six years since my older son, who was then about six, was suffering from diphtheria, and we had little hope that he would survive. We asked the late lamented Don Bosco to pray for him and our son's life was saved."

17. Madame Caroline Leclerc, of Laval (Mayenne), to Father Rua, February 5th: "By means of a novena which the venerable priest held for us in November last, he obtained a temporal grace for us."

18. Mrs. Casimira Tettoni, of Turin, to Father Rua, February 6th: "Encouraged by his exquisite kindness, I ventured to call on him three or four times a year, and I must say that I always came away with indescribable delight. The last time I had the good fortune of seeing him was November 21st, when I asked him whether I ought to go to Rome for the Holy Father's Jubilee. He encouraged me to go. I obeyed, and now I am very glad I did. Had it not been for him, I would never have gone."

19. Father E. Vinson, of St. Canodet (Haute-Loire), to Father Rua, February 6th: "It was my pleasure to look once on the bodily semblance of a saint, for I had the good fortune of going to a fund-raiser sermon delivered by Don Bosco at Aix (B.D.R.) a few years ago. I did not have the pleasure of talking with him in person, as I would have wished; but I did see him quite close as he walked through the throng, collecting alms for his houses."

20. E. Salanson, a painter from Paris (117 Rue Notre-Dame des Champs), to Father Rua, February 6th: "I am sending you at the same time a photograph of a portrait I painted of Venerable Don Bosco when he was in Paris in 1883. I sold a number of them on behalf of his houses. I still have the portrait in my possession, but I painted it only in order to help the Pious Salesian Society."

21. The Cooperator, E. Verny née Dauphin, of Aubenas (Ardèche), to Father Rua, February 6th: " I considered it as an outstanding

grace that the good Father decided to write to me eighteen months ago. I still treasure his two letters, signed by him in person, and the holy picture enclosed, with a prayer written on it."

22. The Cooperator, A. Merigaut, of Trouville-sur-mer (Calvados), to Father Rua, February 6th: "I thank God for having permitted me to become one of his Cooperators, albeit to a very modest degree. I was fortunate enough to see Don Bosco twice: the first time in Turin when I was on a pilgrimage to Rome, where I admired his magnificent creation; the second time in Paris. I would have liked to talk to him but it was impossible on account of the crowd which was around him."

23. Past pupil, Charles Brovia, President of the Catholic Workers' Association of Nizza Monferrato, to Father Rua, February 7th: "We still recall the happy evening we spent here in our headquarters on August 11th,[28] 1881, on which occasion the Venerable Father gave us the holy advice we still follow and which will always be engraved on our hearts. We shall also pass it on to our own dear children. Don John Bosco is not dead, for he will always live in the hearts of the Catholic Workers."

24. The Cooperator, Eulalie Ruty, of Lons le Saunier (Jura), to Father Rua, February 7th: "How happy I am to have a picture of him and a few written lines he honored me with. I treasure it like a relic, for I venerated and loved Don Bosco dearly, as everyone does who knew any of his wondrous undertakings and how holy he was."

25. The Cooperator, Lepage nèe Delys, of Rennes, to Father Rua, February 7th: "I consider it a grace and one of the great joys of my life that I was allowed to meet him in Paris. The thought that he was kind enough to pray for me and my family and that he will continue to do so is a great comfort to me. I will be faithful to his memory and will always love his houses, the protection of which he entrusted to us."

26. The Cooperator, Julia Pensa, of Desio (Milan), to Father Rua, February 8th: "I am nobody at all. I only had the good fortune of talking to Don Bosco once, but what he said was unforgettable and of the greatest comfort to me."

[28] *It was August 8th, not the 11th (see Vol. XV, p. 303).*

27. Mrs. Rosa Calotta- Antoniol, of Longarone (Belluno), to Father Rua, February 8th: "For six months, a nephew of mine, aged 24 and an orphan, had been pining away in the lunatic asylum of Ferrara, condemned as incurable by medical diagnosis. In my desperation I appealed to the saint, Don Bosco, for a special blessing, telling him the sad story. He told me he would begin a novena and that all his pupils would go to Communion. A little later, the director of the asylum wrote to the wretched mother that her son was showing symptoms of marked improvement. This occurred at the fatal moment when the poor mother was obliged to have her son qualified as a pauper. This entitled him to gratuitous treatment, since she was unable to pay fees for him any longer, but it also meant that he would be given a more inferior treatment, and cause him to die of grief. Instead, my husband went to pick him up and against medical advice, he brought him back home to us. Loving care calmed the intensity of his fearful mania and two months later, to our indescribable joy, we were able to return him quite safely to his family."

28. The Mother Superior of the Ursuline Nuns of Nice Maritime, to Father Rua, February 8th: "October last he told one of our pupils, whose family lives in Turin, that he was very fond of the Ursuline convent in Nice. He stressed this as the pupil took leave of him, and this was a great comfort to us."

29. The Cooperator, J. Thomas, of Toulon, to Father Rua, February 8th: "Our venerated and well-beloved Don Bosco gave us a great token of his affection by extending his blessing to a niece of ours who was seriously ill and she recovered very quickly."

30. A governess, Luisa Roy, of Vienne, to Father Rua, February 8th: "You know what Don Bosco meant to me: he engineered my conversion and consequently is responsible for my present peaceful conscience. I feel that I have lost more than a father and a friend, for his prayers alone were able to overcome my hesitation and give me the courage to become that which I am today. I want you to know that I was not at all indifferent to his sickness, for I owe him everything, nor to his death which now leaves me as if I were an orphan."

31. Mrs. Sophie de Voldre, president of the Guard of Honor, wrote to Father Rua from Rome, February 8th: "We had the honor of see-

ing him and receiving his blessing the last time he came to Rome. He then promised us that he would recommend our plans to God. 'Goodbye until we meet again in Heaven,' he said to us. 'Pray for me, my children, and my sons.' Then he added something else: 'Let us bless the Lord in joy and in sorrow.' These words have remained with us, like a testament."

32. Father Stephen Salvatico, archpriest of Saliceto (Cuneo), to Father Rua, February 9th: "He gave a retreat thirty years ago here in my parish and it would be impossible to relate all the good he accomplished, for many people still recall the holy man's sermons and talk about it with admiration."

33. A widow, Lucrezia Negrini, writing to Father Rua from Verona on February 9th about a visit she had made to Don Bosco at the Valsalice school (1884), ended her description as follows: "I came away not only satisfied in soul, but with a certain feeling of confidence in Don Bosco that I was unable to explain."

34. Count de Moudion of the d'Artigny Chateau at Loudun (Vienne) wrote to Father Rua on February 9th: "It is barely a few weeks ago that, at my express request, Don Bosco was so kind as to pray, together with his children, to implore Our Lady Help of Christians for a safe childbirth. Now I am happy to inform you that Countess de Moudion has safely delivered a son on February 1st, the day after the death of your lamented Father. Once again his prayers were answered and it is a great comfort to us to know that he whom you now mourn, leaves only happiness and cause for gratitude behind him."

35. Mlle. A. Touzet of Paris wrote to Father Rua on February 9th: "I knew Don Bosco personally. I had an occasion to talk with the present-day St. Vincent de Paul twice, in Turin and in Paris. I was given advice and enlightenment by him."

36. The Cooperator, Madeline Ochninger, of Wierzl (Tyrol), wrote to Father Rua on February 9th: "I was fortunate to see the venerated Don Bosco once and speak with him; I also received his blessing. I will never forget that moment nor him who welcomed me so graciously. One may say of him too: He went around, doing good everywhere."

37. Enrichetta Tavallini of the Vercelli area wrote Father Rua on February 10th: "Oh, never will I forget that heavenly aura emanating from his entire person, nor the tender words he uttered."

38. John Baptist Santi of Bra wrote to Father Rua on February 10th: "Oh, dear Don Bosco, pray for me and my family, whom you welcomed so kindly so many times in your room, comforting us with your holy words."

39. The Rev. Merlin, curate at Veyrac (Haute Vienne), wrote Father Rua on February 10th: "I thank Divine Providence, first of all, for having allowed me to make your precious acquaintance when I passed through Turin: It was October 13th, the time of the pilgrimage of French workers, on the occasion of the priestly jubilee of the Supreme Pontiff. And secondly, for receiving a medal and a blessing from our well-beloved Don Bosco."

40. Marchioness de Saint Seine of Dijon wrote to Father Rua on February 10th: "He was so paternally kind to me that I only wish I could tell you how filial my recollections of him are. In my mind I keep thinking of all that he was good enough to tell me. It is a very tender memory for me and I consider it as a boon from Heaven that it was permitted to us to house this genuine replica of St. Vincent de Paul here under our own roof."

41. Mlle. Ruelle of Tullins (Isère) wrote to Father Rua on February 10th: "It is now five years since I had the pleasure of talking with the late lamented Don Bosco in Turin. He obtained for me a recovery from sickness for which I shall ever be grateful."

42. A widow, Nunziata Tancredi, of San Marco in Lamis (Foggia), wrote Father Rua on February 11th: "I had a most fortunate chance to know him, see him, and talk with him. You may well imagine how the acquaintance with a priest exactly according to God's heart will stimulate devotion, esteem, and love for him."

43. H. de Trolong du Romain (no other indication given) wrote Father Rua on February 11th: "I owe to his holy prayers the exceptional graces showered on the whole family, and especially on Papa, who obtained the grace to have a peaceful and Christian death. My soul overflows with gratitude toward him."

44. Countess del Melle of Florence wrote Don Rua on February 13th: "I often appealed to him and his prayers in the tragic circumstances of my life. With infinite kindness, he would write to me a few lines in reply or he would have someone answer me, and I must confess that, thanks to his intercession, I have obtained almost miraculous graces from God."

45. The Rev. Louis Ferrugio of Malta wrote to Father Durando on February 13th: "Since it was my good fortune to pay him my respects nearly five years ago, his image is so deeply impressed on my heart and my mind that I have never been able to forget him for a single moment."

46. Madame Marie Lécroart of Lille, to Father Rua, on February 13th: "He was extremely gracious toward me, considering the condition I was in: for I lost the use of my legs thirteen years ago. When he was in Lille, the venerated priest was so kind as to shower words of advice and encouragement on me and assured me that he would never forget to pray for me."

47. Madame V. Le Mire of Dijon wrote to Father Rua on February 16th: "Our venerated Don Bosco wanted to obtain from God the outstanding grace of recovery for my daughter-in-law, Jeanne Le Mire. I still recall, as one of my precious memories, the happiness and honor of calling on the dear Saint in Turin to thank him."

48. The archpriest, Peter Poltroneri, of Vigevano, wrote to Father Rua on February 17th, re the speech delivered by Bishop De Gaudenzi to the seminarians and clergy after a solemn funeral ceremony: he quoted these very words: *"Da mihi animas, cetera tolle!"* "That's what the holy man said to me one day when he was with me at Vercelli and we were sharing our troubles: The Rev. archpriest, that is exactly what we priests ought to say to Almighty God."

49. Father Romain, prior of the Benedictine monastery at St. Pierre de Canon, wrote to Father Rua on February 18th: " I want to tell you about the veneration and deep affection I always felt for Don Bosco ever since I had the good fortune to establish some relationship with him. In his presence, my soul soared and I never forgot the fragrance of sanctity which emanated from his person and pervaded the entire world."

50. Father John Trudu of Belví (Oristano) wrote to Father Rua on February 20th: "I was lucky enough to have him for about five years as my teacher and Father. I am not afraid to say that considering what I was able to know about him during those blissful five years, I hope to celebrate him at the altar some day, if God grants that I live that long."
51. Father Emile Sacco, pastor of Santo Stefano in Pallanza, wrote to Father Rua on February 20th: "How dear he was! How virtuous, and how saintly! I still seem to see him smiling at me, I still seem to hear his tender words, and admire his lovable face which reflected so clearly the beauty of his soul. May I, in my own ministry, safeguard the spirit of charity and zeal that he taught me so eloquently with his words and with his example."

100.

THE STATEMENT PLACED IN DON BOSCO'S COFFIN

Turin, February 2, 1888

The undersigned testify that this coffin contains the mortal remains of the Rev. Don John Bosco, founder of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and of the Salesian Cooperators. He was born in Castelnuovo d' Asti on August 16, 1815; he was the son of Francesco and Margaret Occhiena, and died of slow myelitis, as stated in the certificate signed by his attending physician, Albertotti of Turin, in the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, and submitted to City Hall on January 31,1888. He died at 4 $^{3}/_{4}$ A.M., a few minutes after the Angelus bell, which echoed like the voice of the Virgin Help of Christians summoning him to Heaven, at the close of the 10th year of the glorious reign of that wise Pope, Leo XIII, while His Eminence, Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda, was the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Turin, during the reign of Our Sovereign King, Humbert I of Savoy. History will relate in due course the story of his admirable works of charity and zeal, of his many institutes, of his great and heroic virtues, of the life of this illustrious deceased and of the general wave of mourning which all nations shared at his death.

The corpse is clothed in a cassock and wears purple church vestments, as though about to celebrate Holy Mass. Together with this parchment, placed inside the coffin in a crystal box are three medals of Mary Help of Christians and another silver medal commemorating the priestly jubilee of Leo XIII.

Oh, bones sorrowfully bemoaned and bathed by so many a tear, rest in peace until the day when the blast of the angelic trumpet will summon you, too, to eternal glory once again; may the spirit which lived within you be propitious to us from above in Heaven where we have good reason to hope that you already are, rejoicing with God and with Mary, whom you loved so dearly and in whom you always had the greatest confidence.

(The Signatures follow)

101.

THE ORDER TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE FUNERAL PROCESSION

1. Children of Mary from St. Donato Parish.
2. Children of Mary from St. Joseph Parish.
3. The ladies of the Pious Union of Salesian Cooperators.
4. The young artisans of the Oratory, arranged according to the different shop groups.
5. Young students, divided by class.
6. Pupils of the Hospice of St. John Evangelist.
7. Coadjutors of the Oratory and other Salesian Houses.
8. Past Pupils of the Oratory.
9. The gentlemen of the Pious Union of the Salesian Cooperators.
10. The band.
11. Sub-deacon bearing the Cross, and acolytes.
12. Clerics, arranged by class.
13. Priests, arranged in order of seniority.
14. Idem, for pastors and canons.
15. Their Reverend Lordships, the Bishops.
16. The coffin, borne by eight priests.

17. The Salesian Directors, walking next to the coffin.
18. The President and committee of the General Association for Catholic Conventions.
19. The Association of Catholic Workers from St. Joachim parish, of which Don Bosco was honorary president.
20. The Catholic Youth Association and the Catholic Bravery Association.
21. A fitting place in the procession will be assigned to any other representational committee as yet unscheduled.

102.

LETTER OF THE VALSALICE CLERICS TO FATHER RUA

Valsalice, February 6, 1888

Very Reverend Father Rua:

Today's sorrowful ceremony will be an event that the house of Valsalice will forever remember.

In the name of the Superior Council and of all the Salesians, you, Reverend Father, delivered into our keeping the venerated mortal remains of our common father and founder. We hasten to convey our most heartfelt thanks to you for this inestimable boon and we assure you at the same time that we shall endeavor to keep vigilant watch over this sacred trust.

We promise to carry out eagerly and solicitously the precious souvenirs which you left on Don Bosco's grave and swear wholeheartedly that we intend to labor in order that we may become worthy of our great father. We intend to work hard so that, when we leave Valsalice, it may be said of us that we are off-shoots growing out of that hallowed grave. May God strengthen us in our resolutions and may Don Bosco, with his intercession, assure us that we never betray them.

In his lovely talk, Bishop Cagliero gave us a special souvenir. He told us to give a gracious welcome to the Salesians who will

come here to pray near the beloved and holy remains of our blessed Father. Ah, may these brothers come and without fear of disturbing us. We shall always welcome them with open arms and join them in their prayers, sighing in unison with them, making their resolutions our own, so that all of us may truly emulate the virtues of our common father. May they all come and may this house become the shrine of our Congregation.

It was said of Our Divine Redeemer that one day His sepulcher would attain glory. May we hope that the same, considering our limitations, be repeated in regard to this sepulcher of ours! May God grant that this ardent desire of ours soon be fulfilled. If anything is wanting here, we offer ourselves to Almighty God, striving to hasten this coveted moment with our sacrifices and prayers. Yes, Almighty God, glorify Your Faithful Servant in death, whom you deigned to glorify so much in life; yes, beloved Mother, Virgin Help of Christians, you who have already done so much for this beloved son of yours, continue in your task; give him back to us, as glorious as our hearts desire.

There is yet another thing that we wish to do this day. This is a duty which comes from our heart. We feel that the day would not end properly if we should fail to somehow assuage the immense grief which has pierced us to our very soul, by gathering around our new Rector Major, our dear Father Rua, who even while Don Bosco was still alive, inspired such great trust in us, and won so much of our affection and has instilled into us such a great veneration.

We know that, already some time ago, the Holy Father had designated you as successor to our venerated Don Bosco. We are therefore happy to acknowledge you as such and deem ourselves fortunate to hail you with the name of Father. Here, on the tomb of our beloved deceased founder, we solemnly pledge our filial obedience and most ready submission to your every order.

We all wish to sign our names hereto and utter a joyous cry of *"Long live our new Rector Major."* No; such jubilation is not an act of irreverence, nor lack of sensitiveness on this unhappy day. It is only a sacred duty, and Don Bosco himself would have wanted it to take place beside his tomb. This is the best thing that a loving son should do by the grave of his deceased father. Therefore, may Father Michael Rua live *ad multos annos:* long live our Rector Major.

Please smile upon our good will, beloved Father, and forgive us if our frailty will lead us to neglect our promises involuntarily. Help us meanwhile with your precious advice, support us with your constant prayers, comfort us with your paternal blessing.

(125 signatures follow.)

103.

POSTHUMOUS LETTERS FROM DON BOSCO TO THE COOPERATORS

Turin

To Countess Gabriella Corsi

God bless you, dear Mamma in Jesus Christ, together with your whole family. May He help you continuously along the road to Heaven, so that one day you may see your dear sons all around you in Heaven. May this road be the reward for the charity extended to me and all our Salesians.

Pray for me who will await you in Eternity,

Your most devoted son,
Rev. John Bosco.

P.S. *Requiescat in pace.* She departed for Eternity in 1887.

Turin
In Paris

To Viscountess de Cessac

Rue Boétie, Paris

Madame Viscountess de Cessac:

You have helped our orphans, and the Holy Virgin will make you rich in Eternity, where you will see your parents, your friends.

There you will talk with them forever and ever about God. Persevere in your charity to our houses. Pray for my humble person.

Your grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. 1886. *Requiescat in pace.*

To Baroness Scoppa[29]

You, oh! Baroness Scoppa, who live at St. Andrea del Ionio Napolitano, continue your charity toward our missionaries, our orphans, and Mary will guide you in all you do, and comfort you in the last moments of your life. We shall pray for you every day and also for your relatives and friends, whether you are still living on this earth, or God has already welcomed you among the blessed in Heaven.

Turin

To Madame Prat.

To Madame Prat of Marseilles:

Thank you for your charity. May God reward you generously. Our nuns and the pupils in the apostolic institute are your own children who will pray for you. Help them.

Oh Mary, guide this benefactress of ours along the road to Heaven. Pray for my soul.

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

[29] *See this volume, p. 780.*

Turin

To Count and Countess Colle

Dear Count and Countess Colle of Toulon:

I'll be waiting for you both where God has prepared our great reward, Eternal happiness, together with our beloved Louis.

In His Divine Mercy God will grant this to us. Always be the support of the Salesian Congregation and the helpers of our missions. May God bless you.

With filial affection,
Rev. John Bosco

Turin

To Mademoiselle Du Gas

Mlle. Rose Du Gas, Marseilles:

May the Holy Virgin protect you always. I entrust our nuns and our poor girl orphans to you. Pray for the soul of

Your grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Turin

To Madame Jacques

To Madame Jacques, our mother in Jesus Christ:

God is calling me to Eternity. I hope in His Mercy Almighty God will keep a place for you in Heaven. But continue your support of our nuns and our orphans.

May Mary protect you. Pray always for the poor soul

of the poor priest,
John Bosco

Turin

To Marchioness Fassati

Marchioness Maria Fassati:

Thank you, Marchioness, for your charity during my mortal life. If God, in His Mercy, shall take me in, I will pray fervently for you.

Your support of our orphans will be a most certain way by which to assure Heaven for yourself.

Please pray for this old, yet ever affectionate friend of the Fassati household,

Poor Don John Bosco

Turin

Baroness Ricci

Baroness Azeglia Ricci:

Mrs. Azeglia, continue your support of our apostolic labors and the many souls saved by our missionaries will waft you to Heaven.

Oh Mary, guide your daughter and her husband,B. Charles, so that one day they may both enjoy the true reward of their perseverance in the joys of Paradise.

Pray for my soul,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Turin

Baron Ricci

Baron Feliciano Ricci:

Oh Baron, you really must save your soul; but you will have to give to the poor all your surplus, just as Our Lord gave unto you. I pray that God grant you this extraordinary grace.

I hope we will meet again in the beatitude of Eternity.
Pray that I may save my soul.

Most gratefully in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

Turin

To Mlle. Louvet

Mlle. Claire Louvet:

I have to go before you; but I shall not fail to pray for your eternal happiness. Continue to look after our orphans and our orphans will form your crown when the angels will waft you one day to enjoy the glory of Heaven.

Oh Mary, protect your daughter always.

Please pray for the eternal rest of my own poor soul.

Always your grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Turin

To Count De Maistre

Dear Count Eugene De Maistre:

Thank you for the charity with which you have helped our houses. Continue supporting them. May God grant that you and all your family be united one day, together with your humble friend now penning these lines for you, to enjoy the glory of Paradise. So be it.

Please pray also for the repose of my own soul.

Your affectionate friend and servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Turin

To Countess Callori

Countess Charlotte Callori:

Oh Mary, protect your daughter here, and from your Divine Son Jesus obtain for her an eternal recompense for her charitable support of the Salesian Congregation. May Mary guide you to Heaven, together with your whole family.

Continue to be the support of our institutes, and pray for my poor soul. Goodbye until we meet in Heaven.

Most gratefully in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

Turin

To Madam Broquier

Marseilles

May God reward generously your charity and your husband's kindness. Continue to help our institutes; pray for my poor soul. I, too, will pray for you and will wait for you in the beatitude of eternity, which I hope Almighty God will grant me in His Infinite Mercy. So be it.

Your grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

104.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST GENERAL DIRECTORY OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS AFTER DON BOSCO'S DEATH

My beloved Sisters in Jesus Christ:

Here you have the General Directory of the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians for the year 1888.

To your comfort you can see therein how, in His Infinite Mercy, Our Lord continues to bless our Congregation,by sending us vocations, by increasing the number of our houses, by enabling us to extend the range of our efforts to His Glory and for the salvation of souls. Thanks be given to God Almighty for all these things.

It is unnecessary that I stress here the immense loss suffered by us as a consequence of the death of our most venerated Founder and Father, Don Bosco. This death plunged all of us into deep sorrow, and still has us mourning. You have been already informed about this great loss. I think I should rather remind you that on his bed of suffering, our venerated Don Bosco remembered us several times and left some precious souvenirs for us. When I had the happy opportunity to visit him during the course of his last sickness, and to ask for a special blessing for us all, he raised his hand with his usual kindliness and said: *"I bless all the houses of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians; I bless the Mother General, and may all her fellow Sisters strive to save many souls."* Another day, in the presence of the Rev. Father Rua and Bishop Cagliero, he added: *"For the Sisters:* OBEDIENCE; *they must observe it and have others observe it too."* Then lastly, he let the Very Reverend Father Bonetti, who is in charge of our general guidance, inform us about this other thought: *"If the Sisters obey the Constitutions that were given to them, their eternal salvation is assured."*

Dear and beloved, let us print these three souvenirs in our minds and carve them in our hearts and let us keep them as a precious legacy bequeathed to us by our dear Father. However, let us not be satisfied merely by treasuring them, but let us strive also

to draw the great possible advantage from them, by carrying them into effect. Thus we will become worthy Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, thus we will become holy and deserve some day to join our venerated Don Bosco in Heaven where we have well-founded reason to hope that he already is enjoying the reward of his saintly virtues and prays for us.

I recommend my own soul to all your prayers and remain with all my heart,

Your most affectionate sister in Jesus Christ,
Sister Catherine Daghero

105.

DECREE OF APPOINTMENT OF FATHER RUA, AS IMMEDIATE SUCCESSOR TO DON BOSCO

(See page 844 of the original Italian Edition. In Latin.)

106.

LETTER FROM FATHER RUA TO FATHER BONETTI, REGARDING THE WELCOME GIVEN HIM BY THE ROMAN PRELATES

V.J.M.J.

Dearest Father Bonetti:

Yesterday we at last saw the Holy Father, but not yet in a private audience. We saw him at the beatification ceremony for De La Salle. He really looked like someone superhuman. After the ceremony we called on Bishop Della Volpe to pay our respects, and, as usual, he was very gracious. He said he was lucky to have

received Don Bosco's last letter written by his own hand, and praised the holy memory of our venerated and lamented Father. He then scheduled an audience for us for Tuesday morning at 10:30; so that when you will open this, I will probably have already been able to prostrate myself at the feet of His Holiness and implore an abundant blessing for our Pious Society, but above all for the Members of the Council, and therefore also for dear Father Bonetti. Are you satisfied?

When we left Bishop Della Volpe we called on Cardinal Rampolla, who was singularly gracious and affable to me, and condescended to bless us, and in us, all the Salesians and their pupils. He also expressed great veneration for Don Bosco. In the ante-chamber of the Secretary of State I encountered Bishop Jacobini, the archbishop of Tyre, who, among other things, asked very especially for news of dear Bishop Cagliero, whom he awaits with pleasure.

He said how happy he was to have been able to see our beloved Don Bosco two more times during his last visit to Rome for the consecration of the Sacred Heart Church, when he offered him his arm to escort him to his room.

We paid our last call on Bishop Caprara, the Promoter of the Faith, to elicit detailed explanations on how we must proceed in promoting the cause for our venerated Father Bosco. His Eminence Cardinal Parocchi himself had told us to go and see him. He was very kind and showed genuine interest in listing all that has to be done, offering his services any time we might need him. We took note of everything he said and, when we get back home, we can discuss it all and formulate a plan of action with ease. The main thing he stressed was that we must try to get together as much data as we can, regarding miracles and graces obtained after the death of the Servant of God, accompanying them with the most extensive documentation possible. But we will discuss that in person.

Once we have the audience with the Holy Father, we shall set out on the homeward journey that same evening, or at the latest the following day, which will be Wednesday. I do not know who is the most anxious that I do this, you or me; certainly my own craving is immense.

Meanwhile, if I have the time, I will go again to see the Vatican Exhibit where our display makes a very handsome show-

ing, and is greatly admired by everybody, especially as far as the things sent from Patagonia and Vespignani's drawing. Everyone is astonished that it was done entirely by pen. Intelligent visitors also admire the printing display. From what I could see, should Bishop Cagliero present a handsome well bound copy to the Holy Father, he would be very pleased. Besides that, I think it would be a wonderful gesture if we could give a copy to several cardinals and prelates.

Farewell, dear Father, may Our Lord bless us all and Mary Help of Christians continue to extend her maternal protection on us.

Most affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Rev. Michael Rua

107.

a) FATHER RUA ANNOUNCES HIS ELECTION TO THE OFFICE OF RECTOR MAJOR TO THE SALESIAN HOUSES, AND DESCRIBES HIS AUDIENCE WITH LEO XIII

Turin, March 19, 1888

Beloved Sons in Jesus Christ:

After the letter addressed to all the Salesian houses by our honorable Superior Council, I am today writing you for the first time as Rector Major to which office, despite my unworthiness, I have been elevated by Divine Providence in the way which has been made known to all of you. I introduce myself to you under the auspices of St. Joseph, whose solemn feast is being celebrated today, and I am confident that this great Saint, the patron of the Universal Church, together with his most holy Spouse, will also be the special protector of our Honorable Society, benignly assisting me in the duties incumbent on my office.

There are many things I would like to say to you, but this time I think it will be agreeable to you and beneficial if I tell you of the audience I had with His Holiness, Leo XIII, on February 21st.

Further on you will find a special report on it, from which you will be able to see for yourselves how highly the Vicar of Christ thought of our dearly beloved Founder.

I can tell you that Don Bosco was held in high esteem by the eminent Cardinals and other eminent personalities I had the honor of meeting. They all talked about our late lamented Don Bosco with the highest praise. In fact, quite a few urged me to initiate, as soon as possible, the cause for his beatification. Very particularly did the Cardinal Vicar, our gracious protector, urge me to do this who had already written to me about it before I left for Rome. In Rome he talked with keen interest about it during the two interviews he granted me, and as I took leave of him, his last words were: *"I recommend to you, Don Bosco's cause: I recommend to you, Don Bosco's cause."*

The words of the Supreme Pontiff and this recommendation from His Eminence, the Vicar, made me think of two things: one of them is that we immediately should go to work to collect all memoirs connected with our beloved Father's life.

I therefore warmly exhort all the Salesians to write down in detail all they know regarding episodes of his life, his theological, cardinal and moral virtues, his supernatural gifts, cures wrought by him, prophecies, visions, and so on. Such statements are to be sent to the Spiritual Director, Father Bonetti, who is in charge of coordinating them and of using them as a basis for initiating the cause. As a guideline for those who will submit a report, I wish to bring to their attention that, in due course, they may be summoned to take an oath on what they have set forth. I therefore urge them to be as truthful and precise as possible.

The other thought which persists in my mind is that we should deem ourselves fortunate to be the sons of so great a Father. We should therefore make every effort to maintain and in due course develop the undertakings he himself has initiated, faithfully following the methods he used and taught to us, and seeking, in our manner of speaking and behaving, to imitate him as the model which, in His Infinite Goodness, Our Lord has given to us. This, my beloved sons, is the program I shall follow in my office; this should also be the aim and concern of each individual Salesian.

Now I must convey to you a word of thanks. After the tragic loss we suffered, many of you, either individually or collectively,

wrote me letters full of warm affection and esteem, promising to obey me and be subject to me. With this letter I now intend to cordially thank all those who wrote those letters, and everyone who chose to participate or would have liked to participate in writing them. Such tokens of affection and religious submission helped considerably to assuage my grief, and engendered into my heart the confident feeling that I will not find my path so arduous.

Yet, despite that, I cannot conceal either from you or myself, how urgently I need your prayers. I therefore recommend myself to your charity, asking that you all support me with your powerful prayers. For my part, I assure you that I will remember all of you always in my heart, and recommend you all every day during my Holy Mass to Our Lord, asking Him to assist you with His Holy Grace, to protect you from all harm, and above all, to grant us the grace that one day we may, all of us together, with no exceptions whatsoever, be united to sing His praises in Heaven where, as he wrote us that he would, our dearly beloved Father Don Bosco is waiting for us. Then courage, dear sons in Jesus Christ, let us persevere in our vocation, and with the help of God and our own steadfastness, we shall succeed in this all-important endeavor. But let us not rely only on our own strength but unanimously let us turn to Our Heavenly Mother Mary Help of Christians, to Her Most Pure Spouse, St. Joseph, and to our own patron Saint, Francis de Sales. They will not fail to come to our assistance.

Believe me always in the Most Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. Michael Rua

b) FIRST AUDIENCE GRANTED BY THE HOLY FATHER TO FR. RUA AFTER DON BOSCO'S DEATH.

Rome, February 21, 1888

It was February 21st of this year, 1888. As I was the very first one to be ushered in to have an audience that day, at about 10

o'clock in the morning, the Holy Father, Leo XIII, welcomed me very kindly and addressed me by name, saying: "Father Rua, you are the successor of Don Bosco; my condolences for the great loss you have suffered, though I rejoice, for Bosco was a saint, and will not neglect to help you from Heaven." I then replied to the Holy Father: " Your Holiness, I am grateful for your comforting words, which give me courage. Now that I, for the first time in my quality of Rector Major, have the honor to present myself to you, may I proffer my respects and those of the entire Pious Society of St. Francis de Sales. All the Salesians intend to be always devoted, respectful, obedient and loving sons of Your Holiness and of the Church, continuing to work as much as they can for the glory of God and the welfare of souls, to hold on to the undertakings initiated by our lamented Founder." "Good," the Holy Father replied, "go on with these holy undertakings, but for the time being, make sure you consolidate them thoroughly. Do not be in any hurry to expand them for some time now, but rather support them rightly and develop what you already have." "That is precisely what our dear Don Bosco recommended to me in writing. In a Memorandum, he stressed, among other things, that for some time I was to shelve requests for foundations of any more houses, so that I might complete the staffing of the houses already in existence." "Certainly, that is what you have to do," His Holiness said, "and this applies to both the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, lest it may happen to you what has happened to other Congregations which grew too quickly and then were unable to continue in an adequate manner. They were hardly successful by sending only two or three people to found new houses and then abandoning them to themselves."—Here I pointed out to the Holy Father that, according to the Rule which the Holy See had incorporated in their Constitutions, the Salesians must not be less than six in any new foundation, and that this was an excellent precaution.

The Pope went on developing his theme, adding: "Above all, make sure that the people you send to the various houses are steadfast in virtue. This has to be ensured, especially during the novitiate. Do you make sure that the novitiate is rightly run? How long does it last?"—"Holy Father," I answered, "usually the novitiate lasts one year for those aspiring to the priesthood, and two

years for coadjutors."—"That is good," His Holiness replied, "but let me tell you that whoever is in charge of the novices should give accurate attention to reforming the life of the novices. When they enter the novitiate, they carry along a certain amount of dross. They therefore need to be purified, molded all over again to a spirit of self-denial, obedience, humility, simplicity and to other virtues essential to religious life. The main concern, and I should say the only concern the novices should have during the novitiate, is that of striving after their own perfection. Do not hesitate to send them away if they are unable to mend their ways. It is better to have a few less members than to have people who lack the religious spirit and virtues."

"I thank your Holiness for these holy suggestions; we shall strive to abide by them, as they come to us from the Ruler of the Church, from the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and our beloved Don Bosco has inculcated in us the determination to profess the most boundless obedience, respect and affection to him. In fact, we very well recall how during his last sickness, even when his voice was no more than a whisper, he would say now and then to the Superiors standing around his bed: 'Wherever the Salesian may go, they must always make sure to uphold the Pope's authority, and instill and inculcate in others respect, obedience and love for the Church and Her Ruler.'"—The Pope seemed touched by such words, for he said: "Oh! It is evident that your Don Bosco was a saint just like St. Francis of Assisi, who, dying, urged his religious to be always devoted sons and the support of the Church of Rome and Her Ruler. Abide by these recommendations of your Founder and Our Lord will not fail to bless you all."

Then he asked about the houses of Italy, France, Spain, England, Austria and America, dwelling with especial pleasure on the Patagonian and Tierra del Fuego missions. He also asked me if I knew all of our houses, particularly those located in Italy. When I said that I did, he asked about Bishop Cagliero, and I told him that, in his devotion to the Holy Father, he had come to Italy to attend his priestly jubilee, and that Almighty God had rewarded this act of devotion by allowing him the consolation of assisting our beloved Father during his last illness and at his death, and even of hearing his last words of advice, and his last instructions. He had even been able to administer the Sacraments to him, I

said. "But were you also there?"—"Yes, Holy Father, I too was assisting him," I answered, "but since John Cagliero was a Bishop, I felt it would be more befitting that such a task would be left for him to do."—"Good, you acted quite rightly."

At this point I resumed my conversation and thanked His Holiness for his past benevolence toward the Pious Society and the gracious words that His Eminence, Cardinal Rampolla, the Secretary of State, had addressed to us on behalf of the Pope at the time of Don Bosco's death. I begged him to continue extending such benevolence to us. The Holy Father replied: "I too felt the loss of your Father keenly, and when the Cardinal Secretary of State brought me the news on your behalf, I decided to tell him exactly the words that he had to use in the reply to you. Henceforth, all the affection and benevolence that I gave to Bosco will now be extended to you and to the Society he founded."—"I am deeply grateful, your Holiness. Your words give me great comfort. I now beg you respectfully to bless me, my dear confreres, all the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, all our Salesian Cooperators, and all our pupils and dependents." "I do so gladly, and heartily bless you, your confreres, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, your good Cooperators and all who are dear to you."—"Your Holiness, if you will permit me, I will now call in our Procurator General as well, and my Secretary—they are waiting outside in the ante-chamber; and would like to receive your blessing."—"Certainly, tell them to come in."—He rang a bell and had them ushered inside. The Pope then asked Father Caesar Cagliero, the Procurator General and the Director of the House of Rome: "Have we met somewhere already?"—"Yes, Your Holiness, I am the Procurator General of the Salesians and Director of the House of the Sacred Heart here in Rome."—Then the Holy Father went on: "See that the house of Rome is a model house, for that house is very important." I remarked: "This was precisely the topic of the talk I gave recently to the confreres of that same house."—To which the Holy Father replied: "Certainly, the house of Rome is where the Pope is, right under his nose, one might say; everything that goes on in it can be reported back to him at once."—Father Cagliero said: "Your Holiness, we shall do our utmost to respond to your kindness and your wise advice." "Yes, always try to provide comfort to the Pope," the Pope

answered, stressing his last word. After this, with great warmth, the Holy Father imparted the blessing we had implored; we kissed once again his holy foot and his hand, and took our leave.

Rev. Michael Rua

108.

REPORT ON THE AUDIENCE GRANTED TO BISHOP CAGLIERO BY LEO XIII

Rome, Sacred heart of Jesus, March 3, 1888

Dear Father Lazzero:

We have just got back from our audience with the Holy Father. He received us at 12 o'clock, alone, just the two of us, with genuine fatherly warmth. He instantly wanted us to spread out at his feet the guanaco hide made by our Patagonians. He was very pleased with the volume (which was bound at San Benigno) of the three Encyclicals and looked at it very carefully. He was also delighted with Father Francis Cerruti's book, *The Ideas of Don Bosco,* the life of Mamma Margaret, and a booklet about Buenos Aires. He was greatly touched by the gifts and instructed the Bishop to repeat these exact words to all the boys: "I embrace them all fondly and I bless them."

We talked about the staunch solidarity existing among all the Salesians after the death of Don Bosco, and he said that he had been afraid about it, but that now he was very happy.

We thanked him for having given us Father Rua as our Rector Major. Tomorrow I will send a little article to *l'Unità Cattolica.*

Father Costamagna has written us a letter, dated February 20th, from Buenos Aires, and they did not know anything about Don Bosco's death at that date. Please send some reliable person to find out if the telegram sent by the Bishop on the very same day Don Bosco died was ever sent off from Turin, and let us know something in this regard while we are still here in Rome.

The Bishop is well and sends his regards to everybody.

Kiss Father Rua's hand for me, give my regards to the Superiors and pray for someone who loves you dearly in the Lord.

Most affectionately,
Rev. Anthony Riccardi

Documents and Previous Episodes

I.

DON BOSCO AT THE SHRINE OF OROPA IN THE YEAR 1863

An unpublished document informs us about an event that happened to Don Bosco in 1863 while he was visiting the famous Shrine of Biella. This document is a letter from Father Joachim Sella, cousin of the famous Quintino and Superior of the Fathers of St. Philip of Biella. It is addressed to Father Carlo Vercellone, a native of Biella from Sordevolo, a Barnabite monk, well known as a scholar of Biblical studies. The document is in the hands of the Barnabite monk, Joseph Roberti, likewise from Rigolio, Province of Biella. On August 10, 1863, a few days after Don Bosco's departure from Oropa (Cfr. LEMOYNE, *BIOGRAPHIC MEMOIRS,* Vol. IV, page 366 and Vol. VII, page 299), Father Sella informed the above-named monk of the intention Don Bosco had confided to him, namely, to write the history of the Oropa Shrine; then he went on:

While we were in the vicinity of the sacred chapel we saw a few sophisticated gentlemen wandering around amid others who were intent on looking at the votive plaques. These gentlemen were blasphemously joking about the credulity and gullibility of the people who lapped up as unadulterated truth all that the priests dished out to them...about the authenticity of the miracles which had taken place and were depicted there. They were talking loud enough for Don Bosco to overhear them, and by their glances, they challenged him to take the matter up with them. With his habitual kindly manner, Don Bosco asked them if he could call on them at their residence at his ease, and when this had been arranged, they jumped the gun and called on him in his room where, after some courteous formalities, they assured him they were good Catholics, but could not overcome their reluctance to believe in all the above-mentioned miraculous events. Don Bosco sat quietly and calmly with his three

assailants. He let them talk and then, turning to their leader, he began to force him to admit, but always using a wonderful gentleness, that after all, such things were not impossible, and listed, one by one, all the miracles and extraordinary events narrated in the Holy Scriptures: apparitions of angels, resurrection of the dead, etc. etc.

Once he had obtained an admission that this was possible, he asked for what reason one might not believe the same things, or similar things which had occurred and been seen both in public and in private, and to which credit had been given in Oropa, even by learned people—ecclesiastics, laymen, generals, etc.

Faced with this unexpected argument, the gentlemen began to laugh and courteously took their leave, not knowing what to say in rebuttal, but agreeing with him in everything he said. The matter did not end here. The same evening, the ringleader of the three went to see Don Bosco and asked to make his confession to him, and did so to his indescribable relief. When Don Bosco asked what had so impulsively persuaded him to go to Confession, the man replied: "After our conversation, I really did understand many of the graces to which colonels, four star generals and so on had borne testimony, and I said to myself: "These are men not given to facile credulity; therefore, I am the one who is off the right path, etc. etc.!"

The story, as told by Father Sella, is sketched out with simplicity; but, as Canon Buscaglia wrote in *Eco del Santuario d'Oropa (*April 1936), "it depicts luminously the characteristic figure of St. John Bosco, always so calm, affable and wondrously gentle, yet ever ready to defend Christian faith and pious beliefs, especially where the miracles and graces granted by the holy Virgin Herself were at stake. Yet, at the same time, he was always so deft at inducing even the most recalcitrant to bare their consciences to him in the Sacrament of Penance and make their peace with God."

II.

LETTER FROM DON BOSCO TO COUNTESS CROTTI DI COSTIGLIOLE

This letter was sent together with several copies of a circular in which Don Bosco appealed to the charity of his benefactors for the work to be done on the Church of Mary Help of Christians. (Lemoyne,

Biographic Memoirs, Vol. VII, footnote to page 734 of the Italian Edition. Omitted in the English translation).

Turin, September 8, 1864

Dear Madame:

Here, dear Countess, are a few programs of our Church of Mary *Auxilium Christianorum.* It is I who send them, but it is the Holy Virgin who recommends that you distribute them and make them fertile so that her temporal home in this world may be completed with the certainty that she will, in due course, generously repay you by preparing a lovely home for you and yours in Paradise.

Father Scaglia and Count Alessandro can give you a hand; what about Count Michael? Make him pay, and leave him in peace with his glass and cutting diamonds.

God grant you good health, Countess, as well as to your whole honorable family; please do me the charity of praying for me and my poor boys, and believe me in the Lord,

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

III.

THREE LETTERS TO THE NOBLE CAPELLETTI FAMILY, ROME

The first two letters are addressed to Baroness Louisa Capelletti, née Marchioness Cavalletti; the third to Baron Philip, her husband. Saverio, who is mentioned in the second letter, was their son, to whom reference is made in the first letter. "The intrepid senator brother praised in the second letter is Marquis Francis Cavalletti, the last Papal Roman senator until 1870; he married Mary, of the noble Durazzo marquisate family of Genoa. The originals are in the possession of Marchioness Mary Neirotto Cambiaso, daughter of the Baron Philip and his wife, Mary Capelletti.

A.

Turin, October 22, 1866

Dear Madame:

Thank you with all my heart for your offering on behalf of my poor boys, and especially for the help to continue the work on the church being built in honor of Mary Help of Christians. The exterior part of this sacred edifice is nearing completion, and we hope in Divine Providence for the rest.

Do not be afraid in any way as far as the cholera epidemic. Go to Rome, and stay at Frascati. You have nothing to fear. No one who helps build the Church of Mary Help of Christians of Valdocco will become victim of the deadly plague, provided you put your trust in her.

If it shall so please God, I will go to Rome sometime between December and January next year.

It was an excellent idea to put your son at Mondragone. Teachers, assistants and the director there are all anxious to provide what is really good, the welfare of the soul.

God bless you and your family, pray for me, who remain gratefully,

Your obedient servant,
Rev. John Bosco

B.

Turin, May 25, 1868

Worthy Madame Marchioness:

On the one hand, I welcomed the news you sent me, but on the other, I was saddened by the troubles that our dear Saverio is giving you. Yet you have resorted to the proper remedy: prayer. I shall gladly join you, together with my boys.

A few days ago I sent Saverio a book to Mondragone: if you can persuade him to write to me, and ask for my advice in any-

thing, I would try to straighten out some of his ideas; he seemed to have great respect and deference for me when I was in Rome. Who knows if a new voice may not have a beneficial effect on him. It is just an idea of mine.

I informed Chevalier Oreglia of the matter and he is praying with us; and will make sure to have a novena of Communions to this end.

Please convey my respects to Marchioness Cavalletti; also to the intrepid senator brother, his wife, and the whole family. God bless you all and grant you all the grace of perseverance. Pray for me, who am in the Lord,

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

C.

Rome, January 23, 1869

Dear Baron:

I have to meet with Cardinal Antonelli this evening at six o'clock. I must therefore forego the pleasure of dining at your house, as you so graciously invited me to do.

Quod differtur non aufertur; that is why I hope to be able to enjoy your hospitality some evening next week.

God bless you and your whole family; pray for me, who am most gratefully,

Your most obedient servant,
Rev. John Bosco

IV.

A LETTER OF THANKS

This letter was written by Don Bosco to the notary public, Joseph Borgogna, of Arigliano, in the region of Vercelli. The person sending us

the original also enclosed a receipt issued by Don Bosco for more than fifty lire which had been sent to him by the above notary public on July 30th, that same year.

Turin, May 30, 1880

Kind Sir:

With grateful heart I have received the sum of one hundred francs which you in your charity offer as a homage to Mary Help of Christians, to help us in our increasing needs. As a small token of my gratitude, I celebrated a Holy Mass, and our boys have said prayers and went to Communion at the altar of Mary for your pious intentions, invoking abundant blessings from Heaven for you and your whole honorable family.

I would be indeed delighted if you would honor us by calling on us next time you come to Turin. In this one institute alone you would already see over a thousand boys that you have assisted. Under the guidance of their teachers, and either through study or by acquiring some trade, others are trained to be able one day to earn an honest living.

May God bless you and your whole family, and keep all of you in good health. Please add another act of charity to your merits and pray for me who will always remain in Our Lord Jesus Christ,

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

V.

DON BOSCO'S VISIT TO AVIGNON IN 1883

The Jesuit priest, Father Victor Vieille, writing on April 12, 1883 to Bishop Michael Rosset, of St. Jean de Moriana in Savoy, from Avignon, makes the following allusion to the presence of Don Bosco in that very city:

We have had a visit from Don Bosco, who was on his way to Lille. This holy priest left a very deep impression here in Avignon. While a guest in the house of Monsieur Michel Bent, he was literally besieged all day by a huge

crowd which wanted to seek his advice, ask him to pray, or who implored good health for themselves or for some member of their families. Even in this day and age holiness still exercises an irresistible power of attraction.

VI.

DON BOSCO IN FRANCE

From the periodical *St. Andrew's Magazine,* February 1912, the Salesian priest Father Franco translated the following passage:

Don Bosco was already very old and blind when I had the privilege of attending one of his functions in South France.

At that time he was on a tour of many cities to raise the funds essential to the upkeep and development of his many undertakings. After a rousing speech which was deeply touching with its eloquent simplicity and ardent, genuine zeal, Don Bosco came down from the pulpit and, guided by one of his orphans, he himself started collecting alms all round the church, which on that occasion was jammed full with people. As he slowly advanced, the people shifted their chairs to let him by, as the custom is in French churches when there is a collection in progress. The funds for which he had made his fervent appeal were given with genuine generosity, for there was hardly anybody in that huge crowd who was able to look at the holy priest and great philanthropist without feeling deeply moved. His beautiful soul was not reflected as one might see it reflected on the features of a statue, but it rather had a rare spiritual beauty blended with an exceptional force of character.

His whole countenance bore an expression of meek peace and humility evidenced by his half-closed eyes.

Miss Wollaston White

VII.

LETTER TO COUNTESS THERESA MASTAI-FERRETTI

The daughter of the countess, Countess Belgard of Leghorn, has the original of this letter.

Rome, January 23, 1878
Torre de'Specchi 36

Worthy Countess:

It was somewhat peculiar the letter that you were so kind as to write to me. You do not want to be a Salesian Cooperator. Yet at the same time you are sponsoring the Catholic Readings and send me 50 Francs in alms? What else is there needed? Nothing, certainly nothing. There are no obligations in this association. Everything is done voluntarily, and there is no vestige of guilt if one gives nothing. So please allow me to enlist you as a Cooperator, the Holy Father himself and other patrician ladies of Rome have joined this association.

May God bless you, and grant you lasting good health, a happy life and the precious gift of perseverance in doing good. Please perform an additional act of charity by praying for me and my twenty-thousand boys, and believe me in Jesus Christ,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. Should you for any reason absolutely insist that your name be struck off the list of our Cooperators, I will do so without hesitation, and immediately.

VIII.

DON BOSCO TO MONSIEUR ROSTAND, PRESIDENT OF THE BEAUJOUR SOCIETY

Don Bosco wrote the draft of this letter and then gave it to Count Cays to copy. Count Cays met Don Bosco at the Alassio school with the Superiors of the Council. The Saint was on his way back from France and had to go straight on to Rome.

Alassio, February 7, 1879

To Monsieur Jules Rostand

Monsieur Jules Rostand:

Since you were in Paris when our business had wound up, I was prevented from paying my respects to you, and thanking you for your kindness, or rather for your charity which you extended to us. We shall be eternally grateful and the children benefiting by it will say a fervent prayer every day to Almighty God, that He reward you, according to His Divine Promises.

I stopped over at Saint-Cyr during my trip and met with Father Vincent, who awaited our arrival like manna from Heaven. He still has some fifty orphans with him and this causes his debts to increase daily. He signed our compromise agreement without any argument, saying that from now on he will not spend anything without first letting us know. Among the children there are 24 who are not yet ten years old; they range between two, three, four, five and six years of age. Since, at such a tender age they require first and foremost a genuinely maternal care, we agreed with him that they should be sent home to their relatives. The estate has some 90,000 square meters, and the soil is good, but overrun by weeds. There is no pasture land, meadows or cattle.

Things are better at La Navarre. I sent already 7 months ago two priests and four clerics there to look after about fifty youths, some of whom attend school, others the workshops. The remainder work in the fields under foremen. We already bought fifty heads of cattle, but this is still too little in view of the size of the farm which measures 230,000 square meters. The soil is excellent there; wheat, vines, olive-groves, the *quercus suber* (cork trees) grow there abundantly.

In the two farms of Saint-Cyr and La Navarre we shall have a great deal of expenses for several years to come, yet they will support and feed over 200 boys, without any need to have recourse to anybody.

Dear sir, I wanted to report to you on the above, to update you on the importance of the institutes to which you have given such a valid support and which one may well call fruits of your own great charity. I am no longer in Marseilles, but when I left that

city, my heart remained behind at St. Leo's Oratory. The number of young orphans accepted, the workshops just inaugurated, the growing school staff, and the pressing plans...everything is calling for expansion! I will do my best; and I have unlimited confidence in you, and in your hands lies the happiness of Maison Beaujour.

May Almighty God bless you, charitable Monsieur Jules Rostand, and may He grant you good health for many a year, so that you may live to see the outcome of your charity. May He shed His Graces on all the members of the Beaujour Society and on your whole honorable family to which I am greatly indebted. I am now on my way to Rome where I hope to tell people many good things about the Beaujour Society, and obtain a special blessing from the Holy Father.

My sincerest gratitude to you,

Your very obedient servant,
Rev. John Bosco

LETTER TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE HOUSE OF PARIS

Turin, January 18, 1885

My dear Father Bellamy:

I enclose a copy of the letter I plan to send to our Parisian Cooperators.

Please read it and translate it if you think it will do, and then send the translation back to me, so that we can print it in good French.

Then the printed copies, all of them signed by myself, will be sent to you, so that you may mail them to the individual address of all the Cooperators.

I duly received the letters you wrote to me. They made me very happy. I am satisfied with what you are doing, but please look after your health, and that of all your confreres. Whenever you have a chance to talk with any of our benefactors, or only

Cooperators, give them my personal regards, and assure them that I am praying for all of them.

May God bless you and all our Confreres. Please pray for me. All of you pray for me who will now and forever be in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

X.

CONFIDENTIAL ADVICE TO TWO DIRECTORS FROM DON BOSCO

The first of these two directors seems to be the director of Varazze, the second that of Lanzo.

A.

1. A sermon on the spirit of charity and on brotherly unity. One God, one sole master, one sole superior, one sole Congregation.
2. Monthly manifestation; convene the Council; make and recommend warmly a practical meditation. For example: Let no one keep money for his personal use; let no one incur expenses without the consent of the Council.
3. Never criticize what was done formerly in the school or outside of it at Varazze. Never boast either in public or in private about what is now being done or what has been accomplished.
4. Avoid all unnecessary conversations, visits or contacts; avoid familiarity with members of the opposite sex. Someone has reported to me about your excessively long stay in Nice.
5. Have great respect and fear (keep your distance) for the Ligurian clergy;[30] therefore praise it, never criticize it, or boast in any way detrimental to it from the pulpit or from elsewhere.

30 *To properly understand the word "fear" here and in the instructions to the missionaries in 1875 ("love, fear, and respect other religious orders") one must interpret the word in the light of typical popular Piedmontese dialect expression "have fear of" when alluding to the reverent awe a subordinate should feel toward those superior to him. Keep a distance from them.—Don't be too familiar.*

6. Do all the good you can, without making a show of it. Violets grow in concealed places, but they are traced and found, thanks to their fragrance.

Read these suggestions, carry them out, and then we will talk about them. Accept all this from yours

Most affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

B.

Eve of the Feast of the Annunciation

Beloved:

During this retreat I talked with a number of retreatants from our schools and jotted down a few things which I feel are worthy of serious consideration. Meanwhile, summon the Prefect and read this together.

1. Do not forget what I have earnestly recommended at the time when you accompanied me to Sant'Ignazio.
2. Both of you too easily leave the school, and you call on private families and the houses of the boys.
3. There are some serious complaints about personal neatness of the clothes worn and of living quarters. Serious complaints also regarding discipline. These are two fundamental things. Who is in charge of them? Do the Director and the Prefect carry out their assigned tasks? They should give their attention to this rather than to any other external occupation.
4. A number of parents are complaining about the administration; a lot of boys are dissatisfied, while others are pampered, etc. etc.

May God help us. Work on behalf of souls, especially on behalf of your own. Amen.

Rev. John Bosco

XI.

TOPICS FOR PREACHERS OF OUR HOLY RETREATS

We do not know in what year Father Rua instructed Father Barberis to distribute these topics, gleaned from a draft written by Don Bosco, to the preachers of our retreats.

1. Patience in bearing with the faults of our Confreres; advise them, correct them with charity, but promptly.
2. Avoid criticism, fault-finding; mutual defense, and mutual material and spiritual assistance.
3. Never complain about orders given to us, things denied to us, or about food offerings; about clothes, about the jobs assigned to us, about our life troubles, or quality of the assigned tasks.
4. Take extreme care in avoiding, and seeing that others avoid any deed or word which might be the cause of scandal, or even only interpreted as such.
5. A Salesian should never remember any offense received, in order to bring it up for reproach, or seek revenge for it.
6. Never recall things (past and already almost generally)[31] forgotten in order to blame someone for them.
7. Eagerness and general endeavor to render the Salesians capable of exemplary compliance with the duties proper to their office.

XII.

THIRTY-EIGHT BRIEF APHORISMS WRITTEN BY DON BOSCO

His secretary, Father Berto, copied these little phrases. For the most part, the Servant of God had written them on holy pictures, signing them as usual.

[31] The words in parenthesis are the gloss of Father Rua. For things forgotten cannot be remembered; here it means, however, things that one had decided not to try to remember.

1.

May God bless and generously reward the charity of the benefactors of our orphans.

2.

We shall pray for all our benefactors every day.

3.

Give to the orphans here on earth and Almighty God will make you rich in Paradise some day.

4.

The prayers of the poor are always answered, and find mercy.

5.

May God bless you, your relatives and all your friends.

6.

May God make you all rich in the holy fear of Him.

7.

Oh! Mary, protect France and all Frenchmen

8.

God detests sin and those who commit sins; but His Mercy is Infinite.

9.

Be swift in performing good deeds, for you may run out of time, and thus you will be deceived.

10.

He who does good in life will find good in death. *Qualis vita, finis ita.*

11.

Oh Mary, obtain for us from Jesus good physical health, if this is advantageous to the welfare of our soul, but assure our eternal salvation.

12.

Oh pious Virgin, give your powerful aid
to my soul at the moment of my death.

13.

Oh Holy Mary,
Give my soul
Your powerful aid
At the moment of my death.

14.

He who tarries in giving himself to God runs a great risk of forfeiting his soul.

15.

I pray for you everyday, and you too please pray for the salvation of my soul.

16.

Children are the joy of Jesus and Mary.

17.

If we do good, we shall be well off in this life and in the next.

18.

In Paradise we shall enjoy all the good things for all eternity.

19.

Oh Mary, be my salvation.

20.

Sin is the greatest enemy of God.

21.

May God bless you, and the Holy Virgin be your guide through all the perils of life.

22.

He who protects the poor will be abundantly rewarded by God at His Divine Judgment.

23.

Blessed are those who consecrate themselves to God in their youth!

24.

My sons, save time and time will save you in Eternity.

25.

Date et dabitur vobis.

26.

May Jesus always be your guide through dangers, until you reach Heaven.

27.

He who protects the orphans will be blessed by God in this world, and Mary will protect him at the time of his death.

28.

How many people meant to give themselves to God, yet were unable, for lack of time.

29.

At the end of our life, we reap the harvest of our good deeds.

30.

May God bless and reward all our benefactors.

31.

How generously shall we be rewarded for all the good we do in this world!

32.

May God bless us and deliver us from all evil.

33.

At the thought of the presence of God
May our lips, our hearts, our minds
Pursue the path of virtue
Oh! Mighty Virgin Mary.

34.

Et cognovi quod non esset melius nisi laetari et facere bene in vita sua (Eccl. 3:12) [I came to know that there is nothing better than rejoice and do good in one's life].

35.

Do not rely on my prayers but on those of our orphans, for they are under the special protection of the Holy Virgin Help of Christians. May God bless and generously reward all our benefactors.

36.

May Mary extend to you Her holy blessing and deliver you from all the perils in life and in death. So be it. (To Viglietti, when a student.)

37.

Adde quotidie scientiam scientiae, virtutem virtuti, et dominus dabit tibi mercedem magnam nimis [Add everyday knowledge to knowledge, virtue to virtue and the Lord will reward you greatly]. (To Viglietti, when a cleric, on the occasion of his name day, 1884.)

38.

Help me like a son, and I will always love you like a father, praying fervently that you may one day fly to Heaven, accompanied by all the souls you will have saved. *(To Father Viglietti when a priest, on the occasion of his name day 1887.)*

XIII.

MEMORANDUM OF CARDINAL CAGLIERO

Golden words of advice gleaned from the souvenirs and example of our Venerable Father Don Bosco, and addressed to the personnel in charge of the houses and missions of Patagonia, teaching and assisting, in a position of leadership.

I. *Qui praesunt, ideo praesunt ut prosint.* (St. Augustine). He who is in a position of high authority is put there so that he may be of advantage to those in an inferior position. 1.

Everyone must feel responsible for the office to which he is assigned, and must ponder on how he will have to render account of what he has done to God and the Congregation. 2. Foresight, vigilance and diligence should be our inseparable companions in wisely governing the house, school, or institute entrusted to us and in honestly administering them. 3. Community life, prayer, work and sacrifice: these are the prerogatives and privileges of our superiority and of our dignity which is in no way enviable.

II. *Exemplum dedit nobis ut sequamur vestigia eius.* (St. Peter) 1. Just as the behavior of our Venerable Don Bosco, our behavior should at all times and towards all be noble, intelligent and benign, never harsh, vulgar nor spiteful. 2. Our manner of speaking should always be gentle, gracious and prudent; never caustic, uncouth or impetuous. 3. Let us always be very, very controlled in everything we do; woe unto us if we are angry, careless or uncontrolled.

III. *Apparuit benignitas Salvatoris nostri erudiens nos* (St. Paul) It's more suitable to have the heart of a father than a head of a superior. 2. Let us strive to make ourselves loved rather than feared. 3. Let us learn how to have others obey us, without being ordered to.

IV. *Charitas non agit perperam* (never act without thinking). 1. Let us not rush to give corrections. 2. Never harsh, but always gentle when admonishing. 3. Never humiliate or mortify your subordinates.

V. *Si vis amari, esto amabilis* (St. John Chys.) It is unwise to be over strict in demanding obedience or general observance: the best is the enemy of the good. 2. We should learn how to bear with and prefer not to see the faults and temperament of our charges. 3. Never reprimand anybody unless you are calm in spirit, serene in mind, and with your heart at peace.

VI. *Discite a me quia mitis sum* (St. Matthew) 1. Emotions in a Superior are a bad companion or the worst possible adviser. 2. Meekness, patience and indulgence should be the badge of our authority. 3. Our words ring, our example thunders.

VII. Labia tua lac et mel, et eloquium tuum dulce (Cant.) 1. Prayer helps us to be wise and prudent. - 2. Gentleness makes us liked and lovable. - 3. Goodness makes us loving and beloved.

VIII. *Magis docendo quam iubendo, magis quam minando. Nec aspere nec duriter: si quid minarum, cum dolore, ne nos ipsi in nostra potestate, sed Deus in nostro sermone timeatur.* (St. Augustine). 1. Zeal must always be tempered by gentleness, so that on our lips even threats will appear likable. 2. Always remember never to correct a sinner nor reprimand a fault harshly, sternly or impulsively. 3. When you are obliged to use threats and apply severity, do it reluctantly and regretfully, manifesting your inner grief, so that the culprit will realize that you do not want to make him afraid either of you or of your authority, but instead, of the Lord he has offended.

Poscenda fides, ut vincatur mundus cum suis erroribus, cum suis amatoribus, cum suis tortoribus. (St. Augustine)

Finis scientiarum est, ut aedificetur fides, ut honorificetur Deus, ut componantur mores, ut haurientur consolationes, ut animae salventur. (St. Bonaventure)

Charitas fraternitatis maneat in vobis. (Ad Hebr.)

St. José de Costa Rica, March 22, 1912.

John, Archbishop

XIV.

PUBLIC RETRACTION BY CANON CHIUSO

Turin-Valsalice
January 19, 1937-XV

On May 24, 1891, the feast day of Mary Help of Christians, His Excellency, David, of the noble family of the Counts Riccardi, and Archbishop of Turin, had his coach waiting near the sacristy after the pontifical solemn service in the Shrine, since he wished to return immediately to the archepiscopal residence. I, who was on duty in the ante-chamber of Father Rua, approached

the carriage to kiss the beloved archbishop's ring, though, in reality, I wanted to know what his intentions were.

As soon as he saw me, he beckoned that I was to approach him. "Tell Father Rua that I am going to the archepiscopal palace," he said, "to meet someone there who is awaiting me, and tell him that he should have an extra place be set at table."

I instantly informed Father Rua, who seemed somewhat surprised, since he could not imagine who the companion of His Lordship might be.

Meanwhile, half an hour later, the carriage of the archbishop arrived and the archbishop got out of it, followed by a noble-looking priest, and walked straight to the ante-chamber of Father Rua. I flung the door open, and the archbishop warmly embraced Father Rua. " I have brought here someone you have not seen for a long time," he said. "But his presence here today will be most welcome." I did not hear anything more, for I closed the door. They all went down for lunch and I, too, went to my own dining room.

After lunch I met my good friend, the engineer Rodolfo Sella. He was more cheerful than usual. "Today I have had one of the greatest satisfactions I could possibly have had here on earth," he told me. "At the end of the meal, His Lordship toasted with noble words the wonderful growth of the Salesian Congregation under the strong, enlightened guidance of Father Rua. He said how closely he was following the apostolic footsteps of Don Bosco, overcoming every obstacle. Then he concluded: 'On this day, consecrated to Mary Help of Christians, I am delighted to present to this solemn gathering the Rev. Father Chiuso, who wishes to put an end to a period of time which has endured all too long and was extremely painful, and to demonstrate in deed his warm attachment and immense esteem for Don Bosco, to his most worthy successor Father Rua, and the whole Salesian Congregation'."

The Rev. Father Chiuso then began to speak in the midst of a religious and breathless silence, making a dignified and heartfelt retraction of what he had done during the tragic year-long friction which had put Don Bosco's holiness to so arduous a test. His words brought tears of joy to the eyes of all present. But Father Rua was happier than all the others, for once again he saw the virtue of Don Bosco exalted. He affectionately embraced Father

Chiuso and then ran to the Shrine to give thanks to Mary Help of Christians.

In faith
Rev. Melchiorre Marocco

XV.

MY FIRST GENERAL CONFESSION TO DON BOSCO

It was the year 1882. In August, the Rev. Don Bosco came to San Benigno Canavese for the retreat of the novices and confreres. Our Father Director, Father Julius Barberis, informed us of his coming, and urged us to go to confession to Him, and said that anyone who felt the desire or necessity, should make a general confession. I had gone to San Benigno in April of that same year, and decided I would take advantage of it, although at that time I was unaware of the extraordinary gifts which Our Lord had endowed him with. I prepared myself as well as I could and went to confession. My first words were: Father, I came here to the school five months ago, and would now like to make a general confession so that I may be better reassured.

"Good," he answered. "Have you made your preparation?"

"I think I have; I did all I could to make an examination of conscience," I replied.

"Good, good. Now tell me: do you want to tell me your sins, or would you like me to tell you what you have done wrong?"

"It will be better that you tell me; I will answer truthfully."

"Good. What is your name?"

"G.Z." I said.

"What was that?"

"G.Z."

" I do not understand very well," he said.

"G.Z."

"You see, I do not understand," he repeated.

He went on like that until he had made me repeat it seven or eight times. Then I realized that I should make myself known to him in another way. "Father, I am the nephew of the pastor of the Sacred Heart Church in Rome, Father Cagnoli," I said.

"Ah! I understand now who you are. Now look, you committed such and such a sin, in such and such a place, with such and such a companion."

"That is true, Father." In this way he told me all my sins in minute detail, listing the circumstance of place, time and with whom I had committed them. He said that I had made my First Communion adequately well, although it could have been better, and as he finished the list to which all I had to do was reply: "Yes, Father, that is true," he said, "Now there is nothing else, and you will be happy." I do not recall whether he said anything about the future, I do not think he did, because I have no recollection of it. Though somewhat confusedly, I do believe he said: "We shall see what this son of God is capable of doing." During the next six years I spent at San Benigno Canavese and Turin, I made my confession to Don Bosco some two or three more times, though I do not recall anything particular. I believe I was the last of the boys of the Oratory to kiss his hand when he was still alive, at eight o'clock at night on January 31, 1888.

What I have said here is the perfect truth.

Rev. Zacarias Genghini
Salesian priest in Chile

XVI.

A TESTIMONY REGARDING THE GREY DOG *"IL GRIGIO"*

We must never overlook any testimony concerning events of the early days of Don Bosco's Congregation. This report on the famous Grey Dog is by the Salesian priest Father Aliberti, who is at present the Provincial of Magallanes.

On the eve of my departure for Turin in 1920, Father Victor Durando, a missionary at Magallanes, asked me to convey his warmest greetings to his brother, a distinguished Turin priest named Father Philip Durando.

When I arrived in Turin, my first thought was to call on this priest, in the company of Father Maggiorino Borgatello.

Father Philip, who lived on the top floor of a house in Via San Martino, welcomed us with great courtesy and offered us a glass of good

wine. In the meantime he told us how, because of his advanced age, he had obtained from the Cardinal Archbishop of Turin the privileged faculty of celebrating Mass in his own home, since he was now barely able to walk.

The venerable priest spoke of Don Bosco with great warmth, saying that he had known him and been a close friend of his. Then, as the talk chanced to turn to the Grey Dog, he said: "I too know this mysterious animal; this is how it happened: one day I met Don Bosco in Via della Consolata, and since it was midday, he invited me to go eat with him at the Oratory. I gratefully accepted the invitation. Since we arrived there late, we ate alone. As we were talking, I suddenly happened to look up and saw the gray dog at Don Bosco's side, looking up at him and wagging its tail, as if it were expecting something from him. Don Bosco, too, was looking at the dog and said: "Good, Grey One, you have always been well-behaved with Don Bosco," and he handed the dog a piece of bread. The dog sniffed at it but did not eat it. Don Bosco then dipped the bread in the gravy in the platter and again offered it to the dog who again did not eat it. "I understand," Don Bosco said then, "I understand, Grey One, what you are trying to tell me: Don Bosco is unable to reward you as you deserve, but you are hoping for more than I am able to offer you."

The two table companions went on talking amicably, ignoring the dog. At the end of the meal, the animal was no longer visible; it had mysteriously disappeared.

Rev. Aliberti
Salesian Provincial of Magallanes.

XVII.

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

Il Corriere Nazionale of Turin published the following article in the issue of February 9, 1888, on the occasion of the funeral services for Don Bosco at the church of St. John the Evangelist.

As our readers are aware, a requiem Mass for our venerated Don Bosco was celebrated today, February 9th, in the church of St. John the

Evangelist, and immediately afterward there was a meeting of Salesian Cooperators.

Our readers should know at least partially how many sacrifices, anxiety and troubles this church has cost the pious priest.

Some years before, he had erected the Oratory of St. Aloysius on this same spot, and hundreds and hundreds of boys attended it. Then, as Turin grew bigger and became an exceptionally beautiful city, Don Bosco conceived the idea of building the church of St. John the Evangelist as a monument to Pius IX, who, at Holy Baptism, had been given the lovely name of John. But Don Bosco met with difficulties wherever he turned. One piece of land necessary to his project belonged to a Protestant and it was impossible to purchase it, despite the thousand and one offers made for it from all sides. At last, he resorted to the claim that the project was of public benefit, and the Protestant was therefore obliged to relinquish his opposition stand, and his exorbitant demands.

Louis Ferraris was then in charge of Turin City Hall. Count Zoppi was in charge of the Prefecture. The latter was busy with people who were often hailed before the Criminal Court. Neither one nor the other chose to acknowledge the public benefit aspect of the project, preferring to defend the Protestant interests at stake with a malignant zeal. They sent a formal reply to the State Department, assuring the authorities that no one wanted to have the church there, but that indeed the plan was greatly opposed. There was, therefore, no further need to talk about it. Yet, Don Bosco was indeed that *tenax propositi vir,* of whom Horace spoke, and was ready to withstand even the world in ruins. Don Bosco was not one to back out in front of any of the obstacles when it was a question of the glory of God, or charity toward his neighbor. Don Bosco saw that here both one and the other cause were at stake.

City Hall and the Prefecture told him that they felt he ought to back down, and the same reaction came from the State Department of Public Works. What did Don Bosco do? He appealed to the Council of State...which never received the memorandum, and was therefore unable to debate on the matter, although nothing in the way of variation had been expected as an outcome. Don Bosco went to Rome, unless we are mistaken, in the early part of 1876, to find out what was behind so much opposition and hostility. He had been told that the papers he had sent and wanted to be forwarded to the Council of State had been mislaid, or lost outright, and also he knew that someone had an interest in leaving the whole thing to languish in oblivion. Attempts were made to

wear Don Bosco down, to exhaust him and drive out of his mind all ideas of building the church of St. John the Evangelist.

One fine day Don Bosco discovered that despite the good offices of the minister of state (Spaventa) at the Department of Public Works, who had tried to remove all traces of them, his papers had reached the Council of State after all, and that the matter was to be discussed the following day. He took his courage with both hands and, wise man that he was, sought to find out who was to sit in judgment on the issue. When he was told some of the names, he called on them at home, to recommend the matter to them. Among others there was a kindly Roman, who for some time had been anxious to meet Don Bosco. Who could describe his gratification when he saw him appear quite suddenly before him, to seek his support for so sacred and beautiful a cause, with his characteristic simple and persuasive eloquence? The verdict was favorable and, two evenings later, the councillor of state told him so.

The undersigned happened to be in Don Bosco's humble little room when almost simultaneously, with the same messenger, he received a letter from Rome and another from the Turin Prefecture. The letter from Rome was from the Secretary of State, informing him that the Holy Father Pius IX was enclosing an offering of two thousand lire for the church of St. John. The letter from Turin was from Zoppi himself and had gone first to City Hall or vice versa. It informed him now that the government had recognized the usefulness of building the Church in question and that now it was possible to proceed with the obligatory expropriation! I saw how happy and how grateful the pious priest was toward God, for having rescued him at long last from his predicament. I wanted to ask him how the papers *invita universa* [when everything was against him] had reached the Council of State; he lifted his eyes heavenward and said that it had been the work of God Who likes to play games with mortal beings.

May the Beloved Apostle, for whom the great man of God had such devotion, answer the prayers offered up today in his church, a monument of art and piety and, should Don Bosco not have joined the chosen souls in Heaven as yet, may he grant that he enter their beatific company as soon as possible.

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